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BEARING CULTURE, WIELDING CULTURE:
POWER, INDIGENEITY AND 'MULTICULTURALISMS' IN A
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BEARING CULTURE, WIELDING CULTURE:
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By

Holly Dygert

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ABSTRACT

BEARING CULTURE, WIELDING CULTURE:
POWER, INDIGENEITY AND 'MULTICULTURALISMS' IN A MIXTEC VILLAGE

By

Holly Dygert

In recent years, indigenous rights activists have impelled the Mexican government
to claim a 'multicultural' approach toward indigenous populations in lieu of its
longstanding assimilation approach. Situated within this context, this dissertation
investigates formulations of indigenous culture in contemporary Mexico. I examine
conceptions of indigenous culture within two projects devised to stake out divergent
futures for indigenous communities: the Mexican development program IMSS-
Oportunidades and Mixtec cultural revitalization efforts. Through a community-centered
approach, I investigate how residents of a Mixtec-speaking village targeted by both
projects encounter, interpret and deploy these conceptions in their everyday contests with
one another.

Multicultural claims notwithstanding, IMSS-Oportunidades programmers and
providers regard indigenous culture as an impediment to modernity. Mixtec cultural
revitalizationists' efforts to realize a vision of modernity grounded in the valorization of
Mixtec culture diverge markedly. Nonetheless, developers and revitalizationists share a
common perception of indigeneity as the antipode of modernity. This oppositional
framing accords with modernist perceptions of indigenous subjects who lack modern
training as ill-equipped for modernity. Accordingly, developers and revitalizationists
alike target their efforts toward youth who have acquired training in the requisite modern

skills and knowledge (e.g., literacy, Spanish facility) through the formal educational system.

In the village, youth interpret the constructions of indigenous culture they learn through their encounters with developers and revitalizationists in ways that correspond with these modernist polarities. They interpret 'negative' and 'positive' constructions alike as evidence of the backwardness of those people, practices and perspectives most associated with indigenous culture. Among villagers, women with limited to no formal education are widely regarded as bearing an especially true expression of indigenousness. These women bear much of the suffering meted out in the process of denigrating indigeneity, and they enact a crucial front-line politics as they combat the denigration of indigenousness in their daily lives. As youth wield these formulations of indigenous culture in their everyday contests with 'culture-bearers', they spur the denigration of indigenousness. This dynamic evidences the perniciousness of 'multicultural' formulations of indigenous culture, which predicate claims of the value of indigenousness to modern life on the exclusion of the quintessentially indigenous.

For the people of Pueblo Verde.

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most students, if not a great deal more. Despite my doubts and protestations, Laurie

always insisted on teaching me how to do things correctly. I doubt that many students

experience the privilege, pain and growth such committed mentorship can provide. Over

the last decade, Laurie has taught me to patiently and carefully craft my often jumbled

and always partially-formed insights into arguments. By doing so, she has helped me

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INTRODUCTION

When I began conducting research in a small Mixtec village in southern Mexico, Pueblo Verde,[1] I was struck by the varied and often flexible and complex family forms I observed. While preparing for the research, I had expected that the vast majority of villagers would form their families in similar ways and would maintain their marital commitments throughout their lives. Based on these presumptions, I considered that it might be prudent to withhold details about my split family from the community, as negative assumptions about split families could lead some villagers to perceive me poorly. Nonetheless, my observations of Verdeans' diverse families assuaged my concerns. Thus, I shared with my hosts – Na Beatriz and Ta Rodolfo[2] – that my mother and father were divorced, that he had remarried, and that both parents had raised my siblings and me.

One afternoon, while Ta Rodolfo and I finished the meal of tortillas and black beans Na Beatriz had served us, they asked me more about my family. I was surprised to find from their queries that they had not understood my situation in the terms that I had assumed. Instead, they asked me – quite contemptuously – How could my father have two women? I explained (again) that he and my mother had divorced thirty years earlier, and that both of them were content to be apart from one another. I assumed that I had clarified the apparent misunderstanding during the momentary silence that followed my explanation, but Na Beatriz proved me wrong when she broke the silence, and asked me whether my mother was angry. As we continued to discuss my family, I repeatedly told

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[1] I substitute pseudonyms for the name of the municipality and all informants.
[2] Na and Ta are Mixtec terms of respect for older villagers, similar to Mrs. and Mr.

