Subsidizing Capitalism

Brickmakers on the U.S.-Mexican Border

Tamar Diana Wilson

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Preface

Don Nicolas was partially raised on an impoverished rancho in Sinaloa, where he believes he was born in 1919, two years after the end of the Mexican Revolution. After the birth of his first living son, Diego, in 1936, Don Nicolas began working as a cotton harvester, traveling north from Culiacan through Sonora and to Baja California each year. In 1954, accompanied by his second wife and three children, he decided to stay in Mexicali. There, a distant relative who was a brickmaker (*ladrillero*) taught Don Nicolas the trade. For the next thirty-eight years, and through three more marriages and the birth of five more children, Don Nicolas lived on brickyards (*campos ladrilleros*). He and his family first worked as piece-rate laborers on others' brickyards and then rented in their own brickyard. All three of his sons followed this trade, first as part of Don Nicolas's unpaid family labor force, then, after marrying, as heads of their own brickmaking concerns. One of Don Nicolas's five daughters, the only one who remained in Mexicali, also married a brickmaker. Two of his sons married daughters of brickmakers.

When Don Nicolas was seventy years old, he and his son, Diego, who was in his early fifties, put a down payment on their own brickyard, and they were still paying for it in monthly installments in 1992.

Diego's children all worked as brickmakers. An older, married grandson bought a flatbed truck and sold his father's, his grandfather's, and others' bricks in the *colonias populares* (squatter settlements), *fraccionamientos* (government-sponsored sites and services settlements), and other construction sites throughout Mexicali. Diego did not allow his daughters to work mixing clay, their feet in icy mud in wintertime or sweating beneath the sun that heats the earth to 120° F during the summer: he feared that it would negatively affect their future childbearing. The daughters performed subsidiary tasks in brickmaking, however.

Dedicated to the brickmakers of Mexicali

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Contents

Don Nicolas and his family illustrate a number of phenomenon typical of brickmakers in Mexicali and elsewhere in Mexico. Initially, brickmakers were usually rural to urban migrants and were landless peasants in their places of origin. Often a relative with brickmaking experience would teach the incoming migrant the methods involved in manufacturing bricks. Brickmaking tends to run in families after the head of household enters the trade. There are endogamous tendencies among brickmakers due to, first, the isolation of brickyards on the periphery of the city and, second, due to this isolation, the narrow social field of brickmakers, which tends to include primarily other brickmakers and their families. Finally, brickmaking often, though not always, involves a trajectory from piece work on someone else's brickyard, to the renting in of a brickyard, to the ownership of one's own brickyard. This trajectory is heavily dependent on the existence of an unwaged family labor force.

Don Nicolas never managed to become a full-fledged brickyard owner during his lifetime, in part because he started so late in life—his sons married and became heads of their own rented-in brickyards, thus depriving him of the benefits of a family labor force—and, in part, because he did not have a wife to help him run his brickmaking enterprise and to organize the family labor force. (Successively, four wives either died or abandoned him for a less onerous life.)

Brickmaking in Mexico is an income-generating activity that falls within the informal sector, the informal economy, or the underground economy, as it has variously been called. Brickmakers generate their own employment, enjoy none of the workers' benefits such as medical insurance and pension plans legislated by the Mexican Labor Laws (Ley Federal de Trabajo), and avoid paying taxes—a form of "rent" that could lead to greater family impoverishment or even the disappearance of an incipient or ongoing brickmaking enterprise. In various parts of Mexico, including Mexicali, brickmakers have a unit within the CROC (Confederción Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos, or Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants).

Not all brickmakers belonged to the CROC, however, and those who did said the unions did little for them besides soliciting their votes. Two roles played by the union were often mentioned by the brickmakers, however. If a brickmaker was so impoverished that he could not afford burial for himself, his wife, or his child, then union members would collect money to buy a casket and a burial plot. Second, the unions pressured the government for new brickyard com-

plexes, when the city expanded to such an extent that new squatter settlements displaced the old brickyards. The government usually responded because the growing city needed the brickmakers' product to build houses, industrial parks, schools, and other structures. The brickmakers relocated even farther to the periphery, and even farther from urban services such as electricity, schools for their children, or even a *tienda* (small store) where they could buy tortillas or drinking water.

Don Nicolas did not belong to the CROC, though his son, Diego, was a functionary in the brickmaker section for many years, having multiple roles. When the new squatter settlement, Colonia Nueva Estancia (a pseudonym), was established in 1992, brickmakers in the area were forbidden to bake their bricks, due to the ovens' contamination of the air. Union members eventually were moved to an unoccupied stretch of land approximately six miles further south; their old brickyards became part of the new colonia, and they were given new ones in exchange. Those who did not belong to the union were not provided this benefit. Don Nicolas and Diego were prohibited from baking bricks on the brickyard they were buying. Initially they both sold unbaked bricks to other brickmakers on the new brickyards. They earned so little, however, that Diego eventually sought another job in the informal sector. He became the night watchman for a warehouse and was paid in cash, with no Social Security benefits. Later he did find a night watchman's job with *seguro* (the package of medical, housing, and pension benefits provided to workers in the formal sector).

I will not write much about the CROC in the following pages, although its constantly expanding role is important in understanding the present and future welfare of the Mexicali brickmakers. The union was the only "formalized" economic aspect of the brickmakers' trade when I initially did fieldwork among them in the early 1990s. Here I am concerned with brickmaking as informal sector work. It is my belief that not only theoretical approaches but the life stories of the brickmakers are important in understanding their lives and positioning in the economic system in which they are immersed.

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Border Subsidy

Gray smoke billows upwards in intermittent puffs
wisps skyward from the brickmakers' wood-fired ovens
erected on brickyards cut through by canals
filled with toxic wastes from factories and foundries
built of mottled hand-made bricks.

Families flock north from Sinaloa, Jalisco, Sonora,
Guerrero, Michoacán and points south:
The newly arrived labor force.
They seek work in the factories and foundries
of Baja California's capital city.

Together they invade weed-infested garbage-strewn
fields outside the city's limits: Form communities
of displaced persons expelled from *ranchos* where there are no jobs;
and they establish *colonias populares* or buy lots in *fraccionamientos*
and live, at first, in shacks of cardboard or discarded wood.

Little by little they replace their dirt-floored provisional abodes
with self-built houses made of mottled brick
like the bricks in the factories, banks, hotels, and shopping malls:
and the brickmakers mold the clay
and the brickmakers fire the bricks.

Tamar Diana Wilson

Introduction

Mexicali, the capital of the state of Baja California and home to the in-migrating brickmakers whose stories are presented in this book, celebrated its 100th birthday on March 14, 2003. Its birth as a commercial and service center in 1903 was due to the inversion of North American capital in the Mexicali Valley, in the interests of growing and processing cotton. Harrison Otis and his son-in-law, Harry Chandler, publishers of the *Los Angeles Times*, founded the Colorado River Land Company in 1902, and under the presidency of Porfirio Díaz, they acquired vast tracts of lands in the Mexicali Valley. Cotton cultivation was originally subcontracted to Chinese entrepreneurs who used a largely Chinese labor force (Hu-DeHart, 1985–1986; Anguiano Téllez, 1995: 22 et passim). In the early 1920s, limitations on the use of Chinese labor came first in the form of a hefty head tax on Chinese laborers imported into Baja California (imposed in 1919 by then-governor Estebán Cantú) and second in the form of federal legislation passed in 1923 prohibiting the importation of any foreigner for manual labor (Anguiano Téllez 1995: 76–77).[1]

Meanwhile, as a result of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) and its aftermath, many economic and political refugees from central Mexico began arriving in Mexicali and its valley, a point distant from the dislocations occurring elsewhere in Mexico. They were joined by farmworkers returning primarily from Arizona and California. A decade or so later, there was an inflow of Mexican families forcibly repatriated to Mexico during the Great Depression (Anguiano Téllez, 1995: 23, 75–76, 125).

Under the presidency of Lázaro Cardenas (1934–1940)—the president who distributed most land throughout the nation under the 1917 Constitution's agrarian reform law (Article 27)—large quantities of Mexicali Valley land were bought up from North American interests and distributed to *ejidatarios* (those who hold individual or share collective title to communally owned lands) or

sold to *pequeño propietarios* (small landowners). Up until 1946, the Colorado River Land Company continued to own a third of the Mexicali Valley lands; in that year, the Mexican federal government bought up and distributed these lands as well (Anguiano Téllez, 1995: 87–89, 99). Irrigation works, involving vast networks of canals, had been constructed first by the Colorado River Land Company, and later, after 1937, they were expanded by the Comisión Nacional de Irrigación (National Irrigation Commission) (Anguiano Téllez, 1995: 103). Some of these canals provided water for the making of bricks on the brickyard complexes in Mexicali—the water often diverted for this purpose from local farmers, with or without their consent.

In-migration to Mexicali surged after the completion of the Sonora-Baja California railroad, under construction from 1937 to 1947, which connected Mexicali to the central and southern states of Mexico (Anguiano Téllez, 1995: 31; Martínez, 2002: 1–2). In-migration fueled Mexicali's growth; the city's population growth from 1900 to 2000 can be seen in Table 1.

Many of the new in-migrants eventually acquired lots in *colonias populares* (squatter settlements), established by group invasion or gradual accretion on unoccupied lands and later regularized and extended services by state and municipal governments. The first *colonia popular* in Mexicali was established in 1934. Twenty-five more were formed between then and 1974, with numbers increasing each decade: twelve originated in the 1960s (Fuentes Romero and Casillas, 1983, Table 31: 43). Less were established in the 1970s, but in the five-year period between 1983 and 1987, nine new colonias arose from invasions (Ortega Villa, 1990). One of these colonias was "Colonia Popular," where 18 percent of male heads of household were brickmakers (ladrilleros), the majority of whom had previously lived with their families on brickyards on which they labored as piece-rate workers (*maquileros*), rented in, or owned. At least five more colonias were formed by 1992 (among them, "Colonia Nueva Estancia"), when land invasions became illegal.

People continued migrating to Mexicali, especially from the states of Jalisco, Sinaloa, and Sonora; in Colonia Popular, residents came from twenty-one states and the Federal District (Wilson, 1992). In-migrants from other states to Mexicali composed 24.7 percent of the city's population in 1980, 35 percent in 1990, and 31.4 percent in 2000 (INEGI, 1983: 47–48; 1991: 7–8; 2002: 78–79).

Though Don Nicolas and Diego arrived in Mexicali in the 1960s, most of the ladrilleros I interviewed had arrived in the 1970s (thus would be counted in the 1980 census) or the 1980s (thus would be

Table 1 Population of Mexicali and of Baja California, 1900–2000

Year	*Population of Baja California*	*Population of Mexicali*	*Percent of Population of State in Mexicali*
1900	7,583	397	5.2%
1910	9,760	1,600	16.3%
1921	23,537	14,599	61.9%
1930	48,327	29,985	62.1%
1940	78,907	44,399	56.6%
1950	226,965	124,362	54.7%
1960	520,165	281,333	54.1%
1970	870,421	396,324	45.5%
1980	1,177,886	510,664	43.3%
1990	1,660,855	601,938	36.2%
2000	2,487,367	764,602	30.7%

Sources: Anguiano Téllez, 1995: 124; CONEPO, 1997: 93; Corona, 1986: 85–90; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), 1991: 7; 2002: 78.

counted in the 1990 census). All of these in-migrants needed housing. Prior to 1992, when land invasions were prohibited, many found lots in colonias populares; others found lots in sites and services settlements (fraccionamientos),[2] which they still do today. The majority eventually upgrade their initial housing to brick or cement block, with brick being preferred.

I am unsure when brickmaking first began in Mexicali. The first railroad stations in Baja California, and the houses surrounding them, were, from 1937 onward, built of unfired, sun-dried bricks (Martínez, 2002: 2). Up until 1951, with the construction of the Escuela Presidente Aléman (President Aléman School) with bricks, most public buildings—for example, the Palacio del Gobierno (initiated in 1919 to house state government offices) and the Palacio Municipal (initiated in 1924 to house municipal government offices)—were built with reinforced concrete; some public buildings had additions of cement block (Lucero Velasco, 2002). By the late 1950s, fired bricks became more common in construction. Lucero Velasco (2002: 96) attributes this to the "tendencies" and "traditions" of in-migrants coming to Mexicali from central and southern Mexican states. For at least the past three decades, industrial parks, office buildings, and individual houses were among the structures built of handmade, fired bricks. In the pages that follow I will present my methodology in acquiring information about the brickmakers, most of whom I inter-

viewed in their houses in Colonia Popular but also, in some cases, on the brickyards they rented in or owned. I also will relate why I chose to present some of the information as "short stories."

Methodology

"Colonia Popular," as I call the squatter settlement where most of the brickmakers (and all of the garbage pickers) I interviewed lived, was established in January 1984 by an invasion of an empty field to the south of the city of Mexicali. In the campaign for the governorship of the state of Baja California in that year, Xicoténcalt Leyva Mortera utilized the slogan: "Un Lote Para Cada Familia Humilde, Es Tu Derecho!" (A [house] lot for every poor family. It is your right!) (Moreno Mena, 1989; Ortega Villa, 1990). After ascending to the governorship, Leyva Mortera established his "Fraccionamientos Populares" program designed to give title to lands already invaded and to provide an orderly process for future land invasions (Ortega Villa, 1990).

In 1985, the legal possession of lands in Colonia Popular was recognized; nonetheless, legal title to house lots had not been surrendered by 2005. Colonia Popular consists of 155 house lots: eight are utilized for a kindergarten and twelve for a primary school. In 1986, electricity became an option for each family resident in the colonia. Each lot owner could sign a contract with the electricity company (Comisión Federal de Electricidad), promising to make monthly payments for the installation of posts and lines. Part of the costs were subsidized by the state and federal governments. By 1991, twelve households still did not have electricity. The families who lived on these lots simply did not have enough resources to pay their portion of the installation costs. Four of these were brickmakers. Of the 157 households from which one or more interviews were taken, twenty-nine (18 percent) of the male heads of household worked as brickmakers.

Between the autumn of 1988 and the winter of 1990, the heads of household (male, female, or both) were interviewed in 151 of the 155 permanently occupied lots. The majority of the initial interviews were retrieved in 1988 with the help of six sociology students from the Universidad Aútonoma de Baja California, Mexicali. New families were moving in constantly to occupy empty lots. I interviewed many of these family heads in 1989 and 1990, for a total of 174 interviews.

Although the interviews were designed to describe the migratory history of the families, work histories also were documented.

Table 2 Place of Origin of Male Brickmaker Heads of Household Residing in Colonia Popular

	Males		*Females*		*Total*	
Place of Origin	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
Jalisco	7	24.1	2	50.0	9	27.3
Zacatecas	6	20.7	1	25.0	7	21.2
Sinaloa	4	13.8	–	–	4	12.1
Nayarit	3	10.3	–	–	3	9.1
Michoacán	2	6.9	–	–	2	6.1
Chihuahua	2	6.9	–	–	2	6.1
D. F.	–	–	1	25.0	1	3.0
Mexicali, BCN	5	17.2	–	–	5	15.2
Total	29	99.9	4	100.0	33	100.1

Source: Interviews in Colonia Popular, 1989–1992.

Questions such as what was your occupation before arriving in Mexicali, what was your first occupation upon arriving in Mexicali, and what is your and your spouses' current work were included. The results are a reflection of the occupations engaged in only during that time period, since men frequently change jobs. Only the brickmakers remained in the same occupation over many years, some for a lifetime, and even over generations. In 1991 and 1992, I conducted in-depth interviews with brickmakers about their work, the history of living on brickyards, and their opinions about brickmaking for themselves and their offspring. Furthermore, I visited the new garbage dump and talked to garbage pickers there. Some brickmakers had moved to brickyards from Colonia Popular in the ensuing years, and I re-interviewed them there. I also interviewed and conversed with two families who had never lived elsewhere than on brickyards.

As can be seen in Table 2, the majority (82.8 percent) of the brickmakers who lived in Colonia Popular emigrated into the state of Baja California. Twenty-four percent of male brickmakers came from the state of Jalisco and almost 21 percent from the state of Zacatecas. The four states of Jalisco, Zacatecas, Sinaloa, and Nayarit are the places of origin of 68.9 percent of the male heads of household. Twenty-three of the twenty-four male heads of household (95.8 percent) who emigrated into Baja California were born on *ranchos* (unincorporated rural villages) or in small agricultural towns.

Brickmaking Families

The manufacture of bricks tends to be a family affair. All members of the family help produce bricks. Because the brickyards are isolated on the periphery of the city, far from neighbors, social interaction among the brickmakers who live on the yards where they work tends to be limited to one another. For this reason, sons of brickmakers often marry daughters of brickmakers. Of the thirty-three brickmakers who came to live in Colonia Popular, twenty-nine men and four women, three brickmakers' fathers were brickmakers, four brickmakers' wives' fathers were brickmakers, and three women brickmakers had fathers who were brickmakers.

The ages of the male and female heads of household who work as brickmakers can be seen in Table 3. Of the twenty-nine male brickmakers, 37.9 percent are between twenty and thirty years of age, and 65.6 percent are less than forty years old. Brickmaking is difficult work in Mexicali: it is necessary to work without pausing in temperatures reaching 120° F in the summers and to work without shoes in icy water when excavating the earth or mixing the clay during winter. For this reason, many brickmakers whose children desert the brickyards for other employment seek other work when reaching an advanced age.

The percentages of brickmakers with low educational levels are higher than the percentages for the state of Baja California or for

Table 3 Ages of Men and Women Heads of Household Living in Colonia Popular Who Work Making Bricks: 1989–1990

Ages	*Males*		*Females*		*Total*	
	No.	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
20–24	4	13.8	1	25.0	5	15.2
25–29	7	24.1	1	25.0	8	24.2
30–34	2	6.9	–	–	2	6.1
35–39	2	6.9	1	25.0	3	9.1
40–44	3	10.3	1	25.0	4	12.1
45–49	2	6.9	–	–	2	6.1
50–54	4	13.8	–	–	4	12.1
55–59	3	10.3	–	–	3	9.1
60+	2	6.9	–	–	2	6.1
Total	29	99.9*	4	100.0	33	100.1*

*Difference from 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: Interviews in Colonia Popular, 1989–1992.

Table 4 Level of Schooling of the Brickmakers of Colonia Popular As Compared to the Level of Schooling of the Population Fifteen Years Old and Over in Mexicali and in Baja California

Level of Schooling	*Baja California*	*Mexicali*	*Brickmakers in Colonia Popular*
None or less than primary school	23.5	23.8	81.8
Finished primary school	19.1	16.6	6.1
More than primary school	55.1	57.2	12.1
Not specified	2.4	2.4	–
Total	100.1	100.0	100.0

Sources: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 1991; Interviews in Colonia Popular, 1989–1992.

Mexicali as a whole, as can be seen in Table 4. Slightly more than 81 percent of brickmakers have not finished primary school, as compared to slightly over 23 percent for the population of the state and city of Mexicali. Of the men, 41.4 percent have less than one year of schooling, and, including this group, 82.8 percent (twenty-four of twenty-nine) have not completed primary school. Of the women who work as brickmakers, 75 percent have not completed primary school. The use of a family labor force and also the distance between the brickyards and services such as schools and urban transit partially explain these differences. Many of the brickmakers were aware of the need for education for their offspring, however; and in many cases, the children of brickmakers had completed primary school or beyond; Guadalupe's offspring were exceptional in not having finished elementary school.

The majority of brickmaker families residing in the colonia have lived for a period of time on the brickyards where they produce bricks. Of the twenty-one people I asked "Where did you live immediately prior to coming to Colonia Popular?" Fifteen (71%) said they had lived on a brickyard. Another three families had lived on brickyards during the five years prior to acquiring a lot in the colonia. Thus 86 percent of the families with a male head of household who worked as a brickmaker have lived on brickyards in Mexicali. Six families sold their lots in Colonia Popular after the colonia was regularized: five of them made a down payment on or bought brickyards outright with the money they earned from doing so. The others moved to a brickyard that they had already acquired.

Besides the brickmakers who lived in Colonia Popular I also interviewed three brickmaker families who were living on the brickyards at the time of the interview, two of whom previously had house lots in Colonia Popular, thus my sample size was thirty-six.

In 2003, I returned for several weeks in May and June to try to find out what had happened to the brickmaker families: if they were still making bricks, and, if so, if they had moved forward economically. I was able to speak to five brickmaker heads of household, and I obtained information about twenty-seven more (in total, thirty-two of the original thirty-six interviewed) through relatives (ex-wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, sons, daughters, sisters, and/or brothers). The information about the four families in the chapter on women's and children's work on the brickyards (chapter 5) was garnered at that time, as was data on the current price of bricks, observations of the new technology on the brickyards, and a short account of the history of the brickmakers' involvement in the CROC. In August 2003, in pursuit of another study—on the immigration to the United States from Colonia Popular—I was able to interview a brickmaker and his brickmaker son in the Lake Tahoe region of Nevada.

Fiction and Creative Non-Fiction

An anonymous reviewer of one of the preliminary drafts of this book asked me to define "creative non-fiction," which I was claiming my poetry and vignettes to be. So I reviewed a few books on the subject. One account is that "Creative non-fiction has emerged in the last few years as the province of factual prose that is also *literary*—infused with stylistic devices, tropes, and rhetorical flourishes of the best fiction and the most lyrical narrative poetry. It is fact-based writing that remains compelling, undiminished by the passage of time, that has at its heart an interest in enduring human values: foremost a fidelity to accuracy, to *truthfulness*" (Forché and Gerard, 2001: 1). Aside from their dubious literary value, and although they are "fact based" in the sense of rendering the truth as those who spoke to me saw it, two of my "stories" are fiction rather than creative non-fiction. According to one expert in writing creative non-fiction, creating composite characters crosses the line from non-fiction to fiction (Gerard, 1996: 201). Editing interviews and presenting them in a different order from the one said, and even paraphrasing, do *not*, however, according to the same author, constitute fiction (Gerard, 1996: 120).

The short story, "The Ladrillera" (chapter 1), is loosely based on the migration history of one of Guadalupe's daughters (chapter 5). The context of the story was the invasion of lands in 1991 not far from Colonia Popular. A number of men and women, though mainly women, from Colonia Popular sought lots for their offspring during this invasion. I was in intense contact with four women and one man who, living in Colonia Popular, took part in establishing the new colonia. I often accompanied three of the women to their new lots and even spent nights in the small rooms erected on their properties. A presence was required on the lot to show possession, and the women would bring washing or work on house construction to fill the time. There were also occasional meetings to discuss strategy in the face of government opposition, as well as guard duty required for several hours a week by all colonos. Ultimately this land invasion was a failure, but after some negotiations, the government ceded a nearby stretch of land to the colonos, assigning each of them a lot. I call this new colonia "Nueva Estancia," though many of the experiences recounted in the story took place during the original invasion of lands that eventually had to be vacated. In both colonias I attended meetings with the women I knew. I stood guard duty with one and helped another collect materials and put up the original scrapwood shack. Although I was not present when Gloria and the "Seventh Dwarf" were arrested, my friends recounted the incident to me, and it also was reported in two or three of the local Mexicali newspapers.

The norms for women, the fear of the consequences of their physical mobility, were imposed on a number of them in the new colonia as well as in Colonia Popular. This form of machismo is also well documented in the literature on gender relations in Latin America. "The Ladrillera" is fiction. Though based loosely on the life history of one of Guadalupe's daughters, it involved participant observation among a number of different women who took part in the invasion, although interviews were also conducted with her, her brothers, and her mother and father. I never stayed in her house in the new colonia, nor saw her struggles to build their first shelter, although I did with other women. Nonetheless, that makes her a composite character, and thus the account of that portion of her life fiction rather than non-fiction. Notably, *Anthropology and Humanism*, which published poetry and fiction, has no separate category for creative non-fiction; fictionalized accounts of information gathered during fieldwork are a permissible contribution to anthropological knowledge.

Not long after the establishment of Nueva Estancia in 1992, the brickmakers were prohibited from baking their bricks due to the air

contamination it caused. Approximately a year later, the brickmakers moved to rent lands farther south from the expanding periphery of the city. Those who owned brickyards made out decently, since the value of the land increased slightly as the area was turned into a residential district, which meant it would eventually be supplied with electric and water services. They were able to sell at a profit and buy brickyards in the new brickyard complex farther south of the city. This meant that they were isolated once again and far from the schools and small stores that had sprung up in Nueva Estancia.

Don Nicolas did not attempt to find a new brickyard but continued to make bricks without baking them and sold the unbaked bricks to brickmakers who had moved to the new periphery. He earned less than half the amount for unbaked bricks than he would have for baked bricks. It was partially due to this change in fortune and partially due to his injury that Don Nicolas's son, Diego, left brickmaking to seek work as a watchman, the refuge in Mexicali of elder men with no capital or useable skills. Don Nicolas's story is an edited version of my interviews and conversations with him, with some additions from interviews with other brickmakers. Don Nicolas died alone in 1997 while still living on the brickyard near Nueva Estancia that he had hoped to buy. As far as I know, he never met the widow mentioned in the story. She died in 1999.

In my story of Don Nicolas, I did add details from other lives: another brickmaker who had moved from state to state during his youth. And his family, as far as I know, had not been affected by the *cristero* revolt, though one woman's was. Otherwise, things are as he told me, in interviews and conversations. But by adding details from other people's lives, I have made him a composite character and thus written a fictionalized account.

"Mexicali Brickmaker's Wife" (chapter 6) is based on an interview I did with a woman living on the brickyards with her husband and seven children. When I first interviewed Marisela, she said that she did nothing. When I replied that I saw her carrying bricks, she admitted to this, and step by step admitted even more. She offered that she "kept the books."

"Brickmaker's Daughter, Brickmaker's Wife" (chapter 8) *is* a first-person, creative non-fiction piece based on interviews with Yolanda's parents (Marisela and Fernando), her husband Julio's parents (Estela and Rogelio), and my friendship with Yolanda and Julio over at least a two-year period, 1990 to 1992. I became aware of the problems she was having in getting permission to marry Julio when they asked me to be the *madrina* (godmother) for their wedding,

which essentially made me a go-between for the two sets of parents to determine a wedding date. The formal church wedding never took place: Yolanda and Julio married quietly in the civil registrar's office, thus I never became their godmother. I saw them again in 2003. In the latter year I spoke to both of them at length about their lives over the past decade. I also spoke to Julia's stepfather and mother, who were visiting Mexicali from San Quentín in order to acquire medical aid at the General Hospital, an institution absent in San Quentín. Though my conversations with the "brickmaker's daughter" occurred intermittently over a fourteen-year period, she is not a composite character, and the story is a presentation of her real-life story over that period of time.

"Don Rafael's Desire" (chapter 11) is also creative non-fiction. I interviewed and conversed with him a number of times while staying in his daughter-in-law's and son Raúl's house in the Lake Tahoe area in August 2003. This was in pursuit of another research project on migration from Colonia Popular to Arizona and Nevada. Although the order in which he told me is changed, it is his story. The amnesty referred to in the story involves the 1986 Immigration Control and Reform Act that permitted agricultural workers who had labored in the fields for ninety days or more during certain years to regularize their illegal status. I include this story to show that many brickmakers indeed like to be brickmakers.

Alejandro Morales (1992: 319), in his novel about Mexican workers in a Los Angeles County brick factory, claims that "*The Brick People* is a work of fiction. Any similarity between characters, living or dead, is coincidental." This is a typical disclaimer in all novels. Yet it is a *historical* novel, revealing how the toil of immigrants helped build California (Márquez, 1996: 80). Morales's story is based on a real brickworks (the Simons brick factory) with reference to his father's and mother's lives and to his father's attempt to help unionize fellow workers there (Cook, 1998: Footnote 4, p. 288; Morales, 1996: 20–21). Despite its being a fictional account, it gives the reader insights into the living conditions and struggles of these Mexican immigrant brickmakers. I hope that my fiction and creative non-fiction pieces can portray insights for readers into the lives and personalities of some of Mexicali brickmakers that would be hidden in academic prose. The reason for giving these fictional and creative non-fictional accounts is to "represent" from interviews, conversations, participation, and observation the typical (or extreme) instances in the life histories of some of the brickmakers who so kindly lent me their time.

Outline of This Book

Subsidizing Capitalism: Brickmakers on the U.S.–Mexican Border is meant to be postmodern in format, with academic chapters interspersed with fictional and non-fictional accounts presenting a portion of the life histories of the brickmakers. The intent of the "short stories" and the poem about the brickmaker's wife is to show that grand theory rests on the life stories of real people.

The first chapter consists of the short story, "The Ladrillera." ("The Brickmaker"). It concerns a brickmaker family who migrates from Jalisco to work on the brickyards in Mexicali and their acquisition of a lot in the squatter settlement I call "Colonia Nueva Estancia," near the brickyards. Although the story is centrally concerned with a portion of the life of a brickmaker family, I also hope to illustrate the dynamics of establishing a home via land invasion in a squatter settlement (colonia popular).

In the second chapter I summarize various theoretical approaches to understanding the informal sector and show how elements of various approaches are needed to explain the position of brickmakers vis-à-vis capitalist enterprise and the overarching capitalist system. I then discusses similarities and differences between the economic position of brickmakers and peasants, introducing Chayanovian and Marxian theories. I also explore how women are involved in both peasant production and brickmaking and in subsistence activities supportive of both.

In the third chapter I outline the process of brickmaking and describe the internal class stratification among brickmakers. I point out their structural similarities to the ideal-typical peasantry, with the fourfold internal class structure of proletarian, petty commodity producer who controls the means of production, petty commodity producer who both owns and controls the means of production, and petty capitalist. The importance of the domestic cycle in passage from petty commodity production to petty capitalism is underscored. I further explore how petty commodity production and the patriarchal family are mutually supportive. In chapter 4 I reconstruct, in the form of a first-person short story, the Mexicali career of a brickmaker, a grandfather (Don Nicolas) with brickmaking sons and daughters and grandchildren, based on interviews and conversations with him, his family, and other brickmakers. Because two aspects of other brickmakers' lives were added, and Don Nicolas in the story is thus a composite character, it is fiction.

In chapter 5 I examine the roles of women and children on the brickyards, both in terms of their contributions to "endofamilial accumulation" (Cook, 1984a; Cook and Binford, 1990) within the household economy and in terms of their indirect and direct subsidies to the overarching capitalist system. Chapter 6 is a poem based on an interview with a brickmaker's wife.

I consider in chapter 7 the importance of gender in petty commodity producer-microentrepreneur households not only among brickmakers but among subcontracted microenterprises and artisans. The subsidy that women provide to the household and to the capitalist economy is underscored. It is offered in the belief that a gender perspective is important in understanding the endofamilial accumulation of the dynamic and inner workings of the brickmakers' mutually influential household and enterprise. I argue that brickmakers, as peasants and other petty commodity producers who utilize a family labor force, are neopatriarchal in character. Chapter 8 is a first-person, creative non-fiction piece tracing the brickmaking career of a brickmaker's daughter who became a brickmaker's wife. Chapter 9 introduces the case of garbage pickers, an informal, income-generating activity that differs in its manner of subsidizing capitalism and capitalist enterprise from the subsidy provided by the brickmakers. Self- and family exploitation is common to both, however, as is "liberation" from employer-imposed discipline. Chapter 10 considers the idea that the informal sector in general and brickmakers in particular show "counterhegemonic" tendencies. It is argued that though their economic activities indeed sometimes show counterhegemonic aspects, core capitalist enterprise and the overarching capitalist system siphon off much of the value they produce. Chapter 11 is another creative non-fiction piece. The epilogue updates changes that have occurred in Mexico and among the Mexicali brickmakers since the original study. The appendix is concerned with the theoretical and empirical differences between Scott Cook's findings in his many books and articles on brickmakers and mine.

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CHAPTER 1

"The Ladrillera"

Josefina García emerged from the Central Bus Terminal carrying her fourteen-month-old son. His head on her breast, Pablo slept from exhaustion after the thirty-eight-hour trip from Guadalajara. Her five-year-old, Miguelito, clung to the end of her long cotton blouse, as he had been taught to do when they were on city streets or in crowded places. Rubén, her husband of seven years, his sun-wrinkled face and quiet, serious demeanor, making him look older than his twenty-three years, walked beside her, carrying the two patched suitcases bound by a length of rope and containing their clothes and a few pots and pans.

Outside the terminal, the air rising from the cracked sidewalk shimmered from the midday heat. They had arrived in Mexicali again, as she had done every year for the past eight years, and as she and her husband had done since they had begun living together six years ago. The rains had come again in Jalisco, making it impossible for them to continue making bricks, turning their efforts from hard, rectangular building blocks to asymmetrical clumps of mud.

The only difference was that this year Josefina and her husband had preceded her mother and father and her two brothers and their wives and children. Usually her mother and father or her eldest brother, José, and his wife had come ahead to arrange work for the family. But this year, Josefina's mother had wanted to visit the rancho she was from in Zacatecas, having heard her own mother was ill; Jose's wife was going to give birth any day and didn't want to come north until the baby was born, and José had stayed behind to sell the last bricks they had all made. And last year, her father had died of pneumonia.

Josefina and Rubén turned right and walked to the nearest urban bus stop. "Which bus goes to the Sanchez Toboada crossing?" Josefina asked a grey-haired women laden down with plastic bags filled with groceries from the supermarket across the street.

"Any yellow and white or maroon and yellow," the woman answered.

Josefina was glad the woman had not replied with a bus number. Then she would have had to ask what the bus looked like, revealing that she could not read. "There's still no bus that goes from here down the highway to San Felipe?" Josefina queried the woman again.

"No," the woman said, "I have to change, too." Then, after a pause: "Are you going to Colonia Santos?"

"No. To the brickyards," Josefina replied.

They boarded the next yellow-and-white bus to Sanchez Toboada, then waited for the hourly bus that traveled past the dirt road where the brickyard complexes to the south of Mexicali could be found. Little Miguelito complained about being thirsty, and Josefina extracted the plastic bottle filled with drinking water from the large canvas bag strung over her shoulder. They would have to buy more water soon. They had only 14,000 pesos and change. A kilo of beans, which would last the family only two days, and that without flour to make tortillas, cost 2,500 pesos. And they would have to buy drinking water, 2,000 pesos for the five-gallon bottle. This they needed for cooking as well. They drank so much in the heat when working that they went through three or four of these a week.

They got off of the bus at the rutted yellow dirt road two and a half kilometers outside of the city and started the long walk past the dairy farm that fronted the highway and that was backed by fields where pasturage for the cattle was grown, past the few large two-story houses made of brick, and up to the small side road that turned into the first brickyard complex.

They stopped at the one-room shack on the first brickyard, noticing two men mixing the *estiércol* with the clay and water in a wheelbarrow, using short-handled shovels. A boy and a girl, both under twelve, carried water to them in buckets from the nearby canal that wound its way through the brickyards. The foggy smell of the *estiércol*, formed of barnyard manure and cornstalk chaff, reminded Josefina of her childhood on the rancho in Zacatecas where she was born, of horses, cows, and burros grazing in the forlorn, infertile fields that then meant nothing more to her than spaces to play hide-and-seek with sisters, brothers, friends, and cousins, once the meager harvest was in.

A woman was baking tortillas de harina over a wood-fueled stove made from a rusting metal barrel in the ramada attached to the shack.

Josefina greeted her, shifting the baby in her arms. "Good day. Do you know if they need any brickmakers nearby?"

The woman looked up while patting a ball of dough into a flat roundness, then down again, to turn over the tortilla on the stove and place the new one beside it. She shook her head: "I'm not sure. My husband took on a helper last week." She handed Miguelito a toasted hot tortilla, which he rolled and ate hungrily.

She shook hands, first with Josefina, then with Rubén: "Eliza Hernández, para servirle."

"You're coming in late this year," Eliza commented, "Where are you from?"

Josefina, relieved at the woman's welcoming manner, set Pablo down for a few moments, crouching beside him. "Guadalajara. How about you?"

"Mazatlán, Sinaloa."

Josefina nodded and smiled, affirming that she knew of Mazatlán. When she and her brothers were children, her father had taken the family there two years in a row to make bricks.

Eliza handed each of them a tortilla and a glass of water that everyone who could offered to visitors in this heat that often reached 120 degrees in the summer. Josefina gave the glass first to Pablo, then to Miguelito, with Eliza refilling it each time it was emptied, then to Rubén, and then she drank a glass herself. Feeling refreshed, Josefina indicated that they would continue up the road to see if anyone needed brickmakers.

"You should try to rent," Eliza advised Josefina as they got ready to leave. And, as they were leaving, she said, almost as an afterthought: "If you don't find anything you can sleep with us in the ramada tonight."

As they walked further up one short, dusty byroad, Josefina turned to Rubén: "Yes. We should try to rent." Confirming something he already knew, she continued: "Sometimes the owners supply the molds and wheelbarrows."

After a long pause, Rubén replied: "Usually you have to have your own shovels at least. And most don't let you anything but the very brickyard. And they want to let it by the year anyway."

Over the next few hours they walked, tired, sweaty, and thirsty, from brickyard to brickyard in the first complex, then up the main, winding, rutted road to the second. Most of the brickyard owners had already taken on salaried workers or had rented out the yards in May. But now it was June.

At the second complex, the third family to whom they spoke to said that Don Tacho was planning to rent out his brickyard. He would be there tomorrow to fire the bricks he had made last week. He rented it at the usual price of 11 percent of the bricks he made, but he was willing to rent it out to someone else for 15 percent of the bricks.

Exhausted from having slept only a few hours on the bus for the last two days, they returned to Eliza's. Rubén went to help Eliza's husband and their hired hand put the mixture in the molds to offset the losses to the family for their food and water for this night's stay. And in the evening, by a fire they lit to discourage the hordes of mosquitoes that came out after the sun went down and to provide light in the absence of a full moon, they talked, Rubén to the men and Josefina to Eliza.

While they were talking, two women, looking in the distance like young men in their blue jeans and T-shirts and caps, walked up the road and into the brickyard. The women handed both Eliza and Josefina a slip of paper, quickly, anxious to move on, one saying only: "The meeting is day after tomorrow at 10 A.M. At the field up the other dirt road," pointing south. "Gloria Sanchez and the Seventh Dwarf are organizing it."

Josefina and Eliza each stared at the slip of paper, wondering what it was about. Josefina asked: "Can you read it?"

"No," but my Chuey can, when she wakes up," Eliza replied, indicating her daughter, sleeping on the blanket beside her little sister under the ramada. "She had a year of school while we lived in Mazatlán. I wanted her to continue here. But she didn't know the kids and she was older than most of them. She said she felt ashamed. So she stopped going after a week. But she can spell things out for us."

After awhile they slept, under the night sky, waking when the sun rose at 5 A.M. The women made tortillas and were preparing to fry some beans when Josefina thought to ask: "And the leaflet?"

Eliza had her eldest daughter read it. Chuey did so carefully, pronouncing each syllable as though it were a separate word, running the different words together as though they were one: "Our last gov er nor pro mised us a lot for ev e ry poor fam i ly. Join us to oc cu py the lands near the brick yards at kil om eter one point five. Or gan i za tion al mee ting at ten A.M. Wed nes day. Com i ttee in sol i dar i ty for col o ni a Nue va Es tan ci a."

"Another invasion," Eliza commented when Chuey stopped. "It's nearby this time." Then, after a pause: "Three years ago there was an invasion. But it was too far from here. On the other highway. The one

to San Luis Río Colorado. We couldn't have gotten to the brickyards from there. I believe Gloria helped arrange that invasion too.

