



Work and Gender among Co-owners of Family Micro-Enterprises in Mexico

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic study uses a gender perspective to examine the differences in the work of five (female-male) couples who are co-owners of family micro-enterprises in the town of Amayuca, in the state of Morelos (Mexico). These micro-entrepreneurs produce typical Mexican candied fruits. The following factors were analyzed: hours worked, access to money earned and the use of leisure time. We find that the wives work for more hours per week than their spouses, have no access to the money generated by the micro-enterprise, and less leisure time.

Keywords: Development work, gender, Mexico, micro-enterprises.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In Mexico, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía / INEGI: 2010a*), 95.2% of the economic units in the country were micro-enterprises³. Of these, most were family microbusinesses (*Polanco, Pereyra & Madero, 2013*). Of the total economic units that existed in 2009 in Mexico, women accounted for 42.5% of the personnel, while men held 57.5% (*INEGI, 2010a*). Thus, in the field of paid work, the government recognizes that Mexican women make significant contributions to the country's economy. However, women also actively participate in the Mexican economy through unpaid work.

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³ According to INEGI, a micro-enterprise is a business organization that has between 1 and 10 workers, regardless of its sector (commerce, industry or services). Economic censuses from INEGI consider all the economic activities that are carried out in the country, with the exception of agricultural, livestock and forest activities, which are rather considered within the Agricultural Census (*INEGI, 2010a*).

In this paper, we focus particularly on work in family micro-enterprises from a gender perspective in Mexico, an issue that has also been addressed by researchers mainly in the last decade (Neira, 2004; Hernández, Zapata, Alberti & Vázquez, 2004; Tuñón, Tinoco & Hernández, 2007; Moctezuma, 2008; Ramírez, 2011). For example, a study by (Neira, 2004) investigates whether work provides greater autonomy for women in agricultural micro-enterprises in a town located in the south of Mexico City, through surveys conducted in 185 homes. The author concludes that women in the micro-enterprises researched did increase their workload, but not their income. Neira also points out that the women in his study feel at liberty to leave the house to make purchases, go to a clinic and to visit relatives. However, they realize that they don't have as much freedom to go out to work outside of the micro-enterprise or to participate in an association. Between 80% and 90% of women claim they have the last word in decision-making concerning the children and the purchase of food. However, their margin of decision-making becomes limited when it comes to sex and contraceptive use.

Hernández, Zapata, Alberti & Vázquez, (2004) research family micro-enterprises of ornamental plants in a village of the state of Puebla, which are part of the informal economy. In these micro-enterprises, in addition to the spouses, the rest of the family also works. The authors insist that the wives work and produce more than the rest of the family. However, this does not change their subordinate position to men (husbands) or male children over the age of 18. The researchers point out that daughters under the age of 18 years, in addition to their participation in the micro-enterprises also collaborate in the household chores; while the sons do not carry out activities within the home at any age.

The study by (Moctezuma, 2008) discusses work in artisan shops⁴ making typical local artisan sweets in a village in the east of Morelos. These shops mainly craft peanut caramel brittle and *alegrías* ("joys"), which are amaranth caramel bars⁵. These workshops also produce peanut butter caramel bars, tamarind paste and wheat wafer desserts. In these shops, the men are the ones who manage the profits, supervise the work and are responsible for the sales. They subcontract workers from outside the family. The author concludes that the hired male workers in these micro-enterprises earn more than the hired women who work in those same businesses. The income of these hired women goes to the expenses of their households, as yet another obligation in addition to their household chores and childcare.

The above-mentioned studies seem to agree with (Kanji & Barrientos, 2001) and (Chen, Vanek & Carr, 2004) in that, beyond analysis at the macro level, what is necessary is analysis and data at the micro level that will help determine the impact of public policies on specific population groups. When reviewing the literature, we did not find any comparative study between women and men in Mexico that provides an hour by hour summation of the activities they perform during more than four months.

Our research draws - on a gender perspective and describes the gender dynamics between the (male-female) couples in five family micro-enterprises producing traditional sweets in Amayuca, Morelos (Mexico), a town that has practically been left out of social research. With this ethnographic work (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 2013), we make a contribution to the field studying the relationship between labor and gender by inquiring at a micro level, in detail and depth, as to three factors that are significant for analyzing power relationships between the sexes. We examined the following factors for each member of the married couple in the family micro-enterprises we studied: hours worked, use of leisure time, and access to the income generated.

⁴ The author does not use the term "micro-enterprise", but rather "artisan workshop," likely due to the fact that the term "micro-enterprise" is polysemic, as outlined in the following section.

⁵ Water and sugar, *piloncillo* (unrefined cane sugar past) or honey is used to bring the candy together.