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them that the divorce was a positive resolution to both of my parents' desire to terminate the relationship, and that the new families worked well. They maintained their interpretation that my father had abandoned my mother and her children to pursue a relationship with his "*ña'an uu*", second woman. Repeatedly, they mulled over what I said and then asked me additional questions that signaled that I had failed to persuade them to adopt my perspective. In the end, my host got up slowly from the table, chuckled, and said, "*Dos mujeres!*" – Two women! He nodded his head smiling as he walked out of the door. My hostess also nodded her head while she concluded the conversation, but with a stern look of concern and disapproval concluded, "*Nda'vi nanalu.*" – Your poor mother.[3]

During the year I worked in Pueblo Verde, this is the only topic that moved my hosts to argue with me. According to them, a man and a woman cement the formation of their family when they have children. In doing so, they make a lifelong commitment to remain together and carry out their complementary duties in ensuring the wellbeing of their family. Their responsibilities as husband and wife to one another, as well as to their children, remain even in cases where the couple separates. I was utterly unsuccessful in my attempts to convince them that the divorce was beneficial, and they continued to refer to my stepmother as my father's *ña'an uu*.

This uniquely lively discussion dizzied me, especially our glaring inability to reconcile our different opinions. As I reflected on the interchange in the days that followed, I reasoned our impasse in terms of *cultural incommensurability*. The idea that

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[3] Quotes that have not been translated to English reflect the language employed by the speaker. In this discussion, Ta Rodolfo and Na Beatriz spoke to one another in Mixtec, Ta Rodolfo drew from his Spanish fluency to converse with me in that language, and Na Beatriz, who lacks Spanish language skills, spoke in Mixtec.

a particularly wide *cultural gulf* precluded my hosts from understanding my family as I do seemed fitting. Accordingly, I reasoned that my hosts' unwillingness to adopt my understanding reflected the relative homogeneity of family forms in this seemingly 'traditional' "out-of-the-way-place" (Tsing 1993), and that this lack of familiarity with different kinds of families circumscribed their ability to comprehend my family in my terms. Although I struggled to understand my hosts' apparent ignorance of the diverse familial arrangements I had already encountered in the village, I concluded that their insistence on the idea that a married couple is joined forever reflected their rootedness in family values of a passing era in village life.

As the research progressed, however, my hosts' intimate engagement with the diversity of expressions of family in the village challenged me to rethink my assumptions. I watched as their own family was torn apart over a conflict between them and their adult daughter when she became pregnant and decided not to formalize her partnership. When that occurred, I learned that their family had been repeatedly reconfigured by conflicts and reconciliations associated with my hosts' efforts to force their adult children to live by these ideals. My hosts pursued varied strategies to impose this ideal vision of the family on non-family members, as well. They promoted "traditional" marriages to young people; they supported the efforts of a young couple to marry by taking the role of their absent parents in sponsoring the union; they pursued legal and social channels to force absent husbands to return on behalf of women whose husbands had left them. In short, my hosts were deeply and passionately entangled in ongoing contests over the ideal family. As I continued to carry out the research, I learned that these contestatory entanglements are not anomalous to my hosts. My interviews with

