

## **Reciprocity and Resource Deprivation among the Urban Poor in Mexico City**

**Robert A. Rubinstein**  
*Department of Anthropology*  
*SUNY at Binghamton*

**ABSTRACT:** This paper demonstrates the utility of extending theoretical constructs developed to account for social regularities in nonurban areas to urban anthropological studies. This is done by showing that reciprocity exchanges recorded in Lewis' study of the Sánchez family in Mexico City can be adequately accounted for by a modified version of Sahlins' model of the sociology of primitive exchange. The study shows that kinship distance is not sufficient to predict the type of reciprocity that will occur and suggests the substitution of strength of affective ties and degree of resource deprivation as the determinant variables in the model. It is suggested that prolonged or severe environmental deprivation will shift reciprocity towards the negative reciprocity extreme.

### **Introduction**

The aim of this paper is twofold. First it is an attempt to illustrate the value of testing, modifying and extending existing theoretical approaches in anthropology to the study of behavior in urban settings.<sup>1</sup> Second, it is intended to contribute to our understanding of the nature of sociocultural responses to prolonged resource deprivation.

### **The Ethnological Problem**

Wirth (1956), Lynch (1967), and others have argued that earlier approaches to the anthropology of urban areas made a premature and inadequately supported dichotomy between rural and urban forms of social life. Perhaps it is this over-hasty dichotomization that has led theorists down several particularly unproductive paths in their attempts to develop a theory of urban life.<sup>2</sup> In particular, there seems to be no reason to require separate bodies of theory for

the explanation of social regularities in urban areas, on the one hand, and in non-urban areas, on the other.

Laughlin and d'Aquili (1974) suggest that a theory designed to explain an aspect of human behavior ought best be formulated so as to explain that behavior, or particular aspect of behavior, crossculturally. Specifically, theories should not only handle data from a single society or from a particular type of society (e.g., primitive, complex), but also they should be able to deal with that aspect of behavior in all societies.<sup>3</sup> There is, by this line of reasoning, something wrong, *a priori*, about requiring two separate bodies of theory to deal with "complex" versus "primitive" societies. Furthermore, since people in all societies in all places at all times exchange (both goods and services), the ethnological problem is to devise a model which will adequately deal with exchange in both complex and primitive societies. It is to be hoped, then, that a model which seems to provide an adequate description of exchange in a particular type of society, be it primitive or complex, might profitably be generalized to describe exchange in societies of all types. A good starting point for such a task is Sahlins' (1965) model of the sociology of primitive exchange. First an attempt will be made to apply this model directly to exchange in a complex society. Then the model will be evaluated in light of the results, and attention will be directed to areas of the theory which need to be reformulated or discarded.

### The Ethnographic Setting

The present study utilizes data from Lewis' (1969) work on Sánchez family of Mexico City. Some background material is required before proceeding to an evaluation of the utility of Sahlins' model.

Lewis' study was done among the urban poor of Mexico City. The residents of the Panaderos *vecindad* in Mexico City live in extreme poverty, and the life situation of these people is precarious. Regular access to food and other vital goods and services is highly problematic. Jobs which are available to the people of the *vecindad* require disproportionately large investments of time and effort for rather meager returns. The occupations that are open to members of the *vecindad* are:

street vendor (of towels, alcoholic beverages, cooked food, and candy), newspaper vendors, shoemaker, shining shoes, mechanic's helper, tinsmith, toymaker, bicycle mechanic, leather worker, washer woman, making lottery game [sic] and shop clerk (Lewis 1969:xxvi).