This article is structured as follows. In section 2.0 we present the definition of gender that we use in this project, and address some of the main issues raised by gender critics of mainstream economic theorists, as well as of policymakers. We place special emphasis on unpaid work by women. We mention some inequities that gender analysts have found in the field of labor within the informal economy. Finally, we offer a definition of micro-enterprise focused on the Latin American family micro-enterprise. In section 3.0 we explain the location of the community where this research was conducted. Subsequently we offer some socio-demographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural data in order to provide a context and framework for our research. In section 4.0 we outline our method as well as the characteristics of the population studied. In section 5.0 we present information on the origin of family micro-enterprises, as well as the conditions of production of the candied fruits. In section 6.0 we describe in general the work of the men and women in this study. In part 7.0 we discuss the main findings of our research. Finally, in section 8.0 we present our conclusion and policy implications.

2.0 GENDER, WORK AND MICRO-ENTERPRISES

According to (Scott, 1986, p. 1067), “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.” That is, gender is a determining factor in social relations, which are mediated by power. To focus their analysis on these power relations, gender theorists have made significant contributions to various fields of knowledge, among which are, economy and development.

One of the main criticisms made by gender theorists of economic theory is the androcentrism which underlies the very epistemic foundations of this theory. For (Chen et al., 2004), the androcentrism in the mainstream economic notion of productive work has profound implications for the conceptual framework of economic theory. According to some analysts of gender (Kanji and Barrientos, 2001; Chen et al., 2004), the conventional notion of "economy" is limited and should be extended to include activities that take place outside of the labor market, as well as unpaid work.

Gender theorists highlight the significant amount of unpaid work in - and outside of - the home carried out by women, which represents an important contribution to the countries' economies and yet is ignored in the economic indexes and therefore in certain public policies (Waring, 1990; Anderson, 1995; Chen et al., 2004; Kabeer and Natali, 2013; Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly, 2013; Bjørnholt & McKay, 2014). Some female gender scholars called to question the very principles of economics. (Butler, 2010:147), for example says that *...it is not possible simply to situate certain processes and activities within a state or, indeed, an economy, as if 'state' and 'economy' were pre-given entities, already bounded, identifiable, and knowable. If such notions of the state are produced through state effects, then we must rethink the basic ontologies with which we operate. Moreover, the same goes for 'the economy' which only becomes singular and monolithic by virtue of the convergence of certain kinds of processes and practices that produce the 'effect' of the knowable and unified economy.*

By challenging the notions of "state" and "economy," gender theorists highlight gender inequities both at the macro and micro level. According to (Chen et al., 2004:62), economic analysts must change their perspective to conform better to the reality of the households; for example, they should integrate the concept of two or more income earners, must observe the gendered flows of income and consumption, as well as the hierarchies of gender (and age), as well as the level of bargaining power that these entail within the household.

In the field of economy, some analysts of gender report the following gender inequities at work:

- "There are significant gaps in [...] earnings within the informal economy [...] with women earning less on average than men" (Chen et al. ; 2004: 42).
- “Women tend to have less ownership of, control over or access to resources than men” (Chen et al.; 2004:63).

- “The gender hierarchy within the household means that women tend to have less control over how income and food are allotted within the household” (Chen et al.; 2004:63).
- “The systemic gender biases that exist within the household, which mean that women are less well-positioned than men to seize opportunities and address constraints associated with trade and growth” (Kanji and Barrientos, 2001; Chen et al.; 2004:63).
- “Lack, in the case of women, of mobility (cultural restrictions) and time (domestic responsibilities)” (Chen et al.; 2004:75).
- “Men [...] have greater access to market information than women” (Chen et al.; 2004:62).

The informal economy has further reaches in countries with lower incomes. According to Chen et al. (2004), due to the fact that low income countries do not have policies for unemployment insurance, the majority of low-income people cannot remain unemployed and therefore seek additional income. These people are overworked, i.e. work long hours (Chen et al., 2004).

In Latin America, a way to earn extra income is the creation of family microbusinesses, many of them in the informal sector of the economy. There is no absolute consensus on a definition of micro-enterprise between different national and international organizations in Latin America (Pavón, 2010). For the purpose of this research, then, we consider micro-enterprises to be small entities that produce goods or services and operate with very little capital, very low productivity, and poor working conditions, usually outside state regulations, embedded in imperfect markets in which they compete only marginally, with very little organization of labor, no business skills, and producing limited income (Pérez & Jofre, 2000).⁶

Focusing on a definition of family micro-enterprises, we can characterize them as economic units of at least two members who contribute their labor, skills, knowledge and social networks. They are companies based on the organization of the family and are generally located close to the home, drawing on their access to the market as an extension of the domestic economy at the local level (IFEA, 2012).

