
RESEARCH REPORTS AND NOTES

CLASS STRATIFICATION AND COOPERATIVE PRODUCTION AMONG RURAL WOMEN IN CENTRAL MEXICO*

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This research note investigates class tension between rural women in the context of a grassroots women's development project in the village of Guadalupe in the Mexican state of Querétaro.¹ These tensions affected the cooperative's internal dynamics, economic choices, and inevitably its lack of success. My study found these class tensions to be gendered in that they were manifestations of patriarchy as well as dependent capitalism.²

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1. To avoid repercussions for the informants, all names of persons have been changed to pseudonyms, as have the names of places smaller than counties.

2. This analysis is based on participant-observer research in a pig-farming cooperative in 1987 and 1988. My research was conducted during two on-site visits in Guadalupe of approximately four weeks each, separated by five months. During these visits, I attended cooperative meetings, assisted in production tasks at the Guadalupe pig farm, and observed interactions among members, former members, and women and men not involved in the cooperative. I also spent three weeks at the national headquarters of the parent

CASE DESCRIPTION

For eight years, Guadalupe was home to a women's pig farm sponsored by the Multi-Activity Cooperative Society without Borders (Cooperativa sin Fronteras, or CSF), a binational, union-based farmworkers' group organized into a national confederation of cooperatives. It originated with the Arizona Farm Workers Union (AFW) in 1980. The AFW had formed the year before out of the Maricopa County Organizing Project (MCOP), which had organized a strike in 1977 by U.S. farmworkers in green-onion fields in Arizona.

The Cooperativa sin Fronteras was organized as a confederation of associated cooperatives, each having its own membership and executive committee but all associated with and governed by the national CSF leadership in Mexico. The CSF received pension funds from the AFW as well as grants from the Inter-American Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Presbyterian Church, and other organizations.

The Granja Porcina in Guadalupe was one of the few CSF cooperatives made up entirely of women members, and its origins differed from those of other projects that involved men only or men and women. The women of Guadalupe were first mobilized into an income-generating project during a sewing and marketing course offered in 1982 by the Mexican national agency CONASUPO (Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares). A group of fifty women, including all those who became members of the pig farm, organized to undertake a peach orchard on *ejido* land. Of this initial group, the majority were *ejidatarias* (beneficiaries of land reform) who proposed to take advantage of the requirement

organization, located in a different town in Querétaro. My interviewing included individual interviews with all current cooperative members and most recent former members, all the technical assistants who resided in Querétaro, and all the management staff in the cooperative's national office. I also conducted group interviews with some members (or former members) and their families. I recorded observational data and informal interviews in daily field notes and tape-recorded most interviews. Although I did not actively participate in cooperative meetings, I responded to requests for input when asked. During both visits, I lived with a member of the cooperative, and my observation of family dynamics was facilitated by the "daughter of the house" relationship that developed between me and my host family. Initially, this role involved merely sharing in household chores with resident daughters-in-law. The relationship later developed into shared afternoon *refresco* breaks and close interactions with the grandchildren of the household, who called me "Maestra" and solicited my help with their homework. I was also invited to share meals at homes of other members, which offered further opportunities to observe family interactions. Some of the information on the management of the cooperative's parent organizations in the United States and Mexico came from fieldwork done in 1983 by Douglas Anthony, then a master's student in urban planning at the University of California, Los Angeles. The organizational history was confirmed in my own field visit to the Arizona offices of the Arizona Farmworkers Union in 1992. At that time, my main source of information was a journalist long associated with both the Maricopa County Organizing Project and the AFW. Much of that history was also documented in the CSF central files, to which I was given complete access.

in Mexican land reform law to provide plots for women (called *unidades agrico-industriales de mujeres*, or UAIMs).³

In 1983 the executive committee of the Guadalupe ejido offered the women a plot of land suitable for orchards and made what many of the members considered a firm commitment to advance a start-up loan to the new cooperative. When the loan fell through and it became clear that cooperative members were not to have full control over land-use decisions or the profits from that land, the members withdrew completely from negotiations with the ejido. Some of the women cooperative members joked about the ease with which the male ejido leaders made promises and the pain it cost them to live up to those promises.⁴ Many of the ejidatarias associated with the project pulled out when the ejido was no longer the central organizing agency. As of July 1987, the orchard remained abandoned by cooperative members and by the ejidatarias who had legal claim to its use.

Meanwhile, negotiations with the CSF proved fruitful in getting solid loan guarantees and assurances of technical assistance for the project. These negotiations were spearheaded by powerful women in the community who represented housewives, workers, and *campesinas*. The CSF was willing to come through immediately with help in locating and financing land. As one interviewee explained, "And then, already [after the preliminary talks], they gave the money for the plot of land. That is, they fought to obtain the plot . . . because soon after that, they obtained the land."⁵

Cooperative members argued over what to produce and how to produce it. They settled on pig farming because many of those who were not ejidatarias had little experience with orchards and pig farming seemed more accessible to more women. After further debate, the cooperative chose to fatten piglets for resale for slaughter (*engorda*) rather than get into animal husbandry by raising pigs throughout their life cycle (*cria*).

Like most cooperatives in Mexico, the pig farm in Guadalupe was organized according to the guidelines of the Ley Federal de Sociedades Mercantiles y Cooperativas, with a central executive committee and following the principle of one woman, one vote. The cooperative did not always function in this democratic fashion, however, because decisions

3. Taped interviews with Carolina Villa Morelos (former member, CSF Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, Querétaro, 23 July 1987; with Flora Mora (member, Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, 26 July 1987; with Marta Mora (president, CSF Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, 24–25 July 1987; and with Ernesto Chacón (director, Cooperativa sin Fronteras), Querétaro, Querétaro, 1 Aug. 1987. According to Chacón, at one point three different farm projects were operating in Guadalupe, each dominated by a single family. I heard nothing of such an explicitly kinship-based project structure from the women themselves, except for the later dominance of the Guadalupe pig farm by a family of housewives.

4. Interviews with Flora Mora and Carolina Villa; and taped interview with Honoria Chávez Mora (former member, CSF Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, 26 July 1987.

5. Interview with Flora Mora. All translations of quotations from the Spanish are mine.

were often dominated by the more powerful members, especially regarding labor-process issues such as task assignments, criteria for allocating inconvenient work schedules, and produce choices.

The cooperative was never financially successful at any point due to unfortunate management decisions and production losses caused by illness of animals and inefficiency. Profits were to be distributed first as reimbursement for time worked (according to the hours worked) and after that, across the board in dividends to owner-members. Although the cooperative managed to reimburse labor, it was never able to generate dividends.

After a number of crises and administrative changes in the AFW and CSF as well as in the Mexican economy, the CSF ceased operations in 1989, nine years after its inception. Despite the CSF's obvious successes in mobilizing large numbers of Mexican migrant peasants into cooperative production, the organization was fraught with structural problems, many of which mirrored problems discussed here in the local functioning of the Guadalupe cooperative. Notwithstanding this failure and inherent flaws in CSF organization and structure, the cooperative deserves credit for having provided an economic and organizing model for many programs.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS

The Guadalupe pig farm played a complex role in local proletarianization and domestication in Guadalupe. These processes in turn had marked and mainly negative implications for the Guadalupe pig farm, largely because the cooperative engaged in activities that made a commodity out of aspects of domestic production, a key means of generating domestic subsidy and surplus value.