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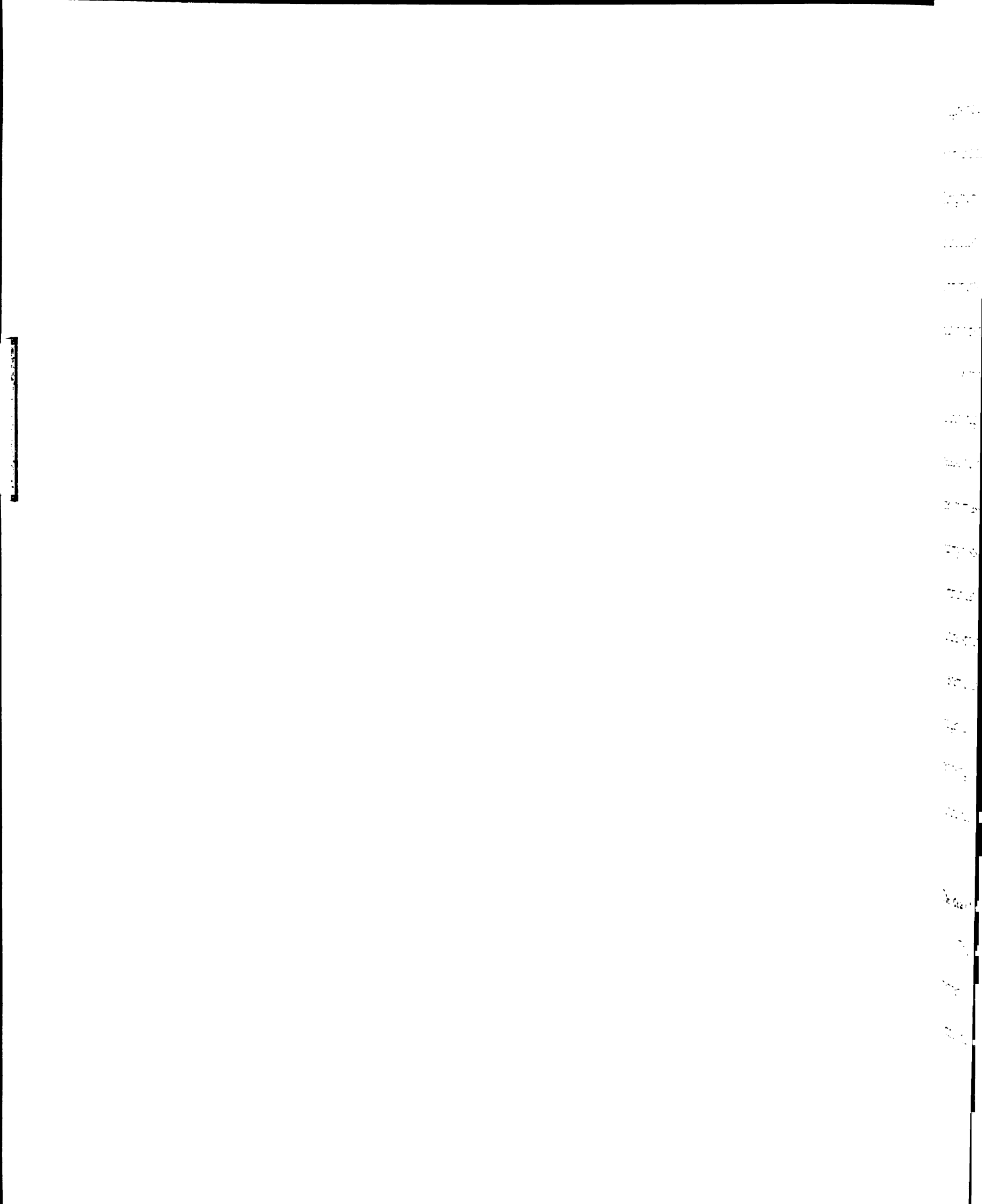
villagers indicate that disputes over the family have been the norm throughout recent history, and date back at least to when the oldest villagers were forming their unions. During the moments when I conducted the research, these contests largely revolved around questions of monogamy, serial monogamy, and struggles over formalizing commitments, which were linked with women's ongoing struggles to negotiate relationships that they found more beneficial.

Within this context, our 'dispute' over family was unremarkable, excepting my failure to register it as a dispute. My hosts openly contested my conception of my family because it conflicted with their opposition to serial monogamy. Nonetheless, I initially drew from assumptions that my hosts and I inhabit different *cultural spheres* to conclude that my hosts 'failed to grasp' my family, and to construe the conversation as a failure in communication. This explanation resonates with widespread assumptions that the cultural spheres inhabited by indigenous peoples are especially different from their Western counterparts, particularly owing to the homogeneity and stagnancy of indigenous cultural forms. Reconceptualizing the discussion as a dispute required rethinking these assumptions to consider my hosts and me as inhabiting a common cultural realm and sharing a basic level of understanding therein.

The idea of 'culture'

The traditional conception of culture posits easily definable groups whose members share common practices, values and beliefs. Roy Wagner (1975) advanced a compelling critique of the concept over three decades ago in *Inventing Culture*. In this

work, Wagner described the distinctiveness of the vantage point the traditional

anthropological conception of culture affords to anthropologists, as he observed,

> The New Guineans see the anthropologist's creativity as *being* his interaction with them, rather than resulting from it. They perceive the fieldworker to be "doing" life... For his part, the anthropologist assumes that the native is doing what *he* is doing, namely "culture". [1975:26, Emphasis in original.]