The family micro-enterprise is a space conducive to analysis from a gender standpoint. As happens in other areas of social life, one of the organizing principles of family micro-enterprise activities is gender. In this study we investigate the power relations as referred to by Scott, as well as investigate whether there are gender inequities mentioned by other analysts. We believe that three relevant factors in this analysis are the differences between women and men in the number of hours worked, the use of leisure time, as well as access to the money generated by the micro-enterprise.

3.0 A TOWN THAT HAS BEEN UNDERSTUDIED FROM A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

The state of Morelos is in South-Central Mexico and is bordered to the north by the state of Mexico and the Federal District (best known as Mexico City). Figure 1 presents the location of the state of Morelos.

Amayuca belongs to the municipality of Jantetelco (Xantetelco), which is in eastern Morelos and shares a border with the state of Puebla. Amayuca is located on a stretch of the Mexico-Oaxaca highway (section 160, Cuautla, Morelos to Izúcar de Matamoros, Puebla). The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía /INEGI, 2013) reports that in 2010, the town of Amayuca had 5,287 inhabitants: 2,672 Women and 2,615 Men. This Institute considers Amayuca to be an urban locale, since it has more than 2,5000 inhabitants (2010, 2014). With 33.42% of its population in Jantetelco, Amayuca is the most heavily populated community of that municipality (Morelos State Government, 2014). According to the Ministry of Social Development (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social / SEDESOL), it is an urban town with an intermediate degree of marginalization (SEDESOL, 2013). Many

⁶ This and all other translations of original Spanish sources are by the authors.

socio-scientific studies have been carried out in Morelos. However, Amayuca has practically been left out of those studies⁷.



Fig.1. Map of Mexico. The dark area represents the state of Morelos

Many socio-scientific studies have been carried out in Morelos. However, Amayuca has practically been left out of those studies⁸. We did not find sufficient information in the literature about Amayuca. Only two monographs on this town were found in Jantetelco City Hall, both containing little data about Amayuca in particular. Due to the lack of reliable information about the town, in addition to the ten micro-entrepreneurs participating in the study we consulted a number of residents about certain social, cultural, and economic aspects of relevance for understanding the setting where the research took place. The criteria for selecting these residents were that they be over 30 years old, be born in Amayuca and have lived there for their whole lives, and be knowledgeable about the aspect of the town they would be asked about.⁹ This section thus presents some information from the literature in addition to information provided by residents. Some of the data in this section may be the first socio-economic data published about this particular location and help to show the context in which this study was carried out.

The education level of the Amayuca population is considerably low. According to (SEDESOL, 2014), the number of inhabitants 15 years of age or older who had not completed middle school was 1,966 in 2010. Amayuca has two kindergartens, three primary schools with morning classes and one with evening classes, one general middle school and one offering distance education. There are no high schools, and young people who wish to complete high school must commute to the municipal head of Jantetelco or travel to cities such as Cuautla, Cuernavaca, or Puebla.

Health services are not sufficient in Amayuca. According to (SEDESOL, 2014), in 2010 there were 2,241 people without access to health care social security benefits. This represents 42% of the population. Amayuca has only one public health center, which is open from 8am to 12pm and requires an appointment. Residents that cannot access the services at this health center either go to private doctors' offices or must travel to the Health Center or hospital in Jonacatepec.

Some residents noted that the street lighting was good (residents B, C, D, E, F, personal communication, 2011). According to (SEDESOL, 2014), in 2010, 275 households had no access to the public network of running water, 52 homes had no drain system, 69 homes had no toilet/restroom, 79 homes had dirt floors and 22 homes lacked electricity. Most houses are built out of brick, stone, and mud. The majority of roofs are made of asbestos sheeting, corrugated sheeting made of paper and

⁷ During the time of this research, no social studies were found on Amayuca. A diagnostic of public health performed by a governmental organization was recently found.

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⁹ For example, for research about what types of crops are grown in Amayuca, we identified people who work in this sector.

petroleum byproducts, concrete slabs, or brick and tile. Most floors are made of cement, wood, or floor tiles (resident A, personal communication, 2011).

There are both public transit vehicles and private vehicles for transportation within the town as well as to and from the town, in addition to carts pulled by horses or donkeys. Some companies offer bus services to the state of Puebla either originating in Amayuca or with a stop in Amayuca as they pass through. There is also a taxi stand for rides to different communities and minivans that bring passengers to and from Cuautla (residents G and H, personal communication, 2011). Second-class buses (minibuses) connect Amayuca to the villages of Jonacatepec, Tepalcingo, Axochiapan, and others (residents G and H, personal communication, 2011).

There are public telephone booths on the streets in this community. Some families also have their own telephone lines. The use of cell phones and smartphones has become increasingly affordable for the population, and most adults and adolescents and some children have their own cell phones (resident I, personal communication, 2011). There are some *cybercafés* in the town, although the speed of the internet connection is quite slow, and the internet connection in the computer room in the Amayuca library is also slow. Very few families have computers and internet connections in their own homes (resident J, personal communication, 2011).

