Sex, Family & Fertility in Haiti

Volume 1

by
Timothy T. Schwartz

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Fertility

I have three objectives in this book: First, to explain why fertility decline in rural Haiti has not come about. At 5.0 childbirths per mother, birthrates in towns and rural areas, where 70 percent of the population live, are among the highest in the Western hemisphere; in Jean Rabel county, where I conducted much of the research presented below, they are among the highest in the world. Significant effort and research funds have been devoted to trying to explain why contraceptive campaigns in Haiti have largely failed, but to date no researcher has satisfactorily answered that question. On the contrary, it will be seen that explanations for the lack of fertility decline in rural Haiti have become increasingly obscure, confusing, and unverifiable.

Anthropologists explained high fertility in Haiti with “love” and “prestige,” “absence of contraceptives,” and “tradition” (Herskovits 1937: 89); “the desire to live with reason, and to die with dignity” (Lowenthal 1987: 305); “fear of abandonment in women” and “strong tenets . . . rooted in the culture” (Maynard-Tucker 1996: 1387). Others have argued that it is lack of knowledge and an ineffective health care system (Jennie Smith 1998: 11), old age security
It will be shown that in doing so, in turning to immeasurable variables, remote causation, and value-based explanations, anthropologists have often contradicted their own data.

**Table 1.1: Total fertility rates in Haiti (TFR)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Rural TFR</th>
<th>Rural and urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Census</td>
<td>6.26</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971–1975</td>
<td>Demo Survey</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>HFS</td>
<td>6.10</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>EMMUS I</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>EMMUS II</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>EMMUS III</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Kinship and Family Patterns**

My second objective is to show that the same logic underlying family patterns in contemporary Haiti can be generalized to the rest of the traditional Caribbean and that doing so resolves questions about Caribbean family patterns that have puzzled anthropologists for over half a century: The anthropology of the Caribbean has been called “the battleground for competing theories regarding family structure” (D’Amico-Samuels 1988: 785). Different areas of the region were differentially influenced by native Arawaks and Carib Indians, French, Dutch, British, and various Asian cultures as well as the many African groups that came to prevail in the region. Despite these multicultural origins—what historian William Green (1977: 509) called a “cockpit of conflicting cultures”—there emerged a distinct pan-regional family structure such that M.G. Smith (1962: 244) identified twenty-three features common to 20th century Caribbean families. The most confounding, those that Western anthropologists found most challenging to explain, were late age at marriage, high rates of births to single women, matrifocality, child dispersal, de facto polygyny, and what Ho (1999: 37) called “brittle” conjugal unions, meaning that individuals readily took on new spouses or engaged in extramarital relationships in the absence of their primary spouse.

Thus, in “the battle” to explain Caribbean family structure, victory presumably would have come with a convincing causal model for the behaviours described and an explanation for the degree to which, despite their multicultural origins, these behaviors prevailed throughout the region. Yet, after more than half a century of intensive research and debate, no unifying explanation emerged. Similar to explanations for high fertility, scholars most often turned to the values of the people they studied, often with a decisive ethnocentric bent. During the 1940s and 1950s they dismissed
Caribbean family patterns as “disintegrate” (Simey 1946), “uncivilized” (Matthews 1953: 302), “normless” and “distorted” (Smith 1996: 35, 54), “promiscuous” and “dysfunctional” (Smith and Mosby 2003). Since the 1960s, many scholars have recognized that family patterns are consistent with the poverty prevalent in much of the region (Brown 2002). But a comprehensive explanation has yet to be achieved such that Blackwood (2005: 14) could convincingly indict both feminists and more traditional anthropologists working in the Caribbean for casting “a long shadow over the theories of kinship, marriage, and the family.”

NGOs and Paradigmatic Shift of Anthropology

My third objective is to deal with why I have to address these issues at all. More precisely, why have many social scientists, and especially anthropologists, increasingly turned away from empirically demonstrable material explanations for social phenomenon and instead favored explanations that blame impoverishment and high birth rates on the impoverished people themselves, on their values, cultures, and traditions? I believe that I can show that the answer is that governments, international financial organizations and corporations that fund our studies and the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive, redistribute, and partake in absorbing those funds refocus social-scientific inquiries and influence our conclusions in a manner conducive not to understanding and explaining, but rather to their own political and economic agendas. In understanding why and how, it is necessary to look at the post-WWII shift in funding sources. Before the advent of overseas “development intervention”— as I try to restrict myself to calling it in this book—most social scientists, and anthropologists in particular, went to the field to document the subsistence strategies and cultures of the people who live there (albeit with the hope of furthering colonial objectives). The criteria for success were accurate knowledge, data, and convincing explanations for patterned behavior. Today most anthropologists go to the field not simply to document and explain behavior, but as part of endeavors to change it (in more subtle ways and with more humanitarian rationales than our colonial predecessors). They work for internationally funded “intervention” organizations—NGOs—and have become agents of “value campaigns” targeted to promote specific Western morals and politico-economic “development” programs designed to modify modes of production and markets.

Jean Rabel and the Sociocultural Fertility Complex

To make my case I take a close look at one of the poorest, least developed, and most aided places in Haiti, a place called Jean Rabel, a commune, or what in the United States is known as a county, where I lived, worked, and intermittently conducted research for eighteen years. Jean Rabel is made up of 467 km2 of one of the most geographically remote areas of Haiti and peopled by 130,320 men, women, and children who are primarily engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, and to a much lesser degree fishing. Despite close proximity to the United States, heavy migration, and the long presence of NGOs, the people there lead a daily life remarkably independent of the world economy.

At the time of the most intense survey research, 1996 to 2001, there were no televisions and only 15 percent of households had a radio. There were only three private vehicles in the entire commune. Less than 1 percent of households had a member who owned a motorcycle and only 5 percent had a bicycle. Eighty-seven percent of people in the area inhabited houses that had dirt
floors and 82 percent of houses had a thatch roof. Animal husbandry and the planting of gardens were the principal livelihoods but only 2 percent of farmers used fertilizers, and pesticides were used with even less frequency. Farmers did not select seed stock and they made only feeble attempts to irrigate. Only hoes and machetes were employed in planting and harvesting crops; there was not a single tractor or any other type automated farm equipment in the commune. Animals were not corralled but tethered. Most people did not bother to vaccinate their animals and, except for occasional vitamin and protein supplements for pigs, industrial products or processed animal feeds were unknown. Fishing was carried out exclusively with bamboo traps, hand lines, and hand-woven nets. Boats were built entirely from local materials and propelled with wooden oars and sails that were patched together from used clothing. For medical care, people in the area overwhelmingly depended on herbal healers, called leaf-doctors, and shamans. Only about 50 percent of pregnant women visited the fifteen foreign-sponsored rural health clinics in the region.

The impoverishment and regional economic autonomy being described are accompanied by extremely high birth rates. Fertility among Jean Rabel farmers is perhaps the highest rate biologically possible given the prevalence of infectious diseases, low-calorie diets, high rates of female malnutrition, high female labor demands, and high rates of male absenteeism. It will be seen that at 7.1 births per woman, the TFR in Jean Rabel is, despite all these limiting factors, equivalent to the second-highest country birth rate in the world and almost as high as 19th and early 20th century Hutterites, who had the highest sustained fertility levels ever documented. This high fertility is reinforced by a general rejection of modern contraceptives, something that exists despite more than a decade of internationally funded educational campaigns and contraceptive giveaways. Only 4.5 percent of the reproductive-age female population use contraceptives, ranking the commune of Jean Rabel, if it were a country, among the four lowest contraceptive use rates in the world.

The reason for underdevelopment, poverty, and a rejection of contraceptives in Jean Rabel is emphatically not a lack of influence from state or foreign governments and institutions. Since the first Catholic clergy came to the region (1704), through the first U.S. military occupation of Haiti (1915–1934), and through the past fifty years of intensive Protestant missionary activity and costly foreign-sponsored development interventions, Jean Rabeliens have been exposed to a long history of attempts to change the behaviors described above. Yet, as we have seen, little has changed.

No one seems to know why. Why have rural Haitians, and in this case Jean Rabeliens, shrugged off fifty years of foreign and state efforts to promote the use of modern technologies and why do they remain so desperately impoverished? As with the scholarly interpretations of fertility and kinship seen earlier, the Western-trained agronomists, economists, medical practitioners, and anthropologists who come to the area as specialists and international consultants in the field of foreign aid are generally perplexed by the persistent aversion to contraceptives, the insistence on giving supplements to infants within days of birth, the wholesale refusal to make any additional investments in cropping strategies or livestock, the apparent prevalence of sexually promiscuous patterns of behavior, polygynous unions, high rates of illegitimate births, sky-high fertility levels, and the intellectual tenacity with which Haitians cling to folk medicines, beliefs in sorcery, and other mystical phenomena. In an effort to understand and explain the behavior of the people they are trying to help and to rationalize the shortfalls of foreign development interventions, visiting experts typically resort to an eclectic array of explanations: resistance to technology is usually
ascribed to laziness; promiscuity to the lack of economic opportunity available to women; resistance to contraceptives and belief in supernatural phenomena to tradition and an inferior educational system. L. E. Harrison, a former branch director of USAID in Haiti, typified this attitude when he wrote, “To repeat, the principal obstacles to progress in Haiti are cultural: a set of traditional attitudes and values. . . . The solutions must focus on obstacles in the Haitian mind” (Harrison 1991).

I believe that I can offer a better explanation. I am not claiming that I can explain all of Haiti or all of Haitian behavior. But what I try to do in this book is focus on high fertility and family patterns to offer an alternative explanation for hitherto perplexing behaviors found in the rural areas of the commune of Jean Rabel, elsewhere in Haiti, and in the Caribbean in general. In doing so, rather than resorting to the immeasurable inner workings of the Haitian mind or some progress-obstructing aspect of Haitian culture, I focus on external, observable environmental and economic conditions: most importantly, the contribution to survival that children make to impoverished families.

The Research

I first went to Jean Rabel as a graduate student in 1991 and 1994 to study missionaries and later illegal migrant boat voyages. I returned in September 1995 and between that time and June 1997, I spent fifteen months living in the thatch and tin roofed fishing hamlet of Makab (a pseudonym). I then worked and conducted research in the region of Jean Rabel until 2001.

Early on, I lived in homes of impoverished farmers and fishermen. Later in my research, when I was employed, I maintained several residences, one in the city of Port-de-Paix, the capital of the Department de NordOuest, one in the village of Jean Rabel, and two in rural areas. I always had people from my research sites living with me: children attending school in the city, women who worked as cook or caretaker for the children, visitors looking for work, and itinerant female marketing women. My continued relationship as friend, sometimes guardian, and often “patron” made research easier than it would otherwise have been. When home writing up research results, if I did not understand something or needed to verify a fact about a person or family, I could simply turn to the person next to me for clarification.

In addition to living with Jean Rabeliens for the better part of six years, the major surveys I conducted and draw on in this book are the following:

The Baseline Survey

A one-in-fourteen systematic random sample of all 22,827 households in the commune. The survey was also called the Nutritional, Health, Agricultural, Demographic, and Social (NHADS) Survey because questions and measurements covered all these issues, from interviewing mothers about feeding practices, to weighing mothers and children, to developing profiles of the household membership and detailing information regarding farming practices.

The survey took three months to complete. Survey staff included twelve full-time interviewers, three full-time supervisors, another twenty house counters, cooks, and messengers. The total sample size was 1,586 households; of this figure 46 households were either vacant or
interviewers were never able to locate the necessary respondents for at least one of the questionnaires.

The household head or spouse of the household head was the required respondent for the farming portions of the survey; the female head of the household or the spouse of the man identified as the household head answered nutritional and demographic survey questions. In 4 percent of cases no household respondent was located. A household was defined as a building in which people sleep; household members were defined as people who reportedly sleep in the house more than they sleep elsewhere. Households were counted and physically marked with a number. From the resulting lists, one in every fourteen households was systematically chosen using a random starting point. Longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates of the selected households were subsequently recorded using Global Positioning System (GPS) devices. Loading the information into SPSS spreadsheets involved some 1.5 million separate entries (observations). The original data entry was accomplished in the first two weeks of December 1997 by the survey staff and secretaries working for the local NGOs. With help from hired assistants, data were subsequently entered a second time during the period January to May 1998.

The Opinion Survey
This survey took nine days to complete and involved me and four full-time interviewers—two male interviewers and two female interviewers, all residents of the area and hired based on competency demonstrated during the Baseline Survey. We revisited 136 (~9%) of the households in the Baseline Survey. The sample was selected by dividing Jean Rabel County into twelve geographical zones; five zones were selected randomly and an approximately equal number of households were randomly chosen from each of the geographical clusters (~twenty-eight households per cluster). The sample was stratified by gender. In sixty-eight cases the female household head or the spouse of the male head was interviewed and in sixty-eight cases the male head or spouse of the female head was interviewed. Male interviewers visited male respondents and female interviewers visited female respondents. Only one respondent was chosen per household. Interviewers recorded responses to key questions on cassette tapes. I traveled and stayed with the interviewers and, using the cassette recordings, monitored interviewer performance daily. Transcription of the interviews began in the field and continued for several weeks after the survey ended. Fifty percent of the recorded interviews were reviewed; approximately 30 percent were transcribed.

Household Labor Demands Survey
In an effort to develop ethnographically dependable profiles of household labor demands and needs, I visited and conducted qualitative research in each of five Jean Rabel lokalites (rural neighborhoods). The lokalites were chosen for ecological variability: (1) dry foothill, (2) dry mountain, (3) humid mountain, (4) humid plain, and (5) dry coastal zone. One to three days were spent per visit in each lokalite. Information was gathered by the old-fashioned anthropological technique of hanging out, tagging along, watching, and “whying” people to the point of annoyance.
Livestock and Garden Survey
The Livestock and Garden Survey was carried out in two communities, one in a semi-humid mountainous community (n = 50) and another in a humid plain community (n = 56). The goal was to measure the strength of the relationship between the number of children and the number of animals and gardens per household. I decided this survey was necessary because: (1) in the Baseline Survey and the Opinion Survey farmers gave obviously misleading reports regarding livestock and crop yields (Jean Rabeliens have come to expect that if they report to visitors that they own nothing, then gifts may be forthcoming), and (2) we discovered that respondents in the Baseline Survey were including in their enumeration of household members children who were away at school in the village or in the city—the inclusion of these children led to a misrepresentation of the actual number of available child laborers—and (3) it is important to my argument to provide a concrete measure of the role of children in household livelihood strategies (so that I can provide tests of the relationship between the number of children present in particular households and the number of livestock and gardens tended by household members).

In order to correct these shortcomings and obtain dependable data, two communities were chosen not at random but because they were the home communities of a Baseline Survey supervisor’s parents. The supervisor and his family knew everyone in these two communities and they were able to independently verify details relating to livestock, gardens, and the number of children present in the house. Expected crop yields were also measured during this survey.

Polygyny Survey
De facto polygyny is widespread in Jean Rabel and I hypothesized that it is somehow related to the value of children and therefore an important issue in the research. But inquiry into trends in polygyny was inadequately addressed in both the Baseline and the Opinion Surveys. In the Baseline Survey, a question regarding current polygyny was included but there was no question regarding past polygyny. Past and present polygyny were measured during the Opinion Survey but only men were asked about past polygyny—wives were not asked about their husbands’ past polygynous behavior—and the sample was too small to give a statistically reliable image of polygyny over the course of a Jean Rabel man’s lifetime. Thus, a three-hundred-respondent polygyny survey was carried out using the same supervisor and in the same two communities as the Animal and Garden Survey. Two other small polygyny surveys were carried out, one focusing on forty-one skilled craftsmen and another among sixteen male shaman (known as bokor or alternatively hougan or, in the approximately 10 percent of cases where the subject is female, mambo). The areas for these surveys were chosen as a matter of convenience. Being familiar with people in the area, I was able to confidently substantiate reports by consulting with more than one local informant.

Clinics and NGO Reports
Data on interbirth intervals, contraceptive use, and health status were also garnered from local clinics, hospitals, churches, and NGOs working in the area. The most notable resource for regional health data was Faith Medical Clinic in Mare Rouge, physically outside the commune of Jean Rabel but with some 50 percent of its clientele coming from within the borders of the commune. Health care workers with the French NGO Initiative Developpement (ID) also
provided health information and made reports available, as did the directors of PISANO (Projet Integre de Securite Alimentaire Nord-Ouest) and AAA (Agro Action Allemande). Staff at CARE International also provided access to reports and information on food aid and ongoing projects.

There were three survey reports that were especially important for comparison and validation of the data collected in the field. CARE International previously performed two large surveys in the region. The first, conducted in 1994, was a 1,400-household, twenty-six-cluster random survey covering the entire Northwest Department of Haiti (which includes Jean Rabel). The second CARE survey, in 1996, was a followup to the earlier survey. The third report was by PISANO (German Government NGO) and was based on a 1,300- household, five-cluster random survey in 1990 that largely covered the commune of Jean Rabel (PISANO 1990). The references for the respective survey reports are listed in the bibliography.

Overview of the Book

The book is comprised of nineteen chapters. The present chapter provides the introduction and description of the field research and methods used to gather the data presented in subsequent chapters. The following chapter provides a review of the literature regarding Caribbean family patterns and fertility, most importantly on the peculiar denial of the labor utility of children, an issue that I argue is at the base of understanding Caribbean family patterns. In chapter 3, I introduce the county of Jean Rabel, its people, the local history, and present conditions, including the environment and the importance of the role of the State and what others have called development organizations but I am calling foreign-sponsored intervention institutions.

In chapters 4 through 6, I introduce and describe the central topic of the book, what I am calling rural Haiti’s pronatal sociocultural fertility complex. Jean Rabel women achieve what are among the highest birthrates in the world and they do so despite high incidence of disease, low-fat diets, intense work regimes, scarce resources, low male-to-female sex ratios, and high geographic mobility of both women and men, all factors that militate against pregnancy and childbirth. This high fertility is associated with aversion to the use of contraceptives and abortion, and the prevalence of pronatal laws, customs, and patterns of sexual behavior and beliefs that promote high fertility.

Chapter 7 through 10 are the beginning of an effort to achieve a holistic understanding of the underlying causes of high fertility and pronatal belief systems and behaviors in Jean Rabel and to lay out the conditions that underlie kinship and family patterns found there. I describe and analyze local livelihood survival strategies, and the importance of the household as the organizational framework within which most productive and survival activities are carried out.

In chapters 11 and 12, I show how the livelihood strategies described above translate to high labor demands and the tasks that must be accomplished to sustain a household and its members. Also examined are the sexual division of labor and how labor demands and the lack of alternative energy sources such as electricity and mechanized labor-saving devices mean that contributions Jean Rabel children make to the household labor pool are indispensable for survival. Chapter 12 ends with statistical correlations between household prosperity and number of children, but it is acknowledged that, alone, the data are insufficient to show a causal relationship between fertility and labor demands. To resolve this issue, chapter 13 includes a statistically representative analysis of the opinions of Jean Rabel men and women. The analysis
demonstrates that children not only appear to be important to household security based on labor needs and the tasks they accomplish, but also Jean Rabel farming men and women conceive of children as an absolute necessity.

Chapters 14 and 15 cover the mode of reproduction, which here includes an examination of childrearing practices and reproductive unions. I link the mode of reproduction with the mode of production to show how it is that family and kinship in rural Haiti are conditioned by demand for child labor. The analysis is carried out in light of the necessity of children established in earlier chapters. The labor utility of children is shown to be reflected in—if not a principal conditioner of—childrearing practices, paternity, godparentage, the loaning of children, corporal punishment, and ultimately, conjugal unions—including de facto polygyny. In chapter 16 I show how the system is maintained and perpetuated and whose interest it is; specifically, I show how mature market women, those who control homesteads and dominate the regional marketing system, earnestly promote high fertility and seek to gain control over the children whose labor make homesteads productive.

In chapter 17, I demonstrate how my study of the sociocultural fertility complex in Jean Rabel and the insights garnered from studying it can be generalized to the rest of the Caribbean to clarify the determinants of kinship and family systems. Prior to the recent growth of the tourist industry and modernization of Caribbean economies, family and subsistence patterns throughout the lower-income social strata of the West Indies resembled those found in Jean Rabel and the extensive ethnographic record reveals the same causal patterns and dependency on household livelihood strategies and child labor.

Picking up on the importance of child labor as a conditioner of social patterns, in chapter 18 I examine one of the great demographic mysteries of the Caribbean—the irony of increasing birth rates when fewer men were present, i.e., fewer men, more babies—to demonstrate the applicability and causal significance of my argument.

In chapter 19 I return to the points touched on at the beginning of the book: why scholars never highlighted the importance of child labor as a determinant of social and demographic trends in the Caribbean, and why, despite overwhelming data to the contrary, they downplayed the economic contributions of children. The reason for this shortcoming, I argue, is because our research has been couched in “value campaigns”—part of massive “foreign aid” programs funded by powerful States—particularly those of the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. The programs are carried out in alliance with monetary policies of international financial and political institutions—such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, both controlled by the United States and European allies—but they are largely executed by multinational corporate charities that compete for the right to carry out specific interventions and in doing so manage the funds earmarked for such projects. Social science research has been embedded in these processes. In the service of these organizations, anthropologists have become agents of “value campaigns.” These include the first anthropologists working in the Caribbean, the structural-functionalists of the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s working in the service of colonial governments that sought to modify behavior of the impoverished people living in the region; in the 1960s to the present, feminist scholars, also funded by agencies interested in changing behavior, focused on empowering women; other anthropologists worked as part of antinatal and procontraceptive campaigns; others were embedded in substance abuse campaigns, promotion of gay marriage coming out of queer anthropology, and child value campaigns that sought to export changing U.S. values toward children.
Conclusion and Importance of the Research

Understanding the impact that concrete and measurable conditions have on social organization and particularly on reproduction, kinship, and family patterns is important in the struggle to assist people in Haiti and in other impoverished regions of the Caribbean and the world. For more than half a century, Jean Rabel has been the target of intense foreign-sponsored intervention, most of which has met with indifference. But entrenched poverty and high fertility are not consequences of Jean Rabel inhabitants’ nostalgic clinging to a rustic way of life, nor some shortcoming in the collective Haitian psyche or culture, as suggested by former USAID director Harris. Jean Rabel farmers conceptualize farming as the lowliest of occupations, virtually all rural Jean Rabeliens would prefer to migrate out of Jean Rabel and preferably out of Haiti, and many women interviewed in the surveys conducted for this book stated quite frankly that they would prefer not to have many children but, as will be seen, they must have children because they believe that children are necessary to survive.

Thus, in the struggle to maintain their living standards, those Haitians who cannot escape by emigrating are trapped in a system of spiraling population growth, declining soil conditions, and stagnant technology. It is a system beyond their control. There is currently no active State presence in rural Haiti; and local community organizational structures are often functionally nonexistent beyond the level of the household. The system, however, is not beyond the control of foreign-sponsored international intervention agencies working in the area. I hope this book contributes to changing their practices in a way that helps rural Haitians.

Notes

1. Generally called peasants, presumably because of their tenuous and limited participation in the world market, I refer to rural Jean Rabel men and women throughout this book as farmers. The reason I use the term farmer rather than peasant is because peasant strikes me as too thoroughly imbued with a historic association to the disparaging, semi-slavery status of the medieval European serf. A difference in terms also seems to suggest that the impoverished Jean Rabel cultivator is somehow intrinsically different than the developed world “farmer.” I prefer to use the same, less disparaging term, farmer, and emphasize the environment as the source of behavioral differences (see Dalton 1974 for controversy surrounding the term).

2. My initial fieldwork was sponsored by the Curtis Wilgus Foundation. Field work in 1996–1997 was sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida and a grant from the National Science Foundation and institutional support from IICA. The 1997 Jean Rabel baseline survey was sponsored by the German GTZ project, the German NGO AgroActionAlemande (AAA), and the French NGO Initiative Developpement (ID), the directors of which graciously granted permission to for the data to be used in academic publications.
Chapter 2
Review of the Literature: The Neglected Half of Chayanov’s Rule

Introduction
The basis of my arguments is that children are useful on the nonindustrialized farm because they work. The point might at first seem trite and obvious, but in recent decades social scientists have so rigorously denied the economic utility of children in developing areas that the denial itself is fascinating. Moreover, I believe this denial is the smoking gun in understanding why social scientists have failed to satisfactorily explain Caribbean family structure, kinship, and courting practices. To illustrate my point I want to begin by going back to an earlier time, before the modern worldwide fertility decline, to early 20th century social science, when the small farm in the developing world was intensively studied by a different but no less attentive generation of social scientists.

The Neglected Half of Chayanov’s Rule

*Any economic unit, including the peasant farm is acquisitive—an undertaking aiming at maximum income. . . . But in the family farm, apart from capital available expressed in means of production, this tendency is limited by the family labor force and the increasing drudgery of work if its intensity is forced up.*

(Alexander Chayanov 1925)

From the quote above was derived Chayanov’s rule: “the amount of time peasants devote to work is proportionate to the household dependency ratio of consumers to producers.” Marshall Sahlins (1972) brought the “rule” to the fore of U.S. anthropological discourse in Stone Age Economics, an ethnographic tour de force in which he expounded on the way members of nonindustrial societies, limited by the domestic mode of production (production organized around the household), maximize leisure time rather than profits or productivity. But also inherent in Chayanov’s rule was a principle that bears directly on the thesis of this book: small farmers dependent on nonindustrialized technologies and “limited by the family labor force” use high fertility to increase the size of that labor force.

The point was not lost on other social scientists. The economic value of children among small farmers and the impact that value had on fertility was widely accepted and rigorously substantiated as a basic tenet of anthropological and demographic theory up to and through the 1970s (Notestein 1945; Liebenstein 1957; Becker 1960; Freeman 1962; Boserup 1965). Mahmood Mamdani (1973: 14) conducted research in an Indian village and summarized what became a consensus among many scholars when he wrote that “People are not poor because they
have large families. Quite the contrary: They have large families because they are poor.” At about the same time, White (1973, 1976, 1982), Nag et al. (1978), and Cain (1977) carried out similarly renowned studies empirically demonstrating that impoverished families, particularly those engaged in farming-oriented household livelihood strategies, deliberately use high fertility to maximize the household labor force.

Demographer John Caldwell (1976) took the point to its logical conclusion, setting up what should have been the beginning of a florescence of explanations for family, kinship, and courting patterns focusing on the importance of child labor among small farmers. In his theory of intergenerational wealth flows, Caldwell (1982: 33) defined wealth as “money, goods, services, and guarantees that one person provides to another,” and he argued that when wealth flowed from children to parents—as for example, when children were a valuable source of labor—fertility would be high as would the emotional and cultural reinforcements that encouraged high birthrates. This is, as I show in subsequent chapters, precisely what can be seen in rural Haiti today. Rural Haitians are radically pronatal; the entire rural Haitian social-kinship system and associated attitudes, opinions, and emotions are adapted to maximizing high birthrates and child survival; and the economic value of children in terms of their contributions to household productivity cannot and never has been empirically disputed—not in Haiti. Moreover, this same extreme pronatalism and economic value of children was, I will show, abundantly evident elsewhere in the Caribbean before the growth of the tourist and industrial sectors transformed most regional economies. But first, returning to the issue of economic explanations for high fertility, on the scholarly front something subsequently went strangely awry.

Social scientists began to steer clear of explanations that gave child labor contributions a determinant role in high fertility and the formulation of social and kinship patterns. New studies contradicted earlier ones, concluding that children were rarely if ever a net value to the parental generation (Das Gupta 1994; Lee 1996). Others focused on old-age security as the principal economic advantage of offspring, effectively making the intergenerational flow of wealth from children to parents so remote that it became, at best, a secondary determinant variable (Hugo 1997; Schellekens 1993; DeLancey 1990; Lillard and Willis 1997; Lee et al. 1994). This was not simply a trend among scholars new to the argument. John Caldwell also changed his emphasis, explaining resistance to fertility decline in sub-Saharan Africa with reasons that are “cultural and have much to do with a religious belief system” (Caldwell and Caldwell 1987: 409).

The new trend—that of denying the economic utility of children—can be linked to a shift in our Western value system of which most anthropologists are a part (Lancy 2007). In her study of the evolution of child-adult play. Adriana Zelizer (1985: 171) concluded, “while in the nineteenth century a child’s capacity for labor determined its exchange value, the market price of a twentieth century child was set by smiles, dimples and curls”; and in a study by Gary Cross (2004: 4), “Today, as never before, we are obsessed with kids. We come close to worshipping them.” David Lancy (2007) suggests that it was in fact developed Western governments that imposed these new values on poor countries. Post-WWII institutions founded to export the new values included the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, founded in 1946), Compassion International (1952), the International Association for the Child’s Right to Play (1961), Children Incorporated (1964), Child Defense Fund (1973), and the Alliance for Childhood (1997).

The rise of Western child worship and the well-funded institutions that exported the new values became part of the failure to explain why fertility in much of the world was high in the first
place. It is a classic example of how anthropology has been undermined by the same forces that drive the discipline—funding agencies. Lancy captured the relationship when he explained:

*With modernization, fertility dropped, demand for child workers dried up, and suburbia mushroomed. Gone were the extended family, the “mother ground” where children played [and worked] under the casual supervision of adults in the vicinity, and the large brood of sibling playmates. In their place we have the image of the carefree young mother pushing her toddler on a swing in the backyard. An image that owed much to mass media and marketing became enshrined in academic discourse as well.* (2007: 277–78)

I return to this issue of funding agencies in chapter 19 where I show how the new values were promoted in developing countries, but here I want to stay focused on the scholarly negation of the economic utility of children in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. A close look at how this denial of child labor occurred in the Caribbean and in Haiti demonstrates the extremity of the trend and accents why, in order to understand kinship systems and family patterns, it is so important to rectify it.