The average daily income of people in the *vecindad* is between 4 and 6 pesos, and some families in the *vecindad* find it necessary to pursue two or three of these occupations at once in order to support themselves.<sup>4</sup>

The intense and prolonged deprivation experienced by residents of the *vecindad* is reflected in their lack of material possessions, severe overcrowding,

and a steady and sizeable flow of transients in and out of the *vecindad*. On the average, six people occupy a 10- by 15-foot room. The average net worth of a household is 4,000 pesos. The average monthly rental for housing is 25 pesos, which amounts to at least one quarter of a month's wages. As Abrams (1970) notes in his discussion of the "struggle for shelter" in Mexico City, the housing problem is compounded by an emphasis on the construction and maintenance of middle-income housing. As a result the poor are left with overcrowded and dilapidated shelters. It is quite likely that the high price of housing and the general unavailability of housing are largely responsible for the high degree of transience in the community. In the *vecindad* there is

in addition to the eighty-four permanent residents . . . a transient population of as many as ten homeless friends and acquaintances of *vecindad* families. [These people are, for the most part,] single unemployed men, or abandoned women and children . . . (Lewis 1969:xxvi).

The educational level of the *vecindad* is low. The average number of years of schooling is 2.1 and the population is 40% illiterate. It is interesting to note that young people have no more schooling, on the average, than their elders.

Lewis utilized three major informants in his work. All of them are members of the Sánchez family. Two reside in Mexico City and the third lives in a city on the Texas—Mexico border. Roberto and Manuel both live in the *vecindad* and hence are subject to the poverty and social constraints that obtain there. Both Roberto and Manuel practice several of the occupations mentioned above as the means by which they support their families. Consuelo, on the other hand, has left Mexico City. Although she was raised in the *vecindad* with her brothers, she is apparently doing very well on her own in Nuevo Laredo and has come to feel distinctly different from the people of the *vecindad*. This attitude is reflected in her statements:

The scene in front of my aunt's *vecindad* will always be engraved on my mind. It made me suddenly realize the truth about poverty, exposing its raw ugliness. . . Still others with no shoes and with crusts of filth covering their feet. Nothing mattered to them. After all to whom did they matter? (Lewis 1969: 67–68).

and

We are all going to die, yes, but why in such inhuman conditions? I've always thought that there is no need for the poor to die like that. . . I refuse to resign myself to death in that tragic form (Lewis 1969: 35).

The behavior to be described here centers on a death in the Sánchez family. Guadalupe, the informants' maternal aunt, has passed away. During the events occasioned by this death (preparation of the body for viewing, the wake, the funeral, and the burial) it becomes necessary for the Sánchez family to utilize their established reciprocity ties. These ties are essential for two areas of interaction. First, the funeral expenses place a tremendous strain on the resources of the family: The total outlay is between 400 and 500 pesos. It is

obvious that this sum, needed in a short period of time, is beyond the means of the Sánchez family. Hence, they must call on people outside of the family to help them meet the costs. Second, reciprocity ties are used to determine the distribution of the goods that were left by Guadalupe. This crisis in the lives of the Sánchez family, a crisis during which reciprocity becomes extremely important and in which exchange of goods and services becomes even more important than usual, provides an excellent context in which to examine the nature of reciprocity in a group that has experienced prolonged environmental deprivation.

### The Model

The model to be used as the starting point for this analysis was formulated by Sahlins (1965) as a means to describe the nature of exchange in primitive societies. Before testing its applicability to an example of reciprocity behavior in an urban setting, a brief outline must be given of Sahlins' model as a whole and in the abstract.

Sahlins begins by noting that a great proportion of the flow of goods or services in primitive society serves to initiate and reinforce social relationships. He observes further that economic transactions (one type of exchange) in the ethnographic literature can be resolved into two basic types of transactions. The first, *reciprocity*, requires the exchange between two parties in a "vice-versa" fashion. The second type of transaction that Sahlins identifies is *pooling*. Pooling requires that there be a social or physical locus where goods and services are concentrated, later to be redistributed. This type of exchange implies the existence of social groupings within which people cooperate. And, as exchange requires that there be at least two parties, pooling also implies interaction between groups or subgroups.