3.01 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN AMAYUCA

The main economic activities in Amayuca are concentrated in the agricultural and the poultry and livestock sectors.

Agriculture

The main crops include corn, peanuts, sorghum, tomatillos, beans, string beans, onions, cucumbers, zucchini, *cempasúchil* flowers and velvet flowers (resident K, personal communication, 2011). According to resident L (personal communication, 2011), most of the land in Amayuca is dedicated to growing sorghum, corn, rice, sugar cane, cucumbers, zucchini, onions, and tomatillos.

Poultry and Livestock

Many inhabitants raise and sell goats and poultry (hens, roosters, chickens, quail, and turkeys) for human consumption. Of the inhabitants involved in this activity, it is mainly men who go to the Saturday animal market at a bull pen called *El Acopio* (resident M, personal communication, 2011). In contrast, it is mainly women who sell cow's milk and dairy products (cheese, cream, cottage cheese, and yogurt). It is also mainly women who raise canaries, budgies, and peacocks for sale as pets or as ornamental animals (resident M, personal communication, 2011).

Other Economic Activities

Pottery is another economic activity, mainly using yellow clay. Flowerpots of different shapes and sizes are made, as well as dishes, garden statues, and other wall decorations, including a large variety of figures such as birds, frogs, lizards, butterflies, etc. The main markets for these products are in Cuautla, Cuernavaca, and Mexico City.

Visitors to the community of Amayuca can watch small *cuexcomate* figures being made. *Cuexcomates* were once used as granaries to store grains and seeds produced in the region, with a storage capacity of up to three tons. These pottery figures are mainly sold in Cuernavaca and Mexico City (resident N, personal communication, 2011).

There are several family micro-enterprises in Amayuca producing traditional sweets. Among the products of this region are *alegrías* (a typical local candy made from amaranth), caramel peanut brittle, caramel pumpkin seed brittle, peanut butter milk caramels, as well as candied fruits. They are sold wholesale as well as retail to visitors to the town. Residents also sell them at fairs in several communities in the states of Morelos, Puebla, and, occasionally, Mexico City.

There are also a number of other, mainly family-based businesses in the town, which form a part of Amayuca's small economy. These include small grocery stores, building supply stores, hardware stores, repair shops, iron works, tortilla shops, pharmacies, dentist offices, bars, printing shops, fertilizer and agro-chemical stores, veterinary pharmacies, office supply, clothing, shoe, and furniture stores, restaurants, and taco stands (SIEM, 2014; resident O, personal communication, 2011). La comunidad tiene un tianguis semanal (Gobierno del estado de Morelos, 2014).

3.02 FESTIVITIES IN AMAYUCA

The popular celebrations, in which a large number of the town's inhabitants participate, are mainly religious in nature and are organized by the religious stewards and brotherhoods. These religious celebrations have an impact on the region's economic activities, and particularly on the sales made by the micro-enterprises in our study, as they constitute the only opportunities for large-scale sales of traditional sweets during the year. These festive days include the Good Harvest Festival (Epiphany) (January 5 and 6), which celebrates the sugar cane harvest; the Fourth Friday of Lent (March/April); the Feast of Saint James the Apostle (July 25); the Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi (October 4); and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12).

This section has provided an initial description of a town that has been the subject of very few scientific and social studies, offering a general overview of the site where the study was carried out. The next section outlines the methodology used in our research.

4.0 METHOD AND STUDY POPULATION

This study was carried out with a set of five cases, that is, five family micro-enterprises that produce traditional candied sweets in the town of Amayuca, Morelos. We adopted (Yin's, 2002) distinction between *sampling* logic and *case study* logic (Small, 2009). For (Yin, 2002), the objective of sampling logic is statistical representativeness. On the other hand, for case study logic, what counts is replication; therefore, two cases can be sufficient.

The inclusion criteria for selecting the collaborators were that they had to be over 30 years old; have a child or children; reside in Amayuca, Morelos; be part of a (female-male) couple that co-owned a family micro-enterprise producing traditional sweets on the market for at least 10 years; and, along with their spouse, agree to participate in the study.