Josefina helped Eliza fry the beans, taking them from the hand-painted brown ceramic *olla*, throwing them into the hot fat, mashing them down, and serving first the men, then the children, and last herself. While she did this, she thought how nice it would be to have a place to live, to come back to, instead of constantly moving back and forth from one brickyard to another. And Miguelito was getting to be school age, and if only they had a permanent place to stay, maybe he could go to school.

"I think I'll go to the meeting," she told Eliza.

Silent for a few minutes, Eliza then responded: "If my husband lets me, I'll go too." Then, she added softly, "It can be dangerous you know. If the police try to throw us off."

Josefina replied, "I've heard that." She turned the beans over in the frying pan, carefully, poked them with the rusting spatula, then continued: "But it would be nice to have a home of our own."

It was when they were going to meet Don Tacho, walking down the winding road following the curvatures of canals adorned with jutting green reeds reaching high beside them, that Josefina tried to convince Rubén how important it would be for them to get a lot, knowing what he would say, thinking up counterarguments to convince him.

"It would be nice to get a lot. They are close by our work. It would be nice to have a place to live. A fixed place. Our own place," she said.

Rubén didn't answer.

"A place where we could build a house. Our own house. So we wouldn't have to travel back and forth every year. Search for a new patrón every year," Josefina continued, pleading.

Rubén mulled awhile, finally answering, as she knew he would: "My mother could not stand the heat here. You know this. And I cannot leave her alone in Guadalajara."

They both knew that until the invaded lands were regularized, which might take up to two years or more, someone had to live permanently on the lot, someone who would sign the papers necessary as they became available, which meant that they could not rent it or loan it to anyone else.

Josefina wanted to reply, angrily: "So why don't her other sons look out for her too? Why only you? Why mainly you?" But she didn't.

She didn't talk again until they approached the last long bend in the road before entering the brickyard complex where Don Tacho's

brickyard was. "It would be nice if Miguelito could go to school," she said then. "So he could learn to read."

Rubén answered more quickly now, as he did when becoming impatient. "Why does he need to read? I don't. My papá doesn't. Nor yours. Nor you. We make bricks. Miguel will learn to make bricks. It's more important to know how to work than to know how to read, don't you think? You don't buy beans and corn for tortillas by reading. You do so by working."

Josefina thought: "Why does he have to be a brickmaker? To get a factory job you need to read. Or to be a clerk in a store. Or a waiter in a restaurant. Why does he have to sweat in the heat until spots appear before his eyes, until he is so weak that he can hardly stand but must still continue, freeze his feet and hands in the icy cold of the clay in winter, until by twenty he too will have pains in his bones and joints and any shoe will hurt to wear?" But she said nothing.

As they rounded the bend, they saw Don Tacho standing, smoking a cigarette under the ramada attached to the three-walled room in his brickyard. The three talked terms, how many months they'd be there, what percent of the bricks they'd pay, how many bricks they expected to make each week, if they planned to hire a helper—but it was Josefina who asked if he would let them use the wheelbarrows, the molds, the shovels, and the buckets.

Don Tacho generously agreed to do so, provided that someone remained on the brickyard at all times so that they would not be stolen by strangers passing through. Other brickmakers would not steal them, they already knew. The brickmakers were a community, borrowing from each other, helping one another, and never stealing from a fellow ladrillero.

While Rubén checked over the tools, Josefina went back to Eliza's for their two suitcases and the two children, letting Miguelito carry his younger brother. And they moved into the brickyard's one-room shack with a mattress raised from the floor with stacks of bricks and an outside stove made, as Eliza's was, from an old metal barrel, dusted red with rust and mottled by the black stains of smoke and fire.

Soon after they arrived, Rubén walked back to the highway to catch a bus to the *ejidos*, collective farms, in the valley of Mexicali. He went to arrange to buy a truckload of *estiércol*, that mixture of manure and straw that had to be combined with the clay so that it stuck together and didn't crumble into dust after being baked. He didn't return until early evening, as he had to buy on credit and find someone who would trust him to pay later. A man who had lived many

years on the ejido finally remembered him from previous years and promised to deliver the *estiércol* the following day and accept payment after they sold a few thousand bricks.

In the evening, Josefina and Rubén scraped the shovels and wheelbarrows, removing the bits and pieces of dried clay from the surfaces and getting ready for the next day's work.

Josefina slept little that night, wondering how to get away to the meeting about the invasion the next day. She had never lied to her husband, nor he to her. She resisted doing so, wanting their relationship to be based on trust.

Tossing and turning, she thought of Miguelito and how she wanted him to have a greater choice in life than she or her husband had had, children of brickmakers, brought up to be brickmakers. To live in isolated areas where there were no food stores, not even a stall where you could buy a soda, or no city buses unless one walked two kilometers at least, or even electricity so one could plug in a fan to blow away the mosquitoes and escape the heat at night. To drudge away without the medical insurance one got from a factory job, and when one got too old to work anymore, to hope that one's children would provide support, having received no pension for having worked all one's life as a brickmaker.

She made her decision. Miguelito was to go to school. And his going to school meant getting a permanent place to live. And in a colonia, not in a brickyard, where no schools were ever built.

In a planned invasion, she knew, once the settlement was recognized by the government, and even before possession of lots was legally regularized, that teachers were always sent, and a school, however rudimentary the building, was built with the help of the mothers of the students, mothers because the fathers were away trying to earn a living. Josefina had learned this from talk on the brickyards about previous invasions that had taken place over the last few years.

In the morning they ate the fried burritos that Eliza had sent them with her daughters. Josefina organized the house, sweeping the dirt floor with a broom made of reeds from the bank of the canal, carrying the mattress out to air, and hanging up their pots and pans, carried with them from Guadalajara, on extruding nails.

Then she bathed her two sons in the murky water she carried from the canal in the deformed aluminum buckets that Don Tacho had left for their use.

The *estiércol*, by the grace of God, had still not arrived when the sun told her it was after 9 A.M. So her husband would not need her to

help him mix the clay, carrying buckets of water from the canal and pouring them into the wheelbarrow while he mixed the water with the clay and *estiércol*, because until the manure and straw mix arrived, they could do nothing.

"I'm going to ask Eliza to lend me some money to buy beans and flour," Josefina said then. "I'll be back as soon as I can get them."

And Rubén, unsuspectingly, nodded his assent, accepting her lie.

She and Eliza, Eliza with the permission of her husband, went to the meeting. They were instructed that on Sunday, four days from now, they could bring some materials to put up a structure on the lots that they would be assigned today. And that within two weeks, they would have to present their birth certificates, proving that they were Mexican born, as well as those of their children, to show that they had dependents and thus would qualify for a lot.

Josefina was assigned lot 30, manzana 5, and Eliza the one backing hers, lot number 31, manzana 6. And then, back at the brickyard where Eliza lived, Eliza gave Josefina a half kilo of beans and a kilo of flour to take home. Josefina also arranged with Eliza that the scrap wood she would collect when her husband left the brickyard, as he had to do every other day to bring back drinking water from the colonia across the highway, would be left beside the shack where Eliza lived. From this wood, she would build a structure in which to sleep, proof of her occupancy of the lot, and the first step necessary for being recognized as a possessor of property in the new colonia.

The one thing Josefina did not know was who would live in that structure, as someone must, until the colonia was legalized and she became not only a possessor but a legal owner.

It was Friday when Josefina's mother arrived, bringing Josefina's youngest brother, Mauricio, age thirteen. Her eldest brother, José, his wife, and their three preschool children had also accompanied their mother, Guadalupe.

They too had stopped at the first brickyard, where Eliza lived, when they arrived at the complex asking for her and Rubén, and Eliza had sent them on, after first giving each a taco of beans garnished with pickled jalapeños from a can.

Luckily they had brought their own blankets, although there was no ramada to sleep under. Mauricio still had enough energy after the extensive bus trip to look for some discarded planks in the nearby fields, and within a couple of hours, the men had tacked together a makeshift roof, covered by one of the blankets to keep the sun away, resting it on the trunks of two slender young trees that the boys had

hatcheted down. There, soon after the sun disappeared, the family lay down to sleep.

It wasn't until the next morning, while her mother helped her make the tortillas de harina, that Josefina broached the subject of the lot to her. Josefina expected her mother to say that she, as any good Mexican wife, must let her husband decide.

But instead, Guadalupe observed: "It would be a good idea for José and my daughter-in-law to get one too."

They worked awhile in silence, Josefina feeling uplifted, knowing that her mother was thinking about it and would come up with a plan.

And she did. "Mauricio can help José a few days each week. He'll more than replace Carolina's work. She has three little ones to tend to now anyway." Guadalupe paused, and then surprised Josefina even more: "And I will stay on your lot, so you don't lose your rights. Maybe I can make some money selling snacks and sodas. About Miguelito going to school, this we'll have to see. About this I don't know. Your man will have to decide."

Yes, in this her mother could not interfere. This was between man and wife, Josefina thought happily, knowing now that they would at least have a place to come back to.

Later in the day, when José and Carolina had gone to look for work on one of the nearby brickyards, Josefina approached Rubén with trepidation but feeling strong because of her mother's assent. "Rubén. I must tell you something. About the other day when I told you I went shopping. I put my name down for a lot in the new colonia. We will have a place to come back to. My mother will live there. Mauricio will give her a part of what he earns with José for her sustenance, and José will help too. And she'll open a little store to sell sodas, and tacos, and . . ."

The violence of Reuben's reaction surprised her. He, who seldom raised his voice, had never hit her, raised his hand threateningly: "Hija de la chingada. You lied to me. You went behind my back. Who knows what you will do next? I told you we are not going to live here. You expect me to desert mi mamá? You use your mother to stab me in the back?"

He did not hit her, and Josefina, who had never cried in front of him, hid her tears while she helped him fill the molds with the clay he had mixed earlier that day.

"Now I can never trust you. You say you go one place, and you go another. Who knows who the father of your next son will be?" Rubén added, as they worked side by side.

Josefina remained silent.

That night she approached him, putting her head on his chest as they lay together on the mattress.

But he did not search for her, and eventually he disentangled her arms from around him and turned to sleep with his back toward her, shutting her out.

Josefina, hurt by his rejection, cried softly into the folded flannel blanket she used as a pillow.

The next day was Sunday, the day the invaders had to begin occupying their lots. She would have to defy her husband, something she had never done before, never wanted to do.

José still had not found work that morning but was waiting to talk to a patrón later in the day. Their mother had already talked to him about the new colonia, and he had given Carolina permission to see if she could still get a lot number.

A little before 10 A.M. Josefina, her sister-in-law, Carolina, and Guadalupe started down the road to Eliza's. Josefina had said to Rubén only: "Now I am going. You know where. Now I am not lying to you."

She feared a confrontation, but Rubén pretended not to hear her, not wanting to call her hand in front of her family. He said nothing. Mauricio stayed behind to help him with the work.

At Eliza's, the women collected the wood that Josefina had gathered over the past few days when she had left the brickyard to visit Eliza. They bound together a number of planks with a length of rope, and each carried a load, balanced on her head, over the fields separating the brickyard complex from Colonia Nueva Estancia, Josefina with her youngest son balanced on her hip, Carolina carrying a shovel and a hammer borrowed from Eliza. The other children brought a plank or so as well, the smallest dragging them along. Eliza had taken her collection over earlier in the day. Josefina had gathered a lot of wood, enough to share some with Carolina, though not enough for two complete rooms, and they had to make two trips for it all.

There were indeed other empty lots. Josefina talked to Gloria, one of the organizers, and Carolina was assigned a lot one up from hers, on the same street. Now she would have a brother and his family, as well as her mother and a friend, living in the new colonia. She had seen a few other women whom she thought she recognized as brickmakers' wives from previous years as well.

Gloria also lent Josefina another hammer, and she, Carolina, and Eliza set to work. While Eliza pulled the rusty nails from the

planks they had found, hammering them straight on a piece of rock, Carolina and Josefina took turns digging holes for five stalwarts, one for each corner and one to hinge the door upon. Then, for lack of posts, they set some planks in place, stabilizing them with the pieces of brick and stones that the children had gathered, then filling the holes where they stood with earth.

With the nails Eliza had straightened, and with the children fetching planks, the three women took turns nailing together one wall at a time, first forming a rectangle with four lengths of wood, then setting the boards and pieces of board nailed together, between top and bottom. Josefina and Carolina next hammered the walls into place, nailing them to the upright planks. They then made a fifth rectangle for the roof, with Mauricio coming from the brickyard to join them part way through. It was Mauricio, lighter than the women, who climbed on top to nail it down.

In a little over four hours, they finished a room for Josefina's lot and also helped Eliza, who had returned to the brickyard and brought them lunch, make two walls for her new dwelling. After awhile, Eliza urged them to put something up on Carolina's lot, saying that her husband would come to help her later in the afternoon. Meanwhile, Josefina sent Mauricio, with Miguelito and Eliza's Chuey tagging along behind him, to look for more wood in a nearby field that once had been used as an informal dump, and they began the walls for Carolina's structure.

At one point someone from the organizing committee passed by and told them of a meeting that someone from each lot must attend at 4 P.M.

At the meeting, the Seventh Dwarf, known as such due to his small stature and constant efforts to help the poor and forgotten, explained that an adult must be on the lot at all times for the next few weeks. That if everyone had to leave, it could not be for more than an hour or so, and that a neighbor should be advised to keep an eye on things. That someone from each lot would have to stand guard at the two entrances by the road into the colonia, to warn the colonos if the police came to try to dislodge them. That although negotiations were under way with the state and municipal governments, they still had not been assured of recognition. That each woman would have to do two hours of guard duty with three other women every two days in the daylight hours. That young and older men would do the night guard duty. That at least one person from every lot had to do six hours of guard duty one week, eight another. That more than 1,000 of the

1,500 lots had now been assigned. That each street would have its representative, and each family occupying a lot would go to her to sign up for guard duty. The representative would be a woman who could stay in the colonia twenty-four hours a day, for men had to leave in the day to go to work. And some women too. That it had been arranged for water trucks—one with water to wash in, one selling bottled water to drink—to enter the colonia daily. That anyone who needed barrels to hold water should talk to the street representative, since Doña Gloria of the organizing committee was hoping to get a couple of truckloads sent over from the chemical factory in Fraccionamiento Obrero. And, finally, that they would cost 15,000 pesos each.

Gloria, the Seventh Dwarf's most trusted assistant, her cropped hair now streaked with grey, and her bulky body supported by a cane she carried to ease a limp she earned when she was beaten by the police during an earlier invasion, spoke next. She told the group that anyone who wished to open a small food store was encouraged to do so—and soon. That everyone should learn the meaning of the following signals: one skyrocket meant to assemble for a meeting; two that the meeting was obligatory; three that there was danger from the police attempting to dislodge them; four that there was active confrontation between the police and the colonos. That they hoped anyone with school-age children would aid in erecting a building, since the Secretaría de Educación Pública would send primary-school teachers in August—if the colonia was recognized by then. That those with children in secondary school would have to arrange to put them in school in Fraccionamiento Obrero, five kilometers away, for the next year or so. That hopefully those parents with cars or trucks would be willing to cooperate to take children of those families without transportation to the schools. And that the local university had promised to send recently graduated doctors to do their social service in the colonia if they could erect some sort of building to serve as a clinic.

Josefina's head hurt trying to take it all in. So much time was needed! She couldn't expect her mother to do guard duty. That her mother was willing to live on the lot to assure her possession was enough to ask. And how could she find time to contribute to building the school? She felt a weight on her chest. If only Rubén was in agreement. For so much work, one needed a partner, if only to tell one that good was being done. At least she had her mother. And her brother, José, would be nearby too. Maybe someday Rubén would understand.

When Josefina returned to the brickyard, when the sun was beginning to sink, Rubén was not understanding. "I can't even expect a taco from you anymore," he said furiously. "Where have you been all day? You expect me to make bricks alone? Even expect me to make my food alone?"

Josefina pointed out that she had left beans on the stove and tortillas already made. And that Mauricio had stayed to help him with the work, for at least four or five hours.

"And where were you all day? Do you continue with the same plan? Against my wishes?" Rubén continued.

"It can be a lot for my mamá to live on, Rubén" Josefina explained. "My brother, José, will have a lot there too. He gave Carolina permission to get one. And there was a number for her too."

Rubén had not known this. He calmed a little. "Well, if it's for your mamá . . ." he trailed off. "Are we eating today, then?"

Exhausted from the hard labor of the day, knowing Rubén too had worked hard, Josefina lit the fire in the stove. She wished she had some chickens to put eggs beside the refried beans she would make tonight. Carolina and her mother had stayed in the colonia, as they must every night now until the state recognized their claims. After feeding Rubén and the children, she would have to take them some beans and flour. If only her children were older, Josefina thought, she could send one of them! Mauricio had already gone over to the colonia, so she couldn't sent the supplies with him.

After they ate, Josefina said to Rubén: "My husband. I must take food to my mamá."

"It's dark now" Rubén, replied. "I cannot accompany you. We have promised Don Tacho that someone will be present here at all times. To protect the tools. The wheelbarrows. We can't make an agreement then break it."

Rubén was not used to saying so much at one time. But he continued, trying to explain his objections to Josefina's plans. "You know it is dangerous for a woman to walk alone at night. Men will wonder why you have no family who cares for you. That your man lets you wander where you wish."

He tried to make light of it. "Someone will rob you. Then what do I do for tortillas?" Rubén ended, giving in, "Wait until your brother, José, arrives. Then you can go. Yes. Your mother needs to eat."

Josefina, pleased that Rubén feared for her safety, worried because he still seemed unconvinced of the value of her efforts. She busied herself making fried bean burritos to send to her mother and sister-in-law and brothers and nephew and nieces in La Nueva

Estancia, noticing she must soon go, or send Rubén, for more supplies.

José arrived a little after eight. Josefina served him and told him about the events of the day, that Carolina had been assigned a lot.

José told them that he had gotten work with a patrón who promised him 80,000 pesos for every thousand bricks he made, 10,000 pesos less than he had earned last year. "But what can I do," he said, trying to shrug it off. We came late. There's not much work left now."

Josefina tried to make him feel better: "Mamá says you can have Mauricio to help you."

José smiled. "Teach him to be a brickmaker, I will. It's time he started learning to mold."

Then he added, "Now it seems I have a place here too. Next year I will be among the first to get work."

After eating, José prepared to go to the new colonia, to remain there with Carolina and his children. He asked Josefina for directions to get to the lot where he would now be living.

Josefina knew he would be tired, too tired to accompany her back to the brickyard. She decided not to go to her mother. Perhaps Rubén would be pleased that she stayed.

Josefina handed José the fried burritos, wrapped in a square of clean cloth. As José prepared to leave for the colonia, Josefina urged Rubén: "Accompany José, my little husband. You haven't been off the brickyard in two days. I'll be all right here alone with the children for a little while."

Rubén replied, shortly: "Go there just to amuse myself? When I don't want anything to do with the place?"

But that night he turned to embrace her.

The following day, Josefina helped Rubén mix the clay, carrying buckets of water from the canal. Then she cleaned the wooden molds, rinsing them in a bucket of water each time Rubén created four new bricks, and before he filled the molds with clay once more.

Together they made almost twice as many bricks as the 1,000 he had made the day before, 200 more than the average brickmaker working for a piece-rate wage usually made. He had worked hard. Together they worked hard as well.

"We'll bake an oven full in three days' more," Rubén said.

That meant they must start looking for firewood later in the day, Josefina knew.

"I must go to the colonia to see my mamá. I'll bring back some fuel," Josefina told Rubén later.

He grunted his assent, not looking at her.

At the colonia Josefina talked to the street representative, Hortensia, and offered herself for guard duty from two to four the next day and Thursday as well. She and Eliza and Carolina tried to get watch together and did so for Thursday. Then Josefina borrowed a little more money from Eliza and walked the three kilometers to Colonia Popular, across the highway, to buy beans and flour and cooking oil for her household and for her mamá's.

As she walked back to the brickyard, carrying her supplies, she crossed the many fallowed fields and gathered firewood along the way, binding the dry branches and plank fragments together with a rope she had taken with her. She slung the cargo over her back. As she neared the brickyard, she appeared in the distance like a walking stack of dismembered tree limbs.

Upon arriving, she told Rubén: "Tomorrow I must take watch for my mamá from two to four."

"Watch? What is this about?" he asked.

"The police might try to force us out," Josefina explained. "The organizers are still arranging with the state for us to be there. Someone from every lot must take watch. I'll be taking my mamá's turns. Three times one week, four times the next, then three times again, and so on." Then she explained to him about the skyrocket signals.

Rubén looked serious at this, but said nothing, and Josefina could not read him. Was he angry that she would be gone from the brickyard for so many hours? Did he suspect that she still wanted Miguelito to go to school?

So she went on guard duty. First Tuesday with some women she didn't know. They exchanged stories of where they were from, about their children, about why they had come to the border. They became friends.

Then Thursday Josefina stood watch with Eliza and Carolina and a woman from Guanajuato with whom she had shared the first watch with. Their children played beside them as they sat in the shade of the ramada, erected to keep the sun from scalding those on watch. Hortensia arranged for the women to be together on future watches as well.

Nothing happened until Saturday.

It was that afternoon when carloads of men, five or six to a car, some in uniform, some not, arrived at the two entrances to Colonia Nueva Estancia. Where Josefina was on guard, the women saw first

three cars, followed by three more, and then another two. The first car in line drove right through the orange plastic ribbon that they had suspended between two posts as a symbolic barrier, respected and stopped for by those who resided in the colonia until it was lowered for them to enter. Two more cars barreled through before the women thought to block the roadway with their bodies, and with their small children in hand, they walked in front of the next oncoming car.

The car stopped. Two men jumped out. They pushed the women forcibly aside. One of the men flung Eliza to the ground. Another hit Josefina, hard across her sunburned cheek, with the back of his hand. She fought back, scratching his neck with her work-jagged fingernails, pulling some buttons from his neatly ironed khaki shirt. He hit her again, this time with a nightstick, twice, bruising first her upper arm and then her neck and chin.

As she fell back to the side of the road, Miguelito screaming "mamá, mamá," she heard three skyrockets going off from the direction of the other entrance.

The other five cars drove through the flimsy ribbon guarding the colonos from hostile entrants.

Carolina went into the ramada where the skyrockets were stashed to give the next signal. They saw a car stop at Gloria's house. Two men entered her door. Other men began tearing down the provisional stake fence surrounding her lot. More carloads of men had gone on to the house where the Seventh Dwarf was staying.

Some of the men and women in the colonia, having heard the three signals, began moving out of their lots, running toward the house of the organizer living nearest them, grabbing a length of wood, or hammer, or a rock, or a kitchen knife, or any object they could find to use as a weapon along the way.

Carolina and Josefina sent up four more skyrockets, one after another, alerting those in the colonia who still did not know that a violent confrontation had begun.

"They're going to try to get Gloria," someone shouted. "They want to jail the leaders!"

Josefina ran over to Gloria's house, picking up a stake, after motioning to Eliza to watch her children. Her upper arm hurt her, but she ignored it. She ran up behind one of the men who was handcuffing Gloria and hit him in the back, and she was struck by the nightstick in the hands of one of his companions once again. Josefina picked up the cane that Gloria had let drop to the ground. She began slashing the calves and back of the man who was restraining Gloria.

More people swarmed toward Gloria's lot, trying to prevent her from being arrested. Five men began pounding the colonos' back with lead-filled nightsticks. One drew a pistol and fired warning shots into the air.

Josefina fell to the ground under the blows of one of the plain-clothed policemen. He kept slugging her, hitting her back, her shoulders, as she turned herself into the dirt to avoid being struck in the face once more. Some of the other colonos were being systematically beaten as well. Still others began moving backward when they saw the men pull out pistols.

Then it was over. Gloria had been put into one car, the Seventh Dwarf in another. The other three organizers living in the colonia were pushed into separate cars, and all were driven away, down the dirt road to the highway, puffs of dust rising like smoke in the wake of the disappearing vehicles.

Carolina helped Josefina get up, brushed off her clothes, and wept, repeating "Damn them. Damn them. Pinche cabrones. Cowards. Hitting women. Damn them."

Josefina saw her brother, José, and Rubén running toward them, through the grassy field separating the brickyards from the settlement.

Rubén neared her, put his arms around her, and Josefina began crying, sobbing. "So important it is to you, my little wife?" he asked her.

She nodded, trying to control herself, to hold back her tears.

The organizers were not released until Tuesday morning. The newspapers had picked up the story of the invasion, of the confrontation between the invaders and the police, of the brutal beatings that some of the colonos had received. Editorial commentary supporting the recognition of the new settlement appeared in *La Voz* and *El Mexicano*. A candidate for governor of the state came on a local radio station and pointed out that the city thrived on industry, on factories set up by both foreign and Mexican businessmen, which benefited both Mexicali and the state of Baja California, but that without a workforce they would not locate here. And the workers deserved to have housing. There were not enough residences in the city, and rents were high where housing was available. Those who invaded lands built their own houses, expanded the city, and drew in new industries.

The candidate didn't say anything about the ambulant vendors, the taco stand owners, or the garbage pickers, domestic servants,

gardeners, or brickmakers who had invaded the colonia, but the colonos, most of whom worked in these less-valued types of jobs, were happy anyway, because now a politician had taken up their cause. They knew the candidate would not win the governorship of Baja California, because he belonged to neither the Partido Revoluceonarico Institutionni (PRI) nor Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) parties—the two major political parties in Mexico, though the former eclipsed the latter in its longevity and power—but he had made their existence a political issue that could no longer be ignored. Now other political leaders from the PRI, which had lost the governorship of Baja California to the panistas, the first time since the Mexican Revolution of 1910, and from the PAN, which wanted to assure its succession in the state, would try to woo their votes by calling for recognition of their settlement. Now too that the newspapers and a radio station supported their claims, more people in Mexicali knew about their efforts and would be on their side. Sunday's fray would be the last attempt to dislodge them.

Rubén began coming to the colonia, to expand the structure that Josefina and her friend and sister-in-law had erected. At times he even hummed while he worked, echoing songs heard in the distance on battery-run radios.

"Do you think we will have a radio one day?" Josefina asked him once.

"When we have electricity. In a few more years. We will put money aside to buy one. A secondhand one. From the tianguis," Rubén replied.

Yes, one day we will have electricity here, Josefina thought. She smiled happily at his reply and hummed a tune along with him.

There came the time that her mother stayed some nights on the brickyard so she and Rubén could be together on their new lot, in their new house. And Rubén did not object when Josefina asked permission from him to help build the new kindergarten and primary school, volunteering four or five hours a week every Sunday to do so. Once he even left Mauricio on the brickyard and came to help as well.

When it became possible to make bricks again in Guadalajara, Josefina left Miguelito with her mother and her younger brother on the lot she had invaded, and she and Rubén headed south once again. Her mother had opened a small food store with some of the money Mauricio had earned making bricks with José, and Josefina and Rubén had given her a little as well to offset some of the costs of her caring for Miguelito in their absence.

It was hard for Josefina to leave her eldest son. But in August, he and José's eldest daughter had begun kindergarten. Her brother, Mauricio, had found two days' work a week as an assistant on the truck that delivered bottled water to the colonias. The other days he helped José.

José was going to keep making bricks in Mexicali until the coldest weather set in, when the top layer of the water in the barrels and canals froze in the early mornings and when the freezing water burned bare feet while the clay was mixed. Brickmakers couldn't afford enough boots or shoes to wear while mixing the clay. The earth would enter them and destroy the leather within a week. In any case, it didn't pay to make bricks when temperatures were too low. The moisture in the newly molded bricks turned to ice and split them. When the shivering-cold weather began, he would look for a job in construction.

Josefina hoped it would all go well. Soon the colonos would begin building more permanent houses. They would need bricks. And construction workers. Maybe things would go well. But one must never count one's chickens before the eggs are hatched.

Josefina repeated to herself the warning she had heard since she was a child, so nothing could disappoint her: "You are sure of nothing in this life but death."

If God willed it, Josefina thought, then she would see her mother and brothers and little son again next summer when she and Rubén came back to make bricks, now with a place to return to. Miguelito might even know the alphabet by then.

Josefina and Rubén and Pablo boarded the bus to Guadalajara.

As she sat, looking out the window into the busy parking lot of the central camionera, her youngest son now in her lap, Josefina remembered another adage she had heard since a child: "Without hope, there is nothing."

She reached for Rubén's hand.

Plates 1 and 2. Beginnings ("Colonia Nueva Estancia," 1990).

CHAPTER 2

Approaches to the "Informal Sector" and to the Brickmakers of Mexicali

Although brickmakers may be conceived of as "disguised proletarians" vis-à-vis the capitalist system as a whole, there is a fourfold internal class stratification among them. They may be pieceworkers on someone else's brickyard, or they may be renters in or owners of their own brickyard. The renters in and owners may rely entirely on the family labor force or they may hire in supplementary workers. This internal class stratification will be touched upon in chapter 3. Here I will address the economic position of brickmakers as an informal-sector occupational group and its relationship to the capitalist system of which it is a subsumed part. In order to do this, I will elucidate various theoretical approaches to the informal sector of the economy and show how some approaches throw more light on the dynamics both of the informal sector and of the occupation of brickmaking than others.

In the pages that follow I outline five general approaches to the informal sector. Then I discuss two approaches to understanding the capital accumulation possibilities of petty commodity producers—that transitory status occupied at some point over their careers by the majority of brickmakers—approaches that explain the possibility of movement from proletarian to petty commodity producer to petty capitalist status.

Approaches to the Informal Sector

There are five general approaches to the informal sector.[1] They include those associated with modernization theory, dependency theory (as this is associated with Programa Regional Para Empleo en América Latina y el Caribé [PREALC] analyses), neoliberalism,

Marxism and neo-Marxism, and world systems theory. Many of these approaches have adopted each other's assumptions, since the "informal sector" was first labeled as such by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1972. Prior to that, names such as the "bazaar economy" and the "traditional economy" were common, reflecting notions of development contained in the modernization paradigm. "Petty commodity production" or "petty commerce" is a concept used to define the mode of production found within the so-called "informal sector," especially by those writing in the Marxist, neo-Marxist, or worlds systems tradition. Most of the approaches have been in cross-fertilizing debate and dialogue.

Modernization Theory

Modernization theory identified the informal sector with "traditional" pre-capitalist economic organization as opposed to "modern" economic organization. The economy was conceived of as dual, with the "traditional" sector having no linkages with the "modern sector." Those who worked in the "traditional sector" were there mainly due to lack of education or disinclination to accept factory discipline. The "traditional sector" was also conceptualized as a "peasant system of production" in which a "proto-proletariat" was engaged in self-generated employment (McGee, 1977), and it was even labeled a "bazaar economy" (Geertz, 1963). It was expected that as economic development progressed, this "archaic" sector would gradually disappear. Its disappearance would occur as the modern sector took over the production of all goods and services, providing them more cheaply due to higher technology and a larger scale (Moser, 1994). In the 1960s, the idea of marginality of those employed in what the 1970s became known as the informal sector/economy was embraced by both modernization theorists and by "historical-structural" (or Marxist and neo-Marxist) approaches (Quijano, 2000: 135–37). For the former, however, it was considered a surplus population that would eventually be absorbed with "modernity," or the expansion of capitalism, while for the latter (which also endorsed the idea of eventual full proletarianization) it was a reserve army—created by a peculiarly dependent capitalism—that functioned to keep wages low.

Empirical evidence has disproved the predictions of modernization theory. Not only does the informal sector show no signs of disappearing, but it has retained its proportion of goods and services produced in Latin American countries from the 1950s to the present, even increasing after the economic crisis that hit Latin America in the

early 1980s and then again in the mid-1990s (Portes and Benton, 1984; de Oliveira and Roberts, 1994; Roberts, 1995). It has consistently shown signs of expansion during periods of economic crisis. Furthermore, many formal-sector jobs in advanced industrialized countries have been "informalized" (Portes, 1983; Portes et al., 1989; Portes and Sassen-Koob, 1987; Sassen, 1990, 1991), and the informal sector has reappeared in new forms and in new industries such as electronics assembly (Fernández-Kelly and García, 1989; Tiano, 1994) or older industries such as the automobile and auto parts manufacture.

Programma Regional Para Empleo en América Latina y el Caribe (PREALC) and Dependency Theory

Dependency theory attempted to explain the lack of capitalist development in Latin America as being due to the relation of economic dependence between core capitalist countries and peripheral countries. Although the forms of dependency changed over historical time, they led to the arrested development of Latin American countries. The earliest relations of dependency rested on the export of primary materials from the periphery and the import of industrial goods. Later, import substitution programs led to a new form of dependency; although consumer goods were now produced in the periphery instead of being imported, the machinery and other infrastructural supports for such light industry still had to be imported, and at a disadvantageous rate of exchange. Furthermore, most of the goods produced by these industries were destined for middle-class consumption in countries where the middle class constituted only a small proportion of the population.

In the most recent phase of dependency, export-oriented industry has taken center stage. This is partially in response to the need to pay off tremendous national debts (de Oliveira and Roberts, 1994). In Mexico, exports include products manufactured by *maquiladoras*, whether subsidiaries of multinationals whose headquarters are located in the United States, Japan, or a variety of European countries; or subcontracting facilities, whether owned wholly or in part by the indigenous capitalist class. The "marginal pole" of the economy has little to do with the "hegemonic pole," marked by oligolopic industries and manned by an aristocracy of labor (Quijano, 1974). Yet this division is somewhat artificial.

Thus Castells (1983) contends that cities in Latin America are dependent cities, and that the wrongly labeled "marginal" patterns shown by some of their residents are due to this dependency. Residents

cannot control the pace or direction of urban development because of their submission to the goodwill of the state as well as "to the changing flows of foreign capital" (Castells, 1983: 212).

Initial Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL) and PREALC analyses grew out of work done by researchers for the ILO in Africa (Hart, 1973; ILO, 1972). The ILO defined the informal sector by its ease of entry, small scale, and labor intensity, involving skills acquired outside of the formal educational system, and by its involvement in highly competitive and unregulated markets (Bangasser, 2000: 10). The PREALC researchers, while endorsing this definition, also incorporated insights from dependency theory.

Both import-substitution and export-oriented industry share two characteristics: the need to import heavy machinery and high capital-labor ratios in processes of production. Sophisticated machinery replaces the need for an extensive labor force. The result, according to PREALC analyses, is the creation of a surplus labor force, with no chances of employment in the formal sector (Pérez-Sáinz, 1991; Cartaya, 1987; Tokman, 1987a, 1987b; Mezzera, 1987). Recent research has shown that with globalization, capital-intensive industry is replacing labor-intensive industry in the interests of competitiveness, and thus is not job creating but in many cases job diminishing (Heath, 1998). This is especially true in Mexico, with the result that even more of the labor force is thrown into the informal sector.

The surplus labor force must create employment for itself in order to survive. This self-generated employment, marked by a qualitatively different mode of production from that employed in the formal sector, constitutes the informal sector. The mode of production is marked by low capital-labor ratios, frequent use of unremunerated family labor, low start-up costs, low labor productivity, unskilled labor, simple technology (See Pérez-Sáinz, 1991: 36; Carbonetto, 1985: 66), and earnings used not for capitalist investment but for subsistence. The microentrepreneurs of this informal sector do not reinvest their earnings in order to expand their businesses and realize greater profits; rather, earnings are used simply for family survival (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981).

Linkages with the formal sector were not conceived of as exploitative. Those employed in informal-sector activities may buy inputs from each other, or they may buy inputs for their own production from the formal sector, exporting personal services in return. The relationship of the informal sector to the formal sector is seen as similar to the relationship between peripheral countries and core countries (Pérez-Sáinz, 1991: 21).

The informal sector is seen as being subordinate to the formal sector, since it exists only in the niches left by the latter (Pérez-Sáinz, 1991: 22). In itself, it is neither functional nor dysfunctional for the capitalist system. Rather, different occupations within the informal sector have different relationships with the formal sector and are subordinate to it in heterogeneous modes (Tokman, 1979; 1989). Some are relatively autonomous, requiring neither exogenous inputs nor markets. These include vendors of fruits and vegetables who buy directly from the small farmers. Others are dependent on either inputs, products, or sales from the modern sector of the economy. These can include small manufacturers, whether independent or subcontracted by a formal-sector firm, and some small commercial establishments that buy from wholesalers (Tokman, 1979: 217–18).

As for the future of the informal sector, the ILO-PREALC researchers again stressed the heterogeneous character of the informal sector. Some entities, such as small-scale manufacturers, will eventually disappear as modern industry takes over their roles. Others, such as those offering personal services, will survive, as they have in advanced capitalist countries. And others, such as vendors and other commercial establishments, will continue to exist for a longer time: they will ultimately be replaced by large-scale commercial establishments, however (Tokman, 1979: 224–25; 1989). The informal sector as a whole also takes on different characteristics according to the country in which it is found, and it is influenced by existing laws (Tokman, 1992).

The ILO-PREALC policy toward the informal sector was to (1) provide credit packages to informal-sector entrepreneurs, (2) and provide education in management, accounting, and microenterprise development (PREALC, 1979; Placencia, 1988, Tokman, 1987a). The focus is on capacitating individual workers in the informal sector. Optimistically, it is foreseen that informal activities will be formalized if access to financial capital is facilitated, and if human capital is increased.

By the end of the 1980s, ILO-PREALC members recognized the interlinkages between the formal and the informal sectors, although they tended to visualize this as occurring essentially at the level of product circulation (see, e.g., Mezzera, 1988). They, however, despite occasional exceptions (e.g., Tokman, 1992), continued to focus on microenterprises rather than on the informalized labor force which, until recently, led them to exclude domestic workers from the study of the informal sector, despite these workers "unprotected" working conditions (Mezzera, 1988). Current ILO-PREALC definitions of the

informal sector in Latin America comprise "independent workers, including unpaid family workers, domestic workers, and wage workers in enterprises employing up to five workers" (ILO, 2001: 13). Recently, there has been recognition of informalized or casualized labor as needing special attention and the imperative for analyzing the existence of such labor in developed countries as well as in developing countries (Carr and Chen, 2002: 4; ILO, 2002) These informalized laborers can include workers in such diverse activities as garment, shoe, or electrical component manufacture, whether as home workers or as employees in small workshops, teams of construction workers subcontracted by a building company to carry out specific tasks (e.g., plumbing, drywalling, plastering), domestic workers, casual day laborers, and other workers without contracts, as well as part-time or temporary workers who would prefer full-time or more stable work. There is also a greater emphasis on organizing informal sector/economy workers so that they can press for policy changes in their favor (Bangasser, 2000; ILO, 2001).

Neoliberalism

Associated with Hernando de Soto (1987), the neoliberal approach considers the informal sector the most dynamic sector of the economy. It is marked by its "extralegality." Some informal-sector enterprises, whether industrial, artisanal, or commercial ventures, may conform to some bureaucratic regulations while evading others, leading to what de Soto calls "semiformality." Thus some enterprises, for example, may pay for licenses but not pay taxes. Legal restrictions on and requirements of ventures in the formal sector lead to the formation of microenterprises within the informal sector. Escape from such regulations foments its dynamism. Compliance with bureaucratic regulations exacts "costs" that are avoided by noncompliance. De Soto's approach was developed in the context of the Peruvian state, which he sees as mercantilist in character, with executive policies dominant and slanted toward benefits for the elites, while ignoring the popular sectors.

As Cross (1998b: 30–31) points out, de Soto's analysis assumes that participation in the informal sector is a liberating experience—in the sense of freedom from the bureaucratic regulations of the state. In this way, de Soto's position differs from the PREALC analysis, which assumes that the participation in the informal sector is a burden borne by undercapitalized, relatively uneducated sectors of the population. As Quijano (2000: 140–41) points out, another major

difference between ILO-PREALC analyses and that of de Soto and his Instituto Libertad y Democracía (ILD) is that the former concentrated on the relationship between capital and labor, whereas the latter focused attention on the relationship between (budding) petty capitalists and the regulatory apparatus of the state.

