

The Semiproletarian Household over the *Long Duree*
of the Modern World-System

by

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The Semiproletarian Household over the *Long Duree* of the Modern World-System

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Only from below– at the bottom– can the whole be seen as a whole (von Werlhof 1984: 146)

What has capitalism “to do with the humble lives at the bottom of the ladder?” queried Fernand Braudel (1973: 445, 28-29). “Everything,” he responded, because capitalism “incorporates them in its game.” Fernand Braudel (1981, vol. 1: 559, 29) envisioned history to be “a succession of landscapes” consisting of two major levels of human existence: (a) the realm of major historical events and (b) “the ground floor and the first story” that lies in “images of daily life.”¹ Braudel (1979: 28-29, 16) argued that the task of the historian is to reveal the dialectical interplay between the upper and lower levels. But he complained that the lower level is too often ignored, so that everyday life has been “the great absentee in history.” He contended that we cannot understand the most complex layer of history– the economy-- unless we investigate how the ethnographic details of people’s everyday lives are intertwined with it. While he envisioned the upper story of economic history to be frequently innovative, he maintained that everyday life was an enormous layer of “stagnant history” in which the deprivation of the living conditions of the poor altered so slowly and in such tiny increments as to seem unchanging. According to Braudel (1981, vol. 1: 318; 1980: 3, 31, 33), “the large scale inertia of the poor” has typified the *longue duree* of capitalism, and their past “is a history which unfolds slowly and is slow to alter, often repeating itself and working itself in cycles which are endlessly renewed.”²

Rather than searching for dramatic and sudden ruptures in history, Braudel (1980: 172) insists

¹ I would like to thank Donald Clelland for his conceptual challenges, his bibliographic recommendations, and his critical review of earlier drafts of this paper.

² For the purpose of this study, I am referring to the entire history of the modern world-system as its *longue duree*.

that we should “seek to unveil subtle, often invisible, continuities between present and past,” and we should examine patterns and trends that occur over a century or longer (Lai 2000). If we analyze the *longue duree* of capitalist history, he is convinced we will discover that “centuries have something in common” because there is a “certain ‘horizontality’ of time over a long period.” Some structures of capitalism, he argues, “become stable elements for an infinite number of generations: they get in the way of history, hinder its flow, and in hindering it shape it.” Such structures continue from one generation to the next even when “a thousand reversals and ruptures totally alter the face of the world.” In the *longue duree* of capitalism from the 16th century until the present, the semiproletarian household has been such a “regular, patterned structure” (Thompson 1991: 431). I am convinced that we cannot capture the history of the capitalist world-system unless we make visible the operations of this fragile institution which has nurtured the vast majority of the world’s population in every generation.³ Because it stretches backward and forward over several generations that span a century or longer (Dickinson 1995: 19), the semiproletarian household is “a key institutional structure of the capitalist world-economy” (Smith et. al. 1984: 21) that has existed throughout the *longue duree* of the modern world-system. Because of their longevity, these households have in common several persistent structural traits. Poor households exhibit a stunning degree of similarity across time and space, and consistent patterns can be discerned across very different cultures and societies.

“Historical Stagnation”: Living Conditions of Semiproletarian Households

Let me pinpoint a specific indicator of the “historical inertia” that Braudel (1981, vol. 1: 33) associated with the world’s poor. Braudel reports that the dirt floor of homes and lack of public sanitation typified daily life for a majority of Europeans and Asians over the first 300 years of capitalism. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, the dirt floor continued to transmit parasites, disabling molds, and damp cold to poor Europeans, Asians and Americans. In colonized areas, poor white settlers, slaves and

³ Lenin (1899) and Mao (1926) first analyzed the semiproletariat. World-system analysts (Arrighi 1967, 1970, Wallerstein 1976b, 1983) initially analyzed the semiproletariat more than three decades ago.

indigenous peoples could claim common ground through their similar dirt floors in one-room rustic shelters (Dunaway 2008: 196-99). As during the first century of capitalism, households of the fourth century were at risk from grossly inadequate sanitation methods that caused repeated epidemics of infectious diseases (Snowden 1995, Dunaway 2003). Throughout today's world, a majority of semiproletarian households continue to watch their young children crawl, learn to walk and become ill on dirt floors, a high percentage of them serving as the foundations for slum shacks or overcrowded rural huts that are situated in communities without safe drinking water or spatial separation from livestock (United Nations 2004, UN-HABITAT 2003). Parallel to the 16th century, less than half the current population of poor countries has adequate sanitation (UNICEF 2007: 24).

In reality, a majority of the world's households "are worse off than their ancestors five hundred years ago" (Wallerstein 1983: 98). In the early 21st century, the semiproletarian household in poor countries is at a greater risk of extinction than are many vulnerable animal and plant species that receive far more scholarly attention. At present, one-quarter of the world's population lives on less than \$1 per day while two-thirds try to survive on less than \$2 per day (UNICEF 2007: 42). Global inequality has expanded to such an extent that the poorest two-thirds of the world's population receives a tiny sliver of world income while the richest one-fifth receives almost everything (UNICEF 2007: 42). "The point may be reached," warns a recent United Nations study, "where households are no longer able to reproduce themselves" because the current situation "is unfavourable for the operation of traditional household mechanisms and work intensification" (de la Rocha 2001: 89).⁴ I will investigate three broad topics to assess the degree to which semiproletarian households have exhibited the "historical inertia" and "the shared characteristics over generations" that Braudel (1981, vol. 1: 33, 1980: 172) predicted for impoverished households over the *longue duree* of the modern world-system:

⁴ As its beginning points, this research is informed by Wallerstein's (1983) household conceptualization and by the published works of faculty and graduate students who were active in the 1980s in the Fernand Braudel Center Research Working Group on Households, Labor Force Formation and the World-Economy. See Appendix A for appropriate citations and for a brief summary of revisions of their conceptualization. .

- ❑ the dialectical shaping of these households by the contradictory processes of *proletarianization* and *housewifization*,
- ❑ mechanisms through which capitalists extract surpluses from and externalize costs to semiproletarian households, and
- ❑ the inequitable internal dynamics through which these households struggle to survive.

Even though a small percentage of semiproletarians have always existed in richer countries, I will focus on households in poor countries where a majority of these workers are concentrated. For historical details and contemporary comparisons, I have drawn upon 289 case studies that span a diverse array of societies and cultures.

The Siamese Twins of Capitalism: Proletarianization and Housewifization

There is widespread consensus among international development agencies (United Nations 1999), among radical feminists (e.g., von Werlhof 1984) and among world-system analysts (e.g. Wallerstein 1983: 26) that the vast majority of the world's workers have never been fully proletarianized. The mainstream view is that the world's nonwaged workers are "redundant people" who are too flawed to be successful in a capitalist system (von Werlhof 1984: 145). In contrast, Wallerstein (1983: 23, 36, 91) contends that there are so many nonwaged workers in the world because proletarianization leads to reduced profit levels in the capitalist world-economy. The "partiality of wage labor" is an historical hallmark of the modern world-system (McGuire et. al. 1986, Wallerstein 1995: 1), and "households whose incomes are based entirely upon remuneration through the wage mechanism have never been fully developed" (Stauth 1983: 289). Simply put, complete proletarianization is too costly for capitalists (Frobel 1982) because full integration of all workers into waged work "puts the onus on capital to reproduce its labor force" (Broad 1991: 566). In fact, new processes of nonwaged labor have been created far more rapidly and consistently than workers have been integrated into waged labor (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1987: 773).

Capitalist Goal: The Semiproletarian Household

Indeed, capitalists have always resisted full proletarianization while they have promoted the continued existence of the semiproletarian households that make possible “the lowest possible wage” (Wallerstein 1983: 91) and the invention of “producers who work without wages” (von Werlhof 1985: 15). Since the 16th century (Smith 1989), the wage has covered only part of the cost of provisioning and reproducing the labor force (Dickinson 1995). Consequently, workers have been forced to depend upon nonwaged income and resources (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 254, 262).