With the above criteria, only five families from the village of Amayuca agreed to participate. Data collection took place for five months, from May to October 2011. Participant observation (Taylor & Bogdan, 1987) and in-depth interviews were used to collect data, which were recorded in a field diary. The following factors were analyzed: a) differences in the number of hours worked between women and men,¹⁰ b) differences in the use of leisure time between women and men in the study, and c) differences in terms of access to the money earned by the micro-enterprise. The following table shows data on the families in the study and the physical space and working conditions in which each of the five families carries out their work preparing the traditional sweets:

Table 1. Prepared by the authors based on participant observation

Characteristics of the Family Micro-Enterprises in the Study					
	A	B	C	D	E
Fruit used to prepare sweets	Squash, <i>chilacayote</i> , fig, and sometimes <i>biznaga</i>	Squash, <i>chilacayote</i> , fig, and sometimes	Squash, fig, <i>chilacayote</i>	Squash, <i>chilacayote</i> , fig	Squash, <i>chilacayote</i> , fig

¹⁰ It is difficult to establish parameters to measure the intensity of the work carried out by the men and women in this study, but we can quantify the hours they work.

		<i>biznaga</i>			
Husband (age)	40	42	53	37	38
Husband (Highest level of formal education)	3rd grade	2nd grade	4th grade	2nd grade	1st grade
Husband (Sells sweets:)	In Amayuca, Temoac, Zacualpan, Tlacotepec, Jonacatepec, Atotonilco, and Tepalcingo	In Temoac, Jonacatepec, Zacualpan, and Tlacotepec	In Chalcatzingo	In shops close to the town of Amayuca	In a small shop. Sometimes there are also large orders for souvenir baskets that include candied fruits for weddings and girls' 15 th birthday parties
Wife (age)	37	39	49	34	40
Wife (Highest level of formal education)	Illiterate	3rd grade	Illiterate	1st grade	1st grade
Wife (Sells sweets :)	At a table outside her house	At a table outside her house	To friends and neighbors	To friends and neighbors	To friends and neighbors
Children	2 school-aged children: a 12-year-old girl, an 8-year-old boy, and a chronically ill 20-year-old child	3 teenage children who live outside of the home and do not work in the micro-enterprise	3 teenage children who live with their parents and only help a little with the micro-enterprise because they do not earn much	3 teenage children who live outside of the home and do not work in the micro-enterprise	3 teenage children who do not work in the micro-enterprise but give a bit of money to their parents
Housing	1 floor	2 floors	1 floor	1 floor	1 floor
Rooms	2	5	4	3	1
Floor	Cement. They sleep on the floor as they do not have beds.	Tile	Cement	Cement	Dirt
Walls	Adobe partition walls	Block	Block	Adobe partition walls	Adobe
Roof	Asbestos sheeting	Cement	Cement	Asbestos sheeting	Asbestos sheeting
Bathroom	1 bathroom outside the dwelling	1 bathroom inside the house with a water heater	1 bathroom outside the house with block walls, galvanized roofing sheets and a cement floor. They bathe with buckets of water.	1 bathroom outside built with partition walls. It has a shower but no hot water.	1 bathroom outside the dwelling
Vehicles	No	Vehicle from the 1980s	Vehicle from the 1980s	Vehicle from the 1980s	No
Animals	Hens, goat, Dog	Dog	Hens, roosters, chickens, turkey, pig	No	Hens, lambs and goats

The above table shows the housing conditions of the dwellings of the families in our study. Four families have their bathroom outside of the dwelling and do not have hot water. One of the houses has a dirt floor. All of the dwellings have a *tlecuil*.¹¹

¹¹ From *tlecuilli* in Nahuatl; it is similar to a brazier or camping stove, built with walls of mud or clay, with firewood placed inside and a griddle or pot on top to cook.

The low level of schooling of both women and men is also worthy of note. None of the participants in the study completed 5th grade. Overall, the women have less schooling than the men. Four of the five wives did not complete 2nd grade, and two of them cannot read or write. None of the collaborators had heard of financial support from the government for micro-enterprises.

5.0 WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE FAMILY MICRO-ENTERPRISES IN THE STUDY

The main economic activity of the men in the five families we studied was agriculture. Both male and female collaborators commented that the men's earnings from working in agriculture are not sufficient to meet the families' needs. Therefore, the purpose of creating these micro-enterprises is to generate additional earnings that contribute to improving the families' finances. In all of the cases it was the men who proposed the idea of producing these sweets to their wives. As one interviewee points out: "*it is a way to get another source of money in order to be able to live better*" (Husband, Family D). The fact that the micro-enterprise is located in the same house/room where the family lives is an advantage.

All of the owners of the micro-enterprises mentioned that the idea of producing sweets came from the previous generation in the 1950s and 1960s. The micro-enterprises in our study have been in operation for between 15 and 30 years. Some micro-enterprises closed for a period of time and later started working again.

The micro-entrepreneurs consider their sweets to be traditional because the manufacturing processes have been passed along for generations. The interviewees do not remember exactly how they got the recipes for the traditional sweets, as they learnt them from their fathers and/or mothers just by watching how they made them and what ingredients they used in their preparation.