**Pronatalism in the Caribbean**

Documentation of children in the nonindustrialized Caribbean and their important role as contributors to traditional household livelihood strategies abounded in the ethnographic record. On the island of Montserrat, “in the terms of the day-to-day household activities . . . the child is a definite asset.” (Philpott 1973: 138). In Jamaica, “life is very strenuous for a peasant child . . . there are innumerable tasks to be done around the yard” (Kerr 1952: 47–48). In Trinidad, “a child is expected to help with a variety of tasks . . . as soon as the child ‘has sense,’ or as soon as he ‘can walk and talk’” (Rodman 1971: 83). Among the Black Carib in British Honduras, “children help with household tasks, doing such things as carrying water, running errands, sweeping the house and compound. . . . Children of three or four may carry out many of these activities” (Gonzalez 1969: 53). In St. Vincent, “Young children were also perceived as economically useful. Children help around the house by performing chores, caring for smaller children, rearing livestock, running errands” (Gearing 1988: 236). In Barbados, “At five . . . [children] start caring for the ‘stocks,’ carrying water from the pipe, and ‘cleaning the wares.’ Boys . . . care for the animals, cut ‘meat’ [grass], carry water and help on the land. Their sisters learn to cook, wash clothes, clean the house, and shop with mother” (Greenfield 1966: 106). In Barbuda, “When six years old, boys and girls alike begin to carry water and look after the younger children. They run errands, scrub, and go to the shop . . . do laundry and cook. . . . help sow, weed and harvest” (Berleant-Schiller 1978: 259). In St. John, “Children were sent to the spring to get water when they could carry a pail on their head . . . to find firewood in the bush . . . sweep the yard and help with food preparations . . . watering and re-staking daily the animals that were kept in the bush. They helped cultivate the provision ground and burn the coal, and often had to ‘hold water’ [keep the boats in position] when the fish pots were being hauled” (Olwig 1985: 118–19).

Congruent with child labor contributions, pronatalism was an outstanding cultural feature of the traditional nonindustrialized Caribbean. People wanted children and customs, beliefs, and
behaviors encouraged high birth rates. In St. Vincent, for example, it was believed that a woman who could not have children was, “tragic, sad, and pitiable” (Gearing 1988: 235) and as with women, “a man who could not have children is equally scorned, and his masculinity and virility are called into question” (Gearing 1988: 237). In Jamaica, “a child is God’s gift”; “nothing should be done to prevent the birth of a child”; “no woman who has not proved that she can bear a child is likely to find a man to be responsible for her”; and “just as a woman is only considered ‘really’ a woman after she has borne a child, so the proof of a man’s maleness is the impregnation of a woman” (Clarke 1966: 95, 96). In summarizing the results of 1,600 interviews from the extensive Women in the Caribbean Project (WICP 1979–1982), Olive Senior (1991: 68) concluded that, “there is an almost universal impulse to mothering,” “Virtually all women are mothers. . . . Childless women are scorned,” they are “mules” and they are “beyond the pale of society.”

In addition to the general desire for children and the censure of childless individuals, there were beliefs that militated against birth control. Physical and mental disorders were associated with contraceptive use, abortion, and childlessness. In rural Suriname, if a woman did not have the destined number of children she might get “cancer” (Buschkens 1974: 223). In Jamaica “she will be nervous, have headaches, and even go insane” (Kerr 1952: 25). Young Jamaican girls were instilled with “horror” regarding abortion, and told things like the child’s head and nails remain in the womb (Blake 1961: 200). Even coitus interruptus was abhorred, as illustrated by Blake’s informant who equated it with murder, explaining that:

> When the liquid is coming you can get up and throw it away but at the same time it is your blood you dashing away, and for that reason I don’t like it. It is a sin, because you are destroying your blood, it is like killing a child. (Blake 1961; 201)

When explaining this pronatal complex of customs and behavior—extreme desire for children and aversion to contraceptives—one would expect that social scientists, especially anthropologists, would have turned to the child labor contributions that were so assiduously documented in the ethnographic literature. As a rule they did not.

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, social scientists working in the Caribbean contradicted their own reports and denied the economic utility of children; and they did this much earlier on than the rejection of the utility of children found elsewhere.

Judith Blake (1961), co-author of the most influential demographic paradigm of the 20th century—the proximate and intermediate determinants of fertility (Davis and Blake 1956)—asked a sample of sixty-five Jamaican women, “What is your idea of a good son?” Fully 95 percent of the women interviewed replied, one who “helps” with productive household tasks. The next most common response (36%) was a son who “obeys,” which according to Blake meant “he heeds instructions . . . willingly helps in domestic chores,” “thinks of his parents all the time . . . considers in every way he can help them.” Only 11 percent of respondents mentioned “love or affection.” Yet, despite her informants clearly telling her the contrary, and despite acknowledging that “the child in the poorer strata of Jamaican society appears to lead a fairly burdensome and chore-ridden life,” (62) Blake decided that high fertility in Jamaica had little or
nothing to do with child labor contributions. It was, according to Blake, “a means to non-economic ends” (250–51).

This tendency to note the critical economic contributions children made to the household while at the same time downplaying child labor as a determinant of pronatalism or high birth rates was not the oversight of a select few social scientists; it was and is representative of the entire body of anthropological, sociological, and demographic literature on the Caribbean. In her summary of findings from the Women in the Caribbean Project and exhaustive review of Caribbean ethnographies, Olive Senior summarized:

*Where there is no piped water, children are assigned the task of carrying water from a river or spring some distance from the house. Where there is no cooking gas or electricity or other easily available fuel, seeking firewood—sometimes at a great distance—is a major daily task. Where there is no refrigeration and the family income arrives in a fragmentary way, running to the shop for basic items as needed is a constant activity. Caring for domestic animals and garden plots, helping with laundry, cooking, cleaning and other housekeeping tasks and caring for younger siblings are all regarded as the duties of children.*

(Senior 1991:34)

Quoting Brodber (1986: 60) in Jamaica, Senior drove the point home:

*Children are seen as appendages of elders and have little existence of their own; rarely can they find occasions to slip away to play with neighboring children. . . . As their parents hire no help, and as there are no labor saving devices, their human energy is very highly valued and is not frittered away in play.* (Senior 1991: 34)

But having said this, Senior subsequently summarized explanations from the Caribbean ethnographic literature, presenting children as a maternal burden, wanted because childbearing is the way that a woman “proves herself to a man,” the way she “completes a family,” the way she achieves “social recognition,” the result of the “widespread belief in the biblical injunction to be ‘fruitful and multiply,’” and thus bearing children is “a good thing to do,” an activity that “makes you feel like a woman” and allows women to “realize their self-image” to derive “psychic satisfaction” (Senior 1991: 67–69). In all of Senior’s discussion of the causes of pronatalism, the only material factor cited is that woman want children because they are useful as “minders in old age” (Senior 1991: 67). Nothing is said about the benefits of young children as contributors to household production, benefits that, as seen, Senior herself noted are of major significance.

Illustrative of the point is also Penn Handwerker, deservedly among the most respected contemporary anthropologists in the field of fertility, a scholar who has provided the social sciences with our most powerful cross-cultural statistical model for fertility decline (see Handwerker 1989). When referring to the islands of St. Lucia, Barbados, and Antigua, Handwerker (1993) explained that the economic value of children for women consisted not in labor utility but in the fact that “childbearing was a singularly effective way to secure their future material welfare [a reference to old age] and to establish the relatively permanent ties to men that
improved their immediate material welfare” (1993: 45). Handwerker (1989: 87) made a similar argument with regard to Barbados, saying that “the probability a woman could adequately support herself through her own employment was close to zero.” The reason women had children in the first place was that “young women overtly traded sex for financial support. Pregnancies and children occurred as mere byproducts of that exchange” (Handwerker 1989: 87–88).

As with many scholars, Handwerker’s focus was on economic opportunities that would have been expected in upper-class Western industrialized societies, specifically “employment” and outside economic opportunity. But he gave little attention to the household as a woman’s realm of productive activity or to other nonformal work activities and, most importantly, to the value of children in accomplishing such work. And he did this despite noting that:

All children began working when they were capable of helping. . . . As early as five or six, girls began to sweep, dust, straighten, to wash, dry, and put dishes away. To fetch water, put water on for tea, to look for eggs, feed the chickens, collect firewood, and to wash, iron, and dry clothes. Boys too were assigned tasks at early ages . . . their tasks were primarily outside chores—boys took care of the stock and helped their fathers. (Handwerker 1989: 81–82)

Anthropologist Ann Brittain is another example. Brittain (1990) made the counterintuitive and demographically startling observation that fertility rates on the islands of St. Barthelemy and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1991a) increased with male migration (fewer men but more babies) —something that flies in the face of conventional demographic wisdom, but that, as will be seen in chapter 18, is tantamount to a demographic rule in the traditional Caribbean and has befuddled a host of other anthropologists. Having discovered this demographic oddity, Brittain offered a tentative explanation and in doing so deemphasized the value of child labor in favor of preeminence of contributions, not from young children, but from adult offspring who twenty years after they were born might seek remunerated employment on distant islands and share it with their mothers:

The most likely explanation for the connection between the crude rate of emigration five years earlier seems to be that parents were not acting directly in response to the loss of children through death or migration, but anticipating the emigration of some of their offspring when they reached adulthood. . . . Children provide valuable labour in farming families but the presence of adult offspring may be even more important as a support of old age. (Brittain 1990: 57)

The point is not that the cited scholars did shoddy research. Senior, Handwerker, and Brittain have produced some of the most commendable anthro-demographic studies on family and fertility in the Caribbean. The point is that they illustrate how social scientists have, for whatever reason, glossed over the significance of child labor contributions to household livelihood strategies and, as I will attempt to demonstrate, in doing so have fallen short of explaining the determinants of high fertility and family patterns in the region. Despite their own data, they attributed birth rates to causes such as the desire to feel like a woman, biblical injunctions to “be fruitful and multiply,” inadvertent byproducts of sex, and the value of grown offspring; at the same time scholars were often insistent about viewing young children as a burden. Although they
often provided the data that showed otherwise, they paid little attention to the role that children played in making households productive and little attention to how female engagement in extra-household marketing activities depended on child labor contributions.

**Child Labor and Pronatalism in Haiti**

Concerning the literature on rural Haiti, an area with perhaps the richest history of ethnographic accounts and currently the largest and one of the few remaining bastions of traditional nonindustrialized Caribbean lifestyles, emphasis on the importance of child labor co-present with a rejection of its role as a determinant of pronatalism has been the norm. Similar to other regions of the Caribbean, children in rural Haiti are highly prized. They are the mark of adulthood and they bring the individual respect. As one of the very first ethnographers in Haiti, George Simpson (1942: 670) reported that “the peasant couple wishes to have children, and to have the largest number possible.” Simpson recognized that Haitian pronatalism derived from the value of child labor, which he said is of such “great assistance to the family” that rural Haitians say, “if it is necessary to choose between a large fortune without children and a large family without money, one must not hesitate to choose the large family without money.” (Simpson 1942: 670).

But virtually all other ethnographers at the time and since have wavered on the issue. Melville Herskovits (1937: 101) wrote that in Haiti, “at about the age of seven or eight the children’s play-life is invaded by the serious work which they must assume.” But when it came to pronatal attitudes and high fertility, Herskovits never mentioned child labor activities, preferring instead to explain the desire for children and high fertility with factors such as “love” and “prestige,” “absence of contraceptives,” and “tradition” (Herskovits 1937: 89). 

Thirty years later Gerald Murray (1977) spent twenty-one months living in a low-altitude plains community in central Haiti and he carried out what is among the most exhaustive systematic investigations of Caribbean farmers’ opinions regarding fertility ever conducted. One of the questions Murray asked his sample of 227 farming men and women was, “why they liked to have children/didn’t like to remain childless.” When interpreting his data Murray concluded that, “the data strongly suggest that the current utility of children in the ongoing domestic economy has come to play a secondary role” (1977: 273). Murray preferred to explain the “primary role” as the result of sociocultural evolutionary processes that, through selective advantages, had given way to the emergence of costly funeral rites: families were forced to sell off property to cover the costs of funerals for deceased elders, the forced sale of the property functioning as a societal mechanism for the redistribution of land. But, although Murray’s argument is fascinating and his contributions to the ethnographic literature on Haiti arguably exceed in breadth and quality that of any other scholar, his ranking of the reasons people gave for wanting children was flawed. Murray split the response itil (useful). When coding his open-ended questions, he created two categories for the term: One for the 30 percent of farmers who said they wanted children because children were itil (“useful”) but did not specify why (“unspecified useful”); and another category for the 32 percent of farmers who said that children were itil and added that the reason was because they helped accomplish agricultural and domestic tasks. But in the investigations I conducted in northwest Haiti, investigations detailed in later chapters, informants used itil as a catchall term to refer to the usefulness of children in accomplishing chores, whether those chores were helping around the house, helping with the animals, in the gardens, or running to the market. There was no ambiguity in this regard. Thus, if the same were true for informants in Murray’s research area—and Murray gives no reason to believe otherwise—then the “current
utility” of children was not “playing a secondary role,” rather, with a total of 62 percent respondents, it was playing the primary role. Of Murray’s 277 respondents in Kinanbwa, Haiti, 67 (30%) said children were itil (agricultural and domestic), 72 (32%) said itil but didn’t specify, 108 (48%) said old age and sickness, and 123 (54%) said burial (Murray 1977: 273).

(Respondents could choose more than a single category.)

Another highly respected and excellent anthropological work on life in rural Haiti was that of Ira Lowenthal (1987), who spent four years living in a village on Haiti’s southern peninsula. Lowenthal titled his dissertation Marriage is 20, Children are 21, a proverb that has nothing to do with age—as it might intuitively seem to outsiders—but rather highlights the value Haitian farmers attach to children. The proverb means that while marriage is a prestigious behavior—it gets a high number—having children is of even greater importance—it gets an even higher number. Thus, the very title of Lowenthal’s dissertation emphasized the desire for children among the rural Haitians he was studying. In supporting this notion of the importance of children among his farmer informants, Lowenthal reported that “children’s multifaceted labor contributions to the household, from a relatively early age through early adulthood, cannot be gainsaid” (1987: 303; the italics belong to Lowenthal). Yet, similar to Murray, Lowenthal did not believe these contributions could be used as a rationale for high fertility, saying that “despite the absence of hard data on the topic, peasants . . . definitely see children as a financial burden, not an economic asset” (1987: 394). Lowenthal (1987: 305) concluded that “progeneration” among the people at his research site was the means by which people fulfilled “the desire to live with reason, and to die with dignity.”

Even more recently, anthropologist Gisele Maynard-Tucker (1996) reported on a three-part sample of 2,383 impoverished rural and urban Haitian women. Maynard-Tucker’s objective was to address the problem that despite massive contraceptive giveaway programs financed by USAID (United States Agency for International Development), programs that date back to the 1970s, Haiti continued—and continues—to have the lowest rate of contraceptive use in the Western hemisphere. Her principal finding was that both rural- and slum-dwelling Haitian women were not using contraceptives simply because they did not want to use them. They wanted more children: When asked “why they did not want to use contraceptives?” the most common reason given, after “pregnant” or “breastfeeding,” was precisely “wanting additional children” (1996: 1385). Not only were informants telling Maynard-Tucker they wanted children, but Maynard-Tucker herself noted the economic utility of children, saying that, “in the countryside children fetch water and carry water and help with the cooking, cleaning, child care, gardening, and animal care” (1996: 1381). In the slums “children are taught at an early age to sell and trade goods in the streets or to do menial work, carry water, goods, watch property” (1996: 1381). So important was child labor that, according to Maynard-Tucker (1996), only one-third of both slum and rural children were sent to school (she explicitly explains this as a consequence of the economic activities of children, 1996). Yet, in spite of this clear recognition of the economic utility of children, Maynard-Tucker downplayed the utility of children, forming conclusions such as that the popular Haitian saying, ti moun se riches (“children are wealth”) is not derived from the current utility of children, but “probably based on colonial times when children were needed to work the fields for their parents who had to produce for the ‘colonial masters’” (1996: 1381).

In fact, during colonial times the master often controlled and directed child labor activities; and slave women bore an average of less than one child per woman. The point is that Maynard-
Tucker, like other anthropologists, forsook pursuing the obvious notion that high birth rates may actually be an adaptation to the “living standards” that are “the lowest in the Western hemisphere; most living quarters have no piped water, electricity or sanitation facilities . . . . Job opportunities are scarce and every day brings a new search for food and survival” (Maynard-Tucker 1996: 1379). And similar to Murray and Lowenthal before her, Maynard-Tucker (1387) reached for immaterial and nondemonstrable explanations, indeed nonexplanatory explanations, saying that “the lessons learned in Haiti are that strong tenets about the importance of children are rooted in the culture.” In other words, there were no lessons at all to be learned, Haitians are having many children simply because they are Haitian.

Another excellent ethnography, and the latest to deal with pronatalism in Haiti, is that of Jennie Smith (1998: 7) who spent three years living in a rural mountain hamlet in northern Haiti. She too noted the importance of child labor with regard to the rejection of contraceptive use, explaining that for the rural Haitian household, “the tasks to be done are never-ending” and “without several children it seems impossible for a family to function well.” She (1998:11) built on her observation of the economic utility of Haitian children, saying that the primary reason why intervention practitioners have been so unsuccessful in their efforts to promote family planning in Haiti is because, “they are simply proposing the preposterous!” (punctuation belongs to Smith). But Smith then went on to disregard her own insights when she subsequently attributed low contraceptive use, not to her observation that parents need children to accomplish the “never ending” labor tasks of daily life in rural Haiti, but to shortcomings in the local health care system. To her credit, Smith concluded with a self-reflective comment that very neatly sums up the essence of scholarly conclusions regarding the causes of high fertility in the nonindustrialized Caribbean:

_Most scholars asking questions about why family planning initiatives have not been accepted by the people of Haiti seems to reflect crucial (though often tacit) preconceptions. Not only do these scholars tend to assume that if people were more educated about the issue and more aware of their options, and if these options were more accessible to them, then they would choose to accept family planning. They also tend to imply that this compliance would be good for them. (Looking back over the pages above, I find that I myself, however unwittingly, also seem to hold that underlying assumption.) (all punctuation in the original: Smith 1998: 24) 3_

Thus, similar to both the cross-cultural and the Caribbean literature regarding fertility decline and the economic utility of children, an interesting if not academically astonishing facet of the Haitian ethnographic record is the contradictions that we, as social scientists, have made ourselves.

**Conclusion**

Reflecting trends in Western demographic theory at the global level, researchers in the Caribbean have left a record of stark denial. We have often ignored the determinant role of material conditions as our informants reported them to us, and specifically, in this case, the value of child labor. In the following chapters I want to show how reinserting the importance of child labor can
resolve some of the most perplexing issues that have confounded anthropological research, specifically persistent high fertility in Haiti and the determinants of what many have considered the Caribbean’s unique courtship, family, and kinship patterns. To do so, I take the reader to Jean Rabel, Haiti, one of the few regions left in the Caribbean where traditional livelihood strategies continue to prevail and where there are ample data to demonstrate the mechanics and underlying causes of kinship and family patterns that prevail there.

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Notes

1. Handwerker (1986) provides the most successful model available for fertility decline. His model explains over 95 percent of the variance in a very large sample of country data, demonstrating that fertility decline is a consequence of increasing economic opportunities. However, explaining why fertility declined does not resolve the issue of why it was high in the first place and, like many contemporary scholars, Handwerker prefers not to emphasize the labor value of children when they are young.

2. The full quote from Herskovits is as follows:

_The love of children, and the prestige which a man gains as head of a large family are factors that go far to explain the desire for numerous progeny. In this not only is he aided by his own sophistication in matters of sex...but his desire is furthered as well by the absence of contraceptives, and the emphasis laid by Church, State, and African traditions on the desirability of many offspring._ (Herskovits 1937: 89)

3. Also important but for editorial reasons omitted is Glen Smucker’s (1983) excellent ethnography on peasants/farmers in the north of Haiti. Smucker does not attempt to evaluate the importance of child labor as a cause of pronatalism and thus the insight he provides does not fit into the literature review in the main text. Smucker’s work is, however, among the most thorough and instructive resources written on rural life in Haiti and he does make frequent mention of the economic utility of children, as for example:

After children learn to walk, they are expected to help with domestic tasks, carrying water, gathering wood and running errands. When they are old enough, boys go to the fields with their father, and girls take greater responsibility for household domestic tasks and marketing. As they approach adolescence, boys are assigned their own gardens and livestock. (1983: 232–33).

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Chapter 3
The Commune of Jean Rabel

Introduction
The commune of Jean Rabel has had a sometimes glorious and prosperous past. It was home to the most socioculturally complex Indians in the Caribbean, the Classic Taino, and one of the first places that Christopher Columbus landed in the new world. It became a refuge of pirates and buccaneers, it was a prosperous quarter of the French colony of Saint Dominigue, the first New World home to some ten thousand African-born slaves, a strategically important site during the Haitian wars for independence, and it was an area that produced and exported significant quantities of rum and plantains during the mid 1900s. But in recent decades Jean Rabel has experienced deteriorating environmental, economic, and social conditions. The presence of the State is feeble at best, and no local community organizations exist capable of confronting the devastating social, economic, and ecological problems that affect the area. International NGOs have been operating in the commune for fifty years and are presently the only effective suprhousehold community help organizations and the only real providers of institutional healthcare, agricultural, and social security services to the 130,320 residents of the region.

Today, contemporary farmers living in Jean Rabel survive in the face of harsh cyclical environmental conditions exacerbated by the rapid degradation of their natural resource base and periodic hurricanes, droughts, and floods. The absence of assistance from the State in the form of an agricultural extension service, price support during market gluts or disaster, aid in storing crops and moving them to markets, or assistance with infrastructure such as roads and ports mean that, with the NGOs aside, Jean Rabel families have had to adapt to harsh environmental and economic conditions on their own. Disease, malnutrition, chronic food shortages, and scarcity of potable water have been making life even more difficult. To most observers, the primary force driving the disaster is exponential demographic increment. But as I argue, it is precisely the demographic increment that is the primary adaptive mechanism.

Geography
The commune is half mountain, half plain, and includes approximately thirty-five kilometers of Atlantic coastline. Beginning in the humid three-thousand-foot inland mountains and moving northward toward the sea, the landscape transforms in a quick seven to eight kilometers into foothills and then fertile plain. The plain runs the entire length of the Jean Rabel coast but a smaller range of drier low-slung, wind-sheared desert mountains separates the plain from the ocean. Rainfall varies from one thousand mm in the high inland altitudes to four hundred mm along the coast (see figures 3.1 and 3.2 below). Rainfall on the drier plains occurs most often in the autumn and winter months and rain in the mountains falls most heavily in the spring (see
Deforestation and Erosion
All of Jean Rabel is largely deforested. In the mountains there are pockets of mature trees such as avocados, and colonial introductions such as mangos and breadfruit. The plains contain mostly scrub bushes and stubby, native acacia trees. The low, coastal mountains are covered with thorny xerophytic vegetation and cacti. Scenes of erosion are one of the most spectacular features of the landscape. At higher altitudes one occasionally finds single bodies of earth, some encompassing hectares of land, slipping down mountainsides. But it is gully erosion that residents and local intervention workers consider to be the primary soil control problem in Jean Rabel. Low-altitude gullies can appear in several weeks and the course of a single stormy night. Some of the gullies are a spectacular ten and fifteen meters deep. They cut roads and footpaths, forcing people to take new routes, and in a few short years they divide neighborhoods into separate communities.

Droughts and Hurricanes and Adaptation
Jean Rabeliens are primarily farmers, and the greatest danger to their livelihood is droughts and hurricanes—both called siklon by locals. Hurricanes are not as severe because tuber crops such as manioc, sweet potatoes, and arrowroot survive and even benefit from the abundant rainfall. Prolonged droughts are different. Crops stop yielding and livestock begin to die off. People who are old or sick are more likely to die at these times. Stricken families begin moving, going from house to house begging morsels of food. People typically ridicule and humiliate them, but some give. Banditry increases. Desperate people hide themselves in the brush by trails and charge unsuspecting voyagers, hurling rocks and screaming, driving the traveler away from her donkey and seizing her merchandise.
Locals give the siklon names like dekore (unleashed) and twa ribon (three ribbons—a reference to the strips of cloth that hungry people tie around their stomachs to squelch the pangs of starvation). Since 1921 there have been at least three major hurricanes that devastated the region and severe drought has struck at least nine times during that same period.

Table 3.1: Major natural disasters in Jean Rabel since 1921
1921: Drought (name forgotten).

1931: Unnamed hurricane devastated crops and killed livestock.

1938–1939: Severe drought called twa ribon. Elders remember banditry, gangs of people watching roads and paths to steal whatever supplies a traveler might be carrying.

1950: Drought (no details).

1954 (October 12): Hurricane Hazel wrecked crops and killed livestock. Locals called it douz oktob (October Twelfth), and it is a major milestone in temporal reckoning for people in Jean Rabel and all over Haiti.

1956–1957: It is not clear if this was really a crisis year. Several old-timers in Jean Rabel remember the year as a drought period and report going to the nearby island of La Tortue to buy manioc for relief. An earthquake occurred in 1956, but reportedly had little to no effect on the gardens. Pasture Brown of UFM (Unevangelized Field Missions) gave tents to displaced villagers and the Red Cross came in to evaluate the situation.

1965: Drought that is poorly remembered because of the severity of the ensuing drought in 1967–1968.

1967–1968: Drought called dechouke (Uproot) and plan dijans (Emergency Plan). The latter name stuck because food aid was distributed in the form of a road project that opened a direct route to capital city of Port-au-Prince. The food some report was rapadou, a crude sugar that comes wrapped in banana leaves.

1975: Drought called goldrin after a blan named Gordon who was reportedly responsible for regional food relief under HACO.

1979: Hurricane David devastated crops, tore roofs off houses, and caused flooding in low-lying areas. The incident is not recollected by most farmers.

1991–1993: A drought called dekore (Let Loose) and twa zorey (Three Ears). Some people at the time called it the déziem imbago (the second embargo—the first embargo being imposed by the United Nations in 1992, this second embargo was imposed by God). Reportedly much banditry occurred. USAID/CARE relief effort began in earnest toward the end of the drought.

1997: Drought—no name.

Figure 3.1: Historic Regional Rainfall by year (1921-1950) (in millimeters)
While difficult, the prudent farmers, those who have saved money and those who have planted sufficient security crops like cassava, yams, and sugarcane, come through crises relatively unscathed, for the crops planted by Jean Rabel farmers are uniquely suited to surviving drought. Plants such as sweet potato go into a state of dormancy during drought and then come back vigorously at first rain and may yield as much as twelve metric tons per acre on as little as four inches of rainfall. But the more it rains, the more the vine produces (see Bouwkamp 1985; Onwueme 1978). Or there is cassava, a close competitor with sweet potatoes for the most productive tropical food plant in terms of calories produced per square meter. It needs more rain than sweet potatoes to grow, but it is more tolerant of drought, easily surviving dry periods longer than six months. Further, unlike sweet potatoes, cassava has the unique ability to be stored in the ground and is hurricane proof because it can lose all its leaves and its branches may break but the root, which is where the food is, will not die. After drought or hurricanes the plant draws on carbohydrate reserves in the roots to rejuvenate itself (see Toro and Atlee 1980; Cock 1985).
Or pigeon peas, a bush-like plant with roots reaching six to seven feet beneath the surface, deeper than cassava, making the plant highly drought resistant. When drought does strike, pigeon peas shed all their leaves and go into a state of dormancy just like cassava, coming back to life when the rains return (see Nene et al. 1990). Or sorghum and millit, both crops that yield with minimum rainfall. The roots reach more than eight feet beneath the surface, enabling the plant to withstand over two months of drought. When the crop is entirely lost to drought or has been harvested, the stalks can be cut back and the plant will begin growing again (see Nzeza 1988). Peanuts are even more drought resistant than sorghum, and in Jean Rabel they are planted in sandy soil and in the kadas where only cacti and xerophytic plants are found. It is also the premier high yield cash crop in the mountains, taking over the role that corn and beans fill on the plains (see Nzeza 1988).

The other lesser but still important crops all fit into an agricultural strategy that is clearly selected more for eking out a living in the face of an unpredictable market and natural environment than for participating in the world economy: Lima beans, which are inter-cropped with corn, are nitrogen fixing and begin to yield two to three months after harvest and continue to yield for as long as there is sufficient rainfall. Pumpkins and squash also yield continually as long as there is rain. The most popular yam in the mountains of Jean Rabel (yam reyal) can be planted during dry spells and will begin to grow with the first rains. Like cassava, it can be stored in the ground indefinitely, serving as an important food during droughts and other crises. Sugarcane endures for years, propagates itself without human intervention, can be harvested at any time after it is mature, and will grow back after being cut. Perhaps most importantly with regard to sugarcane, the hard fibrous exterior locks in water while the roots extend some eighteen feet underground, making it a completely drought-resistant source of water and high-energy food for both people and animals.

During the most severe dry spells, people traditionally purchase cassava and rapadou (a gummy crudely refined brown sugar wrapped in banana leaf) on the nearby island of La Tortue, an area with three times the average annual rainfall of Jean Rabel. People also resort to eating boiled green mangos, and a variety of wild plants, including a yam and several types of seedpods. Livestock are sold or slaughtered and eaten as they succumb to the drought.