Wagner affirmed the consequentiality of the adoption of the perspective that people 'do

culture', as 'culture' presumes "a very basic kind of difference between [people],

suggesting that there are different varieties of the phenomenon of man" (1975:2).

Many anthropologists have rejected the culture concept during the three decades

that have intervened since Wagner made these observations. Yet, at the same time,

ordinary people have widely adopted the concept as a frame for reckoning who they are

and where they fit in the world. The culture frame provides a map for conjuring the

similarities individuals share with some and the qualities that differentiate them from

others. My own experience suggests the pervasiveness and profundity of 'culture's'

influence on people's everyday lived experience: the concept profoundly shaped my

initial interpretations in Pueblo Verde even though I came of age as an anthropologist in

the wake of a sustained and thorough 'culture' critique.

This study examines the politics of this popularization of 'culture'. I approach the

concept as a real and consequential anthropological invention. Quetzil Castañeda (1996)

has insightfully captured how this starting point challenges common perceptions of ideas

as inventions that (necessarily) fall short in capturing the real practices they are intended

to narrate. Rather, Castañeda asserts the realness of 'culture' (1996:17):

> The real pattern, the "lived-in culture," is an abstraction *embodied* in its own representation of an imagined world and not in the supposedly real world outside of *its* reification. [Emphasis in original.]

I adopt this starting point to investigate how 'culture' is "embodied" as a true and consequential invention in everyday social life. I am especially interested in analyzing how contemporary articulations of 'indigenous culture' influence the subjects perceived as bearing the truest expressions of the notion, whom I refer to as *culture bearers*. I employ a tri-pronged approach to evaluate the politics of contemporary formulations of 'indigenous culture' from this vantage point:

First, I examine the (re)formulation and (re)deployment of notions of indigenous culture with widespread purchase within two current political projects, the Mexican development program Oportunidades and indigenous Mixtec cultural revitalization efforts. I examine how Oportunidades workers and Mixtec revitalizationists interpret indigenous culture and its salience as they design strategies to realize their goals.

Second, I analyze Oportunidades employees' and Mixtec revitalizationists' efforts to carry out these strategies. I highlight the subject-making efforts in which they teach individuals 'culture' as a frame for reckoning the ways in which they resemble and differ from those around them. I refer to the subjects who have adopted the culture frame as *wielding culture*.

Third, I examine how the differential dissemination of 'culture' shapes Verdean social life. In particular, I examine how the divergence between those who wield culture and those who bear culture shapes villagers' ongoing cultural contests, focusing on contests over the ideal Verdean family.

As the vignette above suggests, and as discussed in greater depth below, critical analyses of culture readily focus attention on the concept's contributions to shaping encounters *between* 'groups'. In this study, I aim to provide an additional eye onto the

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politics of 'culture' by privileging the family as a dimension of cultural life. Because of the great divergence in the burdens women and men bear in relation to biological and social reproduction (Browner 2000, 1986; Ginsburg and Rapp 1995; Greenhalgh 1995), the family provides an excellent vantage point for analyzing how conceptions of cultural difference contribute to transformations in villagers' relationships with one another, as well as with other 'groups'.

Organization of the dissertation

I situate the research questions within anthropological and feminist debates about culture and scholarly ethics in Chapter One, "The Politics of 'Culture'". Chapter Two, "Power and Indigeneity in Mexican History" situates the investigation within historical context. I trace changing orientations toward indigenous culture and forms of rule through the history of New Spain and Mexico. In Chapter Three, "Research in Context: Methodology and Settings", I introduce the community and populations under examination, and detail the research methodology.

Chapters Four and Five examine articulations of indigenous culture in the two 'projects' under investigation in this study: Mexican development and Mixtec cultural revitalization. As I examine how Oportunidades employees and Mixtec revitalizationists construe culture in these chapters, I consider how they differentially position indigenous people in relation to culture. In Chapter Four, "Culture, Power and Pathology in Oportunidades", I examine how Oportunidades program designers and service providers conceive of indigenous culture and utilize these ideas in designing and carrying out Program initiatives. Chapter Five, "Culture and Power in Mixtec Cultural Revitalization"

examines how revitalizationists conceive of Mixtec culture and its salience for their efforts, and how they have drawn from these ideas in devising revitalization strategies.

Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine focus on Pueblo Verde. Chapter Six, "Movement and Meaning in Pueblo Verde" examines Pueblo Verdean social life in the context of widespread short- and long-term migration. In this chapter, I foreground the struggles of 'the women who remain' – namely women with limited wealth and formal education – as they work to enforce social and cultural continuity in this context. I highlight the concerns and conflicts that have arisen as some villagers adopt derogatory perceptions of local experience. In the process, I analyze how the differential adoption of the culture concept among villagers – those who wield 'culture' versus those who are perceived as bearing 'culture' – shapes Verdean contests. Chapter Seven, "The Changing Verdean Family" situates villagers' ongoing contests over the ideal family within this context. I examine in more detail how power relations grounded in gender, generational, educational and economic differences shape Verdean social and cultural processes.

Chapters Eight and Nine examine how villagers engage with developers' and revitalizationists' conceptions of indigenous culture within ongoing contests over the ideal family. In Chapter Eight, "Encountering Others Within" I examine how villagers engage developers' conceptions of indigenous culture as they contest ideal family size among one another. I observe that IMSS-Oportunidades' efforts affirm and contribute to the distinctions between those who wield 'culture' and those who bear 'culture' examined in Chapter Six. Next, in Chapter Nine, "Valorizing 'Culture' in Verdean Cultural Contests," I examine villagers' adoption of revitalizationists' perspectives. I contend that

revitalizationists' perspectives on Mixtec culture shape Verdean contests in ways similar to those of developers.

I return to consider and synthesize the findings of the dissertation in relation to politics of culture and the ethics of anthropological scholarship the final chapter, "The Politics of 'Culture' Revisited."

CHAPTER ONE: THE POLITICS OF 'CULTURE'

'Culture' and its critique

Throughout much of the history of the discipline, anthropologists have conceived of the diversity of human experience as universally structured by an underlying entity called culture. During the first two-thirds of the 20th century, in particular, anthropologists shared a solid grounding in the idea of culture, even while debating the nature and substance of this entity. The claim of 'culture's' universality enabled anthropologists to explain seemingly incomprehensible ideas and practices not only as reasonable, but also as part and parcel of a common human experience (Povinelli 2002; see especially Chapter Two). Anthropologists distilled the ethical posture of cultural relativity from the concept's precepts, arguing that the ultimate incommensurability of cultures — each one can only be properly understood and justly evaluated from within its own cultural context — necessitated 'intercultural' respect.

Notwithstanding many anthropologists' zeal to explain human difference in ways that promoted human understanding, beginning in the 1970s, anthropologists and others began to identify ways in which the field has contributed to the colonial and postcolonial processes that marginalize the subjects of anthropological inquiry. The publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 greatly influenced this critical introspective turn, as he analyzed how Western scholars *constructed* difference while claiming to *represent* it. Specifically, he examined how 'Orientalists' constructed Arabs and the East as the 'other' against which the West defines itself. Said's work raised the specter of

anthropologists' collusion with colonial and postcolonial forces of marginalization, as anthropologists claimed to render 'others' intelligible to a Western self.

As anthropologists turned a critical eye toward anthropological scholarship, they identified ways in which, indeed, the process of 'explaining difference in terms that made sense to a Western audience' often entailed creating, affirming and fomenting assumptions about alterity (e.g., Abu-Lughod 1991; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Fabian 1983; Trinh 1989; Rosaldo 1993 [1989]; Wagner 1975). For example, Johannes Fabian (1983) implicated the rhetorical conventions anthropologists employed for fortifying presumptions about the alterity of anthropological subjects. Fabian argued that these conventions contributed to the production of a time-space continuum wherein the geographic distance separating anthropological subjects and the audience of anthropological accounts corresponded with a temporal plane. The anthropological subjects of distant regions exemplified living history – the primitive 'other' – in contrast to the Western audience of anthropological works, who occupied the modern here and now.