5.01 PRODUCTION OF TRADITIONAL CANDIED FRUITS

Some of the raw materials they use include brown sugar, *piloncillo* (unrefined whole cane sugar), refined sugar and lime (calcium hydroxide), though the fruit is the primary ingredient for candied fruit. The micro-entrepreneurs usually buy figs and *chilacayote* in the village of Hueyapan (which is part of the municipality of Tetela del Volcán), as these fruits grow in cold regions. They either get or grow the squash in Amayuca itself, and they collect *biznaga* from fields in the town. This fruit is only used in two of the micro-enterprises.

None of the family micro-enterprises has any machinery to produce the traditional sweets. Nonetheless, the five micro-enterprises do have the following instruments: copper pots, wooden paddles, *tlecuiles*, large buckets, large pots, screens or strainers, knives, needles, and others. These families do not use materials such as cellophane paper to package the sweets, nor do they attach labels with the names of the micro-enterprises. The owners state that it is an unnecessary expense and that they do not want the smell or taste of plastic to affect the sweets.

The production processes are generally simple; however, they do require a considerable amount of time. Overall, the final product takes about one week or up to ten days, depending on the amount of the product being produced by each family micro-enterprise.

One problem is the product's short shelf life, as once candied, the sweets can last up to one week before being sold. The average shelf life of the finished product is about eight to twelve days, as these sweets do not have any preservatives and thus tend to decompose quickly.

6.0 MEN'S AND WOMEN'S WORK

A similar occurrence of gendered division of labor was observed in each of the five family micro-enterprises studied. The husbands carry out tasks in the country and in the micro-enterprise. The wives perform tasks in the home and in the micro-enterprise. Below is an ethnographic description of the work performed by the study participants.

6.01 MEN'S WORK IN THE FIELDS

The men in the five families we studied plant mainly corn, sorghum, tomatillos, tomatoes, onions, squash, beans, peanuts, *cempasúchil* flowers, and velvet flowers. Their fields are in Amayuca's Y Neighborhood. Their work in the fields varies with the time of year. They call May, June, July, August, September, and October the "wet periods", as their lands are rainfed during these months and do not require irrigation. The first thing they do is observe the land to determine how they will process it to obtain good harvests.

The men in families B, C, and D have machinery and equipment: seeders, rakes, fertilizer spreaders, fumigators, and plowing disks, among other work instruments. If the soil is very compacted, they use the tractor with the disks to turn over the soil and "loosen it up" in order to be able to sow. The number of times they need to take their tractors to their fields depends on how "hard" or "soft" the soil is. They also use the tractors to fumigate the whole field in order to kill off the insect pests that could harm their crops.

The men in families A and E perform heavier work than the men in families B, C, and D, as they work their land in a more rudimentary way using plows, hoes, and hand-held sprayers. They use horses and mules, first saddling them up, giving them blinders so that they do not attack their owners, and then connecting the plows to them. They bring the animals to their fields by the halter and the animals walk and plow the soil to "loosen it up".

When the men in families A and E consider their fields to be in good condition to be able to sow their seeds, they fumigate with their hand-held pumps to kill the pests. After sowing, the men wait for the rains to act on the soil. They let the plants grow about eight inches, and then fertilize the plants.

The men in families A and E send their horses or mules into the fields with plows, and farmworkers follow behind with hoes in order to dig up the plants and lift them up, making sure that they are not buried under the soil and that the ears of the sorghum, corn, or other crops can sprout.

When their crops are ready, the men hire farmworkers to collect the harvest, cut it up, and place it in wooden boxes. After their harvests are packed up, the men in families B, C, and D bring their goods in trucks to the Central Market (*Central de Abastos*) to sell them. The men note that they are not very well paid for their products at this market, and that if they could deal directly with the buyers they would make better profits and avoid intermediaries.

To sell their crops, the men hold meetings with the other communal land holders in Amayuca to discuss their prices. For sorghum, for example, once an agreement is reached with the buyers, they harvest the crop with threshing machines and then load it into trucks, bring it to the scales to be weighed, and sell it by the ton at the agreed-upon rate.

In terms of harvesting corn, the men in families B, C, and D sell a part of their sweet corn harvest for consumption in their community, and they sell another part at the Central Market in Cuautla. Following tradition, they also save a little bit of the best corn to dry, and they use these seeds both for planting and for their own consumption. In contrast, the men in families A and E dry out the corn to sell it by the ton to tortilla factories. They also set aside a bit for their family's consumption.

Families E and D plant *cempasúchil* flowers and velvet flowers to sell during Day of the Dead celebrations. The men sell the flowers themselves along with their wives on the side of the highway (as

their land runs along the highways) and then they sell them by the row to townspeople so that they can resell them. The buyers are usually friends or relatives or people from nearby towns.