First, there is a pattern, worldwide in scope, in the degree to which non-waged labor activities supplement earnings from wages. Secondly, these non-waged labor forms are the product of constraints specific to the capitalist world-economy. . . . these informally organized relations are not some survival from a precapitalist past nor are they just a method of subordinating women. . . . Non-waged labor is, in terms of the modern world-system, no less ‘capitalist’ than the labor in the most advanced robotized plant (von Werlhof 1983: 321).

On the one hand, capitalism has always needed “small producers whose labor power is not being ‘utilised fully’ and who are available as cheap laborers” (von Werlhof 1983: 338). On the other hand, wage workers “are only marginally or partially proletarianized as, over their life cycle, they derive the bulk of the means of subsistence for their families from outside the wage economy” (Arrighi and Saul 1968: 149).

The Counter-Process of Housewifization

At the same time that capitalism tends toward *proletarianization*, the system offsets that creation of waged laborers through the process of *housewifization*. Because invisible household labor is a structural necessity of capitalism, housewifization is that process through which capitalists obfuscate the economic value of household contributions to capital accumulation (von Werlhof 1983: 356).⁵ “The extremely different conditions of work of the free wage laborer and the housewife constitute the two poles of a continuum of capitalist conditions of work relations and of production” (von Werlhof 1984: 140). The parasitic relationship between wage labor and housewife production constitutes “the basis of all

⁵ For a discussion of the historical development of the definition of household-based work as nonproductive, see Folbre (1991).

capitalist relations of production” (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1984: 266).⁶

Only if women remain outside the formal sector and are socially defined as housewives can the double exploitation of their labor go on. Not only the big exporters, but also the husbands. . . are benefiting as non-producers from [women's] ongoing subsistence production. The integration of women. . . into a world system of capital accumulation has not and will not transform them into free wage-labourers. It is precisely this fact-- their not being free wage-labourers, but housewives-- which makes capital accumulation possible. (Mies 1981: 500).

Over the *longue duree*, proletarianization has moved slowly and impacted only a small percentage of the world’s population in every historical epoch. Instead, the typical capitalist worker has been “the marginalized, housewifized, unfree labourer, most of them women” (Mies 1986:116). By externalizing the maintenance and reproduction of households outside the range of capitalist costs of production (von Werlhof 1985: 19), housewifization justifies low wages and renders invisible and inequitably remunerated a large part of world labor (Chang 1995). “Women are the optimal labour force because they are now universally defined as ‘housewives,’ not as workers.” Whether for household consumption or market, their work “is obscured, does not appear as ‘free wage labour,’ is defined as an ‘income-generating *activity*,’ and can hence be bought at a much cheaper price than male labour” (Mies 1986: 116). On the one hand, housewifization has been a functional requirement of capitalism (Mies 1986) to such an extent that household-based work– not wage labor– has been predominant in the modern world-system (von Werlhof 1984: 141). On the other hand, housewifization is “the great ‘Other’ of the market” (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1999: 154) because capitalism lays a “veil of invisibility” over household-based work, especially that of women (Blumberg 1979: 448). Indeed, “the secret of all capitalist life” is that unwaged labor supplies much of the surplus that capitalists accumulate (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1999: 176).

⁶ The housewife did not exist in her present form prior to capitalism, but she has existed throughout the *longue duree* of the modern world-system. Prior to capitalism, people were tied to larger communities which pooled survival and reproduction resources (Dunaway 1997). When an area is incorporated into the world-system, capitalists effect policies that lead to the elimination of alternative household and family arrangements (Smith and Wallerstein 1992).

How Do Capitalists Extract Surplus from Households?

Because of the parasitic nexus between proletarianization and housewifization, the vast majority of the world's workers are marginalized into semiproletarian households where capitalists can more easily exploit laborers (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1999: 176). Indeed, these households are the the loci of "human capital accumulation" because they produce the future labor supply and make the necessary investments in survival needs, education, and health that are required to sustain that labor over its life cycle (Terleckyj 1975: 230-231).⁷ However, these households serve another essential function for capitalism. They represent millions of structural units that enable capitalists to conceal their systematic extraction of surpluses from workers and from women. Because capitalists extract surpluses from semiproletarian households, consumers never pay the full cost of any commodity. If capitalists compensated households for all their hidden subsidies, externalized costs and unpaid labor, prices would be driven so high that most commodities would not be competitive in the world-economy. At the macrostructural level, the commodity chain is the global mechanism that insures the inequitable division of surplus among the core, semiperiphery, and periphery (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1994). Long before those expropriations can occur, however, the commodity chain structures the maximal exploitation of under-paid and unpaid labor.

Hidden Household Subsidies of Capitalist Commodity Production

A commodity chain is more than a long string of spatial points at which mechanical processes occur to generate a marketable product. Because it consists of successive layers of unequal exchanges, a commodity chain is an interconnected network of nodes at which laborers are directly and indirectly exploited to permit surplus extraction. Indeed, every exchange within a commodity chain is unequal, for there is a polarized distribution of the means of production (including natural resources) not only *between* nodes but also *within* every single node (Dunaway 2001). Consequently, a commodity chain structures

⁷ In this unusual study conducted by the National Bureau of Economic Research, US economists acknowledge that "human capital is self-productive" because "firms do not pay for any of these costs."

multiple opportunities to extract surpluses from semiproletarian households through:

- ❑ unpaid reproduction and maintenance of the labor force,
- ❑ unpaid household labor that is contributed to the production of a capitalist commodity,
- ❑ under-paid household and informal sector outputs that are integrated into commodity chains,
- ❑ putting out systems, and
- ❑ higher node extraction of surplus that was produced by households at a lower node.

Figure 1 about here

Unpaid reproductive labor. The first level of hidden inputs into commodity chains occurs through women's biological ability to reproduce and to sustain new laborers (see Figure 1). Historically, capitalism triggered the division of the economy into visible and invisible sectors (Mies 1986: 100-110) to capture the hidden value of unpaid household labor. Only that which has value in the marketplace was assigned to the formal economy while the work necessary to produce and maintain households was redefined to be "non-work." Labor that earned money outside the household in the capitalist "work place" came to be defined as "productive." Concomitantly, labor inside the household was devalued with the myth that it generated no surplus that could be appropriated (Wallerstein 1983: 24). "It is the wage form," contends Seccombe (1974: 29), "that obscures domestic labour's relation to capital." Even though it is not priced in the marketplace, housework has economic value, and its unwaged character makes it highly profitable. The housewife's unpaid work is "embodied in the waged labor, and it is a direct input into production. It is not necessary for the housewife to sell her labor to the capitalist for her labor to generate economic surpluses. Traded first to the husband for partial subsistence, it then existed in the husband's labor as an element of subsistence made available to capital for free" (Boydston 1986: 21-22). For this reason, non-proletarianized labor is essential to capitalism, for the highest profits result when nonwaged forms of labor subsidize the wages of proletarians (Wallerstein 1976a: 279). In semiproletarian households, wages "can be reduced below the level of household reproduction because the household supplements this income with its other income-generating activities" (Wallerstein, 1995: 5-6; also cf.

Wallerstein et. al. 1982: 440).