The redistribution of goods and services through either type of transaction serves, according to Sahlins' model, two possible purposes. First, it may serve to sustain the individuals involved in a simple material sense. Second, it may serve to maintain the corporate structure of the group. It is the particular situation in which the exchange takes place, however, which determines which, if either, of these two purposes is the more important.

Sahlins goes on to discuss the first type of exchange, reciprocity, in depth, and he notes that:

Reciprocity is a whole class of exchanges, a continuum of forms. This is especially true in the narrow context of material transactions—as opposed to a broadly conceived social principle or moral norm of give and take. At one end of the spectrum stands the assistance freely given. . . regarding which an open stipulation of return would be unthinkable and unsociable. At the other pole, [stands]

self-interested seizure, appropriation by chicanery or force required only by an equal and opposite force. . . (Sahlins 1965: 144).

Working from this scheme, Sahlins goes on to define the three kinds of reciprocity implied by the existence of these two endpoints, and a midpoint, in the continuum. The three kinds of reciprocity that he identifies are (1) generalized reciprocity, (2) balanced reciprocity, and (3) negative reciprocity. Generalized reciprocity refers to the situation in which transactions are "putatively altruistic." Hence, assistance is given to those in need; and, if it should become possible or necessary, the assistance is returned. In this exchange situation, failure to reciprocate by returning like goods and services does not cause the assistance to stop. Sahlins notes that, "the goods move one way, in favor of the have not, for a very long period" (1965: 147). Balanced reciprocity "refers to direct exchange." A perfectly balanced exchange situation is one in which goods or services are exchanged simultaneously, or nearly so. In this form of transaction Sahlins posits that "the material side of the transaction is at least as critical as the social: there is more or less precise reckoning, as the things given must be covered within some short period" (1965: 148). Negative reciprocity is the extreme at which the attempt is made to "get something for nothing." In a negative exchange situation one party tries to maximize his gains at the expense of the other party. Hence, in this form of exchange a one-way flow of goods and services can be established.

Sahlins then goes on to discuss the relationship of kinship to exchange. He posits that "Reciprocity is inclined toward the generalized pole by close kinship, toward the negative extreme in proportion to kinship distance" (1965: 149). In discussing this relationship Sahlins superimposes his continuum of reciprocity onto a diagrammatic representation of kinship distance. His description of the diagram states that:

In each sector, certain modes of reciprocity are characteristic or dominant: generalized modes are dominant in the narrowest spheres and play out in wider spheres, balanced reciprocity is characteristic of intermediate sectors, chicanery of the most peripheral spheres (1965: 152).

Continuing his discussion of these relationships, he notes that, although he can associate the nature of reciprocity with kinship distance, neither the presence of reciprocity nor the choice of one or another type of reciprocity is by any means determined by kinship distance. Thus, although he can roughly predict what type of exchange will occur if exchange occurs, he cannot say when exchange will occur. He attributes his inability to identify when exchange will occur to the need to consider the larger cultural structure. He notes that "the terms of final analysis are the larger cultural structure and its adaptive responses to its milieu" (1965: 156).

### Testing the Utility of the Model

The utility of Sahlins' model of primitive exchange for accounting for exchange behavior in urban areas will now be subjected to nonexperimental test (see Hempel 1966). This sort of test is conducted by seeking out or waiting for cases where the conditions specified by the model obtain, and then checking to see whether the independent and dependent variables vary in the manner predicted by the hypothesis.<sup>5</sup> The conditions that must exist in order to test the hypotheses to be derived from Sahlins' model are (1) there must be exchange, and (2) kinship distance in the group that is doing the exchanging must be identifiable. Both of these conditions exist in Lewis' data.

In order to test the model, specific hypotheses must be derived from it; and these hypotheses, along with the test implications deduced from them, must be clearly stated. The main hypothesis examined by this study is:<sup>6</sup>

H<sub>1</sub> — Reciprocity will tend to be of the generalized (altruistic) type when it involves close kinsmen, and, as kinship distance increases, it will tend to be balanced or even negative (selfish).