**Infrastructure**

Jean Rabel is one of the poorest communes in Haiti. For whatever reason—lack of funds, corruption or apathy—the Haitian State has only a marginal presence and provides few public services. There is no electricity, no indoor plumbing, and no sewers. In 2000, the State sponsored a small hospital staffed by four Haitian doctors and two visiting Cuban doctors, but the facilities permit only minor surgery. The police force consists of eighteen national police officers who are usually absent from their posts. Even when they are present, they do little more than sit huddled around their two-room headquarters in the village playing cards and dominoes (albeit it is difficult for them to do anything else as they have no vehicles—no truck, no motorcycle, not even a mule). There are no State irrigation works and no State-supported maintenance services. In the past forty years the State has built only one hundred yards of drainage canal and no new roads. Older roads in the region are maintained by international intervention agencies.
The Village

The village, or bouk as locals call it, which continues to be the administrative seat of the commune, is like a place time and progress forgot. The streets are laid out in an orderly grid—a vestige of the village’s colonial origins—and are made of dirt with muddy drainage ditches running down both sides. As late as 1992, a spiked colonial cannon still lay discarded by the roadside. The center of the village is a cluster of several hundred rusty tin roofs, rickety wooden two-story houses built in the 1930s and 1940s, and a few cement ones built in the 1990s, evidence of the latest “boom” in NGO intervention activity. Some of the older single-story houses at the edge of town have been all but swallowed by a creeping lava-like flow of mud that pours down the eroding hillsides during rainy season. Vehicles have to ford a shallow river to arrive or leave, and once outside of town the streets fizzle their way out, becoming winding, rural, rock-strewn and gully-ridden roads and footpaths.

Houses, Settlement Patterns, and Transportation

Beyond the hills surrounding the village, up in the mountains, across the plain, and along the coast is where most of Jean Rabel’s 130,320 inhabitants live, in isolated homesteads and tiny hamlets. Not much has changed for these people over the past two centuries. More than half the adult population has no education, none. Over 80 percent of all houses are made of sticks, rocks, and mud, clay, or lime. The floors are dirt and the paneless windows protected only by wooden shutters that can be opened during the day. There is no access to any form of electricity, water service, or any other utility. Animal and foot traffic remain the primary modes of transportation: 89 percent of households own one or more donkey, 19 percent own at least one horse and 10 percent own at least one mule, the Mercedes Benz of rural Haiti (data on transport animals is taken from the Polygyny Survey; see table 3.2). Less than 1 percent own motorcycles and about 5 percent own bicycles.

Figure 3.3: Years of school for respondents over eighteen years of age
Table 3.2: Transport Vehicles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle</th>
<th>Household Survey (n = 1,509)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcycle</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pack Animals</th>
<th>Polygyny Survey (n = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donkey</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mule</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are only three privately owned noncommercial vehicles in the entire commune, and the only public transportation for the 130,320 residents is provided by approximately twenty pick-up trucks, sixteen larger trucks, and two school buses, all privately owned. When traveling to the distant urban centers of Gonaives and Port-au-Prince, people in Jean Rabel pay H$10 to H$20 (US$3–US$6) to squeeze aboard the overloaded trucks, brightly painted in colorful designs and bedecked with lights and ornamentation. Bleating goats and squawking chickens are strapped to the roofs and bumpers as the top-heavy vehicles totter their way along, ever so slowly, often inching through river beds and down rocky and washed out roads. It takes them ten to twelve hours to reach the capital by bus.1

Malnutrition and Disease

Despite the occasional natural disasters, the deteriorating environment, absence of modern utilities, and the poor educational opportunities, life in Jean Rabel might not be so bad, except for the scarcity of potable water and the high prevalence of infectious diseases. To begin with, potable water sources are few and far between. The average round trip walking distance from a Jean Rabel household to the nearest water source is seventy minutes (see chapter 11, table 11.4). During droughts, many springs dry up and the distance to the water often doubles and can be as much as three or four times as far. Foreign employees of the French NGO Initiative Developpement report that only 65 percent of the springs in the region qualify as safe drinking water. After heavy rains, many springs become polluted with runoff and are unsafe to drink. Locals often resort to digging holes in river beds and areas where there is ground seepage, something that also exposes them to contamination from animal and human feces.

Most Jean Rabel households make two hot meals a day. People also eat fruit, avocados, bread, peanuts, and a series of other inter-meal snacks. But by U.S. standards, 15 to 20 percent of Jean Rabel children are malnourished, and a 1990 study found that 26 percent of women were mild to
severely malnourished (PISANO 1990). Chronic food scarcity has intensified recently with the deteriorating environment and with the rise in food aid, something that is arguably a principal cause of increasing poverty (Richardson 1997). Food aid lowers market prices for staple foods, reducing the income farmers get for their own produce, which, in lieu of the fact that other household expenses do not change, lowers household cash reserves for food purchases during the off season.

Complicating the problem of scarce drinking water and malnutrition—or perhaps largely as a consequence of these factors—are high rates of infectious diseases. The exact rates are difficult to ascertain. No one is keeping count of the sick and less than half the population uses the fifteen NGO-sponsored clinics in the region (the estimate is courtesy of clinic staff who fail to keep the records). By any measure, at least 10 percent of infants die in their first year of life and 25 percent of children do not survive past the age of five. Interviews with sixty-four women revealed that in the twelve months prior to the interview, twenty-two (34%) had at least one bout with a debilitating disease that left them bedridden for several days to months, and as seen in the following chapter, at any given time about 5 percent of adult Jean Rabel women suffer from a sexually transmitted disease.2

Table 3.3: Offspring deceased by children born (per mother)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of children deceased</th>
<th>1 to 4</th>
<th>5 to 9</th>
<th>10 to 14</th>
<th>15+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of children born</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 4</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15+</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Migration

Many Jean Rabeliens desperately try—and many have succeeded—to escape to the city and to neighboring countries, to the United States, and to Europe. For example, the migration of the village elite, from whose ranks come political leaders and people in positions of public trust and power, is alarming. Since the early 1980s the number of village residents has grown from 3,294 to the current estimate of 8,000 people (out of the total commune population of 130,320). But longtime Jean Rabel residents explain that more than 80 percent of the villagers who were present in the early 1980s are gone.

In an attempt to corroborate these reports and to measure the extent of migration out of the village, I took a list of village residents from a 1960 open letter to then President Francois Duvalier that I found in a Port-au-Prince newspaper (Nouvelliste 1960). The letter was a plea for aid after a storm had washed out the local cemetery, uncovering graves and sending coffins and cadavers floating through the streets. There were 178 signatures on the letter. Using local informants, we were able to identify eighty-two of the individuals listed in the letter, all the rest presumably having long ago left with their entire families. For sixty-nine of the individuals, information was obtained on the number of children they had and the current whereabouts of
these children. Of the individuals, thirty-one had left Jean Rabel; twenty-one of these had immigrated to Miami. Of the 287 offspring identified, 76 percent had left Jean Rabel and 57 percent had immigrated to the United States.

The same trends are evident in rural areas. In a 1992 random sample of two rural areas near Jean Rabel, I compared tin-roofed households (a sign of higher income) to thatch-roofed houses (a sign of lower income). None of the sixty-nine heads of thatch-roofed households had any children in the United States and only three had a sibling in the United States. In contrast, seven of twenty-seven tin-roofed household heads had siblings and four had children living in the United States (Schwartz 1992).

It is not that migrant families have more money because they have migrants. It is the inverse. As one moves from the poorest rural areas into those zones where there is a relative concentration of wealth, migration becomes the dominant theme. In one of the only irrigated zones in the region I found that 74 percent of all children of the largest landowners had left the region. Thirty-one percent (31%) were reported as being in the United States, and this percentage did not take into consideration the age of the children and the fact that some were still very young and hence had not yet emigrated (see tables 3.4 and 3.5).

Table 3.4: Migration of the offspring of owners of irrigated land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of land</th>
<th>Location of Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 or more</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Schwartz 1992

Table 3.5: Current location of circa 1960 villagers and their offspring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signors (n = 82)</th>
<th>Jean Rabel</th>
<th>Elsewhere a</th>
<th>Miami</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offspring (287)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Schwartz 1992

Population Growth, Fertility, and Contraceptive Campaigns
While migration has been spectacular in terms of the number of people leaving the region, it has done little to offset population growth. In the past few decades, population growth in Jean Rabel has reached juggernaut proportions. In the first century following Haitian independence, the Jean Rabel population grew at the slow rate of 0.36 percent per year. Perhaps as a result of medical interventions associated with the 1915–1934 United States military occupation of Haiti, the population growth rate increased substantially during the 1900s. Between 1919 and 1971 the population growth rate averaged 1.6 percent; and between 1971 and 1997, the rate was 3.7 percent, putting the current estimated Jean Rabel population at almost three times what it was in 1971, the same year the Haitian government initiated an internationally funded national contraceptive program (Allman 1982a).

The fertility control campaign reached Jean Rabel in the mid 1980s, when international intervention organizations began trying to veer Jean Rabeliens from a collision course with overpopulation, stagnant technology, and ecological catastrophe by, among other things, making contraceptives available to women. Currently the French, U.S., and German governments, along with the European Union and the United Nations, all promote family planning through the fifteen health facilities—three of which are outside the commune—and three NGO programs in the region. Condoms are given away and other contraceptives are sold for nominal service fees. But efforts to get women in Jean Rabel to use contraceptives can be summed up as a failure. In the 1,586-household Baseline Survey, 82.2 percent of women were aware of contraceptives and where to get them. Of these, 1,131 women (6.3%) reported not using contraceptives for religious reasons; 11.5 percent reported their husband objected; 27.6 percent reported a belief that contraceptives would make them ill; and 54.6 percent explained they did not use contraceptives simply because they did not want to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge and Use</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women who have ever heard of family planning and know where to get it</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who have ever used family planning</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently, only one clinic in the region reports artificial contraceptive methods being used by more than 5 percent of reproductive-age women in its service area, and this figure is skewed by the fact that over 50 percent of the patients listed are actually tubal ligation patients who visited the clinic over a period of fourteen years. Twenty percent of the tubal ligations were performed because of medical complications that made pregnancy a dangerous or life-threatening condition for the woman. Most of the women had over five children. And many of the patients reported as having received tubal ligations actually came from outside the clinic service area as this particular clinic was one of the few institutions in Far-West Haiti that offered the operation.
Overall, reproductive-age women in the Jean Rabel commune have a 4.5 percent rate of contraceptive use, which is one-fourth the rate for Haiti as a whole (18%), one-seventh that of the lowest country rate in the Caribbean (Guatemala at 31%), and one-thirteenth the level of contraceptive use for Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole (59%). The contraceptive use rate in Jean Rabel is compatible with the four lowest country rates in the world—Mozambique at 2 percent, Ethiopia and Niger at 4 percent, and Eritrea at 5 percent (see the UN 2000).

Thus, today, while technology remains virtually unchanged from what it was two centuries ago—indeed, more rudimentary—Jean Rabel is inhabited by 130,320 residents, an average of 279 people per km² or 724/mile². Forty-six percent of Jean Rabeliens are children under fifteen years of age and 57 percent of residents are under twenty years of age (see figure 3.1). Very few women are interested in using contraceptives and if the current fertility rate continues, the population of Jean Rabel will double in the next twenty years, reaching 260,000 people, 1,548 people per square mile. 10

Table 3.8: Population of Jean Rabel in the years 1780–1997*

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>14,802</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>2,802</td>
<td>13,401</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>33,372</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18,570</td>
<td>24,087</td>
<td>2.49%</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>46,378</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13,006</td>
<td>39,875</td>
<td>1.55%</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>67,925</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21,547</td>
<td>57,152</td>
<td>3.43%</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>130,320</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>62,395</td>
<td>99,123</td>
<td>4.20%</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>NHADS</td>
<td></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Rates calculated from previous population estimates. Rate of population increase estimate = midpoint population/ (total population increment/number of years)

Conclusion

Droughts, hurricanes, periodic famine, declining soil productivity, and spectacular and catastrophic erosion would seemingly militate against high birth rates but, as will be seen, while
large numbers of children may be illogical from the standpoint of the population as a whole, it is logical from the standpoint of the family and, more importantly, from the standpoint of the women who are the owners and managers of households, the primary productive units around which labor is organized in Jean Rabel. But before getting to that, I want show how the high fertility seen above is accomplished in the face of an array of factors averse to high birth rates, specifically disease, malnutrition, intensive labor regimes, conjugal unions interrupted by male absenteeism, and a scarcity of men with the financial resources to care for young children.

*****

Notes

1. During the Baseline Survey, 35 percent of household respondents told interviewers they own at least one donkey, 8 percent reported owning a horse, and 7 percent percent of households owned a mule. But this later data was skewed by the drought that was occurring and so I have used data from the Polygyny Survey carried out two years later and in which questions regarding pack animals were included. Intuitively, I believe the Polygyny Survey results reflect general conditions in Jean Rabel but it focused on only two communities, one in the mountains and one on the plain, and therefore must be interpreted with this in mind.

2. The interviews were conducted at the Nan Sentren Clinic by missionary Carol Ann Truelove. Of the women interviewed, thirty-four were visiting the clinic because they were pregnant or nursing mothers and of these, ten had experienced a debilitating illness in the previous year; thirty of the interviewees were currently sick at the time of the interview, and ten of these had experienced a prior debilitating illness within the previous twelve months.

3. The identification of “prestigious” is simply those individuals who were most easily recognized, about which informants had no questions, and were double-checked without complication.

4. These samples were chosen from lists made in two neighborhoods. Beginning at a random starting point, every fifth household was chosen from the lists.

5. Promotion of contraceptives began with the opening of the Protestant-funded Nan Sentren clinic and accelerated in the later 1980s, when the French NGO InterAid began taking over regional clinics that the Catholic Church sponsored and managed.

6. The organizations that actually do the promoting, funding, and/or supplying of contraceptives are Profamil, PROMESS, EEU, USAID, CARE, PISANO, ID, and MSPP. AAA plans to join the effort in 2000. The fees for contraceptives are 25 gdes (US$1.50) to place Norplant, 25 gdes (US$1.50) to remove Norplant, 5 gdes (US$0.30) consultation fee for all other chemical contraceptives (Depo-Provera, Noristat, and pills). Condoms are given away at clinics and sold in rural stores at three condoms for 2 gdes (US$0.12 ). Tubal ligation is 50 gdes (US$3.00). Charges account for the cost of service and not the cost of contraceptives, which are considered gratuitous.

7.

Table 3.9: Knowledge of contraceptive methods (N = 1,132)
8. The figures in the table have been adjusted to account for skewing by the fact that over 50 percent of the patients listed are actually tubal ligation patients. The codes are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contraceptive Methods</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depo-Provera</td>
<td>99 (8.7%)</td>
<td>1033 (91.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pill</td>
<td>149 (13.2%)</td>
<td>983 (86.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norplant</td>
<td>862 (76.1%)</td>
<td>270 (23.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>924 (81.6%)</td>
<td>208 (19.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condom*</td>
<td>916 (80.9%)</td>
<td>216 (19.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1088 (96.1%)</td>
<td>44 (3.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Condoms are not generally thought of as a contraceptive method by Jean Rabeliens, but rather as a means of avoiding sexually transmitted disease.

a Regions are based on clinic zones and do not coincide with commune boundaries.

b Population estimate based on census by missionaries responsible for the Faith Medical Clinic, Mare Rouge Medical Clinic, and Kote d’Fer Medical Clinic.

c Population estimate based on 1997 Baseline Survey; represents 70 percent of population in the commune of Jean Rabel.

d Mole St. Nicolas, Temps Perdu, Kot d’Fer, and La Montagne; only La Montagne (population of reproductive age women = 2,910) is within the commune of Jean Rabel.

There were 24 vasectomies in the region, all in Nan Sentren.

9. The average age of the women was 34.5; the average number of children ever born was 6.0; and the average number of living children was 5.15.

10. From the time of the revolution to the time of the end of U.S. military occupation, the population in Jean Rabel grew very little. Ostensibly this was because of high death rates that began declining in 1915 with the occupation of Haiti by the U.S. Marines. As seen, just prior to the wars in 1789, Moreau had recorded a population of twelve thousand in the commune; nine thousand of these people were slaves who would likely have stayed in the region after independence had been won. In 1919, a priest named Marcel Simonneau visited Jean Rabel and reported there were 20,000 people in the commune. But it is not clear where Simonneau got this estimation and I have deferred to the 1919 US Marine Corps census, which placed the population at 14,802. Simonneau did report that there were one thousand baptisms a year—something the priest should well know—which translates to a gross fertility rate of about sixty-seven births per thousand people. This is too high. It is twenty-two births higher than Hutterites and eighteen births higher than the highest crude birth rate recorded during the 1990s. Thus, perhaps Simonneau was correct in estimating a population of 20,000. Verschuren reports that in 1936 there were thirty-five thousand inhabitants and this looks like an estimation based on the 1919 figure and would fit well with a population growth of about 4 percent—derived from the gross fertility rate of fifty. But, again, it is not stated where these data came from and the census of 1950, fourteen years later—when the population should have increased by at least another 50 percent—found only 33,372 people living in the Commune—less than Verschuren estimated in
1936. The most prudent course of action seems to be to eliminate the 1936 estimate and go with
the 1950 census if for no other reason than they are censuses. That is what I have done here. Nevertheless, the important point is that, whichever population estimates are used, population
growth has been much higher since 1919 and it has steadily increased throughout the century.
The population growth rate estimate appears and probably is slightly too high and this could very
well be caused by undercounts in early censuses. However, with the youthful population
structure of current Jean Rabel—something that typically results in a low death rate—and, as
will be seen in a later chapter, with a total fertility rate of more than seven children per woman
and completed fertility rates of about eight children per woman, population growth rates above 3
percent are not simply possible but likely.

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Chapter 4
Extremely High Fertility

Introduction
High fertility seen in the previous chapter is a spectacular demographic feat. If Jean Rabel were a country, then at the time I carried out the research for this book it would have had the second highest total fertility rate (TFR) in the world: 7.1 births per mother. The achievement is startling because in the endeavor to reproduce, Jean Rabel women face extreme adversity. High rates of infectious diseases, low-fat and low-calorie diets, high rates of female malnutrition, demanding exercise regimes, and a high rate of male absenteeism diminish the probability of pregnancies and weigh heavily against the likelihood of high birth rates. Yet, Jean Rabel fertility rates measure up impressively to that of the early 20th century Hutterites, people who had the highest sustained fertility levels ever recorded. Thirty-two percent of Jean Rabel women equal or exceed the median ten births attained by early to mid 20th century Hutterite women (Eaton and Mayer 1953; Larsen and Vaupel 1993; Nonaka et al. 1994). In this chapter I compare Jean Rabel women to their Hutterite counterparts to show how remarkable high fertility is and how efficacious are the customs that make it possible.1

Figure 4.1: Completed fertility in Jean Rabel for women over 45 yrs

![Completed fertility chart](image-url)
Factors that Dampen Fertility

High incidence of diseases, widespread malnutrition, intensive physical exertion and labor regimes, and the disruption of unions through male absenteeism are all factors associated with low birth rates. All are also factors conspicuous in the lives of Jean Rabel women.

Data from the Baseline Survey indicate that 5.7 percent of Jean Rabel women never succeed in carrying a pregnancy to full term, a figure close to the median of 4.2 percent reported for all developing countries (Vaessen 1984). But clinic records for pregnant women also indicate that, at any given time, 5 to 10 percent of women in the region suffer from sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia, HIV/AIDS, and syphilis—maladies that interrupt and sometimes prematurely end reproductive careers. As seen, other widespread and debilitating diseases such as malaria, typhoid, and hepatitis annually leave over 30 percent of women in the region bedridden and sexually incapacitated for months and sometimes years. 2

Malnutrition and high levels of physical exertion are also factors known to lower fertility by inducing amenorrhea—the suspension of menstrual cycles for three or more months. In the Baseline Survey, women were found to generally consume low-fat, high-carbohydrate diets (see table 4.1). And 26 percent of Jean Rabel women were found to be slightly to severely malnourished.3

Table 4.1: Most commonly eaten foods in Jean Rabel (N=1,483)
The average Jean Rabel woman also leads a physically demanding life. Fetching household water requires daily walks to water sources often located more than one half hour from the household. The return trip involves carrying a filled five-gallon bucket balanced on top of the head. Women also walk an average of six hours per week to make market purchases and sales for the household.

Figure 4.2: Completed fertility in Jean Rabel for five-year age groups
An average of six hours per week is also spent picking produce from the gardens, and another
twelve to twenty-four hours are spent walking back and forth from the nearest water source to
hand scrub clothes. This total exercise regime certainly matches or exceeds the five miles of
jogging per week that induced amenorrhea in 6 percent of the U.S. subjects studied by Feight et
al. (1978) and is probably closer to the weekly physical exertion of women in the same study
who ran forty-five miles per week inducing amenorrhea in 43 percent of the cases. Extended
breastfeeding, necessary in the absence of high-protein baby formulas, is also known to suppress
ovulation (WHO 1999); and 63 percent of women in the Jean Rabel Baseline Survey reported
breast feeding their last child for eighteen to twenty-seven months (see figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Duration of breastfeeding
Another factor researchers have identified as a determinant of low fertility is reduced exposure to the risk of pregnancy through late entry into union or disrupted union through factors such as wage migration (Bongaarts and Potter 1983; Williams et al. 1975; Blake 1954). Male absenteeism is part of the rural Haitian demographic profile. Males in Haiti migrate to larger Haitian cities and overseas to the Bahamas, the United States, and the Dominican Republic at a significantly higher rate than their female counterparts. The result is lower male-to-female sex ratios. In the Baseline Survey, 10 percent of Jean Rabel men in the twenty- to forty-nine-year-old age groups were reported as being absent and no longer considered as members of the household from which they originated. Furthermore, in the Opinion Survey, 26 percent of men in union reported having been away from home for at least 30 of the preceding 365 days (see table 4.3). Congruent with male transience, 52 percent of Jean Rabel women in the twenty- to twenty-four-year-old age group and 26 percent of women in the twenty-five to twenty-nine-year-old age group were not in union at the time of the interview, and at least 26 percent of women abandon or are abandoned by their first spouse during the course of their reproductive careers (see table 4.4).

In a society with strongly enforced values regarding monogamy and premarital pregnancy, the type of male absenteeism and transience being described would disrupt ongoing conjugal union and force a minority of women to remain out of union and childless. Yet, according to respondents in the Opinion Survey, the average age at first union for Jean Rabel women is 21.7 years and the average age at first childbirth is 22.3 years. These averages for Jean Rabel women are not unusually high or low. For example, the average age women in the remote rural Dominican Republic first enter into unions and give birth is significantly lower than the averages cited for Jean Rabel (McPherson and Schwartz 2001). Nevertheless, entry into union at moderate age and the high birth rates are accomplished despite high rates of male absenteeism.

Table 4.2: Mean age of follow-up survey respondents
Table 4.3: Temporary male migration in Jean Rabel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean age at marriage/plasage</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=60)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=127)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age at birth of 1st child</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=63)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(n=129)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Individuals still with first spouse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men who report having worked in the city or overseas for at least 30 of the past 365 days</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As will be seen in the following two chapters, Jean Rabel society has adapted to male migration with an array of customs, beliefs, and behaviors that, with respect to fertility, allow women to overcome the problem of male absenteeism.

Jean Rabel Women vs. Hutterite Women

Despite all the preceding factors that work against high fertility, Jean Rabel women measure up impressively against the Hutterites of North Dakota and Canada, the healthy, well-fed, and fecund world champions of high fertility. Jean Rabel women on average eat two and sometimes only one cooked meal per day and meals rarely include meat or dairy foods (see table 4.1). Hutterite women eat three meals per day, every day, and meat, dairy products, or sometimes both are included in virtually every meal (Hostetler 1974: 353). Further, while Jean Rabel women are members of what is among the most disease-ridden populations in the Western hemisphere and at any given time upwards of 5 percent of Jean Rabel women are suffering from an STD—to say nothing of other infectious diseases—the incidence of infectious diseases among Hutterites is even lower than their healthy Canadian neighbors, something that Ross and Cheang (1997)
attribute to a genetically superior immune system. When Eaton and Mayer (1953) surveyed the Hutterites during the 1940s they found virtually no deprivation or interruption of Hutterite unions resulting from imbalanced sex ratios, wage-migration, or divorce. There were 106 men for every 100 women in the twenty- to forty-nine-year-old age range. Only 33 percent of Hutterite women in the twenty- to twenty-four-year-old range were not in union; and only 7 percent of those in the twenty-five- to thirty-year-old age group were not in union. In comparison, 52 percent and 26 percent of Jean Rabel women in the same age groups were not in union (see table 4.5, following page). Eaton and Mayer (1953) noted that:

Hutterite couples are never separated after marriage. In the history of the group since 1875 there has been only one divorce and only 4 desertions. We know of one other case where husband and wife separated temporarily to live in different colonies. (p. 223)

Thus, while reproductive-age Jean Rabel women are faced with a 10 percent deficit of men, Hutterite women are outnumbered by men. And, as might be expected, there was an average of 13 percent more reproductive-age Hutterite women in union than there are in contemporary Jean Rabel.

But despite all of the limiting factors, including the absence of many Jean Rabel men and the physiological factors mitigating against high fertility, 32 percent of contemporary Jean Rabel women who have completed their childbearing careers equal or exceed the median ten children born per Hutterite woman in the years 1880 to 1950. Contemporary Jean Rabel fertility levels are 13 percent higher than contemporary Hutterites (Eaton and Mayer 1953; Larsen and Vaupel 1993; Nonaka et al. 1994).

**Table 4.5: Hutterites vs. Jean Rabeliens: Percentage of women in union per five-year age group and sex ratios (includes widows)**
Conclusion

Fertility in Jean Rabel is extremely high despite nutritional, epidemiological, and social factors that work against it. In the following chapter I want to show that this extremely high fertility is not the inadvertent consequence of people helplessly procreating while lamenting the burden of more children. On the contrary, this high fertility in the face of adverse conditions is made possible by a specific array of interrelated beliefs, customs, and behaviors that promote childbirth.

Notes

1. Jean Rabel’s TFR of 7.1 is 48 percent higher than Haiti’s overall country TFR of 4.8 children and 20 percent higher than the rural Haitian TFR of 5.9 children per woman (EMMUS 1994/95). The Hutterites had a sustained overall TFR of 8.0 to 8.5—the commonly cited Hutterite fertility rates are median completed fertility and the TFR of married women, one of which is discussed in the text. The highest birth rate in the UN data base, year 2000—date of the Jean Rabel Baseline Survey--was Niger at 7.25 births per mother (see the UN web site).

2. Infecundity is deduced from the number of women who have completed their childbearing years without bearing children (age > 45) (see Vaessen 1984). There was no relevant clinic data available in Jean Rabel. The records that have been kept at the hospital are sporadic and unreliable. More often than not, nurses failed to record the results for STD tests. The observation is generalized from data collected at the Bombardopolis clinic, which is in the Far-West but outside the commune of Jean Rabel, and there is little reason to believe there is a difference between the communes. Other epidemiological data are similar.

3. The determination of malnutrition was based on a brachial measure of less than 18.5 centimeters. The size of the sample was 770 women.
4. There might be a way around suppression of ovulation through breastfeeding. The suppression of ovulation is apparently a reflex response to suckling. According to a research review by Larsen and Vaupel (1993), a woman must nurse her infant at least four times a day for a minimum of twenty minutes each time. By conscious design or simply custom, Hutterite women only allow their babies to nurse for ten minutes or less. Further, supplementary foods are introduced early and by six to seven weeks the infant is fed before it is given the breast. Interestingly, while it is not known how long Jean Rabel women allow infants to nurse, they too introduce foods extremely early, often within days of birth, a practice that healthcare workers have ardently and with little success tried to overcome.

5. Eaton and Mayer (1953) only found evidence of ten illegitimate births in the Hutterite population between 1875 and 1950, indicating that few births occur before marriage. The age-specific birth rate in 1950 for women twenty to twenty-four was 1.4 births.

6. Hutterite women during the period 1880 to 1950—when their fertility was highest—entered union at 22 years, only .3 years later than among Jean Rabel women, and bore their first child a mean thirteen months later, at 23.1 years of age—about ten months later than Jean Rabel women.

7. Jean Rabel women between the ages of fifteen and forty-five years old have an overall average birth interval of 50.5 months—one child every 4.2 years. But in a sample of eighty-nine women who have already begun childbearing, the average interbirth interval was thirty-two months—one child every 2.7 years.

The latter data on interval birth intervals was obtained from a Nan Sentren clinic run by missionary Carol Anne Truelove. The clinic has records on female birth histories dating back to 1984 when the clinic was first opened. The clinic serves a population of approximately sixty thousand, half within the commune of Jean Rabel and half outside of the commune boundaries (the population estimate is based on a census by clinic staff carried out in 1991; the extrapolation was based on 3 percent estimated population growth). Records were chosen based on the presence of information for the first and last child born to the mother—some women had begun their childbearing career elsewhere or had left the region. There were thirty-two women who had used contraceptives, with an average interbirth interval of 37.1 months and a standard error of the mean of 2.3 months (95% CI = 32.5 – 41.6 months). There were fifty-seven records for women who had never used contraceptives, with an average interbirth interval of 29.6 months and a standard error of the mean of 1.3 months (95% CI = 28.3 – 30.9 months).
Chapter 5

The Pronatal Sociocultural Fertility Complex

Introduction

The extremely high fertility seen in the previous chapters is made possible by what I call rural Haiti’s pronatal sociocultural fertility complex, an array of social behaviors that allow Jean Rabel women to overcome high disease, poor nutrition, and scarcity of financially eligible reproductive-age males. Jean Rabeliens want children for themselves, for family, for friends, and for neighbors. The merits of having numerous children are a commonly discussed topic, even with strangers. The farmers generally regard childless people with suspicion and derision. Contraceptives are thought to make women sick, even to cause death, and women who use them, particularly young women, are thought of as immoral. Abortion is abhorred as a grievous crime and a sin, and women revealed to have had an abortion are publicly humiliated, their families are fined, and they may face imprisonment. In contrast, pregnant and postpartum women are relieved of heavy work, fed unusually large amounts of choice foods, cared for and waited on by family and friends, and massaged daily by a paid attendant. Overall, this pronatal complex of behaviors articulates with a series of sexual beliefs and behaviors seen in the following chapter to function as a catalyst of high fertility despite malnutrition, intensive work regimes, and disease.