Unpaid contributions to capitalist commodities. In reality, the semiproletarian household is a locus of production in which members simultaneously produce use-value and exchange-value (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1984, Blumberg 1979). As Fox-Genovese (1983: 229) has observed, “the decisive social relations of production are contained within the household rather than outside it.” Consequently, the second level of hidden subsidies occurs through unpaid household labor that is contributed to home-based capitalist commodity production. Because of their combined subsidization of capitalism through reproductive labors and their unpaid market-oriented labors, semiproletarian households have been the “pillar of accumulation” throughout the history of the world-system (von Werlhof 1984).⁸ For instance, women and girls are more likely to be unpaid workers in family-based enterprises or farms (United Nations. 2003: 109-27). In agricultural households, for example, women's labor remains hidden behind that of adult males who cultivate cash crops for export (Mies et. al. 1988, Dunaway 1995). Virtually every wife and most children are expected to contribute labor as assistants to the market-oriented production of the husband, but that “family labor” is neither valued economically nor acknowledged socially (Boydston 1986: 9).

Under-paid contributions to capitalist commodities. Capitalists do not only extract surpluses through unpaid household labor, for paid work that is household-based is also devalued and rendered invisible. The third level of hidden subsidies occurs when households and women receive low remuneration for their non-wage inputs into a capitalist production process. A narrow emphasis upon those waged and nonwaged laborers who are involved *directly* in manufacture of the commodity can

⁸ I am challenging the western feminist (e.g., Matthaiei 1982) claim that the household and the capitalist enterprise are two separate spheres. In that scenario, the household is supposed to be the women's sphere of domestic activity while the productive process is externalized into the male-dominated capitalist realm. Woman's work in the home is described as “a premarket form of labor” in which the household never engages in income-earning activities that are traded publicly. In this bifurcated typology, the household relies on the unpaid labor of women and the paid labor of males. Moreover, “the surplus above subsistence which enters [the household] does not pass beyond it into a productive activity” (Smith 1973: 17). This conceptualization ignores all household labors other than unpaid labor reproduction and household maintenance.

ignore three types of hidden laborer inputs. There can be direct and indirect flows into the production process from household provision pools, from the informal economy, and from illegal sectors (Dunaway 2008). The informal sector provides cheaper goods to capitalist workers, and informal goods and services are routinely integrated into capitalist commodity chains (Portes 1983). In peripheral regions, women and children receive below-market prices for household-based inputs into commodity chains, including the collection of ecological resources and the retrieval of recyclable items from the garbage (Mies 1986, Dunaway and Macabuac 2007). Locally and globally, nonwaged workers in households supply foodstuffs, raw materials and other inputs that provision the capitalist production process (Dunaway 1996). Even though their household-based labor generates market commodities or informal sector inputs into the export production process, their inputs are priced at below-market levels (Mies 1981).

Putting out systems. The fourth level of hidden subsidies occurs when semiproletarian households engage in home-based production of goods and services that are integrated into commodity chains. Such putting out systems have been an enduring feature of capitalism since the 16th century (Braudel 1981, vol. 2: 298-99), and “feminization is a crucial dimension of its structural nature” (Dangler 2000: 66). Throughout the *longue duree* of capitalism, women have completed piece-rate labor through cottage industries and putting out systems (Littlefield and Reynolds 1990; Dunaway 1994, 2008). In poor countries, capitalist industries integrate low-paying nonwaged work of householders directly into their commodity chains by employing casualized labor and other forms of home-based contract work (von Werlhof 1984, Ward 1990, Collins and Krippne 1999, Beneria and Roldan 1987).⁹

By employing putting out mechanisms, capitalists can revert to earlier production forms that rely on cheap nonwaged labor and inexpensive material inputs that are contributed by households (Portes 1983: 171, Beneria and Roldan 1987: 73). Through these exploitative labor mechanisms, capitalists

⁹ In the core, female wage laborers are “being transformed into non-free housewifized labour.” Once they are pushed out of the formal sector, they are reintegrated into capitalist commodity chains through “a whole range of informal, nonorganized, non-protected production relations, ranging from part-time work, through contract work, to homeworking” (Mies 1986: 126-27).

externalize much of the costs of production to households by paying a level of remuneration that falls far below the wages paid to factory workers. Households assume the costs for provisioning workers, for the integration of unpaid children, for equipment, for electricity and support goods and services, and for any public accountability associated with ecological damage. Despite the significance of their labor inputs into commodity chains, homeworkers are rendered publicly invisible because they are neither counted in national statistics nor as part of the waged labor force (Beneria and Roldan 1987). In the contemporary period, these forms of non-wage labor are still common all over the world (Mies 1981, Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983, Beneria and Roldan 1987, Miller 1999). Many Asian women “have been housewifized” (Mies 1986) to subsidize textile commodity chains through their integration into low-paying piece-rate contracts (Mies 1981).¹⁰

Higher node extraction of lower node surplus. The fifth level of hidden subsidies occurs when households and women at lower nodes of a commodity chain subsidize households, laborers, or consumers at higher nodes. In effect, the commodity chain structures a network in which consumer and laborer households at higher nodes benefit from the exploitation of households at lower nodes. The provisioning inputs of households at one node may subsidize other nodes of the commodity chain. Through the commodity chain that exports shrimp from the Philippines, for example, capitalism exploits women in a poor country as cheap nonwaged producers of commodities in order to export food to the core working class. In this context, the low wages, malnutrition, and degraded ecosystems of Philippine subsistence fishing households keep the global prices of shrimp low, permitting the distant consumer to avoid the real costs of production and to pay cheap prices for this luxury food. While the distant fisher wife and her children go lacking in essential protein and iron, the Japanese working-class housewife feeds her offspring an abundance of hidden Philippine sacrifices for which she does not pay (Dunaway and

¹⁰ In the core, there is a trend toward home-based workers who utilize computers and subcontracting systems in which women are paid by task completion, thereby cutting the costs incurred by employers for wages and employee benefits (Ward 1990).

Macabuac 2007).

How Capitalists Externalize Costs to Households

In addition to these hidden semiproletarian subsidies, capitalists also maximize profits by externalizing costs of production to households and to the ecosystems that provision them (Frobel 1982: 534). In reality, capitalists externalize most of the real costs of commodity production. "Externalized costs are unseen and unpaid bills that are additional components of unequal exchange. They are part and parcel of normal capitalism, and they are to be found at every node/link of every commodity chain" (Wallerstein 1995). Over the *longue duree* of capitalism, semiproletarian households have absorbed production and distribution costs from commodity chains at six levels (see Figure 1):

- reproduction, maintenance, and health care of waged laborers,
- threats to household and human survival,
- household restructuring to react to capitalist changes and economic crisis,
- export of surplus laborers,
- household work to consume capitalist goods, and
- greater risks for women and girls.

Wage labor costs. At the most fundamental level, capitalism transforms women into "the last link in a chain of exploitation, permitting by their unpaid labour the reproduction" of the work force" (Mies et. al. 1988: 29). The biological reality of women's lives is sexual and reproductive. Thus, capitalism externalizes to mothers the costs associated with the bearing and raising of successive generations of laborers. Despite its dependency upon this natural female contribution, however, capitalism has externalized child rearing outside the realm of the economic (Sen 1980: 82). Second, the household is the site in which women undertake unpaid labor for those members who are waged laborers. To generate family survival requirements, women engage in "shadow work" outside formal capitalist structures in which labor is remunerated (von Werlhof 1985).

What the housewife produces. . . are not simply use-values but the commodity "labour-power"

which the husband then can sell as a ‘free’ wage labourer in the labour market. . . . the productivity of the housewife is the precondition for the productivity of the (male) wage labourer. . . . Hence, the housewife and her labour are not outside of surplus value production, but constitute the very foundation upon which this process can get started. The housewife and her labour are, in other words, the basis of the process of capital accumulation (Mies 1986: 31).

Perhaps the most expensive externalized costs are health care-giving and medical treatment for workers injured on capitalist jobs.