6.02 MEN'S WORK IN THE MICRO-ENTERPRISE

The main task of the men in this study with respect to the family micro-enterprise consists of loading and placing the firewood and a bit of diesel fuel in the *tlecuil* to light the fire and heating water in a pot to prepare the honey. Once the fire is ready, they lift the pot onto the *tlecuil* and haul the water (5 to 8 gallons) to fill the pot to an exact level, depending on the amount of honey to be made, which depends on the fruit to be candied. Once the fruit has been candied and is ready to be sold, it is also generally the men who go out to sell it.

6.03 WOMEN'S WORK IN THE HOME AND THE MICRO-ENTERPRISE

In all five cases, the women have the greatest responsibility for organizing the home and caring for their children. The women have established routines with which they begin their daily activities. One of their most important tasks is to keep their kitchens clean, collect and wash the dishes, and prepare breakfast while the men are still sleeping. Then they go to the nearest store to buy bread so that their husbands can have a hot drink with sweet bread before they go out to work in their fields. The drink can be coffee, tea, *atole*, or chocolate milk.

Three of the five men go to the fields early (between seven and eight in the morning). In the other two families, the men generally sleep or chat with their wives as they prepare breakfast, and then go to the fields to work after breakfast at about ten in the morning.

After their husbands have breakfast and leave to work in the fields, the wives go to the market to buy what they will need to cook that day. They mainly buy eggs, fruit, meat, vegetables, rice, and pasta. Then they go to the mill to grind the corn, because the women—following tradition—make tortillas by hand for the morning snack, lunch, and dinner.

After working for a couple of hours in the fields, the men come home for a morning snack. When their wives finish giving them their meal, they clean the kitchen, wash the dishes, tidy up the whole house, sweep and then mop the floors, dust the furniture, wash and iron the clothes, etc. Once almost everything is clean by midday, they start to prepare lunch, and at the same time they make their tortillas in the *tlecuil*, which is also where they cook the fruit to prepare the candied sweets.

In some families in the study, the children also come home either from school or from the fields. After the men arrive in the mid-afternoon, they eat and then rest for a while. While the men rest, the women collect and wash the dishes again and clean the kitchen. Due to tradition, the men do not feel like they should carry out any activities inside their homes. The women themselves say that it is their obligation to keep their homes clean and organized.

The men are not used to participating in housework. When they were asked about the possibility of washing their plates, the five men laughed. One collaborator commented... *well I don't do anything in my house. I think that is my wife's job, and besides, that is what you women have to do. That's what you are there for, to take care of us. And that is why men look for company and I just work in the fields and I get tired. That's why we look for someone to pamper us (Husband, family A).*

The women quickly perform the exclusively home-related activities so that they can start working on their tasks for the micro-enterprise as soon as possible. Three of the women start the first step in their production process, which is preparing the mix, at about two in the afternoon. They mix the right amount of water with lime to soak the fruit. The women put potable water in buckets and then add the

lime and fruit to the water to soak for 24 hours. The next day they wash the fruit and leave it to soak again. They always keep the *tlecuil* clean.

Once the fruit has been soaked for 24 hours, the women in families B, C, D, and E start to remove the peels. The woman in family A waits for her husband to carry out these activities as she dedicates more time to her sick child. The women in the other four families start to prick the fruit with pins, peel it, and cut it into pieces. Then they sprinkle it with sugar and put it in the sun so that the fruit will absorb the sugar.

Overall, while the men haul the gallons of water, it is the women who are in charge of preparing the honey by adding the *piloncillo* or sugar and stirring continually. After stirring for three or four hours, they start to bathe the fruit in honey. The women spend one week putting the fruit in the sun for it to take on the typical characteristics of candied fruit.

One of the strategies the women use to make their work in the micro-enterprise compatible with their other responsibilities is to perform their domestic tasks at the same time as those related to the micro-enterprise. For example, they leave the honey cooking over a slow fire for a few minutes while they clean the kitchen. Two women put a table outside their homes to display the sweets and leave the door open. If a buyer comes, they serve the customer and continue with their domestic tasks.

7.0 DISCUSSION

Using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes, we analyzed the hours worked, the use of leisure time and access to the money earned by the members of the couples who co-own micro-enterprises.

With respect to the hours worked, we prepared two tables with the average numbers of hours worked during the week and on the weekend by the men and women who collaborated in this study. The tables were detailed, showing the activities carried out by the men and the women on an hourly basis, from 6 am to 12 pm. A summary table is presented below (combining the results of the two tables mentioned above) with the hours worked per week by the women and men in the study:

Table 2. Prepared by the authors based on two tables: “Table of average hours worked per week” and “Table of average hours worked on the weekend”, which were also prepared by the authors based on participant observation, field notes, and in-depth interviews.