Thus the class dynamics of this cooperative cannot be understood without addressing the nature of domestication and proletarianization, especially in terms of resulting class structure. In this research note, class identity is attributed to individuals, not to households, because using the household as a unit of analysis masks many differences among women and the existence of individuals with differing class interests within the same household.

It should also be pointed out that all the women discussed in this research note are considered peasants by virtue of their rurality, the predominance of agricultural production in their labor history, and their prior history of production for subsistence. Thus the overarching class category in this analysis is "peasant." The term *campesina* is used here to refer to those women who continue to engage in agriculture on family farms that do not market most of their product.

Development scholars have documented proletarianization as the expected outcome of capitalist penetration in areas previously dominated by subsistence production (see Smith 1984; Scott 1979; Lewis 1955). More-

over, theorists from a variety of perspectives have argued that wage labor rarely supersedes subsistence production completely and that households and even individuals usually have to divide their labor between subsistence production and wage labor (see McGee 1976; Wolpe 1980; Laclau 1986; and De Janvry 1981, 94–140). Neo-Marxist writers on development agree that the immediate result of capitalist “modernization” in the countryside is a rural population that is only partially proletarianized and a large segment of agricultural production that is only partially capitalized (see Goodman and Redclift 1982; De Janvry 1981). The resulting “flexible working class” (the semi-proletariat) is still tied to family farming but becomes more and more dependent on money wages as well (see Otero 1989, 43–45).

Mode of production theory provides useful insights into how peasant production persists and flourishes despite the pervasive penetration of capitalist agriculture into Third World rural economies. Mode of production theory enhances understanding of the continued interaction between disparate class structures—peasant and capitalist. These theorists posit that although the establishment of a “motor of development” involves the gradual creation of a working class through the privatization of land, the development of market exchange, and similar steps, this process does not completely eradicate preexisting modes of production. Rather, the spread of capitalist development absorbs and transforms preexisting forms of production and land tenure, creating or maintaining a series of “marginal sectors.” The labor of the resulting “*semicampesinado*” and “semi-proletariat” is then called on selectively to subsidize capitalist development by producing cheap inputs, maintaining a labor reserve, and engaging in subsistence agriculture that supplements wages. One would thus expect to find evidence in a contemporary rural setting of both “pure campesinas,” or women who still manage to live in households that subsist without entering the capitalist labor market, and semi-proletarians, a faction of the peasant class who have begun to perform wage labor to various degrees.

Evidence also can be found of a third category of rural women who are not primarily involved in subsistence production (although some of their male relatives may be) and who do not perform wage labor. These “housewives” survive on the income generated by the men in their families. Although housewives work, their efforts are limited to reproduction and household labor.

Much of the literature on semi-proletarians focuses on transformations in men’s work and emphasizes the subsidies provided by the peasantry and informal sectors to the capitalist mode of production. Feminist theorists have documented similar transformations of women’s work and have enriched the debate with increased understanding of the complex relationship between production and reproduction under dependent capitalism (see Lamphere 1987; Benería and Feldman 1992). In my view, what

one can call “the domestic mode of production” is an equally critical source of subsidy.⁶ That is, where no precapitalist mode of production is available, then one of the options available to capital is to create a subsidizing, noncapitalist mode of production in the form of the domesticated household (see Lipietz 1977, 32). In this domestic mode of production, housewives provide the labor.

Rural housewives, like semi-proletarians, are still peasants: they are rural because they live in agricultural households and have had the experience of subsistence production in their labor history. They may also live in relatively modest circumstances. But unlike semi-proletarians, their class position is best defined by the lack of sale of their labor power and their lack of ownership of means of production.

In sum, the campesina faction is labeled as such because most of its productive activities generate commodities outside the capitalist market. The semi-proletarian faction is labeled as such because most of its productive activities generate monetary income through wage labor. The housewife faction is labeled as such because nearly all of its productive activities involve reproduction and domestic labor, with the primary source of money income coming from male relatives. Although the boundaries between these class positions are somewhat fluid (they are not mutually exclusive categories), stratification creates enough differences in access to resources and options to cause women in different class factions to act according to distinct sets of class interests. The analysis that follows will show that in Guadalupe, housewife interests ultimately prevailed over campesina and semi-proletarian interests.

This behavioral element of rural class stratification among women lends an ideological element to the present discussion. In addition to being able to define the material conditions that characterize housewife status, one can also identify a dominant “housewife ideology.” Non-housewives in the Guadalupe cooperative, especially semi-proletarians, aspired to housewife status and often identified themselves as *amas de casa* despite their inability to abandon wage labor or subsistence production. The dominance of this ideology can be explained, at least in part, by the tendency for both men and women to ignore or romanticize domestic labor.

In the process of capitalist development, women’s work comes to be defined in terms of domestic contributions to social reproduction, while that of men is increasingly viewed as an expansion of production in the “public sphere.” Development undoubtedly transforms the type of

6. The term *domestic mode of production* was first used by Marshall David Sahlins in 1977. His focus was on the prehistoric era and did not address contemporary subsistence production. My use of the term differs in several ways. Edholme, Harris, and Young (1977) have extended the limits of the domestic mode of production beyond simple biological procreation to the social scale, and it is their definition that I am using here.

economic activity through changes in and movement away from household or domestic production. What is often ignored, however, is the continuation of production within the domestic sphere, despite the dominance of public-sphere production (see Mies 1986; Bennholdt-Thompson 1989; Sage 1993).

Development theorists and policymakers alike have tended to treat all activities that occur in the private sphere of the household as forms of consumption or leisure. Women's domestic work is viewed wrongly in the same light, as an extension of consumption activities rather than as productive labor. This misreading of women's domestic production leads to an implicit dismissal of the marginal conditions under which that labor is undertaken as well as its importance as a factor of production. Social and biological reproduction is an important part of the social productive system and clearly encompasses more than consumption. In fact, all reproduction can be seen as a subcategory of production (see Edholme, Harris, and Young 1977; Smith 1984; Marx 1967). Reproductive economic activity is best defined as the part of production that creates or replaces inputs, including current and future labor, tools and raw materials, and systems of social regulation (Edholme, Harris, and Young 1977). Women are primarily responsible for that portion of reproduction that takes place in the household. Rather than referring to their labor as a form of capitalist production, domestic labor is best described as a domestic mode of production (see Rogers 1980; Dwyer and Bruce 1988).