Threats to survival. The second category of externalized costs consists of threats to household survival. Over the *longue duree*, capitalism has generated chronic scarcity of resources that are needed to supply the basic survival needs of households. Capitalism “has always been unsustainable since it has assumed, from the start and continues to assume, extermination and hunger for an increasingly large part of humanity” (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1999: 17). Even though capitalism cannot survive without the profits that accrue from exploitation of the world’s semiproletarian households, the modern world-system threatens their survival by concentrating the world’s assets and resources into a very few hands. Capitalists have destroyed the capacity of these households to self-provision by expropriating and by degrading land and natural resources that are essential to household provisioning. Through super-exploitation of semiproletarian labor, capitalists appropriate “so many of the fruits of the workers’ labor that the workers cannot maintain themselves or reproduce their labor power” (Frank 1981: 87). In addition, capitalist enterprises in poor countries target a minority of workers while “preventing the majority from entering the occupational niches that export-oriented economic policies foster.” As a result, “workers are leaving waged employment and self-employment *at earlier moments* in their lives, and they are becoming disposable earlier and younger than in the past” (de la Rocha 2001: 92, 88). Moreover, capitalist commodity chains replace household crafts with imports and capture a high proportion of local consumer goods for export production.

In every historical epoch, the modern world-system has been characterized by declining biodiversity and crisis in fresh water. Industry-generated global warming has led to rising sea levels and desertification of the periphery. Capitalist agriculture has degraded so much of the world’s soil that the

percentage of arable land has declined to critical levels (Goldfrank et. al. 1999). Since agricultural production has been increasingly integrated into world commodity chains, food self-sufficiency has declined sharply in poor countries. Peripheral countries now import two-thirds or more of the food needed for local consumption, raising the prices of basic survival needs above levels that the poor can afford (Spielfoch 2000). Throughout the *longue duree* of capitalism, the poor have never received their equitable share of the world's food (Braudel 1981, vol. 1: 104-180), and the situation is still grim. Since 1900, the proportion of hungry and malnourished people in the world has risen, and per-capita calorie intake has steadily declined in poor countries (Patnaik 2008).

Household boundary restructuring. The third category of externalized costs results when households are forced to restructure their boundaries and internal dynamics to confront capitalist crises and changes over which they have no control. Such household restructuring occurs in reaction to capitalist incorporation of a geographical area, to offset the effects of the widening and deepening of capitalism in an area, or to adjust to the economic cycles of the world-economy (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 19-21). Through geographic expansion, capitalists integrate new work-forces “destined to be semi-proletarianized” (Wallerstein 1983: 39). In order to force the emergence of households oriented around the reproduction of wage laborers (Stauth 1983), capitalist states implemented policies that eliminated the communal and inter-household networking systems of precapitalist communities (Arrighi 1970, Wallerstein and Martin 1979, Wong 1984, Smith and Wallerstein 1992, Dickinson 1995, Dunaway 1997). Even when capitalist states have initiated policies that were intended to speed up proletarianization, the vast majority of the laborers have been marginalized from waged occupations (Arrighi 1970, Munslow and Finch 1984: 121-47). Over the *longue duree* of capitalism, the semiproletarian household has repeatedly been “redefined and reshaped as part of the pulling and tugging that constitutes accumulation on a world scale” (McGuire et. al. 1986). Historically, households have repeatedly been forced to alter their composition in reaction to growing immiseration caused by capitalism (Matthei and Smith 1996).

Export of surplus laborers. The fourth category of externalized costs result from the household

disruption associated with the export of surplus laborers. In every historical era, capitalists have destabilized households by removing members (most often adult males) for labor migrations (Morrissey 1986, Boss 1993, Gisbert et. al. 1994, Grosfoguel 1997, Dunaway 2003). In order to centralize capitalist labor forces in cities, capitalists depopulate rural areas, decompose households and weaken their provisioning capacity (Goldfrank et. al. 1999).¹¹ Women's reproductive work has been restructured internationally to redistribute core household "care" work onto peripheral women, as evidenced by the current transnational migration of domestic servants, the emergence of an international baby market, and the booming international sex tourism industry (Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa 1999). To permit transnational migrants to be employed in distant countries, contemporary "transnational families" (Boss 1993, Parrenas 2005) absorb the shortfalls caused by absent members. Through the "international transfer of caregiving," reproductive labor of migrant domestic workers is shifted from peripheral children to middle-class women in richer countries. In turn, the migrant women must transfer to poorer females in their home countries their child care and unpaid household labor (Parrenas 2000).

Unpaid consumption work. The fifth category of externalized costs is unpaid consumption work that keeps capitalist distribution costs low. Capitalists need to "create and maintain households of a shape and form that will create an optimal market for wage-goods" (Wallerstein et. al. 1982: 441). As households become more dependent on the market to supply their basic needs, economist John Kenneth Galbraith observes that:

the volume and diversity of consumption increase and therewith the number and complexity of the tasks of household management. The distribution of time between the various tasks associated with the household. . . and forms of consumption becomes an increasingly complex and demanding affair. In consequence, and paradoxically, the manual role of the women becomes more arduous (Lloyd 1975: 112).

Through the work she does to locate and purchase, to assemble and to utilize, or to make commodities edible, the consumer-housewife does more and more unpaid work "in order to lower the costs for the

¹¹ To aid employers in securing cheap laborers, core states historically removed children from semiproletarian households and indentured them to capitalists (Dunaway 2008).

realization of capital” (Mies 1986: 126). As poor countries become increasingly dependent on food imports, women must work every day to locate scarce goods at affordable prices, to transport them home, and to prepare them for consumption. At the same time, the household also absorbs rising prices for foods that were previously obtained through household provisioning or informal sector activities (von Werlhof 2007). Moreover, reallocation of household labor time toward the pursuit of capitalist commodities leads to the decline of handicraft production, causing loss of livelihood for thousands of households (Wallerstein and Martin 1979: 198, Dunaway 1994).

The greater risks that are suffered by women and girls represent the sixth category of externalized costs (see Figure 2). Because the inequalities are so stark, it is easy to be fooled into thinking that all peripheral men, women, and children experience the same degrees of immiseration. However, the world-system has structured "a modern form of patriarchal relations, in which women experience a social reality very different from their brothers in capital or labor" (Salleh 1994: 108-109). Consequently, peripheral men and women do not experience the same degrees of exclusion and poverty. If we are to capture the workings of the household, therefore, we must recognize that there are two classes of people among the semiproletarians: the double exploited (women) and those who are both exploited/exploiters (men). “Men are socially enabled to compensate for their exploitation (partly/totally?) by appropriating the labor-power/sexuality and bodies of women” (von Werlhof 1980: 40-41).

Figure 2 about here

To treat all peripheral households as though there are no gender differences in the experience of inequality is to ignore the worst effects of the world-system itself. A majority of women control very little wealth, 70 percent of the world's illiterate adults are women, and there is an increasing trend toward female-headed households and feminization of poverty all over the world (United Nations 1999). Women are disproportionately endangered by the ecological degradation that accompanies capitalist development (Merchant 1992, Stephens 1994), and they are the household members who must contribute the labor needed to care for those made ill by environmental risks or resource depletion (Warren 1997: 8-9).

Worldwide, resource scarcities impact women much more severely than men (Shiva 1988: 9). Water scarcity, desertification, deforestation, land degradation, and coastal pollution are forms of resource depletion that pose special hardships for women. Malnutrition is the most fundamental act of environmental sexism that is inflicted by the capitalist world-system upon women and girls. Half of all Third World children die before age ten, and females are disproportionately represented among those deaths (United Nations 1999). Capitalism also externalizes to females the nutritional battering of children associated with high fertility rates that accompany high child mortality in about one-third of all peripheral countries (Ward 1985, Scheper-Hughes 1991).