As in the modernist paradigm, the informal sector is seen in dualist terms, as a separate economy, although populated by emergent capitalists. If given a chance, the informal sector could become the engine of development. It is disadvantaged by the fact that government subsidies tend to go to formal-sector enterprises; it is also overwhelmed and stunted by massive bureaucratic regulations that consume both an inordinate amount of time and money and unfair taxes. The assumption is that informal-sector entrepreneurs would "formalize," given a more equitable system. Labeled a "neoliberal" by Cartaya (1987), de Soto is seen as a populist by Pérez-Sáinz (1991: 39) and his theory as one of "capitalist populism." It is also known as a "legalist" approach, stressing the rational response of microentrepreneurs to overregulation, and it is contrasted to structuralist and earlier dualistic approaches, the former illustrated by the work of Alejandro Portes and the latter by the ILO's Kenya report (1972) (Carr and Chen, 2002: 5).

Marxism and Neo-Marxism

Concerning capital-labor relations, Marx (1977) distinguished between "formal" and "real" subsumption of labor to capital. In the latter case, full proletarianization is symptomatic; in the former, noncapitalist modes of production are accessed by capital, while the means of production in the hands of producers and the internal labor processes, such as self-exploitation and the exploitation of unremunerated family labor, are left in place (see Cook and Binford, 1990: 23–24). Instead of the dual-economy framework embraced by the modernization theorists, the Marxist approach visualizes the informal sector as a socially and historically determined mode of production subordinated to and subsumed by capitalism. Articulation exists between the two modes of production.

Nonetheless, the neo-Marxist scholars who first attempted to analyze the existence of what they described as "precapitalist economic activities" in the growing cities of Latin America explained the persistence of these activities in terms similar to those of modernization theory. They were expected to disappear as modern capitalist enterprise advanced. Meanwhile, they provided subsistence to the

"reserve army of labor." The reserve army of labor helped keep wages low: the threat of being replaced inhibited the workers employed in capitalist industry from unionizing or pressing their demands for higher wages. Scholars working within "the Marxist framework disagreed among themselves as to whether this reserve army of labor, sometimes labeled the "marginal mass" (Núñ, 1969), was dysfunctional and parasitic or functional for capitalism. It is notable that the term *marginal mass* is equivalent, if less insulting, to that of the "lumpenproletariat."

A great deal of the literature concerned with structural marginality (Leeds, 1971; Valentine, 1971, 1972) was a Marxist or neo-Marxist response to the "culture of poverty" theory, also a Marxist offshoot meant to explain the behavior and persistence of the "lumpenproletariat" and associated with Oscar Lewis (1975, 1966). Later still, Marxists and neo-Marxists argued that those in the informal sector were not "marginal" populations at all but rather immiserated masses spawned by the dynamics of capital accumulation (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1981; Cockcroft, 1986; Perlman, 1976). In contrast to those neoliberals most recently represented by de Soto (1987) (discussed earlier), who held that informal-sector enterprises were emerging bourgeois concerns, Cockcroft (1986: 246) pointed out that those in the informal sector were neither part of a marginal mass nor were they emerging capitalists: "In terms of their overall relations of production these self-employed' and 'self-exploited' elements are disguised proletarians whose 'ownership' of a humble workshop or of a miscelanéa masks their proletarian incorporation into a larger capitalist structure that appropriates the fruits of their labor."

Garbage pickers and street vendors, for example, may also be seen as a disguised proletariat. Birkbeck (1978, 1979) has shown how the garbage pickers of Cali, Colombia, sell their carton, through one or more intermediaries, to a multinational paper company. Paid on a piece-rate basis, the garbage pickers are essentially working for the company, but with no benefits, such as pensions and medical and unemployment insurance, enjoyed by the "formal proletariat" employed by that company (see also Wilson, 1994).

Street vendors are also functional for capitalist enterprise. They may have only an indirect relationship to assuring company profits, for example, only buying from wholesalers. Or they may work for a commission with one or more companies or suppliers. Finally, they receive credit, while paying interest, from the companies or intermediaries whose products they sell (Bromley, 1978b; Möller, 1979).

Marxists and neo-Marxists are in agreement that the formal and informal sectors not only are strongly interdependent but are in a relationship characterized by Davies (1979: 89) as "asymmetrically symbiotic." The informal sector gives more than it receives. It provides a subsidy to capitalist enterprise and to the capitalist system as a whole.

The informal sector subsidizes the formal in the first instance, and at the most abstract level, because the workers in the former sector constitute a reserve army of labor, which by its mere existence, can be used by employers as a bargaining counter to keep wages low (Bromley and Gerry, 1979: 9; cf. also Cockcroft, 1986: 235; Kowarick, 1979: 83; Perlman, 1976: 156). More directly, the "casual poor" can be used as strikebreakers as well (Bromley and Gerry, 1979: 9). Alternatively, the informal sector offers peasants a way of making a living in the city, thus making them available for formal-sector employment when this sector needs them (Davies, 1979: 98). Thus the supply of labor to the formal sector is not dependent on that sector's offering high enough wages to remove peasants to the city: it is, rather, the number of income opportunities, including those provided by the informal sector, which draws them to the urban centers (Davies, 1979: 98; cf. also Hart, 1973: 88).

During times of economic contraction, formal-sector firms can disemploy their workers without fear of political repercussions, since informal-sector opportunities will enable these workers to subsist, a function that Davies (1979: 98) calls the informal sector's "social security role." The "put-out" arrangement, whereby workers are compensated on a piece-rate basis for work done in their homes, and subcontracting, makes it possible for formal-sector firms never to hire their workers on a wage-work basis in the first place but to employ them only in times of economic expansion (Portes and Walton, 1981: 99, 101; Roberts, 1978: 117). Thus subcontracting in all of its forms permits a greater "flexibility" in securing a labor force.

The informal sector provides low-cost goods and services, thereby lowering the costs of the maintenance and reproduction of the labor force, and thus the pressure for higher wages (Davies, 1979: 101; Kowarick, 1979: 78–79; Perlman, 1976: 256; Portes and Walton, 1981: 92; Safa, 1982: 6) The lower the wage bill, the higher the profits made by capitalist firms.

In other words, an indirect subsidy to capitalism from informal economic activity results from the fact that workers employed in the formal sector purchase goods and services from the informal economy at a price lower than that which they would pay for goods and serv-

ices produced in the capitalist sector (Davies, 1979; Kowarick, 1979; Moser, 1978; Portes and Walton, 1981; Safa, 1982). For example, Portes and Walton (1981: 104) maintain that "the informal sector subsidizes part of the costs of formal capitalist enterprises, enabling them to enforce comparatively low wages on their own labor." The informal sector does this by lowering the actual cost of subsistence below a theoretical cost of subsistence based on the full value of necessities if they had "to be purchased as commodities on the market" (Portes and Walton, 1981: 87–88), thus lowering the pressure for higher wages.

De Janvry (1981), whose work focuses mainly on peasant farmers and the phenomena of semi-proletarianization, advances an interesting argument about the "functional dualism" between petty commodity producers, both among the peasantry and within the informal sector and the dominant capitalist economy. He argues that Latin American economies are characterized by sectoral and social disarticulation. Under sectoral disarticulation, there is external dependence on the import of capital goods and technology; markets for products lie abroad as well. In socially disarticulated economies, formal-sector laborers are only a cost for capital; although they play productive roles as wage laborers, they are seldom consumers of the finished commodities. Formal-sector workers' subsistence needs are often provided for by peasant and informal-sector petty commodity producers. Portes and Walton's analysis (1981) can be seen to complement de Janvry's. They show how the informal sector subsidizes the capitalist economy, both directly by providing industrial inputs more cheaply than they could be produced under fully proletarian relations of production and indirectly by providing cheaper consumer goods to the urban proletariat, thus lowering the pressure for higher wages, and the costs of reproducing the labor force.

Neo-Marxist approaches are in accordance with the PREALC analysis that the informal sector is constituted by a surplus labor force unabsorbed by the advanced capitalist sector, and that the informal sector is subordinated to the formal sector. Neo-Marxists, however, differ from the dependency theorists and some traditional Marxist approaches, in that they see this subordination as exploitative but highly beneficial to capitalist enterprise and-or to the capitalist system as a whole, that is, to the "formal" sector (Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981; Cockcroft, 1986; Davies, 1979; de Janvry, 1981; Kowarick, 1979; Moser, 1978; Portes, 1983; Portes and Benton, 1984; Portes and Sassen-Koob, 1987; Portes and Walton, 1981; Safa, 1982). Although this conclusion follows from the logic of dependency theory,

those PREALC scholars who have applied some of the assumptions of this theory in order to analyze the informal sector have not used the assumption of links of exploitation subsequent to subordination to analyze this sector. This is in part because the PREALC analysis locates the nature of the informal sector in the context of dependent development instead of in the context of problems associated with capitalist development (Rakowski, 1994). In their policy proposals, neo-Marxists focus on the need for structural changes and a more even distribution of income on the macro level rather than training programs and credit packages on the micro level. On the micro level, collective action to bring about change in favor of informal-sector participants is suggested. It is held that "Daily activities carried out by the people who undertake activities provide basic elements for the construction of a popular social subject" (Cortés, 1997: 87), with all that this entails for collective organization.

World Systems Theory

In a manner very similar to that of the neo-Marxists, world systems theorists view the continued and increasing presence of the informal sector as being due to current global economic restructuring. They point out that the informal sector is increasing also in the core capitalist countries following a logic of keeping wages low and ensuring a flexible labor force that can be hired in peak periods and fired in slow ones (Portes and Sassen-Koob, 1987; Sassen, 1990).

As the neo-Marxists as well, world systems theorists view informalized labor (i.e., that portion not extended social benefits fought for by the unionized workers) as being functional to capitalism, since it increases profits, and informal economic activities as being valuable in reducing the costs of reproduction of a labor force dependent on survival through buying all commodities in a capitalist market (Fröbel, 1982: 533–34). The process of informalization and the generation of informal economic enterprise is not occurring only in the developing world. Writing of the "recausalization" of labor in the "center" in general, and in Canada in particular, Broad (1991: 583) points out that many of the unemployed have become self-employed, though involuntarily, and many of these in turn hire workers for their informal enterprises. Casualization of work is found, for Broad, in part-time, temporary, and home work as well, an observation echoed by Cohen (1994), especially concerning women.

World systems theory proposes that the informal sector has always existed under capitalism, that full proletarianization has

never been realized, and that informality expands or contracts in keeping with the long cycles of downturn and upswing in capitalist accumulation (Broad, 2000: 34, 43). Such insight rests on theorizing of informalization in "advanced" or "core" capitalist societies (e.g., Portes et al., 1989; Portes and Sassen-Koob, 1987; Sassen, 1990, 1991). Broad (2000: 29) observes that "the current revival of the informal economy and casual labor fits easily into capital's drive to renew accumulation by cutting and externalizing costs of production and reproduction of labor power." Like the peasantry, those engaged in informal-sector activities often reproduce themselves and their families entirely within that sector, sometimes with occasional forays into proletarianization by some family members. Although Broad is concerned primarily with informalization in core capitalist countries, Roberts (1995: 123) provides evidence that throughout Latin America the informal sector has expanded since the 1970s; this has occurred in tandem with the introduction of high-tech, capital-intensive industry put into place through neoliberal economic policies, a kind of industry that has absorbed less and less of the existing labor force (Heath, 1998). This high-tech manufacturing produces goods mainly for export and for high-income groups, whereas the informal sector produces goods and services for low-income groups (Portes and Walton, 1981; Roberts, 1995: 117), perhaps an integral characteristic of a "socially disarticulated" economy.

Both world systems analysts and neo-Marxists view the informalization of labor and informal economic activities as providing a subsidy to the capitalist system as a whole, in a manner similar to that provided by the semi-proletarianized peasantry, and to capitalist entrepreneurs subcontracting work to a casualized (informalized) labor force. The two approaches differ mainly in their interpretation of the overriding characteristics of the capitalist system. World system analysts view the principal dynamic as capital accumulation and stress the role of informalized labor and informal income-generating activities as adding to this accumulation. The neo-Marxists, on the other hand, view the principal dynamic of the capitalist system as the class struggle and attend to the effects of informalized labor in undermining the well-being of the working class as a whole, as well as the functionality of the informal economy for keeping wages low. Both world systems theorists and neo-Marxists also underscore the super-exploitation of those informal-sector workers whose economic activities subsidize capitalism. Importantly, Portes (1983: 160) has pointed out that it is the formal sector, not the informal, that is new. Over time and through class stuggle, labor laws have been passed that

guarantee minimum wages, workers' compensation, health and safety protections, and prohibitions against child labor—many routinely ignored by informal-sector enterprises.

Some New Syntheses

Further developments in world systems approaches to the informal economy have paid increasing attention to state regulatory regimes and how these have evolved (or have been deformed by International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies) given the constraints of the world system (e.g., Itzigsohn, 2000). Since de Soto's work, originally published in 1986, greater attention has been focused on state policies directed toward the informal economy (e.g., Cross, 1998b; Itzigsohn, 2000: Portes, Castells, and Benton, 1989; Schneider, 2002). Some have also analyzed the pressures that those involved in informal activities can bring to bear on the state (e.g., Cross, 1998a, 1998b; Motala, 2002).

Recent work has underscored the agency of those involved in discovering new economic niches, often through vertical or horizontal networking (e.g., Zlolniski, 2000; Browne, 2001; Cross 1998b). The idea that those involved in the informal economy are entrepreneurs in a dynamic sense harks back to Hart's 1973 article, but the "liberatory" aspects or even the "counterhegemonic" (Staudt, 1998) tendencies of informal-sector entrepreneurship should not be exaggerated. As Peattie (1987) underscores, informal activities such as sweatshops and work subcontracted to home workers are highly exploitative; on the other hand, some street vendors and independent craftsmen and artisans can exhibit an entrepreneurial character. Even these vendors and artisans, however, may be subject to exploitative relations as commission sellers in the first instance (Bromley, 1978b; Cross, 1998b: 117) or as (essentially) outworkers for merchant middlemen in the second (García Canclini, 1993: 74–75). A similar difference within the informal sector is offered by Itzigsohn (2000: 11) in terms of the types of regulations that are avoided in informal economic activities: one type involves "the avoidance of regulations about registration and taxation"; the other type "concerns the evasion of labor market regulations such as regulations governing the minimum salary, social security, and hiring and firing or regulations about working conditions such as health and safety regulations." As Cross (1998b: 30) points out, de Soto was concerned with eliminating regulations of the former type while ignoring the implications for employee exploitation involved in evading the latter

type. Whereas eliminating bureaucratic regulations concerning registration and taxation might lead to dynamic growth, those eliminating worker protections would only lead to a higher quotient of oppression in the society as a whole.

Development discourse concerning those engaged in informal-sector activities has evolved over the past four decades. Prior to the ILO Kenya report of 1972, those who filled jobs later conceptualized as being part of the informal economy were viewed as a "surplus population" or a "marginal mass" (e.g., Quijano, 1974; Nún, 1969). Once considered a backward, "traditional" holding tank for the unemployed sector, the informal economy has been reconceptualized as an engine of growth and development and, by some, such as de Soto (1989), and some recent World Bank Policy Papers (e.g., Maloney, 2003; Loayza, 2002), as a hotbed of entrepreneurs. It would be easy to exchange "micro-enterpreneurs" for "small farmers" and "those in informal income-generating activities" for "peasants" in the following passage: "[B]efore the productive potential of the *small farmer* was discovered, *peasants* figured in development discourse only as a somewhat bothersome and undifferentiated mass with an invisible face; they were part of the amorphous 'surplus population,' which sooner or latter [*sic*] would be absorbed by a blooming urban economy (Escobar, 1995: 157). Just as an array of bureaucratic organizations and national, regional, and international policy makers and scholars pinpointed the peasant as an object of research (Escobar, 1995), so too did such a consortium begin to pinpoint those engaged in the informal economy. Most theoretical approaches to understanding the origin, dynamics, and structural position of the informal economy were hammered out in the two decades following the 1972 ILO report. More recent work, following and/or contesting de Soto (1989), has focused on theorizing the relationship between "informals" and the state (e.g., Cross, 1998b, Itzigsohn, 2000; Staudt, 1998). Bureaucratic organizations such as the ILO, PREALC, and, more recently, the World Bank continue to generate policy papers with a view to cultivating the potential of the sector and encouraging the success of "microentrepreneurs" through training courses in management and administration, technical assistance, and credit packages for "target" populations, or organizing those in a specific informal sector niche (e.g., Goldman, 2003; Motala, 2002). I have not explored the relationship between brickmakers and the state, except for brief mention of local government action against contamination caused by the burning of tires in the kilns and the removal of brickmakers from brickyards near new residential areas to brickyards far-

ther out on the expanding periphery of Mexicali. These relationships, most often mediated by unions such as CROC and CROM (Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana), to which some brickmakers belong, provide an ample field for future research. How brickmakers are viewed through the lens of past and contemporary development discourse is also worthy of being explored—an analysis similar to Escobar's (1995) concerning peasants. I next turn to elements of theoretical paradigms that I feel best explain the structural position of brickmakers and the dynamics of brickmaker households.

Proletarians, Petty Commodity Producers, and Petty Capitalists

Elements of the neo-Marxist and world systems theories, but also of a modified "capitalist populist" model, must be used to explain the economic dynamic of brickmaking enterprises and the career trajectory from pieceworker to renter in to owner of one's own brickyard. The capitalist populism is notable in the agency involved in entering brickmaking and in the eventual evolution of some brickmakers into petty capitalists.

Gerry (1987: 112) characterizes the neo-Marxist approach to the informal sector as conceiving small entrepreneurs to be petty commodity producers who are actually disguised wage workers exploited through such devices as subcontracting. These petty commodity producers benefit the capitalist system both by supplying cheap commodities to the workforce employed in the formal sector and by their continued presence as an industrial reserve army. It can be noted that in supplying goods (or services, as in repair shops) to the formal-sector labor force, whose living wages can thus be reduced, the subsidy provided by those employed in the informal sector to capitalism is indirect. Many commodities produced or services generated in the informal sector represent direct inputs into formal capitalist productive processes however.

Subcontracting for bricks is not the norm in Mexicali, although there are occasional exceptions. A builder may contract with one or several brickmakers to supply him with a certain number of bricks. A brickmaker thus contracted may "subcontract" for several thousand bricks from other brickmakers to fill his contract. This is, however, a horizontal type of subcontracting involving reciprocity, rather than the kind of vertical subcontracting typical of home working or the use of informalized workshops to produce a segment of a prod-

uct—practices employed by formal-sector firms throughout Mexico and the rest of the developing and industrialized world (Benería and Roldán, 1987; Treviño Sillar, 1988; Wilson, 1991). Alternatively, a buyer may present himself on a brickyard and request 40,000 bricks, for example. If the brickmaker only has half that number immediately available, then he will go to other brickyards to buy up the other 20,000. Sometimes a large construction enterprise will contract for bricks from several brickmakers, but the relationship is usually not a long-term one. Resellers also exist on the brickyards. They buy bricks and resell them at construction sites for a higher price. Brickmakers, however, even though they are petty commodity producers, as defined by the neo-Marxists, usually cannot be conceptualized as a disguised proletariat employed by a specific capitalist enterprise. Rather, as will be seen in more detail in the following chapter, the proletarianization of the piece-rate brickmakers is open and undisguised.

Nonetheless, brickmakers do provide both an indirect subsidy and a direct subsidy to formal capitalist firms and thus can be conceived of as being in the position of disguised proletarians in relationship to the formal capitalist system as a whole. By supplying bricks for self-built housing in the squatter settlements, where the majority of the formally employed labor force reside, brickmakers' commodities lower pressures for a wage sufficient to cover the costs of already fabricated housing. They thus provide an indirect subsidy to capitalism by lowering the costs of maintenance of the formally employed labor force. More directly, the bricks produced by self-exploitation, exploitation of unpaid family labor, and through the "surplus" labor of pieceworkers are used to build hotels, plazas, offices, banks, industrial parks, warehouses, and factories, thus providing a low-cost input into the infrastructure needed for running capitalist concerns.

Furthermore, petty commodity production of bricks, as in the case of all petty commodity producers, may (in some cases) permit the production and reproduction of a labor force that is then available, or whose offspring are then available, for formal-sector employment when needed, thus maintaining a "reserve army of labor" for the capitalist system, as the neo-Marxists point out. Members of the household labor force may even enter the formal labor market occasionally, and their wages provide a subsidy to the brickmaking enterprise, as in semiproletarianized peasantry wages that are used to support the farming enterprise. And in semiproletarianized peasantry, the temporarily proletarianized members of the petty commodity producing

household are thus indirectly benefiting the capitalist system, which need not provide an adequate welfare system for its workers. Sometimes, but seldom, however, this does occur among the brickmakers of Mexicali: semiproletarianization is often more the first step in the breakup of the petty commodity enterprise, as one worker after another abandons it for formal-sector work or for work in other, less demanding, informal-sector occupations. Nonetheless, it is often that a brickmaker who owns or controls his own brickyard will *echar un liebre*, a term employed on the Mexicali brickyards, meaning that if he needs cash quickly, he will work temporarily as a pieceworker on another brickmaker's yard.

Unfortunately neo-Marxist approaches—in their departure from Lenin's (1977) analysis—share with dependency theories a blindness to the development of petty capitalists from among the ranks of petty commodity producers, thus encountering problems in confronting certain informal-sector phenomenon applauded, if overromanticized, by such laissez-faire capitalists as de Soto and his followers. The essential difference between the two types of production consists of the use of hired laborers. Petty commodity producers, like petty capitalists, own or control the means of production, which for brickmakers means those who own or control (rent in) a brickyard. Petty commodity producers, however, rely entirely on their own and unpaid family labor, whereas petty capitalists or petite bourgeoisie will also contract pieceworkers to work on their brickyards.[2]

The transition from proletarians to petty commodity producers to petty capitalists was found among my sample of thirty-six brickmaking households in Mexicali (see chapter 1), echoing the findings of studies of brickmakers in the Oaxaca Valley (Cook, 1984, 1987a, 1987b; Cook and Binford, 1990). Two models that focus on the internal dynamics of the household can shed light on this occasional transition to petty capitalist status. One rests on Chayanov's (1986) analysis of the Russian "middle peasantry" at the turn of the century. The other involves a radical questioning of Chayanovian insights and is presented by Cook (1984a, 1984b: 29ff.; Cook and Binford, 1990: 115 et passim) under the rubric "endofamilial accumulation."

According to the Chayanovian model, which focuses on peasant petty commodity producers, the amount of labor expended by any member of a peasant household depends on the ratio of consumers to producers. When a couple is recently married, the consumer-producer ratio is low: each consumer is also a producer. Each needs not work as long or as hard to fulfill his or her basic needs as he or she must when the number of consumers in the form of small chil-

dren are added to the household. Labor intensity and self-exploitation increase as the number of consumers becomes increasingly greater than the number of producers. As the children grow and begin to work, the consumer-producer ratio begins to decrease. By the time the children are age fifteen, each produces as much as he or she consumes, and the head(s) of household need self-exploit less. The household income per capita remains in equilibrium, as less work is contributed by each consumer, when each consumer contributes labor. The implications of the Chayanovian model, which Chayanov did not deduce, are that with a lower consumer-producer ratio, a surplus might be generated. Chayanov assumed, as do many analysts of petty commodity producers, especially among the peasantry, that there was no search for a surplus (profits); rather, that once a culturally prescribed living standard was attained, no work effort would be expended. As Cook (1984a: 4; see also Cook and Binford, 1990: 27–28) points out, however, simple reproduction with its accompanying lack of profit generation is not a goal of petty commodity producers but an undesirable situation in which many are entrenched.

A number of studies have incorporated Chayanovian insights into analyses of the position of peasant families in particular and into analyses of household labor allocation and income-generating possibilities in general.

In a study of the Cajamarca region of Peru, Deere and de Janvry (1981) combined Marxist-Leninist and Chayanovian models to explain the class differentiation of the peasantry. The Marxist-Leninist framework holds that factors external to the peasant farm affect its economic well-being, and draining off any surplus produced by the majority of family households most usually leads first to semi-proletarianization, as one or more members of the household must seek wage work, and eventually to full proletarianization of the household. Although peasant farmers value children for their labor power, the more children a family has, the greater the chances of their offsprings' semi- and full proletarianization, as land becomes fragmented to less than subsistence levels through the generations. Spurious occurrences, such as crop failures, push the petty commodity producing or "middle" farmers into the ranks of the proletariat (Lenin, 1982). Chayanov, on the other hand, stresses internal household dynamics, predicting that with more working-age children, more land could be farmed, thus farm size would expand.

Deere and de Janvry's (1981) sample of 105 Cajamarcan rural households showed that the largest farms indeed had more working

members, whereas the smaller farms had less labor power, thus following Chayanov's predictions. Nonetheless, it was among the poorest households, landless or near landless, that the highest number of working members was found. Most members of these poor families are engaged in artisan production or have entered wage labor, thus illustrating the class differentiation over the generations predicted by Marxist-Leninist paradigms.

Among the swidden (slash and burn) agriculturalists of West Kalimantan, Indonesia, whose income is not constrained by land scarcity but by labor scarcity, a Chayanovian dynamic becomes even more apparent. Dove (1984) distinguishes between intensive agricultural systems, in which land is scarce but labor is abundant, and extensive agricultural systems, in which, land is abundant but labor is scarce. Among the Kalimantan farmers he studied, extensive agriculture, unconstrained by land scarcity, is practiced. Household labor is generally underutilized during slack periods in the agricultural cycle but intensified and overworked during the peak periods of planting, weeding, and harvesting. Households with high consumer-producer ratios hire in rather than perform wage labor on others' swiddens, for two reasons: first, because hiring in labor permits them to intensify their own labor through a division of tasks; and second, because returns from work on their own swidden are higher than returns from wage labor on other people's swiddens. On the other hand, households with a low consumer-producer ratio preferentially perform wage labor, preferring the more immediate returns. Dove concludes that no structural class differences exist between hiring in and hiring out labor households; rather, each group of households is, following Chayanovian predictions, in a different stage of its demographic cycle. There are no fixed classes, and this, Dove argues, is due to the abundance of land.

Arguments abound as to whether the proletarianization of sons of petty capitalists and/or petty commodity producers is a permanent state (as Lenin and other Marxists argue) or a temporary stage in a longer career trajectory (as the Chayanovian model would suggest). In a study of simple commodity producer farmers in South Dakota, based on 1920 census data, Friedmann (1978) argues that the proletarianization of the surplus working-age sons of the family enterprise was temporary. Working-age sons hired themselves out as farm laborers in order to earn the money necessary to form a new household enterprise of petty commodity producers. Thus no class differentiation was occurring; rather, whether a man was a wage laborer or a petty commodity producing farmer depended on the stage in the

family life cycle. This is a theoretically possible trajectory for all petty commodity producers with sons who wish to establish an independent concern.

Applying the Chayanovian model to explain differences in total family income, Greenhalgh (1985) analyzed data she collected on eighty Taiwanese non-coresidential families, corporate kin groups known as *chia*. Dividing the family cycle into three stages, nuclear, stem (including one married son and his wife and children), and joint (including two or more married sons and their wives and children), Greenhalgh found that total family income varied as consumer-producer ratios changed. She concluded that the family developmental cycle underlies differences in property ownership, as Chayanov contended, but that differences in access to property also cause differences in the value placed on children: there is a mutual causality. One must thus ask which factor (property or family labor power) has most importance, and at what point in the family life cycle one is more important than the other. Notably, Greenhalgh calculated income earned by proletarianized family members, as well as that from property or business ownership, in determining total family income, showing that Chayanovian insights can be extended beyond consideration of peasants or petty commodity producers.

Criticizing the Chayanovian model while recognizing that demographic factors affect the accumulation of capital within a household enterprise, Cook (1984a; see also Cook and Binford, 1990) relates the number of producers within the household to the possibility of "endofamilial accumulation," which is the motivating force behind the endogenous development of capitalist enterprises from petty commodity producing ones among brickmakers as well as other types of artisans. As children mature and consumers become producers as well, a surplus can be generated that permits the movement from pieceworker to petty commodity producer to petty capitalist. Surplus income is invested first in the acquisition of a brickyard, then in contracting pieceworkers. Thus the consumer-producer ratio affects "productive capacity, capital accumulation, and material wealth" (Cook and Binford, 1990: 115). Once pieceworkers are hired in, the brickmaking household enters the stage of "simple capitalist accumulation" and may or may not continue to use unpaid family labor in the brickmaking process. Cook (1984a: 187) justifies using the term *endofamilial accumulation* partially to underscore the fact that the use of family labor can lead to endogenous capital accumulation, and not just to the simple reproduction of the family and the family enterprise, as the

Chayanovian model, along with other approaches to petty commodity producers that see them as economically static, suggests.[3]

Although Cook notes that this trajectory from proletarianized pieceworker to petty capitalist is unusual, and is becoming more so as the price of land increases in the Oaxaca Valley, a phenomenon also common to Mexicali (thus decreasing the "abundance" or perceived availability of land), it is important to note that the idea of endogenous development of capitalist enterprises from among the petty commodity producers is an important "neoliberal" (yet, paradoxically, also advanced by Lenin [1977]) modification to neo-Marxist, world systems, and dependency theories. Elements of Chayanov's and Cook's model will be used to trace this trajectory among the brickmakers of Mexicali in the following chapter.

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CHAPTER 3

Petty Commodity Producers in the Informal Sector: The Peasant Adaptation of the Brickmakers in Colonia Popular, Mexicali

The term *peasant* has become more of an ideal type in Weber's (1978: 20) sense—an abstraction from reality—than an actual living and lived-in category. This is partially due to historical changes in the situation of small subsistence and sub-subsistence farmers and to the problems of classifying any phenomenon that freezes it as a static entity rather than as a dynamic confluence. Small peasant farmers and even relatively large peasant farmers on the way to becoming capitalist farmers have increasingly become semi-proletarianized and members of their nuclear family fully proletarianized. They thus escape, as Kearney (1996) points out, traditional governmental classifications. More often, they and their families are what he calls "polybians" (as opposed to amphibians, which occupy two ecological niches), occupying multiple economic niches (Kearney, 1996: 141). They may be artisans (Nash, 1993a), plantation workers, transnational immigrants, or urban squatters, sometimes changing categories within a few years. Often the peasant who is also sometimes a proletarian displays social and political behavior more typical of a wage worker than of a peasant: rather than acting like peasants who also do waged work, they act more like wage workers who also do farming (Cancian, 1992: 198). It is widely agreed that with the penetration of capitalism, the Mexican peasantry has become differentiated into landless farm laborers, sub-subsistence farmers, subsistence farmers, and capitalist farmers (Hewitt de Alcantara, 1976; de Janvry, 1981). The fate of the descendants of subsistence farmers, most of whom are semi-proletarians, will be full proletarianization and thus reentry into official government categories. In the following discussion, I will use "peasant," with all of the differentiation that has historically occurred within this category, as

an "ideal type." It must be kept in mind that ideal types are abstractions from reality: "It is probably seldom if ever that a real phenomenon can be found which corresponds exactly to one of these ideally constructed types" (Weber, 1978: 20). Epistemologically, most classifications and categories are of an ideal-type character, hiding the fact that individual identities, as well as the cultures attached to them, are heterogeneous, hybrid, and contradictory.

It is important to point out that each petty commodity producing segment within the informal economy contains an emergent internal class structure. Such classes are definable in terms of their relation to the means of production, as well as access to paid laborers, and can be understood using a Marxist perspective. In other words, as Ypeij (2000) found for micro-producers in Lima, Peru, the informal sector is heterogeneous. In this chapter I will analyze the economic position of the brickmakers not only in terms of their relation to the dominant capitalist system but also in terms of their internal class composition. Just as there is an internal class stratification among the peasantry (Deere and León de Leal, 1985; Deere, 1982), there is also an internal class stratification among the brickmakers. This internal class stratification is related not only to access to the means of production but also, as Chayanov (1986) showed for the peasantry, to the number of producers contained by the household and the level of self-exploitation and exploitation of the family labor force. Such self- and family exploitation leads to what Cook and Binford (1990) identified as "endofamilial accumulation" (see also Cook, 1984b). Such accumulation can lead to changes in the head of household's relation to the means of production.

Remember that, according to Chayanov, as offspring mature, the household contains more working hands. With an augmented family labor force, the family can work more lands and increase their income, and all of this with less drudgery per person. The recently married couple, and for the first decade of their marriage, according to his theory, a family with many dependent consumers but only two producers, will be poorer than a family with adult children who produce as well as consume. Notably, Chayanov's prediction that artisan production by peasants will increase when there are more consumers than producers in a family may be true in relation to men but not in relation to women, whose domestic labor increases with the presence of small children or the aged (Nash, 1993). Nash (1993b: 137) has found that Mayan women produce more pottery when there are low consumer-producer ratios than when these ratios are high. The same can be seen concerning women's aid in brickmaking. As children age

to the point of being able to help their fathers in brickmaking, women are also relieved of the intensive caretaking involved with raising small children, and they can spend more time helping to make bricks themselves. It is at this point of low consumer-producer ratios that the brickmaking enterprise can expand from renting in to owning a brickyard.

The "Peasant" Adaptation of the Brickmakers: Economic Stratification among Petty Commodity Producers

The internal class stratification among the brickmakers is similar to the economic divisions among the peasantry; the subsidy of brickmakers to the capitalist system as a whole and to the formal sector of the economy is also similar to the subsidy provided by the peasantry. Whereas the peasantry supplies cheap food for the urban centers (de Janvry, 1981), the brickmakers supply cheap building materials for housing, offices, banks, and factories, sometimes even supplying their bricks to cross-border construction companies (Cook, 1998).[1]

Among brickmakers there are various relationships to an extremely important means of production: the brickyard. Many brickmakers work for others at a piece rate, being paid for every thousand bricks they make. They may work for a renter in of a brickyard or for a brickyard owner who also works making bricks. Those brickmakers who rent in brickyards or become owners of their own brickyards may or may not utilize piece-rate workers; it is possible that they, their sons, and often their wives and daughters form the complete labor force. Brickmakers who rent in brickyards may rent to another brickmaker. The normal rental price at the beginning of the 1990s was 11 percent of bricks fired, firing being the last step of the process of brickmaking. A renter in who decides to rent to a second brickmaker will ask 15 percent of the fired bricks, or what is earned therefrom.

Brickyard owners or renters in may have an adult son who enters the formal labor market, in a way similar to the semi-proletarianized peasant family: what the son earns provides a subsidy to the family business in the years that prices for bricks are low or fewer bricks are made, due to climatic problems or family illness. Male heads of household may also temporarily enter the formal labor market until an economic goal, such as buying a truck, is met, while leaving their adult sons (and often daughters) to continue making bricks on the family-owned or controlled brickyard.

There are six stratum among working Mexicali brickmakers (ladrilleros). At the first level are worker-owners who employ pieceworkers (*maquileros*—those who make or manufacture), and usually also utilize family labor. At the second level are worker-renters in who employ pieceworkers and usually also utilize family labor. Below them, at the third level, are the worker-owners who utilize only family labor. They are followed by worker-renters in who utilize only family labor. At the fifth level are the piece-rate workers who are aided by their wives and children. They are followed by piece-rate workers who work alone.[2] These piece-rate workers are similar to agricultural day laborers except for the method of payment (day laborers being paid a daily wage): they have no independent access to the means of production.

A further high stratum can be added: those absentee owners who rent out their brickyards and may or may not have a history of brickmaking. Absentee owners tend to rent out their brickyards for a percentage of the bricks produced, and renters in usually have a history of living on those brickyards with their nuclear, and, in several cases, partially extended (often with a married sibling or a married son) families. Owner-workers and renters in may or may not have lived on the brickyards at some point in time; many later acquired a lot in one of the colonias and walked or, by 2003, more commonly, drove to work. The few who hire in piece-rate workers may have these maquileros and their families living on the brickyard, though this is unusual. Those brickmakers who hire in maquileros are usually entering a trajectory that will move them from petty commodity producers to petty capitalist producers.

Two people in Colonia Popular are absentee owners who have never made, nor do they plan to make, bricks. A woman inherited a brickyard from her father, who had bought lands that subsequently became a site of numerous brickyards. Her husband, who is a building contractor, bought a brickyard as an investment and in order to have bricks available for his construction work. Both rent out their brickyards. This couple is one of the best off economically in the colonia. A third absentee owner once made bricks, lived on the brickyard with his family, and employed a brother as a pieceworker. This brother now rents in his brickyard. Absentee owners may own more than one brickyard, often being ex-farmers who decided to rent their land to the brickmakers, both small property owners and *ejidatarios*. From these landowners, brickmakers are enabled to rent in as much land as their family labor force can work.

I would like to propose here that the case studies show that the movement from piece-rate workers to renters in, and from renters in to owner-workers, can be related to the domestic cycle and the proportion of producers to consumers in the brickmaker's household, following Chayanovian insights. When a couple has small children, consumers but not producers, the male head of household has only his wife to aid him in brickmaking, and then only occasionally, as her domestic duties prohibit full-time work. As the children mature, there are more workers in the household, the brickmaker can produce more bricks, he earns more or realizes more profits, and the family becomes better off economically. At this stage, the piece-rate worker can become a renter in, and as more children mature and expand the family labor force, he may move from the status of renter in to owner of his own brickyard. At either the renter in or owner stage, the brickmaker may or may not hire in piece-rate workers to supplement his family labor force.

There is a caveat, however: the price of land in Mexicali is increasing each year. The level of self-exploitation and exploitation of family labor needed to buy a brickyard is thus becoming more difficult, requiring more labor and a greater amount of time. Also, if the brickmaker's offspring decide that the brickmaker's life is not for them, that they prefer to find work elsewhere, an increasing possibility in an industrial city such as Mexicali, then the Chayanovian model will not work either. Rather, it is necessary to add the conceptualization of semi-proletarianized petty commodity producers in order to fit them into a static classification.

Apart from needing access to land, brickmakers also need access to water. It is for this reason that brickyard complexes are almost always located near networks of canals. These canals were constructed for agricultural use, but brickmakers either illegally divert some of the water or reach an accord with a local farmer rather than going through the government Secretariat concerned with water distribution (SARH). Tools needed for brickmaking include shovels, hoes, buckets, wheelbarrows, and molds. Renters in and owner-workers must possess these tools. Many make the molds themselves, and some earn extra income by making molds for other brickmakers.

The earth for making bricks is excavated from the brickyard, but the brickmakers have to buy the mixture of manure and straw, known as "*estiércol*," from the nearby cattle ranches in the Valle de Mexicali. Often they will make a deal with the rancher to clean his corrals in order to acquire this input for free. The cost of transporting the estiércol elevates the costs of production. If the brickmaker does not have a

truck, he has to pay someone to transport the estiércol from the ranch to the brickyard. The brickmaker can lose several workdays if he must pay for someone to deliver estiércol: the truck owner may have various deliveries to make before one particular brickmaker's turn comes up. In some cases, sons of brickmakers, such as Don Nicolas's grandsons, decide to buy a truck with their earnings, thus transporting estiércol to their family's brickyards, earning money for transporting it to other brickyards, and also being able to deliver the bricks made on the family brickyard or earning the transportation costs incurred by the buyer of bricks from other brickyards.