Two of the test implications that can be derived from this hypothesis are:

T<sub>1</sub> — If exchange occurs during the crisis of Guadalupe's death then the type of reciprocity that obtains between members of the Sánchez family will be generalized.

T<sub>2</sub> — If exchange occurs during the crisis of Guadalupe's death then the type of reciprocity that obtains between members of the Sánchez family and people outside of the family will be closer to the negative reciprocity pole in proportion to the kinship distance of the parties involved.

The data can now be examined in light of these test implications.

T<sub>1</sub> — Case 1: Manuel, speaking of the distribution of his aunt's possessions, suggests to his sister, Consuelo, that, rather than give anything to Gaspar (Guadalupe's shiftless husband), they should sell the few possessions that Guadalupe left. Manuel says later to Lewis: "Now why should her things go to him? . . . Those [things] alone are worth over one hundred and fifty pesos . . . All I'm saying, is with what the things bring . . . she [Consuelo] thought I was so much of a business man that even in that sad situation I was capable of trying to make money for myself . . ." (Lewis 1969: 90-91). The three reciprocity relationships that are involved in this discussion are between Manuel and Gaspar, Manuel and Consuelo, and Consuelo and Gaspar. The important one for the purposes of this test is the relationship between Manuel and Consuelo. It is apparent from the discussion that, contrary to test implication T<sub>1</sub>, their relationship is not one which may be characterized as "putatively altruistic." Rather than being characterized by generalized reciprocity, this relationship seems to be characterized by a reciprocity type falling somewhere between balanced reci-

procuity and the negative reciprocity pole. Hence, this first case does not lend support to hypothesis  $H_1$ .

$T_1$  — Case 2: The second case deals with the exchange of money between Roberto and his godmother. He has asked her to lend him money to help pay the expenses of Guadalupe's funeral. Since, for the people of the *vecindad*, the godparent relationship functions as a close kin relationship, and explicitly so in regard to economic obligations, the model would predict that this exchange would be characterized by generalized reciprocity. The data do not show support for this prediction. The nature of the exchange is evidenced in the following passage:

What do you think godmother? . . . now we need money for the burial.

I brought only a hundred pesos with me . . . but I have another hundred and fifty pesos at home.

I accepted the loan of 250 pesos, but told her, look, I don't expect to have any money until December, and I'm not sure of that yet.

*What about your brother?* (Lewis 1969: 31, emphasis added)

The concern of the parties for the return of like goods in a reasonable amount of time is characteristic not of an exchange situation of the generalized reciprocity type; rather it is characteristic of balanced reciprocity. And, the last sentence of the exchange indicates that the exchange is leaning towards the negative pole. The second case, like the first, fails to lend support to the hypothesis.

$T_1$  — Case 3: Speaking of his sister Manuel says, "I really couldn't stand my sister any more on account of her attitude toward me . . . a few weeks ago she showed up at the market screaming that I was a crook, that I hadn't paid her her money" (Lewis 1969: 97). This obvious concern with the return of goods is characteristic of balanced rather than generalized reciprocity. Again, the data do not support the hypothesis.

None of the three cases of  $T_1$  support the prediction derived from the model. The conclusion must be drawn that the data do not support the test implication  $T_1$  and that the tests lend support to neither the hypothesis  $H_1$  nor the model.

Turning to the second of the two test implications ( $T_2$ ), several interaction situations in which exchange takes place between members of the Sánchez family and persons outside of the family will be examined.