Because the modern world-system has institutionalized the cultural devaluation of the work of women and girls (Wallerstein 1983: 103), integration into capitalist commodity chains brings destructive economic results for women. Historically and currently, women have been targeted for the dirtiest, most back-breaking aspects of the capitalist production process (Dunaway 1995), while higher-skilled, higher-paying artisan jobs have been reserved for males (Dunaway 2008). In the face of capitalist expansion, peripheral women lose artisan jobs to imports and see their local markets subsumed by commercialized agriculture (Mies et. al. 1988). The world-system is currently structuring a vast international sex industry, and girls are targeted as the human resources to be exploited (Mies 1986: 137-42). Peripheral females are entering the waged labor force faster than adult males, and this is a trend expected to continue into the 21st century (United Nations 2003). Domestic violence increases when capitalists enterprises target female workers and exclude males (Mies 1986). To keep production costs low, capitalists are breaking the bodies of peripheral girls and young women at an alarming rate. By eliminating safety equipment and sanitary working conditions, corporations externalize to females the health costs of industrial injuries and disabilities, work-related diseases, and the higher incidence of birth defects and mother mortality due to exposure to chemicals and industrial waste. Yet most of these women live in countries with grossly inadequate medical systems (Madeley 1999). These kinds of indicators bear witness to the “stagnant history” of continuing semiproletarian deprivation to which Braudel (1981, vol. 1: 318) called attention.

How Do Semiproletarian Households Persist Through Capitalist Threats? ¹²

It is tempting to romanticize semiproletarian households as arenas of greater nurture than can be found in the marketplace. But it is not that simple. Households are microcosms of the inequities of the modern world-system, so they are structures which combine elements of both human intimacy and capitalist enterprise, and they juxtapose market values against the conflicting basic needs of human survival (Ulshofer 1983). Consequently, two simultaneous processes unfold within households. On the one hand, labor and other surpluses flow out to subsidize capitalist commodity chains. On the other hand, householders need greater income as desperately as any capitalist requires wealth accumulation. As a result, households seek remuneration from the very system that threatens their safety and survival. Over the *longue duree*, semiproletarian households have employed five broad mechanisms to try to survive the immiseration caused by capitalism (see Figure 3):

- ❑ inequitable management of scarce labor time,
- ❑ inequitable management of scarce resources,
- ❑ restructuring of household boundaries,
- ❑ alteration of gendered labor roles, and
- ❑ antisystemic resistance.

Figure 3 about here

Inequitable Management of Scarce Labor Time

The first survival mechanism of semiproletarian households is their inequitable management of scarce labor time. Over the *longue duree* and across societies, three patterns are consistently exhibited in the strategies through which work is allocated within households:

- ❑ allocation of members' labor time and energy into a diverse portfolio of labors,
- ❑ inequitable allocation of work to members,

¹² Trends and patterns in this section were derived from analysis of 289 case studies that span the 16th century to the contemporary period.

□ and self-exploitation by members.

Historically, semiproletarian households have woven together a creative tapestry of labors in order to accumulate a consumption fund adequate to sustain their members (Dunaway 2008). Thus, “the production and reproduction of labor power have always been based on a mix of wage-labor with nonvalorized domestic, rural, and artisan labor” (Broad 2000: 31). In reality, unpaid household labor is the principal activity of only one in four women in poor countries where 40 percent of females are now economically active (UNICEF 2007: 38-39). Throughout the *longue duree* of capitalism, householders have routinely superimposed several types of income-generating labor upon their domestic responsibilities (see Figure 4), and females have played crucial roles in the household’s diverse portfolio of labors. Semiproletarian households have always been arenas for both reproductive work and productive income-earning labors (Dunaway 2008).

Figure 4 about here

Diverse labor portfolio. To varying degrees depending on its geographical location, class and racial status, a semiproletarian household articulates several unpaid, waged and nonwaged activities in a complex portfolio of labors, sometimes merging both agricultural and nonagricultural work.¹³ Over the *longue duree*, semiproletarian households have frequently co-mingled eleven categories of labor (see Figure 4). Typically, women engage in four types of unpaid household labor, including biological reproduction and child rearing, household provisioning and maintenance, inter-household networking or community work, and the hidden household labor that supports the income-earning activity of a male member (Boydston 1986). Households have historically engaged in an array of informal sector activities, including home-based activities to generate goods and services for local markets, informal waged labor, enterprise ownership, and labor indenturement of household members, especially children (Schlemmer 2000: 21-47). Finally, households can simultaneously be involved in one or more types of income-earning

¹³ Anthropologists term this household co-mingling of labors *pluriactivity*; see Marsden (1990).

labor that is integrated into a capitalist commodity chain, including waged or salaried work or home-based putting out systems.

Semiproletarian labors are far more deeply integrated into the informal sector than into capitalist commodity chains, and women are over-represented in the informal sectors of most countries (United Nations 2003, UNICEF 2007).¹⁴ Such nonwaged activities have continued to exist and proliferate, especially during economic downturns (McGuire et. al. 1986). In the early 21st century, “labor that is not directly organized by the wage is on the increase everywhere in the world” (Smith et. al. 1984: 65). In fact, the vast majority of the world’s workers draw their income from the informal sector (United Nations 1999, Leonard 1998).¹⁵ As a direct result of 1990s neoliberal policies, the informal sector has exploded in poor countries, creating “a surplus population working in unskilled, unprotected and low-wage informal service industries and trade” (United Nations 2004: 40, 46). The 21st century informal sector is creating half to two-thirds of the new jobs in poor countries, and informal employment will absorb 90 percent of new urban workers in the future (UN-HABITAT 2003, United Nations 2004).¹⁶

Semiproletarian households juggle an ever widening work portfolio, in order to have a security net that provides a “hedge against failures in any one component of their survival package” (Dunaway and Macabuac 2007: 333). Even though householders practice “risk spreading” through diversification of livelihood strategies (Baker 1995), these diverse forms of labor do not operate autonomously. In fact, the articulation of different types of labor has the effect of making households vulnerable to the loss of

¹⁴ The quantity of informal sector labor has dwarfed the mass of capitalist wage labor in every historical epoch, and “the informal sector has always been part of the capitalist world-economy” (Broad 2000: 28, also cf. Tabak 2000: 1-19).

¹⁵ Contemporary development programs have redefined such work to be “livelihood strategies” for underemployed households in poor countries. Consequently, current development policy is to encourage and to broaden these forms of semiproletarian work since there are too few waged opportunities with capitalist enterprises (Bose and Acosta-Belen. 1995).

¹⁶ The concept “informal sector” was introduced by the International Labor Organization (ILO 1972). For an overview of conceptual debates about the informal sector, see Quijano (2000: 133-65). In the contemporary U.S., workers overcome loss of waged labor by returning to semiproletarian survival strategies through nonwaged activities in the informal sector (Portes and Sassen 1987, Nelson and Smith 1999: 121).

wages, even when that type of income comprises a minority of the total household pool. Self-provisioning is no longer independent from wages, and people without regular wage income face great difficulty in self-provisioning, especially in urban areas.

Self-provisioning activities and household production of goods and services for household consumption are dependent on regular wages. . . . Petty commodity production, domestic production of goods and services for household consumption, and social exchange through networking are not activities that can be taken for granted. They require money investment (de la Rocha 2001 91-93).

Inequitable allocation of work. The second consistent pattern is inequitable allocation of work to members. What was new under historical capitalism was “a steady devaluation of the work of women (and the young and old)” and a corresponding valorization of waged labor (Wallerstein 1983: 24-25). Because households reflect these capitalist market values, waged laborers contribute less total work toward household survival than their nonwaged peers. There is widespread consensus that women worldwide work more hours than men (Longhurst 1982, Roldan 1984, Wilk 1987, Waring 1988, Deere 1990).¹⁷ According to a recent UNICEF (2007: 37-38) study, women spend 6 to 8 times more hours at household chores than men. In addition, girls do more of the unpaid household labor than boys. Even when wives in poor countries provide significant income to their households, their contributions do not afford them enough leverage to convince males to assist with domestic work (UNICEF 2007: 22-23).