In the same way that the peasant-farmer can earn more if he has a truck to transport his produce to the market instead of being dependent on intermediaries, the brickmaker who owns a truck can also earn more if he can transport his bricks to buyers or to potential buyers.

Brickmakers sell their bricks either by waiting for buyers to come to the brickyard, selling them from trucks they or intermediaries own, usually parked along a major highway, or by circulating in colonias where construction is going on. They can sell several thousand bricks at a time to a colonia resident who is constructing his house, using paid laborers, family laborers, or a network-mediated labor force. In the period 1989–1990, a thousand bricks cost between 100,000 and 130,000 pesos (when the dollar was between 2,000 and 2,300 pesos per dollar), depending on the quality, with those fired in the interior of the kiln being considered of higher quality; if the buyer had no way of transporting the bricks to his building site, then the brickmaker or intermediary earned 10,000 to 20,000 pesos for each thousand bricks delivered.

Once in a while buyers arrive on the brickyard complexes with semi-trailers, coming from Tijuana. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was also common for trailers to haul bricks from Mexicali to San Felipe, Tecate, and Ensenada. Although a semi-trailer holds only 15,000 bricks, these buyers often bought between 50,000 and 100,000 bricks at wholesale prices. Since most brickmakers fire only 20,000 to 30,000 bricks a month, this often means buying from several Mexicali brickmakers. Climatological variables such as the dry, hot climate and the consistency of the earth make bricks made in Mexicali of more durable constitution than those made in the more humid, cooler coastal region where Tijuana is situated and which also affects nearby Tecate. It rarely rains in Mexicali, usually less than a week or two a year, unlike in Tijuana and Tecate, where the rainy season lasts for months. Rain

Table 5 Economic Circumstances Common to Peasant Farmers and Brickmakers

	Peasants	*Brickmakers*
Common economic phenomena		
1. Necessary means of production		
Access to land	X	X
Land rentals for a percentage of the product	X	X
Access to water	X	X
Access to tools	X	X
2. Characteristics of labor force		
Self-exploitation and exploitation of family labor ("endofamilial accumulation")	X	X
Higher earnings depending on domestic life cycle	X	X
Possible use of paid workers	X	X
Semi-proletarianization (Household head or adult son or daughter may enter the labor market temporarily)	X	X
3. Class differences		
Absentee owners	X	X
Owner-workers	X	X
Renters in	X	X
Paid workers	X	X
4. Subsidize urban expansion and the capitalist system	X	X
5. Neopatriarchal households	X	X

prohibits the fabrication of bricks that will dissolve if too wet; humid climates weaken their inner structure.

As can be seen in Table 5, peasants and brickmakers are similar along three dimensions: the types of means of production needed to carry out their productive activities; the utilization of various types of labor force; and the internal class stratification. Of course, in spite of the fact that brickmakers need land and water in order to produce bricks, the quantities utilized are less than those needed by peasants. There are limits to the amount of land a brickmaker family can effectively utilize: although those who hire in laborers can often work as much as two or three hectares, more often a family with five or six adult workers, whether family or hired in, will seldom utilize even an acre over a year of brickmaking. Sons of brickmakers, once married, will most often begin an independent brickmaking enterprise as renters in, possibly working for a few years as paid piece-rate workers on their fathers' rented in or own brickyard prior to this.

Brickmakers, like peasant-farmers, utilize the labor of their children in the family enterprise, and they engage in self-exploitation and exploitation of family labor to the degree necessary to survive. These two types of exploitation are mitigated as more and more sons (and at times daughters) are able to contribute to the process of brickmaking. For both the brickmakers and the peasant-farmers, the extent of self-exploitation and exploitation of the family labor force depends on the stage in the domestic life cycle and on the number of producers to consumers that the household contains. The more workers there are, the more extensive the planting and the harvest may be for the peasant family, and the greater the number of bricks produced for the brickmaker family. In a manner similar to the semiproletarianized peasant household, some household heads among the brickmakers may enter the formal labor market for short periods or send an adult son to do so.

There may be absentee owners among the brickmakers as well as among the peasant-farmers, many having once been worker-owners. They may maintain control over their brickyards or farmlands either by hiring in workers or by renting out, on a sharecropping-like basis, their plots of land. Other brickyard owners, like the peasant farmer, may be the principal workers on their lands. Brickmakers who do not own or control a brickyard may, like the landless peasants, rent in lands or work for other commodity producers in their occupation. Renters in of brickyards can rent to a third party at a slightly higher price, a phenomenon not unknown among the peasantry.

There is another dimension in which brickmakers are similar to the peasant-farmers: the end result of the labor of both provides a subsidy to urban growth and alleviates the pressures for a higher wage among those workers employed by formal-sector enterprises. Just as the cheap foodstuffs provided by the peasantry permit salaries of the urban proletariat to remain lower than would otherwise be conceivable without massive protest, the bricks made by the brickyard petty commodity producers allow the urban labor force to build their houses in the colonias populares at a minimal cost.[3] Low salaries translate into higher profits for capitalist businesses. In such a way, then brickmaker, as well as the peasantry, provides a subsidy to the capitalist system as a whole and to capitalist enterprises.

Conclusions

The level of schooling of the brickmakers is lower than the level of schooling of the population fifteen years of age or over in Mexicali or in Baja California (cf. Introduction). This is explicable partially because the brickyards are located far from urban services such as schools and transit systems, partially because of the role children play in the small family business, and partially because the majority of brickmakers have migrated from ranchos in the south of Mexico where educational facilities were lacking or their peasant fathers used their labor in turn on the family farm. The following chapter will delve more deeply into the subsidy provided by women and children on the brickyards.

A Chayanovian model can explain the economic movement from class to class of the brickmakers equally well as it does the peasant; probably it will be valuable in explaining the economic advancement of all petty commodity producers in their trajectory from workers to owners of their own small businesses. This is not to deny that differentiation of class takes place on a macrosocial level, however. Over the family life cycle, as the children mature, there are more producers, more unpaid workers for the family enterprise. With more workers, there is the chance of earning an income more than that necessary to survive and even investing it in a brickyard. At the same time, with each added producer, the level of self-exploitation for each worker diminishes. For each mature child added to the family labor force, exploitation of their labor diminishes, while at the same time the family enterprise can make more profits. The internal class position of both brickmakers and peasants and their level of income is also determined by their access to the means of production, following Marxist insights: for both it includes land, water, tools, and vehicles. The prices of the commodities produced by peasants and brickmakers also depend on the level of competition between them and others in their occupation.

Brickmakers as well as peasants can be seen as petty commodity producers or emergent petty capitalists whose productive activities are subsumed under the dominant capitalist system, to which they provide a subsidy. The brickmakers, because they provide formal-sector workers with bricks to build their self-built housing, provide a direct subsidy to the construction of housing, and thus they indirectly influence urban development by their direct subsidy to the proletariat living in this housing.

In sum, brickmaker families and peasant families are similar in these main ways:

1. Their work provides a direct subsidy to the urban proletariat and an indirect subsidy to capitalist enterprises located in the formal sector of the economy, and to the capitalist system as a whole.
2. These subsidies depend on the self-exploitation of the brickmaker or peasant head of household as well as exploitation of the family labor force.
3. Their internal class position depends on the following factors:
   a. Their access to the means of production: land, water, tools, and vehicles.
   b. The stage in the family life cycle, which conditions how many members of the family who are consumers are also producers, that is, how many offspring are able to contribute labor to the small family business and how much wives are able to contribute.
4. As will be discussed in chapter 6, both peasants and brickmakers display neopatriarchal household structures and dynamics.

The brickmakers and the peasants are also similar in one other dimension: often they live far from the urban services that their beneficiaries enjoy.

CHAPTER 4

"The Old Brickmaker, 1993"

I'm old now, and I've seen a lot. We have a saying here: "The devil is more devilish because of his age than because of his evilness." I'm not a bad man, though I've been through many wives. Five all told. But it was they who left me for another man, richer than me, I guess. Or they died.

I guess I'm more than eighty. They tell me I was born in 1919 in Sinaloa. My birth certificate was lost after the Revolution. When the federales, the government troops, and the cristeros, who didn't like how the new government was keeping down the Church, were fighting and burning down the villages. Both of them. The cristeros and the federales.

I never could get another birth certificate, because I never knew exactly where I was born. We had moved around so much, from Michoacán to Colima to Jalisco to Sinaloa and back again, wherever my father could find lands to sharecrop, or wherever the Indians would lend us land. They felt sorry for us because we had no place to call our own, and no earth of our own to sow. So they'd lend us a piece of land. Most of the time they didn't even want part of the harvest. They just let us use it, while they didn't need it. For a year or two here and there.

Finally we settled in Sinaloa, on a rancho more or less near Los Mochis, and that's where I spent most of my younger years, so that's where I say I'm from.

That's where my mother and father are buried as well. When I was thirteen they died, within months of each other. My only brother, who was about ten then, died with them. From some fever that devastated the ranchos after the Revolution had carried off my uncles.

By the time I was fourteen I was together with my first wife, Rachel. She was an orphan too, living with an older sister of hers.

I never had much luck with wives. They either died, like Rachel did, my first wife, the one I miss the most, or they went away. She died giving birth to our first child, when we both were fifteen.

My first son died with her. There were no hospitals or doctors closer than Los Mochis. And the only roads from our rancho were burro paths back then. Someone would have lent me a burro, but by the time the midwife knew Rachel was in trouble, it was too late. She couldn't have stood the three-day ride.

And where would I have got the money for the hospital, anyway? Who would have lent it to me? My family wasn't from the rancho, not even married in, and our friends and compadres were pobres like us. Who would have lent it to me when I only had a few weeks' work here and there, planting corn or slaughtering hogs or milking cows or picking beans?

Yes, they either died or left me for another man. Who knows their reasons? Left me with the children. I'd wash the children's clothes and cook for them, that's how I learned to make tortillas, until another woman came along to take care of the ones I had, and then we'd make some more.

I have three sons and two daughters living, from the four women I had after Rachel. And from my own children, at least from the four here in Mexicali, the other girl I don't know about, I have twenty-seven grandchildren. They youngest will be a year in a month, the eldest is almost thirty-three.

It was in 1954 I think, when all but my youngest living son—Raimundo is his name—had been born, and I was almost forty years of age, when we came north to Mexicali. To pick cotton.

My wife María, the one who left me to cross over to California with some man she met here on the border, and Diego, my eldest, who was about fourteen then, and Ramón, who was nine, and I all picked together. Because they paid you by the weight you picked, you see. María would leave our newborn baby daughter, Sonia is her name, in the shade of one of the pickup trucks. And we'd all pick together. María was a hard worker, I'll say that for her.

My other daughter, Michaela, who was about seven then, I think, followed her mother, Elvia was her name, when she left me for a man who had a piece of land, back when we lived in Sinaloa. He was a widow, you see, and needed a woman to bring up his children. Elvia was Ramón's mother too, but she left me Ramón and took Michaela. That's our custom here in Mexico, the sons follow the father, the daughters the mother. Except María left me Sonia, probably because she didn't want to risk smuggling her over to the other side. Or maybe

because her new man didn't want any previous children to take care of. He probably wanted to put María to work over there.

Well, we worked planting and picking and deseeding cotton for a few years, four or five maybe, and tying onions when we weren't doing that, sometimes as far away as San Luis Río Colorado. But cotton prices began to fall after a time, and Mexicali Valley soils were becoming salty from the waters of the Río Colorado. The river was contaminated, you see, and in the end the owners didn't need so many workers. Then they stopped growing so much cotton all over the valley.

So one year I crossed over to Yuma, but found jobs only for a week or days, mostly picking lemons, and in the end I didn't earn enough to even shoe my children. María left me soon after I returned, and I was the only one left to care for them. Four now, the youngest less than five.

So I went to the brickyards where Colonia Hidalgo now is, and I watched the brickmakers make bricks. That's how I learned to mix and mold and fire them. I worked for a few months as a peon on a brickyard and brought my two boys along to learn as well. Sonia played with the patron's daughter while we worked. They stayed good friends after I rented in my own brickyard soon after, started making bricks on my own, with the help of my boys.

Diego was about nineteen then, and he soon started seeing the daughter of a brickmaker on a nearby yard, and within the year she was awaiting my eldest grandchild. He's two years older than my son, Raimundo. Raimundo was my last wife's son. Juanita's son. She was killed in a bus accident when she was going back to Michoacán for her mother's funeral. About twenty years ago. I didn't get a wife after that. No, I haven't had a wife since then.

We lost Diego. He first went to work on his father-in-law's brickyard for a few years, then as the children started coming—they had nine all told in the end—he rented his own brickyard too.

I've been making bricks since then, more than thirty years now, as have all my sons and most of their sons. Sonia's first husband was a brickmaker too. Lived on the brickyard down from the one we rented after Colonia Hidalgo was set up and we had to move out this way. She left him for being a drunk. A brickmaker's disease, drinking, though I haven't done much of it myself. Not recently, anyway. There were some years I spent in the bars, spent my money there, my time there. That's probably why Ramona left me. Then I stopped. After she left and I had to take care of the *chamacos* alone. My sons still do drink though. They say beer helps them stand the summer

heat, when you're sweating even if you're just sitting down doing nothing, and brandy, the feel of the iced clay on their feet when they're mixing and on their hands when they're molding, in the winter.

You see, when you shovel down the earth from the sides of the hole, you throw water on what you've loosened, then mix it all together with the shovel, plus some straw and manure, but you've got to be barefoot when you do it, it's too slippery for any shoe or boot, yes even rubber ones, and a good way to ruin them within the week as well. And in the winter it's so cold it feels as though you're walking on razors. So that's why they take a sip of brandy every once in awhile while they're working. And sometimes after the day's work is over too, to get ready for the next day.

Nights are cold here in the winter. I've stuffed the gaps in the planks with mud and grass and hung burlap over the door and the window, but the cold still gets in. The dogs get in bed with you in winter, shivering away like you are, and you don't throw them out when it's that cold. For the warmth, you know.

Sonia's married again now, and she helps me when she can. They have three children though, and her husband doesn't earn so much in the body repair shop, he's a solderer, so she can't help me a lot. About Michaela, I don't know. I wish I knew, but I don't. She's probably married now too. She must be, she's older than Sonia.

Well, I rented at least six or seven brickyards around Mexicali, moving further south every few years or so as the new colonias went up where the earlier brickyards had been. We brickmakers were just pushed out along the edges as the city grew.

A couple, maybe four, years ago, my eldest son, Diego, said we should try to buy. He sold a lot he and his wife, Marta, had in Colonia Popular, he had never gotten together enough money to put in electricity anyway, and after paying off his truck—that one sitting over there that needs a new engine now, it doesn't run, one of his sons used to drive it, he never knew how to drive himself—he put a down payment on this here brickyard I live on. On his half of it anyway. And with a little money I had saved over the years I put down a few month's worth for my half. We had three years to pay, two years ago.

It's hard to keep up my payments, though, since I had pneumonia this year and couldn't work for three months. The doctor at the Red Cross clinic told me that if I worked, I'd die. And old as I am, I'm not ready to die just yet. And now with the new colonia they put in, I can't burn an oven of bricks anymore. Same old story. People move in then complain of the contamination, and we brickmakers keep get-

ting moved further out. So I still make bricks, but I don't bake them. I sell them unfired, for half the price or less of fired bricks. The other brickmakers come and buy from me, or my grandson loads it up and sells them on the new brickyards. But the money is less now.

Then Diego broke his arm and it didn't heal right, and his sons had to give him money for almost six months, and now he's talking about quitting brickmaking and taking a job as a watchman at the industrial park down the highway over there. The Baja Californias I think they call it. The family'd live on the grounds.

He says he's worked making bricks for thirty years or more, and he's tired. Tired of sweating in the summer sun, tired of the mud icing his feet and hands and giving him rheumas in the winter, tired of trying to get something, then not being able to make it.

That means, I guess, that we'll never have our own brickyard.

Never did have anything to call my own. But the only thing I regret is that I never learned to read or write. Because if I had, I'd have gotten my driver's license and driven trucks, those big trucks carrying things all around, and I would have driven all up and down the Republic of Mexico.

I've got some grandsons who have driver's licenses. One even works driving a truck, for a grocery store, and another has a truck of his own, a small one, but it works. He used to sell our bricks, when we could bake them, loading up the truck, driving it over to the Sanchez Toboada crossing, parking alongside the road there and waiting for the buyers to come. Now, sometimes, he takes my unfired bricks out to the new brickyard to sell them.

I'm not sure what I'll do if Diego leaves. I've lived in this house, built it myself with the help of my grandsons, more than three years ago now, and I thought I'd be here for life. It will be lonely here without Diego and his wife and their children, my grandchildren, but if we don't keep up the payments, I'll have to leave anyway.

One of Diego's wife's cousins was telling me about a widow living right near Colonia Popular. Some time when I visit Raimundo, my son who still lives in the colonia—all my sons got lots there, but only Raimundo managed to stay, probably because his wife brings in some wages working in the carrot packaging plant when it's open four or five months each year—sometime when I go to visit Raimundo, I think I'll pass by her house.

They say she used to make bricks herself. When her husband was alive, before he became a sign painter.

I bet her tortillas are better than mine, although I've had a lot of practice making tortillas myself.

When I go over to the colonia, I'll walk past where she lives and I'll tip my hat to her, and maybe we'll start talking.

Maybe we won't start talking the first time I pass, but after awhile.

It would be nice to have someone to keep me company.

I'm not a bad man you see, I'm just old, too old to live with my grandchildren all around, sharing a bed with them, and my sons have enough problems as it is without making a space for me.

I'm just old, and soon I'm not going to have Diego and his wife here, and it would be nice to have a wife myself again. He's going to seek other work, you see. He is getting old too. And making bricks takes a lot of energy. Energy that goes away when you're old. And now we can't fire them anymore.

Plate 3. The “old brickmaker,” Don Nicolas, and his house on the brickyard.

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CHAPTER 5

"Invisible" Women and Children Workers on the Mexicali Brickyards

Literature on the Mexican peasantry, whether small property owners (*pequeños proprietarios*) or *ejidatarios*,[1] has shown that the food crops they produce and sell, supplied more cheaply than those grown by fully capitalist enterprises through their self-exploitation and exploitation of family labor, provide a direct subsidy to the cost of living of urban populations (de Janvry, 1981; see also Lipton, 1982; Bernstein, 1982) and thus provide an indirect subsidy to the firms that employ sectors of this population. Simply put, if food prices were higher, there would be greater pressure to raise the wage, thus lowering profits.

Brickmakers (ladrilleros) provide a similar subsidy to urban populations, facilitating the construction of housing, both self-built and furnished by building contractors, as well as offices, factories, and industrial parks, with the cost of materials, that is, bricks, made lower through the brickmaker's self-exploitation and exploitation of family labor.

Brickmakers' work directly subsidizes capitalist enterprise when their product, manufactured and sold at costs lower that those which could be afforded by brickmaking businesses run according to profit-making principles, since containing the inputs of unpaid family labor, goes into building industrial parks and office buildings that the capitalist enterprises will occupy. The subsidy is more indirect when the bricks are utilized by squatter settlement residents for self-built housing (Wilson, 1998a). A number of scholars have noted that self-built housing lowers pressures for higher wages among workers who live in this type of housing and are employed in the formal capitalist sector, since the wage does not have to cover the cost of pre-built, standardized housing constructed by private builders (e.g., Burgess, 1978; Connolly, 1982; Portes and Walton, 1981; see also

Bennholdt-Thomsen, 1981) . The family labor force whose exploitation on the brickyards makes possible these direct and indirect subsidies to formal-sector firms includes women and children, wives, daughters, and sons. Children may begin "helping out" on the brickyards from age six or seven.

In this chapter I will outline the brickmaking process and describe four cases of women's and children's work in the production of bricks.[2] Women's work generally is often hidden from policy makers due both to interview design and for reasons peculiar to gender ideologies (Benería, 1985, 1981; Dixon, 1985; Melhus, 1993). So too, often, is the work of children. Women's work is often "invisible," even to themselves, as they define their labor as an extension of their domestic duties, as "helping out" their husbands or sons, who are seen as the household's breadwinners (Cook and Binford, 1990; Cook, 1990: 114; 1984a: 169; Rodríguez-Shadow et al., 1992). Gender ideology in Mexico also makes it a shame for men to allow their wives to work (Melhus, 1993; Benería and Roldán, 1987), leading both women and men to consciously hide women's labor contributions to the family economy.[3] Nonetheless, the utilization of available family labor, varying over different stages in the life cycle (see González de la Rocha, 1986), helps families simply survive; as children mature and the family workforce expands, the brickmaker may even move from piece-rate labor on someone else's brickyard to renting in a brickyard, to owning a brickyard (Wilson, 1993a, 1991a, 1991b). This trajectory depends, in the final analysis, on self-exploitation and the exploitation of a growing family labor force,[4] or what Ypeij (2000) has conceived of as a link in the "chain of subordination." Exploitation of family labor, as seen earlier, may also contribute to the emergence of a petite bourgeoisie, hiring in laborers, from the petty commodity producers, aided only by unwaged family labor.

Women in the informal sector in general and among brickmakers in particular may be married or single heads of household. As women married to a male head of household, they may take part in informal-sector activities either as part of the family labor force involved in the same informal-sector activity or as workers on their own account, involved in informal economic activities in order to generate an income to complement or supplement those of their spouses. Women heads of household, abandoned, separated, or widowed, more often depend on their informal-sector work for the majority of household income. This of course depends on the stage in the domestic cycle and how many working-age children there are living in the household. The number of women-headed households is increasing

throughout Latin America, and these women are disproportionately found in the informal sector (Berger, 1988: 16–17; Buvinic et al., 1978; Folbre, 1991; International Center for Research on Women, 1988; Lycette and White, 1988: 38–39).

Women who work independently of their husbands are disadvantaged in setting up any kind of microenterprise, whether a sewing workshop, a street-vending stall, or a brickmaking enterprise, due to their lesser access to capital and undeveloped skills needed for buying, marketing, and other administrative concerns (Rakowski, 1987; Lycette and White, 1988). Due to the limitations on their mobility, related to gender ideologies in Latin America, women have less possibilities of making contacts needed for developing a successful business, especially concerning access to formal or informal credit and transportation, as well as with suppliers, buyers, and other marketing possibilities (Cartaya, 1987; Lycette and White, 1988; Espinal and Grasmuck, 1994; Ypeij, 1998). Women working with their children as unremunerated labor in their husband's microenterprises may make a difference between the success and failure of such enterprises, as we will see in the case of brickmaker's wives and children. A gender perspective is thus important in understanding the dynamics even of male-dominated small enterprises.

Women and Children Brickmakers

Women brickmakers are, in most cases, part of their husband's labor force. Similar to the landed peasant families, brickmaker families tend to be neopatriarchal (nuclear rather than extended, as was traditionally the case in the patriarchal family). There are, however, exceptions to women's work. At least two women in one colonia popular in Mexicali controlled their own brickyards, took part in making bricks, and hired in laborers. Another woman, separated from her brickmaking husband, became part of the brickmaking proletariat and paid for every thousand bricks she molded. Most women who work for piece rates on brickyards work with their husbands to augment their production; if single or separated, they usually work on brickyards belonging to relatives.

Brickmaking involves mixing the clay with water and *estiércol* (cow manure), molding the bricks, filing off the rough edges, setting them up to dry, and firing them. Work subsidiary to these main steps is also necessary. Water must be carried in buckets from nearby canals, or alternatively, a small canal is dug leading from a natural

well to the brickyard, then recovered in buckets; the estiércol and sand must be screened; the clay must be shoveled into wheelbarrows to be transported to the portion of the brickyard where the bricks will be molded; the molds must be rinsed after each set of bricks is made;[5] and the bricks must be carried, by either truck or wheelbarrow, to wherever the kiln is to be situated. Unloading and loading trucks and wheelbarrows is part of the subsidiary labor process. Enough fuel must be collected to keep the fire in the kiln burning for twenty-four to forty-eight hours, depending on the number of bricks to be fired. Women and children may take part in any or all of the main or subsidiary labor, although they seldom drive trucks or mold bricks until attaining a certain minimum skill level.[6]

The wooden molds used in Mexicali may contain spaces to make two, four, six or eight bricks at a time. Most adult workers prefer the four brick molds; they feel that they can make more bricks per hour using these molds, with less drudgery than when using larger molds (see Cook, 1984a: 68–69). Brickmakers may make their own molds, may pay a carpenter to manufacture them to the brickmaker's specifications, or may buy from other brickmakers who also earn income by manufacturing molds. Children, who do not have the strength to pick up a mold so large due to the weight of the clay, are initially given molds to make one or two bricks at a time. Each brick weighs about two kilos besides the weight of a sturdy wooden mold made heavier due to the fact that it must be wet while used so that the clay does not stick to it.

According to Jesús, an ex-brickmaker who worked in various stages of brickmaking from the time he was eight until age nineteen, a child can begin making bricks with a two-brick mold by age ten and with a closed, four-brick mold by age fifteen, depending on his physical development. Bricks can be made in molds that are open in the back or closed. The closed molds are heavier. A child may begin making bricks in an open, four-brick mold by age twelve.

Among the Colombian and Peruvian peasant families described by Deere and León de Leal (1985), women's work varies according to the class position of the household. Deere (1982: 802), in a study of the peasantry of Cajamarca, Peru, found that women's greatest participation in agricultural tasks is found among the poorer strata. Women's tasks differ by class status: the majority of women from near landless and smallholder households engage in agricultural fieldwork, whereas in middle-income and rich households, which meet 21 percent of their labor requirements through hiring in labor, the main contribution of women is cooking for field hands (Deere,

1982: 803–804). Although it did not analyze the work of children, my research on a rancho in Jalisco showed that children of sharecroppers, private property owners, and ejidatarios also help in harvesting and planting corn (Wilson, 1992). More work is required of children in families unable to hire wage laborers.

What Deere and León de Leal (1985) found for women's work among peasants is also true among brickmakers. Whether husbands are piece-rate laborers on someone else's brickyard, renters in of a brickyard, or owners of their own brickyards, and whether they depend exclusively on the family labor force or hire in workers will affect the amount and kinds of work the female members of the family do. So too will sex ratio and age distribution within the family household (Wilson, 1993b; 1991a; 1998a). These variables also will affect the amount and kinds of work that children do.

Wives and children who help their hired in husbands-fathers tend to work in all steps of the process, as do women with young children whose husbands rent in or own brickyards but cannot afford hired laborers. Women who do not take part in the main or subsidiary steps of brickmaking may provide input into the family enterprise by making meals for the brickmakers, whether they are part of the family labor force or hired in, an activity that Deere and León de Leal (1985: 69) have argued must be seen as part of productive labor in agriculture, and that I would argue is a necessary part of productive labor on the brickyards. Children, especially but not exclusively male children, from an early age are involved in carrying water, screening sand and estiércol, and setting up the bricks, smoothing their edges, and carrying them to the kiln. It is often expected that sons will become brickmakers when grown, and more attention is given to their learning the more skilled steps, unless the household sex ratio is such that a daughter's work also becomes necessary for family survival or economic advancement.

I next discuss four cases of women and children brickmakers, taking into consideration such factors as access to the means of production (here restricted to brickyard ownership or control, or lack of it) and the age-sex ratio of the household. It will be seen that women's and children's work provides three kinds of subsidy to different analytical units: the family household; the brickmaking enterprise; and both directly and indirectly the capitalist enterprises in the formal sector of the economy.

Case 1: The Value of Children

Alfonso and Ruth migrated from Sinaloa to Mexicali in 1970, shortly after marrying. Alfonso had a female cousin in Mexicali, who had migrated there in the 1960s. Her husband, along with his father and brothers, had been making bricks since the early 1960s, shortly after cotton cropping declined due to excessive water salinity, and with it the availability of work as cotton pickers. Alfonso learned brickmaking by watching and aiding these relatives. Subsequently, these relatives helped Alfonso find a job as a piece-rate laborer, who was paid for every thousand bricks he made, on a brickyard near the one on which they lived.

Alfonso's and Ruth's first son was born the year they migrated to Mexicali. Four more sons were born by 1976, followed by three daughters. By the time the two eldest boys were seven and eight, they were helping their father in various aspects of the brickmaking process, initially screening the estiercol and sand, carrying water from the canals to mix the clay, piling up bricks to dry, and carrying the dried bricks to be fired in the kiln.

It was not until the eldest, Jesús, reached the age of ten that he began molding bricks, using a two-brick mold. The following year, his father rented in a brickyard, for 11 percent of the fired bricks he made, molding bricks with the help of his two eldest sons, then eleven and ten, with subsidiary labor provided by sons who were nine and eight. Within two years, all five sons were aiding in some aspect of the brickmaking process.

Because the family wanted their children to be educated, all were sent to, and completed, primary school, working in the rented-in brickyard after arriving home from school. Their mother, slim and barely five feet tall, helped when she could, making bricks with a four-brick mold, a fact that she proudly relates, knowing that few women who help their husbands in the brickyards also mold bricks. Not only were the daughters too young to aid in brickmaking, but the fact that five sons preceded them made their labor less necessary. Ruth, however, did help when her household duties were finished for the day.

The family lived mainly on the brickyards they rented in, until taking part in the invasion of lands that established "Colonia Popular" (a pseudonym) in 1984 and securing a lot. While repairing the roof on the temporary house the family had built, Alfonso fell and broke his clavicle. The boys, Jesús, then age thirteen, and the youngest, age seven, had to take over all steps of the brickmaking

process, under the direction of their father, until his broken clavicle was healed. They essentially supported the entire household for several months. After his accident, Alfonso could never work as hard physically as previously, and his sons provided most of the labor on the rented-in brickyard. In order to make ends meet and not have the expense of buying estiércol to mix the clay, the family cleaned the corrals in a dairy farm for free to be able to use the manure. Ruth also began sewing clothes on order for friends and neighbors in the colonia and among her network of fellow Jehovah's Witnesses.

Finally, when Jesús was nineteen, he secured construction work with a subcontractor based in Colonia Popular. Such work provided the family, to whom he turned over half of his pay, with a higher income than could be earned by his brickmaking with its associated costs of buying estiercol and tools and paying rent for the brickyard, and it also enabled him to provide medical insurance to a sister plagued by chronic asthma and tonsillitis.

Eventually, after breaking his clavicle, Alfonso secured work as a night watchman, a less physically demanding job, and one by one, the sons stopped making bricks. The other sons found first unskilled (and later skilled) jobs, Jesús being the only skilled laborer in the family by 1994 in an occupation notorious for its instability and seasonality.

Due to the input of his children's and wife's labor, Alfonso was able to move from being a piece-rate worker to a renter of his own brickyard. When Alfonso was injured, his sons, ages seven to thirteen at the time, became the primary workers on the brickyard, sustaining the family while he could not work. The family was unable to reach the status of brickyard owners due to the lasting effects of the father's injury and eventually found other, mostly temporary, work.

EPILOGUE, 2003. Alfonso has worked in many jobs with *seguro* (the package of medical, housing, and pension benefits paid to workers in the formal sector) since the family left brickmaking in 1990. He first worked as a night watchman for a trucking company, then two years for a private garbage collecting company, then again as a night watchman, then another two years for the garbage collection company, and finally as a gardener for a tourist complex, which includes a large, landscaped golf course. After ten years (the minimum required in order to receive a pension) working with seguro, he retired in 2001. None of his sons chose to continue on as brickmakers. Three have work with seguro: one as a semitrailer truck driver, one as a driver for the same private garbage collection company for which Alfonso worked, and one as a factory worker. When recounting

how many brickmakers had left this work and moved on to other types of employment (eleven of the thirty-three interviewed in the colonia), Alfonso explained that many brickmakers, after arriving in Colonia Popular, sought to find jobs that paid seguro. This is especially true of those in their late forties and early fifties, who hope to qualify for the small pension that comes with working in the formal sector over a ten-year period.

Case 2: From Brickmaker's Wife to Brickmaker

Landless farm laborers, Guadalupe and her husband left their rancho in Zacatecas for Jalisco in 1968. Four sons and two daughters of their eventual six sons and three daughters had been born by then. The family began making bricks, living on a variety of brickyards on the periphery of Guadalajara, initially working as piece-rate laborers and later as renters running their own brickmaking enterprise. In both cases, the father was the person formally contracted; his output was increased through the contributions of his wife and children, including both sons and daughters.

Eight years later, the family moved to Mazatlán, Sinaloa, to live and work on a brickyard as piece-rate laborers paid for every thousand bricks they made. Again, Guadalupe's husband was the person contracted: the rest of the family worked beside him, increasing the number of bricks he could present in return for a wage. None of the children ever attended school or learned to read or write. As one of Guadalupe's daughters explained: "Our father was always moving, from one brickyard to another. He dragged us through the hills as though we were burros. We never had time to enter a school. And they were always too far away [from the brickyards] to attend, in any case."

It was while they were living in Mazatlán that the family began going to Mexicali to make bricks for a few months each year. They continued to work seasonally in that border city for the next six years. The first time they went, they had been offered a job making bricks by a Mexicali brickyard owner whom they had met in Mazatlán. They worked in Mexicali every summer when the dry heat assured that high-quality bricks could be made, and they received a higher rate per thousand bricks of smaller size than they did in Mazatlán. In the winter, they continued producing bricks in Guadalajara for some years, and in Mazatlán others, since Mexicali's cold weather during the months from November to April caused many of the bricks to crack and become unsaleable.

In 1982, Guadalupe, her husband, and unmarried children, accompanied by a married son and his family, relocated to Mexicali on a permanent basis. They were eventually joined in that city by three more married sons, all of whom worked as brickmakers, and a daughter married to a brickmaker. Two other daughters, also married to brickmakers, remained in their husband's places of residence: one in Guadalajara, one in Nayarit.

After living in rental housing and on brickyards, one of Guadalupe's married sons took part in the 1983–1984 invasion that established Colonia Popular. Within two years, Guadalupe and two other married sons also had acquired lots in the colonia. A fourth married son and the married daughter living in Mexicali erected their own shelters on Guadalupe's lot. All five family units continued working as brickmakers, either at a piece rate or as renters of brickyards. One married son eventually sold his lot in the colonia and made a down payment on his own brickyard.

In 1989, Guadalupe's husband made a down payment on *his* own brickyard, and not long afterward, left Guadalupe for another woman, who lived in Tijuana. From that time until 2002, he occasionally returned to live with Guadalupe, despite the fact that she would have preferred, due to his physical and psychological violence, him to stay away. When he was away, he worked on a brickyard owned by the other woman in Tijuana; he worked on his own brickyard, aided by two piece-rate laborers, when in Mexicali.

In 1990, the married daughter, who was based in Guadalajara and who had occasionally come to Mexicali with her husband to make bricks during the summers, relocated to Mexicali on a more permanent basis. Her husband first rented in a brickyard, then later made a down payment on it. Their three young children help out on the brickyard, carrying buckets of water and filing the edges off the bricks, besides carrying them to the kiln and later stacking them up. "The Ladrillera" is loosely based on her story.

After Guadalupe and her husband separated, Guadalupe became dependent on her own labor and that of her two young, unmarried sons to support her household unit. Her young sons worked as piece-rate laborers with their elder married brothers. Guadalupe sold sweets, sodas, and cigarettes from a small booth that she and one of her daughters erected on her lot in Colonia Popular.

Because of the low levels of income coming into her household during the years she did not work as a brickmaker, Guadalupe was unable to keep up monthly payments to the state for the electrical services installed on her lot. When tap water was introduced into the

colonia in 1991, the infrastructure required represented another expense to be paid in monthly installments over a three-year period. Fearing that the state would eventually take her lot away if she could not keep up payments for these services, Guadalupe decided to sell out. She moved into a new squatter settlement, established in 1990, (Colonia Nueya Estancia), where lots were half the size of those in Colonia Popular and also cost her half of what she sold her lot for in Colonia Popular. She began to work as a piece-rate laborer, paid for every thousand bricks she made, sometimes on one of her son's brickyards, sometimes on one of her son-in-law's.

Guadalupe and her daughters and two of her daughters-in-law work in all aspects of the brickmaking process. Guadalupe began working at her husband's side, as did all of their offspring, in Guadalajara. They thereby made more bricks, increasing the family's income. That the income was not earlier reinvested into a family-owned brickmaking enterprise was partially due to her husband's notorious drinking problem, a vice shared by some of their sons.

After coming to live in Mexicali, when married offspring alternatively worked along with their parents, or as pieceworkers for different employers or renters in, Guadalupe and their offspring worked at her husband's and their father's side as unpaid laborers to increase the quantity of bricks he was paid for or could sell. Once married, they continued as piece-rate workers until they were able to rent in their own brickyards, often utilizing the help of younger, unmarried brothers.

In the early to mid-1990s, Guadalupe was a pieceworker on her offsprings' brickyards, earning a wage that she could control, rather than being an unpaid family laborer increasing her husband's work output. Her sons rent in or own their own brickyards, as do her daughters' husbands, and their sons and daughters are reaching the age at which they too are beginning to help in the brickmaking process.

The endogamous tendencies among brickmakers are illustrated by Guadalupe's offspring. Her elder sons and daughters met their spouses when the family lived on brickyards on the outskirts of Guadalajara. They too are the offspring of brickmakers. Brickyard complexes, isolated on urban peripheries, become the field in which most, if not all, social interaction takes place. Daughters of brickmakers who formed part of the labor force of their families of procreation bring their skills in brickmaking into their own families of orientation, becoming part of their husbands' labor force. As unpaid family laborers, they provide a portion of family income. If husbands

or fathers become renters of brickyards, women's and children's labor may contribute the difference in output, which enables renters to move into owner status. While many sons of brickmakers continue on as brickmakers themselves, others leave the family enterprise when mature, undermining the neopatriarchal character of families in which artisan skills are passed down in lieu of inheritance. In keeping with the endogamous tendencies, one of Estela's sons married one of Marisela's daughters when they ran neighboring brickyards. Interestingly, it was charged by Marisela's husband that Estela's family (see cases 3 & 4 below) only wanted the daughter for her labor, as she was a key worker on her stepfather's brickyard.

EPILOGUE, 2003. Guadalupe stopped making bricks in Mexicali toward the end of 1995, when she was fifty-eight years old. From February 1996 to mid-1998, she did construction cleanup in a nearby housing development, then maintained the houses until they could be sold. She proudly showed me a letter of recommendation from the housing development company—a letter she herself could not read, as she never went to school. After that job ended, Guadalupe went to visit her sister on their *rancho* of origin in Zacatecas. There she made bricks with her sister and brother-in-law on their brickyard on the outskirts of the rancho. Bricks made on several brickyards there are used to build houses on the rancho and are sold to people from nearby ranchos and pueblos as well. Guadalupe worked there for about a year, returning to Mexicali in 2000. A year ago, she moved into a small, two-room house borrowed from another brickmaker family, in Colonia Popular. She had been forced to sell her house in Colonia Nueva Estancia to pay some debts. The house lot in Colonia Popular is one of the few that still has neither electricity nor running water. She lives there with one of her married sons and his wife, who are childless. Although this son has a brickyard, he stopped making bricks about two years ago and is presently renting it out, while working with a man who cleans warehouses, without seguro.

Guadalupe's husband lives with another woman on his brickyard in Mexicali and continues making bricks. Of Guadalupe's three daughters, one lives and works on her husband's brickyard in Mexicali; another lives and works on her husband's rented in brickyard outside of Guadalajara; and the third works with her husband as a piece-rate worker on a brickyard owned by a woman in Tijuana. Of Guadalupe's six sons, only two continue making bricks. Two were shot down after a bar fight in the late 1990s. The eldest son returned to his wife's rancho in Zacatecas and from there joined a transnational migration stream to Texas, where he has lived for six years.