The process of "domestication" or the expansion of the domestic mode of production supports the capitalist economy because it allows women workers, as housewives or semi-proletarians or both, to be economically exploited. The economy is provided with a reserve of labor that it does not have to support, while that "redundant population" engages in production that not even the producers view as "real work" (see Roldán 1988; Deere and León de Leal, eds., 1981; and Young 1978). This separation in capitalism between the location of production and consumption is achieved ideologically as much as physically and leads to reclassification of domestic work as a nonproductive activity. Although domestic reproduction ensures the ongoing capacity of a society to produce, it becomes obscured. It is treated as leisure or consumption activity. The work that women do to transform money income into consumable goods is ignored, and the hot meal at the end of the day seems to have appeared magically in front of the tired worker. The myth of the "non-working housewife" makes this invisibility of domestic work possible.

Thus the political economy of the household, where much of women's work is situated, can be viewed on the one hand as truly a woman's domain, the site of her primary labor and a source of her social power. On the other hand, the structure of the household mirrors the inequality of power between men and women and serves to disempower women by

subordinating their economic, social, and political interests. These household contradictions are critically important as the arena of Third World women's daily struggle for empowerment. Development projects can either inhibit or promote that struggle.

THE CLASS FACTIONS

Campesinas

As noted, all the women in Guadalupe were peasants, but those who continue to produce subsistence with minimal integration into the money economy can be labeled "campesinas." In Guadalupe campesinas were either "ejidatarias" (beneficiaries of land reform)⁷ or "rancheras" (tenant farmers). The campesina faction was an important force in the cooperative, although it was not the dominant one. Most residents of the Guadalupe area live outside the village proper, producing their subsistence and earning cash in ejidos or on ranchos. Campesina members in the cooperative included three ejidatarias (Eva de Castillo, Juana Morelos, Serafina Mora Moreno) and two rancheras (Flora Mondragón and her daughter Susana Archuleta Mondragón). These women all produced under family farming systems in which farm tasks, although fairly strictly divided between men and women, balanced out to more or less equal contribution to creating use values and exchange values on the farm (see Deere and León de Leal 1987, 1–20). The ejidatarias produced crops and animals primarily for the use of the family, selling whatever accidental surplus they created. The rancheras, working under sharecropping arrangements, produced food for their family's survival and the crops that were owed to their landlords.

All the campesinas were geographically isolated, as far away as a two-hour walk from their compounds to town or to the cooperative. Those who had access to piped water or a well had obtained it recently as a result of a CSF irrigation project. The rest relied on water carried from the arroyos and irrigation ditches (*acequias*) that crisscross the region. Few campesinas had access to electricity and had to keep their purchases of durable goods to a minimum. Campesinas had access to land, however,

7. Women ejido campesinas are referred to, in this text, as *ejidatarias*, even though most are not officially listed in the rolls of the Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria (SRA). Ejido plots are allocated to family heads of household, usually male, and thus usually only household patriarchs can lay official claim to the title of ejidatario. These men are also the only ones who have voting rights or a voice in ejido meetings. Women occasionally inherit ejidataria status as widows, but more often that status is passed on to sons (via a complicated set of procedures through the SRA). Nonetheless, the economic activity of wives and daughters of ejidatarios is as fully integrated into ejido functioning as that of the men, and hence I label them by their material status as ejidatarias rather than by their official status as invisible. See Deere (1987), Arizpe and Botey (1987), and Guerra Aguilera (1985).

which raised their social status and their economic security above that of their "urban" co-members (who were semi-proletarians).

Although Juana Morelos's main expertise was in orchard and vegetable production, her household raised chickens and pigs to eat and sell and on a larger scale than any of the women "in town." Eva's plot was a fully functioning farm that produced various items, including sugarcane and peaches for sale as well as chickens, ducks, turkeys, pigs, meat, and dairy cows, some of them for sale. The Archuletas were also extremely capable farmers. Their sharecropping plot was more diverse in products and more sophisticated in production technology than the plots of their co-members.

Semi-Proletarians

As expected, both men and women semi-proletarians could be found in Guadalupe. These individuals subsisted primarily on the fruits of their own wage labor, even though many still had kitchen gardens and small animals. Several characteristics linked the semi-proletarian cooperative members in interests and ideology. All were dependent in some way on their own wage labor, in combination with the uniformly low wages (when available) of their male partners and children.

None of the semi-proletarian women in the cooperative had access to land. Most were single heads of household, some with legitimate claim to housewife status prior to divorce, abandonment, or widowhood. They worked as laundry women and maids (as did Althea Poblano)⁸ and in the primary school dormitory cleaning, cooking, and taking care of the children (Doménica Machado and Martina Machado).⁹

The one petty bourgeois member of the cooperative, Carolina Villa Morelos, shared the same working history as the semi-proletarians and allied herself with them in cooperative politics.¹⁰ She too was a single mother who lived and worked in a rented home. She owned and ran a clothing goods and general store financed with her early savings as a cook in the secondary school dormitory. Carolina also supported an extended family through sales in her shop.

Most of the semi-proletarians lived close to the center of town and rented from absentee landlords. But even in such an urban setting, some managed to maintain a kitchen garden, and Martina had pigs and fruit trees to supplement her subsistence. An important characteristic linking the semi-proletarian members was their heavy dependence on the pur-

8. Althea Poblano (former member, CSF Granja Porcina), interview taped in Guadalupe, 25 July 1987.

9. Martina Machado, (member, CSF Granja Porcina), interview taped in Guadalupe, 23 July 1987.

10. Carolina Villa interview.

chase of food, despite the great expense. Doménica Machado explained why she did not have household animals, “No, because it’s better that we buy. It’s that this compound is very small—there’s no space.”¹¹

The semi-proletarian members varied in their access to forms of income and subsistence other than their own wages. Carolina and Martina had corn and bean plots (*milpas*), but they were small and could not possibly provide enough food for the families. Not one of the proletarian members grew enough food to have a surplus to sell.

Several received remittances from migrant husbands (Althea) or sons (Doménica), but male wages were only enough to supplement their own wage income and at times allow for saving an emergency fund. Doménica’s oldest son sent her some money from Arizona: “Even though it’s very little, he also helps me.”¹² Unlike the housewife members, Doménica did not feel that she was “due” assistance or remittances. When talking about her differences with one of the housewives in the cooperative, she elaborated, “It’s that as I’ll tell you, I’m not one of those who likes to demand, or beg, right? I say what I think. . . . they know my needs very well. They see them, and I don’t have to demand from them.”¹³ One of Doménica’s sons was a teacher, but he was unable to find work during the economic crisis (“from the bad times of the year before”).¹⁴ She had two other sons who had settled in Michoacán, and both helped out some but not regularly.

Housewives

Housewives represented the dominant class faction in the Guadalupe pig farm. As noted, with the acceleration of industrial capitalism, production had shifted to the public sphere and the household came to be perceived as being devoted to consumption. Those who remained in the household, mostly women and children, were in turn viewed as non-workers.

Both men and women in Guadalupe retain economic ties to the subsistence sector. Yet despite this economic reality, aspects of domestication are pervasive and affect women’s labor inside and outside the wage labor force (see Arizpe 1986). As a result, although both men and women engage in various forms of domestic production, development causes the character of household negotiations to change in fundamental ways (see Roldán 1988).