Pronatal Attitudes, Customs, Beliefs, and Behaviors

For a Jean Rabelien not to have children is tragic. Childless people, especially women, are pitied, even criticized as millet (mules), and sometimes suspected of being lougawou (witches) or having sold their unborn children to demons (li te manje yo). With parenthood comes adulthood and respect. As one man once remarked to me; “it is children that bring you respect” (se ti moun k-ap fe moun respekte ou). Another man explained, “a woman needs children or her husband will not respect her” (yon fi bezwenn ti moun paskè san ti moun gason ki rete ave-li l-ap manke respè). People who have not yet borne children are considered children themselves, no matter what their age. Not to have children at all is a far greater shame than having children outside of a union or with someone who is considered disreputable.

Not only do Jean Rabeliens want children, but they want everyone else to have children as well. The first question a rural Jean Rabelien asks a stranger is, “how many children do you have?” (kombyen pitit ou genyen?). Responses to childlessness almost invariably go as follows: “why don’t you have children?” (pou ki sa ou pa gen pitit?); “you are supposed to make children” (ou sipoze fe pitit); “you are supposed to make lots of children” (ou sipoze fe anpil pitit); “you are
supposed to make children when you are young” (ou sipoze fe pitit jen); “children are a good thing” (ti moun se yon bon bagay); “children can help you” (ti moun ka ede ou).

Most women are eager to bear children. Childless women in their early twenties who are not in school will lament their barrenness, “I need to have a child” (m bezwenn fe yon timoun), and their age “I am beginning to get too ripe” (m presk mi). A woman who cannot get pregnant visits leaf doctors and clinics. She might make costly pilgrimages to distant sacred sites to ask for help from the Virgin Mary or a Catholic saint. In a commonly occurring phenomenon known as perdisyon, discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, the woman may blame kolegs (co-wives) and other jealous rivals for magically tying her fetus up, in vitro, arresting the pregnancy. To overcome the affliction she goes to the spiritual healer (bokor) to ask for help, she visits the local mid-wife (matwon) who tapes her stomach to hold the imaginary fetus in place, and she goes to massage specialists who arrange (ranje) the imaginary fetus in a position to grow.

Attitudes toward Contraceptives

Jean Rabeliens are suspicious of contraceptives. Many believe that using them is immoral and that they may bring on disease. Even women professing to want to use contraceptives insist they don’t because of the risk of illness. As one woman told the author, “it is contraceptives themselves that kill people” (se plannin menm kap touye moun). Many of those Jean Rabeliens who believe HIV/AIDS really exists attribute the disease to sorcery, while others are convinced it is a fiction contrived by foreign governments wanting to trick Haitians into using condoms, thereby averting pregnancies and limiting the population of black people on the planet. Due to their association with disease, condoms are thought of as something dirty and demeaning. Contraceptives are also commonly associated with loose women (bouzen) and infidelity. A Jean Rabel man once explained to me that contraceptives are useful only “when a women has a husband, he’s not there. . . . She takes something so she won’t get pregnant” (Tankou lè yon fi gen yon mari ki pa la. Li vle al fe bouzen. L-ap pran yon gren pou li pa fe pitit).3

Abortion

Despite the overwhelmingly pronatal attitudes, there are still some young Jean Rabel women who are reluctant to begin their reproductive careers. In May 1997, a fifteen-year-old girl in the village of Jean Rabel tried to abort an unwanted pregnancy by popping fourteen antimalarial pills (chloroquin) into her mouth and washing them down with raw rum (kleren). An hour later, while waiting at the village spring, in the midst of a crowd of other children sent to fill water buckets for their households, she fell dead.

There are other girls who steadfastly disavow that they are pregnant right up until the time their bulging stomachs make denial impossible. In an incident that took place in the summer of 1997, I carried a convulsing sixteen-year-old rural girl to the Jean Rabel hospital. Unbeknownst to everyone, including her siblings and parents, the teenager was eight months pregnant, a condition she had concealed by tying torn strips of cloth around her stomach. The French doctor who treated the young woman told me that the stomach tying had almost killed her. She spent the entire following month being cared for in the hospital until giving birth to a healthy baby boy.

But while some young women try to avoid first pregnancies, most succumb to social pressures that bear on young women reluctant to begin childbearing. A twenty-five-year-old woman
explained to me, “my mother said that if she caught us taking birth control pills she would club us to death” (mama-m di si li jwenn nou pran gren li tap tiye nou anba baton). Social pressures against abortion are even stronger. Mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and female friends are quick to condemn abortion and older female confidants counsel young girls against abortion by explaining that it will rot their vaginal canals, making them disgusting to men, and that they will burn in hell for having committed the “greatest of all sins” (pi gwo pech). Men, too, have something to say about abortion. In an Opinion Survey subsample, forty men were asked what they would do if their wife had an abortion, and 62.5 percent responded that they would abandon their wife and another 25 percent said they would have her arrested. Only one man said he would do nothing. Of responses falling into the category of “other,” one man said “I would sit down and talk to that woman to see what the hell was wrong with her.” The three remaining men responding “Other” said they would kill their wives with sorcery.

By law, women are supposed to be imprisoned for aborting pregnancies. In reality, imprisonment is rare. But women are, nevertheless, ridiculed and publicly disgraced. In an instance witnessed by a U.S. missionary working in the Jean Rabel area, a fifteen-year-old girl who had allegedly aborted a fetus was tied to a post in a busy market while a civil servant spent his day standing nearby announcing her crime over a handheld loudspeaker. In the spring of 1998, in the thatch-roofed, seaside hamlet of Makab, where my research began, fishermen found a fetus floating in the sea. The news spread quickly and literally hundreds of people descended from the hills into the tiny village. The police were summoned. Houses were searched, and eventually the still-bleeding sixteen-year-old mother was discovered hiding under a sheet in the corner of a friend’s house. As the police led the humiliated girl away, the crowd chanted her name, “Viki! Viki! Viki!”

**Pregnancy**

The typical Jean Rabel woman does not understand the female menstrual cycle in a way that would permit her to avoid pregnancy. Many young women are taught by their mothers or other female elders that pregnancy occurs most readily during or just after menstruation, and many young women believe they cannot become pregnant as the result of a single sexual encounter. But older women in rural Jean Rabel understand very well that missed menstrual cycles may mean pregnancy, and they carefully track the dates of their and their daughter’s menstrual cycle so they can act swiftly to defend against sorcery that may arrest development of the fetus and so they can begin to care for and nourish the gestating fetus.

When a woman knows that she is pregnant, she takes up the habit of spitting, supposedly to spare the fetus the ill effects of bile but something that also informs others of her special condition. Family and friends relieve her of heavy work and attend to her needs. If she is a young woman, she is encouraged not to travel, mount pack animals, or ride on the back of motorcycles. She is encouraged to eat nutritious and fatty foods and she should never be refused a food of her choosing. The stingy individual who refuses food to a pregnant woman is menaced with the belief that a boil will erupt on his/her eye.

The new mother remains confined in the house for five days, during which time female family members and often a paid midwife attend to her. She is given hot ginger tea twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. Each morning she is bathed with warm water. Each afternoon she is given a sweat bath, for which she sits on a steaming pot of water with a sheet draped over her
head. Instead of the usual two meals a day and rare portion of meat, she is fed three meals a day, all including the luxury of meat, especially goat and chicken slaughtered specifically to feed her. After five days, the mother may leave the house, but for the first two months she must not engage in heavy work, not leave the homestead, never go out at night for fear the cold (fredi) will make her sick, bathe only with warm water, and not speak loudly or do heavy work.

### Conclusion

High fertility in Jean Rabel is indisputably bound with the beliefs seen above. The association of pregnancy and childbirth with duty; the concern with conception and the care and rewarding attentiveness toward pregnant women; the abhorrence of contraceptives and abortion; the misinforming of young women concerning the mechanics of pregnancy; and the censuring of childless individuals all act to promote conception among Jean Rabel women. In addition to these blatantly pronatal attitudes, high fertility is further reinforced through local customs and belief systems that remove social, legal, and moral barriers to pregnancy, values associated with what I want to call the sexual moral economy, the subject of the next chapter.

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### Notes

1. Several women in the survey illustrated this point, one woman for example saying, “If you don’t have children, there is a name they call you, they curse you mule.” (Si ou pa gen ti moun, gen yon non yo konn di ou, y-ap joure ou millet si ou pat fé ti moun).

Witch is here meant in the anthropological sense of being the incarnation of antisociety and it is a very widespread if not pancultural ideological phenomenon. Mischief caused by witches is usually peculiar to the society. A witch is conceptualized as a threat where the society is most vulnerable. Thus, pastoralists often believe witches suck the milk and blood from their animals at night. Agriculturists often conceptualize witches as destroyers of crops. Haitians fear witches as the eaters of children—usually manifest in the form of disease but also as the causal agent in accidents. The supposed behavior of the Haitian witch, the lougawou, is testimony to a strong pronatalist tendency in Haiti and a dependency on children.

2. There are a series of sacred sites throughout Haiti. Some of these sites are associated with voudou deities and some with the sighting of the Virgin Mary or the presence of a saint. There is a sacred rock in Mare Rouge, just on the outskirts of the commune of Jean Rabel. The rock is called Marie Noel and people leave written prayers in the crevices of the rock. The next nearest sacred site to Jean Rabel is Anse-a-Fleur, where people visit once a year for an annual voudou festival. If my understanding is accurate—and in this instance there is a good chance it is not—several years ago a doll was found and elevated to the status of a manifestation of Saint Anne. The doll is kept in a shrine in the yard of a mambo (female spiritual practitioner).

3. Even many well-educated rural Haitians believe that AIDS is caused by sorcery—as when one person goes to a bokor (“witch doctor”) to kill another person—and that venereal diseases are caused by jealous spouses who ranje (magically fix) their partners so that other lovers will fall ill.

4. M ta chita pale a fi sa pou we sa li genyen.
5. “Viki” had until only days before the incident been away to school in the village. “Abortion” is, according to the only civil judge in Jean Rabel during 1999, the worst crime known (Sa se pi gwo krim ki ka genyen). It is considered voluntary homicide. A woman can be given life in prison as can anyone who participated in the abortion. In practice, it is not always if ever like this. Police and judges do tend to arrest everyone who might be involved in an abortion and there is usually a grand interrogation. But fines rather than prison tend to be the rule. Although humiliated, neither of the girls whose abortion stories were told in the body of the text spent time in jail. In the village and in the department seat Port-de-Paix, abortion services are reportedly available for H$50.00 and by western-trained medical doctors. During a chance encounter in the city, a judge of a neighboring Jean Rabel commune once told me he was in town to help a fifteen-year-old girl he had impregnated locate a doctor to abort the fetus. Further, in rural areas there are leaf doctors known to specialize in abortificants. Nevertheless, there is a definitive ideological horror associated with abortion and a very public disapproval of it, particularly among the truly rural people of the region.

A couple of ethnographic examples to note: In the early summer of 1997, in the incident where a fourteen-year-old girl in the village died after trying to abort a fetus with a dose of fourteen chloroquins washed down with rum, the police commissioner ordered the arrest of the twenty-two-year-old man who had prescribed the medicines, but he was subsequently released. Between 1996 and 1998, at least two girls in nearby Mole St. Nicolas were caught aborting viable fetuses—one of which lived to be adopted by a UN medic in the area with a project to repair the local high school. Neither of the girls served time in prison.

Mention should also be made of la djablesse, the Haitian boogeywoman. All over Haiti la djablesse are believed to live alone in caves. They are giant female, human-like creatures, with breasts sagging to the ankles, extremely long hair, moss and weeds hanging off their bodies. La djablesse are associated with fertility. A la djablesse is thought to hunt men and if she gets hold of one, she leads the man back to her cave, where she forces the man to impregnate her. The sexual appetite of a la djablesse is thought to be insatiable. Simpson (1942) explained that in Plaisance in the north of Haiti, la djablesse were thought to be young girls who died before having sex and were caught in the netherworld of spirits. Simpson reported that because of the fear that a deceased virgin could become a la djablesse, cadavers of young girls were deflowered with a stick before burial. Their were no reports of this practice in Jean Rabel and local farmers explained la djablesse as a human-like animal rather than a spirit.


7. Plantains are also an important element in the postpartum mother’s diet. She may eat red and black beans but white beans and rice are considered dangerous as they are cold (fret) foods that can make the woman ill. A partial list of other dangerous versus not dangerous foods follows:

**Healthy**
- Corn
- Taro
- Banana
Flour
Corn
Goat
Chicken

**Dangerous**
Sweet potato
White beans

8. During confinement, only those people who were present during the actual birth may enter the house. All is applicable even if the baby dies. If the child is a boy, restrictions may apply for as long as three months and if the baby is a girl, restrictions may be lifted as early as 2 months. Boys are thought of as harder to bear and thus it takes longer to get over the birth.
Chapter 6
The Sexual Moral Economy

Introduction
The attitudes, customs, beliefs, and behaviors seen in the previous chapter are complemented by a specific econo-sexual patterns of behavior found throughout rural Haiti. Rural Haitian women assiduously negotiate sexual acquiescence to men and they do so with the goal of material gain. Ira Lowenthal (1984: 22) first described this behavior in detail when he reported that women in his research community referred to their genitals as intere-m (my assets), lajan-m (my money), or manmanlajan-m (my capital), in addition to tê-m (my land); a common proverb was, chak famn fet ak yon kawo te—nan mitan janm ni (every women is born with a parcel of land—between her legs). Lowenthal (1984) described this type of female commoditization of sexuality as a “field of competition” wherein women are at a socially constructed advantage: men are conceived of and taught to think they need sexual interaction with women, while women portray themselves and are taught to think of themselves as able to get along without sex and thus are able to exact material rewards for sexual contact with men. Called “gendered capital” by Richman (2003: 123), these sexual-material values are universal in rural Haiti and apply whether the woman in question is dealing with a husband, lover, or more casual relationship.

Jean Rabel is no different, and in later chapters I show that the commoditization of womanhood being described is linked to a sexual division of labor and rights and duties associated with control of the household, children, extra-household income, and female marketing activities; but here I simply want to describe “gendered capital,” or what may alternatively be described as rural Haiti’s sexual-moral economy, and show how it combines with the pronatal sociocultural fertility complex seen in the previous chapter to make extremely high fertility possible despite conditions aversive to conception. In accomplishing this I will illustrate my points with songs that rural adolescent girls in Jean Rabel compose, sing, and act out in theatrical performances called téat. Reminiscent of Jorge Duany (1984: 186), who stated that the traditional song “cannot fail to create and recreate the most important social values of the group that produced it,” and John Szwed (1970: 220), who wrote that “song forms and performances are themselves models of social behavior that reflect strategies of adaptation to human and natural environments,” the songs I present below highlight the uniform sexual-material-domestic value system found throughout rural Haiti.

Girls’ Téat Songs
Girls’ Theater
When school is out for the summer, girls in rural Jean Rabel neighborhoods form dance troupes called téat (theater). The troupes are formed by the girls themselves. There is no adult sponsorship or leadership. The girls are all prenuptial, have not yet borne children, and are generally aged ten to twenty years. Older girls appoint themselves troupe directors and instruct the younger girls in daily practices. The girls dress in short skirts and sing while performing the latest erotic dances such as the buterfli (butterfly), a dance in which the girls gyrate, opening their legs wide and rocking their abdomens out toward the impromptu audience as they descend lower and lower toward the ground. The songs are improvised from bits of other songs and spiced with the girls’ own creative additions. The most popular songs are imbued with sexual connotations, such as the following, in which the girls celebrate their own budding sexuality with respect to the sexual bravado of men:

Look here, it is mango season  
Look here, the mangos are sweet and beautiful  
Good day young lady, I say to you good day  
It is a plantain that has come to make things sweet  

It’s Pepsi Cola I drink. It is Coca Cola I drink  
It’s Pepsi Cola I drink. It is Coca Cola I drink

******

Vwasi lè mango,  
Vwasi lè mango, yo dous e yo koket  
Bon swa madamwazel mwen di ou bon swa  
Se yon banan ki vini pou-l sikre

Se pepsi kola m bwe, se koka kola m bwe  
Se pepsi kola m bwe, se koka kola m bwe

As can be seen, the song relies heavily on metaphors. In this particular song, informants explained that mangos, ubiquitous in Haiti and the all-time favorite fruit, symbolize the girls’ budding young breasts. The eroticism of fruit and particularly a mango with its soft juicy flesh is clear to native speakers, the declaration that “it is mango season,” means that it is time to eat mangos, the fruit is ripe, or rather, the girl has come of age and she is ready to engage in sexual relations. The “good day young lady” is an introduction to the young woman. The next line reveals the speaker, a man, represented as another fruit, a plantain, which has come to add sugar (sikre). The plantain also happens to be the most phallic shaped fruit in Haiti leaving little doubt
for analysis (any remaining doubts are erased by snickering Haitian informants). The references to Pepsi and Coca Cola are metaphors for prestige. In Jean Rabel these are, aside from beer, the most expensive locally available beverages and they have correspondingly high prestige value, representing the speaker as a high roller.

Thus, the songs I use below to illustrate the sexual moral economy all touch on the theme of sex. The songs also, as will be seen, highlight female ideals and aspirations, gender relations, control over resources, parent-daughter relationships, and most importantly of all, the rules, expectations, and norms associated with male-female sexual interaction, all of which, I argue, are interrelated in what might be called a type of sexual-moral economy. The analysis, conducted with the assistance of local informants who helped explain the double and sometimes triple meaning of the words to the songs, begins with a look at a socially constructed problem that Jean Rabel women have and the representation of that problem in tèat songs.

**Male Sexual Aggressiveness**

A common expression used by women in Jean Rabel is “men are dogs” (gason se chyen); “men cannot get by without having sex” (gason pa ka rete san fi). No strong prohibitions exist in Jean Rabel against men seducing young women, and Haitian laws that prohibit sex with girls under fifteen are not enforced. Men in their fifties, sixties, and even men in their seventies are referred to with regard to their sexuality as jenn gason (young men), and powerful men may have four or five and even six common-law wives, a source of pride and esteem. Thus, young women are badgered and cajoled by a relatively large pool of socially eligible, sexually active, and highly aggressive men. The most common seduction tactic is for a man to catch a woman on a footpath or while she is alone in the kitchen. He will seize her arm so she cannot get away, playfully trying to pull her near, proclaiming his desire for her and pleading for her sexual affection while whispering promises of money and gifts.

As counterintuitive as it might first seem, females arguably play an influential role in encouraging aggressive male sexual conduct. They take part in propagating the myth that a celibate man can go insane, become ill, and may die. They tease timid boys and ridicule celibate men, taunting them with names like jay-jay (retarded) and masisi (homosexual); and they goad younger brothers and even sons into pursuing nubile young women with comments that sound to the Westerner like admonitions to rape: “you must bother them, don’t let them get away, grab them” (fo ou jennen yo, pa kite yo ale, fo ou kenbe yo). The influence of women in conditioning male attitudes begins at an early age, as exemplified by the fondling of the genitals of male infants, toddlers, and boys up to the ages of nine and ten years, something so thoroughly engrained and accepted as to appear to the foreigner to be below the level of awareness. The fondling is made easy by the custom of making prepubescent boys go without pants. Examples of the context in which it occurs include the following: a rural woman nervous about being interviewed distracts herself by fondling a four-year-old’s penis all the while she is answering my questions; a nineteen-year-old woman sitting on a bed in a dimly lit hut talking to me reaches beside her and, without ever looking at what she is doing, begins fondling the penis of a naked eight-year-old boy, doing this as nonchalantly as if she had just picked up a pen or any other stray object off the table; a twenty-two-year-old woman excited to see her two-year-old nephew tickles his penis, lifts the boy, swings his body up to her face, and pops his penis playfully into her mouth. The toddlers and young boys are not indifferent to the treatment and react with
enthusiasm, smile, and laugh when given the attention and often follow their significant female others around. The song below playfully alludes to, or is at least suggestive of, the active role that Jean Rabel females play in determining male sexual identity and the coy preservation, or at least guarded access, to their own sexuality.

I went to Port-de-Paix
I went to buy a little wooden club
Little club, if it falls I will make it rise again
Two feet tied, two arms crossed
I have a place
I have a place on my body that boys don’t know
Where is it?
Below my mound
Below my mound

******

M ale Pò-de-Pe
M-al achte yon ti baton
Ti baton si-l tonbe m-a leve-l
Dè pye mare, dè bra-m kwaze
Mwen g’on kote
Mwen g’on kote nan ko-m ti gason pa konnen
Ki kote li ye?
Anba ti vant mwen
Anba ti vant mwen

The reference to “a little wooden club” is an obvious phallic symbol (clubs are not something that everyone in Jean Rabel is walking around with and while old infirm people might use a cane, purchasing one is nonsensical). The line “if the club falls” signifies the loss of an erection and this image is reinforced by the next line, which in Kreyol uses the verb leve (rise) and anko (again)—“I will make it rise again”—rather than ranmase, the Kreyol word for “pick up”—“I will pick up the club.” The next line, “Two feet tied, two arms crossed,” suggests restraint or prohibited access to the woman’s sexuality. The remaining lines, “I have a place boys don’t know . . . below my mound” are a proclamation of virginity and chastity: “below my mound” is translated from “anba ti vant mwen,” it literally means “below my little stomach.” In effect, the
girl may choose, “buy,” a penis to fondle, making it rise again and again, but her own genitals have never been “known” by boys.

Chastity and the Commercialization of Female Sexuality

Although women encourage men to be sexually aggressive and inculcate boys in the association between females and sexual stimulation, they do not present themselves as so willing to comply with the amorous wishes of men. The socially constructed attitudes of Jean Rabel women are contrary to that of men. While admitting that they desire sex, women define themselves as not needing it. Despite the “hot” tone of the songs, they always include restraint, as in the previous song, “two feet tied, two arms crossed . . . I have a place that boys don’t know.” All Jean Rabeliens know and commonly say “girls do not flirt with boys” (fi pa konn koze a gason), it is the boy’s job to flirt. A sexually aggressive woman or one who engages in sex for pleasure is criticized, as in “she is such slut” (tann li bouzen), or insultingly called “nymphomaniac” (piten). A young woman who has not had children and is not in union will always insist she is a virgin, no matter what her personal sexual history might be; and as a matter of identity and pride most Jean Rabel women insist, often and quite publicly when the subject arises, that they can live without sex. They describe themselves as sipòtan (able to tolerate abstinence). They maintain an attitude of sexual indifference, describing excessive sexual intercourse as painful, a burdensome service they provide to men, and while admitting that sex can be fun, and even exalt its pleasures, they consider over-manifestations of their own biological interest in sex to be a fault, something evident in attitudes toward vaginal secretions during sex. Commonly thought in Western society as a biological sign of sexual arousal, Jean Rabel women who become more than slightly wet are called bonbon dlo (watery vagina), considered disgusting; and women make efforts to dry themselves if the condition manifests itself during sex, even if the sex is with their husbands.

As seen with the studies mentioned from elsewhere in rural Haiti (Lowenthal 1987; Richman 2003), the defining feature of female attitudes toward sexual relations in Jean Rabel is that they view their sexuality as an economic asset. They say that they are born with a kawo of irrigated land between their legs (the most valuable asset in rural Haiti) and they refer to their genitalia in exchange terms, byen-pa-m (assets/goods), excusing each other for engaging in an affair outside of conjugal union so long as the man reciprocates with material rewards: “She is a woman isn’t she? It’s her right”; “Getting by is not a sin” (degaje se pa pech). Men are acutely aware of the rules, and they commonly say “in order to have a woman you must have money” (pou gen fi, fo gen lajan) and “women eat/devour men,” meaning they take all a man’s wealth (fi konn manje gason). A woman’s right to exchange sex for financial reward is exalted in the following song, which according to informants is actually a metaphor for sex and a demand for payment.

I need a couple dollars
Why do I need couple dollars?
To buy a ribbon, to tie around my waist, to make my hips shake/the dance work
Just throw it in my alley, two dollars
Just throw it in my alley, two dollars
Just throw it in my alley, two dollars

*****

Mwen bezwen dè dola
Sa pou-m fe dè dola?
Pou achte yon ribon pou fe lamayet mache
Lage li nan riyèl la, dè dola
Lage li nan riyèl la, dè dola,
Lage li nan riyèl la, dè dola

This song humorously summarizes the attitudes with which Jean Rabel women imbue their sexuality. As with the other songs, it is a play on words, but words already very sexual. The Kreyol term lamayet designates a sexy dance movement, and informants explained that it is combined with the word mache (to function, operate, work) to form the implied verb “to hump”—make the dance (lamayet) function, or less suggestively, to enable the girl to better shake her hips. Lage literally means “to let go” and a Haitian male “come on” is lage-m nan reyal la, which means “let me loose in your alley.” But in terms of money, a very common colloquialism is lage sink goud nan min mwen (let a dollar go in my hand). Thus, lage li nan riyèl la is a play on these two expressions and to state it literally it means “just throw the money in my vaginal canal.” So the song is a rather ingenious circular play on words that reduced means “I need two dollars. Why? Because if you want me to perform sex that is what it costs to get my hips going. So just throw the two dollars right in my vagina.” The Jean Rabeliens who reviewed these songs with me could hear this particular song several times in succession and would laugh hysterically every time.

Conjugal Union and Sex and Infidelity

With the guarded notion that sex begets children, it is considered to be a Jean Rabel woman’s God-given right to use her sexuality to acquire material support. If a man wants to claim exclusive sexual access to a woman, he must purchase that right with gifts and promises (or lies). In the event it is a young woman still living in her parents’ home, the man must first fianse the girl (become engaged), which requires giving a gold chain and gold earrings to the girl. And, as discussed in a later chapter, if the man wants to maintain his right to his wife’s sexual fidelity, he must build her a house, plant gardens, and tend livestock for her.

A man who fails to provide continued assistance to his partner can be legitimately cuckolded. However, not unlike the Hutterites, a woman who is in a union with a man who steadfastly plants gardens and tends livestock to support the household must be unflaggingly faithful, even if her partner or husband decides to enter into union with one or a series of other women. Any sign of a woman’s infidelity sets neighbors, family, and friends buzzing with gossip and can damage her reputation in the community for life. With an act of infidelity a woman risks destroying her
existing union and diminishes the probability of entrance into a subsequent union with a respectable, or at least a financially able, man.

That is the ideal pattern of behavior. In light of the geographical mobility of many husbands and the scarcity of income, it is often not possible to maintain these standards. The sexual mores seen above and desire for children set up a grey area where women are often not able to conform. As will be seen below, fortunately, or perhaps as a consequence, women and their families are able to appeal to myths, fictive illnesses such as arrested pregnancy syndrome, and superstitious rationales that convince men to accept paternity for children that are not biologically their own. Appealing to the same fictions, men readily accept.1

**Pregnancy, Paternity, Sex, and Sorcery**

In Jean Rabel, 29 percent of women and 35 percent of men over forty years of age report having borne children with more than one partner, a suspiciously imbalanced proportion (table 6.1). Moreover, there is the demographic oddity of men reporting an average of more living offspring than that reported by women: 6.3 versus 5.2. The explanation for why the average number of children born to men is greater than the number born to women is that women often assign paternity to more than one man; 13 percent of men in one of the research communities were reported—by friends, family and neighbors—as having been “clobbered-with-a-baby” (kout pitit), an expression meaning that they had at least one child who friends and neighbors reported was actually the child of another man. In a later chapter it will be seen that men have a definitive economic interest in claiming paternity for children that are not their own. This interest is manifest in attempts to identify with and appease women. Some men make displays of sympathetic labor and illness when their wife is giving birth; and the most common paternity suits are not women suing for child support but men suing for exclusive paternity.

**Table 6.1: Parental partners (age > 40)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Partners</th>
<th>Female (n=714)</th>
<th>Male (n=758)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 4</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To clarify or explain doubted paternity or controversial sexual encounters, a variety of universally accepted beliefs can be invoked. Women and men explain away sexual infidelity as having succumbed to magic spells purchased from bokor (witch doctors), spells that make people
fall in love, that stupefy women, that give men the power to take an unwilling girl’s breath away so she can not scream, and that make a married man irresistibly attracted to another woman (kout maji). A man uncertain that he is the father of an infant has recourse to a blood test; he pricks his own finger and puts a drop of blood on the newborn’s tongue. As everyone in Jean Rabel knows, if the man is not the biological father the baby will die instantly.

A belief that deserves special attention is the fictive illness known as perdisyon, mentioned above. Perdisyon is diagnosed when a sexually active woman who would otherwise expect herself to be pregnant begins to menstruate again (due either to an actual pregnancy ending in spontaneous abortion or some other amenorrheic condition). In search of an explanation, she visits leaf doctors and other specialists, who are quick to tell her what she wants to hear, she has a baby inside. The explanation provided for the failure of gestation to proceed is invariably that a rival or a jealous lover of her spouse—or boyfriend—is using sorcery to prevent the fetus from growing. The phrase mare nan vant is used to describe the condition and it literally means “tied up in the stomach.” Perdisyon provides a convenient rationale for the swelling stomach of a woman who has not seen her emigrant husband for more than the preceding nine months. It also provides the woman and her parents grounds to pressure a man into beginning to swenyen (care for) her and the imaginary fetus. That the illness is widespread and accepted by both women and men is evident. Only two of twenty-six women interviewed in Makab had any doubt regarding the veracity of perdisyon and even men typically responded to the question: “has your wife ever carried a fetus longer than nine months?” with replies such as “Thank God no, we haven’t had that problem yet.”