Women’s capacity to maneuver the duty component of their total workload is very limited. In fact, women’s bargaining capacity is reduced to deciding whether to concentrate on paid or unpaid work. . . . They can mobilize claims to other women’s labor. In no case, however, have women been able to significantly diminish their own contribution by having husbands undertake a share of domestic work (Beneria and Roldan 1987: 135, 146).

Crisis management through self-exploitation. The third consistent pattern of household labor management is self-exploitation. During crises or shortfalls in basic needs, semiproletarian households have few options for broadening their resource pool (Rosas 2002). Girls are almost always the children

¹⁷ It is important to note that part of the inequitable workload of females is assigned to them by other older females (United Nations 2003).

kept out of school to do home-based work during crises (UNICEF 2007: 41, World Bank 2001).

Consequently, they more deeply self-exploit by working longer hours, sleeping less and intensifying use of family labor (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 51-57). As one Philippine semiproletarian observed, “it is solely your body that earns a living. If you rest, you will have nothing to eat” (Dunaway and Macabuaac 2007: 333). During crises, households most often expand their resource pool through an intensified work load for women and girls. In addition to taking in rent-paying boarders whom they must service, more wives and daughters enter the labor force as wage earners or expand their cash-generating informal sector activities (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 33-50, Rosas 2002). In order to accommodate these new extra-household labors, women are forced to lengthen their work days in order to articulate their income-earning labors with conflicting household chores, provisioning, and gathering activities (Moser 1996). One Philippine wife captures the stress and over-exertion associated with a diverse portfolio of waged and nonwaged labors. “A bird wakes up at dawn and immediately flies about looking for food,” she explains. “The bird spends his days doing this. The next day is the same. Me, too. I wake up and scurry around looking for food and work wherever I can find it. . . becoming dizzy trying to keep my family alive. By evening, I’m tired and weak. At dawn, I have to be up again doing the same, like the birds” (Dunaway and Macabuaac 2007: 334). While women take on the burden of double or triple work days, males do not typically match the level of female contributions through the same degree of self-exploitation (Moser 1996, Rosas 2002).

Historically during crises, households have expanded their survival pools by maximizing the economic value to be accrued from child labor. Many households increase the number of income earners by removing children from school to earn wages or informal sector income, to beg on the streets, or to assume the household or provisioning labor that a newly-waged mother can no longer handle (Bradbury 1984, Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 192-94, Dickinson 1995, Young and Alderman 1997, de la Rocha 2001, Rosas 2002). Desperately poor households have engaged in some extreme forms of self-exploitation. By harvesting the body organs of the poor, semiperipheral hospitals now cater to rich

medical tourists in need of transplants they cannot secure in a core country (Scheper-Hughes 2002).

Historically, parental indenturement of child laborers has been a common practice in capitalist societies.¹⁸

In the contemporary period, the numbers of children trapped in the international sex tourism industry have been fed by the willingness of parents to indenture their daughters (and a few sons) to brothels and sex traffickers (Dottridge 2002).

Inequitable Management of Scarce Resources

The second survival mechanism of semiproletarian households is their inequitable management of scarce resources through three strategies:

- ❑ unequal contributions to household survival pools,
- ❑ inequitable distribution,
- ❑ and power struggles.

Because capitalism marginalizes a majority of workers outside the wage labor force (Arrighi 1970) and because capitalism remunerates men and women at differential levels (UNICEF 2007), household members are positioned to make unequal contributions to household pools. Even though males are still over-represented in waged jobs, women routinely contribute an inequitable share of the total pool of resources (Roldan 1984, Bose and Acosta-Belen 1995). In this way, the household mirrors "the basic inequality of partners that underlies the capitalistic process" (Braudel 1979: 62-63), and women are doubly housewifized. On the one hand, females are concentrated in low-paying informal sector and home-based work (United Nations 2003), positioning them to bring less income to the total household pool. On the other hand, husbands often render invisible the diverse array of female inputs and assume a greater degree of control over management of the pool. In a majority of semiproletarian households historically, husbands have exercised an inequitable degree of control over their own earnings and over budget priorities. In many households, wives are responsible for budgeting and allocation of resources, but their

¹⁸ It is important to stress that child indenturement was relatively common in core countries until the late 19th century (Dunaway 2008: 250-54).

degree of control is minimal (Dunaway and Macabuac 2007: 330-31). In fact, the wife's control:

is largely illusory, for she has no financial autonomy. The pool she manages must cover unavoidable expenditures. In addition, husbands do not withdraw from the scene after delivering their contribution; rather they exercise several mechanisms of control. Most important. . . a husband makes sure that 'his' money is spent to cover basic family needs as well as his desired level of personal consumption (Dwyer and Bruce 1988: 235).

In most case studies, males withheld part of their earnings, forcing women to make up shortfalls or unexpected expenses. Many males also took control over part of their wife's income (Beneria and Roldan 1987: 135). In poor countries, women tend to assume responsibility for the extra weekly medical and educational expenditures of children, and crises do not necessarily cause husbands to lower their demands for pocket money.

Inequitable distribution of resources. Rather than being egalitarian, the semiproletarian household is a capitalist structure in which conflicting interests lead to unequal access to resources (de la Rocha 1994). Resource pooling "for the common good does not mean that all members of the group have equal benefit from them." On the contrary, intra-household inequality is pervasive around the world (Haddad and Kanbur 1990).¹⁹ Access to resources is determined by a household member's status in a hierarchical order based on income-earning capacity, gender, and age, with the male wage earners at the top and mothers falling last (Young et. al. 1981: 88-111). Because they reflect the capitalist valorization of income-earning labor (Wallerstein 1983: 24-25), semiproletarian households allocate an inequitable share of household resources to waged workers (Wilk 1987). Like the capitalist system itself, the household is grounded in patriarchal principles that derive from the processes of proletarianization and housewifization. Like capitalists, some householders are so driven by self-interest that they exploit the altruism of others. Wage earners often behave in the household as though their monetary contributions are far more valuable than the back-breaking labor of others. They expect to be treated as though they are entitled to greater recognition and privilege, that the wage alone is enough to validate their demand for a

¹⁹ For a survey of literature about intra-household inequality, see Dreze and Sen 1989, Ch. 4.

greater share of household resources and a lesser share of unpaid household labor (Thomas 1990). Consequently, women and girls receive an inequitable share of the total pool of resources even though they contribute more labor power to household survival than males (Mies et. al. 1988).

Because their scarce resources do not permit long-term planning or saving, semiproletarian households are vulnerable to low-level global and national economic forces . A household has often not recovered from a previous resource shortfall when the next crisis befalls it (Wolf 1992). In a majority of African and Asian households, women and men prioritize provisioning in very different ways. Indeed, “husbands and wives differ in the definition of the basic necessities of the family complex, their consumption priorities, the way in which income should be distributed, and the proportion to be allocated for the common fund” (Beneria and Roldan 1987: 123). When resources are scarce, women generally prioritize the nutrition of family members above other personal and households issues. Thus, income-earning women spend three-quarters of their funds on family food while men allocate less than one-quarter of their income to food. Moreover, increased female income leads to additional household spending on food, but an increase in male income does not necessarily expand household food (UNICEF 2007: 26).