$T_2$  — Case 1: Faced with the expense of the funeral, the Sánchez family looks for alternatives by which they can get enough money to cover the expenses that will be incurred. Matilde and Pancho offer to take up a collection among the news vendors, and they succeed in getting a considerable sum of money from this collection. It is clear, however, that the contributions are made

with some degree of reckoning by the donors concerning the likelihood of receiving like contributions from the Sánchez family in the event of similar needs on the part of the news vendors (See pp. 22–33). The observations in this case are consistent with the predictions generated by the model. The news vendors are members of the same *vecindad* as the Sánchez family, and the model predicts that balanced reciprocity would be characteristic of exchange situations between these parties. During the wake the same situation occurs. Each individual who comes to the wake contributes to the expenses. Manuel notes that “Every one of them stopped to look at the body, and all of them, without exception, reached into their poor pockets and produced a few centavos or a peso or two . . . for the clay plate at the foot of my aunt’s gray casket” (Lewis 1969: 55). In this case the data tend to support the hypothesis.

T<sub>2</sub> — Case 2: In this second case Gaspar is speaking to Roberto. The conversation is about who should receive the option to rent and occupy the house in which Guadalupe lived. It is the Sánchez children who control the distribution of Guadalupe’s possessions. In predicting the form of reciprocity which will characterize the exchange situation between the children and Gaspar it is important to understand what his position as a kinsman is relative to the informants. While Guadalupe was alive the closeness of her kin position with the Sánchez family extended to Gaspar. Thus, while Guadalupe was alive Gaspar was treated as a close kinsman. However, with Guadalupe’s death the link defining Gaspar as a close kinsman vanishes. Hence, Gaspar is now viewed as a non-kinsman. The model would predict that the reciprocity type which will characterize exchange situations involving Gaspar and the Sánchez children would be balanced or negative reciprocity. The data support this prediction. Gaspar comments to Roberto that “No one gives orders here except me, this is my house.” To this Roberto replied that “it’s yours for the moment, but once my aunt is buried with proper respect, you’ll get your things together and be on your way . . .” (Lewis 1965: 45–50). This exchange is consistent with the type of reciprocity we would expect to find on the basis of the model. The observations of the second case support the hypothesis.

T<sub>2</sub> — Case 3: The third case revolves around an exchange between Consuelo and Matilde, a nonrelated member of the *vecindad*. Consuelo, upon arriving at her aunt’s and seeing the body, is overcome with fatigue and grief. Matilde removes her to her house where she tells Consuelo how well she treated Guadalupe. Consuelo asks for a cup of tea to settle her stomach. Instead she is given a glass of milk. Consuelo comments on this saying; “Instead of tea they gave me a large glass of milk, a *luxury in that household*” (Lewis 1969: 74, emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> This exchange situation seems to be characterized by general rather than balanced or negative exchange. However, later information shows that Matilde is trying to get possession of Guadalupe’s house (cf. pp. 84–85). This additional information changes the entire reciprocity situation so that it is

consistent with the predictions of the model. The third case also lends support to the hypothesis.

The results of all three test cases of  $T_2$  lend support to the hypothesis  $H_1$  that was derived from Sahlins' model. There is then an anomaly. Two test implications derived from a single hypothesis have been tested. On the one hand, the results of one series of tests lend support to the model while, on the other hand, the results of another series of tests indicate that the model needs to be rejected. The next section of this paper will attempt to resolve this anomaly by proposing some lines along which the model might be reformulated.

### Refining the Model

Having performed two series of tests of the utility of Sahlins' model of primitive exchange for exchange situations in an urban setting, a number of results emerge: (1) in the tests, the situations which did *not* support the hypothesis were those in which we expected to find generalized reciprocity, (2) the tests show that we *did* find balanced and negative reciprocity when predicted by the model, (3) there seems to be a shift in reciprocity patterns towards the negative reciprocity pole, and (4) kinship distance was not an accurate index of the type of reciprocity that would characterize an exchange situation. The test results, then, have established only partial support for Sahlins' model when it is applied to data from an urban area.

In predicting the type of reciprocity that will characterize an exchange situation, Sahlins' model moves directly from kinship distance to reciprocity type. Thus, while he suggests that residential distance is important in predicting the type of reciprocity that will characterize an exchange situation, he finds it necessary to incorporate this factor into his model in an implicit manner only; that is, he assumes that residential distance and kinship distance are covariant.