His wife plans to join him and two of their sons also living in Texas this year (2003). A fourth son lives on his lot in Colonia Popular, acquired in 1984: he, his wife, and his children commute six days a week to his brickyard, with his wife helping in all stages of brickmaking. A fifth son and his wife and children live on their brickyard in Mexicali. The sixth son, the youngest "*era flojo para hacer ladrillo*" ("was lazy about making bricks"), Guadalupe tells me. He presently works at the dump, collecting and recycling cardboard and metals.

Case 3: Wife's Subsidy to Brickmaking

Estela is married to one of four brothers from a rancho in Sinaloa who migrated into Mexicali, one family at a time, between 1980 and 1984. All brothers have worked and continue working as brickmakers, except the eldest, who is the absentee owner of a brickyard on which he first hired in laborers, then rented out. This brother, the only one of his sibling group, received amnesty under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, and he works three to six months each year in a restaurant in northern California.

Rogelio, Estela's husband, began his brickmaking career as a piece-rate laborer upon arrival in Mexicali in 1982. Soon afterward, he rented in a brickyard, and his stepson, then age twelve, and two of his four sons (the youngest two were initially excepted because of their age) began helping him make bricks. After renting this brickyard for three years, the family moved to another brickyard for a year. In 1986, they acquired an unoccupied lot in Colonia Popular, where two husbands' brothers were also living, and they continued renting a brickyard on which five male members of the household eventually worked, the youngest being excepted, and most labor being carried out by the father, his stepson, and the eldest son.

In late 1989, the family sold their lot in the colonia, buying a brickyard with the proceeds. They went to live on this brickyard, along with a husband's brother. By 1991, Rogelio had one full-time, piece-rate laborer working for him and his stepson, Julio, then nineteen, and Rogelio's two eldest sons, ages sixteen and fifteen, were doing the daily work of adult male laborers. Rogelio also had refurbished an old truck in order to be able to transport his bricks to buyers throughout Mexicali. He sells his bricks as far away as Tijuana, from where semitrailer truck drivers come to the brickyard complexes to buy as many as 70,000 bricks at a time to be used for construction projects in that city.

Estela has five sons and one daughter. The sex ratio of the household indicated that her labor and her daughter's were better spent in household upkeep, including washing clothes by hand and making meals for the family labor force employed making bricks. Although she claims never to have worked making bricks, Estela was willing to give up amenities such as electricity, which would have permitted the use of a clothes washing machine and water from a circulating water truck, services unavailable on the brickyards where much more domestic drudgery is therefore required. Her acceptance of added domestic work, made lighter because her daughter was of an age to help when the family moved from the colonia to the brickyards, made it possible for the family to live on the brickyards instead of in a house in a colonia where living conditions would have been more comfortable.

Since moving to the brickyard, Estela also, with the help of her daughter and youngest son, raises goats. The herd ranges in size from seven to twelve. The goats must be taken out to grassy areas during the day and brought home at night, with food collected for them while they are nearby the house; they also must be watered, with water carried from the canals. Estela raises chickens as well. The chickens and their eggs go into the family's diet, as does an occasional goat, although these latter are primarily used to sell if cash is needed to sustain the household or for the brickmaking enterprise. For example, when Estela's husband needed a part to repair the motor of his truck, she sold a goat so he could buy it.

Women's small livestock production, aided by the labor of children, has been shown to provide a subsidy to peasant families throughout Latin America (Hecht, 1985). In this case, small livestock production is providing a subsidy to the family's consumption needs and to the family's brickmaking enterprise.

In late 1992, Estela's eldest son, Julio, her husband's stepson, married Marisela's (see Case 4) eldest daughter, Yolanda. Yolanda's stepfather is a brickmaker who owned the neighboring brickyard. As the eldest child in the family, Yolanda had worked in all stages of the brickmaking process by the time she married, at age seventeen. Although Julio had received income in the form of an allowance for a portion of the work he did five and a half days a week on his stepfather's brickyard, after his marriage his status was converted to that of a full-time pieceworker who was paid a wage for each thousand bricks he made, as was the hired hand. Julio's wife, after not working for about two years (see chapter 8) in order to increase the output, and with the aim of earning enough to buy a house lot of their

own, aided him in all steps of the brickmaking process, providing mainly (but not exclusively) "subsidiary" labor, as described earlier.

EPILOGUE, 2003. In 1995, Estela and Rogelio sold their brickyard and a house they had built in the extension of Colonia Nueva Estancia (called "Ampliación Nueva Estancia") and moved to San Quentín, Baja California. In part, they did so because the weather was not so extreme, so cold in the winter and so hot in the summer. A major consideration, however, was that Rogelio had developed "rheumas" in his hands, a kind of arthritis common among brickmakers and ascribed by them to the constant changes from exposure to extreme hot (baking bricks) followed by extreme cold (molding bricks in the winter's icy water). In San Quentín, Rogelio went to work in a vegetable packaging plant for a couple of years, retiring in 1997. He had never worked with seguro, so he received no pension.

After his mother and stepfather left for San Quentín, Julio began working for piece rates on one of his stepfather's brother's brickyards. When Rogelio retired, Julio and his wife and daughter moved to San Quentín to help support them: there Julio worked for three years irrigating tomato fields. Meanwhile, two of his half-brothers crossed to Washington State to work and began to send remittances to their parents. In 2000, Julio, Yolanda, and their daughter returned to Mexicali. Julio rented in a brickyard and hired two piece-rate workers. When Yolanda became pregnant again, in 2001, Julio took a job loading trucks for a soft drink company in the evenings, while making bricks in the mornings. He was still doing this in 2003. His parents continue to live in San Quentín and are supported by their sons. Two of their five sons work for piece rates on brickyards in Mexicali.

Case 4: Wife's and Daughter's Work

Marisela was born in Guerrero in 1958. She and her husband first came to Mexicali in 1987 and found work in the brickyards. Her husband, Fernando, had previously worked for several months in Guerrero making bricks. Although Fernando was the salaried worker, Marisela worked by his side during all aspects of the brickmaking process, when her domestic duties were completed. Since they lived on the brickyard where he worked, her input was regular.

Having no relatives in Mexicali, she joined an aunt in Morelos to give birth to her seventh child in 1989. Marisela returned to Mexicali the same year and continued helping her husband make bricks. Fernando, by that time, was renting a brickyard from his former

employer. In 1990, Fernando made an arrangement with this employer to buy, in installments, the brickyard on which they were living. The one-quarter hectare was fully paid off and became his ten months later, in 1991. By the end of that year, he had two full-time and three or four part-time, hired-in pieceworkers. How many worked on his brickyards depended on the seasonal demand for bricks and climatic factors that facilitated or hindered the brickmaking process.[7]

When I interviewed Marisela in September 1991, she claimed to do little work on the brickyards other than counting the bricks to see how much the hired pieceworkers should be paid, although she admitted, when pushed, to having previously taken part in all aspects of brickmaking, except mixing the clay, which she defined as a "man's job." She also stated that her fifteen-year-old and eleven-year-old daughters mainly helped her in the house and did little in the brickyards. She reported, however, that her eight-year-old son helped make bricks by filing off the excess clay to make them smooth and rectangular prior to firing, and that her twelve-year-old-son aided in all aspects of brickmaking.

A few days later, when I arrived on the brickyards, Marisela and her fifteen-year-old daughter, Yolanda, were loading a truck with bricks, despite the fact that Marisela was then seven months' pregnant. She admitted that she and her daughters did load and unload the trucks to take the bricks to the kiln. She had not reported this work, which was not considered part of the brickmaking process. She defined this loading and unloading as merely "helping out." During his interview, Fernando was less reticent about admitting that his wife and daughter took part in various aspects of brickmaking.

Further observation revealed that Marisela's eldest daughter, Yolanda, who was Fernando's stepdaughter, took part in all phases of brickmaking, despite the presence of hired workers, except for mixing the clay (although she often carried buckets of water from the canal, about 100 meters away, for this purpose) and molding. Marisela eventually admitted that both she and Yolanda had taken part in all steps of the brickmaking process at one time or another, though not on a routine basis, since her husband became owner if his own brickyard hired in workers. Notably, when Yolanda married the young brickmaker, Julio, in 1992, son of the brickmaking family whose activities were outlined in Case 3, she aided him in all aspects of the brickmaking process on his stepfather's brickyard, where he worked for a piece rate.

Marisela's initial minimization of her and her daughters' input into the brickmaking process may have been a way of giving both herself and her husband "face." That is, she achieved a certain amount of status by being a wife supported by a responsible husband and was part of a "success story" since migrating to Mexicali. And her husband fit the male ideal of provider, thus being a worthwhile husband, despite his drinking bouts and overnight absences in bars, about which she later expressed great distress. Fernando, on the other hand, emphasized his wife's and stepdaughter's input into brickmaking, possibly to underscore the extent of his control over family labor and thus to make obvious his thereby ratified masculine role as head of household.

In 1991, Marisela's husband was learning to drive a truck so that he could sell bricks throughout the city. Previously he had been dependent on buyers coming to the brickyards. Fernando described the buyers as mainly people who were constructing their own homes and as government-owned companies that were building housing complexes and industrial parks.

Neither Marisela nor Fernando want their sons to be brickmakers. Marisela gives as her reasons the difficulty of life on the brickyards: "*Porque aquí está duro el tiempo de calor y hay muchos sangudos. No tenemos luz ni un avanico podemos poner. Mucho calor se siente*." [Because here the hot season is hard and there are many mosquitoes. We don't have electricity and can't even put on a fan. One feels very hot].[8] Fernando explains that being in the mud like worms (*como lumbrises*) all of the time is pure drudgery. He says that he works as a brickmaker because he can earn more money doing so than in a factory, and also because factories require primary or secondary school. Fernando never went to school, nor did he learn to read or write. Marisela had three years of schooling, which is why it falls to her to keep the books, however informally. Although her labor in keeping accounts of the number of bricks made, the cost of materials, workers' wages, and the quantity of bricks sold is unpaid, it is central to the ongoing success of her husband's small brickmaking business.

Epilogue, 2003. By 2003, Fernando employed ten pieceworkers. He had regularized his brickmaking enterprise and became part of the formal sector of small businessmen: he paid taxes and seguro for his workers. Marisela no longer made bricks but went daily to the brickyards to keep the accounts, more complex now with more employees and augmented production and the paperwork necessary to maintain their "regularized" and "formalized" status. From 1997

onward, they lived in a beautiful two-story house painted white and turquoise, nearby the brickyard complex. They had become one of the most successful brickmaking families in Mexicali (despite Fernando's earlier negative attitude about brickmaking) and ran a capitalist enterprise.

Conclusions

Alfonso was able to progress from a piece-rate brickmaker to a brickyard renter when his two eldest sons reached the ages of ten and eleven and were able to begin molding bricks. His younger sons and his wife, who sometimes molded bricks, provided "subsidiary" labor on the brickyards. His sons, ages seven to thirteen at the time, supported the household by completing all steps in the brickmaking process when he was injured and incapable of physical labor. His injury prevented him from ever becoming a brickyard owner, and eventually he and his sons, with the exception of the eldest, a skilled construction worker, entered into unskilled wage work. Their bricks were utilized in various autoconstructed houses in the colonias populares of Mexicali, and Alfonso has seen his bricks (bricks are recognizable due to marks that a particular mold leaves on them) in a lawyer's office and in a bank building in Mexicali.

Guadalupe and her children have, over their lifetimes, contributed to the household economy and subsidized her husband's and their father's brickmaking enterprises, probably providing the marginal product that eventually enabled him to buy his own brickyard. As in all cases, the work Guadalupe and their children and, more recently, grandchildren have done in brickmaking provides building materials to various sectors of the urban proletariat and to capitalist enterprise. Since the bricks are often utilized to build at least some portion of the industrial parks that dot the frontier, the subsidy is not only to national capitalist enterprise but to international capital. The multinational assembly plants known as *maquiladoras* typically occupy these industrial park complexes.

Estela's and the younger children's contribution to her husband's and their father's brickmaking enterprise was more indirect than Guadalupe's and involves mainly household reproduction. Supplementary activities, including raising small livestock and poultry, add resources to the family's economy and free assets earned through brickmaking to be reinvested in the brickmaking enterprise. The sale of one of the goats that Estela and the younger children raised also

provided cash to be invested in materials needed for the production or sale of bricks. Thus her husband was able to buy parts to repair his truck, with which he delivers bricks to buyers, thereby earning the delivery charge, through the sale of one of the goats. Four of her sons have provided the brickmaking labor force that enabled the family to move from wage laborers to renters to owners.

Marisela's case is among the most common for women who live on the brickyards. Through her work in brickmaking, a higher income was earned for use by the family household and by the family brickmaking enterprise. This is true in the case of Guadalupe, her daughters, and her daughters-in-law, and in Ruth's case as well. Like Estela, Marisela also provided input into the brickmaking enterprise by making meals for her husband's paid laborers. She also functioned and still functions as an unpaid "accountant" for her husband's business, despite never having finished primary school. In Marisela's case, the skills she brought to the brickmaking enterprise, owned and overseen by her husband, were indispensable. Since she knew how to read and write and her spouse did not, she could keep rudimentary accounts: she was the official bookkeeper. Both she and her daughter, Yolanda, also aided in all steps of the brickmaking process until Yolanda's labor was transferred to her husband's household.

In sum, these "invisible" women and children, who usually live long portions of their lives on isolated brickyards far from basic urban services such as bus transportation, food stores, schools, and access to electricity or running water, contribute with their productive labor to sustaining a number of entities subsumed within or central to the overarching capitalist system: the family household, the family brickmaking enterprise, and formal capitalist firms, both national and international. Their subsidy is both direct, as when they supply bricks to build factories and industrial parks, and indirect, as when they supply bricks to be used in self-built housing by workers employed in the formal sector of the economy. Living without access to basic services impacts directly on the life chances of their children: in part due to their difficulties in attending school and in part due to the conditions of survival on the brickyards. Without adequate schooling, moving into better-paid, skilled work is difficult. In terms of the conditions of life on the Mexicali brickyards, I will only note here the following example. Temperatures are normally over 100 degrees Fahrenheit during summers in Mexicali and can climb as high as 120 degrees. Without electricity, a family cannot put on a fan to cool the air. It has been reported on local radio stations and in local newspapers that newborn infants have died when temperatures

reach high levels, many of these deaths due to heat-induced dehydration.

As various researchers have found for peasant women, brickmakers' wives' work is invisible to census takers, to their husbands, and often to themselves; children's work also is often invisible. And as various researchers have found for the peasant farm, products made cheaper by self-exploitation and the exploitation of a family labor force enable lower wages to be paid to the urban proletariat that is consuming them.

Women's and children's work on brickyards provides three layers of subsidy: to household welfare; to the family brickmaking enterprise; and to capitalist firms, both directly and indirectly. In other words, brickmakers' wives and children are the locus of a number of economic phenomena that have been analyzed by various overlapping bodies of literature. Women and children form a part of the family labor force exploited by the family firm—even if this may be conceived of as autoexploitation; and as part of that labor force, women and children provide a subsidy to the capitalist system in a manner similar to the peasant women and children on the family farms whose products are destined to be consumed by the urban proletariat. I predict that future research will find this to be true of women and children found in any petty commodity producing family enterprise. As the enterprise becomes differentiated into a petty bourgeois concern, employing wage laborers, women and children may or may not contribute direct labor, though subsidiary labor is usually provided, even if this is no more than food preparation for the hired-in or unpaid family workers in the family enterprise by the women, or running errands or taking messages by the children.

Plates 4 and 5. Digging the clay, prior to mixing with water.

Plates 6 and 7. Molding the bricks with a four-brick mold.

Plate 8. Removing the rough edges from the unfired bricks.

Plates 9 and 10. Foreground: Unfired bricks stacked to dry. Background: A brick kiln.

Plate 11. An independent woman brickmaker.

Plate 12. A woman piece-rate brickmaker.

CHAPTER 6

"Mexicali Brickmaker's Wife"*

Marisela says, "I don't work, my husband does,"
but pressed, admits, "I sometimes help.
Although with the youngest, only three months old,
I don't do so much as half a year ago.

"Until I was eight months' gone
I stacked the bricks and carried them
to the oven, then loaded the trucks,
once they were baked. Just helped out.

"Then I got real big and couldn't bend
to pick them up, so Yolanda here,
my fourteen-year-old, the eldest, stood in for me.
She can even mold bricks, though she's a girl.

"I still hurt inside, so I still don't lift.
I just count the bricks the workers make,
and figure out how much they're owed,
so my husband knows how much to pay.

"Other than that, I don't do anything,"
Marisela says as she carries the pail
of water from the canal, dumps it into the tub,
and begins the clothes washing
for her seven children, her husband,
a cousin who has come to visit, and herself.
"When the baby's older, I'll help out again,
but I really don't do much.

"I don't mix the clay or mold the bricks,
I just stack them up so they will dry,
carry them to the oven, load the trucks,
and since I can read n' write, I keep the books."

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CHAPTER 7

Gender Considerations among the Brickmakers

"Patriarchy" has become an overused and overburdened concept utilized to signify diverse types of sex-gender systems characterized by male domination oppressive to and exploitative of women, despite the historic specificity and economic basis of types of masculine domination and female subordination (Nash, 1988; Ramos Escandón, 1997; Rubin, 1975: 167–68). Following Stern (1995: 21) and Nash (1988: 15), I use patriarchy to designate a sex-gender regime that is a holdover from a pre-capitalist, social-familial system and mode of production in which male elders ruled over both women and married and unmarried dependents of both sexes, providing them with protection and sustenance in return for their obedience, submission, and labor in the interests of the patrimony. Survivals of this patriarchal "gerontocracy" (Nash, 1988: 15) and "clanlike" structures ruled by benevolent but authoritarian patriarchs (Nazzari, 1996) are still apparent among some propertied families in Latin America and elsewhere, for which the extended family performs important economic and social capital functions (Bourdieu, 1986), and inheritance remains an important behavioral sanction. Patriarchal holdovers have also survived among some indigenous and tribal peoples (Nash, 2001).

With the increasing penetration of capitalism, which allowed young dependents to strike out on their own as wage laborers, however, what I call "neopatriarchy" came to the fore. This was true in Latin America in general and Mexico in particular, as well as in Europe and the United States. Neopatriarchy consists of male domination exercised within the nuclear, rather than the extended, family household, with power exercised solely over wives and unmarried dependent children. Male domination took on a "fraternal" (Murray, 1995; Pateman, 1989) character with this change, and less of a gerontocratic one. With possibilities for sons, and sometimes daughters, to establish independent enterprises in the dynamic economic environment of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or at least to take

advantage of proliferating opportunities for wage labor, inheritance became less important, and dependence on the father's goodwill for economic survival was eroded; men left the extended family to form their own independent nuclear households (Boyer, 1995; Nazzari, 1997, 312; Ramos-Escandón, 1997).

Typical of the expectations associated with the neopatriarchal household is that the male head should be the primary breadwinner, duty bound to provide economic sustenance to his dependents. While he represents his nuclear family in the public sphere, just as the pater familias represented the extended family in the public sphere, his wife is responsible for running the domestic sphere. Nonetheless, it is considered part of the neopatriarchal bargain that the male head can utilize the labor of his wife and children, especially in peasant, petty commodity producer, and even petite bourgeoisie households (e.g., Friedmann, 1986; Ypeij 2000). Women too feel that it is an obligation "not to be a burden" (Narotzky, 1990), that is, to aid in assuring the welfare of the nuclear family household.

One can construct a continuum from what Safa (1995: 88) calls "classic patriarchy" to phallocentrism, with neopatriarchy falling in the middle. The basis of this continuum is the male head of household's control over the productive and reproductive labor of his wife and children. Under patriarchy, the male head, or patriarch, disposes of the labor of an extended family, including daughters' husbands, sons' wives, younger brothers, and sometimes nieces and nephews, as well as the labor of his wife and children. Under phallocentrism, women's productive and reproductive labor are no longer under the control of an individual man. Phallocentrism develops as women enter the public space of employment, whether in the formal or informal sector: the result is that the protective functions of patriarchy are progressively undermined. Women who are in public space are considered fair game to outsider male predations and delinked from traditional forms of protection by male members of the household (Wilson, 2003). They often choose not to marry, or, when widowed or divorced, not to remarry. Their independent income also helps women escape the subordinating aspects of neopatriarchy, a tendency seen in "degenerating" neopatriarchal and also "loose" patriarchal households in some instances, dependent mainly on the amount of women's income.

Neopatriarchy is found in the middle of the patriarchy-phallocentrism continuum and forms a continuum of its own, running from what I will call "tight" neopatriarchy through "loose" neopatriarchy to "degenerating" neopatriarchy. Under tight neopatriarchy, the

husband-father disposes of the labor of his wife and children and controls their movements. The male head of household is seen as the primary breadwinner and his wife and children as just "helping out" in the productive activities in which he is engaged. Peasants and farmers who utilize the family labor force in productive activities are an example of tight neopatriarchal households, as are brickmaker families whose members are (or will be after reaching a certain age) routinely involved in the production of bricks.

Under loose neopatriarchy, women's and children's productive activities become separate from those of the male head of household. Women do not work outside of the household, however: their productive activities take place within or near the home, and they seldom enter public space without permission, even to visit relatives (Benería and Roldán, 1987: 147–48; Chant, 1994: 100; Roldán, 1988: 240; LeVine, 1993: 39). Homeworkers, women who raise small livestock in peasant or brickmaker families, run a small store on the premises of their house, or sew garments for friends and neighbors—all are engaged in productive activities separate from husbands-fathers and dispose of some independent income. As long as this income is substantially less than the male head of household's income, he is still seen as, and treated with the respect deemed due to, the primary breadwinner. If women's income-producing activities come to approach those of the male head of household, then the neopatriarchal bargain begins to degenerate. The husband-father's breadwinner role begins to erode: women may rebel against traditional gender expectations, challenge men's perceived misbehavior when and if it occurs, and begin to have a larger say in decision making (Benería and Roldán, 1987: 146–49; Wilson, 2003).

As women establish their own microenterprises, and even more so if they find waged employment (whether in the informal or formal sectors), the myth of the male breadwinner becomes apparent (Safa, 1995; Chant, 1991). Where employment possibilities for women are widespread, there will be women who choose not to marry (or remarry after divorce or widowhood), seeing men as a potential, and an added, economic burden (Chant, 1991: 157–58; 172–73). Men, sliding toward phallocentrism, come to evaluate women primarily in terms of their sexual characteristics rather than as reproducers of children (Wilson, 2002b, 2003) or as part of the labor force that they can deploy for household survival, though women's independent income may also be an attraction. There is no longer any pretense of the male being the sole, or even the primary, breadwinner. This tendency occurs especially in times of economic crisis, leading to high

male unemployment or underemployment. There is a movement toward degenerating neopatriarchy and, ultimately, phallocentrism as the primary system of male domination-female subordination.

Where are the brickmaker women and children in this scheme? The large majority are in tight neopatriarchal households, perhaps transferring the model they were socialized into from their peasant origins to the new urban setting. Such a household organization is the basis for the successful movement from pieceworker, to renter in, to brickyard owner, with the deployment of the family labor force most common in all stages. It is also the basis, therefore, of endofamilial accumulation, this despite the fact that some men may be pieceworkers without the help of wives with small children in the early stages of the family life cycle.

There are instances of a looser neopatriarchal structure among the brickmakers, however. When Ruth's sons became old enough to put in a full day's work on the brickyards, she began to sew clothing for friends and neighbors in the colonia. In another brickmaker family, the wife ran a small store from one room of their house. Estela raised goats for sale. Many brickmakers' wives also raised chickens, some for home consumption and some for sale. In no cases of alternative income sources did brickmakers' wives earn enough to challenge the male breadwinner role and image, however.[1]

I would argue that the situation par excellence of the tight neopatriarchal household is that of the petty commodity producer and petite bourgeoisie, the latter differing from the former by the hiring in of outside laborers, whether relatives, other social network members, or "outsiders." Although in some neopatriarchal households women contribute to the family economy through such means as outworking (Wilson, 2003; Benería and Roldán, 1987), which keeps them out of the public sphere of employment, the petty commodity producers and petite bourgeoisie utilize wives' labor more directly, as part and parcel of the male head of household's economic enterprise.

The workings of the tight neopatriarchal household are apparent among the brickmakers of Mexicali, whether renters in or owners of brickyards. It is also apparent among microentrepreneurs working as subcontracted labor for national companies in Lima, Peru (Ypeij, 2000), and elsewhere: men form workshops in which wives' and children's labor is utilized to meet the product demands of the larger firm; so too among some artisans and craftsmen in Middle America (Nash, 1993b) and beyond. In all of these cases, it is common that the most viable enterprises are embedded in the household and

directed by a male head. The myth of the male breadwinner (Safa, 1995) takes a form other than women working outside of the household; rather, women and children contribute necessary labor to the enterprises of husbands-fathers. Although women may sometimes head these petty commodity producing enterprises, women's economic activities are restrained due to women's (1) lesser access to capital and credit; (2) lesser human capital development based on education or prior work experience in the formal sector; (3) restricted movement due to the normative gender order that keeps "good" women at home and designates domestic and child care chores as women's work; and (4) less extensive social networks, due to this more limited mobility (Ypeij, 2000).

In most brickmaker, some artisan, and many subcontracted workshop households, activities are organized by the male head, utilizing wife and children for the labor force; the male most often makes contacts in order to buy inputs and to sell the finished product. Thus it is the male head of household among brickmakers who buys the shovels, picks, and straw-manure mix necessary for brickmaking; and it is the male head who determines how the bricks will be sold and who will represent the enterprise to buyers who come to the brickyards. If income is earned by the wife, for example, by raising and selling goats or chickens, then the money is often reinvested in the brickyard. The male head of household thus has priority in income disposal, which ideally should be spent on the welfare of the household and his dependents. Often, however, the money is diverted into male leisure pursuits, such as drinking with comrades.

Notably, male-headed "microenterprises," which can include brickmaking, subcontracted manufacture, and artisanal work, represent the neopatriarchal household's articulation with capitalism par excellence. Whereas, following Ypeij (2000), labor processes are embedded in the household, neighborhood networks, and the community, the prevailing gender regime shapes all of these relations of labor and of capital formation. For want of a better term, we can call these households petty commodity producing ones, though they fall on a continuum between petty commodity producers (using only family labor) and petite bourgeoisie or emerging capitalist ones (hiring in some laborers). Petty commodity producers-petite bourgeoisie also fall on a continuum between patriarchal and neopatriarchal households. Although being nuclear with the male head designated as primary breadwinner they are neopatriarchal, they are "tightly" so because they display some patriarchal aspects in the use of a family labor force (which sometimes includes extended family members

such as siblings, cousins, nephews, or in-laws) and in the tendency to pass on the skills or "business" to their sons.

In some indigenous communities practicing artisanry, the families may fall on the more patriarchal end of the continuum, to such an extent that women seeking independence from male control by, for example, forming female cooperatives may be subjected to male violence (Nash, 1993a; 2001). Although there are a few women brickmakers in Mexicali, independent of husbands, they have not formed a woman's cooperative. Nor in any case is there such a powerful cultural community to negatively sanction women's search for economic independence. Guadalupe makes bricks for her sons or sons-in-law as a piece-rate worker, and thus her efforts are embedded within her extended household. Rosa substantially supplements the household income through her brickmaking enterprise, but it is her husband who assumes, with her complicity, the role of primary breadwinner. She can be conceived of as being part of a loose neopatriarchal household Only one woman head of household (and she has not been considered in the previous pages) runs a quasi-independent brickmaking enterprise, and this she does with the intermittent labor of her otherwise employed adult sons. Notably, she is a widow. These women thus present no treat to the normative neopatriarchal mode of domination typical of brickmaker microenterprises. The labor of these women, however, subsidizes the urban development of Mexicali, just as male brickmakers' labor does.

Women's labor in the family brickmaking enterprise, as among other microentrepreneurs, whether petty commodity producers or petite bourgeoisie, also subsidizes the labor of the male head of household. It may do so directly, by production alongside husbands, or indirectly, through labor in domestic activities that will replenish the husband's labor potential, or through, as in Estela's goat raising, earning an income, at least part of which will go into the husband's enterprise, enabling it to expand. Most women in brickmaker households also raise chickens, whose eggs and meat supplement the family diet. Women's direct labor, as well as the labor of the family's children, permits the consolidation and expansion of the microenterprise, as has been seen in previous pages.

Women's indirect input into the microenterprise (i.e., her domestic labor) is especially difficult under conditions in squatter settlements (colonias populares) or on brickyards, where patchwork houses must be cleaned daily, where dust and dirt are ubiquitous, and where water is in limited supply and must be hand carried from canals or barrels filled by a circulating water truck. These are the conditions in

the first years of settlement, conditions that may last as long as a half decade. Thus women's domestic labor subsidy to maintain the household is more intense than for women living in middle-class households. Women's efforts in self-building houses and in taking part in land invasions to establish colonias populares, as outlined in the short story that opened this book, provide another female subsidy to the household economy. If brickmakers live on the brickyards instead of in colonias populares, then the family also self-builds its housing, more often than not with wives' aid. Such land invasions and self-built housing have been seen as lowering the pressure on the wage by household members employed in the formal sector (Burgess, 1978; Connolly, 1982; Portes and Walton, 1981), thus indirectly subsidizing the capitalist system and capitalist enterprises as well. Brickmakers in general subsidize the capitalist system by providing cheap inputs, made cheaper through self-exploitation and the exploitation of family labor, to others self-building houses in colonias populares or for the construction of factories, banks, shopping centers, and other buildings destined to house capitalist enterprises.

Although agency is apparent among petty commodity producers, who actively seek out economic niches in order to gain a livelihood, neo-Marxist insights are valuable in showing how artisanal activities, brickmaking, and workshops subsidize capitalist accumulation, either directly or indirectly. Artisans often sell to middlemen who skim off a great deal, if not most, of the profits (García Canclini, 1993), providing a direct subsidy to the capitalist enterprise that the middleman represents. The subsidy that brickmakers provide to the capitalist system as a whole as well as to individual capitalist firms has been discussed previously. It depends, in part, on the tight neopatriarchal regimes of the household economy. Their subsidy is more indirect than that of workshops, which are subcontracted by national and international firms to carry out part or all of the production process. The workshop owners, as well as their informalized family and perhaps wage-labor force, are like the artisans producing for middlemen, but even more directly so: they are "disguised proletarians" for the firms that benefit from their manufactures. Thus the subsidy provided by petty commodity producers may be direct or indirect and beneficial to individual capitalist firms or to the capitalist system as a whole. Furthermore, the subsidy provided by brickmakers, artisans, and workshop households is embedded in the gender dynamics of the household and the society.

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CHAPTER 8

"Brickmaker's Daughter, Brickmaker's Wife"

1993

I came with my mother and five brothers and sisters and my stepfather to Mexicali when I was twelve years old. We moved immediately to the brickyards, those beside what became the new colonia, La Nueva Estancia. My stepfather rented the brickyard for about a year, then put a down payment on it. We sold all the bricks we made, and quickly, to the people building houses in the new colonia, as well as to construction companies starting to put up another factory complex on the highway to San Luís Río Colorado. My stepfather knew about making bricks from our rancho in Guerrero. He had helped make bricks there. When we got here though, and he rented in the brickyard, we all had to work—all of us that could. So we could pay off the brickyard faster. The little ones didn't work, though Chano—he was seven when we came here to the border—sometimes helped. My mamá helped out a lot also, even while she was pregnant. And always, because my stepfather can't read or write, she kept the accounts. How many bricks we made, how many bricks the piece-workers made, how much we owed each worker, how much we sold the bricks for, how many we sold.

The hardest thing was living without electricity. Especially in the summer, when there was nowhere to plug in a fan to blow the swarms of mosquitos away or to cool our small scrapwood house down. We ended up sleeping outside in the summer, under some lace curtains we found in the dump, using them like a tent into which the mosquitos could not enter. It's still that way where I live now, on the new brickyard complex.

Mostly I carried water from the canals, took the buckets-full to my stepfather when he was mixing the clay. Then after the bricks

were molded I cut off their rough edges and piled them up in little castles, *castillos* we call them, so they would dry on all sides. Then when they were dry we stacked them up into *trincheras*, all piled up row on top of row, waiting to be baked near where the kiln would be built. And when it was time to bake them I handed them to my stepfather as he built the kiln. My mother did, and still does, all of this too. Then also, me and my brothers would go to look for scrapwood, dead branches, paper, any *combustible* to keep the fire going to bake the bricks. When we first came to Mexicali we even burned old rubber car and truck tires, until the government outlawed it, saying it caused too much air pollution. And it did. How we used to cough as the tires burned! Now there is a fine, a high one, if you burn them. If they catch you burning them. Sometimes my stepfather drove us out of town in his pickup, to the outback, to search for fuel. We used a couple of truckloads or more of *combustible* for every kiln he fired. Always 10,000 bricks or more. Sometimes, at the end of a good month, 40,000 or 50,000. When it was that much we needed even more fuel, and we usually went out to the *ejidos* to buy wood and dried cow manure. Sometimes we cleaned the corral ourselves and got the manure for free. We needed it not only to mix with the clay but also for fuel.

The firing is the men's work, and they must be by the kiln sometimes three days at a time, night and day, keeping the kiln going, firing it with combustible. My mother would bring them coffee and water and food. Every few hours or so, me and Chano would walk over from the house to see what they needed. Lots of water when they burned the kiln in the hot sun. And we didn't have a refrigerator or where to plug it in to give them ice water, or even cold water. Tepid drinking water, that's what we were used to on the brickyards. Except after a sale, when my stepfather would buy a big block of ice, and we'd put it in the washing tub with sodas and a gallon of water. It always melted within a few days though.

At first, when the lands beside the brickyards were invaded and Colonia Nueva Estancia put up, we were happy. We could walk over to one of the stores, which sold cold sodas and bring them back. They got electricity almost immediately and had freezers filled with fanta and coca and seven. I even thought for awhile I could go back to school, the school they put up almost immediately after invading the lands, even though I was fourteen, almost fifteen, then and old for seventh grade. My mother had made sure I got through primary school, back in Guerrero. She only has three years of school but always wanted to study more. She didn't think, or at least my step-

father didn't think, I needed more than that though. But with the school so close they might have let me go.

Then some *colonos* got together and complained to the government about the smoke from our kilns. Even though we weren't burning tires anymore. Just firewood. And cow manure sometimes. The union my stepfather belongs to got us and the other brickmakers a stretch of land further out the highway in the direction of San Felipe, where we could set up the kilns. But such a loss of time! We had to load the unbaked bricks into the truck, then unload them there, then build the kiln, and some got broken along the way. Then after they were baked, we had to load them up once again. Before we only had to load them once, when they were baked and had been sold. Some brickmakers just took a loss and sold their unbaked bricks to brickmakers who had trucks to take them out to the new complex. And the men weren't close by to carry them coffee and food, though they took the five-gallon water bottles out with them. And some eggs and tortillas and coffee they heated up over a fire. Sometimes I went with them and made the food and coffee for them out there.

There was talk about moving all the brickyard owners and renters in and the workers out to the new complex and close the old one completely down. And eventually they did. The land in the old one was now more valuable because it was near a residential area, but my stepfather just traded the old brickyard for the new one. Now there is a big brick house on it, owned by people with a lot of money. But before my family relocated to the new brickyard complex, something happened. I eloped. Actually at first I just ran away and lived with him, on the new brickyard complex actually. When I got pregnant, his mother insisted we get married. My mother and stepfather didn't want me to. I was only fifteen and needed their permission to marry. I turned sixteen a month before my little girl was born, and a week after my birthday we were married por civil at the offices in Palaco. My little girl was my first child. Now, ten years, and a new millennium later, I have three, two boys and a girl. And my eldest boy, now seven, is beginning to help his father on the brickyard.

But let me tell you about Julio and how I met him and why my stepfather didn't want me to marry him or my mother either.

He wasn't the first I met of his family. One of his younger brothers used to come to the canal to fetch water, sometimes when I was doing the same thing. We said "*olá*" a couple of times, and then one time he asked how old I was, and I asked him the same thing. He was thirteen then, just one year younger than me. Another time, when we met at the canal, he told me he had an older brother, nineteen, named

Julio. A couple of times later, when we met again fetching water—water to mix with the clay, many buckets of water, back and forth to the canal all day long most days—he, his name is Fernando, told me Julio wanted to meet me by the canal. I felt shy about it. I had almost never talked to any young man outside of the family, except our piece-workers, but they were older and mostly married and didn't talk much to me anyway, but I agreed to walk up along the canal, out of sight of our brickyard, one night before the sun went down, which was late because it was approaching summer. It was more than a week before I got the courage to go, though I could see him walking beside the canal from our brickyard. When Fernando asked me why I hadn't gone to meet his brother, I told him I was helping my mother with dinner. "How about this Saturday?" he asked me. So I went. I didn't talk much the first time. Julio told me he was from Sinaloa, asked me where I was from. Told me they had come here when he was a kid. Told me about living in Colonia Popular and the weekend dances he had gone to there and sometimes still did. He spent most of the time spinning his new baseball cap in his rough, chapped hands, like my hands but more so since he dug the clay and molded the bricks, which I didn't do usually. But before he left he touched me on my shoulder and asked if we could meet next Saturday. And I agreed. I had taken my next to littlest brother along, telling my mother we were going for a walk, but she did wonder where we were walking around in the dark. Luckily my little brother still hadn't learned to talk!

After meeting for a few times Julio asked me if I'd like to go to a dance in Colonia Popular with him. I knew my mother wouldn't let me—and I'd have to tell her about Julio, and I didn't want to just yet. My family slept shortly after the sun went down, since we didn't have electricity, and the dances, Julio said, didn't really get started until 10 P.M. So one Saturday I sneaked out after everyone was asleep. Julio and I walked the almost three kilometers down the dirt road and crossed the highway, and we were there! I didn't know how to dance, but Julio was an excellent dancer and whirled me around to the music of Los Tigres del Norte, among other cassettes they played.

My stepfather was waiting for me when I got home. He hit me across the face with the back of his hand and told me I shouldn't be wandering around at night like a *puta*, like a dog without parents. My mother said nothing. She didn't talk to me for two days.

But I kept sneaking out to see Julio. Then one day, months later, I was pregnant. I had met his mother, he had taken me over to have coffee with his family once. When I told him I was *esperando*, he took

me home again. His mother said we should get married. That she and Julio's father and Julio would come over to talk about it with my parents sometime during the week.

And they did. But my stepfather and mother were not welcoming. Said that they just wanted me to be a workhorse on *their* brickyard, that they themselves needed my labor on my stepfather's brickyard. And that they should have come over a long time ago to ask permission for Julio to be my *novio*.

It was in that month that some of the brickmaker families began to move to the new brickyard complex, and that included Julio's family. When they finally got established out there, Julio came for me, and I ran away and went to live with him and his family. And then, five months later, we got married, without my mother's permission. Julio's family almost never let me work on the brickyard. Julio's mother mainly cooked and washed clothes, only occasionally cut the rough edges off the unbaked bricks, and I helped her with the cooking and marketing and cleaning. It was as though Julio and his family wanted to show that they didn't want me as a workhorse but just as a new member of the family. I liked to help Julio with the brickmaking, and sometimes he let me carry some water over, but he has three brothers, no sisters, and his family seemed to think that it was enough that men do that work. After we were married, Julio continued to work on his father's brickyard, but now as a fully paid pieceworker. We could earn so much more if he'd let me help! Though he makes about 800 bricks a day just by himself. But Julio says it is a man's business to support his wife, and his wife's business to keep quiet if he decides to go alone or with some friends to the Saturday night dances.