The status of housewives in Guadalupe after 1982 derived largely

11. Doménica Machado, (member, CSF Granja Porcina), interview with author taped in Guadalupe, 24 July 1987.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

from access to U.S. dollars provided by migrant relatives in the crisis-ridden Mexican economy. The money allowed these families to maintain and even expand their access to land (the primary means of production in Guadalupe) and to support women household members without having to rely on their wage labor. The relative affluence of housewife households made it fairly easy for them to attain ascendance in the cooperative, and their influential position was further reinforced by the dominance of what might be called a housewife ideology.

The housewife faction was represented in the Guadalupe pig farm by the women of the Mora Jarina extended family, which included sisters Flora, Magdalena, Marta, and Eugenia. The women in each of the sisters' extended families were also housewives, and Marta's daughter Honoria also belonged to the cooperative.

Most of the male members of the Mora family were well established in migration networks in Arizona and Florida. Although none of the Mora men were active in the leadership of the CSF or the AFW, many were members or former members in good standing with the union and its organizers. Migration income provided one of the few sources capable of supplying anything close to a "family wage" in Mexico since the onset of the 1982 crisis.¹⁵ The economic security afforded to families of migrants was attested by the presence in the Mora compounds of televisions, well-built sanitation systems, concrete house construction instead of lashed timber or adobe, and disposable income for processed food, household utilities, and other conveniences. In addition, the Mora sisters commanded large and stable patrilocal households and thus had control over the human capital of their subordinate relatives. In fact, manipulation of the "mother-in-law–daughter-in-law dynamic" was instrumental in the housewives' assertion of power in the cooperative. Finally, strong housewife kinship and mutual-assistance networks allowed the womenfolk of Mora migrants to maintain the appearance that they did not work.

In reality, housewives worked very hard, despite their ideological inclination to deny that fact. In addition to the usual domestic tasks, they also managed fully the family's "small-owner plot" (*pequeño propietario*) while their male relatives were away. Finally, these women supervised the recruitment, labor control, and paying of casual laborers on those plots. Although it might seem that such tasks would elevate the Mora women to the status of manager or agricultural entrepreneur, the women actually functioned as unremunerated caretakers of family interests controlled in the end by their fathers, husbands, and sons.

The fact that increased family income led to formation of a housewife faction rather than to a nascent capitalist one is due largely to the

15. See the collection of articles on the Marxist and feminist debates about the family wage in Hamilton and Barrett (1987).

fact that the Guadalupe housewives never laid claim to any of those resources in their own right. Their access to resources was indirect, with their husbands or sons maintaining direct control even when they were absent. Yet by the same token, the power of women as housewives in Guadalupe was increased by the absence of husbands, fathers, and sons, a situation that opened a field of social power that housewives in other communities may not have.¹⁶

It is thus worth noting that, as is the case with most rural Mexican women, the status of Mora housewives was ambiguous, not least because of their managerial and production capacity in agriculture. The ambiguity was made even more complex by the fact that many of the Mora women had at some point in their lives worked for a wage, whether in the form of home-based piecework, wage labor outside the home, or service work. All the housewives, however, viewed this work as “helping out” and an insignificant source of household income, an assertion born out by my observations. None of their households depended on that labor, and the housewives themselves argued that this work was just to fill time and make a little extra cash. All were adamant about that fact, even though Marta Mora and her daughter Honoria Chávez Mora had made children’s clothes for sale in Mexico City,¹⁷ Honoria had a long history of secretarial and nursing assistant jobs, Eugenia Martínez (Honoría’s aunt) had periodically cleaned local municipal offices,¹⁸ and even Flora (the “purest” housewife in the family) took in laundry from time to time to tide the family over between remittances or agricultural sales. When asked how she supplemented her meager income from the cooperative, Flora replied: “Well, with the little that my sons give me. . . . Right now, I don’t have to take in washing and ironing, but when the secondary school teachers are here, I wash and iron.” She went on to say that washing and ironing were more of a service to the local teachers than a necessity for generating income.¹⁹

This work can be distinguished from that of semi-proletarians or campesinas by three characteristics: the relatively small amount of the housewives’ labor power allocated to generating money income; their

16. My thanks to one anonymous *LARR* reviewer for the excellent insight that this dual situation of power and subordination can be explained in terms of the subaltern of position of housewives. They are “elevated” by their association with men to a higher status among women, but their power is constrained to acting as a broker for the patriarchal heads of their households (the source of their power), leaving them unaware of possibilities for power growth and self-management.

17. Interviews with Marta Mora and Honoria Chávez.

18. Interview with Honoria Chávez; and with Eugenia Martínez Jarina (member of Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, 30 July 1987. Eugenia Martínez is the sister of Flora, Serafina, Marta, and Magdalena and was effectively part of the Mora faction. Most villagers referred to her as Eugenia Mora, and only during my taped interview did she identify herself as a Martínez. She evaded my question about her last name, and I did not push the point.

19. Interview with Flora Mora.

extremely low dependence on such labor to guarantee their household's subsistence; and their own perception that such work is, in the final analysis, a mere extension of their housework. The last category is key and fits the classical pattern of housewives. They perceived themselves to be doing someone a favor or helping out a friend or relative rather than working. Also, most of the Moras (with the possible exception of Honoria) viewed their income-generating activities as merely supplemental to the "real income" produced by their male relatives, who were dedicated to full household support. Flora in particular was careful not to do any nonhousehold work when her sons were home.

Class Interactions

None of the class identities of Guadalupe women were fixed or rigid, but they understood their class differences well enough to ally themselves along class lines. As mode of production theory would suggest, a great deal of ambiguity in self-definition and overlap in material position existed within and between the factions. This ambiguity became more evident in the cooperative because whereas housewives could operate with considerable kinship-based unity with no other housewife competitors, the semi-proletarian and campesina members shared a wide range of life histories, kinship networks, and relationships to land and other means of production. Because of the Mora family's clear vision of their interests in the cooperative political process and their extraordinary ability to act politically as a single family bloc to realize those interests, the Mora family came to be nicknamed by the CSF administration and rival groups of women in Guadalupe as the "Mora mafia."

Despite the fact that the campesinas tended to avoid contact with housewives whenever possible, they became particular targets of the Mora women in the Guadalupe pig farm, partly because of their competition for control over cooperative land early in the farm's history and partly due to competition for final authority on agricultural matters. The housewife and campesina factions both evidenced considerable agricultural competence, despite their participation in different labor processes. But the fact that the Archuletas did not control their land diminished their social status so much that, despite their superior technical expertise, they ceased to be a threat to the housewives.²⁰ The families of ejidatarías, in contrast, controlled their land and enjoyed the accompanying status, and they therefore continued to present a threat to housewife hegemony.