Historically, households have primarily reduced expenditures and lowered consumption by eating less, eating cheaper, and eating less protein (Dickinson 1995, Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 211, Smith et. al. 1984: 233-50). During crises, the inequitable allocation of household resources becomes most pronounced, for malnutrition and hunger are not spread evenly across all household members. (Harris 1990).²⁰ During shortfalls, the household will rarely be able to have fish, meat or other protein. “When they wake up in the morning, “ one Philippine wife explained, “the children open all our pots and often find them empty” (Dunaway and Macabuac 2007: 331). In one-third to one-half of all poor country households, parents go hungry in order to feed children, the mother experiencing the greatest degree of

²⁰ For a survey of relevant literature, see de la Rocha 2001.

deprivation (UNICEF 2007). In another one-third to one-half of households, there is an hierarchical order for resource allocation that is especially noticeable in differential access to protein. Wage or income-earning males (followed by wage-earning older daughters) take precedence in times of shortage over nonproductive children, and the mother almost always receives the lowest allocation (Smith et. al. 1984: 230). Even though they work more than household males, women consume less of the food pool (Deere 1990). When food shortages are faced, nonworking children do not receive an equitable share in relation to adult or teen males, but girls receive the lowest allocations of food (Van Esterik 1985). Despite mothers' sacrifices, one of every four children in poor countries is underweight (UNICEF 2007: 23). Sick children receive the least food, followed by adults who are ill enough to be likely to die (McMillan 1986, Scheper-Hughes 1991). With respect to the allocation of extra-household services that require monetary payments, households often engage in "selective neglect." Males are less likely than their wives to prioritize child health care (UNICEF 2007: 26). As a result, income-earning males are more likely to receive health care than ill children, girls, or pregnant women (Larme 1997, UNICEF 2007: 26). When resources are limited, poor households are more likely to invest in the educations of boys. As a result, the vast majority of the world's illiterate adults are females (United Nations 2004). When resources are scarce, female fetuses are more frequently aborted due to boy preference while infanticide and selective neglect are directed more frequently toward girls (Wadley 1993).

Power struggles and domestic violence. As a reflection of capitalism, the household is a structurally contradictory unit in which human nurture coexists with power struggles and domestic violence. Because their "internal processes are regulated by market relations," households exhibit patterns of internal exploitation and competition over resources (Ulshofer 1983: 191). Households are not only units in which people's survival is nurtured; they are also the loci of power struggles to try to gain individual entitlements (McC. Netting et.al. 1984: 353-81). Such discord often reaches out over the breadth of inter-household networks (Elwert 1984). First, households do not typically allocate scarce resources or labor time through democratic processes; instead, decision-making is controlled and/or

manipulated by the most powerful (Wilk 1987, Wolf 1992). In many poor countries, one-third to two-fifths of husbands make decisions alone about daily household expenditures and about health care for wives and children (UNICEF 2007: 18-19). Second, husbands have played historical roles in keeping housework invisible and outside the wage calculation. When male wage workers have protested low pay or working conditions, they have not “objected to the fiction that wages were meant to cover the full value of household maintenance” (Boydston 1986: 22). Third, husbands in many poor countries, have played pivotal roles in keeping women trapped in exploitative nonwaged systems. In a recent United Nations study, 60 percent of interviewed males in Africa, Asia and Latin America argued that men should have more right to a waged job than women (UNICEF 2007: 6). Similarly, a high proportion of husbands oppose their wives’ entry into waged occupations, but they are willing to tolerate lower-paying female industrial homework (Beneria and Roldan 1987). In this way, men have acted as agents for capitalism because they benefit directly from the artificial economic separation of wage labor and household-based labor (Salleh 1994: 114). Fourth, power struggles over ecological resources dominate case studies of peripheral and semiperipheral societies. Females produce 80 per cent of the crops consumed locally, and they account for a majority of agricultural workers in poor countries. However, women own only about 1 percent of all agricultural land (UNICEF 2007: 42). When capitalist incorporation creates new wage and trade opportunities for males, those economic activities quite often threaten the ecological resources from which women produce household sustenance and trade commodities (Shiva 1988, Dunaway 1997). While women struggle to retain land use for household provisioning, males prefer to allocate limited resources to the production of export crops (Moock 1986: 105-21). Finally, household power struggles are evidenced by the rising incidence of domestic violence. Worldwide, male violence toward women and children is highest during (a) economic downturns and (b) when women become pregnant. In addition, domestic violence increases in contexts in which women contribute more household income than males (White 1993). In short, the household is a unit of human capital accumulation, but it is also a space in which the very people who create that life— women and

girls– are devalued and violently mistreated.

Restructuring Household Boundaries

Threats to the household production base requires the transformation of semiproletarian householding patterns (McGuire et. al. 1986). Consequently, the third survival mechanism is restructuring of household membership and household spatial boundaries to adapt to crises or change. Case studies reflect three broad trends with respect to capitalist impacts on household boundaries. In reaction to cyclical upswings and downturns, households widen inter-household networks and/or decrease or increase their size. A high proportion of the world’s semiproletarians have retained nonwestern network systems as part of their survival repertoire. In many sections of contemporary Africa, Asia and Latin America, there are few independent, self-sustaining households with a collective consumption fund. Instead, there exists a network of interconnected households that are defined by having the same family lineage. In such situations, “the ultimate guarantor of a woman’s reproduction is her lineage,” not her conjugal household (Wong 1984: 56). In these contexts, there is no pooling of property between married spouses, and the wife remains more closely tied to matrilineal clans than to her husband’s kin (Dunaway 2008: 61-63, 199-202). Consequently, “processes of consumption and reproduction are not necessarily confined to the isolated household as a self-sufficient unit” (Wong 1984: 58). Instead, the boundaries extend outward to encompass several other households, broadly expanding the base of resources and labor. In Southern Ghana, for instance, women’s activities and resources are spread across many households that comprise a matrilineal family system (Vellenga 1985: 295). It is not surprising that inter-household networks are the second most frequent survival mechanism that households employ during resources shortfalls (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 211, de la Rocha 2001, Rosas 2002). Worldwide in every historical epoch, semiproletarian households have retained inter-household networking systems that reach beyond their own confines, and they receive one-quarter to one-half of all resources and credit through these networks (Wong 1984, Deere 1990, Dickinson 1995). In this way, “several households may form a reproductive system for one individual member of the labor force” (Meyers 1983: 277).

On the one hand, "stagnations in the world-economy create pressures on small household structures to enlarge boundaries" (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 15), so some units persist by widening their membership. In an attempt to increase the number of income-earning adults, smaller households take in extended kin, merge with other small households, or take in non-kin boarders who pay rent (Thompson 1991, Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 209, 242, Moser 1996, Young and Alderman 1997, de la Rocha 2001, Rosas 2002). On the other hand, capitalist policies and labor recruitment strategies have historically denuded households of members. In the 18th and 19th centuries, for example, the international slave trade permanently destroyed household and kinship ties (Dunaway 2003), and core states routinely removed children from poor families in order to indenture them long-term to capitalists (Dunaway 2008: 250-54). Colonial states designed regulations to coerce householders to transform into wage laborers. Through vagrancy laws and regulation of labor mobility, the Southern African colonial states forcibly removed males from households. In addition to these forced separations, households of every historical epoch have survived by decreasing their number of members (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 192-94, 33-50). For example, the number of street children has ballooned in peripheral countries, as a growing proportion of households try to overcome resource shortfalls by putting children out to live and work on the streets (Schlemmer 2000: 211-15). Historically, households have been denuded when members migrated great distances, as is the case in the contemporary period when "transnational families" are being created by the division of households that are based in two countries (Parrenas 2000).

Alteration of Gendered Labor Roles

The fourth survival mechanism is the tendency of semiproletarian households to alter gendered labor roles in the face of crisis or resource shortfalls. Over the *longue duree*, capitalist-driven change:

- has stimulated new patterns of biological reproduction and maintenance,
- has threatened women's household maintenance work,
- has shifted men's work to females,
- and has housewifized male wage laborers.