Then, it was not more than a year, we stopped living on the brickyard. Colonia Nueva Estancia expanded into some nearby lands, and Julio's mother and father got a lot in the Amplificación Nueva Estancia. So Julio, his father, and his brothers commuted to the brickyard, leaving us women at home where after a time there was electricity, and we could listen to the radio, or play cassettes, or watch television—something I'd never done before. We even lived in a house built of Julio's and his father's bricks.

2003

For the first few years we lived in *la casa de mis suegros* with my parents-in-law in the Ampliación Nueva Estancia. But after we were

married for three or four years, Julio's parents moved to San Quentín. They found the climate in Mexicali too *extremoso* they said, ice-covered puddles of water in the winter, hands chafed almost to bleeding when you mixed the clay with the icy water, a killing heat in the summer. But there was no work back on their rancho in Sinaloa. They had left there more than twenty years ago, in any case. In San Quentín, it was not so extremoso—not as cold, not as hot. My mother-in-law sold their house in the Ampliación Nueva Estancia, and my father-in-law his brickyard. In San Quentín, they bought a house on an *ejido* near the highway. My father-in-law went to work in a vegetable packing plant. But after a year or so my father-in-law's rheumas got worse. He had gotten rheumas for having changed from hot to cold with his hands so much, for so many years during the winter months—from baking bricks and attending the oven to putting his hands in the icy water to mold the clay. He ended up retiring. Julio and his other sons send him money now. Two of them, my *cuñados*, are in Washington State, where sometimes they pick apples.

After his father sold the brickyard and left for San Quentín, Julio started to work with one of his uncles, his father's brother, at a piece rate, just as he had for his father. Then, after his father retired, we moved to San Quentín. We lived with my parents-in-law once again, and Julio got work irrigating the tomato fields, for which they say San Quentín is famous. We were there for almost three years. Then Julio decided to come back to Mexicali and make bricks, that he would earn more money that way. So in 2000 we returned, and Julio rented in his own brickyard and employed two workers to help him out, including his youngest brother, my cuñado Tomás. Then, after almost eight years, I became pregnant again. Julio started loading trucks for a soda bottling company in the evenings, kept on making bricks in the mornings.

Ever since he rented in his brickyard I have gone out to help Julio with the brickmaking. Sometimes I helped him when he was a pieceworker for his father, then later for his uncle. For almost two years after we were married, Julio didn't let me help him. In part because our first little girl was just a baby, and both he and his mother, especially his mother, thought I should concentrate on taking care of her. And probably also because Fernando, my stepfather, accused him of wanting to marry me just to have a burro to work making bricks with him. I was my stepfather's burro, and he didn't want me to be anybody else's. I enjoy helping out though, working beside my husband, and willingly go to the brickyards with him. Julio

is proud though, and my mother's husband's words must have hurt him.

My stepfather doesn't need my help anymore in any case. When my mother and I carried water and filed the bricks and stacked them up and loaded the trucks, my brothers were little, and my stepfather had only two, sometimes three, pieceworkers. Some years after Julio and I married, he had five or six working for him. Now he has ten, and for some years has even paid their seguro, and my brothers are grown and help out too. My mother doesn't help make bricks anymore. But she still keeps the accounts, how many bricks are made, who made them, how many were sold and to whom, how much they paid in seguro for his workers, and now that they started paying taxes, how much they owe—all that paperwork. Even though she never finished primary school, she learned to do it. My stepfather, Fernando, can barely read or write, and what he knows he taught himself, for he never went to school. I think they did not want me to marry a brickmaker, to be working in the mud like the worms, as my stepfather once said of our work. But now he is a patrón and content to do mainly overseeing.

My mother and stepfather now live in a beautiful, two-story house, painted white with turquoise trim, surrounded by a cast-iron fence, and with an inside plaza. Although it is near the brickyards, they now have electricity and running water, for the first time since they came to Mexicali and started to make bricks. By now they have had the house for at least six years. They bought the land from an ejido bordering the brickyards and had it built from bricks made on my stepfather's brickyard.

Julio plans to keep renting in a brickyard and hiring at least two workers. We have bought our own house in the Ampliación La Nueva Estancia, bought it after returning from San Quentín. This year Julio will turn thirty-two. He's been making bricks for twenty years, since he was twelve. Just like me.

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CHAPTER 9

The Heterogeneity of Subsidies to the Capitalist System: The Case of the Garbage Pickers

Heterogeneity within the informal sector as a whole means that informal income generation and labor contribute in heterogeneous ways to capital accumulation by others and provide subsidies to capitalist enterprises and the capitalist system in diverse ways. Brickmakers subsidize capitalism more indirectly than home workers or garbage pickers do. Their commodities are absorbed in a variety of ways that subsidize construction of industrial parks, office buildings, and hotels but also are an input in self-built housing in squatter settlements often inhabited by wage laborers. Home workers, on the other hand, are disguised wage laborers, working for national and multinational enterprises whose wage bill is lowered by not paying them the safety net benefits legislated for full-time workers employed within factories. The commodities produced by home workers thus enable capitalist firms to make higher profits. So too in a similar way do garbage pickers, who permit the national and multinational companies that buy the products of their gleaning labor to make higher profits. The collecting, packaging, and transporting services of the garbage pickers make them also "disguised wage workers" (Bromley, 1978b).

In Colonia Popular, brickmaking and garbage picking are among the six most common occupations of male heads of household, the others being construction (including bricklaying, cement laying, and drywalling), commuter work on the U.S. side of the border (primarily agricultural fieldwork), vending, and factory labor. These six occupations account for 65.6 percent of employment of male heads of household in the colonia, with brickmaking being the most common, at 18.1 percent. While the dump near Colonia Popular was open, brickmaker families often subsidized their household income by col-

lecting clothing and other useful items that had been discarded there. If rain made brickmaking impossible and if it destroyed the already molded but still unfired bricks, or if the soil was too damp upon which to stack newly molded bricks, then members of brickmaker families often turned to the dump to collect metals for resale, though their metal recycling activities seldom took place for more than the three or four weeks a year it rained. One of Guadalupe's sons left brickmaking to become a garbage picker. Cook (1998) found that many ex-brickmakers on the Mexican side of the Texas border began a career as garbage collectors (and most probably recycled much of the useful garbage they collected).

More women were garbage pickers on their own than were women brickmakers in their own right. Professional garbage picker families usually deployed a family labor force, and their income, like that of the brickmakers, was in keeping with Chayanovian predictions: as children matured and could put in a full day's work, more money was earned, and/or often fewer hours per week were worked. The neopatriarchal character of the household was looser than among brickmakers, as mature family members were often encouraged to find work outside of the family labor unit. Nevertheless, garbage picker husbands and wives expressed satisfaction that they could work together, instead of apart, in earning an income.

Both brickmaker and garbage picker households, in their unique ways, subsidize capitalist enterprises though self-exploitation and the exploitation of family labor. Level of income is also, in both cases, dependent on access to means of production: a pickup truck for garbage pickers, and ownership of or rental rights over a brickyard for brickmakers. Because of certain structural similarities (micro and macro), it is useful to compare them. In the following pages I will begin with a note on methodology and then discuss the dynamics of working in the dump near Colonia Popular and present the stories of some of the people who live in the colonia and work in the dump. The phenomenon of self- and family exploitation should be obvious in the account that follows.

Methodology

The garbage pickers I interviewed lived side by side with the brickmakers who resided in Colonia Popular in the period 1989–1992. Besides getting structured interviews with the families whose garbage-picking activities will be reviewed here, I worked in

the dump with three women who collected useful items there on an intermittent basis (three times with Cuca, for seven hours; once with Paula, for four hours; and twice with Maria, for three hours) and with one family whose sole source of income, when the eldest son is not employed in a factory, comes from collecting and selling recyclable materials, mainly cardboard cartons and metals. I worked with Don José and Doña Teresa and/or their offspring in the dump seven or eight times for a total of more than forty hours. Additionally, I spent many hours in Doña Teresa's house, where I arranged to take my meals for a three-month period, discussing with them such things as problems they had in collecting materials, prices for selling materials, and special finds they made in the dump, for example, cameras, jewelry, a piece of furniture, an old refrigerator, or a food item. I was privy to Don José's later buying of metals from a number of colonia residents, mainly children, while spending time in that household. I also had contact, off and on, with another family who earned the majority of their income from garbage picking, and whose story I will present later: Miguel and Rosa.

Although the formal sample size will be considered twenty-nine, the number of people who indicated on the structured interview of colonia residents that their primary or secondary occupations were working in the dump, this underestimates the number of people who collect useful items and earn some income from things collected in the dump. These use-values may be clothing, household items, furniture, toilet paper, disposable diapers, canned food, and fresh fruit and vegetables, the latter culled out from among their stock by supermarkets. Some of these items may be used in the household or passed on to friends or relatives in other households, becoming part of the values transferred among network members and used to reinforce these extra-household network ties.[1] Some items, such as clothing, toilet paper, and disposable diapers, may also be resold to neighbors, and with clothing, even in other colonias.[2] Fifteen of the sample of twenty-nine (52 percent) consider garbage picking their primary occupation, while fourteen consider it their secondary occupation.

There are at least four reasons the number of people who reside in the colonia and earn some income or collect items for their own use from the dump is underestimated. First, there was no separate question during the formal interview asking people if they worked in any capacity in the dump. Second, many people who intermittently went to the dump to see what they could find for household use or possible resale did not consider these gathering activities to have the status of a primary or secondary occupation. Third, many of the people who

intermittently collected in the dump actually had another type of employment, which for some reason or another they could not engage in temporarily. For example, during the rainy season, when bricks could not be made, some brickmakers turned to collecting in the dump but for so few days a year that they did not consider it even a secondary activity. Fourth, collecting in the dump is not an activity easily revealed to outsiders, since it is considered a shameful and stigmatized job.

Doña Teresa told me of her reluctance to admit to working in the dump, because people thought that those who worked there had been convicted of some crime and thus were ineligible for (formal-sector) employment. She also told me of one of her daughters being teased by a schoolmate for being no more than a *dompera* (a worker in the dump) and returning home from school in tears. The couple who claimed that working in the dump was only their secondary occupation spent most of their working hours collecting and selling recyclable materials such as cardboard and metal from the dump. Yet the wife gave as her primary occupation "*hogar*" (housework), and the husband claimed as his primary occupation radio repair, although he seldom had radios to repair. I think this was an attempt to remove themselves from the shame of admitting that working in the dump was their primary occupation (thus to others in the colonia and the city perhaps their overarching identity or master status). One woman who worked seasonally in the carrot packaging factory, which operates only three to five months a year, also gave garbage picking as her secondary occupation, despite the fact that most of the year she worked in the dump.

Many of my observations on the dynamics of the dump were shaped by having read articles by Birkbeck (1978, 1979) and also by Gerry and Birkbeck (1981) on the garbage pickers in Cali, Colombia (Wilson, 1998a). My inclusions about the overriding class position of the garbage pickers who sell recyclable materials are greatly informed by Birkbeck's work, especially concerning the role of these workers vis-à-vis the formal economy, as "self-employed proletarians" (Birkbeck, 1978: 1174), although I prefer Bromley's (1978b: 1165) term, used in reference to some workers employed in the informal sector, viz. "disguised wage workers." Nonetheless, as readers of Birkbeck's work will see, the day-to-day organization and hours of work of the garbage pickers, as well as some of what is collected, are different in Mexicali than in Cali, Colombia.

Dynamics and Organization of the Dump

The municipal dump was moved to a deep natural trench separating Colonia Popular from a planned fraccionamiento, with titled lots, in 1987. The trench separating the colonias ranged from approximately 300 to 500 meters wide and almost two kilometers long. The trench was being filled in by a process of sanitary in-filling, whereby alternate layers of garbage are bulldozed flat and then covered with alternate layers of soil. On the top of the resulting plateau a layer of garbage is dumped by a garbage truck. The hills of garbage are bulldozed flat, extending the garbage to the side of the plateau where the trench is being filled in. Then a truck comes to dump earth, which in turn is bulldozed smooth, over the layer of garbage. The plateau that has been formed from successive layers of garbage and soil is about thirty feet high and constantly extending outward, slowly filling the length of the trench.[3]

Municipal garbage trucks, factory and supermarket garbage trucks, and privately owned pickups enter the dump to leave behind garbage. Municipal garbage trucks arrive at the dump continually between 7 A.M. and 5 P.M., bringing a variety of garbage from private homes. Cardboard boxes, aluminum soda and beer cans, and electrical wiring attached to a variety of appliances and containing copper, newspapers, and soda bottles are among the items collected for resale by the garbage pickers. Use-values, such as household items, including plates and cutlery, clothing, mattresses, and furniture, may also be found among the garbage.

A number of people from the colonia have brought home discarded refrigerators that no longer work in which to store kitchen wares, dry goods, and, in one family, the notebooks and schoolbooks of their many offspring. Others have gathered a variety of nonworking electric mixers, cannibalizing parts of some of them to make one workable electric mixer. Maria collects clothing with which she clothes herself and her daughters, and after washing and ironing them, she sells the remainder in surrounding colonias. Slightly damaged children's toys may be gathered by mothers who cannot afford to buy such luxuries for their own children.

Factory garbage trucks also arrive at the dump, leaving behind, among other things, irregularly cut rolls of toilet paper and disposable diapers. A number of women with small children go to collect the disposable diapers. Paula, among these women, uses the diapers for her two children, who were both under age four at the time. She also hands some of them down to her sisters-in-law who have small chil-

dren. A fourteen-year-old girl from a family whose head of household is a brickmaker collects diapers and sells them in the colonia in order to get money for her school supplies. The irregularly cut rolls of toilet paper are collected for household use.

A factory that makes plastic tarpaulins dumps long lengths of plastic ribbon trimmed from the tarpaulin material. This ribbon is collected by the *cartoneros*—those specializing in cardboard collection—in order to bind together their thirty to forty kilo packs of flattened cardboard boxes. One young widow, whose major source of income comes from recycling materials from the dump, used the plastic ribbon to make swings for her two small sons, suspending a loop of ribbon from the rafters of the porch of the well-built house she rented in the colonia.

Supermarkets discard canned goods with expired dates or those with dents, as well as slightly wilted fresh fruits and vegetables. This food is also collected for household use. People will collect all of the canned goods they find. And once they arrive home, they inspect the cans to see if the ends are bulging. Although they do not know the word "botulism," they know that cans with extruding ends contain food that is dangerous to eat. The factory and supermarket trucks arrive in the late afternoon and evening, until eight or nine at night. Private persons also bring garbage in pickups. The same type of garbage as found in the municipal garbage trucks is usually delivered. These may arrive at any hour of the day or night.

The garbage pickers specializing in items other than cardboard or newspaper work with eighteen- to twenty-inch-long metal hooks seated in a wooden handle, often an old broomstick. Most of the garbage pickers make their own hooks, using materials found in the dump. With these hooks they pull toward themselves the mainly plastic, but also paper, bags filled with garbage, open the bags with a slitting motion, and search through their contents for aluminum cans or bottles. Wet garbage can also be removed from the top of dry garbage, such as newspapers or clothing, with these hooks. Using these hooks eliminates the need to handle the garbage directly in order to search through it. Collectors put their gatherings in cloth feed bags or plastic bags or in carton boxes that they also find in the dump: searching for and locating these containers in which to pack their findings is the first task upon arrival at the dump.

Many garbage pickers are at the dump by 7 A.M., when the first municipal trucks arrive. In the summer months, temperatures can reach 120° F during the day, so few people work between noon and 4 P.M. Those for whom garbage picking is a needed source of income

come early and leave by noon in the summer months; they may return again when it starts to cool down, after 4 P.M. During the winter months, hours are more flexible. Those who collect solely use-values, and these are almost exclusively women and/or children, arrive after 4 P.M. in the summer months and usually in the afternoon, after school is over for the children and household chores are completed, during the winter. Few people go to the dump on windy days: the soil layer blows into one's eyes and mouths. For the cartoneros, the struggle with large pieces of carton is intensified when fighting the high winds.

By 8 A.M., garbage trucks of all types are arriving, and two bulldozers begin their work, pushing the plateau of garbage ever farther out into the trench as new garbage is dumped. Garbage pickers looking for metals, clothing, and other useful items may work below the advancing hill of garbage, being careful to avoid the advance of the bulldozers that push garbage over the sides or on top of the plateau where the garbage is dumped. On top of the plateau people must run out of the way of the advancing bulldozers and also make sure that the things they have collected are not bulldozed away. There are two bulldozer drivers, with two different styles. The one least liked by the collectors drives his bulldozer as though there were no people in the dump: people work near him at their own peril. Doña Teresa heard him remark that he didn't care if he hit someone anyway, because he would not be fined. The other driver may "rest" for a minute or two after a garbage truck arrives to give the pickers a chance to pick through the hill of garbage left behind by the truck.

The cartoneros work exclusively on top of the plateau, often approaching the trucks before the garbage is dumped to pull off pieces of cardboard and cardboard boxes. Especially men, but also some women, grab what they can from the sides of open trucks, throwing it backwards over their heads, where their partners gather it into a pile. Young men may hop onto one of the moving pickups (municipal garbage trucks are closed dump trucks, so this cannot be done with them) and ride it into the area where the garbage is being dumped. They are known as *macheteros*. From the back of the truck they throw the cardboard down to their partners, or into a large pile if working alone. If there are not many cartoneros on a specific day, then a single young man or two may be able to claim all of the cardboard on the truck and even earn 2,000 to 3,000 pesos ($.80 to $1.20 in 1990) from the driver for cleaning and sweeping out the truck. At times of more fierce competition, as many as seven or eight men may run and mount the same truck. Nonetheless, the cardboard collec-

tors, though competing fiercely to grab cardboard from the arriving trucks, generally respect that the carton thrown off the truck by a particular cartonero belongs to him or her. Disputes may arise but usually are settled peacefully, as overlapping piles of cardboard will be shared. Garbage pickers collecting other items may even throw cardboard to cartonero friends.

Cartoneros working alone must do all of the collecting, sorting, and packing. Few cartoneros work alone, however. Two men will join together to work for the day and share the collection. The cartonero families follow a rough division of labor. The men generally approach the trucks to throw off the cardboard, though the women may do so as well. Both sexes collect the cardboard scattered around the dump or dumped onto a pile by the municipal trucks, climbing up on the resulting hill of garbage to do so. Both sexes may also break down the cardboard boxes into flat pieces, although women and children most often do this while men bind and carry packs of the cardboard. The flattened pieces of cardboard are placed one on top of the other, over an approximately three-meter length of plastic ribbon with a loop tied in one end. The other end of the ribbon is pulled through the loop and the pack bound crosswise, then lengthwise, as one would bind a gift. Men generally bind the packs, and usually they carry the thirty to forty kilo packs to an area close to the dump where each person marks out a space to leave his her items collected during the working day.

There are women cartoneras, but none work alone. Two women from another colonia (not Colonia Popular) work together, one lifting the thirty kilo or more pack to the back of the other. Men will lift the packs onto their own backs without help. Carrying the packs is done at a trot, partially in order to move more quickly out of the way of the oncoming trucks and bulldozers, and partially because one is slightly off balance when carrying this weight on one's back.

All means of production for collecting and packing whatever is found in the dump are available to all: the packing materials are found in the dump (the discarded tarpaulin ribbon, the plastic or cloth bags), as are often unpaired gloves that the cartoneros collect whenever they are found to wear to work, and the materials for making hooks that the other pickers use. But ownership of a vehicle is what separates those who earn the most money from those who earn the least.

Garbage pickers without a vehicle must sell to buyers who come to the dump to buy cardboard or metal, for example. In 1989, they were paid 70,000 to 80,000 pesos per ton of cardboard collected. The

buyers were often garbage pickers as well, although some were middlemen. Those with vehicles load their packs of cardboard and bags of scrap metal into their pickups, selling directly to the metal junkyards or paper companies. In 1989, cartoneros with their own means of transportation earned 90,000 pesos for a ton of cardboard sold directly to the paper companies.

The Workers

Twenty of the twenty-nine people in my sample are married or in common-law marriages, including six couples who work in the dump, five of whom listed garbage picking as their primary occupation. All couples specialize mainly in cardboard and metal collection. The wife of one couple also collects clothing that she cleans and then resells, for 1,000 to 2,000 pesos apiece. All garbage pickers who collect items in order to generate an income also collect useful items and generally clothe themselves and their families from the dump. Three of the couples bring along their offspring to help them in their collection activities. Two couples have children who are too young to help. One of these couples leaves all of their children, all under age eight, at home—with the exception of their newborn daughter, who the mother brings along to the dump so she can breast-feed her throughout the day. With the other couple, whose four children are under six, the mother goes to the dump in the mornings while her husband watches the children. In the afternoon, the husband goes to the dump to pick up (in his truck) what his wife has collected and to do some collecting himself while she watches the children. One couple is in their fifties and has no unmarried children and no other relatives living with them to help.

All six of the couples who work in the dump have pickup trucks. Most of the people who work alone in the dump, or with the occasional help of children, do not have transportation. One elderly single man who lives with his single sister has constructed a one-meter-by-one-meter hand cart from materials he found during his collecting activities. Using this cart, he hauls his findings back to the colonia and need not sell them to buyers at the dump. He specializes in collecting discarded soda bottles of which there are few, as most soda companies have bottles on which one pays a deposit, and these are not often thrown into the garbage.

I next discuss the work histories and garbage-picking activities of two of the couples whose primary occupation is collecting card-

board and metal. Notably the age range of heads of household working in the dump reveals that no men between the ages of thirty-five and forty-five are garbage pickers. Although this may be due to my small sample size, evidence from Guadalajara suggests that it is in this age range that men are most likely to be employed in the formal sector (González de la Rocha, 1986; see also Roberts, 1989).

José and Teresa

José was born to an unmarried mother on a rancho in the state of Jalisco. He was born in 1936, he believes, though it could have been 1937. He isn't sure, because he has no birth certificate. He never went to school. When he was sixteen he came to Mexicali, crossing into California with a friend from Zacatecas whom he met for the first time after arriving in that city. José had no relatives in the United States, but his friend had acquaintances near Los Angeles. They hopped a train and went there. From there, José went alone to Sacramento, then Mendocino, then Salinas, Watsonville, and Gilroy. He had jobs helping with the plowing and planting garlic. In Mendocino, he picked cotton. In Watsonville, he picked lettuce and strawberries. He was never able to find work that lasted more than three or four days at a time. He slept outside, though one night when it rained he slept in an abandoned house and another night in an abandoned train. Most nights he slept in the fields. One night the police found him sleeping in a field and handed him over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). He was then deported to Mexicali.

Shortly afterward he crossed the border again, going to El Centro, California, where he worked in the fields for three months. The INS picked him up again and sent him to the El Centro Detention Center for forty-two days. José remembers that the famous Mexican singer, Pedro Infante, died in a plane crash while he was in the detention center. His cell mates read him the news from a newspaper printed in Spanish. After spending time in the detention center, José was flown to El Paso, Texas, and was bused to a town in Chihuahua. From there he jumped a train, going first to Guadalajara, then to Mexico City.

In the capital city he moved in with his mother's sister. He held a variety of jobs in Mexico City, eventually going to work in a small shoemaking and shoe repair shop, where a male cousin of his mother's also worked. A maternal uncle of Teresa's also worked there and eventually invited him home: he was living with Teresa's mother and her children. Teresa, born in 1947, was still a little girl then,

attending primary school—which she eventually completed. After an unsuccessful marriage, Teresa separated from her husband and eventually, with her three sons, moved in with José.

Teresa and José lived in a number of colonias on the outskirts of Mexico City in rented houses. Together they had five children. José never wanted Teresa to work apart from him—he was very strict with her for many years, Teresa recalls. So they worked together. They went to Toluca, Mexico, to buy blankets, which they sold from door to door. Later they worked together on the municipal garbage trucks. Teresa, José, and a son from her first marriage, Martín, collected garbage throughout Mexico City and were permitted to pick through it. They gathered what they could retrieve for household use and recyclable materials to sell.

They did not work in any of the dumps in Mexico City. José explained that all of the dumps in Mexico City are controlled by *caciques* (bosses), and that one must belong to a *sindicato* (union) there in order to work in the dump. The unions were formed to keep new garbage pickers from entering the dump, José said. Everything must be sold to the boss who controls the rights to the dump, and one cannot choose to sell to a buyer who will pay more. Also, José said he resented the idea of paying (cooperative or union dues) to work in the dump.[4] Mexicali's dump is one of the few in Mexico where anyone can enter to work and sell to anyone they please, according to José.[5]

In 1983, José and Teresa separated. José returned to Mexicali, renting a room with some other men and working as a mason's helper (*ayudante de albañil*). After some months, he crossed into California, going first to Los Angeles. There he lived on the street in the city center, taking meals at missions or collecting food from the garbage thrown out behind the supermarkets. After a week he got a job doing construction cleanup in apartment complexes near Indio, California. He lived with his boss in Los Angeles and commuted the three hours to work each day with him and another worker in his boss's pickup truck. José did this for a month, then decided to try his luck in northern California again. He returned to Salinas, Watsonville, and Gilroy, working in the fields when he could find work. After six months in California, he returned to Mexicali, arriving there in 1984.

A friend of his offered to sell José a lot in the newly invaded Colonia Popular, and José bought it, paying seventy dollars. It was the first property he had ever owned. He worked at various jobs in Mexicali, eventually going to work in the dump with a friend. In 1986 he sent for Teresa and their children. She arrived late that year with three of their daughters, ages seventeen, fifteen, and thirteen, and

their nine-year-old son. A nineteen-year-old daughter remained in Mexico City to complete her schooling. She lived with Teresa's mother, as did Martín, age twenty-one, and his two older brothers, who eventually married.

By the time Teresa arrived in Mexicali, José had managed to make a down payment on an old pickup truck. He and Teresa went to collect cardboard and metal in the dump, then located near the Mexicali airport, more than twenty kilometers from the colonia. They often stayed overnight at the dump in order not to use gasoline every day. They would go one morning and come back the following evening, getting in two days of work. The children stayed at home alone, since all had to go to school each day. On Friday afternoons, after the children had come home from school, the whole family went to the dump, working there Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, camping out overnight and cooking meals over a fire so they did not have to waste gasoline on round trips. The children also helped gather cardboard, metal, and useful things. "Everyone has to help, or we would never make it," Teresa told me. The children's clothing, as well as Teresa's and José's, came from the dump. By luck, in 1987, the municipal dump near the airport was filled in, and a new dump opened on the north side of Colonia Popular, where they lived.

In early 1988, José fell ill. Teresa sent for her son, Martín, then twenty and living in Mexico City with his grandmother, to come and take José's place in the dump. The dump being nearby, the two youngest children were often left at home, while the other family members went to work. Martín more than made up for their work. Each of the eldest daughters went to secondary school in the morning and worked afternoons and weekends with Martín and Teresa. They worked from fifteen to twenty hours a week but also shared, with their younger sister, the clothes washing for the family. José eventually got well again and went back to work with the family. Martín now did most of the heavy lifting of the packs of cardboard, but José helped him with this as well.

On a good day, the family could collect up to a ton of cardboard, but this was rare. Usually they collected eighteen to twenty-two packs, or between 600 and 700 kilos. Sometimes they collected as little as ten to twelve packs, but this also was rare. It was unnecessary to work more than six or seven hours a day, and if the cardboard supply was good, the family could work two or three days on, one day off. They tried to collect three tons a week. José sold the cardboard to a cardboard and paper company from which he had a business card that he carried in his wallet. In 1989 and 1990, they got 90,000 pesos

a ton for the cardboard. If they managed to get three tons in a week, they earned 270,000 pesos. This did not include the value of the metals they collected for resale, or the clothing, toilet paper, household items, furniture, and food they gathered for household use.

In 1989, factory employment for a six-day week, eight-hour day paid from 85,000 to 120,000 pesos a week. Most people earned an average of 90,000 pesos a week, and many had to pay for transportation to and from work. So with less hours, the three full-time family workers and the two part-time family workers (the two daughters in school) earned as much as three adults working full time in formal-sector factory employment. But they set their own hours and were not subject to factory discipline. They did not, however, have the Social Security or medical benefits theoretically available to factory workers.[6] By late 1989, José was able to buy a new motor (used) for the truck and a secondhand refrigerator for the house.

In the spring of 1990, Teresa developed pleurisy and could not go to the dump as often. Her brother came from Mexico City for some months to stay in the household and to work in the dump to help out the family. An additional hardship was imposed when in March 1990 the dump near Colonia Popular was filled in, and the new dump was opened up on an ejido (collectively owned agricultural settlement) more than fifteen kilometers away.

By the mid-1990s, both Martín and Teresa were working in a multinational soda bottling factory and receiving Social Security and medical benefits for themselves and the family. José was no longer collecting at the dump but buying aluminum cans and other metals from residents of Colonia Popular to resell. The two eldest daughters in Mexicali had married, one by law, the other by common law. The eldest daughter, who had completed high school, moved to Los Angeles. The younger daughter, who finished only secondary school, moved to a nearby colonia with her common-law husband.

Miguel and Rosy

Miguel's and Rosy's family was in another stage of the domestic cycle: their four daughters were eight, three, one and a half, and three months in June 1990. Rosy was thirty-four, Miguel was thirty-three. They are among the most educated of the garbage pickers, many of whom have not attended school or have done so only for a few years: they both finished secondary school. They began working in the dump in early 1990, shortly before the municipal dump near Colonia Popular was filled in and opened elsewhere.

Miguel was born in 1957 in Nueva Italia, Michoacán, to an unmarried mother. He began working at age sixteen, picking oranges for a variety of employers in Nueva Italia. At age seventeen, he crossed into California with three friends from his hometown. They joined a brother of one of these friends in a town near Los Angeles, whose name Miguel says he no longer remembers. Miguel, his three friends, and his friend's brother worked picking oranges for two or three months while living in the orange groves. With their last paycheck, the five friends bought a car and drove to Fresno, California. Miguel remained in Fresno for five years. Miguel worked in a restaurant in Fresno—he tells me its name and the street it is on—first as a dishwasher and later as a cook.

Miguel crossed the border into the United States seven times: three times he was deported, twice to Mexicali, where he eventually settled and met Rosa. Four times he crossed, established himself, and found work. Besides working in the restaurant in Fresno, he worked in Madera one year, in Huron two years, and in Sanger and Bandelier, each for three months. Among other things, he picked and pruned grapes in Madera, Sanger, and Bandelier and picked melons in Huron. He was last in the United States in 1989, for the first time after marrying Rosy in 1982. He worked in Gardena, California, for three months driving a forklift for a factory that made announcements for supermarkets and stores such as K-Mart and restaurants such as Bob's Big Boy. This time he returned to Mexico and Mexicali at his wife's request. The children were sick, Rosy explained, when Miguel laughingly pointed out that she nagged him a lot about returning.

Rosy, from a rancho in Veracruz, migrated alone to Tehuapán, Puebla, in search of work at age twenty-one. She worked in a restaurant there for a year and made friends with a woman from Tehuapán who wanted to take Rosy to California to work as a maid in her house there. The two women came to Mexicali together, but Rosy began to fear crossing the border without papers so decided to stay in Mexicali.

Rosy worked at various jobs in Mexicali before and after marrying Miguel, first in a garment assembly factory putting collars on shirts for a year and later in a shrimp packaging factory in a colonia not far from Colonia Popular, where she and Miguel lived in a rented house. After that she worked in a factory making metal parts for boilers. Miguel also worked at a variety of jobs in Mexicali, first for six months in a foundry making metal sheets and later for six years in a bone milling plant. In 1987, the couple acquired a lot in Colonia

Popular. Six months prior to my interviewing them, Miguel had quit his job in the bone milling plant. Five months prior to the interview, Miguel and Rosy began working together in the dump. They worked only a little more than a month in the dump near Colonia Popular before it was closed.

Now Miguel drives them to the new dump in his pickup truck. He estimates that they work five or six days a week, eight hours a day, collecting mainly cardboard but also metals and useful items. They collect about three tons of cardboard a week. Rosy takes her baby daughter with her to the dump so she can breast-feed her during the day; the other three daughters remain at home. Rosy also has a small booth attached to the house from which the family sells sodas, sweets, packaged snacks, and cigarettes. When Rosy and Miguel are working in the dump, her eight-year-old daughter runs the store.

Miguel sells the cardboard they collect directly to a paper company (not the same one José sells to), which pays him 90,000 pesos a ton. Miguel and Rosy thus earn, for a longer work week, the same amount Teresa, José, and their offspring earn from recycling cardboard: 270,000 pesos a week. This is equivalent to 135,000 pesos each weekly, or more than either could earn at the maximum of 120,000 pesos a week, paid by full-time (eight hours daily, six days a week) factory employment. Working in the dump permits Miguel and Rosy to work together and allows Rosy to care for her baby daughter while working.

Garbage-Picking Families

José, Teresa, the members of their family who work in the dump with them, and Miguel and Rosy can be seen as a "disguised proletariat" or "disguised wage workers" (Bromley, 1978b; Gerry and Birkbeck, 1981). Both José and Miguel sell the cardboard to formal-sector, paper-producing companies that pay them for their work on a piece-rate basis: per ton of cardboard collected. Their positions are similar in relation to the metal junkyards that are intermediaries between those they pay for metals by the kilo and the industries to which these metals are then resold. The companies to which the garbage pickers sell reduce their wage bill by not having to pay the pieceworkers Social Security, medical, or retirement benefits.

Those who work on the dump are also identifiable as a "self-employed proletariat" (Birkbeck, 1978, 1979). Garbage pickers set their own hours and essentially run their own "businesses," despite

being in the position of outworkers, thus proletarians, for the companies to which they sell. Miguel and Rosy have the educational qualifications to work in the formal sector, and have done so, but it pays them less and gives them less independence in decisions about when and how long to deploy their labor. Movement between the formal and informal sectors of the economy is apparent in the stories of both families.

Garbage picking is more lucrative than formal-sector employment, in part due to a self-exploitation and family exploitation that will vary according to the stage in the family's life cycle, following the model developed by Chayanov (1986). Again, according to this model, first applied to the Russian peasantry, the degree of self-exploitation and family exploitation and the amount of income earned depend on the ratio of consumers to producers in a family. The consumer-producer ratio depends on the number of working-age children in the family, which varies according to the stage in the domestic cycle. Garbage-picker families, as peasant families, will self-exploit less and/or earn more, depending on the number of household members who can be deployed in the family enterprise. Women also can produce more the fewer dependent non-working children they have, an insight overlooked by Chayanov (Nash, 1993b).

In José's and Teresa's family, school-age daughters help collect cardboard, metals, and useful items after school and on weekends. I would count them as one-half producers, one consumer each. Few other employment opportunities would allow them to combine schoolwork and earning capacity, although family farming and brick-making are exceptions as well. When most members of the household are engaged in garbage picking, each household member could work less hours and on a less disciplined schedule than any of them would have had to if working in a more structured employment situation. José, with no formal schooling (eighteen of the nineteen garbage pickers had less than three years of schooling), would have difficulty finding a formal-sector job in any case.

Rosy could not accept formal-sector employment, despite her educational qualifications, unless she had help to care for her baby daughter. None of her other daughters are old enough to take on this responsibility, especially since the baby is still breast-feeding. Since only Rosy and her husband, in their six-person household, can work in the dump, the consumer-producer ratio is higher than in José's and Teresa's household. José and Teresa have a consumer-producer ratio of eight consumers to three full-time workers, plus two half-time workers, or 8 ÷ by 4 = 2. Miguel and Rosy have a consumer-producer

ratio of six consumers to two producers, or 6 ÷ by 2 = 3. Thus Miguel and Rosy must self-exploit more and work longer hours, more days, and more regularly than José's and Teresa's family. The latter could have earned more if they had self-exploited to the same extent that Miguel and Rosy do, because of the latter's higher consumer-producer ratio.

Conclusions: Similarities and Differences between Garbage Pickers and Brickmakers

Both brickmakers and peasants can be seen as informal sector workers whose production activities are linked to the needs of the dominant capitalist system. Garbage pickers, however, though sharing with brickmakers the insecurity of jobs centrally located in the informal economy, are less petty commodity producers than disguised wage workers, working on a piece-rate basis for the industries that are the ultimate buyers of the cardboard and metal they recycle from the dump. There is thus both class heterogeneity within the informal economy and, as seen earlier, within any particular activity within that economy. The class heterogeneity within garbage picking and brickmaking is directly related to the ownership of the means of production, such as a truck, needed to transport products to the market.

A Chayanovian model is applicable to both garbage pickers and brickmakers and may be applicable to all petty commodity producing families or self-employed proletarian families. Insofar as other family members are employed in the family enterprise, the degree of self- and family exploitation depends on the ratio of consumers to producers in the household. More producers will mean a higher income and/or more leisure. This ratio depends on the stage in the domestic cycle that the household is passing through, although families can be extended to include adult or child producer-consumers. The family labor force that a head of household can deploy is one variable in family income levels among both garbage pickers and brickmakers.

Among the garbage pickers, two other factors also affect household income levels. First, access to a relatively expensive means of production—a vehicle for transporting the materials collected in the dump to a buyer—is a decisive factor in determining income. Internal income stratification among garbage pickers, and whether garbage picking remains only a secondary occupation, is partially related to

the ownership or nonownership of a pickup truck. Second, since the cartoneros and metal collectors are essentially a "disguised proletariat" working for the cardboard and paper companies or for the metal industries that pay them either directly or through intermediaries on a piecework basis, the piecework price they are paid is another consideration in income levels. This price is determined primarily by profit-making considerations of the companies that utilize these recycled materials as well as competition among the garbage pickers. Internal class stratification among garbage pickers is determined by both the household's consumer-producer ratio and access to a vehicle, defined here as a means of production.

Income levels and internal class position among the brickmakers are also determined by the household's consumer-producer ratio and access to means of production, including land, water, and transport vehicles. Income levels depend on these two factors as well as a third: the price of bricks determined on a competitive urban market, essentially petty commodity producers resembling the peasantry in a number of ways, as seen in chapter 3. In sum, the garbage pickers have an overarching class status as disguised wage workers, working on a piece-rate basis for industry. The brickmakers' overarching class status is that of petty commodity producers, with some advancing to petty bourgeoisie. Within the ranks of both brickmakers and garbage pickers there is an internal class stratification related partially to their access to the means of production and partially to the stage in the domestic cycle.

Garbage pickers differ from brickmakers in that first there are no artisanal skills to pass down to offspring; second, successful trajectories do not involve land (brickyard) ownership or control (thus less start-up capital is needed); and third, garbage picking does not tend to be a long-term career: members of garbage-picking families tend to move in and out of other kinds of work, sometimes permanently. Among brickmakers this is less common and usually linked to loss of control over a brickyard. Fourth, because of the stigma attached to garbage picking, mature children are encouraged to look for other work. Although encouraging children to find other work is found among a few brickmaker families as well, it is more common to expect mature children, especially sons, to continue as brickmakers.

Garbage pickers share with brickmakers, first, self-exploitation and exploitation of a family labor force, or portions of it, to increase income or leisure; second, heterogeneity of success within the niche; and third, provision of a subsidy to capitalist enterprise. The direct subsidy of garbage pickers rests in their being "disguised proletari-

ans," essentially outworking for the paper and metal companies that buy up the products of their recycling efforts. The direct subsidy of brickmakers is to the construction companies that build the plazas, hotels, office and bank buildings, and industrial parks, and ultimately to the enterprises that buy up and occupy them, or that contracted for them in the first place.

