



# **Subsidizing Capitalism: Brickmakers on the U.S.- Mexican Border (SUNY series in the Anthropology of Work)**

*Tamar Diana Wilson*

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*Examines the economic activities of self-employed brickmakers and the unpaid family members and others who assist them in Mexico.*

In Mexico, self-employed brickmakers support capitalist enterprise by providing bricks to build hotels, factories, office buildings, and shopping malls at costs lower than those based on profit-making principles. Combining Chayanovian and neo-Marxist approaches, *Subsidizing Capitalism* asserts that the economic activities of these self-employed brickmakers may be considered counterhegemonic because they avoid proletarianization in the formal sector. Tamar Diana Wilson discusses the similarities between peasants and brickmakers, the structural position of garbage pickers in relation to brickmakers, the trajectory from piece worker to petty commodity producer to petty capitalist, the economic value of women's and children's work as part of the family labor force, and how the neopatriarchal household is intrinsic to petty commodity production. Interspersed throughout are short stories and poems that offer the brickmakers' perspectives and provide a rarely seen look into their lives.

Tamar Diana Wilson is Research Affiliate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Missouri at St. Louis.

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