The campesinas were also in a position to threaten housewife he-

20. Interviews with Juana Morelos (member of Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, 28 July 1987; with Eva del Castillo (member of Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, 31 July 1987; and with Flora Mondragón (former member of Granja Porcina), in Guadalupe, 29 July 1987 (interviewed with her husband, David Archuleta, and her daughters Susana and Diana).

gemony because they were the least susceptible to the housewife ideology. Campesinas' material conditions did not encourage them to identify as housewives, and they had little reason to aspire to what they considered an urban and dependent status.²¹ Thus while the Moras could claim superiority over the urban semi-proletarians on the basis of those women's dependence on purchased food (and hence their limited knowledge of raising pigs²²), the housewives needed other means by which to assert themselves over the campesinas. The housewives' strategy with the campesinas therefore revolved mainly around using gossip and character insults, which in the housewife ideology represented thinly veiled appeals to class superiority.

The semi-proletarians did not ally themselves with housewives in political disputes in the cooperative and complained, sometimes bitterly, about housewife control over cooperative decisions, but they did aspire to be housewives. In fact, all the semi-proletarians identified themselves strongly as housewives, despite their usually single status and their reliance on their own labor power to generate income. Instead, their identification came more from their role as mothers than as wives. My intention here is not to denigrate the amount of labor and commitment that these women invested in their children but to clarify the difference between the relation of these semi-proletarian women to the means of production and that of housewives. Semi-proletarians were dependent on commodified means of subsistence, while housewives had the luxury of access to them. Semi-proletarian women were burdened with a strenuous double day, split between their responsibilities at home and at work, but the housewives could dedicate their attention to household management while their daughters-in-law and paid laborers did most of the household work. Housewives were also free from the need to work outside of the home. Semi-proletarian women tended to be apologetic about working outside of the home. Doménica, for instance, in referring to her search for work said, "I have dedicated myself to the household, but it's that now I am alone, right?"²³

In this way, the semi-proletarian cooperative members exemplify best the disjuncture between housewife status or condition and housewife ideology or aspiration. The semi-proletarian women tended to describe themselves first as housewives and then in terms of their public employment. Carolina talked at length about her efforts as the oldest daughter and a single mother before she referred to herself as a merchant. Doménica and Martina both stressed their plural identifications as housewives, workers ("by necessity"),²⁴ and members of the cooperative.

21. Interviews with Juana Morelos and Susana Archuleta.

22. Interview with Flora Mora.

23. Interview with Doménica Machado.

24. Interview with Martina Machado.

Ironically, the semi-proletarian members were the most likely group to include the cooperative as central to their identification, despite the fact that cooperative membership was problematic for all of them. They discussed the cooperative with great insight as a potential source of income and an arena of struggle over the division of labor. Carolina and Althea had already left the cooperative. Althea informed me that she simply could not afford it, while Carolina claimed that she could earn more money by putting in more hours at the store and she did not need the aggravation from the Moras.²⁵ Doménica and Martina were considering leaving if cooperative income did not pick up, although Doménica was extremely dependent on even the low cooperative income and was hoping to be able to stick to it until the enterprise began to show a profit. Unlike the housewives, however, she had few economic reserves to help her achieve this aspiration.

RELATION OF DOMESTICATION TO COOPERATIVE FUNCTIONING

It is tempting to view the dominance of housewives in the Guadalupe pig farm as a simple result of an accidental majority in the group or as a function of the way in which the CSF organized the labor process of the cooperative. Although both these perceptions are partially true, my contention is that the power of the Mora sisters arose from the deeper cultural and structural roots inherent in the development of a housewife faction.

As noted, the complex interactions of competing class interests led to considerable internal conflict within the cooperative. These disagreements could be attributed to attempts by each faction to replicate its own labor process in the cooperative by employing diverse strategies of class conflict to achieve their goals. These strategies revolved around decisions about product choice and decisions about land tenure.

The greater disposable income of the housewives was only one advantage that they used to promote their interests over those of their campesina and semi-proletarian co-members. Nor did the campesinas and semi-proletarians remain passive witnesses to the housewife project. Although the housewives relied heavily on their class and social status to position themselves as cooperative leaders, early negotiations to establish the cooperative also included representatives of the semi-proletarian and campesina factions, who managed to gain leadership positions in the cooperative's first executive committee and appeared initially to be in a position to share power with the housewives. In fact, semi-proletarian Carolina was president of the executive committee for three years and served on the CSF board of directors as well. Moreover, although all the

25. Interviews with Althea Poblano and Carolina Villa.

women instrumental in the initial negotiations with the CSF gained their legitimacy from their elevated class or educational stature, housewives were not the only faction represented. Yet the housewives managed early on to get the group to shift its choice of product from an orchard (an area in which campesinas had far superior expertise) to a pig engorda (an area in which the housewives had the greater expertise). They also struggled to get the project located on private rather than collective land, a tenure more like their own households. Success in these areas allowed the housewives, over the course of five years, to consolidate their dominance by undermining the confidence of semi-proletarian members and subordinating the campesinas who opposed them. Finally, the housewives were able to gain a voting majority through the attrition of members of other factions.

On one level, the choice of pigs as a product made a great deal of sense for a women's project in Guadalupe. From the CSF perspective, that choice arose out of the acknowledged skills of cooperative members. Most women with access to land in Guadalupe had raised pigs in some manner in their compounds. Housewives tended to buy young pigs and fatten them for sale to intermediaries, while campesinas preferred to breed pigs. Thus the choice of pigs itself was not wrong. The dynamics of this domestic production, however, were far more complex than anyone in the CSF realized. Major implications inhered in that product choice in the variety of labor processes that could be associated with Guadalupe pig farming and the dominance of "housewife production" of pigs over that of campesinas. The labor process for Guadalupe pig farming varied considerably from the domestic processes of housewives and campesinas to the commercial processes promoted by the CSF national leadership.

Thus after choosing pigs as a product, the choice to buy pigs as piglets to fatten and sell on the hoof by the pound reflected both housewife and commercial production decisions. The campesinas uniformly preferred to organize the cooperative for pig breeding, even long after the cooperative had been functioning as an engorda enterprise. Most campesinas made extra income from pigs by this means. The ability of campesinas to sell piglets for quick cash also helped offset the cost of feed in the fattening process. Much discussion went on, mostly among semi-proletarians, about expanding into slaughter, drying, and other kinds of processing, but the CSF argued that not enough capital was available and the production process (which would have been largely home-based) would be too disorganized.

Thus the housewives prevailed in production process as well as in product choice for all of the reasons already discussed and with the implicit support of CSF leadership. One result was that in Guadalupe, pig farming came to be defined among the members as mainly housewife work as opposed to the work of all members. This identification was even

more pronounced among the semi-proletarians, who lacked space in their household compounds and thus had little access to Guadalupe pig farming in any form. For semi-proletarians, just about any other cooperative product would have been more supportive of their legitimacy as producers. Almost every household had at least a small kitchen garden and maybe a fruit tree. Care of these products in the compound could have served as a basis of expertise for a vegetable farm or an orchard. Semi-proletarians' support of ancillary activities like slaughtering and food processing could also have raised their status in the cooperative because these activities are available to every woman in Guadalupe as forms of production that require little land. The choice of pigs, especially large-scale pig farming in Guadalupe, completely excluded the semi-proletarians from competition for authority based on expertise and prior experience.