Historically, recruitment of females into the waged labor force has altered women's marriage and fertility patterns (Secombe 1993). Patterns of later marriage dates and lower fertility have been common (Young et. al. 1981: 88-111). To survive resource shortfalls, parents may either delay marriages of income-earning adult daughters or encourage marriages at an earlier age for nonproductive females (Young and Alderman 1997). Women's economically-productive work outside the household often conflicts with their socially-expected reproductive roles (Dunaway 2008: 196-264). Extra-household income-earning activities quite often lead to neglect of female provisioning work, endangering the pool of household resources (Wallerstein and Martin 1979: 205). In poor countries, parents are often absent because they have migrated in search of wage labor. In these situations, the household and provisioning work of the absent member either goes undone or is shifted to other members (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 243). Since 1980, the transnational migration of peripheral women to work as domestics has generated an "international division of reproductive labor" in which poor women leave the mothering of their offspring to others in order to become paid caregivers to children in richer households (Parrenas 2000).²¹

Capitalists maximize profits through "housewifization of the proletariat," without respect to gender. "There is, indeed, no reason why the housewife should be disappearing in capitalism. On the contrary, the housewife has been a specific and a most important invention of modern society who has proved to be so un-substitutable that it is more probable that a sort of 'housework' will even be imposed on men" (von Werlhof 1985: 34, 39). As ecological resources become scarce or degraded, women take on more of the male workload in order to replace lost resources normally generated by husbands (Dunaway and Macabuac 2007). As capitalists target the cheap labor of females in poor countries, males are increasingly pushed out of waged labor opportunities (Beneria and Roldan 1987). Of necessity, men assume some of the household roles of their wives, leading to the housewifization of male wage laborers.

²¹ In the core, most women are employed outside their homes; and that wage labor has altered household patterns and contributed to the high divorce rates. Nearly half of all wage-earning women work different hours than their spouses or partners, and two-fifths of all U.S. working women head their own households (Mies et. al.1988).

In order to break the dominance of trade unions and to flexibilize labor, transnational capital will increasingly housewifize male labor (von Werlhof 1984).²²

²² Core males are experiencing “deproletarianization,” as full-time employment declines and is replaced by part-time work, self-employment, informal sector activities, putting out systems, and other forms of homework (Broad 1991:557-60).

Antisystemic Resistance

The fifth survival mechanism of semiproletarian households is antisystemic resistance. Households are loci of grievances around which antisystemic resistance coalesces, especially during economic downturns (Meyer and Labao 2003).²³ “While antisystemic movements speak in the names of the people, their actual constituent elements are households” (Smith 1994: 36-38). Over the *longue duree* of capitalism, the semiproletariat has been pinpointed in every historical epoch to be central to antisystemic activism (Lenin 1899, Mao 1926). Consequently, householders resist the commodification of their provisioning resources and activities and of their petty commodity production (Wallerstein et. al. 1982: 452). Historically, peasants and indigenous peoples have resisted when their ancestral lands have been threatened by capitalist encroachment (Scott 1976, Dunaway 1997). Peripheral social movements resist decline in livelihoods caused by capitalist expansion (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 131-32), and they press for land reforms when natural resources become concentrated into the hands of agrarian capitalists (Smith and Wallerstein 1992:148, 175-76, Dunaway 1997). Women’s activism is overwhelmingly based within households where they often combine income-earning with resistance (Adams 2003, Nettles 2007) and employ household resources to mobilize their movements (Moser 2003, de Volo 2006).

Conclusion

Because of the parasitic relationship between waged labor and housewifization, the vast majority of the world’s workers are situated in semiproletarian households. On the one hand, these households are the loci of “human capital accumulation” because they reproduce and invest their limited resources in the future labor supply. On the other hand, they represent millions of structural units that enable capitalists to conceal their systematic extraction of surpluses from workers and from women. In spite of the

²³ According to Wallerstein (1995: 1), “The effort to obtain wage-employment and then ensure that such wage-employment is remunerated minimally at the level of household reproduction. . . has been central to the class struggle throughout the history of the modern world-system. To the degree that proletarianization has been achieved, it is in large part the outcome of this class struggle.”

immiseration caused by capitalism, these units persist through their management of scarce labor time and resources, their restructuring of household boundaries, and their alteration of gendered labor roles. In their internal dynamics, these households mirror the structural contradictions of capitalism. Consequently, they are characterized by inequities and by power struggles that result in females working longer hours for which they are allocated fewer resources than males. Formal history and a majority of core people ignore the everyday hardships and deny the capitalist exploitation that poor people suffer. To paraphrase Anton Chekhov, the happy capitalist only feels at ease when the semiproletarians bear their burdens in silence. Without their quiescence, his surplus extraction is impossible.²⁴ However, the world's semiproletariat has never borne its burdens without making loud noise through antisystemic resistance.

²⁴ Chekhov wrote "The happy man only feels at ease because the unhappy bear their burdens in silence, and without silence happiness would be impossible."

Appendix A

As its beginning points, this research is informed by the published works of faculty and graduate students who were active in the 1980s in the Fernand Braudel Center Research Working Group on Households, Labor Force Formation and the World-Economy.²⁵ I seek to revise and to extend the conceptualization of the Working Group in several ways. First, the Research Working group emphasized that proletarianization has never been complete (McGuire et. al. 1986), but they did not integrate the counter-process of housewifization (von Werlhof 1984) as the capitalist labor formation mechanisms through which workers remain semiproletarianized, as I have done in my conceptualization. Second, I have broadened the parameters for labors done by women and households. Even though the Working Group focused on women's unpaid household work as a subsidy to wage labor (Wallerstein and Martin 1979), they did not conceptualize the household as a simultaneous productive/reproductive unit. Consequently, they did not delineate several forms of household-based unpaid and income-earning labor that subsidize capitalist commodity chains. Third, the Research Working Group did not examine the ways in which capitalists extract surpluses from or externalize costs to households, mechanisms that are central to my analysis. Fourth, I have examined the internal dynamics and inequities within households, conceptual areas that were ignored by the Working Group. While the Research Working Group acknowledged that households are inequitable (McGuire et. al. 1986: 76-77), Smith and Wallerstein (1992: 12) acknowledge that they did not integrate the internal dynamics or the gender inequities of households into the world-system conceptualization of household (also cf. Wallerstein and Martin 1979: 202). Fifth, I integrate semiproletarian households into the analysis of commodity chains (see Dunaway

²⁵ For early conceptual background, see Research Working Group (1978) and Wallerstein (1981). For the early conceptual work about households that has been published by members of the Research Working Group, see Wallerstein and Martin (1979), Wallerstein et. al. (1982), Smith et. al. (1984), McGuire et. al. (1986), Smith et. al. (1988), Nelson and Smith (1989), Thompson (1991), Smith and Wallerstein (1992), Smith (1994), and Dickinson (1995). Articles from a colloquium sponsored by the Fernand Braudel Center at University of Bielefeld, Germany are also relevant (Fox-Genovese 1983, Meyers 1983, Stauth 1983, Ulshofer 1983, von Werlhof 1983, Wong 1984, Elwert 1984, von Werlhof 1984, Bennholdt-Thomsen 1984).

2001 for earlier discussion). Sixth, I remind scholars that households are not always independent, singular units and that it is important to recognize inter-household networks. Within the Research Working Group, Meyers (1983), Elwert (1984) and Wong (1984) criticized the Group's preoccupation with the household as a singular unit of consumption and reproduction of the labor force. Wong (1984: 61) argued that "the notion of the household as an income-pooling unit tends to see the household as an isolated entity and to deny the significance of inter-household relations." Finally, the Research Working Group employed the concept *income pooling* (Smith and Wallerstein 1992: 15-16) which exhibits a rich-country bias toward wage earning and state transfer payments that are far less typical of poor countries. In line with Martin's (1994: 163) admonitions about such Eurocentric biases in world-systems analysis, I prefer to utilize the concepts unequal contribution to household pools, management of scarce resources, and management of scarce labor time.

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