Elsewhere in Haiti, researchers have found similar trends. Murray (1976) found that one-third of the women in his research village had experienced at least one bout of perdisyon, and in a large country sample of deceased women Coreil et al. (1996) found that 6 percent of a sample of 1,287 rural and urban women were in a state of perdisyon at the time of death—something they explained had nothing to with death but was a reflection of the widespread belief in the fictive illness.

Whether magic charms, spells, “blood tests,” and arrested pregnancy syndrome really exist is unimportant. What is important is that accusations of sorcery and magic provide convenient excuses for lustful or financially inspired sexual escapades or infidelity that result in childbirths and hence cannot be hidden away or dismissed—as often is the case in the Western version of the extramarital affair. Belief among the population in the supernatural phenomenon described above is unanimous. As a French doctor who lived in Jean Rabel for three years remarked, “these are not things that farmers in Jean Rabel ‘think’ occur, they ‘know’ they occur.”

Conclusion

In previous chapters I showed that fertility rates in Jean Rabel compare favorably with the highest rates ever recorded, those of the 19th and 20th century Hutterites. High fertility is achieved in spite of the presence of factors that should suppress fertility, including the absenteeism of men, free distribution of contraceptives by both government and private, nonprofit agencies, and common physiological factors among Jean Rabel women such as STDs, the practice of prolonged lactation, and malnutrition. I linked high fertility to the pronatal sociocultural fertility complex. Both women and men exalt the blessings of having numerous children, caress and laud the pregnant, ridicule the childless, scorn contraceptives, and
criminalize abortion. In this chapter it was shown that customs and beliefs in Jean Rabel reinforce the pronatal sociocultural fertility complex: In spite of—or perhaps because of—male absenteeism and male poverty, men are encouraged to be sexually aggressive; women are rewarded and remunerated for sexual intercourse, while confining it to acceptable and financially capable fathers; conflict over infidelity and ambiguous paternity are rationalized with fictive illnesses and appeal to superstition and magic. These patterns of behavior are embedded in a flexible type of sexual-material negotiation between men and women, what other scholars have called “gendered capitalism” as well as part of a “field of competition” and that I referred to as the sexual moral economy. It is this sexual moral economy that can be viewed as a substitute for the stable male breadwinner seen among the Hutterites and not possible in Jean Rabel—not if women are to achieve high levels of fertility.

The questions remain: a) how did these beliefs and behaviors come about, b) what and who sustains them, and c) why, despite the obviously deteriorating economic and environmental conditions and the readily available alternative of using birth control, do Jean Rabeliens continue to avidly favor high fertility and display behaviors and beliefs that promote early and frequent pregnancies among young women? Is it, as foreign experts often suggest, that they are tradition bound, ignorant, unable to let go of deeply embedded values regarding large families? Or is there another, more basic explanation? Could it be the economic utility of children so often denied in the literature? Shedding light on this question requires a closer examination of the material struggle for everyday existence that confronts farming men and women living in Jean Rabel.

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Notes

1. The exception is if, when her spouse enters into a union with another woman, the first wife immediately severs the relationship. She then has a right to shamelessly enter into union with another man, but she has sacrificed the house built by the first husband; see chapters 14–15.

2. The figures are from the baseline subsample, n = 136, 68 women and 68 men. In the baseline sample (N = 1,586, missing = 146) the averages were 5.9 children per male household head interviewed (875) and 5.2 children per female household head interviewed (560).

3. Credit for first reporting on perdisyon goes to Gerald Murray (1976), who convincingly explained the phenomenon as the only theologically appropriate approach to treating fertility because in Haiti the actual act of conception is entirely a matter for God (bon dieu) and, therefore, folk healers must first diagnosis a pregnancy before they can begin to treat the childless woman. When first reading Murray’s article as an undergraduate I was strongly tempted to extend his observation to explain perdisyon as a belief maintained and reinforced by women in union to justify pregnancy in the absence of their husbands, an especially appealing explanation as Haiti has a history of over one hundred years of male wage migration. And I do not argue with the notion that this may be one function that perpetuates the acceptance of the belief in perdisyon. Nor does Murray doubt this occurs (personal communication). In a discussion of the issue, anthropologist Ira Lowenthal affirmed that he knows at least six Haitian women, all in union with men who claim to have experienced perdisyon and all invoked the belief in the context of conception in their husband’s absence. I too have seen perdisyon used
this way in at least one instance. In my own research, however, the primary function of perdisyon appears, as explained in the text, not to be a rationale for pregnancy but for barrenness. Women typically decide they are experiencing perdisyon before they are really pregnant and it is recognition of the condition at this stage that makes it authentic in the eyes of the woman’s family, friends, and lovers. The condition is from that point on used to tag the next child born to that particular man with whom she was having relations when perdisyon began.

In six of the eight cases of perdisyon reported in Makab, it was the woman’s first pregnancy, her husband had at least one other madam (wife), and she explained her perdisyon as being induced magically by one of her husband’s other wives. Treatment can get costly. It is understood that Western-trained medical doctors generally do not recognize or believe in the affliction, but there are medsin (herb doctors), matwons (midwives), manyè (massage specialists), and mambos and bokors (shaman) who specialize in helping women to overcome perdisyon and get the fetus growing again.

4. Accusations of magic go both ways. Both men and women can go to the bokor for a magic spell or charm. A woman can jayjay—tame/brainwash/stupefy—a man with food cooked in water with which she has bathed her genitals or food that has been covered with an unwashed genital rag.

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Chapter 7
House, Yard, and Market

Introduction

In order to understand high fertility and the cultural complex of behaviors that reinforce it in Jean Rabel, it is necessary to understand the economy in which it is embedded, for it is the economic exigencies and opportunities that make children important in the struggle to survive in the Jean Rabel harsh environment. Thus, this and the following three chapters describe the local market system, occupations, and income.

It will be seen that despite decades of effort and tens of millions of dollars in development funds described in chapter 3, contemporary Jean Rabel functions largely as an autonomous regional economy with little involvement in the global market. The State provides no significant public services to the population of the region. Houses are simple constructions of thatch, sticks, and mud. The principal income-generating and subsistence activities are agriculture, livestock raising, petty commerce, and charcoal production. Also, approximately 5 percent of the population depends directly on fishing to make a living.

This does not mean, however, that Jean Rabeliens do not seek alternative sources of income outside the household. A dazzling degree of specialization exists in both the production of local material goods and provision of services. A minority of men earn relatively high incomes as skilled craftsmen. Another alternative is seasonal agricultural work and most men at some point in their lives migrate temporarily to urban areas, overseas, or to the Dominican Republic where they work as menial wage laborers. Some women also go to the city and work as maids or cooks, but local and migrant wage opportunities are fewer for women. The primary feminine opportunity is marketing, something that all rural women eventually engage in, and something that has the potential to put women on economically equal footing with men.

But in coming to understand these extra-household income earning opportunities one should keep in mind that prerequisite to pursuing them is membership in a household production unit. Life in Jean Rabelien—including extra-household endeavors activities—is embedding in a materially simplicity adapted principally to minimizing risk in the face of drought and radically unpredictable market conditions. Jean Rabeliens have no choice but to live in simple houses constructed of inexpensive local materials, to employ inexpensive domestic and transport technologies, and to preserve materially simplistic alternative strategies for meeting subsistence needs. In order to provide for the most basic comforts and conveniences, such as furniture, tin gas-lamps, and labor-saving devices such as graters and coffee strainers, Jean Rabeliens turn to a flourishing regional marketing system. (Unless otherwise indicated, percentages assigned to technologies defined below are based on findings from the 1,586 household Baseline Survey—see chapter 1, p. 5)
Houses

Most houses in Jean Rabel are constructed from local materials. The walls are made of interlaced sticks and are plastered inside and out with clay or lime (83%). Floors are generally dirt (87%) and roofs are thatch (82%) derived from one of several types of palm or one of several types of local grasses. A local vine is used to lash the poles of the house together. On average, the houses contain two rooms (75%), one to six doors (85%), and one to four wooden-shuttered window openings (64%).

It is a man’s task to build a house and there are several alternative housing styles and construction methods. A rural house can cost from less than 500 gdes (US$30.00) to several thousand Haitian dollars (US$1,000). On the expensive extreme, a man can purchase the land and all necessary construction materials and contract labor for every task involved in building the house. Cement, if used, is the most expensive item, but only the best houses are constructed using cement. On the other extreme, a man with no property and little money is at liberty to build a house on state land and can build the house almost entirely from foraged materials and with his own labor and the help of family and friends.

House Contents and the Yard

The average house in Jean Rabel was constructed nineteen years ago, and was not purchased but built by its owner with varying degrees of paid assistance from local craftsmen. The house is typically twenty feet long and twelve feet wide and, as described above, has two rooms. The room at the front of the house is the dining room (salon), which is generally furnished with a locally handcrafted wooden dinner table and wooden chairs. Standing against one wall of the more affluent thatch roof salon is a large glass-faced cupboard full of imported utensils, plates, coffee cups with saucers, and juice glasses. Against another wall is a locally made iron frame single bed used for guests. In the corner of most houses sits a large ceramic water jar. The rooms are lit with small oil lamps crafted from discarded cans of condensed milk.

The rear room of the house is used exclusively for sleeping and storage. This room is usually furnished with a locally made wooden frame double bed (70%). Banana thatch sleeping mats are spread on the floor at night for children and are rolled up and stowed in a corner during the day. The only evidence of 20th century mass-produced goods are Goodwill clothing hanging neatly from the rafters. In more cosmopolitan households, torn-out magazine advertisements featuring new cars, radios, vacation spots, and cigarette models adorn the mud walls.

Fifty-two percent of households are built within lakous (compounds) in which a yard is shared with at least one other household, that of a parent, sibling, or child. Almost all houses have an outside kitchen (80%). Like the house itself, it is constructed of local wood and thatch. The hearth where the family cooking pot sits is made of three rocks—or often two rocks and a cannonball—the cannonball being there to conduct heat and help the food cook faster. Fifty percent of all houses have some type of latrine, 75 percent of which are simply holes in the ground without any type of enclosure or roof and located some fifteen to thirty meters from the back door. One or more of a variety of fast-growing and malicious vegetation such a dagger-like sisal, cacti, and poison oak are cultivated as living fences (local names for various noxious plants used as fences are katoch, kandelab, pit, pigwen, bawonet).
The All-Purpose Yard and Useful Refuse

Many of the items used in and around Jean Rabel households are procured or manufactured by household members from useful plants, trees, and shrubs found in the yard, growing up around the garden, along paths, or in the kadas (arid State land). Limes are used as an all-purpose disinfectant and aloe as a hair oil and shampoo. Galata and gayak leaves, and seeds from the bawonet plant, serve as soaps. Rope is woven from sisal and palm thatch. Sacks and saddlebags are fashioned out of thatch and grasses. Baskets are made of grasses and splintered bamboo. Sleeping mats are made from dried plantain stalks. Gourds from the kalbas tree provide a range of different sized storage and drinking vessels. Sticks are collected for use as cooking fuel. Flammable coconut husks and dried orange peelings are used to start fires.

Often households do not even own a pack of matches, but must send a child when necessary to borrow a burning ember from a neighbor. Uses are also found for imported industrial refuse: Flammable plastic bottles or packaging serve as fire-starter. Mattresses are fashioned from worn-out Goodwill clothing and sheets. Pigeon houses are made from flattened cans of cooking oil. A scrap bucket lid makes a wheel for a boy’s go-cart, a nail is the axle, a stick is the drive shaft, and a sprinting boy is the motor.

Jean Rabeliens regularly consume at least thirteen varieties of wild leaves; a wild olive, which before the recent advent of imports and food aid was an important source of cooking oil; and at least one wild bean. During times of crisis, people eat boiled green mangos, unripe fruit from the corosol tree, at least five types of undomesticated seed pods, two wild yams, and the fruit of a cactus. People in the region also opportunistically eat feral cats, iguanas, and most types of birds—including eagles, hawks, and woodpeckers. They also consume land crabs, fresh-water crabs, and crayfish.  

Local Markets and Local Goods

Markets in Jean Rabel are part of a rotating system that provides inhabitants of any particular area walking-distance access to at least two major markets a week. The items sold in the markets are household necessities and are part of a thriving local economy that could, and to a large extent does, exist independently of the global market.

Table 7.1: Regional distribution of market days in and around Jean Rabel
In Jean Rabel markets one finds not only piles of fruits and vegetables, but locally produced beeswax candles, tin-can lamps, thatch brooms, ropes made of sisal or shredded food aid sacks, tin gratters and funnels, cloth coffee and juice strainers, locally crafted wooden mortars and pestles, saddles, saddle blankets, saddlebags, bridles, ropes, baskets, grass sacks, sleeping mats, scrap-iron bed frames, and wooden furniture. Locally produced castor oil is sold as a body lotion and hair relaxer. Bundles of wood are sold as cooking fuel and tiny packets of split pitch pine are sold as kindling. Domestic tobacco is sold in powder and leaf forms. Other locally produced items found include clay pipes, domestic rum concocted with aromatic leaves, roots and spices, homemade sweets made from peanuts, sesame seeds, melted brown sugar and manioc flour, and rolls made with cane syrup and ginger.6,7

This is not to say that Jean Rabel markets are stocked entirely with local products. There are also imported staples and necessities that people are able to purchase with their meager earnings: pinto beans, flour, rice, hair ties, used clothing, shoes, wash basins, pots and pans, dishes,
drinking glasses, eating utensils, fragrant soaps, machetes, hoes, and kerosene. But whether
imported or produced locally, there are very few items sold in the rural Jean Rabel marketplaces
that do not relate directly to subsistence. One finds, for example, no bicycles, sporting goods,
toys, labor-saving appliances, art, radios, videos, music cassettes, sunglasses, or imported
gourmet foods. Nor does one find Hostess Twinkies or Lay’s potato chips or items considered
necessities by people elsewhere such as toilet paper, tissues, and maxi pads. There are no even
shampoo and deodorant are rarities. In summary, the Jean Rabel economy is not disconnected
from the world economy. But corrals of braying donkeys and trains of travelers who have walked
for half a day and some overnight to sell their livestock and produce is very much an early 21st
century anachronism. And it is very much oriented toward provisioning subsistence needs rather
than prestigious or pleasurable wants.

Consumption: Dependency on Household Production vs. the Market

Comparison of results from the Baseline Survey (labeled GAFAW) with results from two other
large Jean Rabel surveys (PISANO 1990 and SCID 1993) shows that households consume more
than they sell for at least four of the six most commonly planted crops. But the fact that Jean
Rabeliens consume much of what they produce should not obscure their dependency on the
regional market. In the Opinion Survey, 86.3 percent of all respondents reported getting more of
the household food supply from the market than from gardens. And in the spring of 1998,
Thomas Hartmanship of the German NGO Agro Action Allemande captured the importance of
the market to Jean Rabeliens in a survey in which 128 randomly selected farmers in Jean Rabel
were asked, “Where do you most commonly get the produce consumed in your household?”
Only in the case of greens and fruits did respondents cite the garden as a more important source
of foodstuffs than markets (see tables 7.2 – 7.6).

Figures 7.2 - 7..6: Percentage of harvest consumed by household
This emphatically does not mean farmers are not producing enough for their own needs. As will be seen below, farmers expect an impressive surplus in at least three out of every four years. The point is that farmers sell their crops and use the money as a storage medium while also rolling the cash over in the market, effectively earning additional income along the way.

### Table 7.2: Reports on source of household foods: Gardens vs. markets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Garden</th>
<th>50/50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plantain</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens and fruit</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manioc, sweet potato, yam</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haricot*</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice*</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat and fish</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AAA 1998

* 4 percent of haricot and 25 percent of rice were reported as coming from development organizations.

### Table 7.3: Parental partners (age > 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If, for example, a Jean Rabelien is given a bag of rice, he/she will not stash it in a dark recess of the house to be doled out bit by bit over a period of weeks or months. Rather, the rice is sent straight to the market where the woman, her mother, or a younger female household member converts it to cash. The cash obtained is then used to engage in other marketing activities and to purchase other foods and provisions as needs arise.
In effect, the market system looms large in local household livelihood strategies. Virtually all households are involved in the market system and while about one-half of most crops are consumed by household members, the other half gets sold and the profits eventually spent on food staples. Thus we can say that Jean Rabeliens are not subsistence farmers but best defined as subsistence-oriented market producers.

**Farming**

No matter what other skills a person has or what other income-earning activities he or she engages in, everyone in Jean Rabel, except for the very few full-time fishermen, is a farmer. When asked to report the three most significant sources of household income, over 90 percent of Jean Rabel respondents reported agriculture and 50 percent mentioned livestock. Every household head owns or access to at least some garden land and every household has at least a few animals. The farming technologies practiced are those best suited to surviving in the face of an unpredictable environment characterized by drought and hurricane, absence of infrastructure, absence of long-term storage facilities, and absence of effective state-sponsored extension services or crisis management.

Specifically, the strategies are generalized, low-risk and low-investment strategies that provide for household consumption, subsistence expenses, and little more. The point is, no matter how one looks at the issue, farming is the backbone of the Jean Rabel economy, it provides a complex of economic security otherwise unavailable in the face of economic, ecological, and social insecurity, and it depends on social organization focused on the household and family.

**Table 7.4: The most commonly planted crops**
Agriculture

Agriculture in Jean Rabel is a low-risk and low-input activity. Only 2 percent of farmers in the baseline survey reported using chemical pesticides, and less than 1 percent reported using chemical fertilizers. The only tools reportedly used by farmers were hoes and machetes. No tractors, wagons, or even animal-drawn plows are available for use. Currently, not a single irrigation pump exists in the entire commune of Jean Rabel, and only 40 out of 3,723 (0.01%) of the plots reported on in the baseline survey were irrigated by a gravity-driven system. As seen earlier, crops planted in Jean Rabel are adapted to harsh environments. Relatively high yields of these crops can be produced with minimal effort in a wide range of soil pH conditions, and they tend to be resilient in the face of unpredictable rainfall patterns, and most importantly, periodic drought. The five principal crops planted are corn, beans, sweet potatoes, cassava, and peanuts—the same five crops most important to the Taino Indians who inhabited the area in pre-Columbian times (Newsom 1993; Rouse 1992). To this basket of Taino domesticates early colonists and slaves added three of the most drought resistant crops on the planet: sorghum, millet, and pigeon peas, crops that continue to be of great importance to Jean Rabeliens, and the lima bean, a quick growing, high yielding legume (Moreau 1797). Most of the crops do not require simultaneous harvesting but rather are crops that yield slowly over a period of several months or year round, making several staples available in the garden in every month of the year (see table 7.5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops planted</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>% farmers</th>
<th>Crops planted</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>% farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>Yam</td>
<td>Africa, Asia</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans*</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>Okra</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Potato</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>Arrow root</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassava</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>Castor Bean</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>Egg Plant</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>Africa, Asia</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>Carrot</td>
<td>British Isles</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantain</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>Echalot</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar Cane</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>Taino/Americas</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watermelon</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>Africa, Asia</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All beans and peas were lumped into a single category during the Baseline Survey. This was a mistake and the distinction between beans rache—beans harvested at one time which are known in French as Haricot—and pigeon peas, cow peas and lima beans is made elsewhere.

Note: N = 1,539; table illustrates the percentage of Jean Rabel respondents mentioning a crop when asked to report the five crops they most commonly plant.
Crop harvesting cycles are complemented by the availability of produce from at least nineteen types of fruit and nut trees, most of which are not planted deliberately but rather selectively permitted to grow and the harvests of which conveniently fall during the leanest months for garden produce. Fruits are sold in the markets for local consumption, they are given away freely among friends and neighbors, and are consumed in abundance by everyone, especially children, and particularly mangos, the unrivaled favorite fruit in Jean Rabel.9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit Trees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crop harvesting cycles are complemented by the availability of produce from at least nineteen types of fruit and nut trees, most of which are not planted deliberately but rather selectively permitted to grow and the harvests of which conveniently fall during the leanest months for garden produce. Fruits are sold in the markets for local consumption, they are given away freely among friends and neighbors, and are consumed in abundance by everyone, especially children, and particularly mangos, the unrivaled favorite fruit in Jean Rabel.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.6: Regional tree cycles (H = harvest)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sep</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avocado</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mango</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread nuts</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread fruit</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges (sweet)</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratefruit</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limes</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges (sour)</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papaya</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corosol</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenadia</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Livestock
Animal raising is as important a feature of household economic livelihood as agriculture. At any given moment one may encounter households that have no livestock because animals have been sold, stolen, or died off from disease or drought, or been killed by dogs. But all rural households in Jean Rabel raise animals as part of their overall survival strategy. The most important animals in order of prevalence are chickens, followed by goats, sheep, hogs, cattle, and then turkey and guinea fowl. Ducks are numerous in the bouk (village) of Jean Rabel but rare in rural areas. Pigeons are also common everywhere in Jean Rabel, a fact that was not investigated in the survey. Table 7.7 below lists the mean number of animals per household as determined in the Baseline Survey. Because the survey was conducted during a period of ongoing drought when many animals had perished, the data are not representative of the typical number of animals people own during normal climatic conditions. Figure 7.7 was derived from data obtained during the three-hundred-household Polygyny Survey—carried out during a non-crisis period—and illustrates the number of households possessing at least one of the larger livestock animals listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livestock species</th>
<th>Animals per household</th>
<th>Std. dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chick</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: There were two factors that affected reports on livestock: (1) the drought during which the survey took place caused many animals to perish and (2) people often misrepresented the number of livestock they owned in hopes the survey was part of a livestock giveaway project as ID.

Figure 7.7: Household with at least one goat, sheep, pig, or cow (N = 300)
Strategies for raising livestock are similar to those employed in agriculture: minimal costs, minimal risks. The greatest livestock expense most farmers incur, besides actually purchasing the animals, is the cords used to tether them (if the farmer decides to purchase rather than make the cords, they cost 3 gdes per animal—US$0.15). Farmers plant clusters of drought-resistant native grass called zeb gine (guinea grass) in their gardens and around their houses to be used as animal fodder. Sugarcane b +agasse and leaves, banana leaves, and pigeon pea foliage also provide high protein fodder superior to most grasses. Corn, millet, and bean leaves and stalks are stored on rooftops; when drought strikes, the stored fodder is moistened with salt water and fed to the animals. When market prices are low, surplus garden produce, particularly sweet potatoes, mangos and bread fruit, are fed to livestock rather than sold. Animals are grazed in gardens after harvests or tethered in fallow fields. With the exception of pigs—the one animal sometimes fattened on purchased supplements—farmers only purchase feeds during prolonged crises, and these are invariably grasses or garden refuse found in neighboring ecological zones.10

Table 7.8: Reasons for selling livestock(a)
Livestock serves primarily as a cash reserve for the household. When an animal is slaughtered, much of the meat gets sold, primarily to provide for other subsistence needs. In the Baseline Survey, the single most frequently cited reason for both killing and selling animals was so that other food could be purchased with the proceeds from the sale of the surplus meat.11

The months most commonly cited as times of animal slaughter and sale are precisely those months householders identify as the hardest/leanest of the year, the same months that crop harvests are at a minimum. The relationship between hard times, animal slaughter, and animal sales only deviates slightly when schools open in September and October and tuition payments come due (see figure 7.8 below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To buy food or feed hshlde</td>
<td>1,558</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School (pay costs)</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death (pay for funeral)</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth (pay costs and feed)</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make room for new stock</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage, baptism . . .</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overpopulation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otherb</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,853</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Respondents were allowed three primary reasons.
b The category “other” was almost entirely because the animal was sick or there was a need to buy seeds for planting.

Livestock serves primarily as a cash reserve for the household. When an animal is slaughtered, much of the meat gets sold, primarily to provide for other subsistence needs. In the Baseline Survey, the single most frequently cited reason for both killing and selling animals was so that other food could be purchased with the proceeds from the sale of the surplus meat.11

The months most commonly cited as times of animal slaughter and sale are precisely those months householders identify as the hardest/leanest of the year, the same months that crop harvests are at a minimum. The relationship between hard times, animal slaughter, and animal sales only deviates slightly when schools open in September and October and tuition payments come due (see figure 7.8 below).

Figure 7.8: Months animals are sold and slaughtered by lean months
Conclusion

The opinions of some aid experts to the contrary, the ethnographic fact is that daily life in Jean Rabel is heavily dependent and deeply involved in farming. It is these conditions that, it will be seen, give way to the particular kinship and family structures found in the area, and it is the failure to identify them and accurately understand what they mean for social life that has inhibited an understanding of rural Haitians. Low income levels and the need to maintain a degree of self-sufficiency in the face of impending drought and uncertain market opportunities
mean that Jean Rabeliens have little choice but to employ inexpensive domestic and transport technologies and to reserve alternative strategies for obtaining material necessities. They walk or ride pack animals, sometimes for several days, to get where they are going and their houses are simple constructions of thatch, sticks, and mud. In order to satisfy subsistence needs and provide for the most basic comforts and conveniences, such as furniture, tin gas lamps, and labor-saving devices such as graters and coffee strainers, they turn to a flourishing regional marketing system.

The Jean Rabel economy is free from dependency on outside goods and services and this autonomy occurs at two levels: the regional level and the household level. At the regional level there is a thriving system of exchange, monetarily based, and characterized by the production of local goods and a rotating market system. At the household level, people do not depend on any public service. Every material item and every service that can be purchased also has a cost-free substitute. Soap can be replaced by special leaves, and a sleeping mat, instead of being purchased in the local market, can be made at home. Even houses, the single greatest lifetime expense for most Jean Rabeliens, can be constructed almost completely independent of nondomestic, paid labor or imported materials. None of this means that Jean Rabeliens live in a system completely shut off from the outside world. Imported staples, for example, can be found in all regional marketplaces, most notably imported rice, beans, and flour, which to varying degrees Jean Rabeliens purchase and consume; and imported plastic items such as hair berets and perfumes are common in the market. What it does mean is that Jean Rabeliens have recourse to a remarkable degree of autonomy and even self-sufficiency at the level of the household and they are also eager participants in an equally remarkable local economy that can be conceptualized as a regional subsistence market system. In the following chapter, I want to take a look at the income that the most basic household-based livelihood strategies generate, for, in the competition for development funds, aid workers and researchers have often exaggerated and misused income data as well.

*****

Notes

1. Wattle and daub, sticks woven together and plastered with mud, lime or cement. Most kitchens are also constructed in this way but without being plastered.

2. Local names for types of thatch: kokoye, latanye, and pay la preskil. Local names for grasses: zeb gini, zeb kos, zeb able, and zeb kanna.

Roofs have to be patched frequently but not uncommonly endure upward of four decades and in at least one instance a grass roof was reported to be seventy years old, albeit it had been added to over the years.

3. The process of building a house usually goes as follows: Branches for house supports and the I-beam that holds the house together are cut from living trees that belong to the man, begged off a friend, or purchased from the market. For the walls, a man gathers rocks or, if the house is going to be wattle and daub, sticks (galata is a common source of sticks; see below). For plaster, he makes his own lime by cooking lime rocks, or if he cannot find lime rocks, he uses clay, which is abundant in the area (preferably a white clay). His wife or future wife, mother, grandmother, sisters, and other female relatives, neighbors, and friends will likely carry dirt and
sand as needed. The dirt and sand is mixed with lime or clay to make a weak cement. In some areas like La Presque’Ile near Mole St. Nicolas, the man may harvest his own roof thatch or he can use Guinea grass found on State lands. In most areas thatch from the Royal Palm is sold for 2-3 gdes per bundle and a typical house can be covered with about four hundred bundles. The vines that lash the house poles together can be gathered in the bush and the poles that form the roof platform are usually from galata, a very straight branch derived from a kind of sisal plant that is ubiquitous on the dry State lands (kadas). Of course, all the materials can be purchased, but the only materials that typically cannot, if necessary, be foraged are the locally hewn boards used to make window shutters and doors.

To build the house: Neighbors and family, enticed by free rum, are assembled to help erect the frame. The main poles are planted several feet in the ground. Other framing poles are nailed to these. At this point the structure is a standard rectangular house skeleton with a simple A-frame roof. (Friends and neighbors typically fade away at this time, returning to help when the roof is put on.) The doors and windows are then framed, most often by a paid boss. The galata branches are laid across the roof and lashed with vine to the house frame and then the thatch, strung on lengths of vine, three leaves to a length, is fastened to the house. Then the walls go up. If the walls are rock, the rocks are cemented together with lime or clay mixed with sand and dirt; if the walls are what is locally called klisay, then sticks are horizontally interlaced between vertical poles. Doors and windows are then framed and the structure is plastered inside and out with pure clay or lime. The jobs for which bosses are typically employed are framing the house and framing the doors and windows; masonry, if the house is stone; and as mentioned, hanging the doors and windows.

Three examples are given below taken from friends of the author. The first man built a small 9.5 x 15 (ft) house, a typical two-room structure. The man hired both a carpenter and a mason. He was nevertheless able to realize a considerable savings by digging his own clay/mud/plaster, cooking his own lime, and gathering vines himself. The man also gathered poles, galata, and thatch from trees growing on his property. He felled a tree for boards and his father, a professional sawyer, sawed the boards free of charge.