Also, because of the pig farm's identification with housewives, some did not consider pig raising to be farming at all (unlike cattle raising or cash-crop production). Pig raising was viewed as a family luxury, a woman's hobby,²⁶ with the benefits of being able to slaughter them for home use, fiestas, or occasional sale.

The most significant implication of the Guadalupe pig farm was not so much that it represented a means of turning a domestic product (pigs raised at home) into a marketable commodity but that it was especially effective in turning the labor of the housewife faction into commodity production. Other production possibilities would have had the same general social effect but for a different faction of members. This choice supported the idea that the Guadalupe pig farm was effectively designed for housewives, regardless of the ideological and material intent of the organizers.

Another critical moment in the cooperative's history occurred early on, when the housewives insisted on rejecting the ejido's offer of a women's plot (UAIM) for locating the cooperative. The housewives actually began to push their project in the cooperative at least a year before the CSF got involved, at a time when housewives constituted only a tiny minority of members. From the beginning, the Moras were key actors in the farm project and were instrumental in key decisions made regarding the initial struggle to gain collective control over cooperative land.

The initial choice of a peach orchard was important to the campesinas, and the decision to use the "women's plot" would have helped them assert their rights as ejidatarías. If either or both of those choices had prevailed in the end, then the cooperative would have favored ejidatarías rather than housewife relationships to land and would have

26. This denigration of pig farming was ideologically based and contradicted by the fact that Guadalupe pig farming is obviously legitimate and productive work.

served to make a commodity out of a domestic product (peaches) that was grown almost entirely by campesinas in Guadalupe.

According to both Flora and Doménica (who represented opposing factions in the Guadalupe pig farm), the Mora sisters were instrumental in arguing for abandoning negotiations with the ejido. The housewives' objections were not phrased specifically in terms of land-use control, economic autonomy, or political self determination. Rather, they viewed the ejido's nonresponse as a breach of contract and a bad omen for attempting business dealings with men.

While it could be that ejidatarías withdrew out of loyalty to the ejido, it also seems likely that the sizable pullout arose from the realization that without ejido patronage and material support, the cooperative could easily become structured to meet interests (economic and social) different from their own.

More important than the fiscal outcome was the fact that in the course of those negotiations, the group's intended project changed from a peach orchard to a pig farm. While it could be argued that the shift from campesina to housewife land base was the accidental effect of promises broken by the ejido, the product shift seems to me to have been an affirmative step in consolidating housewife power over campesina power.

Another option housewives enjoyed that was unavailable to the other members was their ability to wait out bad economic times in the cooperative. The increased resources of housewives allowed them to treat the cooperative as a supplement to household income rather than as a critical means of economic survival, as it was for the semi-proletarians. Although campesinas had relatively more subsistence security, they had little "free time" to allocate to a non-profitable enterprise. Housewives could afford to stay in the cooperative during its difficult economic start-up, but semi-proletarians and campesinas had to quit sooner due to high opportunity costs of participation and minimal (if any) savings to get them through subsistence crises.

Housewives could also delegate household tasks to their unmarried daughters and daughters-in-law in order to spend time away from their households in the cooperative. Moreover, the housewives could usually subsist on migration remittances, local wages of male relatives, and profit from local crops and wages (see Chaney 1987) and could rely on the farm and domestic labor of others, including daughters-in-law, younger children, and field hands.²⁷ Even in housewife households that did not produce cash crops, their access to extensive subsistence allowed them to subsidize their money income and stretch that income further.

Housewives, especially mothers-in-law, thus enjoyed household resources for dealing with child care, household maintenance, and food

27. Interview with Carolina Villa. See also Schmink (1984).

preparation, and could much more easily meet cooperative labor requirements. This ability of mothers-in-law to delegate household and cooperative tasks became a source of contention within the cooperative. Carolina related a conflict arising after Flora Mora's grown son substituted for her at the cooperative one day. The consensus of the nonhousewives was that only members should perform cooperative labor. This disagreement reflected different visions of cooperative membership between the factions. For housewives, substitution caused no conflict because their households were extensions of themselves and their labor in the cooperative was an extension of their own household chores. Again, it is important to remember that an ideological element of housewife status is the denigration of work into something seen as nonproductive, that is, "chores." Such activities are real labor in fact, and both "work" and "chores" are productive. The difference is that work is socially valued while chores are not. For campesinas and semi-proletarians, who treated cooperative membership as an individual (and market) enterprise, this use of the labor of relatives constituted an unfair advantage for housewives. Disputes over the cooperative work schedule were especially tendentious on these issues. Marta Mora expressed awareness of this difference between her own status and that of her co-workers: "And those who don't have anyone, leave everything there [at home] in a jumble until they return, and they are not given permission to return to their house for a whole day. So they have to leave their house unattended. I say that is an injustice because I see it as a bad thing. . . ." ²⁸

Despite her sympathy for nonhousewife members, however, Marta still attributed their inability to devote as much time to the cooperative to a lack of patience. Clearly, she wished her nonhousewife coworkers had more perseverance, and she was not particularly informed about the extent of financial need of her unrelated co-workers. A reasonable and sympathetic woman, Marta took her responsibilities as cooperative president seriously, but her loyalties were nonetheless kin-based. Marta's response demonstrates, however, that the problems with the cooperative were structural rather than personal. That is, the problems with the cooperative were not that the housewives were difficult people or had evil intentions but that the needs of each faction were different and in this situation contradictory.

Another element reinforcing housewife dominance in the cooperative was the fact that housewives were best able to educate their female children by using migration remittances²⁹ and thus could use the daughters' technical expertise to prevail in negotiations and exert pressure on

28. Interview with Marta Mora. The work schedule required members to take turns working twenty-four-hour shifts once a week at the farm.

29. Taped interview with Lorenzo Pachuco (director of the primary school), in Guadalupe, 23 July 1987.

the CSF technical assistant for management and financial accountability. According to the director of the local primary school, most of the secondary school students were girls from families with migration incomes. Marta, in particular, relied a great deal on Honoria to help her with the financial aspects of her job as president. After Honoria married and left the house and the cooperative, Marta turned to her sons, especially the teacher. Although Susana and Carolina also had the requisite skills to play this role, their work requirements made it difficult to take on consistent leadership. Thus the Moras could consolidate their power in the cooperative not only by acting as a unified bloc but also by wielding their power to hold "management" accountable. This power to embarrass the CSF with claims of financial and technical mismanagement may explain the virulence with which the CSF leadership came to label them as troublemakers.³⁰

Like the CSF management, many of the women blamed their difficulties in working together on their "natures as women." Carolina observed, "As I say, well, because we are a group of women and have never worked together, it has cost us a lot of effort to be able to be congenial."³¹

Carolina viewed the internal problems of the cooperative purely in personal terms rather than as a reflection of structural problems with effects throughout the CSF. Although Carolina's tendency to emphasize personalities in the cooperative's problems was shared by many members, I am inclined to agree with Juana, Martina, and even Honoria (a housewife) that the housewives' power derived at least in part from the fact that the cooperative was structured to cater to housewives. I would add that this structure was as much a result of a successful political campaign by the housewives as it was an accidental outcome of CSF policy. That is to say, structural conditions in the CSF created an opening for the housewives to realize their implicit political project.