The data suggest that this need not be the case in urban society, nor, as both Brady's (n.d and 1972) and Laughlin's (1974) studies suggest, need it be the case in primitive societies. In fact, both Brady's (n.d. and 1972) and Laughlin's (1974) data suggest that for primitive exchange residential proximity is at least as important as kinship ties. In attempting to develop a model that will accurately predict the type of exchange characteristic of an exchange situation we need, therefore, to take explicit account of residential distance. This move by itself, however, is not sufficient to eliminate the disparities between the model and the data presented above.

Returning again to Sahlins' model note that it is also implicit that affective ties are covariant with kinship (and by implication with residential) distance. As kinship distance and residential distance may not be covariant at all times, the *notion that affective ties are covariant with both of them is suspect*. Indeed,

Brady's study suggests that such covariance does not obtain at all times in primitive societies; and Coombs (1973) has also demonstrated that covariance between residential distance and affective ties need not obtain in complex society either. To be sure, both kinship distance and residential distance can contribute to the development of affective ties. But Sahlins' model needs to be modified to reflect the proposition that it is the *strength of affective ties* that is important in predicting the type of reciprocity which will characterize an exchange situation. In some societies strong affective ties will covary with kinship distance or residential distance, while in others they will not. In the former societies it would be of heuristic value to predict exchange type by reference to kinship or residential distance alone. However, in the latter type such predictions would be inaccurate. Moreover, this modification of the model does not even resolve the discrepancies between the model and the data (e.g., T<sub>1</sub> — Case 3: we know that Consuelo has strong affective ties to her brother, and yet the case does not lend support to the modified model). Clearly, further modification of the model is necessary.

The original hypothesis was that: "Reciprocity is inclined toward the generalized pole by close kinship, toward the negative extreme in proportion to kinship distance"; and this hypothesis was accompanied by several relatively implicit auxiliary propositions. The major auxiliary hypothesis under which Sahlins' model operates is that exchange will take place only as an adaptive response to the cultural/structural milieu. I take this to mean that exchange will serve as an adaptive (biologically adaptive) response to the physical environment. This hypothesis deserves a more prominent place in the model.

With such a conceptual shift, reciprocity is considered the product of, at least, residential distance, kinship distance, strength of affective ties, and severity of environmental deprivation; and the following two hypotheses can be derived from the model.

H<sub>2</sub> — Reciprocity will occur as a biologically adaptive response to the cultural and environmental milieu.

H<sub>3</sub> — Only in reciprocity situations (adaptive responses) where survival is not in immediate danger (i.e., where relative deprivation is low) will reciprocity type be determined by strength of affective ties (which are sometimes correlated with residential distance and kinship distance).

Returning to the urban-funeral data with these hypotheses, the reformulated model eliminates the remaining disparate results. Thus, for example, an examination of exchanges between members of the Sánchez family shows that the reformulated approach to the problem gains support from those cases. This is so because implicit in H<sub>3</sub> is another hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub> — In reciprocity situations (adaptive responses) where survival is in immediate danger (i.e., where relative deprivation is high), strength of affective ties, residential distance, and kinship distance will not be accurate indicators of

reciprocity type; rather, a shift towards the negative reciprocity pole will be observed.

One test implication of this hypothesis would be;

T<sub>3</sub> — If the Sánchez family lives in a state of relatively high deprivation, then intrafamilial exchange will not be characterized by generalized reciprocity, but by balanced or negative reciprocity.

Note that the results of T<sub>1</sub> — cases 1, 2, and 3 would all lend support to T<sub>3</sub>. Admittedly, this analysis is *post hoc* and as such can only be considered provisional. It does, however, resolve the inconsistencies in the earlier analysis, and this reformulation does appear to be consonant with data from other studies (see, e.g., Laughlin 1974; and Turnbull 1972).