Table 7.10: House building costs 1 (prices in gdes)
The second man also built his house almost entirely by himself, spending 2,115 gdes. He obtained boards by giving a tree to a sawyer friend of his in exchange for half the boards produced. The house was two rooms and a small 10 x 12.5 feet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/service</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Total cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>350</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rum</td>
<td>3 ka</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>16 ke</td>
<td>700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rum</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td>1030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work party (fouye/foule)</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rum</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work party (kouvri)</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rum</td>
<td>65*</td>
<td></td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galata</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thatch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mud</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boards</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Foraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nails</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 lbs</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinges</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latches</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* price dropped
The house listed below is the other extreme of the rural houses. It is not the grand cement houses as seen in small villages but it is the upper scale of the rural houses and almost all the material and many of the services were purchased. It was built by a woman whose husband was away working in Port-de-Paix but who sent her money to construct the house. It is 10 x 22 feet:

Table 7.11: House building costs 2 (prices in gdes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/service</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Total cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nails</td>
<td>Pounds</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boards</td>
<td>Dozen</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rum &amp;</td>
<td></td>
<td>240</td>
<td>2,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poles: Foraged
Galata: Foraged
Thatch: 100
Vines: Foraged
Lime: Foraged
Mud (tif): Foraged
Boards: 21 Foraged
Nails: 4 lbs 40
Hinges: 4 40
Latches: 2 15 95
Total: 2,115

The house listed below is the other extreme of the rural houses. It is not the grand cement houses as seen in small villages but it is the upper scale of the rural houses and almost all the material and many of the services were purchased. It was built by a woman whose husband was away working in Port-de-Paix but who sent her money to construct the house. It is 10 x 22 feet:

Table 7.12: House building costs 3 (prices in gdes)
4. All data, where not otherwise specified, are taken from the baseline survey of 1,586 households; 1,521 actual respondents.

5. The significance of wild plants in the region was partially captured by CARE’s 1994 baseline study in which 58 percent of households in CARE’s 1,400 household northwest sample reported eating them. It should be emphasized that many plants, and particularly fruit trees, that are considered domesticates, are not deliberately planted by Jean Rabeliens but rather selectively permitted to grow. The seeds propagate easily near households because it is there that people most often throw the seeds. If the people in the household like the tree where it is, they do not pull it up. The types of edible wild plants together with some that are more often thought of as domestic are listed below, some are given in Kreol only:

**Wild yams:** dala (manje siklon, grate li kom manioc ame), chat, galata  

**Wild beans, greens and stalks:** piyant (used as a kind of coffee), karaibe, doliv, laman, epina wouj, lyann panye, kou pye, lalo, chou mantad, chou kore, kresan, konkonm, zeb egwi, bondye bay, wild cabbage  

**Fruits that grow on vines:** Militon, Grenadia

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item/service</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Total cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood poles</td>
<td>Old house</td>
<td>750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin roofing</td>
<td>Sheets</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nails</td>
<td>Pounds</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>240</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinges, etc.</td>
<td>Sacks</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,840</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>Dozen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>5,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boards</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1,650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>Rum &amp; food</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>3,510</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work party</td>
<td>Rum &amp; food</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(digging sand, dirt and rocks)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9,440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. All data, where not otherwise specified, are taken from the baseline survey of 1,586 households; 1,521 actual respondents.

5. The significance of wild plants in the region was partially captured by CARE’s 1994 baseline study in which 58 percent of households in CARE’s 1,400 household northwest sample reported eating them. It should be emphasized that many plants, and particularly fruit trees, that are considered domesticates, are not deliberately planted by Jean Rabeliens but rather selectively permitted to grow. The seeds propagate easily near households because it is there that people most often throw the seeds. If the people in the household like the tree where it is, they do not pull it up. The types of edible wild plants together with some that are more often thought of as domestic are listed below, some are given in Kreol only:
Tree seed pods that are eaten from trees during crisis: bwa fè (grenn), bwa dom (grenn nan kos), bwa blan (grenn nan kos—tankou pistach), tamarin (kouver grenn nan kos), and brizzie (grenn)

Fruit trees: unripened corosol and and green mangos are also eaten during times of crisis, guayav, chou palmis, zamond, kenep, papay, korosol zombi, kachima, kayimit (2) pye bwa, manje fri, seriz/cherries, siwal

Wild animals: liza (iguana), chat (feral cat), pentad (guinea fowl), toutril (turtle dove), and any other bird they can catch except those listed below:

Birds not eaten: kwak blanch (cow egret), karanklou (buzzard), serpante, kone–gen gwo, gen piti (unknown)

6. Tobacco was grown abundantly in the region until the last decade when a disease reportedly made planting tobacco unprofitable. One still finds small plots of tobacco but it is not the industry it reportedly used to be. Much tobacco in the region, and in much of Haiti, comes from the Kass market place on the Central Plateau. The Kass market is only three kilometers from the border with the Dominican Republic and it is possible that low grade tobacco is purchased from the Dominicans and sold in Kass and it also possible that some tobacco grown in Kass in sold on the Dominican side of the border. But most people report very little cross border trade in tobacco. The people in the region of Kass explain that Dominican Tobacco is not the same kind as Haitians prefer and vice versa. Further, there is a tremendous amount of tobacco grown nearby on the some fifteen thousand hectares of mud flat that used to be the upper reaches of Lake Peligre—formed by the Peligre hydroelectric dam on the Artibonite river.

7. Up until 1986, rum was distilled locally. Today, raw rum is imported from Leogone. There is little trade with Cape Haitian, the alternative source (another large rum-producing area).

8. 

Table 7.13: Crops by use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers
9. Mangos originated in India and were introduced sometime during the colonial period. Breadfruit (as well as sisal) came from the South Pacific and is believed to have been first brought to the Caribbean in 1792 by the famous Captain Bligh—three years after his fabled “mutiny on the Bounty” voyage. Avocados originated in the Mexican highlands but by colonial times there was a West Indian variety (see Encyclopedia Britannica).

10. Chickens and other poultry are fed grains by owners not to fatten them up but as a means of keeping them near the house (pou yo pa al lwenn)—most of what chickens eat is what they find on their own, i.e., insects, grass seeds, and vegetal refuse.

Pigs are the one special case of an animal requiring high investments, such as vitamin and feed supplements, to be profitable. This makes pigs a problem for people disinclined to make monetary investments in their livestock. As one man told the author; kochon gen plis kob pase tout bet min yo reme mouri twop (pigs yield more money than all animals but they like to die too much), which makes them a losing investment for most Jean Rabel farmers. Evidence for the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Pesticide use</th>
<th>Fertilizer use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantain</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okra</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesame</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar cane</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manioc</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>1,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melon</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet potato</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taro</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yam</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5,867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Units of analysis = crops

Note: Units of analysis = crops
lack of interest and the failing success of pig raising in Jean Rabel comes from recent projects promoting investment in hogs.

### Table 7.14: Use of veterinary service and medicines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal species (units of analysis = animals)</th>
<th>% using veterinary service or medicines (n = 2,789)</th>
<th>Animal species (units of analysis = animals)</th>
<th>% using veterinary service or medicines (n = 2,789)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donkey</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>Goat</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mule</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hog</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>Guinea Fowl</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bovine</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>Duck</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. People in Jean Rabel do not make cheeses or other products from goat milk, but 36.1 percent of people reported milking goats for home consumption—something the author has never seen and is somewhat skeptical about.

Cow owners do not make cheese, butter, or yogurt from cow’s milk—presumably because of low milk fat production related to the lack of high protein feeds and deteriorating quality of grazing land. But, people possessing cows reported milking for home consumption and local sale—something the author has seen often and is not skeptical about. The milk is boiled with cinnamon sticks and salt added.

*****
Chapter 8
Farming and Household-Based Production

Introduction
At the time of this research, the UN listed per capita annual income in Haiti as US$398, making it far and away the poorest country in the Western hemisphere; estimates for Jean Rabel were lower, ranging from US$100.00 per household (UNOPS 1997) to US$350.00 per household (CARE 1996; see also CARE 1997), meaning that with an average of just under six people per household, even CARE’s more liberal estimate translates to an annual per capita income of US$60, giving Jean Rabel an income level one-sixth of that of Haitians overall and only slightly higher than the two lowest per capita GDPs in the world—the Democratic Republic of the Congo at US$52 and Sudan at US$59 (Stepick 1982; CARE 1996; United Nations 2000, 2007).

The use of such measurements as indices of human misery, suggesting squalor and the need for intervention, are erroneous. What they measure are remunerated employment and involvement in the world economy. They tell us little about living standards in terms of health, nutrition, leisure time, happiness, and social security. The significance of this will be returned to in later chapters for it is precisely this type of Western-based standards that bias our understanding of life in places like Jean Rabel, where people have gardens and animals, where they forage for plants and small animals and where they have their own thriving internal regional economies and are loath to report income.

Moreover, even when measures of income are based on surveys, such as the cited data for Jean Rabel, these surveys are often conducted with few controls and invariably embedded in fund-soliciting campaigns sponsored by organizations dependent on foreign aid. For example, the estimate of US$100 annual per household income came from UNOPS (United Nations Office of Project Services)—an organization whose employees depend on projects funded by the UN—translating to per capita US$17; a ridiculously low sum of 4 cents per day. How the UN aid workers came up with these estimates is a mystery. They cite no source for the data, and they discuss no systematic study of household income in the region.

The CARE estimate is problematic as well. CARE (the largest multinational charity in the world and the NGO with an exclusive on U.S.-government-funded charity activities in Jean Rabel) was lavishly funded by the U.S. government (more than US$250,000) to come up with the cited household estimate (US$350 per household per year; or 15 cents per day per person). The calculation came from a study of northwest Haiti, and involved a sophisticated, 1,400-household cluster sample in which twenty-six communities were visited by teams of university-educated Haitian interviewers. Focus groups were held in each community and a large number of local households were subsequently visited to interview the breadwinners and obtain precise details regarding household expenses and income. The study was vitiated by an inclination for
respondents to conceal their wealth and a lack of initiative on the part of CARE to correct for this. For example, in the fishing hamlet of Makab where I lived for eighteen months, CARE interviewers reported that less than 20 percent of households owned livestock. But when I began my research one year later, there were in fact only two of a total of forty-three households that did not own at least one goat or sheep. One member of the community, a man who villagers report was included in the survey, had upwards of one hundred goats, a detail that was not reflected in the CARE report.1 Thus, if these findings can be generalized to other communities studied by CARE and UNOPS, the image of Jean Rabel households spending a daily average of US$0.96 is an underestimate. The question is then, how much of an underestimate?

Agricultural Income

In order to estimate income from agriculture we need to first know three things: average holdings, types of garden, and yields.

Average Holdings

The mean garden size in Jean Rabel is .82 hectares and at any one time the average household works 2.8 gardens on a total of 2.3 hectares of land. On the other hand, the average amount of land reportedly owned per household is 1.13 kawo or 1.46 hectares (1 kawo =1.29 hectares)—the difference being attributable to sharecropping and underreporting of landownership. Almost one-third of respondents, 413 households, reported owning no land; 87.7 percent of households own 2 kawo or less; and 1.1 percent of households claimed to own more than 5 kawo of land. The number of landless farmers is suspect and probably a consequence of deceptive reporting—some respondents expected that the survey would be followed by food-aid distribution to the poorest households. should not be interpreted to mean that land is concentrated. The largest landholder in the sample owned only 12 kawo, and there are no larger plantations or vast tracks of private land in Jean Rabel.

Table 8.1: Total land owned by household
Table 8.2: All types of land tenure (units of analysis = gardens)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of land tenure</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owned</td>
<td>2,485</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharecropped</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On loan</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>99.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed by owner</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,711</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The chart indicates that in Jean Rabel there are basically three ways to access a garden plot: own it (67.1%), sharecrop it (19.1%), or rent it (11.0%). Less important means of accessing land are borrowing and being employed by the landowner (working as a farm hand).

Type of Garden

While the vast majority of land is “dry,” there is nevertheless another 4.7 percent of garden land considered “fertile” and “irrigated.” On these plots farmers can naturally expect higher and more
dependable yields. Table 8.2 above sums up the types of land tenure—i.e., how farmers obtained access to their garden plots.

Table 8.3: Size of gardens by soil type (units of analysis = gardens)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land in kawo</th>
<th>Irrigated</th>
<th>Fertile</th>
<th>Dry</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.01 to .50</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>75.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.51 to 1.0</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 to 1.5</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.51 to 2.0</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 to 2.5</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>.2%</td>
<td>.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 2.5</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N =</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>3550</td>
<td>3723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>95.3%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yields

Production figures reported in the Livestock and Gardens Survey (n = 104) appear low at first glance. Yields on the plain of Jean Rabel are about one-fifth the world average for corn, five-sixths the world average for beans, and about half the world average for sorghum and millet (see table 8.4). But the fact that farmers in Jean Rabel intercrop means that the figures are not comparable. The same low-altitude hectare that yields 1,116 kilograms of corn is simultaneously planted in pigeon peas, lima beans, pumpkin, drought resistant manioc, sweet potatoes, and okra. Corn and beans do not grow well in the mountains and farmers there reported expecting yields lower than the lowest country average in the world. But mountain farmers only marginally depend on corn and beans. Instead, peanuts are the premier income-generating crop in the mountains and farmers enjoy yields respectably close to the world average (1,273 kilograms per hectare, see table 8.4 below). Furthermore, peanuts are also intercropped with a variety of other plants, including tobacco, castor beans, sorghum, melons, squash, okra, pigeon peas, sweet potatoes, and sesame.

Table 8.4: Yields in kilograms per hectare
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Corn</th>
<th>Beans</th>
<th>Sorghum and millet</th>
<th>Peanuts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jean Mountains</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabel Plain</td>
<td>1,116</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Average</td>
<td>4,130</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>1,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1,621</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest country average</td>
<td>3331</td>
<td>2362</td>
<td>2103</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 Cape Verde 2 Rwanda 3 Botswana

Figure 8.1 Number of gardens per household households

(y = 2.8, sd = 1.6, N = 1,491)

Income from Agriculture

If, for the sake of calculation and trying to get a general idea of the income that Jean Rabel farmers can earn, we were to begin by counting only the principal crop cycle (meaning only one
planting), putting all other crops aside, and simply assume that Jean Rabel farmers plant only one of the reported average 2.3 garden-hectares (including share cropped property) per household of the cash-crops beans, corn, or peanuts (which are also three of the top five crops farmers most commonly report planting) and we calculate from the prices sold, in a good year, one where there has been sufficient rain, then the typical Jean Rabel household harvests 13,885 gdes worth of these crops (US$826). If we assume, as shown in the previous chapter, that the household consumes half of the harvest, then US$413 remains. And again, this is less than half the land cultivated and does not account for sweet potatoes, pigeon peas, sugar cane, cassava, and the various other crops that are also planted and sold.

Nor does this calculation account for differential amounts of land owned, the total amount of land worked through sharecropping and other arrangements, and the quality and productive capacity of particular parcels of land. All of these factors translate into significant annual differences in the amount of income a particular household or individual earns.

The data nevertheless provide an indication of the widespread agricultural income-earning opportunities in the region, opportunities available to households with the labor capacity to work the land, and opportunities that allow individuals to avoid dependency on low-wage employment in the service of larger landholders.

### Income from Livestock

Similar calculations can be made regarding livestock. Again, the objective is only to present a general understanding of income possibilities associated with farming. Included are only the most common larger livestock: goats, sheep, cows, and donkeys. The calculations do not include chickens, which are the most common household animal, or pigs, horses, and mules, three of the most expensive animals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.5: Estimated average annual income from livestock</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average adult animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average adult female animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offspring per female per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock produced annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average price per weanling (gdes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. household livestock income (gdes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Polygyny Survey, which included questions on livestock not adequately addressed in other surveys, the average farming household possessed 3.1 adult goats, 2.5 sheep, 0.8 cows, and 1.1 donkeys. Assuming that goats and sheep can yield a mean three offspring per year (the average is three litters of two kids per litter, every two years) and that a cow or donkey has approximately .8 calves per year, then the typical household earns about 4,465 gdes annually on
its weaned livestock (US$266). This figure does not include the most prominent animal in Jean Rabel, poultry, or the most expensive horses, donkeys, and pigs.2

Similar to agriculture, livestock provides a broad spectrum of income-earning opportunity among different households. Household earnings from livestock are based on the number of animals a household unit can successfully tend. For the sake of demonstrating these differences, at the bottom of table 8.6 is the tabulated total annual revenue for a household that has one of each animal listed—i.e., one goat, one sheep, one cow, and one hog. The same estimates can be used to calculate projected income from livestock for a hypothetical household with two of each animal, or three, and so on. The calculations are not meant to reflect exact actual conditions—there is, for example, no particular reason why a household would own two goats, two sheep, two pigs, and two cows—but percentages given are based on actual number of animals reportedly owned by households included in the Polygyny Survey, and the figures demonstrate the economic differences that result from one household having the capacity to care for more livestock than another.

Table 8.6: Variation in the number of animals per household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of animals</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hogs</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue per year</td>
<td>Gdes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>7,400</td>
<td>14,800</td>
<td>29,600</td>
<td>59,200+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>US$</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>880</td>
<td>1,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,520+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special mention is required regarding pigs, an animal that has tremendous but seldom-realized income-earning potential. Piglets sell for 250 gdes (US$14.88), meaning that a litter of ten can yield the owner(s) a respectable 2,500 gdes (US$148.80), and a single well-fed pig sold in the Port-de-Paix market can fetch as much as 6,000 gdes (US$357.14). But most farmers do not have the capital available to provide feeding pigs nutritionally sufficient quantities of food to breed or to grow to a significant size, and so most pigs are bought, raised, and then sold as stunted adults for approximately 750 gdes (US$50.68). For the latter reason, I have limited the income in table 8.6 calculated for pigs to 750 gdes per animal.

Total Farming Income

Combining agriculture and livestock activities, an average Jean Rabel farming household should be able to generate about US$679 per year, about twice the household income estimated by CARE in 1994. This is still not much revenue—an annual US$116 per capita—and it does not take into consideration losses incurred as a result of thievery, disease, storms, blight, and drought. Nor does it take into account the cost of seeds, ropes, tools, and the purchase of new livestock. On the other hand, although farming is the principal source of income in Jean Rabel
for over 90 percent of all households, most households have members simultaneously engaged in several other revenue-generating strategies, the subject of the following chapters.

Conclusion

An analysis of household livelihood strategies and income shows that while people in rural Haiti may be poor, they are not as poor as portrayed neither by intervention experts and charity workers nor as suggested in many reports and statistics submitted by aid agencies. Nor are people in Jean Rabel helplessly sitting around waiting for the next shipment of food aid. On the contrary, they are earnestly engaged in trying to survive and assure security in the face of an unpredictable and harsh environment. The basis of this survival is farming livelihood strategies focused on the household.

The significance of these strategies cannot be gainsaid. There is nothing secure in Jean Rabel beyond the limits of the household. There is no dependable State to provide aid, job security, or unemployment insurance. Foreign intervention agencies, who have come to help, are not there to provide welfare services and the unhappy fact is that even in times of crisis they reach a very small portion of the population; have actually acted as agents of foreign agricultural interests seeking new markets. Individual security, food, and shelter, all depend on being a member of a household. The only people who are not members of a household are a few mentally disturbed individuals called pov (poor), easily spotted in their shabby straw hats and scraggly, matted hair; a bowl in hand for begging coins, they wander from market to market, and sleep on the tiny front porches of nicer houses and in churches—and, interestingly, they are very few.

People who sell and purchase in markets are invariably operating on behalf of a household. The produce, livestock, cooked foods, and artisan goods sold are the fruits of the combined efforts of household members, and the vast bulk of the proceeds from the sale of these products will be returned to the household in the form of food purchases and items needed to continue household production—such as saddles, ropes for livestock, seeds, and tools for the garden.

Some households are able to derive greater income from these activities than other households. But although the emphasis thus far has been on the potential economic differences between households, an equally remarkable feature is the general narrowness of these differences. No household for which data was gathered had planted more than eleven gardens and no household owned more than 12 kawo of land. The maximum number of cattle belonging to any of the households visited during the Polygyny Survey was six; the maximum number of goats, fourteen; the maximum number of sheep, twelve; the maximum number of hogs, eight. No household owned more than four donkeys, two horses, or two mules. The explanation for the relatively equal distribution of wealth among households is simply that, in rural Jean Rabel, despite soil exhaustion and the declining availability of new land, the balance between the three primary elements of production—land, labor, and capital—is skewed most heavily by a scarcity of labor, the subject of a subsequent chapter.

But there is another level of economic activity beyond the household and that has a determining impact on social life, kinship, and family structure: fishing, specialized retail marketing, and craftsmanship. I begin with a chapter on fishing to show what income-generating options are
available beyond the household, to what degree people use them, and how much income they earn, for it is in understanding differences in extra-household income-generating opportunities that we can get an idea of the causes underlying specific kinship patterns in Jean Rabel, especially with regard to conjugal union.

Notes

1. It was also not clear if CARE analysts were aware of the fact that fully 65% of male household heads in the community had more than one wife with whom they had borne children, who they continued to help support, and who they considered as a spouse; i.e., they had more than one family. The wives resided in multiple households, some within the fishing hamlet but most in other fishing villages and in isolated hillside homesteads. If CARE researchers were aware of this fact, they did not reveal it nor, of course, did they specify how they dealt with it in their analysis.

2. Chickens are raised for consumption and sale; secondarily for eggs that are eaten and sold. Depending on its size, a chicken sells for 15 to 100 gdes (US$0.89 to 5.95). Goats and sheep are raised primarily for sale. Kids and lambs sell for 200 to 250 gdes (US$11.90 to 14.88); an adult goat or sheep sells for 300 to 1,000 gdes (US$17.86 to 58.52). Both animals are also slaughtered for consumption, especially goats and especially when a woman has given birth. The meat is often dried for short-term storage or resale. After chickens, goats are the animal most commonly slaughtered in association with religious ritual. Pigs fetch the highest price of any livestock raised for sale. Piglets sell for 200 to 500 gdes (US$ 11.90 to 29.76); and an adult pig can sell for as much as 6,000 gdes (US$ 357.14). Pigs are almost always sold rather than slaughtered for consumption in association with religious rituals. To be profitable, pigs demand large investments in feed and veterinary services: 27.5% of all pig owners reported using veterinary services and medicines, the highest use of veterinary services for any animal. Cattle sell for 2,500 to 4,500 gdes (US$148.80 to 267.86); a calf sells for 1,000 to 1,500 gdes (US$ 58.52 to 89.29). Depending on size, strength, and age, the price of a donkey ranges from 500 to 2,500 gdes (US$29.76 to 148.81). The price of a horse ranges from 1,000 to 4,000 gdes (US$58.52 to 238.10). And the price of a mule, the most prized pack animal, ranges from 1,750 to 7,500 gdes (US$ 104.17 to 446.43). Horses, donkeys, and mules are the prime means of transportation and are reportedly never eaten or slaughtered. Even a sick or injured donkey, horse, or mule is simply left to die rather than euthanized.

3. Goats and sheep have a gestation period of 148–150 days and give birth about three times every two years, meaning six kids. They browse on almost anything, but sheep are reportedly more finicky and less hardy than goats. At ten months either a sheep or a goat can be bred. They have twenty-one-day menstrual cycles. Cattle have a gestation period of 280–283 days.

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Chapter 9
Fishing

Introduction
Fishing involves a relatively high investment in local materials and craftmanship services. Many of the materials needed must be purchased but some may be procured cost-free by resourceful individuals. Fishermen do not have access to outboard motors, fiberglass hulls, or refrigerated storage. Instead, sails, paddles, and wooden hulls prevail, and fish are salted, dried, and sold in local markets or hauled by boat or pack animal to markets in the provincial city of Port-de-Paix. Nevertheless, based on local standards, fishing is a significant source of income.

Fishing Communities
Fishing-dependent families comprise 4.4 percent of the Jean Rabel population or about 5,800 men, women and children (roughly one thousand households), most of whom are also dependent to varying degrees on their gardens and livestock raising.

They live in two permanent fishing villages in protected harbors on the coast of Jean Rabel (Bord Mer and Port-al-Acu) or in semi-permanent encampments along the arid coastal region stretching from Bord Mer west for approximately seven kilometers. The posts are almost entirely inhabited by people from farming communities who learned to fish by visiting their cousins in fishing hamlets and then struck out on their own, spending the fishing season in the most remote and often most productive sites where they build small lean-to like houses called joupas. Some of the men remain full time at the outposts. A steady trickle of wives, children, and cousins of the fishing-farmers come down to the posts to retrieve the fish and carry them back into hillside communities to be sold in the market.

Fishing Vessels
Farmers who fish part time use rudely fashioned one-man kayaks called topye. More heavily invested fishermen use kanots, row boats that average 11.5 feet in length.

In all of Jean Rabel there are some seventy kanots and 350 topye, small kayaks that are approximately eight feet in length. The most modern material on boats in Jean Rabel are nails: the smallest vessels are the topye kayaks, mentioned above, that are made of three logs lashed and nailed together. Row boats are less common but more important: the hulls are made from locally harvested and hewn oak, avocado, or a wood known locally as sad. For a waterproof sealant, fishermen buy a fiberglass-type substance called brè, derived from the nut of a local tree. When heated over a fire, brè becomes a sticky tar-like paste that cools to a hard glass (brè is also
used as a coating for iron goods such as latches and hinges, and to repair leaky water buckets). Strips of cloth are dipped in the brè while it is hot and then pounded with a wooden mallet into the spaces between the boards from which the boat is fashioned. The entire hull is then coated with the resin. Oars are made of wooden poles with an oval length of board lashed to the end. A corn cob or piece of wood serves as a drain plug; a discarded plastic bowl or kalbas gourd is used to bail the boat. On larger vessels—also simply constructed and of which there are only four in the region—a manual bilge pump is fashioned from a length of bamboo or PVC, a wooden pole, and a goat skin, which looks and works like an inverted plunger. Sails are sewn together from used denim. The occasional boat motor in Jean Rabel fishing communities is usually a gift from some overseas relative, but is invariably a short-lived luxury that gets sold or stored away the first time it breaks. There are three compressors in the region but they all belong to the same man, a resident of the Island of La Tortue who supplies Port-au-Prince restaurants with seafood.

**Fishing Materials and Technology**

Fishing in Jean Rabel is an enterprise based almost entirely on nonindustrial technology and materials. Fish weirs are woven from bamboo and vine. Nets, while made from imported nylon string, are handwoven locally and weighted with rocks or lead from scrapped car batteries. Floats for fishing are made from discarded flip-flops, wood, or flotsam scrounged from the surf, and the nets are made with the buoyant seed pods from the local moben tree. Hooks, while often bought, are sometimes made from sharpened wire. Spear guns are made of discarded PVC pipe: wire for the trigger, a piece of wood for the handle, strips of used inner tubes for the charging mechanism, and a length of scrap iron rod for the spear (major fishing techniques used in the area are similar throughout the Caribbean; see Price 1966).

Because of strong winds, rough seas, and the rocky coastline, there are only two seines in the region. A seine is a net measuring several hundred meters used to fish from the shore; they are a common means of fishing in nearby Mole St. Nicolas and throughout the Caribbean. A seine is deployed using a row boat and it is hauled in by teams of from ten to thirty men who stand on the beach in two groups, one at each end of the seine, and they pull the seine in, effectively encircling the fish that are trapped between the position where the seine was originally deployed and the shoreline. Seines are cast during the fishing season when migratory fish pass, and when fish are most abundant, the seine is simply left deployed in the water, one end ashore, the other end tied to a boat. A man waits in the boat looking into the water with a mask or a small window-box that enables him to see under the water. If fish enter he cries RALE! (pull) and the marin, playing cards under nearby trees or ambling along the shore, sprint to position and pull the net in.

There are also nets strung between reefs or hung in the open ocean, suspended from floats and weighted at the bottom. The most common is the twa nap, a three-twine net. The nets are left overnight or fisherman will bat dlo, slapping the water in an effort to drive fish into the net.

Nets are more common, but the principal means of fishing is with weirs, of which there are two kinds: the nas fonn, which rests on the bottom of the sea, and the nas flotè or the floating nas. The floating nas is more important because for much of the year in Jean Rabel strong easterly winds make the unprotected sea rough and fishing difficult. Weirs not floated are caught up in currents and smashed against the bottom or swept away. The floating trap is buoyed by four one-gallon jugs and anchored to the bottom of the sea by a sack of rocks tied to a cord.
Line fishing and spear fishing are of secondary importance but provide many families in the area with small catches to supplement their diet and income. Both are accomplished from the shore or small outcroppings or from the small topye kayak mentioned above. Boys fish for baby balahoo in sandy beach areas, a sport that rivals flying kites but can yield small dividends as well.

**Seasons and Fish Types**

Because of the winds, fishing activity offshore is most intense from March to June when winds are not strong. But the fishing season, when the migratory fish come, is called the rekolt (harvest), and it occurs from July to November. When the fish come in abundance they say they kase pak (they broke out of their corral) and many fishermen in fact believe that people lotbo (overseas) keep migratory fish in corrals that the fish seasonally break out of during foul weather or when the fish become too many. The primary objective of fishermen are the seasonal migratory, but almost everything in the sea is game, including moray eel, conch, and, beginning at the size of about two inches, most tropical reef fish. Turtles, blowfish, sharks, and rays are also eaten. Local fishermen are not sure what to think of porpoises, although informants in Mole St. Nicolas report having once eaten several of the beached animals in 1994. The enormous humpback whales that are occasionally seen passing the area on their winter migration are regarded with horror.

**Income**

The principal means of catching fish is with weirs, known locally as nas, and fishermen calculate in terms of each weir. The weirs are bamboo, held together with vine. They cost from 30 gdes for the smallest to 85 gdes for the largest weirs. Fishermen pay other men to transport the weirs from the market to the fishing hamlets—carrying weirs being considered below the dignity of a respectable fisherman—and for a weir to be carried from the market to most coastal settlements costs a maximum of 30 gdes for a large weir and 15 gdes for a small weir. The weir does not come preassembled but must be woven together with vine (5 gdes). A durable waterproof rope is made from the nylon threads of shredded food-aid sacks and is needed to raise and lower the weir (108 gdes), and for the floating nas four one-gallon jugs are needed (20 gdes); four sticks to make a frame so that the weir can be raised and lowered into the sea without collapsing under its own waterlogged weight (4 gdes); and a sack of rocks for an anchor (5 gdes).