Interestingly, ten out of fifteen (67 percent) men and women who named garbage picking as their primary occupation and twenty-eight out of thirty-three (85 percent) of brickmakers had come to Mexicali from other states in Mexico. A number of male garbage pickers and brickmakers had worked in the United States but eventually chose to remain in Mexico with their families rather than separating from their wives and children to earn a higher wage. It is probable that internal migration rather than an international, undocumented migration option is made possible in the absence of higher wages and sufficient jobs in formal-sector employment to the existence of an informal economy that permits family members to work together.

Plates 13 and 14. Municipal truck dumping garbage in the new dump (fall of 1992).

Plates 15 and 16. Bulldozer flattening and moving forward the garbage.

Plate 17. A cartonero binding together a pack of cardboard.

Plates 18 and 19. The results of one cartonero's day of labor.

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CHAPTER 10

Are the Brickmakers Counterhegemonic?

Kathleen Staudt, in her Free Trade? Informal Economies at the U.S.–Mexico Border (1998), equates informality with counterhegemony and includes undocumented immigration, squatter settlement formation, and informal-sector work within the category informality-counterhegemony (see also Wilson, 2002a, 2004). In part, she is right, in the sense that the latter all evade compliance with formal bureaucratic regulations, whether immigration laws or governmentally mandated controls on business and employment practices or property laws. At this stage in history, in the realm of the political, the nation-state is hegemonic; in the realm of the economic, the capitalist system is hegemonic, both worldwide and in Mexico. Earlier work has shown that informal-sector work, or self-employment (falling on a formal-informal sector continuum), is often a sought-after alternative to proletarianization. In a study of street peddlers in Hong Kong, Josephine Smart (1990: 271) underscores this aspect: "It is not unemployment which drives most people into street hawking; rather it is a case of active resistance to proletarianization by people whose aspiration for socioeconomic mobility is restricted by their marginal position in society." A study by Leo A. Despres (1990: 116) of three cities in Brazil showed that 79 percent of the self-employed (including those in both formal and informal sectors) he interviewed preferred their work because it "provided them with the independence with which they could decide for themselves how, when, and to what purpose they would perform their work." In other words, these workers are economic actors who chose to work for themselves rather than being wage earners. Sixty percent of those interviewed became self-employed "because they did not like taking orders from an employer or a *patrão* " (Despres, 1990: 116). Besides not wishing to take orders from employers, as self-employed "they did not have to worry about layoffs or dismissals," and they were free "to perform their work according to their own sense of priorities" (Despres, 1990: 118). This

resistance to proletarianization, found among brickyard owners and renters in, as well as among other microentrepreneurs in the informal sector, may be considered counter-hegemonic to the extent that capitalism and proletarianization are considered concurrent.

To see how counterhegemonic brickmaking in particular might be, it is useful to ask brickmakers how they feel about their work. I asked them if they liked brickmaking, and if so why, if not why, and if they would want their children to be brickmakers. In the section that follows I present their answers to these questions. In the second section I consider the concepts of hegemony and counterhegemony and how these apply to the informal sector in general and the brickmakers in particular.

Positive and Negative Evaluations of Brickmaking

As far as negative evaluations go, the hardships of living on a brickyard—which the vast majority of brickmakers have done at some stage in their careers—are noted by many. Most often mentioned were the extreme temperatures, up to 120° F or more in the summer and the icy-cold clay and water in the winter. The lack of electricity on the brickyards was considered a major deficit, because a fan could not be used. Fans keep away not only the heat, making sleep easier, but also the vast swarms of mosquitos that breed in the canals snaking through the brickyards They appear at dusk and continue attacking through the night until about 4 A.M.—the hour many brickmakers rise to work in the summer months. Ruth, Alfonso's wife, referred to "the punishment of the mosquitos that make one want to weep" as a reason for not wanting her children to be brickmakers, at least brickmakers living on brickyards, which a brickyard owner would do in order to protect his or her property. None of her sons chose to be a brickmaker: by 2002, one son had worked for some years as a drywaller, one as a mechanic (intermittently), another in a factory (intermittently), one as a truck driver for the municipal garbage service, and one as a tractor-trailer driver. Only the last three had formal-sector jobs, however. All had finished primary school, which neither Ruth nor Alfonso had done.

Alfonso said he likes brickmaking and worked as a brickmaker with the help of his wife and sons until he broke his clavicle. He stated his reasons: "because it is a job in which they don't say why didn't you come or why did you come so late. It is a job [in which] one's own needs [not a boss] drive one to work." Thus brickmaking meant

that he had no employer to tell him what to do or to criticize him for not showing up or coming in late to work. He would not want his sons to be brickmakers, however, because of what can be conceived of as "creeping formalization" of the brickmakers. He mentions that the government is now imposing taxes on the brickmakers (when it can) and prohibiting brickmakers to bake their bricks near the new colonias of the expanding city due to the contaminating smoke of the brick ovens. Alfonso sees these as disincentives to brickmaking and notes that since his sons are young, they can find other work.

Environmental regulations, imposed on the brickmakers but not on the multinationals, were beginning to cause problems for a number of brickmakers. One brickmaker family whose brickyard was close to the newly established Colonia Nueva Estancia complained of not being able to bake bricks there anymore because of the smoke. They had to sell their unbaked bricks to brickmakers on outlying brickyards. The unbaked bricks were then worth 60,000 pesos (about twenty-six dollars in 1991) per 1,000, as compared to 90,000 pesos (a little less than forty dollars) per 1,000 for baked bricks, a considerable loss in income. The same thing happened to "the old brickmaker," Don Nicolas, and his sons, the latter of whom eventually left brickmaking and the brickyard his son Diego was buying with him—because they had nowhere to bake their bricks. One son, who owned a flatbed truck, continued as a middleman, selling bricks bought from brickmakers or for a percentage of the take. Attempts to control the process of brickmaking and to tax the product were thus seen as disincentives that led a number of brickmakers to seek work elsewhere.

Others, though few, did not like brickmaking but did not know how to find work that paid as well. It is probably only these few and their offspring that can be conceived of as a "reserve army of labor in waiting." Fernando, for example, does not like brickmaking but admits he does not have the educational background (he cannot read or write) to qualify for factory work, which he points out pays less than brickmaking in any case. He learned to make bricks in Guerrero, before coming to Mexicali with his family, directly to the brickyards. He owns his own brickyard, on which he, his wife, two sons, a stepdaughter, and two hired-in laborers worked; previously he had rented in a brickyard. He does not want his sons to continue as brickmakers "in the mud like worms." It would be better if they study and find other work, he said. His stepdaughter eventually married a brickmaker who was working on his father's brickyard; she now helps her husband make bricks. Today, he is among the most successful, and may be considered a petty capitalist.

Rafaela, whose husband sold their lot in Colonia Popular to buy a brickyard, does not want her children to be brickmakers, despite the fact that her father, father-in-law, brother, and brothers-in-law are or have been brickmakers. "Brickmaking is too hard (*pesado*), and sometimes one doesn't earn even enough to eat. The heat here is worrisome, and in the winter there is ice in the clay." Her husband agrees that brickmaking is difficult, but doesn't know what other work he would be qualified for. He says: "I tell my youngest son 'study' because brickmaking is very hard. With a diploma you can go to work in a store (*tienda*), in a general store (*abarrotes*), or something."

Not all men and women felt negatively about brickmaking, however. Like Alfonso, they found positive aspects about being their own boss. Don Nicolas, "the old brickmaker," liked brickmaking because "there one goes along as they please. No one tells me what to do. And they pay me according to what I do." In other words, he is free to work when he pleases, without a boss, and the amount he earns corresponds to the amount of work he feels like doing. If he had had an education, however, he thinks he might have liked to be a tractor-trailer driver.

Rogelio likes making bricks for the same reason Don Nicolas and Alfonso did: "Because here I do not have a boss (*patrón*), no one tells me what to do." Furthermore, he receives more sustenance working on the brickyards than he would as a waged worker (in the formal sector), echoing Fernando. Rogelio owns his own brickyard, having sold the family's lot in Colonia Popular to make a down payment on it and to buy a truck. He is aided in brickmaking by his five sons and one hired hand, to whom he pays the piece rate for unbaked bricks (the usual practice). He is satisfied that his sons are brickmakers.

Women brickmakers were often positive about their own brickmaking as well. For those in successful marriages, aiding their husbands gave them a sense of worth, of being useful. Ruth mentioned that she liked making bricks because she was helping the family economically; she mentioned that when her husband eventually found other work, she could no longer work with him and their sons to contribute to the family's income, which she felt as a loss.

Guadalupe, who first worked with her husband making bricks as pieceworkers, then as renters in, then as owners, and later—after separating from her husband—as pieceworkers on a son-in-law's brickyard, likes brickmaking because she can set her own hours and is driven to work only by the money she needs to earn. "One earns money faster in brickmaking," she says. "One only hurries to make [the bricks], and then one can go and buy what one wants to. And if

you want to work all day and earn more, or if you only want to work some hours, it is all right. You work the hours you want to." None of her six sons and two daughters went beyond four years of elementary school. Both daughters are married to brickmakers and help their husbands make bricks; all sons are brickmakers, including the four who are married. When I asked Guadalupe if she would like her sons to be brickmakers, she answered that she believes so, because "as a brickmaker there is no one to tell me to do more than I do" (cf. also Wilson, 2004: 304). In the closing creative non-fiction piece (chapter 11), Don Rafael expresses the desire to return to brickmaking because he is free of a boss and able to set his own timetable.

Brickmakers thus stress the importance of being free of a boss, the ability to earn according to principles of self-exploitation rather than exploitation by others, and the value of being able to work when they want to and the hours they want to. The more successful point out that they earn more than they would as wage workers in the formal sector. They avoid the discipline imposed upon a factory- (or an office-)based working class (Thompson, 1963), being driven only by their needs. The emphasis on independence from a boss as a positive aspect of brickmaking, whether as owner-worker or pieceworker, negates the idea that all brickmakers are a reserve labor force in waiting, clamoring for formal-sector jobs (though some are). But is the niche they occupy counterhegemonic?

Hegemony and Counterhegemony

Mallón (1995: 6–7) distinguishes between hegemonic "processes" and "outcomes" as follows:

> First, hegemony is a set of nested, continuous processes through which power and meaning are contested, legitimated, and redefined at all levels of society. According to this definition hegemony is hegemonic process: it can and does exist everywhere at all times. Second, hegemony is an actual end point, the result of hegemonic processes. An always dynamic or precarious balance, a contract or agreement, is reached among contesting forces. Because hegemonic processes have contributed to the emergence of a common social and moral project that includes popular as well as elite notions of political culture, those in power are then able to rule through a combination of coercion and consent. . . . .

One can think of relevant examples of hegemonic processes and outcomes, as Staudt (1998) has shown, for example, the process of extending the nation-state form around the globe (through processes of dissemination, mimicry, and rebellion against external or internal colonialism), resulting in the present array of nation-states and emerging nation-states; the process of capitalist expansion into such areas as peasant subsistence and simple commodity production to overturn it in the interests of large-scale commercial agriculture; and the incorporation of other petty commodity producers and craftsmen indirectly into subcontracted workshops or directly into factories with an accompanying factory discipline: bosses, foremen, inflexible hours, fixed work routines, the exploitation by employers instead of self-exploitation (even piece-rate workers having, in contrast, the option of flexible work routines when employed by petty bourgeois brickmakers. And since there are more brickmakers needing laborers than piece-rate brickmakers, the piece rate remains relatively high).

Counterhegemony regarding the nation-state is the process of network-mediated migration into work types and job sites in a destination country where migrants are not citizens, crossing borders as undocumented workers (Staudt, 1998: 160; Wilson, 2002a), overstaying visas, and so on. Counterhegemony regarding the capitalist system is holding on to old and inventing new forms of petty commodity production (with a possible trajectory into petty bourgeoisie or being tamed into subcontracted labor), the establishment of informal workshops in which owners and workers earn by a non-exploitative piece rate and have relatively flexible work routines (though this too may be exploitative (cf. F. Wilson, 1991), informal services such as repairing or painting cars, selling prepared food from mobile carts or fixed stalls, home working, and so on—all involving self-exploitation and done sometimes (but not always) due to lack of qualifications to work in the formal sector, but even with qualifications, to avoid factory (or office) discipline (and, for women, to avoid as well the sexual harassment often confronted on these sites (Wilson, 2000]). Yet it is a counterhegemony, in the informal sector in general and of the brickmakers in particular, often by default rather than by design. And the search for independence some feel their work affords them is often programmed for failure (or other types of exploitation) because of what Kearney (2000: 259) calls "jujitsu forms of domination."

To quote Kearney (2000: 259–60) at length:

> The master of jujitsu waits for an opponent to strike and then deftly redirects the blow in order to trip or throw him. The modern martial art and sport of judo is based on jujitsu principles such that each opponent attempts to use his adversary's own strength and momentum against him. The analogy can be applied to the politics of cultural [or economic] domination. In contrast to the cultural dynamics of top-down domination, jujitsu forms of domination mobilize the active efforts and momentum of subjects in their own self-defense to bring them down and keep them down. The subalterns' own best efforts at self-defense and resistance [provide] the energy deployed in their subjugation.

If involvement in the informal sector can be seen as "self-defense" or "resistance" to capitalist discipline—as the comments of brickmakers (and garbage pickers) imply—then "jujitsu forms of domination" ensure that the products of their labor benefit the capitalist system both directly and indirectly.[1] As discussed earlier, their bricks, produced more cheaply by self- and family exploitation than they could be produced in factories, are a direct input into factory, office, bank, hotel, and shopping mall construction, built by capitalists (often employing informalized labor) and occupied, rented, bought, or financed by capitalist entrepreneurs. Bricks also are an input into self-built housing in squatter settlements where many of the formal-sector workers reside: as seen before, the self-built housing of these squatter settlement-based workers lowers pressures for a higher wage to cover the costs of prebuilt housing (Burgess, 1978; Connolly, 1982; Portes and Walton, 1981). In this latter case, the brickmakers' labor provides an indirect subsidy to capitalism.

There seems little counterhegemonic consciousness in the fact that brickmakers would most often prefer to be brickyard owners and hire in labor (or that garbage pickers with transportation buy gleaned goods from those without transportation at a lower cost than that for which they will resell them, although often for the sellers this is seen as a necessary and benevolent service). Rather, there is the understandable desire to become part of the system. Admittedly as well, some brickmakers have benefited from formal bureaucratic decisions. Some have manipulated the formal political system that recognized squatters' rights in the 1980s. At least six brickmaker families that acquired lots in Colonia Popular later (after the colonia was legally recognized, regularized, and extended electrical services) had sold them by the mid-1990s. All but one family used the money

earned to make a down payment on or to buy a brickyard. The other family already owned a brickyard. The CROC, to which many brickmakers belong, also has helped them find new lands on which to make and bake bricks and to buy new brickyards as the city expands.

There are at least three considerations, based on the study of brickmakers, that suggest that involvement in the informal sector is indeed not in itself a conscious counterhegemonic strategy. First, a number of brickmakers earn more than they could through formal-sector employment. Second, many brickmakers leave brickmaking when the opportunity is afforded them. Third, over the past ten years, the more successful brickmakers in Mexicali have regularized, or formalized, their microenterprises.

With regard to the first point, while some brickmakers prefer brickmaking over formal-sector proletarianization, due mainly to self-imposed rather than other-imposed discipline, others do not have the educational qualifications to land even a factory job requiring primary-school completion (see Introduction). Nor, despite the relative poverty of some brickmaker families, would they necessarily be better off in the formal sector. In 2003, in Mexicali, factory operatives earned 600 to 700 new pesos (sixty to seventy dollars) for a six-day week; piece-rate brickmakers earned 300 to 350 pesos for every 1,000 bricks made. Although some brickmakers can make up to 800 bricks during an eight-hour day, the normal output is about 500. Thus they would earn 300 to 350 pesos every two days (thirty to thirty-five dollars), or seventy-five dollars to $87.50 for a five-day week. They do not, however, receive side benefits such as enrollment in the Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social (IMSS), the Mexican Social Security-medical system. Nor can they work when it rains or when the market for bricks is slow, thus income is not steady. Baked bricks sold by the brickyard owner or renter in garnered 800 to 850 pesos per 1,000 (eighty to eighty-five dollars) in the summer months of 2003. As Ruth and Alfonso pointed out, the price depends on supply and demand: in the summer months (counted by the brickmakers as May through October), days are longer and the climate is drier, thus more bricks can be made, so the price for bricks is lower in the summer, than in the winter, with its shorter days and dampness that cause some unbaked bricks to disintegrate. Given the going summer prices in 2003, however, a brickmaker family, with one full-time worker and two part-time workers, who would produce 1,000 bricks a day in a five-day week, would earn between 150 to 175 dollars a week, or 600 to 700 dollars a month (not taking into account the extra three days needed to bake the bricks). The minimum wage in early

2003 was 41.5 pesos a day (INEGI, 2003d), or 249 pesos for a six-day week. A pieceworker on a brickyard earns, at a minimum, three times that amount, placing him or her among the 49.1 percent of the population in Mexico that earns two to five times the minimum wage (INEGI, 2003e). Thus there could also be a pecuniary motivation (coupled with greater freedom to work the hours and days one wishes) to avoid proletarianization in the formal sector.

On the other hand, and second, after reaching their late forties or early fifties, many brickmakers I interviewed had sought work in the formal sector, explained by one as the desire to work with *seguro* (the package of medical, housing, and pension benefits supplied to formal-sector employees). Of the thirty-two of thirty-six brickmakers I could locate or receive news of through relatives in 2003, only eight are still making bricks in Mexicali, while two are making bricks elsewhere (Tijuana and Guadalajara). One remains an absentee owner (he needs bricks for his construction business), and one has become an absentee owner while working elsewhere. Thus, in total, only twelve are still involved in some aspect of brickmaking. Of the four independent women workers, the first has died, the second works in a fish packaging plant, the third works in a factory, and the fourth, retired, is supported by a son. Three brickmaker heads of household are deceased: sons of only one of them continue brickmaking. Three have retired, of whom two are pensioned after having engaged in formal-sector work for at least ten years after leaving brickmaking: sons of two of them continue in the brickyards. Five are working in jobs that pay seguro, mainly as night watchmen in factory warehouses or as gardeners for a nearby tourist complex. Five work in the United States: four live there as well. One family is in northern California; two families are in the Lake Tahoe region of Nevada; one family is in Texas; and the one male head of household commutes to California and Arizona from Mexicali to work in the agricultural fields. One of the men working in the Lake Tahoe region plans to return to make bricks (see chapter 11). Thus fifteen of the thirty-two brickmakers opted out of brickmaking[2] (the four who are deceased—one woman and three men—had continued brickmaking throughout their lives).

With regard to the third point, it is recounted among brickmakers and ex-brickmakers that many of the more successful among them have *regularizado* (regularized, or formalized), a process that it is estimated began only six or seven years ago. Thus those "with some capital," as Alfonso puts it, pay seguro, both for their families and their workers, and have no compelling conscious reason to

remain "informals." So it can be posited that there are contradictions in counterhegemonic processes, just as there are in hegemonic ones.

The recognition of contestation, resistance, and even oppositional subcultures is apparent in applications of the concept of hegemony (e.g., Hall and Jefferson, 2000). Contradictions within hegemony are less theorized than perhaps they should be (but see Gramsci [1999: 172] on structural contradictions). In some ways the informal sector represents a contradiction (and-or a counterhegemonic tendency) within capitalism due to its lack of rationalization, lack of employer-imposed work discipline[3] in the case of garbage pickers, brickmakers, and some street vendors, and lack of drive toward profit making and reinvestment—yet people are making a living and sometimes moving forward, even becoming petty capitalists. As seen earlier, many have no consciousness of being counterhegemonic, and some, when capable, will find jobs in the formal sector and-or formalize their microenterprises.

Furthermore, as seen in chapter 2, the informal sector is subsumed by hegemonic capitalism. The informal sector subsidizes the formal, both directly and indirectly, making possible greater profits in the latter sector (e.g., Portes and Walton, 1981; Portes et al., 1989). Often "counterhegemonic" attempts at organization (whether to establish a squatter settlement or a pressure group within formal or informal channels) ultimately become co-opted by the clientelistic Mexican state (e.g., Cross, 1998a, 1998b; Foweraker and Craig, 1990; Staudt, 1998; Vélez-Ibañez, 1983). There is no reason to believe that this clientelism will change under President Fox: his presidency represents a regime change, but not a structural change, in the government.[4] Whether the informal sector (and its various heterogeneous parts) can be defined as "counterhegemonic" or is capable of becoming counterhegemonic in whole or in part is thus open to further developments within that sector and further research.

Generalizations about Petty Commodity Producers

What does the example of brickmakers teach us about understanding the dynamics of petty commodity producers in the informal sector? First, intragenerationally, petty commodity producers, despite their best efforts, often remain just that. Some may move into the ranks of petty capitalists, hiring in pieceworkers or wage laborers. A few of these may formalize their enterprises, paying taxes and fringe benefits for their workers; others will not, thus remaining

informals despite their petty capitalist status. Second, movement from pieceworker (or informalized wage laborer) to petty commodity producer to petty capitalist is based on endofamilial accumulation or self-exploitation and the exploitation of family labor and thus depends on the size and composition of the family labor force, with age and gender composition often playing central roles. Third, intergenerationally, among the offspring of both petty commodity producers and petty capitalists—whether informals or formalized—some will maintain the family enterprise, some will "bud off" to form similar enterprises that they themselves own and control, and still others will become proletarianized, whether in the informal or formal sector of the economy. Fourth, one of the primary reasons petty commodity producers cannot make the transition to petty capitalists is because the surplus value they generate is siphoned off by intermediaries, core capitalist enterprises, or the hegemonic capitalist system. Those who do make the transition often do so due to luck, not just agency, such as the luck of having many sons who agree to the neopatriarchal family bargain and contribute their unwaged, or subremunerated, labor to the family enterprise. In other forms of petty commodity production, such as the manufacture or decoration of clothing, the luck factor may depend on the contribution of daughters—the more daughters, the more luck—rather than of sons. Thus the internal composition and dynamics of the household often make for a successful movement into the petty capitalist class. This is perhaps what is meant by the oft-repeated adage—left unexplained—"family cooperation is the basis of capitalist cooperation" (Lenin, 1977: 110).

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CHAPTER 11

"Don Rafael's Desire"

Lake Tahoe, Nevada, August 2003

My father was a ladrillero. I began making bricks with him in 1951, when I was seven years old. I only went to school for one year. My father said to me, keep studying son, but I wanted to help him in his work. We lived in San José de Gracía, Jalisco, and went from rancho to rancho to make bricks. Our patrón would make a deal with someone who wanted bricks to build his house to make him so many on his construction site. And we would mold them and fire them there. We also made adobe. We did that in the dry season. In the wet season, my father and brothers and I worked in the fields.

We were very poor. Very poor. One day we went to work making bricks and my father had only six tortillas for us both. My father said he wasn't hungry and gave all of them to me. Because I was a growing boy and always hungry. I'll always remember that he gave me his share of the tortillas. Tortillas with salt and a slice of chile. We were often hungry, especially when there was no work. What we earned one day we'd spend on food the next. Once we went to a rancho to try to find work, and we wanted to buy some tortillas with the few coins we had. But we couldn't find a family who would sell us any—they only had enough for themselves. Everyone was poor on that rancho. So we went back to San José de Gracía.

On one of the ranchos where we made bricks—Ojo de Agua—I met the woman who was to be my wife. After we married, the children started coming, and I had to look further away to find enough work. I came to Mexicali to pick cotton, and from there I crossed with a friend to Bakersfield, California. I worked irrigating the fields there and sometimes in San Jose, California, irrigating the alfalfa, cotton, wheat. I first went when I was twenty-seven, after two of my children

were born. I crossed five times, the last time in 1977, I believe that was the year, and stayed five, six months each time. When I returned to San José de Gracía, I made bricks for a patrón. All my brothers knew how to make bricks. It was the only work around, besides working in the fields. We learned brickmaking from my father, all of us did.

I was forty when we moved to Mexicali. All of my ten children had been born. The youngest was a year old when we arrived. My eldest son, Raúl, was fifteen. At first we lived with a friend I had made in Bakersfield, but he and I began fighting, so I had to look for another place to live. I joined with a group—there were about twenty of us—who invaded some land to set up brickyards. We each were paying off our brickyards in monthly installments. It was in the brickyard complex that used to be near where . . . [Colonia Nueva Estancia] grew up.

Eventually the government made us move to a new brickyard complex, over there where my son Raúl's house is. We got a brickyard there. It cost me 5,000 pesos, and a few years later I sold it for 30,000 pesos and bought another brickyard in the same area but further out. Meanwhile, we had got a lot in . . . [Colonia Popular], and we were able to pay it off and begin constructing, about seven years ago, the brick house that's on it now.

My sons and daughters all know how to make bricks. And all of them helped me on the brickyard. Making bricks seems like a very healthy kind of work. In spite of my age, I still have the strength for brickmaking. I've seldom ever been sick in my life. I'm fifty-nine now and have almost never even had a cold. There is an eighty-five-year-old brickmaker out on the new complex. He still makes bricks, comes to the brickyard on his bicycle.

My eldest daughter married a man who got amnesty in the 1980s for working in the fields in California. His family was originally from the same region in Jalisco we were from, but they had lived in Mexicali at least forty years. They live in Fresno, California. First he became a U.S. citizen, then my daughter did. Then she arranged papers for me and my wife. We got them in March 2002.

My eldest son, Raúl, had crossed to work, first in Los Angeles in 1989, the second time six years ago to Lake Tahoe. He jumped the fence each time, just like I did when I went to Bakersfield. The last time he crossed it was because we had bad rains that year, and all the bricks he had made, 30,000 or more, were destroyed. The family patrimony, he called them. He called some of his cousins from Jalisco who were there, and left for Lake Tahoe the week afterwards. He got good work in maintenance at a local hotel where my wife's brother's

son was employed. After a few years they made Raúl supervisor. He said there was work for me, if I wanted to come. And as soon as my wife and I got papers, about a year and a half ago, we came up here. I wanted to earn money to expand the brickworks—hire in some workers, maybe buy a flatbed truck. I saved up $6,000 last year, then Raúl had an accident. He fell off a roof at the hotel and injured his back. Luckily, the hotel is paying most of the medical expenses. They treat me well at the hotel, give me boots and a jacket to work in during the winter. But then my son, Adrian, wanted to come up here with his wife—they're living with my wife and I now—and that cost 5,000 dollars for the coyote. Adrian is working two jobs now, one at maintenance in the same hotel as me, one in a restaurant in a casino—to pay me back. I mow the lawns, cut back the trees, trim the flowers, sweep the entry road in the summer, shovel snow in the winter. Adrian works with me, doing the same. Raúl did the outside and inside maintenance, painting walls, laying tile, doing repairs. He was foreman over about five other men. I don't mind the work, it is out of doors. But I don't decide my routine, as I did on the brickyard.

I'll stay here until Raúl is operated on. I want him to be all right, and able to work again, before I go. But after Adrian pays me back, I want to return to Mexicali. I like it there. When I go, I plan to make bricks again. But with maquileros this time, with luck. I like making bricks. No one tells you what to do, and one works at the pace one likes.

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Epilogue

Outside of every city in Mexico one can find one or more brickyard complexes, where bricks are made and many brickmakers live. On the periphery of both San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, and Rosarito, Baja California, for example, are entire colonias made up of brickmakers. On some ranchos (unincorporated rural settlements) and ejidos (communally owned but usually individually tenured agricultural communities), especially those where remittances from international wage labor migration go into building houses (and also schools, churches, community centers, barns, etc.), there are also brickmakers. These latter tend to be among the landless agricultural laborers or sub-subsistence peasants who make bricks outside of the peak agricultural seasons, or whose agricultural wage labor has been reduced or eliminated due to the introduction of farm machinery. But most brickmakers are found on the peripheries of growing cities. Only the better-off brickmakers who own their own brickyards have houses made of brick. The poorer brickmakers must sell all they produce, and renters in, if they live on the brickyard, have little incentive to build a brick house on land they may have to vacate. Even those who have acquired a lot in a colonia can seldom afford to consume their products for their own use, however. They tend to live in houses built of scrap wood or adobe.

Brickmaking, as a "microenterprise" found in the informal sector in general, is a creative, agency-driven, yet fueled by necessity, alternative to unemployment or underemployment among the reserve army of the landless or near-landless labor force that has increasingly vacated the countryside. Internal migration has taken place rapidly. In 1970, 36.9 percent of the Mexican population lived in urban areas, with more than 15,000 inhabitants; in 1990, that figure had risen to 57.5 percent of the population, and in 2000 to 61 percent. If "semi-urban" population centers of more than 2,500 people are added in, then in 1970, 58.9 percent of the population was non-

rural, in 1990, 71.4 percent was nonrural, and in 2000, 74.1 percent was nonrural (INEGI, 2003a). As cities grow, the need for bricks expands for everything from construction of individual housing to construction of commercial centers and industrial parks, as well as schools, hospitals, and places of worship. Mexicali's population has grown from 510,664 in 1980 to 601,938 in 1990 to 764,602 in 2000 (INEGI, 1983, 2003b, 2003c). Demand for bricks is thus present. The new urban population needs housing, and no matter how humble their housing may be in the beginning, most people will eventually upgrade to brick or cement block.

The supply of brickmakers, in the form of the unemployed, is also found among the massive numbers of rural to urban migrants and their children. The "quasi-privatization" of the ejido due to the 1992 changes in the Mexican constitution has accelerated proletarianization in the countryside (Gates, 1996: 55, 58) and fed into internal (as well as international) migration. Mexico's opening of the economy due to neoliberal policies imposed by creditors after the 1982 crisis, and formalized by Mexico's entry into GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in 1986 and into the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) in 1994, has led to the establishment of capital-intensive rather than labor-intensive industry, less able to promise employment to the urban labor force (Heath, 1998). Besides capital-intensive industry replacing labor-intensive industry, high-tech manufacuturing has marginalized the less-skilled workers. Additionally, the search for lower labor costs has led to the informalization of labor employed by "formal" firms, primarily through subcontracting arrangements and the employment of home workers (outworkers working at a piece rate) (Carr and Chen, 2002). Furthermore, the Mexican population pyramid is such that ever more men and women enter the labor force each year. As Cockcroft (1998: 166) recounts: "More than a million new jobs a year had to be created in the crisis year of 1995, a year when nearly two million Mexicans were thrown out of work." In that year, when the peso was devalued to approximately one-third of its early 1994 value, "Estimates of those living off the underground or informal" economy ranged up to 70 percent of the population, and the number of those reduced to poverty reached an estimated 80 percent (Cockcroft, 1998: 166). Recently, there are more conservative estimates of the size of the informal sector in Mexico. For example, Pastor and Wise (1998: 59) report: "It is now estimated that between 25 and 40 percent of the country's economically active population of 24.1 million has sought refuge in the informal economy." However, an ILO (2002: 36) paper

estimates that 64 percent of total employment in Mexico was in the informal sector, of which 45 percent was nonagricultural and 19 percent was informalized labor in agriculture. In March 2003, the percent of workers employed in urban-based jobs without the benefits that legally must be paid by formal-sector employers was 49.3 for Mexico as a whole and 39.2 for Mexicali (INEGI, 2003f, 2003g). Such lack of benefits may be a proxy for informality. The lower average for Mexicali is due both to the existence of maquiladoras there as well as employment in government services. A study funded by the World Bank estimates that in 1999–2000, 30.1 percent of Mexico's GNP (Gross National Product) was generated in the informal economy (Schneider, 2002, Table 4, p. 11). Despite (or perhaps because of) the increase in informal-sector employment, self-built, or semi-self-built housing, utilizing bricks has continued and expanded, despite the fact that the establishment of colonias populares has not been an option in Baja California since the PAN (Partido Acción Nacional) took over the governorship of the state in 1992. Instead, housing is provided through fraccionamientos, offering lots with sites and services provided but predicated on self-built housing. Payments for the lots are based on income and are the contemporary refuge of the better off among the poor.

Most brickmakers in Mexicali enter the niche through network mediation. One pieceworker will introduce another prospective pieceworker to a brickyard owner-renter in. Brickyard owners or renters in will employ newly arrived or unemployed relatives, training them in brickmaking skills that they may come to use on their own brickyards. Several learned their skills in their states of origin—Sinaloa, Jalisco, Zacatecas, Guerrerro—and needed no apprenticeship in Mexicali. Rather, they trained other family members, whether cousins, siblings, or children. Along with the brickmakers' endogamous tendencies, network mediation implies that strong ties between brickmakers can be the basis of cooperative and organized efforts. This is considered in recent ILO publications (Bangasser, 2000; ILO, 2001; Motala, 2002; Goldman, 2003) to be one means for ameliorating exploitation and gaining concessions from governmental bureaucracies. Bangasser (2000: 22) recounts an interdepartmental project sponsored by the ILO, the objectives of which were to "(a) improve the productivity of informal sector activities, (b) to extend to informal sector producers and workers basic social protections incorporated into certain fundamental international labour standards, and (c) to promote and strengthen informal sector organisations and institutions for collective action." Looking at street ven-

dors in South Africa, Motala (2002: 44–45) underscores the value of local organizations in lobbying for concessions and favorable policy decisions on the part of local governments. Drawbacks to organizational efforts are difficulties collecting fees and the need to allocate scarce time to "organizational work" (Motala, 2002: 46, 49). Collective action "to promote the integration of informal sector workers and entrepreneurs into social dialogue and representative organizations" has become a policy goal of ILO-PREALC (ILO, 2001: 10), giving them some overlap with those Marxists and neo-Marxists who view collective organizing as valuable in bringing about change.

The brickmakers, over the last three decades, have strengthened their organization. Diego, married to a cousin of Alfonso's and Alfonso, both ex-secretaries of the brickmakers' section of the CROC, related to me in 2003 the following history of organization: In the 1960s and 1970s, a minority of brickmakers belonged to the CNOP (Confedración Nacional de Organizaciones Populares, National Confederation of Popular Organizations). Characterized as middle class in orientation and composed primarily of teachers, other professionals, private farmers, and small merchants and industrialists, as well as being one of the three sectors under the control of the PRI (see Hansen, 1971: 103–104; Hamilton, 1982: 35), it did little for the less well off, the majority of brickmakers. When in 1976 the local government demanded that the brickmakers pay Social Security (seguro) benefits for their workers, some of the brickmakers turned to the CROC to plead their case to the government. The union's secretary-general argued for them that the work of brickmaking was unstable and seasonal: bricks could not be made when it rained, for example. Thus it would be difficult for the patrón-employer to pay seguro whether for himself and his family or for his workers. Furthermore, the CROC supported the brickmakers' struggle to be able to transport their own bricks within the city limits—a demand contested by a local union of transport workers but, with the aid of the CROC, eventually ceded. Those brickmakers who owned flatbed trucks were especially prone to, and perhaps pressured into, joining the CROC. One can see the CROC logo on almost all flatbed trucks transporting bricks. This has been so since I interviewed the brickmakers in the early 1990s. Over the past ten years, more and more brickmakers have joined the CROC, according to Diego, who remains active in the union, one of the changes over the past decade.

A number of other changes in the daily work practices of brickmakers had taken place by 2003, ten to eleven years after I conducted the first interviews and made my first observations. First, fewer

brickmakers, as an inspection of the brickyard complex shows, live on their own brickyards. Most, as Ruth and Alfonso pointed out to me, now commuted to work. Even the poorest had a lot in a colonia, or they rented or "borrowed" a house. Notably, people prefer to "lend" their houses rather than to leave them empty, fearing robbery and-or vandalism if they are left unoccupied. Among the poorest, Diego now rents a house for thirty dollars a month from one of his daughters' fathers-in-law. While pensioned—having worked a minimum total of ten years with seguro—he continues to work as a night watchman. Guadalupe and her son and daughter-in-law live in a borrowed house. Two of the three families I originally interviewed on the brickyards now have their own house lots. On the other hand, one of Guadalupe's sons who once had a lot in Colonia Popular lives on his brickyard, as does one of her daughters and a son-in-law.

Second, there have been technological changes, though technology has remained rudimentary. Instead of carrying water in buckets from the canals and filling a *tambo* (barrel) with it to have it on hand to mix the clay, wells are dug or water is taken from the irrigation canals with the aid of a gasoline pump and thick (two to three inches in diameter) hoses. Furthermore, many brickmakers no longer dig the clay with picks and shovels but pay 300 to 400 pesos ($30 to $40) an hour for the use of an excavating machine, which digs up the clay and deposits it in mounds on the brickyard. Third, wooden pallets discarded by the factories as well as dried slabs of manure mixed with straw have become the exclusive fuel for the brick ovens. Notably, all of these changes require a higher investment than previously.

Fourth, a growing proportion of brickmakers, according to Diego (who remains in the CROC) and Alfonso, now belongs to the union. And the more successful brickmakers, like Fernando, are beginning to "regularize" (formalize) the status of their microenterprises, paying taxes and seguro for themselves and their workers. One motivation for "formalizing" is that large constructors want an official receipt for the bricks they buy, a receipt that can only be supplied if one is paying taxes through the Hacienda, the tax department. People building houses in colonias populares or fraccionaminetos, on the other hand, do not usually request such reciepts. The cost of formalization, in Fernando's case, with his ten pieceworkers and a larger enterprise than most, became lower than its benefits. Many others, one can say the majority of the approximately 100 brickmaker heads of household in Mexicali,[1] remain informalized, however.

In conclusion, it can be said that in spite of the"capitalist populist" cost-benefit aspect of brickmaking and microenterprises in the

informal sector in general, neo-Marxist and world systems perspectives best elucidate the structural position of the brickmakers (and garbage pickers). Despite not being subjected to discipline by a boss, they provide a direct subsidy to capitalist enterprise and an indirect subsidy to the hegemonic capitalist system. The direct subsidy rests on the fact that the products of their labor (bricks) are used in the construction of commercial and industrial parks and structures and are acquired at a cost lower than could be produced by a formal-sector firm operating according to profit-making principles. The indirect subsidy comes from the use of bricks in self-built or semi-self-built housing: as argued previously, such housing lowers the pressure for a higher wage among the formal-sector workers who build and occupy them. Their structural subordination, recognized in the exigencies of their daily lives, does not keep them from organizing on their own behalf and most probably has promoted such organization.

The subsidy to the overarching capitalist system rests on self-exploitation and the exploitation of a family labor force—a characteristic shared with the peasants and small farmers who produced cheap food for urban workers. Success in moving from pieceworker to renter in to brickyard owner rests on a Chayanovian dynamic involving producer-consumer ratios: as dependent children become old enough to aid in brickmaking (thus also freeing the wife to take part in brickmaking more often as well), more bricks are produced, and more income is earned. The recycling activities of garbage pickers follow the same Chayanovian logic. The neopatriarchal organization of the brickmaker households is the foundation for utilizing the labor of wives and children and shows one of the many possible intersections of systems of male domination and capital accumulation by capitalist enterprises. That there will be a differentiation among the brickmakers, with some dropping out and into other kinds of informal- or formal-sector work and others expanding their piece-work labor force and brickyard ownership, and perhaps becoming formalized, is not in doubt. Nor is it in doubt that while urbanization and population growth increase, there will be a demand for bricks, often made by families living in dire circumstances, without electricity or running water, on brickyards on the periphery of Mexican cities, or in the squatter settlements-colonias populares as owners, renters, or borrowers of houses while commuting to the brickyards.

Plates 20 and 21. The new technology on the brickyards: a gasoline pump above; an earth excavated by an excavating machine below.

Plates 22 and 23. The most common fuel used for the brick ovens in 2003: wooden pallets discarded by factories, above; slabs of manure and straw, below.