### Implications of the Revised Model

Lewis' attempt to account for the behavioral regularities exhibited in the *vecindad* focused on the use of the "Culture of Poverty" construct. While Lewis' use of this construct unified the data, it served, because of its largely *a priori* and *ad hoc* nature (see, e.g., Valentine 1968), to isolate Lewis' account from more general urban theory and from anthropological theory in general. The reanalysis of Lewis' data which has been presented here, on the other hand, is explicitly complementary to a general theory of reciprocity.

This examination of reciprocity in an urban area that has experienced intense and prolonged environmental deprivation sees reciprocity relations as a mechanism for the maintenance of a biologically viable population (Laughlin 1974, and Laughlin and Brady n.d.). This approach sees,

The primary biological function of any social system is the maintenance of a genetically viable reproductive population which is capable of perpetuating itself through time. This may be called society's *adaptive* function. . . . In order to fulfil its adaptive function, a society must assure the existence of modes of production and distribution of basic goods and services to at least the biologically critical fraction of its population. The 'critical fraction' will usually consist of a sufficient number of its reproductively fertile young adults (Laughlin 1974: 392).

In order for societies undergoing intense or prolonged resource deprivation to remain adaptive they need to insure a degree of flexibility in their social structure which will allow for the maintenance of the "critical fraction" of its population. One partial solution to this problem is the shifting of reciprocity types characteristic of exchange situations in the manner described in the reanalysis of Lewis' data. Hence, one advantage of viewing reciprocity in urban areas from the present perspective is that it offers the possibility of bridging the analysis of social regularities in urban areas to the analysis of like regularities in nonurban societies.

### Summary and Conclusions

This paper has explored, through one example, the utility of extending theoretical constructs developed to account for social regularities in nonurban areas to urban anthropological studies. This was done by using data gathered by Oscar Lewis in Mexico City to test the utility of extending Marshall Sahlins' model of primitive exchange to urban areas. Hypotheses and test implications were derived from Sahlins' model and these were tested against appropriate data from Lewis' study. The original hypothesis was only partially supported by the data. The model was then reformulated along the lines of a resource-deprivation theory of exchange behavior. The reformulated model showed that the data could be adequately accounted for, and that the approach upon which the reformulation was based contributes to our understanding of both urban and nonurban behavioral regularity.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented in the symposium, "Sociocultural Responses to Resource Deprivation," at the 73rd annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Mexico City, Mexico, November 19–24, 1974. I would like to thank Bruce Arlinghaus, Ivan Brady, Gary Coombs, Brian Foster, Charles Laughlin, Owen Lynch, and Stephen Straight for their helpful comments and criticism of earlier drafts of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See Reissman (1970) for a comprehensive review of theories of urban life. Reissman's review stems from his own attempt to develop such a theory, a goal he fails to reach.

<sup>3</sup> In essence, the argument is that while it is possible to make certain analytical distinctions between societal types, all human social behavior must be examined in terms of species-specific evolutionary imperatives.

<sup>4</sup> The rate of exchange at the time of Lewis' study was 12.5 pesos equals 1 U.S. dollar. The uncertainty of life in the *vecindad* is underscored in the following passage: "That day turned out to be a very bad one in the plaza. I didn't earn a cent and there was no food at home. We didn't even have milk for the baby and had to give him rice water with sugar" (Lewis 1969: 26).

<sup>5</sup> See Hempel (1966) for a discussion of the development and use of tests in scientific inquiry. For further discussion of the type of validation and the problems involved with validation in anthropology see McEwen (1963).

<sup>6</sup> Note that this is only one of several hypotheses that can be drawn from the model. It is, however, the primary hypothesis and the one which is most directly related to the study.

<sup>7</sup> One problem with the use of Lewis' data for this study is that only the dramatic exchanges are being recorded. Generalized reciprocity, in Sahlins' sense, includes trivial exchange between parties.

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