As noted, the Mora women made full use of gossip to consolidate their position in the cooperative, a strategy that had terrible effects on the cooperative group process and created serious obstacles to developing the gender-based solidarity necessary for a cooperative to become politically empowering as well as economically secure. Use of gossip was one of the key ways in which housewives articulated their ideological norms and in so doing labeled their "lesser counterparts" in the cooperative as lacking according to those norms. Housewives tended to view the cooperative in the same light that they saw their households, as a family-like structure organized around moral rules of obligation rather than around any economic (market) rules or even social (consensus) rules. House-

30. Interview with Ernesto Chacón. The Mora women were perfectly capable of being troublemakers, a skill they used to great advantage against the CSF leadership and other members as well.

31. Interview with Carolina Villa.

wives fomented competition between semi-proletarians and campesinas through gossip by "informing" each faction of the lack of diligence of the other. These strategies often succeeded in keeping alternative sources of women's power in check.

The code of behavior upheld by the Moras was not consistent, however. Gossip was applied strategically, its terms being invented to suit the case, and thus the allegations were usually applied unfairly. For instance, the usual content of housewife gossip seemed to involve some form of sexual misconduct. But housewife Honoria's three children by different fathers were treated as a sign of her liberation and independence, while Serafina Mora (a campesina not part of the Mora clan) was held to such a strict behavioral standard that she felt forced to leave town because her reputation was ruined and she could not bear the pressure and ridicule. In actuality, victims of gossip were considered guilty not of any particularly appalling behavior but of not acting like housewives.

Thus through a variety of mechanisms, the Mora housewives managed to gain and maintain considerable power and control in the cooperative. The Moras, especially Flora, set themselves up against CSF central management as the rightful leaders of the group in opposition to the male- and class-based definitions imposed on them. The fact that these appeals were often made on explicitly gendered ground was significant. To the extent that the housewives thought about feminism at all, they perceived themselves as the saviors of the cooperative against unscrupulous men. What they did not acknowledge was their own role in suppressing effective leadership and participation by campesina and semi-proletarian members.

This is not to imply that other members did not share housewife concerns when conflicts arose over the CSF leadership's dominance in decision making and financial management.³² But the Moras were the only members able to raise a unified voice in favor of more autonomous cooperative control. It is interesting to note that because of the class status of the Moras (and the way they used that status against management and co-members alike), the resentment of other members toward central management was extended, sometimes uncritically, to the Moras. When asked to describe the problems that developed in the cooperative, former member Carolina replied: "Flora Mora, Marta Mora, Magdalena Mora, Honoria Mora, and Eugenia Mora."³³ She went on to explain:

Okay, as for the problems of the organization of the cooperative here in Querétaro, well there aren't any problems [in the organization] because we can say that the problems are internal, that is, within the group, right? . . . And over all, the thing

32. Interview with Doménica Machado.

33. Carolina Villa made this comment in my first conversation with her, in March 1987, when I asked her why she had left the cooperative.

that affected us most is that there were many family members in this project—four, five, or six. Well, now there aren't any other members who aren't related. And for example, if one thing gets approved, well it's approved because of those six. So this other group of us who weren't family members didn't agree because clearly they were related, therefore it was a benefit for them. And well, yes, it's good for them. So, that benefit didn't end up being given to all. Therefore almost always, this kind of person always tries to do what benefits them personally, and not the cooperative, right? And those are the problems that we had in the cooperative.³⁴

But in the final analysis, the housewives were effective in articulating their interests over those of the semi-proletarians and campesinas for structural reasons. The Mora sisters certainly had more flexibility in time and money than their co-workers. The anger, frustration, and resentment of the other members led them to either leave the cooperative or to remain silent in order to preserve their income and sources of patronage.

It is also clear that the Moras made some important challenges to the paternalism inherent in CSF management policies and management style. In practice, these women tended to make extreme gestures to make their points. For example, in late 1987, the Mora sisters "stole" some of the cooperative's pigs and took them to their own compounds. In essence, however, they were carrying out the wishes of the collective membership. Much discussion had gone on about fattening some of the pigs for personal household use, and by August 1987, the majority of the remaining members were related in some way to the Moras. As noted, however, the sisters carried out that mandate only to their own benefit and against all the rules and regulations of the CSF.

Throughout the time that I was associated with the cooperative, all members (regardless of their class faction) were debating the insistence by the CSF central offices that the members produce only for sale, not for home use.³⁵ The Moras' expropriation of the pigs seems to have been related directly to the opinion, rarely articulated publicly, that cooperative members, especially those in subsistence crisis, should have flexibility about how much of their product to save for market and how much to use to supplement their own consumption. The fact that the Moras chose to address the issue with a strategy that management considered illegal should not completely overshadow the point they made.

At the same time, the Moras cannot be portrayed as heroines. Clearly, they were not particularly interested in articulating concerns for the benefit of the entire cooperative membership. The family solidarity that their housewife status allowed and required placed them in direct class conflict with other members. In this instance, their gesture of "stealing" pigs expressed the preference of all members, but none of those pigs

34. Interview with Carolina Villa.

35. Juana Morelos made this point in one of my earliest conversations with her, in March 1987.

went to campesina households or even to the neediest semi-proletarian households. Instead, the Mora women kept the benefits of that gesture for their own clan.

Part of the contradiction between housewife, campesina, and semi-proletarian interests in the cooperative can be traced to the contradictory position of migrant workers in their home communities. The Farmworkers' Economic Development Corporation was intended foremost to benefit the families of migrant members of the AFW in order to lessen the future need to migrate. As the CSF national director noted, although migrants clearly numbered among the working poor in the United States, they did not in Guadalupe: "Well, the problem was born of a lack of organization, including in the union itself, that over there [in the United States], yes, they are agricultural workers, but here no. In their same conditions of work, that makes them agricultural workers, but if we compare the social [community] structure with that of the union, they're also merchants, they're also middle-class."³⁶

The male migrant relatives of the women in Guadalupe were the class faction most removed from direct agricultural production, despite their direct producer status in Arizona. But although this contradiction was noted by CSF leadership, the organization had developed few tools to challenge it.

A cautionary note is necessary here. As with all dynamics of class and gender formation, the case cannot be baldly stated. Housewives did not function as simple dupes of management, manipulated into production decisions to generate domestic subsidy for some arcane and abstract "state purpose." Despite the fact that the choice of raising pigs ran directly counter to the interests of semi-proletarian members and was a less-desired choice for campesinas, many representatives of both factions supported the choice on largely ideological grounds because of their ideological aspirations to be housewives. As Carolina noted, "But our idea was always to construct a Guadalupe pig farm. Because the work is a little lighter. It's rough, but at the same time it's light."³⁷

Evident here is the general acceptance of housewife assumptions that work at home is light work (after several weeks of "helping out" at the farm, it did not seem light work to me). Carolina also overstated the universality of women's work with pigs. When asked if most of the cooperative members had experience in raising pigs in their home compounds, Carolina responded, "Yes, it is for precisely that reason that we based our cooperative on that."³⁸ This statement is simply not accurate, but those who had the least experience with pig farming in Guadalupe

36. Interview with Ernesto Chacón.

37. Interview with Carolina Villa.

38. *Ibid.*

were semi-proletarians, a faction that Carolina was steadily attempting to rise above.