The lifetime of a weir is approximately equivalent to the duration of the fishing season, about four and a half months. But weirs are sometimes swept away by currents, stolen by thieves, and destroyed by big fish and moray eels that get to the catch before the fisherman. All this makes it difficult to estimate how much a weir will yield. The poorest fishermen tend to estimate 150–400 gdes, but the wealthiest and most knowledgeable fishermen—some of whom actually keep records—consistently estimate that, lost weirs factored in, a large weir yields on average 1,000 gdes over the course of the rekolt. This later estimate makes the most sense if one considers the investment in money and time. Deducting the cost of the weir (247 gdes), the lifetime yield is 743 gdes. Thus for three to six months (average 135 days) the average daily yield per weir is 5.1 gdes. A fisherman usually needs at least one helper, which means he must give him some of the fish—usually a fourth to a third of the catch. So before totaling, 30 percent of income must be deducted which brings the income down to 3.6 gdes per weir per day. Most fishermen will work
a couple weirs during the off season, but during the most intense months of the rekalt—September thru November—fishermen who own their own boats typically work twenty weirs, about 72 gdes per day (US$4.30). Men without boats, women, and even children will have three or four weirs that are checked by husbands, cousins, or kanot-owning neighbors.

Sen (seines), the long nets used for shore fishing, and filè (simple nets) that are set farther out to sea or along the cliff-lined coasts, both presuppose that a fisherman has a kanot. Owning a sen is the economic pinnacle of fishing in the region. Because of the high winds and often violent shorebreak, there are only three seines within the commune of Jean Rabel, but during the fish rekolt some men go to nearby Mole St. Nicolas, where there is a large protected harbor and fishing is significantly different than along the exposed Jean Rabel coast. At the “Mol,” there are seventeen seines varying in length from 160 to 400 meters, with an average of 300 meters and a cost of about 50,000 gdes.

Based on books kept for five seines at nearby Mole St. Nicolas, the average yield per seine in 1998 was 30,000 gdes (US$1,786). But 1998 was an off year, and seine owners report an average closer to 40,000 (US$2,381) gdes per year. Half of the catch (20,000 gdes) goes to the owner of the seine and half goes to the crew. This means that for the approximately 408 men who have a secured place hauling in seines at the Mol every year, their average income from this particular activity is 833 gdes (or US$50). For the owners of seines, income is substantially more. With an estimated annual repair cost of approximately 5,000 gdes per year, seine owners earn about 15,000 gdes (US$893)—of course they have other expenses as well, specifically boats of which they need at least one (US$93 has been deducted as an approximate cost of a boat over its ten+ year lifetime).

Nets are less expensive, shorter than seines, more portable, and do not need a position; hence they are more common, especially among fishermen in the commune of Jean Rabel, who only have a few rarely used seines. Nets are put anywhere that seems opportunistic. They can be left overnight or simply left and checked daily like a nas. The average net is about seventy meters long and five meters deep and cost about 1,500 gdes (US$90). Serious fishermen earn about 5,000 gdes per season per net. During the winter months, when lobster migrate from deeper waters, and provided there are buyers, some net fishermen earn windfalls as high as one thousand Haitian dollars in a single catch. The calculations have been omitted for these unpredictable windfalls. I focus instead on more consistent earnings, specifically, fishermen with nets go on what are called boukan (an apparent linguistic survival from the buccaneer era), where they camp out in remote coastal villages. Women also go along and they salt and dry the fish.

On a boukan a boat usually has four marin (mariners) and a net. The marin set the net up overnight and check it in the morning. They sometimes spend the day trying to round fish up by swimming and slapping the water, trying to drive the fish into the net (called bat dlo, beating the water, in Creole). As with seines, the catch is split 50/50 between owner and crew—owner gets 50 percent and the crew gets 50 percent—the difference, however, is the owner takes out the costs of damages to the net before the catch is split. On local boukan (Kapafou, Lapreskil, La Grenad, Las Kayo) a net owner can earn from 250 to 1,000 gdes. Marin earn 75 to 350 gdes. Boats usually go on two local boukan a year, for five to eight days each, in the months of November and December.

In the months of January to May, after the local fishing season is over, many of the full-time fishermen in the region go to the island of La Tortue on the north coast, where they have second
or third—and in some cases fourth and fifth—wives. There a kanot with a net can reportedly make from 15,000 gdes to 25,000 gde in a season. This usually means about 9,000 gdes for the owner of the net and kanot, 3,000 gdes for each marin and 2,000 gdes for damages to the net.

It is important to understand the significance of owning a boat and nets or a sein. In general, kanot in the region range from 11 to 16 feet long and the regional average is 13.5 feet (a boat longer than 18 feet is called a chat and is used for transport). A kanot costs from 3,500 gdes to 12,500 gdes. In Makab, three of twenty-one boats kept there were owned by women. But it is usually men who own the boats and it is always men who fish. The small kayaks mentioned above are only good for small weirs and line fishing and they sell for 500 gdes.

A boat is the first and most important ingredient in serious fishing and a significant indicator of wealth and the factors that set one man apart from another. In Makab, the only polygynous man who was not a boat owner was a healer. Most weirs belong to men. Women whose husband or sons fish may invest in weirs and some weirs will be assigned to a child. But it is always a man who raises and checks weirs.

By local standards, fishing is a significant source of income. As seen in table 9.1, a fisherman who owns his own boat, a net, and fishing weirs earns about US$1,268, about twice the US$679 that the average farmer can expect.

Table 9.1: Fishing income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fishing technique</th>
<th>Quat.</th>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Income (gdes)</th>
<th>Income (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner (must have kanot)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept–Nov</td>
<td>1,344</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept–Nov</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>74.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan–May*</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>535.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weir</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Sept–Nov</td>
<td>9,720</td>
<td>578.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21,314</td>
<td>1,268.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marin (worker/assistant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seine</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Sept–Nov</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>49.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Sept–Nov</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>23.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Jan–May*</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>178.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weir</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Sept–Nov</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>12.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,439</td>
<td>264.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Migration to La Tortue

Conclusion

Fishing in Jean Rabel is a technologically basic endeavor in that most resources are procured locally or derived from scrapped industrial goods. Nevertheless, compared to farming it requires a large investment and yields congruently high income. A fisherman who owns his own boat, a net, and fishing weirs, is on a financial level equivalent with or greater than that of farmers and even skilled craftsmen seen in the following chapter. Moreover, although most fishermen are
also dependent to varying degrees on farming strategies, the income they earn and the fact that it is earned independently of the household and contributions from other household members—most importantly their spouse—allow many of them to engage in conjugal union with more than one woman. In subsequent chapters I will take a closer look at the relationship between income, how it is earned, and conjugal unions. But first there are several other very important sources of income.

*****

Notes

1. In the 1999 fishing season, six men in Makab—men with kanots—had the following number of weirs: Mirabo, twenty; Francois, fourteen; Lanyo, thirty-five; Albè, twenty; Joseph, twenty-two; Antonio, fifteen.

2. Table 9.2: Cost of 300 meter seine in Haitian dollars (1 Haitian dollar = gdes: 1 US dollar (1999) = 16.8 gdes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Cost/unit</th>
<th>Unit/Meter</th>
<th>Cost/meter</th>
<th>Total units</th>
<th>Total cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>String*</td>
<td>1 roll</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Per meter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trim (liej)</td>
<td>Per meter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighting</td>
<td>Per meter</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floats</td>
<td>Gallon jug</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cord</td>
<td>Meter</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Most seines are made with #18 nylon string. They cost H$9 a roll when purchased in bulk. Otherwise, fishermen in the spring of 1999 paid H$12 a roll for any size roll of nylon string.

3. Most financial and catch information on seines is based on Obreun, the largest seine owner in the region. Obreun has a university degree in fisheries. In 1998 he earned 74,900 gdes for all five of his seines. Another 74,900 gdes—the other half of the catch—went to the 120 marins who hauled in the seines. He paid 26,860 gdes in reparations. He reports, however, that in a normal year he grosses between 100,000 and 200,000 gdes (an equivalent sum going to the marins).

Obreun reports that farming is much more lucrative for him, irrigated land he inherited being his biggest earner. Note that the seines do not yield him a great deal; if he makes US$20,000 in a very good year on all five seines and pays US$6,000 for reparations, he is left with US$14,167. Furthermore, this is indisputably among the three wealthiest men in the region, giving one an idea of the upper limits of income.

Note also that, except in the gran mer (the ocean), fisherman at the “Mol” do not use the floating nas.
4. There are two kinds of filè: filè twa nap and filè sinmp. A filè twa nap is essentially three layers of netting and the filè sinmp is only one layer of netting. The former is made of thicker nylon string (#9 and #36); the latter is made of finer #6 and #9 nylon string:

Table 9.3: The cost of string and weaving nets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>String #</th>
<th>Cost per roll (H$)</th>
<th>Cost of weaving per meter (H$)</th>
<th>Meters net per roll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>45–60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>45–60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>45–60</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>45–60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>45–60</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4: The cost of weights, floats, and rope

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Cost gdes</th>
<th>Cost/unit</th>
<th>Unit/ meter</th>
<th>Cost/meter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weights (lead balls)</td>
<td>sack of 50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liez (kos monben)</td>
<td>sack of 60</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cord</td>
<td>50 dz sacks</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weave rope</td>
<td>2 gde per sack</td>
<td>0.33 per mt</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. In Jean Rabel, kanots are smaller because seines, which require larger boats, are scarce. In Jean Rabel, the average local kanot is about 11 feet and the cost is 3,500 to 7,500 gdes

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Chapter 10
Work, Craftsmen, and Marketing Specialists

Introduction
As seen in chapter 8, agriculture and livestock rearing are the most important economic activities in Jean Rabel. Literally everyone is somehow involved in farming and, when asked to report the three most significant sources of household income, over 87 percent of Jean Rabel respondents reported agriculture, and 50 percent mentioned livestock. But these were not the only sources of income: 45 percent cited commerce as the most important source, 20 percent mentioned charcoal production, 15 percent mentioned manual labor, and 12 percent mentioned “professional,” which here includes both skilled labor and teaching. In this chapter I deal with these other categories of income. Unlike farming strategies, which are relatively equal opportunities based on household organization strategies, these other income-generating activities are more akin to fishing in that they are performed outside of the household, and access to and success at such activities are based on political contacts, age, sex, skill, and work ethic. Differential economic opportunity and success create differentials in social power and it will be seen in a later chapter that in examining the behavior of these individuals, the most economically active who by dint of their control over others—or dint of others who control them—are a vital determinant of family structure and kinship patterns.

Specialization and the Flourishing Subsistence Economy
Rural Jean Rabeliens are highly independent with regard to providing for their daily subsistence. Farmers have recourse to hundreds of natural and homemade substitutes for items like soaps, shampoos, hair laxatives, water containers, lamps, ropes, beds, fasteners, and shoes. Virtually anything regarded as a necessity has its homemade and cost-free substitute. As shown with regard to the marketplace, the range of specialization takes on almost extreme dimensions. For example, individuals specialize in the following activities: making tin lamps from discarded containers of condensed milk; crafting graters and funnels from tin vegetable oil containers; making candles from local beeswax or tree resins with wicks woven from locally grown cotton; fashioning brooms from a long stick with palm thatch lashed to the end; fashioning coffee makers from a sock of cloth and a loop of wire; producing juice strainers from screen scraps; making mortars and pestles of all sizes out of local woods, making switches to whip animals—and children—from the skin of bull testicles.1 These items are all made by part-time farmer-specialists. Lumber for houses and furniture is hewn by the local specialists who fell trees with axes and saw them into boards using hand saws. Furniture is made with hand tools. Chairs are made of sticks and palm thatch, sisal, or vine. Nails, hinges, latches, iron bed frames, and the bits on horse bridles are produced locally by smiths working with nothing more than a hammer,
burin, pliers, and burning coconut shells for heat to work the iron. There are also specialists who make nets, weirs, and boats, caulk the boats, and go into the hills to find buoyant monben tree seed pods for nets and poles for oars. There are specialists who make bread, sweet rolls, and coffee. Others sew shoes. There are those who go into the bush to find vines and galata poles for roofs. There are specialists who climb coconut and palm trees, who gather rocks, and who make lime and charcoal. There are specialists for fixing doors and roofs and there are children who specialize in fixing bicycle tires. Digging holes in gardens is another specialist activity, as is the castration of livestock. There are even specialists who castrate particular kind of livestock. Other specialists hunt cats or mongoose using trained dogs. There are specialist tomb builders, grave diggers, casket makers, and those who wash and prepare bodies for burial. There are health care specialists, herb specialists called leaf doctors who know hundreds of remedies made from local plants and trees to treat everything from colds to AIDS (not all of them are effective). There are masseuses, midwives, spiritual healers, magic practitioners, and card readers. There are prayersaying specialists, and even those who specialize in saying particular prayers on particular occasions.

### Table 10.1: Household income-generating activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Activity</th>
<th># (N=1,519)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1,320</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual labor</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teacher</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maid</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most specialists, men and women, work for the smallest pittance. For example, it costs 2 gdes (US$.12) for the sewing up of a pair of sandals, 1 gde (US$.06) for a sweet roll, 1 gde for a cup of coffee, 7.5 gdes (US$.45) for a session of sorcery, 6 gdes for a twenty-foot rope, 5 gdes for a lamp, and 25 gdes (US$1.50) for a chair. Basket and hat makers earn no more than 10 to 15 gdes per day (US$0.60 to US$0.89). Successful healers are often the wealthiest individuals in an area, but most herb doctors and midwives earn respect but little money. A midwife for example makes
50 gdes (US$3.00) per birth and is lucky to get one birth per month. A manyè (type of masseuse) makes two or three gdes a consultation (US$.12 to $.18) and is lucky to have one consultation per day—which will probably require a walk of several miles. One compensation for the low fees is that service specialists generally must be fed and men are given rum while they work. But the actual labor cost is usually very low. Specialists invariably also have their own home, livestock and gardens, the economic foundation of Jean Rabel, upon which they depend for survival.

**Male Employment Opportunities**

At the top of the Jean Rabel income ladder are tree sawyers, masons, and carpenters. These particular bosses (craftsmen) earn 100 gdes per day (US$5.95) and their workers earn 50 gdes per day (US$2.97). But this assumes ideal conditions. Tree sawing, for example, is one of the most lucrative if arduous tasks in rural Jean Rabel. A tree sawyer can earn anywhere from 100–300 gdes per day (US$5.95–US$29.75). The pay is by the job and depends on unforeseeable conditions—sharpeners break and some trees have almost impenetrable knots in them, knots that can be discovered only after a pay scale has been agreed on and the sawing begins. Thus, when all things are considered, a tree sawyer probably averages less than 100 gdes per day. Masons make about 75 gdes (US$4.46) per day and a carpenter makes the same.

**Table 10.2: Estimated wages for male workers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>Estimated income (gdes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boss</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General laborer</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal maker</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porters</td>
<td>30–90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag laborer</td>
<td>10–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat and basket maker</td>
<td>10–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural school teacher</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 10.3: Reported wages for male workers**

The principal benefit to being a boss is that the individual will find at least some work some of the time, occasionally much work, and the 75 gdes per day earned will be surplus beyond the subsistence earnings from farming livelihood strategies. Assuming work can be found two hundred days a year—accounting for weather, funerals, festivals, marriages, family reunions (called gombos), sickness, and Sundays off—the total possible annual income for skilled labor is probably no more than 15,000 gdes or approximately US$893 dollars per year, and at an average of 42.5 gdes per day (US$2.52), an unskilled laborer can make 8,500 gdes per year (approximately US$505.95). These are sums that significantly exceed the mean household income estimated by CARE International (US$350.00). Furthermore, bosses generally have the same number of livestock and gardens, if not more, than other farmers.

For the majority of men, however, well-paying wage opportunities are scarce. Porters who transport loads on their heads for money or who unload trucks in the village may make from 30 gdes (US$1.78) per day to a rare and strenuously earned 100 gdes per day (US$5.95). Full-time charcoal makers can also earn as much as bosses but the work is hard and prestige low. If they can find enough wood to cut, a charcoal specialist makes two sacks of charcoal per day for a daily income of about 70 gdes (US$4.17) but they still have to haul the charcoal to the market or to a place where it can be shipped on boat or truck, something that can take another day per two sacks reducing earnings to 35 gdes (US$2.08) per day. When hoeing fields, men are paid 10 gdes per bout (thirty bout to an acre). An average worker typically hoes three bout per day but actual production may range anywhere from one to five bout per day, depending on environmental conditions and the abilities of the worker, resulting in maximal possible earnings of approximately 50 gdes (US$2.97) for a day’s work. Rural schoolteachers, of which there are over six hundred in Jean Rabel, make 250 to 300 gdes per month (US$14.88 to US$17.86)—although they often get fringe benefits, such as opportunities to embezzle CARE food aid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of work</th>
<th>Estimated income per working day (gdes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>40–300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>40–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>40–100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron smith</td>
<td>35–250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal maker</td>
<td>35–150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General laborer</td>
<td>10–50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag laborer and porters</td>
<td>30–100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principal benefit to being a boss is that the individual will find at least some work some of the time, occasionally much work, and the 75 gdes per day earned will be surplus beyond the subsistence earnings from farming livelihood strategies. Assuming work can be found two hundred days a year—accounting for weather, funerals, festivals, marriages, family reunions (called gombos), sickness, and Sundays off—the total possible annual income for skilled labor is probably no more than 15,000 gdes or approximately US$893 dollars per year, and at an average of 42.5 gdes per day (US$2.52), an unskilled laborer can make 8,500 gdes per year (approximately US$505.95). These are sums that significantly exceed the mean household income estimated by CARE International (US$350.00). Furthermore, bosses generally have the same number of livestock and gardens, if not more, than other farmers.

For the majority of men, however, well-paying wage opportunities are scarce. Porters who transport loads on their heads for money or who unload trucks in the village may make from 30 gdes (US$1.78) per day to a rare and strenuously earned 100 gdes per day (US$5.95). Full-time charcoal makers can also earn as much as bosses but the work is hard and prestige low. If they can find enough wood to cut, a charcoal specialist makes two sacks of charcoal per day for a daily income of about 70 gdes (US$4.17) but they still have to haul the charcoal to the market or to a place where it can be shipped on boat or truck, something that can take another day per two sacks reducing earnings to 35 gdes (US$2.08) per day. When hoeing fields, men are paid 10 gdes per bout (thirty bout to an acre). An average worker typically hoes three bout per day but actual production may range anywhere from one to five bout per day, depending on environmental conditions and the abilities of the worker, resulting in maximal possible earnings of approximately 50 gdes (US$2.97) for a day’s work. Rural schoolteachers, of which there are over six hundred in Jean Rabel, make 250 to 300 gdes per month (US$14.88 to US$17.86)—although they often get fringe benefits, such as opportunities to embezzle CARE food aid.

**Men and Wage Migration**

In Haitian cities, the most menial income opportunities are comparably high paying in comparison to opportunities men find in Jean Rabel. A man pushing a wheelbarrow in the not-too-distant city of Port-de-Paix, for example, can earn an average of 100 gdes per day (US$5.95). In Nassau, the lowliest male laborer can reportedly earn 330 gdes per day (US$20) and more.
commonly 660 gdes (US$40.00)—a fortune by Jean Rabel standards. Women also migrate to the city and overseas but the opportunities are fewer. In Nassau, the principal job open to Haitian women is reportedly prostitution. A few women have access to upper scale urban neighborhoods within Haiti where they work as maids earning as much as $1,250.00 gdes per month (US$75), but domestic service far more commonly pays wages of 150 to 500 gdes per month (US$9–US$30).

Table 10.4: Urban blue collar pay scales, Port-de-Paix (adjusted for rental fees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male earnings (Haitian dollars per month*)</th>
<th>Female earnings (in Haitian dollars per month)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800–2,000</td>
<td>40–150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collector on bus/taxi</td>
<td>Seamstress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300–800</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loader on truck</td>
<td>Prostitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200–600</td>
<td>5 per customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant marine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowing boat at wharf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tire man</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi driver (moped)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelbarrow operator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 per day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 1 dollar = 5 gdes

* 1 dollar = 5 gdes

The upshot is that men have considerably more experience and opportunities for traveling overseas and to work in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. As seen in chapter 4, seventeen of the sixty-six men (two missing) interviewed for the Opinion Survey reported having worked in a city or overseas for at least 30 of the 365 days preceding the interview. Similarly, in a community sample of forty-one male household heads in Famadou, a typical Jean Rabel farming community, twenty-one of the respondents had gone to the city to work before they married or entered consensual union—and only seven had been away since entering into a union.5

Further, eleven of the sixty-six Jean Rabel men interviewed in the Baseline Survey reported having been overseas, whereas no women reported having ever been abroad. Also, twenty-six men versus seventeen women reported having visited the capital in their lifetimes (see table 10.5).6
Table 10.5: The most distant place farmers have visited

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The most distant place the respondent has visited</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA, Bahamas, DR</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port-au-Prince (capital)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary city</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port-de-Paix</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional market</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To put employment into perspective, most men in Jean Rabel would consider themselves very lucky to land a full-time job for 750 gdes per month (US$44) as a watchman for a local intervention organization. Rural men and woman scramble to secure a spot on road projects at the State minimum wage of 30 gdes per day (US$1.78). But it is also important to understand that this “scrambling” and interest in extra-domestic jobs rests on the expectation that employment will not impede the carrying out of farming activities. Intervention workers in the area are often mystified by Jean Rabeliens who, feeling overtaxed by a demanding employer, simply walk off their jobs in favor of tending to their gardens.

Female Employment Opportunities

There are no female bosses. Women do not work in jobs that require heavy lifting, and while many women, even young girls, might pick up a hoe (manye wou), a woman rarely performs heavy garden work, such as swinging a pick (voye pikwa) and digging holes (fouye tou). Woman can sometimes make 15 gdes per day (US$0.91) picking beans but usually a woman doing an agricultural job is lucky to earn anything more than a meal, some of the harvest, and a return favor owed for her efforts.

Women have a low representation in high prestige fields. None of the twenty-one kasek or sixty-five asek (rural political representatives) are women. Of the 53 (out of 3,925) individuals over eighteen years of age who were identified during the Baseline Survey as professional schoolteachers, only ten were female (19%). There are successful female healers, called mambos, and they are not uncommonly among the wealthier people in the region. Nevertheless, male shaman (bokor) outnumber their female counterparts ten to one. As seen, migrant opportunities for women are considerably less attractive than those available to men. Putting female employment opportunities into perspective, employed women are happy if they can earn the equivalent or somewhat lower wages (500–750 gdes) working six days a week cooking and washing clothes by hand. There is, however, one opportunity open to women that overshadows all others: marketing.7

Table 10.6: People who travel at least once per month
Women and the Market

Marketing is, after agriculture and livestock, the most important source of household income in Jean Rabel. Every woman who has her own household and who is not sick or crippled visits a regional market center at least once a week, where she makes household subsistence purchases and sells the agricultural and animal products produced by the household. In the Opinion Survey, 72 percent (97 of 135) women household heads or the wives of male household heads reported also being involved in buying and selling products other than those produced in the family homestead. Women may specialize in selling anything from staples to used clothes to brewed coffee to machetes and schoolbooks. Even butchery is a female buying and selling enterprise. It is women who skillfully chop with a machete freshly slaughtered animals into smaller divisions and then sell the fresh meat on the spot. The only marketing enterprises in which men participate are the selling of live animals—and even this is an activity in which women are more prominent than men—and itinerant pharmaceutical and pesticide sales. An illustration of the near-absolute domination of the retail marketplace by women was garnered through a count of 612 nonlivestock marketers in Lacoma, Jean Rabel on October 22, 1998: 609 of the sellers were women and only 3 were men. Female market activity is so important to household livelihood that few people would dare save money by stashing it away. A person who has money will invariably “put the money to work” by giving it to a female relative or friend who will roll the money over in the market, for as they say in Jean Rabel, lajan sere pa fe pitit (stashed money bears no children). Of fifty-two husbands interviewed on the topic during the Opinion Survey, thirty-nine reported that their wives were actively engaged in itinerant marketing and, of these women, thirty-one traveled to urban centers at least once a month. Indeed, although men travel farther and stay away from home longer than women, intense female marketing activity means that women travel more frequently than men. Many of the women specialize in the sale of one or several commodities, such as chickens, goats, or straw handbags, which they spend several weeks purchasing from neighbors, friends, or in rural markets to sell in the urban markets. Others focus on seasonal produce and staples.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does this person travel at least once per month?</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10.1: Port-de-Paix Marchann cost of merchandise (y = 483, SD=751, N = 54)
Note: Six observations exceed the 1,000 gdes limit visible in the graph.
The most common ventures to urban markets are made to Port-de-Paix and 38 percent of husbands reported that their wives make the trip at least once per month. The voyage is invariably made on donkey or mule, since the cost of public transportation would consume too much of the profits, and the women usually travel in groups with other market women. They set out for Port-de-Paix in the late afternoon and walk behind their loaded animals all night, fording streams and winding their way down worn trails, some of which have not changed course since the Taino Indians trod them five hundred years ago. On a straight, flat stretch of road flanked by lush banana trees, the women come at last to their final obstacle, Trois Rivie (the Three Rivers). Normally a wide but meandering, crystal clear, knee-deep lowland stream, rainfall in the mountains can quickly turn this tranquil creek into a muddy, life-threatening torrent that woman and animal must wade across to reach the city. Once on the other side of the river, the women find themselves on the windswept dirt streets of Port-de-Paix. They sell their produce among decaying vegetable heaps in a bustling, tin-roofed, seaside market. Many then turn around and head home that very day, without ever having slept and without having purchased anything, because the Port-de-Paix market has little to offer that cannot be bought more cheaply in Jean Rabel from the handlers of imported food aid or from the gran marchann, who ply their trade with Port-au-Prince.

The money that an active market woman can earn compares favorably to male income earnings. In a sample of fifty-four women interviewed while they were en route from Jean Rabel to Port-de-Paix, the average woman was found to be carrying 483 gdes (US$28.75) worth of merchandise to be sold for 717 gdes (US$42.68), yielding an average profit on their merchandise of 234 gdes (US$13.93). The norm, or modal value of merchandise a woman was carrying was between 100 to 200 gdes (US$5.95 to US$11.90), with a modal profit of 200 to 300 gdes (US$11.90 to US$17.85). There are no other incidental costs involved that reduce profit because the women carry their own food and water, and they cut grass along the way or carry fodder
from home to feed their animals. They do not stop to buy cokes or ice cream, and their donkeys burn no gasoline and eat no store-bought feeds or supplements. The women simply take their profits and return.

The average number of voyages per woman per month is two (1.9 to be exact) and so an average market woman makes about 468 gdes (US$27.85) per month as a result of her excursions to Port-de-Paix. The enterprise requires a total investment time of between four and six days. These same women also trade in rural markets and sell goods out of their homes. An investigation of the twenty-four major commodities being sold revealed that the average profit margin for retail sales within the commune of Jean Rabel was 20 percent (standard error of the mean at 2.4%) with a 15.6 day average turnover rate for the major commodities. Thus, using an estimated working capital of 430 gdes—the average value of what women were carrying to Port-de-Paix—market women are probably earning another 172 gdes per month.

Totaling what an average marchann makes in her Port-de-Paix ventures with profits on the home front, a woman’s average monthly income from marketing activities is about 640 gdes per month (US$38.00), more than 2.5 times the salary of the typical rural schoolteacher. The estimated annual total earnings is US$456, 29 percent greater than the regional income for a family of six as estimated in 1994 by CARE International (1996; 1997). But these are modal and average income levels. It needs to be understood that as with bosses, some market women are more successful than others, some have access to greater amounts of capital, and some are simply shrewder. Six of the women interviewed (11%) are not even reflected in figures 10.1 and 10.2 because they were carrying more than 1,000 gdes worth of merchandise. One woman was leading 4,410 gdes worth of livestock to market and she was going to make a profit of 1,040 gdes (US$61)—four times the average rate. Furthermore, as shown earlier, eleven of thirty-one urban-venturing marchann (35%) travel to the larger cities of Gonaives and Port-au-Prince, where the most successful women sometimes build their trade revenue up to several thousand Haitian dollars per month. There are a special few rural women who by virtue of their marketing savvy have migrated to the village of Jean Rabel and led their entire families into the higher ranks of the village commercial elite. They buy land for their husbands to farm, they pay other men to work gardens for them, and they send their children away to urban schools and overseas universities.

**Conclusion**

Jean Rabel has a flourishing subeconomy of skilled craftsmen and female marketing specialists. The money paid for services and local products may appear pittances to outsiders but they are meaningful within the narrow bounds of the regional subsistence economy. In particular, skilled craftsmen such as tree-sawyers, masons, and carpenters are among men who have an exceptional local income-earning opportunity outside of the household means of production. For women, the most substantial nonfarm income opportunity is marketing, the third most important source of household income in the region, and an activity that most women strive to master. But whatever the occupation, a person is already a member of a household, the true foundation of livelihood and survival in Jean Rabel, a point necessary to understand other sources of income. Without being a governing member of a functioning household, one is not free to engage in these other activities. It is through ownership and management of a household that one is free to pursue other economic activities. But this assumes that someone is left behind to take care of the
household, for the demands of the household as a production and income-generating unit and its role as the primary assurance against vicissitudes of the market and natural disasters implies immense labor demands, the subject of the next chapter.

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Notes

1. Saddles and saddle blankets are made from banana and plantain stalks, saddle bags and sacks ranging from quart size to a hundred gallons are woven from palm thatch, baskets are made from slithers of bamboo, bridles are made from sisal and palm thatch rope and goat skin with scrap iron used to make the bit, and hats are woven from grasses.