Table 2: Hours worked per week

Hours worked per week	MEN					WOMEN				
	Field / Micro-enterprise					Home / Micro-enterprise				
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E
Average hours worked per day from Monday to Friday	6.5	7.5	8	7.5	7	10.5	9.5	10	9	11
Average hours worked per day on Saturday and Sunday	4.5	6.5	6.5	6	5	8	8	9	7.5	10
Total average hours worked during the week	32.5	37.5	40	37.5	35	52.5	47.5	50	45	55
Total average hours worked on the weekend	9	13	13	12	10	16	16	18	15	20
Total hours worked	41.5	50.5	53	49.5	45	68.5	63.5	68	60	75

The following table shows the difference between the hours worked per week by women and by men.

As the above table shows, the five women in the study work more than 11 hours more per week than their husbands. The most significant differences were in families A and E, of 27 and 30 hours a week,

respectively. It is worthy of note that the men in families A and D do not have machinery or equipment for their agricultural work (which the men in families B, C, and D do have). It is possible that the A and E men are more tired when they get home than the other men who collaborated in the study.

Table 3: The difference between the hours worked per week by women and by men

Difference Between Women And Men In Hours Worked Per Week			
Families	Husband	Wife	Total Additional Hours Worked By Women Compared To Their Husbands
A	41	68	27
B	50	63	13
C	53	68	15
D	49	60	11
E	45	75	30

In terms of the use of leisure time, we conclude that leisure time is very limited for the women in the study in their daily lives, as they spend most of their time on their homes, families, and micro-enterprises. They continually carry out tasks throughout their workday, whether in the home or in the family micro-enterprise. They generally spend the afternoon completing activities related to the micro-enterprise with the television on, but they listen to it more than watch it while getting their work done.

The five women do not feel free to go places, such as for example, to visit their relatives or engage in activities outside of the home, if their husbands do not “give them permission”. They are used to obeying their husbands and do not go out alone with their friends. The women use expressions like “I don’t disobey him” (Family A). One case that stands out is the wife in family E, who thinks that if her husband were to “leave” her (that is, to separate), her “world would end”, because without her husband, “she is nothing”. Two other women expressed similar ideas.

The men have more leisure time. On weekend afternoons (and sometimes during the week as well), they use their leisure time to go out with their friends, playing dominoes and cards, betting on cockfights, or playing soccer, or they rest at home and watch television (especially soccer). The five men use to drink alcoholic beverages.

In terms of access to the money earned, the wives in the micro-enterprises do not have an income that they can consider to be their own for personal expenses. Although the earnings of both women and men are limited, in all the cases it is the men who keep the money and tell their wives how they should spend it. For example, one micro-entrepreneur said the following... *my wife makes me a list of what we need (...) We decide how much we are going to produce depending on what she thinks is necessary, and we buy what we don't have in our micro-enterprise, and then I take charge of administrating the money in order to be able to buy what is missing and be sure that the money is enough to also buy what we need at home (Husband, Family B).*

This situation limits the independence of the wives as co-owners of the micro-enterprise and limits their ability to make decisions about how to invest or use the money that is the product of their efforts and daily work.

Our study shows the gender inequities present in the relationships of “owner” couples of these micro-enterprises. In spite of the fact that in their discourse, both members of the couple mentioned that they are both owners of the micro-enterprise, in truth, the wives carry out the role of employees. In this sense, gendered hierarchies are evident among members of the same low-income group.

8.0 CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATION

We have mentioned that (Scott, 1986, p. 1067) holds that “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of

signifying relationships of power.” In the five family micro-enterprises we studied, these “signifying relationships of power” can be clearly identified in the factors we analyzed: hours worked, use of leisure time, and access to the money earned. We found that the wives work far more hours per week (11-30 hours), than their spouses have less leisure time, and have no access to the money generated by the micro-enterprise.

(West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 47) note that, “Gender is a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category.” In our research, gender produces, reproduces, and legitimates both the choices and limits of both members of the couple. The dynamics of family micro-enterprises in this study reproduce the dynamics of the home, in which gendered division of labor persists. The sociocultural context of the study participants—their low level of education, the poor market conditions for the products they grow, and the poverty conditions in which they live—may be contributing factors to the ongoing reproduction of these gendered practices by both the men and the women.

We believe that social, educational and economic government policies should have a greater impact on towns like Amayuca. Social support programs, especially micro-enterprise financing programs, should be communicated more widely among the region’s inhabitants so that they can benefit from them. Furthermore, social support programs should be designed, implemented and evaluated from a broader gender perspective that takes into account the sociocultural barriers that women face within and outside the household. In this sense, it would be beneficial if the public awareness workshops offered by some government entities on gender inequities had a greater impact on regions like Amayuca. An educational policy that focuses on quality education for all continues to be a pending issue on the national agenda. Finally, following (Kabeer and Natali, 2013) we suggest that unpaid work by women be taken seriously by economic policy.

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