CONCLUSIONS

The Granja Porcina in Guadalupe played a key role in the commodification of housewife domestic production in the town by serving as a source of supplemental income and political positioning for the Mora family housewives. The supplemental nature of cooperative income for housewives allowed them to regulate the extent of this subsidy to household income. By defining the cooperative as an extension of their households and thus not as "real work," their time allocated to the cooperative could be increased or decreased at will. This flexibility helped the housewives deal with an unpredictable economic environment by varying the extent of their wage subsidy and also added yet another opportunity for women to integrate their domestic and market labor. This integrated labor, while providing a critical subsidy to wages communitywide, could be defined as chores, and it therefore reinforced rather than undermined housewife ideology.

It is also clear that the ability to integrate one's domestic and market production improved housewives' status and power within the cooperative because the separation of domestic and market production severely weakened semi-proletarian women's flexibility in time and labor. This finding is crucial because most arguments about the separation of the household from "the firm" with the development of capitalism assume that such separation universally narrows women's options for economic activity.

The story of the "Mora mafia" neither condemns nor rationalizes their behavior in ethical, political, or economic terms. Rather, the behavior of the housewives in the Guadalupe pig farm exemplifies the contradictory roles of housewife ideology and labor process in the cooperative. The Moras' tendency to maintain mother-in-law relations within the cooperative can be linked to the tendency of women's income-generating projects to commodify domestic production while maintaining the "domestic character" of that production (see Chaney 1987). In Guadalupe, this outcome was possible only because of the existence of housewives.

"Pure market production" may have originated in the subsistence household, but once commodified, it ceases to be viewed as domestic production. Subsistence production of campesinas continues to be necessary for survival but remains isolated from interactions with the market. Therefore domestic subsidy, with its character as "domesticated production" (just as housewives are "domesticated women"), remains at the beck and call of both home and market. It is the ambiguity of domestic production that supports its continuation. Thus a housewife can produce

something that assists in the reproduction of capitalist structures of production while remaining invisible to that system. Production by domesticated women fits the criteria of both subsidy and invisibility.

The preceding discussion indicates that although a number of potential forms of domestic production were available in Guadalupe for incursion into the capitalist market, the only members truly able to take advantage of those opportunities were housewives.³⁹ I argue further that domestication (or partial domestication) tends not only to increase the opportunity to commodify domestic production but also to increase household income. This condition applies despite the fact that relative semi-proletarianization tends to lower household income, at least in the short term.

This contradictory position between the dual tendencies in rural Mexico toward the proletarianization and domestication has forced women to allocate their time between rural capitalist and industrial labor in times of economic expansion and intensified unpaid household production in periods of rural economic contraction (see Chaney 1987; Mones and Grant 1987; and Flora 1987). Although extended capitalist accumulation requires the productivity of semi-proletarians (a source of surplus value and guarantors of the reserve army of labor), it also requires the generation of domestic subsidy, the primary source of which is the domestic mode of production by housewives. The key point here is that the CSF cooperative allowed for partial proletarianization of women (or generation of marginal money income) while promoting the housewife ideology. Through this manipulation of worker and housewife identity, the cooperative served to regulate domestic subsidy in Guadalupe, which was needed in varying degrees depending on the general state of the economy and the productivity of the existing labor force.

Housewife labor, to the extent that it ensures general economic reproduction and hence promotes economic development, is directly susceptible to explicit and implicit policy manipulation. The fact that housewives (and all rural women) must respond to fluctuations in the economic climate and to ongoing changes in the structure of the household means that they cannot reject economic opportunities guaranteeing that flexibility, even if they wish to. But in involving themselves in external sources of support and patronage, they are often competing with their men, who may have different strategic interests.⁴⁰ For housewives, one

39. Theoretically, options also existed for capitalist production not previously undertaken in the household, like marketing, agricultural processing, and other means of increasing the economic "value" added through cooperative production. These options, which were of limited feasibility for women of all factions, would only have been conceivable with access to male-controlled sources of local capital for expansion.

40. The terms *strategic interests* and *practical interests* come from Maxine Molyneux, as cited in Young (1988). Practical interests refer to the maintenance of daily subsistence and insurance of daily reproduction. Strategic interests are directed toward transforming unequal social structures.

interest is to maintain the illusion of nonwork while generating a “crisis cushion” to deal with a changeable rural economy.

As long as external resources were at least partially available, housewives could regulate their time allocation to the Guadalupe pig farm at minimal opportunity cost to themselves and little threat to cooperative stability. But the most important lesson to be learned from the class dynamics of the Guadalupe pig farm is that all sources of power, for all the women in the cooperative, rested on ambiguous class and gender positions. With the possible exception of some of the campesinas, power was conceived in essentially masculine terms. The women of the Guadalupe pig farm, although they were quick to locate power and use it to their partial advantage, considered themselves derivatives and extensions of their male relatives. When they exercised power, they did so indirectly, in the name of their husbands, fathers, and sons.

The conflictive class dynamics discussed in this research note point to extreme difficulties in achieving the empowerment potential of cooperative production in Guadalupe. It is tempting to argue that it was the willingness of housewives to settle for half-power that kept the women of the Guadalupe pig farm from forging a collective solidarity that could have challenged prevailing patriarchal structures. This view belies the evidence that cooperative solidarity was limited by class contradictions among members because it was constrained at least as much as by acquiescence to patriarchal power.

An important theme of this research note is the contradiction expressed in this cooperative between social processes of proletarianization (of women who work for wages) and domestication (of women whose work is limited to reproduction). The difficulties faced by the cooperative revolved around the manipulation of images of work and roles by women of different social and economic classes for their own ends. These contradictions were played out in the cooperative’s conflicts over labor process and in family tensions over the allocation of domestic tasks. Furthermore, contradictions were found between women’s actual material conditions (as expressed by their access to resources and their positions in the cooperative and in the household) and the labels that women affixed to themselves as “housewife,” “worker,” or “campesina.”

These contradictions led to extensive influence over cooperative decisions by women who labeled themselves housewives and who could substantiate that self-identification with the material ability to subsist on the wages of male relatives. The power of housewives in the Guadalupe pig farm came from their relative affluence, their influence in community and cooperative political processes, and their extraordinary ability to act politically as a single bloc. Moreover, the structure of the cooperative served the interests of housewives better than it did those of workers or campesinas and, as such, did not meet its stated mission of empowering

the poorest sectors of the community. Thus through a combination of domestic ideology and class privilege, this particular attempt to develop an income-generating project for women resulted in further capital accumulation by an already privileged group within the community.

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