2. The scrap iron is heated over a fire of dry coconut shells, a fuel that burns hotter than regular woods.

3. The exchange rate used is 16.8 Haitian gdes = one US dollar. Five gdes = one Haitian dollar.

4. Examples of porter opportunities: Carrying fish weirs from the village to Mole St. Nicolas, a four-hour walk (eight hours round trip). Depending on physical endurance, a person can carry one to three large weirs at H$6.00 each or three to four small weirs at H$3.00 to H$4.00 each for a total of H$6.00 to $18.00 per day. Porters in the village get 1 to 2 gdes for carrying and unloading one 110 lb sack of rice or flour—wheelbarrows are rare. These same porters report making about 100 gdes a day but abundant work is not often available—usually on the two village market days, Wednesday and Saturday.

5. It makes no sense to a Jean Rabel woman to go live with a man in a house he gives her if the man has no gardens or livestock; nor does it make sense to go live with the man’s mother when the girl can more comfortably stay with her own mother, who will be happy to have the services of a grandchild. In the absence of a supportive husband, a Jean Rabel woman can begin bearing children while still living with her parents without suffering shame or ridicule. The higher rates of males in older age groups is possibly due to women with grown children going to live with the children in urban areas.

6. The chief advantage of domestic employment is that meals and sleeping quarters are usually provided by the employer. Some women go to the city for a year or two to earn the money to pay debts, buy land, or enter into marketing activities.

7. For the same wages as men, women fill some 33 percent of the places on road projects. But female involvement in roadwork is somewhat misleading because control of the lists is dominated by a few individuals and these people favor friends and family members. The outcome is that lists are stuffed with people, some of who never show up for work—a respectable man or woman of means would never actually work on a road project, although they might send a younger or less fortunate family member to work for them. When gardens are being planted, for example, one can expect to find only women working, no matter how many men are on the lists. In any case, for November 1998 to February 1999, 33 percent (3,289) of the 10,000 participants in a random one in three systematic sample of the AAA food for work lists were women. On lists made available by PISANO, 21 percent (234) of the 1,121 PISANO road
workers were female although the proportion of females varied widely per habitasyon—between 4 percent and 67 percent female.

8. The most successful women are intermediaries in urban/rural exchange of staples between Jean Rabel and Port-au-Prince—the staples flow both ways depending on the season. These women develop extensive networks of local female clientele who depend on them for supplies that are often provided on credit. Some of them become wealthy by local standards—many subsequently emigrate. Seven of the fifty-two women reported on in the followup survey regularly make the trip to Port-au-Prince.

9. The method of selecting women was not highly regimented or the sampling design sophisticated. Every morning for five days in January 2000, between the hours of sunrise and about 8:00 a.m., I sat by the roadside coming into Port-de-Paix, in a place called La Saline, before one arrives at Trois Rivie. All market women were stopped, explained the purpose and nature of the research and then interviewed regarding the type and quantity of merchandise they were carrying. Most women were friendly and cooperative. There were six refusals or rather six women who gave obviously false responses or who simply ignored me. To obtain sales prices in Port-de-Paix and purchase prices in rural areas, I personally visited the markets, haggled over prices, and consulted with market women I know as friends.

Concerning investments in pack animals: twenty-three of the women had only one donkey, seventeen had two donkeys, one woman had three donkeys, one had four donkeys, five women were on mules, and two were walking. An adult donkey costs about H$250.00 to H$350.00, a young donkey can be purchased for H$100.00 to H$250.00. A mule goes for H$800.00 to H$2,000.00, with H$1,200.00 being the most typical price.

10. I have not discussed credit in the main body of the text because I did not think it necessary. The analysis has to stop somewhere and the issue is how much women have invested and how much they can make—not how much they owe. Nevertheless, it may interest the reader to know that there is a well-established if indirect system of money lending. It works as follows: Gran marchanns (big vendors) and store owners sell sacks of staple foods—most often flour, rice, corn, and sugar—on credit to small vendors. Many of the small vendors then turn around and sell the sack or sacks of food for less than cost, using the money to buy and sell more profitable merchandise. The sellers give women a fixed amount of time to pay for the merchandise, usually twenty-two days (three market weeks). Some large vendors charge more money per sack but give as much as a two-month repayment period.

The reason large vendors prefer to give merchandise rather than simply loan money is not clear. The interest that can be demanded for money is reportedly as high as 100 percent per month. The interest charged through this “euphemistic” system of credit works out to be about 15 percent for twenty-two days (and this takes into consideration the loss to the borrower of selling the merchandise below cost).

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Chapter 11

Labor Demands

Introduction

In the previous chapter I showed that in Jean Rabel a dazzling degree of specialization occurs in both the production of local material goods and the provision of services. For men, skilled craftsmanship and seasonal agricultural work are sources of additional income and most men at some point in their lives temporarily migrate to urban areas, overseas, or to the Dominican Republic, where they work as menial wage laborers in agriculture and construction sectors. Some women also go to the city and work as maids or cooks. The primary feminine opportunity is marketing, something that all rural Haitian women eventually engage in and something that has the potential to put women on economically equal footing with men. But all these activities presuppose the individual’s participation in a household, for one must be a member of a household to assure survival in the unpredictable and harsh environment and to be free to engage in other income-generating activities.

In this chapter I want to show that the labor demands associated with technologically simplistic and low-risk household livelihood strategies are enormous. In later chapters it will be seen that it is precisely these demands that explain high fertility and the associated pronatal cultural patterns seen earlier. The role of household livelihood strategies in the face of an unpredictable economy, periodic drought, and the tremendous labor demands inherent in accomplishing these strategies is critical to survival in Jean Rabel. In tending gardens and livestock, fetching wood and water, cooking, cleaning, and childrearing, households need labor. The labor can be procured in three ways: (1) it can be purchased, as in hiring local or immigrant labor, (2) it can be traded, as in reciprocal work groups, and (3) it can be produced, as in pregnancy, childbirth, childrearing, and child labor (or as will be seen later, a child can also be “borrowed”).

Jean Rabeliens are at a decided disadvantage when it comes to purchasing labor. As shown previously, Jean Rabel ranks among the poorest areas in Haiti and the pay that cash-poor farmers can offer workers is too low to attract migrant laborers. Local wage laborers are scarce because most households have access to land and animals through the tenure arrangements described in the previous chapter. The result is that even the few Jean Rabeliens who have money available to pay agricultural laborers frequently complain that labor cannot be found. Moreover, Jean Rabeliens consider performing chores for another household to be humiliating, and no household head would ever consider paying anyone to perform these tasks.

Labor can also be obtained through the use of reciprocal labor groups, the only functional suprahousehold organizations in rural Jean Rabel. Farmers often depend on membership in such organizations, called kwadi, to prepare fields for planting. But as shown previously, agriculture is only one of the labor demands that must be satisfied to maintain a productive household, and
reciprocal labor groups will not drop by the house to assist in the completion of the daunting number of chores that must be accomplished daily in every rural Jean Rabel household. For most labor needs, Jean Rabeliens must depend on themselves and their family.

The Organization of Labor and the Prominence of the Household

Members of Jean Rabel households resolve simple subsistence tasks with raw human labor and abundant amounts of time. Household chores must be accomplished daily, tasks such as traveling several miles to fetch water, purchasing food in rural markets, and collecting firewood. The simplest message must be entrusted to and sent via a person, and clothes must be carried miles to the nearest river or spring where they are washed and wrung out by hand. These tasks, necessary and basic to a sanitary and healthy existence, are accomplished within the sociostructural organization of the household, meaning they are carried out by a cooperating group of people who identify themselves as members of a particular household. Furthermore, it is through the labor-allocating organizational structure of the household that the overwhelming majority of people in Jean Rabel are able to succeed at making a living, however meager, in agriculture and animal husbandry.

Household Tasks

In every household, a minimum number of time-consuming tasks must be performed on a daily basis. Every day the house and yard must be swept (the rolled up and put away and the house dusted, tasks that take an average of one to two hours to accomplish. Food preparation and cooking involve starting and tending a fire, snapping beans, peeling plantains and sweet potatoes, and pounding beans and spices. If the fire is good—i.e., the wood is seasoned and hard—rice or sweet potatoes can be boiled in about one hour. Beans are a daily staple in virtually all Jean Rabel households. If fresh, they take only twenty minutes to prepare, but if they are dry they must be boiled for more than two hours. Under optimal conditions, therefore, a meal can be prepared in about two hours, but it can and usually does take considerably longer. If the fire is not hot, because the wood is too green or of a poor quality, cooking a simple meal without meat can take more than four hours. If meat is cooked it must be washed with sour oranges or limes, boiled, and then fried, adding another hour to the time it takes to prepare a meal.

Gathering firewood is a task that requires at least one hour per day, and where wood is scarce it takes as much as three man-hours per day. Triweekly picking of beans and digging sweet potatoes are also time-consuming endeavors. The average distance from the homestead to a garden is a forty-six-minute walk, but 45 percent of gardens are located more than ninety minutes from the house. The actual harvesting takes one to two hours. Water is necessary in the house for drinking, cooking, and washing dishes and to accomplish these tasks the typical household uses ten gallons per day, although small households with very young children may get by on as little as five gallons per day. In effect, someone must make at least one and typically two or three daily trips to fetch water, at an average of seventy minutes per trip. For bathing and washing clothes, people usually go to the water sources rather than carry water back to the house, but this also involves another time-consuming trek. Clothes are washed by hand. Women typically wash clothes on one in every three days, a task that, depending on the number of people
in the household and the distance to the water, may consume from a half to one full day’s labor
(six to twelve hours). Someone in the household must go to the market at least twice a week, an
average round-trip walking time of three hours per journey (twelve kilometers). Totaled, the
minimum labor demand for a Jean Rabel household is an average of 74.2 adult hours per week,
or 10.6 hours per day. Depending on where the house is located in relation to water, sources of
firewood, and markets, and how many people live in the house, labor demands can exceed 155.4
adult labor hours per week, or 22.2 hours per day. And this is to say nothing about labor
demands associated with livestock and gardens (see table 11.2).

Table 11.1: Average daily labor requirements for principal household tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Frequency per day</th>
<th>Days per week</th>
<th>Avg # hours per performance</th>
<th>Avg. time per week (hours of adult labor)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning house cleaning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly house cleaning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3–6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water carrying</td>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning meal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afternoon meal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering fire wood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6–12</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk to garden + harvesting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip to market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>155.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reality, a task-by-task tabulation of labor demands does not accurately depict time spent doing
subsistence chores, because some household tasks can be integrated in such a way as to facilitate
the realization of others. For example, one may fetch the water on the way back from the market
or clean the house while breakfast is boiling. But, the primary objective of the analysis is to
begin to illustrate the tremendous time demands required in rural Jean Rabel to accomplish
simple subsistence tasks. A myriad of other routine household tasks not included in table 11.1
must also be accomplished. Goods and messages must be hand carried to other people and young
children must be fed, washed, and supervised. Adults insist on ironing cloths, a task that involves
using a charcoal heated steam iron. Coffee beans must be roasted and pounded into a powder, a
task that may be done once a week but takes up an entire morning. Just making coffee, when one
considers starting the fire, boiling the water, and straining the grounds, takes an hour. Dishes are
always washed after meals and in many households they are washed again every morning as a
sanitary measure—an activity that is virtually a Jean Rabel custom. On Saturdays everything is
hauled out of the house, dusted and scrubbed, another Jean Rabel custom. Other occasional time-
consuming chores not included in the calculations in table 11.1 include weaving rope and
sleeping mats, and repairing thatch roofs and mud walls.

Agriculture Labor Demands
There are two planting seasons per year in Jean Rabel, one in October and November and another in April and May. Even before the seasonal rains arrive, farmers scramble to begin working their own plots before daybreak (~5:00 a.m.) and if there is a bright moon, some farmers may begin working as early as 3:00 or 4:00 a.m. They hoe the soil (tchake) until about 10:00 a.m., take a break, and return to their fields at around 3:00 p.m. when the sun is no longer directly overhead and the temperature begins to cool. After the soil is turned, and providing the rains have begun, planting begins. One to two months later, the garden is weeded (sakle), and after three months the harvests begin (rekolt).3

Table 11.2: Estimated labor inputs for average 5.7 acres of garden: One three- to four-month planting cycle (eight-hour work day) (see endnote 5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Total # of bouts</th>
<th>Mean bout per day</th>
<th># of adults</th>
<th>Days needed per task</th>
<th>Total days needed per task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoeing</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>263.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ aE = \frac{B}{C}, \quad bF = D \times E \]

Virtually all rural Jean Rabel households are involved in agriculture. Only 2.5 percent of the Baseline Survey respondents claimed not to have any gardens. The mean amount of land farmed was 5.7 acres per household per year.4 What this means to farmers in practical work terms is that if the gardens are to be planted and harvested, the average farmer will need 319 adult/days of labor per cycle to do it. Due to the fact that the seasonal rains do not wait for people to finish planting and that hungry birds do not wait for people to finish harvesting, the farmer will need access to all of these labor hours concentrated into a few weeks time (see figure 11.1 below).5

Figure 11.1 Rainfall by months (Cabaret Station 1965–1969, 1978–1996)
Complicating matters for farmers is the regional labor shortage mentioned earlier. Farmers in Jean Rabel may be poor, but 67.1 percent report owning some land and even this is probably a large underestimate resulting from the tendency for farmers, in anticipation of assistance, to portray themselves as totally impoverished. Furthermore, the 32.9 percent percent who reportedly do not own land enter into fifty/fifty sharecropping arrangements or employ some other strategy to attain access to a plot of land.6

Table 11.3: All types of land tenure (units of analysis = gardens)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of land tenure</th>
<th>Percentage (n=3,711)</th>
<th>Cumulative percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owned</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharecropped</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On loan</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>99.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consequence is a labor squeeze. Everybody is working on their garden plots at the same time—hoeing at the same time, weeding at the same time, and harvesting at the same time. In the rush to get their gardens hoed lest they miss out on a good season, adults and even boys as young as nine and ten years of age form reciprocal work groups called kwadi. People with the money to pay local wages frequently complain they cannot find workers.

Fifty-one percent of household respondents reported reciprocal volunteer work groups as the principal source of garden labor, 25.7 percent reported family as the principal source, and 22.7
percent reported paid labor as the principal source. A time-consuming feature of planting not accounted for in table 11.2 on labor commitments is getting to the gardens. As farmers say, “there is mountain and there is plain” (gen monn, gen plenn), meaning that in Jean Rabel, in the endeavor to avoid crop failure, the farming of multiple garden plots geographically distant from one another is, in the face of highly variable soil types, altitudes, and rainfall patterns, a practical and adaptive strategy. The average farmer has 2.8 gardens and, as mentioned earlier, the average garden is a forty-six-minute walk from the house, with 45 percent of gardens more than ninety minutes from the house. Some men and women migrate to gardens and stay there during planting and harvests, sleeping in a small, tent-shaped thatch hut called a joupa, but most make the daily commute, a round trip average walking time of ninety minutes.7

**Livestock and Labor Demands**

Virtually everyone in Jean Rabel owns livestock and, as with land, there is a livestock tenure system. People with many animals, especially people who live in the village, give animals to other farmers to raise and look after. The farmer turns the first offspring over to the owner and then takes the second for himself, and so on. Any profits from sales of the “shared” animal are split fifty/fifty.8

Labor demands associated with livestock are more constant and greater than those associated with agriculture, because tasks related to livestock raising must be performed several times daily without failure. In most areas, livestock are tethered. In some areas, however, goats and sheep are free ranged but this is risky as other farmers have a right to kill the animals should they venture into a garden. Nevertheless, even free-ranged goats and sheep require a daily checkup and owners need to take water to the animals to prevent them from straying into garden areas.9 Animals particularly vulnerable to dog attacks (sheep), and animals popular with thieves (cows and mules), are brought back to the homestead in the evening. Goats are left tethered in the brush because they will bleat when approached by dogs, usually attracting the attention of people from nearby homesteads.

Animals are led to open pasture or checked before dawn. The animals are moved again at least once and sometimes twice during the day to areas with shade and fresh fodder. These times also serve to assure that the animals are not strangling on their cords, that dogs are not in the process of killing them, or that thieves are not in process of stealing them. Small animals such as goats and sheep do not need to be watered when there is abundant rainfall. But when there is not sufficient rainfall, as is common in Jean Rabel, the animals must be watered at least every three days and generally every day during the hot summer months. Rain or shine, large livestock such as cows and pack animals must be watered daily.

The amount of time invested in livestock obviously depends on the number of animals a household owns and the distance from the household to water sources and foraging areas. Animals are often tethered on the same land or in the vicinity of the garden and the average distance in time from the homestead to these grazing areas is thus a forty-six-minute walk. In cases where people use the kadas (the arid State lands) to free range, or more commonly to tether animals, the walk is considerably farther. When traveling through the kadas it is not uncommon to encounter boys two hours from home en route to or coming from checking livestock.
It is difficult and probably impractical to try to estimate the amount of time necessary to tend animals. To begin with, there is wide spectrum of intensity with which members of a household can care for their animals. Animals can be turned loose in the kadas and not checked for days, or tethered somewhere and moved only once a day. But these are risky practices that increase the chances of animals being lost, stolen, or killed by dogs. At the other extreme, a household head can see to it that animals are checked and moved at least twice during the day and brought into the yard at night, practices that increase the probability the animals will survive to reproduce and to be sold in the market. But that also requires significantly greater investments in time and labor.

Another factor that complicates the estimation of livestock labor inputs is the difficulty of determining how many animals can be moved or led to the water at the same time. A lone man or woman, for instance, can handle as many as six goats and an unlimited number of sheep. Only one sheep needs to be guided and the rest will follow. Goats will also follow but they are less cooperative. In summary, regarding the time and labor inputs required by a household for livestock raising, the general rule is that the more time and the more labor that is invested, the better.10

**Table 11.4: Distance to and from water**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When there is rain</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there is no rain</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most problematic is the water supply. Water sources dry up and people have to travel farther to fill their buckets. In the followup survey, respondents reported that the temporal distance to and from the nearest secondary water source is 120 minutes, almost twice as far as during normal times. All households in the region are experiencing the same stress and this means that the fewer water sources are being visited by more people. The fewer springs are packed with crowds of pushing, shoving, and cursing women and children. People get up at midnight so they can arrive at a distant spring before it becomes too crowded and they spend hours waiting to fill a
single water jug. Some people, particularly young children, return to the house teary-eyed, trodden and bruised, having failed to procure any water at all. Washing clothes during drought conditions becomes problematic as well. Women must travel great distances to find clean water and a vacant place to sit and scrub. Animals have to be watered more frequently since the desiccated fodder dehydrates them. Fodder itself becomes scarce, so farmers are traveling farther and farther into remote areas to graze their animals or to cut grass for them and then they must lead the animals more frequently in the other direction, into more peopled areas, where there are adequate water sources that have not dried up.

All of this additional effort translates into more labor and the need for more workers because, rain or no rain, people must eat and they must drink. Food still must be cooked, water found, clothes washed, and at least some animals must be kept alive so that when the drought finally does end there will be something with which to start producing again.12

**Conclusion**

In Jean Rabel, the household is the principal organizational medium for survival and, for the most part, the only enduring organizational structure. Being a member of a household is a prerequisite for survival. Virtually all tasks necessary for production and participation in the regional economy are accomplished within—or dependent on—the household. In this chapter, I showed that the actual time needed to accomplish the tasks that make a household viable are tremendous. There is also a feature inherent in the household economy that may not be readily visible to the casual observer. No matter how few members there are in a household, there is a minimum level of labor that must be accomplished. Distance to the water and the market does not change with the number of members in a household, nor does the time required to cook beans change as a result of the number of people eating them. The fundamental point is that the fewer people in a household, the more work there is to do for each member. On the other hand, with increasing numbers of household members, there is a relative decline in the workload required of each member (this was Chayanov’s Rule). This is assuming of course that the size of the household is within reasonable limits, meaning that too many people concentrated in a single household would exhaust local resources.

What exactly is the happy medium between too few and too many household members will be dealt with shortly. But first, as will be seen in the following chapter, labor intensiveness of household tasks and the income-generating opportunities available outside the household give way to a sexual and age division of labor. A woman is usually the focus of the household and the manager of domestic tasks while men concentrate their energies on animal and garden activities. Children are a significant source of labor and, while they participate in agriculture, they more often can be found carrying out easily accomplished but tedious, time-consuming chores such as retrieving water, gathering firewood, cooking, and tending livestock. The role of children in this regard sets up the conditions that give way to the particular types of kinship and family structure found in Jean Rabel

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**Notes**
1. While reciprocal labor groups are important, they are probably less important in Jean Rabel than in regions where farmers heavily depend on a few crops harvested over a very short period of time. The primary agricultural labor pinch in Jean Rabel comes during planting season and the significant advantage of reciprocal labor is that it resolves the need to accomplish particular tasks quickly, such as clearing a field that is grown over with small trees and brush, or turning the soil in a field so that it can be planted before weeds start growing. But in reality, there are few agricultural labor tasks that must involve reciprocal labor groups. Most crops in Jean Rabel are not harvested all at once, but rather over a long period of time and the few crops that do become ripe all at once, namely beans and corn, are easily harvested by a few people, typically women, who can manage the task alone. Furthermore, reciprocal labor groups are ultimately a zero-sum strategy of capturing labor because households get no more from participating in work teams than they contribute as members—i.e., one day of work in a neighbor’s field begets one day of work on the farmer’s own field.

2. A common mistake for development workers in the region is to assume that the limiting factor on meals is food availability, when in fact it is often time needed to cook meals.

The same observations were made in both the baseline survey of 1,586 households and the followup subsurvey of 138 households, in which the exact average was 67.19 minutes.

The estimates for distance to and between markets was based on the average cartographic midpoint of eight kilometers between markets. Four kilometers were added for altitude change and the fact that when it comes to traveling in rugged Jean Rabel, the shortest distance between two points—in this case the household and the market—is never a straight line.

3. The fall season is the highest yielding of the various seasons at low altitudes while the spring planting season is the highest yielding in the mountains.

4. This is a reference to total land farmed—not necessarily owned—and includes sharecropped property (see endnote 7 below). Seventy-six percent of all garden plots are .5 kawo (1.6 acres) or smaller, indicating the data is skewed by a few relatively large gardens.

5. Information is based on inputs per ¼ kawo, called ka and measured in Jean Rabel as sink kout chen (five lengths of a standardized surveyor’s chain = 28 feet per chain length). The table below assumes 24 bout per ka (16 square gol per bout; 1 gol ~ 9 ft; or another measure is bras which is about 5.5 five feet; 1 bout = 7 – 10 bras). In the conclusion here and in the main text, the measure has been translated to acres for convenience (30 bout to an acre). Planting here includes all crops; harvesting only includes bean, corn and millet, crops that are harvested all at once. Farmers—and it is usually women farmers who do this task—harvest sweet potatoes, beans, and other crops the entire year round, making these difficult tasks to estimate. They have been included in household tasks. Thus, in this calculation, harvesting involves uprooting beans and millet or picking corn. Drying time is not included in processing; only threshing. Total time may be slightly overestimated because some gardens are not planted in grain or beans but rather in crops for which little processing is necessary (such as plantains). On the other hand, time devoted to plants subsequently intercropped is not included. Many tasks should have been measured in hours, such as processing crops, because people perform them until they are tired and then do something else, thus distributing the task over a longer period of time. The appropriate adjustments were made based on eight hour working days, typical during hoeing. The total labor input per garden acre is fifty-six adult/days—the estimate below is in units of ka ¼ kawo and there are 3.19 acres per kawo, .80 acres per ka.
Table 11.5: Estimated labor inputs for average 1/4 kawo garden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of activity</th>
<th>Total number of bouts</th>
<th>Mean bout per day</th>
<th>Number of adults</th>
<th>Days needed per task</th>
<th>Total adult days needed Per task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hoeing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 {E} = {B} / {C}, 2 {F} = {D} * {E}

Note: Harvests refers to grains only. One three- to four-month planting cycle, given an eight-hour work day.

6. Almost one third of respondents, 413 households, reported owning no land; 87.7 percent of households own 2 kawo or less; and a mere 1.1 percent of households claimed to own more than 5 kawo of land. This should not, however, be interpreted to mean that ownership of land is concentrated. The largest landholder in the sample owned only 12 kawo and the now infamous gran dons (big landowners) of Jean Rabel—who have been alleged by the Haitian State to have played a role in the 1987 massacre and who controlled much of the local irrigated State land—long ago gave this land in sharecropping arrangements to local farmers and more recently have disappeared from the scene (at least two are in prison for accusations relating to the massacre). There are people who control and collect rent for this land in the name of the families, but their influence is fading and with the recent presence of INARA—the agricultural reform arm of the new Haitian Government—the days of the gran dons appear to be drawing to a close.

7. Some development workers in the region explain the fragmentation of garden land as a consequence of inheritance, i.e., families dividing land into ever smaller parcels for the inheritors. That land is fragmented through inheritance is undeniable. But land could also be aggregated through sales and trades. Over 50 percent of gardens in the baseline survey were reportedly purchased, and even though much of this land was purchased from family—meaning it was still a type of inheritance—it nevertheless indicates the opportunity to aggrandize land. But there appear to be practical reasons why Jean Rabel farmers prefer instead to hold on to a multiplicity of small fragmented holdings rather than aggregating them into a single large garden: in the Opinion Survey not one of the sixty-eight male farmers interviewed explained land fragmentation as a result of inheritance; virtually all the farmers explained the multiplicity of garden plots as an adaptation to variable ecological zones, i.e., soil and rainfall patterns (which in Jean Rabel change dramatically over distances of only a few kilometers). None mentioned heredity or lack of market access; thirty-eight respondents (56%) mentioned the importance of different soil types or the position of the garden plot—such as bottom land versus plateau—and thirty respondents (44%) emphasized rainfall patterns.

It is also interesting to note that the number of gardens per household in Jean Rabel is identical to the national average (RONCO 1987), and the size of gardens as well as the number of gardens planted per household does not appear to have changed in at least the past fifty years (see the
1950 census). With all technological factors being equal, therefore, there appears to be a limitation on the amount of land and number of gardens that an average household can work. The mean garden size is .59 kawo (see table); about 50 percent larger than the national average of .5 hectares (1 kawo = 1.29 hectare). However, 75.5 percent of all gardens are .5 kawo or smaller.

8. With regard to tenured livestock, the Baseline Survey turned up many more people looking after animals for others (tenured in) versus people giving animals to other people to look after (tenured out). A logical explanation for the “missing” animal owners might be that people who tenure animals out are fewer but wealthier—meaning a few tenure to many. However, a look only at the most highly tenured animals—cows (26.1% vs 3.8%), hogs (14.2% vs 1.1%), sheep (11.8% vs .7%), and goats (10.3 vs. 1.1%)—suggests this is not the case: assessing only households that have tenured animals, tables and below reveal the mean number of animals tenured in (1.58) is actually greater than the mean number of animals tenured out (1.11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11.6: Animals tenured-in vs. tenured-out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured-out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is probably a result of the way in which livestock tenure was measured: tenure was not recorded for every animal but rather the primary means of tenure by which households came into possession of each species of livestock. For example, if a household head reported being responsible for six donkeys, the question on tenure was “what is the primary means by which you have these donkeys?” Another reason for the disparity between people who “tenure out” versus “tenure in” animals is that many town-dwellers tenure animals out to people living in the countryside, thus they are not captured in the equation. The survey did not sample the village of Jean Rabel, which would have helped to clarify this point.

9. Damage done to gardens by roaming livestock is a principal source of conflict among farmers. Farmers who find goats or sheep foraging in their gardens sometimes exercise the right to kill the animal. The head is kept by the gardener, but the rest of the carcass is strung up in the nearest tree for the animal owner to come collect. Pigs found foraging in the neighbor’s gardens are usually not killed for their crime, but owners must pay for damages. Pigs suffer, however, in cases where the owner refuses to indemnify the victim—a pig belonging to the author was once macheted to death by a woman fed up with the procine’s repeated and uncompensated invasions of her kitchen (the pig had been “tenured out” to another neighbor). Roving cattle are never killed. However, owners must pay indemnities for damages to gardens. Failure to compensate for persistent intrusions into a neighbor’s garden sometimes results in a machete wound across the rump of the animal or the severing of its tail. Roving donkeys, horses or mules are, compared to other animals, a rare sight, and seldom are the animals intentionally injured for their depredations. Owners must pay for damages to gardens.

10. As elsewhere, I want to document here a series of ethnographic observations that are relevant here, that might be important to other researchers but for which there is no place in the main text.
In Jean Rabel, there is a system of rights regarding browsing livestock that is in various stages of evolution. In decades past, livestock in most areas was free ranged. In some areas today, particularly in the dry coastal region, farmers continue to free range goats and sheep on communal grazing lands owned by the State. Pigs are allowed to forage freely in seaside settlements and in large villages where there are no gardens to destroy. In other areas people are not allowed to free range livestock, but by consensus tether animals on any land not planted with crops. In still other areas landowners appear to be in the process of rebelling against free-tethering and are asserting their property rights by cutting loose livestock they find tied on their land. In more than 50 percent of communities—an educated guess—farmers now exclusively use private property to browse livestock.

11. Charcoal is bagged and sold to intermediaries who ship the product on trucks or by boat to urban centers, most notably Port-au-Prince. Rural Jean Rabeliens generally do not use charcoal themselves—they use wood. In almost any region one finds an ongoing production of charcoal with a handful of specialists and intermediaries engaged in the industry and they are considered among the poorest, lowliest people in an area, although the money earned at charcoal production can compare favorably to other occupations (see chapter 8). But for most individuals charcoal production is something that occurs when a special need arises, as when someone wants to build a house or finance a new garden, and charcoal production is most conspicuously bound with times of drought and crop failure. Makab, for example, is a shipping point for charcoal and there are usually several dozen sacks stacked on the beach. But during the 1996–1997 drought, the entire beach was covered with thousands of sacks of charcoal stacked as high as the houses.

12. The same increased labor demand associated with crises is true of marginal regions. The poorest people usually live in the most marginal areas, which in Jean Rabel are by definition those areas farthest from water and markets, thus increasing household labor requirements.


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