APPENDIX

Scott Cook and I: Ambiguity and Ambivalence in Approaches to Brickmaking

My theoretical approach to the brickmakers, by incorporating informal-sector analysis, differs from that of Scott Cook's. Cook has extensively researched the handmade brick industry both in the Oaxaca Valley and on the Texas–Mexican border (e.g., Cook, 1984a, 1984b, 1984c, 1998, 2001; Cook and Binford, 1986, 1990). Cook's (see especially Cook, 1976; Cook and Binford, 1986) theoretical insights are embedded in the Lenin versus Chayanov debates on the situation and future of the peasant petty, simple, or small commodity producers—debates that reached recent apogee in academic forums such as *The Journal of Peasant Studies* in the 1970s and 1980s concerning both peasants and craft workers (e.g., Bernstein, 1979; Chevalier, 1984; Cook, 1976, 1984b; Deere and de Janvry, 1981; Ennew et al., 1977; Friedmann 1978, 1980; Harrison, 1975; Littlefield, 1979; Smith, 1984; Shanin, 1973). The most succinct summary of the differences between Lenin and Chayanov is provided by Deere and de Janvry (1981) and is endorsed by Cook and Binford (1990: footnote 2: 264).

> For Lenin, inequality in the concentration of the means of production among Russian peasants at the turn of the century was evidence of capitalist class formation. Social differentiation increasingly forced the mass of direct producers into selling their labor power whereas a minority was able to capitalize the productive process on the basis of its use of wage labor. In contrast, for Chayanov, inequality in farm size and in the distribution of income among Russian peasant households was explained by demographic differentiation. Over the family life cycle, increasing family size spurred the acquisition of additional land and other means of production. Inequality in farm size reflected a purely demographic process of household evolution over time which was repeated in a stable fashion from generation to generation. (Deere and de Janvry, 1981: 335)

Both Lenin and Chayanov had different political projects (Cook, 1976; Deere and de Janvrye, 1981: 336), and many scholars felt the necessity to embrace one or the other, sometimes without giving credit to the opposition for contributions made to theorizing the peasantry and-or petty commodity producers.

Concomitantly with the aforementioned Lenin versus Chayanov debate of the 1970s and 1980s, some scholars began comparing the "petty commodity production" and the "informal sector" approaches as to which lent greater explanatory value to clusters of urban economic activities in developing countries (e.g., Basok, 1989; Moser, 1978). One scholar proposed seeing these economic phenomena as the recomposition of a "peasant mode of production" in cities (McGee, 1973). Definitions of simple commodity production facilitated this identification, as many small, informal-sector enterprises never cross the line to profit-making, wage-labor-hiring concerns. For example, Bernstein (1979: 425) defines simple commodity production as "a form of production, the 'logic' of which is subsistence in the broad sense, of the simple reproduction of the producers and the unit of production (descriptively, the household), which includes its dependent members (both young and aged) but also provides a replacement fund to acquire those means of production consumed in the production process." According to Bernstein (1979: 425; see also Cook, 1976: 400), "the cycle of simple commodity production can be summarized, following Marx, as C-M-C (commodities-money-commodities)—unlike the capitalist circuit of M-C-M (money-commodities-money)." In Cook's (1976: 400) words, "simple commodity production is usually engaged in by independent producers who do not employ wage labor and who 'sell in order to buy.'"[1]

Notably, the subsumption analysis offered by Chevalier (1984) shows the similarities between some informal-sector enterprises and petty commodity producers, even though Chevalier was only discussing the latter:

> The formal domination of labour by capital can occur without the legal sale of the worker's labour-power to capital; more precisely, the labour-power of a self-employed labourer can be commodified and effectively exploited if it is subjected, through the purchase of his means of (personal and productive) consumption and the sale of his produce and/or a fraction of his labour-power, to the predatory forces of a capital dominated market. . . . The labour-power of this not-so-independent producer may never enter the sphere of legal circulation and yet be economically "purchased" by capital. This occurs whenever it becomes a calculable ingredient which enters into the products that are purchased by capital either directly, as part of its own costs of production, or indirectly, as part of the consumption of wage labourers." (Chevalier, 1984: 164)

Cook (cf. Cook and Binford, 1990: 29; Cook, 1998: 281) rejects the subsumptionist approach (part and parcel, as seen in chapter 3, of the Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches to the informal sector) on the grounds that it

"ignores factors which influence petty production from the supply side" (Cook and Binford, 1990: 29), and because it tends "to downplay endogenous processes of capital accumulation" (Cook, 1998: 281; see also Cook, 1984: 14). Cook (1984b: 29; see also Cook and Binford, 1990: 4) admits that endofamilial accumulation—the surplus accruing to what I call self- and family labor exploitation—does not, in most cases, push the simple commodity producer over the edge into petty capitalist status. Yet it may happen.

There are alternatives to reinvestment in the enterprise, however, even when high indices of endofamilial accumulation occur, when a surplus is produced. Five possibilities exist for the disbursement of such potential or actual surplus.

First, following Chayanovian insights, the petty commodity producer and his or her family may opt for less drudgery and more leisure time and thus not engage in expanded output, even though the consumer-worker ratio decreases over the family's life cycle. Cook (1998: 160, 234–37) found this dynamic among pieceworkers in the brickyards on the Texas–Mexican border: increased incentives did not always result in increased output, due partially to physical limitations (Cook, 1998: 236), that is, overwhelming drudgery. I also found this leisure preference among the garbage pickers in Mexicali.

Second, like the pieceworkers in the handmade brick industry (Cook, 1998: 236), the simple commodity producing household or even petty capitalist household (hiring pieceworkers) may have a target income and greater output deemed unreasonable after this target is reached As Cook (1998: 237) points out for the piece-rate brickmakers along the Texas–Mexican border, "Brickmakers are a mixed bag: Some respond to imposed piece-rate incentive schemes and work longer and harder to produce and earn more, while others march to the beat of their own drum in the form of a targeted income or package of wage goods together with a penchant for leisure." There is no reason to believe that such an array of work alternatives is not available to the simply commodity producers.

Third, surplus gained by the petty commodity enterprise may be used for expanded consumption which Cook's (1984a: 111) work shows. Cook's (1984a: 40; 1984c: 69; Cook and Binford, 1986: 21; Cook and Binford, 1990: 142) analysis of brickmaking in Oaxaca stressed that it was the pieceworker and his family who lived on the brickyards; in Mexicali, although this occurred among recent arrivals at times, most brickmaker renters in or owners and their families lived on the brickyards in circumstances of direst poverty at some point after stopping piecework. Whatever surplus is accumulated might be, and was, for the majority of workers I interviewed who lived in the colonia, used to acquire a lot in a *colonia popular* (paid for in installments over a five-year period, which was possible until 1992[2]), to obtain electricity and potable water (also paid for in installments), to build a house, to buy a refrigerator, a gas stove, a television, furniture, and even a car or pickup truck (the latter which might be used in the business of hauling bricks) but also school supplies for children and food, such as meat, often

missing from the family's diet. Thus over the years, any surplus may be consumed through raising the general welfare level-standard of living of the family.

Fourth, family size and-or composition may simply not be adequate for endofamilial accumulation to occur to a sufficient extent to move beyond simple reproduction with or without expanded consumption.

Fifth, and finally, the surplus may indeed be reinvested in the brickyard or in expanding its production by contracting piece-rate laborers in the hopes of further augmenting the family's standard of living. It may be used by the renter in to acquire full ownership of a brickyard and ultimately to enter the ranks of the petty capitalist industry. As Cook (1984a: 171) points out, there may be different agendas within the family unit: the male head of household may wish to invest money earned in acquiring a brickyard or expanding production; his wife may prefer investing in a house. Sometimes both aims may be included in the family's plans. Notably, it is this fifth option that Cook focuses his attention upon, even though it is one of many options and outcomes, and even though he admits that fewer and fewer brickmaker households are following a trajectory that will lead to petty capitalist concerns (Cook, 1984c: 74; Cook and Binford, 1990: 137–38).

There are external reasons as well for endofamilial accumulation not to tip the enterprise from petty commodity production to petty capitalist production. First, the rising cost of the means of production (and capital concentration in the hands of established producers) precludes the movement from pieceworker to brickyard owner (cf. Cook and Binford, 1990: 138). Second, as the earlier quote from Chevalier shows, and as Cook seems to deny, the surplus labor product may be siphoned off by capitalist enterprises or by the wider capitalist system. Interestingly, however, in his analysis of the Mexican handmade brick industry on the Texas–Mexican border, Cook (1998: 200) does see intermediaries as siphoning off a portion of the surplus value. Nonetheless, as Cook's (1984a, 1998) and my data show, in some cases petty commodity producer brickmakers may become petty capitalists—and, beyond becoming petty capitalists, they may move to formalize their enterprises in the sense of paying taxes and seguro (Social Security benefits) for their workers.

Although I do not endorse the Chayanovian approach in its entirety, I do not feel, as does Cook (Cook and Binford, 1990: 115), that his consumer-worker theory must be abandoned, though it must be modified in the direction of accepting Lenin's social differentiation insights. Chayanov's (1986) contribution is to point out the deployment of labor within the petty commodity producer household over its life cycle, and how this can indeed lead to what Cook (1984a: 199–200; 1984b: 27–30), as discussed in chapter 3, has called "endofamilial accumulation," as consumer-worker ratios decrease. The weakness of the Chayanovian approach has been widely explored (see, for example, the articles cited in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*), and I will not review those analyses here, except to say, along with Cook (e.g., 1976),

that he mistakenly was unable to contemplate the emergence of petty capitalists through the same consumer-worker dynamics.

As discussed in more general terms earlier, brickmaker families may often be seen as going through the household life cycle changes in tandem with economic changes, as outlined by Chayanov (1986; see also Deere and de Janvry, 1981: 339–41). I here rewrite Chayanov's consumer-worker dynamic to fit the brickmaker data using insights, but departing, from Cook's works. In the first stage the family is composed of children too young to engage in brickmaking. The male household head, with the intermittent aid of his wife (burdened by child-care activities), must engage in the utmost self-exploitation to meet the basic consumption goals of the household, often nearing the survival minimum. In the second stage, older children become involved in the brickmaking process (often from age ten or eleven). Output increases, endofamilial accumulation (Cook's term) becomes a possibility, as does expanded consumption, and-or self-exploitation by the head of household and spouse decreases. All of these things may happen concomitantly, with different stresses in different production cycles or over the years. In the third state, some children marry and may leave the family enterprise to begin one of their own, thus leading to the phenomenon of the "budding off" of brickyards; or, they may become wage laborers in other portions of the informal or formal sectors or piece-rate workers on their fathers' brickyards. Younger children take their place in the family brickyard; consumer-worker ratios are at their lowest, and endofamilial accumulation is at its highest. It is usually in the second and third stages that the brickmaker head of household can move from renter in to proprietor and in either category can begin to hire in piece-rate workers, thus becoming a petty capitalist. This parallels Lenin's (1977: 110, 141) untheorized observation that peasants (or simple commodity producers of the "industrial" type) with the most family labor power are often those who hire the most workers. In the fourth stage, all or most of the offspring have stopped lending their labor to the family enterprise, though some of the pieceworkers—on which the enterprise is now almost wholly dependent—may consist of offspring and their spouses. In some cases, at this stage, brickmaking is abandoned for less physically demanding pursuits that included, in my Mexicali sample, watchmen for warehouses, ambulant vendors, and occasionally garbage pickers.[3] Thus as Lenin (1977: Ch. 6) pointed out, small commodity producers may become proletarianized or may become small capitalists.

Cook (1998: 281) criticizes the subsumptionist thesis because it ignores "internal variation" and, by implication, the agency of the subsumed. Lack of agency is obviously not the case among those brickmakers (with the help of their families, i.e., endofamilial accumulation dependent on consumer-worker ratios) who describe a pieceworker to renter in to ownership trajectory, even if they never cross the line to petty capitalists (which only some do). But it remains the case that the external system siphons off part of the family-produced and-or pieceworker-produced surplus value. This is the pri-

mary reason, I would argue, attaining the status of petty capitalist producer is so difficult.

Cook (1998: 281) adopts, at least for his Texas–Mexican border study, a flexible-accumulationist approach, resting in part on David Harvey's discussion of that phenomenon in The Condition of Postmodernity. A portion of Harvey's (1990: 152) analysis follows:

> Organized sub-contracting . . . opens up opportunities for small business formation, and in some instances permits older systems of domestic, artisanal, familial (patriarchal) and paternalistic ("godfather," "guv'nor," or even Mafia-like) labour systems to revive and flourish as centre pieces rather than as appendages of the production system. The revival of "sweatshop" forms of production in cities such as New York and Los Angeles, Paris and London, became a matter for commentary in the mid-1970s, and has proliferated rather than shrunk during the 1980s. The rapid growth of "black," "informal," or "underground" economies has also been documented throughout the advanced capitalist world, leading some to suggest that there is a growing convergence between "third world" and advanced capitalist labour systems.

Subcontracting and sweatshops would be considered indices of informalization by many scholars (e.g., Portes and Sassen-Kooeb, 1987; Sassen, 1990, 1991), and all three forms elucidated by Harvey can be classified as part of the informal economy. It is possible to distinguish, analytically, between informalization as opposed to the informal sector, though they are interconnected, intermeshed, and interpenetrating aspects of the informal economy. These two concepts are distinguishable along a number of axes. First, informalization is linked to globalization and international competition that propel the search for low-waged labor and the evasion of the legislated social wage. The informal sector is linked to the existence of vast labor reserves and chronic unemployment or underemployment. Second, informalization is directly related to formal-sector firms' drive for higher profits by lowering the costs of labor and shelling off a permanent labor force to which they would owe more responsibility than in the case of temporary, part-time, or otherwise casualized workers. Informal-sector "semienterprises" or "microenterprises" (or petty commerce and petty industries) and self-employment are related to the survival strategies of the poor and often migrant population (though sometimes those involved in the informal sector are neither poor nor migrants). Third, concerning labor relations, informalization involves the utilization of laborers at costs below those associated with employing full-time workers while extending these workers the benefits due them because of existing labor legislation. Informal-sector enterprises are characterized by (1) self-exploitation, the owner also being a producer; (2) the use of unpaid family labor, and sometimes (3) the use of informalized workers (see also Wilson, 2004: 282–83). Notably, the infor-

malization literature is concerned primarily with labor relations (e.g., Bromley and Gerry, 1979; ILO, 2003; Portes et al., 1989; Portes and Sassen-Koob, 1987; Sassen, 1990; Tabak and Crichlow, 2000), whereas the informal-sector literature is concerned primarily with microenterprise characteristics and the self-employed, that is, petty commodity producers and incipient petty capitalists (e.g., Bangasser, 2000; Hart, 1973; ILO, 1972; de Soto, 1989; Smith, 1990; Tokman, 1992). In sum, Cook's flexible-accumulation approach is quite understandable in terms of informal economy = informalization + informal sector.

Apart from our theoretical differences, the major one being that I endorse the concept of an informal sector/informal economy and Cook, following his reading of Lenin, does not (for both everything is a form of capitalism or rapidly becoming so), there were also some technical and social differences among the brickmakers Cook studied in Oaxaca and along the border and those I interviewed and observed in Mexicali.

With regard to technological and work process differences, there are at least six. First, there is no buying of earth to make bricks (Cook, 1984a: 18, 52) in Mexicali; rather, it is extracted from the brickyard. Second, rather than sawdust being mixed with the clay to achieve the correct consistency for molding (Cook, 1984a: 66), estiercol (a mixture of manure and straw) was and is mixed with the clay. Third, there are no permanent kilns on the Mexicali brickyards as there are in Santa Lucia, Oaxaca (Cook, 1984a: 92–93, 119); rather, each brickmaker built a brick kiln each time the bricks were to be fired, composed of the bricks to be fired.[4] Fourth, because brick ovens were temporary structures, they were built close to the patio where bricks were stacked to dry and did not have to be transported to a permanent kiln as in Oaxaca (Cook, 1984a: 119). This was true until the transition period, when the old brickyard complex was being closed down due to colonia development, and a new brickyard complex was established. Due to the establishment of new colonias, and the pollution caused by firing bricks, brickmakers on the old brickyard complex were prohibited from firing kilns. They thus either had to transport them to the new brickyard to which they had been assigned in the new complex, where they were fired, or they sold them, unfired, to other brickmakers already established in the new complex. This was, however, a temporary situation for most brickmakers. Fifth, concerning the "lubricants" used in molding, most bricks in Mexicali were "water struck," while those in Oaxaca appear to have been "sand struck" (cf. Gurcke, 1987: 15–16).

Sixth, by the late 1980s, tires were no longer used as fuel on the Mexicali brickyards due to government decrees against air pollution; meanwhile, mesquite supplies had almost been exhausted. Wooden pallets, acquired from the many maquiladoras at a low price, and dried bricks of manure were the fuel of choice by 2003. Sawdust, unlike in the Oaxaca Valley (Cook, 1984a: 97), to my knowledge, was never used. Seventh, because the kilns built were of a different type than those in the Oaxaca Valley, outside stokers were not always used (though they were sometimes, due to the drudgery

of the work that lasted thirty-eight to seventy-two hours continuously). Fuel was fed into the kiln over two or three days' time (depending on its size) by the brickyard operator with the help of family labor or the labor of one or more of the pieceworkers—who would be paid a wage for this work. Eighth, there were no brick sheds in which to store bricks on the Mexicali brickyards. When it rained, unfired bricks were covered with plastic sheets.

Socioeconomic differences also existed between the brickmakers in Cook's and my studies. First, there was no involvement of brickmakers in agricultural pursuits as there was in Oaxaca (Cook, 1984a: 156 *et passim*), thus brickmakers were "artisans," not "peasant artisans." Second, at the time of the original study in 1991–1992, not only the *maquileros* (piece-rate workers: Cook's *mileros*) or even mainly these workers lived or had lived on the brickyards with their families, as in Oaxaca (Cook, 1984a: 40; Cook and Binford, 1990: 141–42); rather, the brickyard owners and renters in most typically lived on their brickyards, at least initially. Only at a certain level of production, which permitted a brickmaker family to acquire a lot in a new colonia and slowly build a house on it, would it be possible for one of their pieceworkers (or, alternatively, recently married sons who worked as maquileros on their fathers' brickyards) to take their place living on the unserviced brickyards.

Third, there was a budding off of new brickyard operators as sons matured and married. Although for the first years of marriage they might work as maquileros on fathers' or brothers' brickyards, many eventually rented in their own brickyards. From there they might follow the trajectory of renters in (employing pieceworkers or not) to owners employing laborers. This budding off does not seem to have occurred in the Oaxaca Valley, or at least it was not mentioned. Fourth, in Mexicali, there were two female brickyard owners, a phenomenon absent in the Oaxaca Valley in the mid-1970s to early 1980s, and also a female pieceworker (as in Oaxaca). Women contributed to the same or greater extent than was common in Oaxaca (Cook, 1984a: 71–73, 167–70). One brickyard owner, however, refused to let his daughters dig or mix clay, in the belief that it would have a negative effect on their reproductive organs. Others did allow daughters and wives to do so. Fifth, unlike the brickmakers of the Oaxaca Valley (Cook, 1984a: 166), bank loans were not considered an option and probably would not be extended to the vast majority of Mexicali brickmakers, perhaps due to the lack of agricultural lands to secure the loans.

Sixth, and lastly, although brickmakers in the Oaxaca Valley were bombarded by government agencies attempting to tax them or to make them pay Social Security benefits for their workers (Cook, 1984a: 173–85), this did not result in their organizing. In Mexicali, these two demands led brickmaker renters in and proprietors (if they had no pieceworkers, they joined in protest of taxation; if they had pieceworkers, they joined in protest of both) to join the CROC, which represented their claims before the government that they could not afford to pay taxes or seguro (Social Security benefits) if they were to continue in business.

Differences also existed between brickmakers in Mexicali (on the California–Mexico border) and on the Texas–Mexican border. Pieceworkers have never belonged to a separate union as they once did in Miguel Alemán (Cook, 1998: 177, et passim). Second, there was no *campo*/*campero* system in which core brickyards subcontracted work out to satellite brickyards—to produce primarily unfired bricks—and often recruited labor from the interior of Mexico to set up these brickyards (Cook, 1998: 207–11). Only one family in the Mexicali study was invited to come to the border by a brickyard owner. All others came independently, some due to other employment opportunities but many with the idea of eventually becoming brickyard owners. Also, if a brickyard operator (renter in or owner) in Mexicali received an order for more bricks than she or he could make, then she or he would call in network members (kin and friends) on the brickyards to supply what she or he could not produce. Sometimes, during transition periods, when firing bricks was prohibited on an old brickyard complex, brickmakers still there would sell unfired bricks to brickmakers permitted to fire a kiln, but this was a temporary situation. Alternatively, when a brickyard operator needed quick cash, he might sell his unfired bricks to other brickmakers. Third, I am unaware that much brick was exported to Calexico (across the border from Mexicali) or elsewhere in California (though this may be a weakness in my study). Nor, therefore, did intermediary capital play such a large role in Mexicali brickmaking, as it did on the Texas–Mexican border.

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Notes

Introduction

1. Few good histories of Mexicali are available. An excellent overview of the history of the Mexicali Valley up until the 1950s is provided by María Eugenia Anguiano Téllez in her *Agricultura y Migración en el Valle de Mexicali* (1995). My account of the history of Mexicali rests heavily on her work.

2. Sites and services settlements are preplanned colonias that are subdivided into lots, each of which is provided with water, electric, and sometimes sewage services. They may be government sponsored or provided by individual developers, though in Mexicali there is usually some (local) government involvement.

Chapter 2. Approaches to the "Informal Sector" and to the Brickmakers of Mexicali

1. A large portion of this summary of approaches to the informal sector-economy has previously appeared in my introduction to the special issue of *Latin American Perspectives* on the urban informal sector (Wilson, 1998b). Notably, Rakowski (1994) divides the major approaches to the informal sector into four groups. These include the ILO-PREALC (structuralist) approach; the "underground economy" (structuralist) approach, associated with Alejandro Portes; the legalist or ILO-de Soto approach; and the macroenterprise development approach, associated with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). While valuable in analyzing the corpus of works concerned with the development, role, and policy proposals for the informal sector, the classification fails to take into account both (1) the broader theoretical assumptions that led to particular analyses of the informal sector and later to divergences within each approach during the historical development of the informal sector debates, as well as worldwide changes in the economy (see, e.g., Moser, 1994; de Oliveira and Roberts, 1994) and (2)

changes in the assumptions, analyses, and policy proposals of some of the major scholars within each approach. For example, within the underground, or world systems overlapping with neo-Marxist approaches in my classification, one can contrast the early works of Portes (see, e.g., Portes, 1983; Portes and Benton, 1984; Portes and Walton, 1981) with his later proposals (e.g., Portes, 1994) and the early works of Bromley (1978a, 1978b; see also Bromley and Gerry, 1979) with his more recent approach and consequent proposals (Bromley 1994). Notably, also, while PREALC head Victor Tokman was initially in dialogue with Portes and the underground economy approach, more recently he and others writing in the PREALC tradition have found it necessary to address issues raised by the neoliberal approach associated with Hernando de Soto (e.g., contrast Tokman, 1979, and Klein and Tokman, 1988, in their dialogue with Portes and Benton, 1987, and then the later Tokman, ed., 1992). Cross-fertilization continues to this day, especially regarding policy proposals, despite the fact that most theoretical approaches to the informal sector had reached their maturity by the mid-1990s.

2. Cook and Binford (1990: 130) address the characteristics of "petty capitalist production" as follows:

> From our operational point of view, a commodity-producing unit (or enterprise) can be identified as "petty capitalist" when the following conditions are met: (a) the means of production are privately owned or controlled; (b) wage labor is regularly employed in lieu of or to supplement household or reciprocal labor to the degree that it produces more than half the value of unit output per turnover period; (c) the purpose of production for each turnover period is to generate a net cash return (profit) in excess of input costs; (d) the individual proprietor spends at least as much time in management and marketing as participating directly in production; and (e) over time, in response to market conditions (e.g., as they affect the cost and availability of labor and other means of production, product pricing, etc.) and profitability, the unit will expand or contract its productive capacity by altering its investment in labor or other means of production. . . . .

Of the brickmakers in my study, point (a) would include both brickyard renters in and owners, yet there are often great differences in wealth between them. Concerning point (b) I have chosen to simplify things by including all those who hire in pieceworkers as emergent petty capitalists, though this is indeed an oversimplification, as the aforementioned passage implies. With point (c) most brickmakers would indeed like to see a surplus over input costs (which I assume means replacing the means of production as well as ensuring family survival). Concerning point (d) I found only one brickmaker, and not until 2003, who spent as much time in management and marketing as in

production: this was a brickmaker who had also "formalized" his enterprise. With point (e) brick production expanded and contracted due to a number of factors: (1) climatic conditions throughout the year; (2) the amount of family labor involved in production; (3) the number of pieceworkers employed; and (4) market conditions that were often dependent upon the value of the peso. For example, a study conducted of the border brickmakers showed that "The economic crisis that started in Mexico at the end of 1994 affected the construction industry to the extent that there was a decrease of construction activity by more than 60%. These conditions kept the brick prices at the same level of 1994 until the middle of 1996, even though inflation during that period was well over 70%" (SCERP, 2003: 1). These lower prices probably had two results: first, some brickmakers probably sought work elsewhere in the economy; second, brick production among the remaining would have increased in order to guarantee a minimum standard of living.

3. Cook (1984b: Footnote 17, p. 35; see also Cook, 1984a: Footnote 2, p. 137) explains why he prefers "endofamilial accumulation" to the Chayanovaian "self-exploitation" (which I have expanded to "self- and family exploitation").

> Some readers may wonder why I have coined the term "endofamilial accumulation" for what they may perceive to be a notion which Chayanov . . . labelled "self-exploitation." There are four reasons why I have done so: 1) it is not so much "self-exploitation" as it is the systematic use of the labour-power of others in the worker-proprietor's household . . . ; 2) exploitation is a term which I prefer to restrict to the relationship between capital and labour that is mediated by a wage payment; 3) to emphasize that family labour-power expended may result in capital accumulation and not just in simple reproduction as Chayanov emphasizes; and 4) to disassociate myself from Chayanov's extreme peasantism. . . . .

Chapter 3. Petty Commodity Producers in the Informal Sector: The Peasant Adaptation of the Brickmakers in Colonia Popular, Mexicali

1. Although Cook (1998) does not endorse (or even explore) the idea of brickmaking as subsidizing capitalist enterprise, he does note that brickmakers on the Mexican side supplied bricks to construction companies in Texas, primarily through intermediaries who buy up handmade bricks in Mexico and sell them across the border.

2. The analysis by Cook (1984a, 1983) and Cook and Binford (1990) of the brickmakers of Oaxaca is also valuable in understanding the class divisions among the brickmakers. These researchers observed three classes

among those who make bricks: the wage workers, the petty commodity producers, and the petite bourgeoisie. The latter are defined by the hiring of laborers. Nonetheless, Cook (1984a) and Cook and Binford (1990) do not distinguish between the renters in and the owners of brickyards. It is notable that the renters in as well as the owners can be petty commodity producers, utilizing only unpaid family labor, or petite bourgeoisie, hiring in workers. Cook (1986: 69–71) outlined six stratum in the socioeconomic hierarchy of Oaxaca Valley brickmakers and distinguished between brickmakers who pay a set fee to the brickyard owner for each 1,000 bricks made, and renters in who lease the brickyard for a year or more. In Mexicali, renters in pay a percentage of every 1,000 bricks they make, and that is the most common option. Cook (1986: 71) also found highly capitalized units with ownership of several brickyards, permanent kilns, and trucks for hauling bricks. There are no permanent kilns in Mexicali, so this does not distinguish one stratum from another. Nor in my sample did any of the brickmakers, or absentee owners, own or control multiple brickyards. One, by 2003, owned a flatbed truck, and one of Don Nicholas's grandsons also came to buy one—but did not continue making bricks after he bought it. See the Appendix for other differences between Cook's and my findings.

3. A number of studies have shown how self-built housing in the colonias populares of Latin America lowers the pressure for a higher wage among workers in the formal sector (e.g., Burgess, 1978; Connolly, 1982). Other studies show how the peasantry, by supplying cheap food to the cities, give a subsidy to capitalist enterprises and to the capitalist system as a whole (e.g., see de Janvry, 1981, 1984; Lipton, 1982). For an argument that the informal sector in general subsidizes capitalist enterprise and the capitalist system as a whole, see, among others, Portes and Walton (1981).

Chapter 5. "Invisible" Women and Children Workers on the Mexicali Brickyards

1. *Ejidatarios* are those who control *ejido* lands, communally owned, usually individually tenured properties. Until the land reforms under President Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994), such lands could not be legally rented, mortgaged, or sold, although all of these practices occurred clandestinely.

2. The data on which this study is based were collected first as part of a larger study of migration to a squatter settlement in Mexicali conducted from 1988 to 1991 (Wilson, 1992) and second as a preliminary study of brickmakers conducted in the fall of 1992. Thirty-one brickmakers and their wives were interviewed in Colonia Popular (a pseudonym) about their migration and work history; in the latter period, the male and female heads of household of seven families were interviewed about their brickmaking activities. Two of the families no longer make bricks; four of the families that were orig-

inally interviewed in Colonia Popular no longer live there: three moved to brickyards that they bought with money from selling their lots in the colonia. Two other families who live on brickyards were interviewed for the first time in 1992.

3. Melhus cites a popular Mexican saying: "'*Un hombre que deja que su mujer trabaje no es un hombre*' [a man who allows his wife to work is not a man]" (Melhus, 1993: 49). In this regard, Rodríguez-Shadow, Shadow, and Goldsmith's observations of women brickmakers' definition of their work as only "helping out" are also pertinent. These authors (1992: 13–14) point out the following:

> [W]ork is perceived as the activity through which an income is obtained for maintaining the family. Ideally men have this responsibility and are the ones who "bring home the bacon," while women are in charge of caring for the children and the house. In fact many women affirm that brickmaking, and by extension "work" and whatever other economic activity, are masculine obligations while theirs are the children and therefore reproduction. When women refer to their work on the brickyard as "help," they reinforce these traditional ideas and deny the possible conflict of roles which could arise if the fundamental role which they play in production were recognized. Furthermore, this concept masks the fact that men do not completely fulfill their economic obligations; this ideological construction mitigates the lack of reciprocity that exists in practice and which could generate domestic discord." (my translation)

4. Cook (1984a: 187, Footnote 2) explains why he prefers "endofamilial accumulation" in describing the dynamic of petty commodity producer households over the concept "self-exploitation," which he associates exclusively with Chayanov: "First, it is not so much 'self-exploitation' as it is the systematic use of the labor-power of others in the worker-proprietors household . . . ; second, exploitation is a term I prefer to restrict to the relationship between capital and labor that is mediated by a wage payment; and third, to emphasize that the family labor-power expended may result in capital accumulation and not just in simple reproduction as Chayanov [1986] emphasized." I would argue that "endofamilial accumulation," though a useful concept, tends to treat the family household as a black box. Endofamilial accumulation in the last analysis is based on self-exploitation and exploitation of the family labor force and must be related to differences in power according to sex and age within the household.

5. The process described is that with the use of open molds, with which *ladrillos de agua* (water bricks) are made. The bricks known as *ladrillos de dompe* (dump bricks) are made with molds containing a back. With these bricks, the clay does not need to be as damp, the mold needs to be wetted

down each time bricks are made, and small amounts of sand are put into the mold each time new bricks are molded.

6. It may be because women and children tend to do most of the subsidiary work on the brickyards that women conceive of their work as "helping out." Some of the brickmakers' wives interviewed have reported molding bricks, however—a task that, along with mixing the clay to the correct consistency, is considered one of the most skilled steps in the brickmaking process.

7. Success in making, and selling, bricks depends upon the season of the year. Bricks made in open molds cannot be made during the rainy season, for example, since they need a week to dry (bricks made in closed molds need only twenty-four hours to dry, however). They also are subject to breakage in the winter, when the cold can cause ice to form within the damp, newly molded bricks. And as one woman brickmaker with seven children pointed out, few materials for building houses in the colonias populares (squatter settlements) are bought during the first months of the school year, since parents must buy uniforms and schoolbooks and pay school quotas and thus have few resources left over.

8. Temperatures normally range around 100° F during the summers in Mexicali and can reach as high as 120°. Fans, which can be utilized only if one has electricity, also blow away the mosquitos that infest areas with canals in Mexicali. It has been reported on local radio stations and in newspapers in Mexicali that newborne children and the aged have died when temperatures are especially high, mostly because of dehydration.

Chapter 7. Gender Considerations among the Brickmakers

1. Of the women who made bricks without their husbands, one was a widow who adamantly refused to remarry. Rosa, in an intact (and a comfortable) marriage, made an income competitive with her husband's business as a mobile fruit and vegetable vendor, yet she considered her work as just "helping out." Guadalupe, who became a pieceworker on a son-in-law's brickyard, supported her household with the aid of her two unmarried sons' brickmaking work, after she was abandoned by her brickmaker husband. Over the years, and as recently as 2002, her husband returned periodically and asserted his rights in the household through physical violence: Guadalupe would have preferred complete abandonment.

Chapter 9: The Heterogeneity of Subsidies to the Capitalist System: The Case of the Garbage Pickers

1. The economic value of reciprocity networks among the low-income

population in Latin America has been documented by a number of anthropologists, including Lomnitz (1977) and Peattie (1970).

2. One woman head of household collected clothes from the dump and sent boxes of them to a daughter who resided in the Federal District whenever a friend or relative in Mexicali went back to visit other relatives who lived in that city. Her daughter would sell the clothes in the colonia where she lived and then remit a portion of the money to her mother.

3. Although this dump closed in March 1990, I will use the present tense.

4. For a more sympathetic report on garbage picker unions and cooperatives in Mexico and especially in Mexico City, see Castillo et al. (1987).

5. By 1992, after the new municipal dump was opened on an ejido, the garbage pickers had formed a union. The ejido also charged 5,000 (about $2) pesos to anyone or any group of people in one vehicle who entered the dump to pick garbage.

6. Many factory jobs are temporary and do not provide Social Security and medical benefits. Workers must often sign a paper agreeing that the factory need not pay for the social and medical benefits to which they are entitled by Mexican law, for the first three months of their employment. They are then conveniently disemployed before this time period lapses, and then new workers are employed. Or, they are taken on again as new employees, with the same three-month exclusions on their rights. Both Mexican- and American-owned factories take part in this benefit evasion.

Chapter 10: Are the Brickmakers Counterhegemonic?

1. Yet it is not likely that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), despite its role in hegemonic processes and outcomes, will affect the brickmakers negatively. Although it has been predicted that NAFTA's free trade provisions will undermine indigenous capitalist enterprises, it should have little effect on the brickmakers (or garbage pickers). If factory production of bricks were cheaper than those made by self-exploitation, then they would have already emerged in Mexicali. It is doubtful that the higher-waged brickmaking factories in the United States can provide a cheaper product that would appeal, for example, to squatter settlement residents engaged in self-built housing or to building contractors seeking to cut costs. On the other hand, the NAFTA may open up more possibilities for brickmakers, most likely through middlemen, to sell their commodities across the border in the United States.

2. But at least one of these sixteen hopes to return to brickmaking. See the story of Don Rafael, chapter 11.

3. Employer-imposed discipline is imposed on informalized labor in

workshops and the construction industry, however. Informalized labor differs from more independent forms of informal-sector employment in that its distinguishing feature is simply that none of the government guarantees for labor, such as Social Security benefits and medical care, are extended to the workers, despite their doing the kind of jobs formalized labor does. There is a need, perhaps, to distinguish between, first, informalized labor, which would include vendors working for a commission, the disguised proletarians at the end of a chain of labor exploitation, disposable workers receiving none of the benefits mandated for the formal-sector workforce, such as home workers and those employed in small workshops, and piece-rate brickmakers, and, second, self-employed, informal-sector participants. Vendors on their own account, the owners of informalized workshops, brickmaker owners, and brickmaker owner-employers would fall into this latter category. Yet even these contribute labor or commodities that will subsidize the capitalist system, either directly or indirectly by lowering the pressure for a higher wage among formal-sector workers.

4. The difference between regime change and structural change is elucidated by Fatton (2002) in his analysis of Aristide's second presidential term in Haiti. By no means has modern Mexico, however, displayed the authoritarianism of Haiti's administrations (despite the fact that both are called "clientelistic" states).

Epilogue

1. Diego, who continues to attend meetings of the brickmakers section of the CROC, estimated that in 2003 there were approximately 100 brickmaking families. This is also the number given by the Southwest Center for Environmental Research Policy (SCERP, 2003: 6) for the number of brickyards in Mexicali.

Appendix: Scott Cook and I: Ambiguity and Ambivalence in Approaches to Brickmaking

1. Cook and Binford (1990: 10) give a "generic concept" of petty commodity production that includes the following elements:

> 1. The regular and exclusive production of products for market exchange.
>
> 2. Small-scale private enterprise in which the means of production [are] privately controlled by direct producers, and labor is nonwaged.

> 3. Mutual independence of production units, ruling out, therefore, the exchange of products within a larger enterprise, such as a factory. It likewise rules out situations in which apparently independent producers are subjected to tight control by merchants or by capitalist enterprises through subcontracting, the supply of raw materials and equipment through putting out arrangements, and final product purchase.
>
> 4. The purpose or result of production may be simple reproduction but *never to the exclusion of capital accumulation or profit*, which may underwrite productivity increases up to the point at which labor must be hired to facilitate further increases. (emphasis in original)

Notably, many of the small-scale, informal-sector enterprises that otherwise fit the definition of simple or petty commodity production are, indeed, involved in subcontracting chains or in putting-out arrangements (e.g., Portes and Walton, 1981: 98–101; Ypeij, 2000).

2. After the PAN gained the governorship of Baja California in 1992, no more land invasions were permitted. Instead, sites and services projects were set up with requirements for a minimum income to acquire a lot. Most brickmakers would not qualify, financially, for this new housing program.

3. Cook (1998: 216–17) has noted that brickmolders often became involved in garbage-related activities when brickmaking employment ran out on the satellite brickyards-campos on the Mexican side of the Texas border:

> One of the consequences of the downward spiral in the demand for Mexican handmade brick in the 1980s, which led to the closure of most of the gas-firing export brick plants, as well as to the withdrawal of intermediary capital, was the transformation of the brickfields in the Reynosa area into garbage dumps. In order to survive in the informal peri-urban economy, many of the brickmolders who had worked for the camperos became garbage haulers or *carretoneros*, as they are known locally because they ply the streets of Reynosa with horse- or mule-drawn carts (*carretones*).

4. When describing kilns on the Texas–Mexican border, Cook (1998: 18), following other treatments of brickmaking (cf. especially Gurcke, 1987: 29), distinguishes between the following two types:

> Kilns are of the permanent or periodic type, which operate in a batch fashion not unlike a kitchen oven. They are rectangular in shape, updraft in terms of firing technique, and tend to have bases, fire tunnels, and outer walls permanently built with bricks set in

> mortar. However, where brickmaking is a seasonal, ad hoc activity or occurs at or near a construction site, kilns are of the simple scove or field type, made entirely of green or unfired brick with a firing chamber inside. Once the brick is fully fired, the kiln is disassembled, and the brick is removed.

Notably, this "field" type of kiln is the only kind used on the Mexicali brickyards. Usually formed with a minimum of 20,000 bricks, it may be built each month or so by the brickmaker owners or renters in. I have not observed gas-fired kilns in Mexicali either, although they were common in Cook's (1998, 2001) study of the Texas–Mexican border.

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