While Fabian analyzed how some of the taken-for-granted anthropological conventions contributed to the construction of the alterity of anthropological subjects, many others scrutinized the field's key conceptual tool – culture. Critiques of the concept's contribution to exclusion and domination are grounded in observations of the differential application of 'culture' in practice. That is, despite claims of the universality of 'culture', anthropologists have uniquely used the frame to reason the experience of non-Western subjects (Rosaldo 1989 [1993]; Tsing 1993). As Renato Rosaldo (1989 [1993]) observed, 'culture' has consequently acquired salience as an essence or a trait
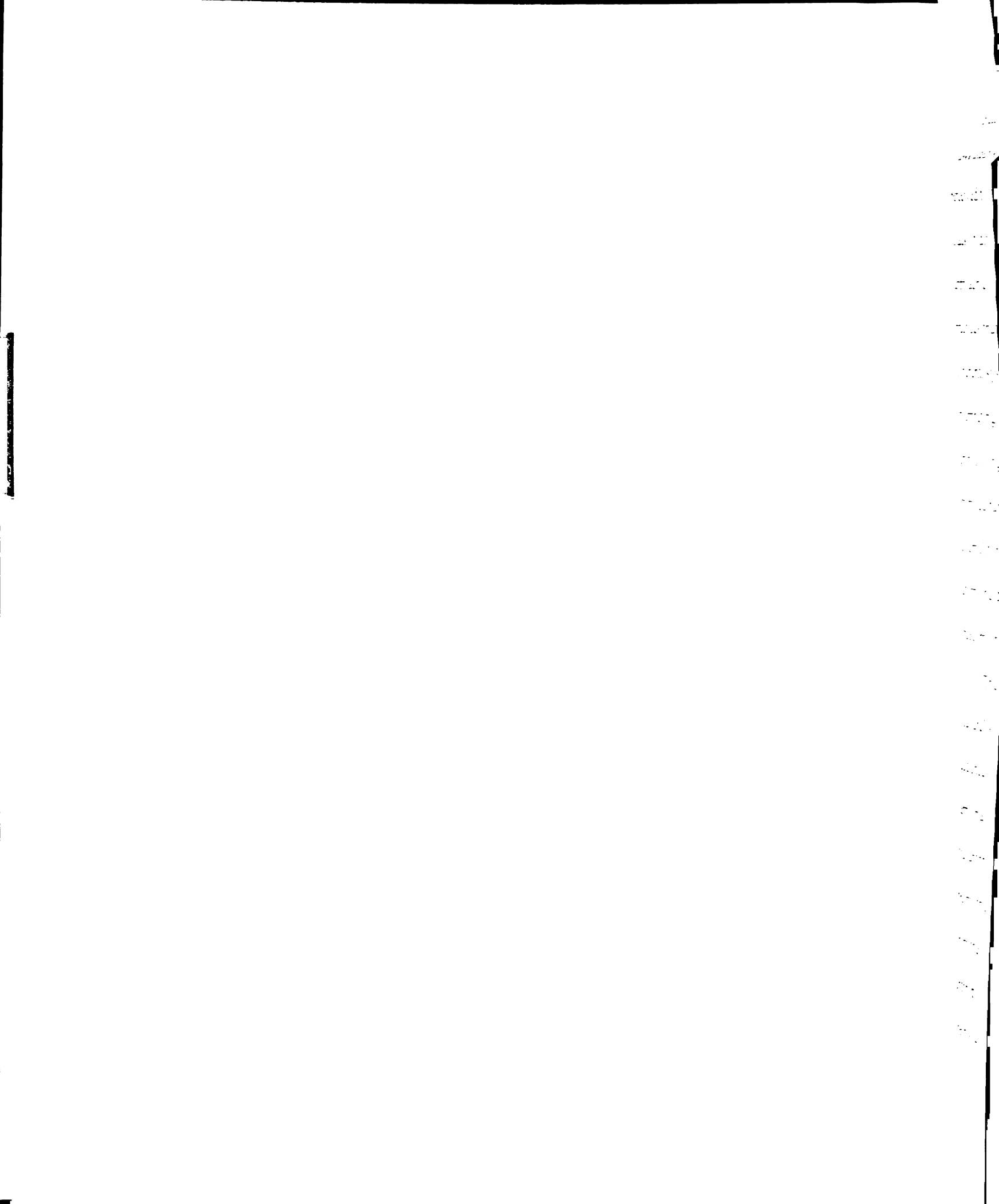
uniquely born by non-modern, non-Western 'others'. The concept bears key assumptions

associated with this specificity of application, reflecting assumptions about the traits

perceived to differentiate anthropological subjects from the modern Western self, namely

a lack of differentiation within 'groups' and a lack of agency. The 'culture' analytical

approach contributes to these assumptions, as it entails analyzing the ideas, values and

practices that individuals express and carry out in their daily lives as manifestations of a

coherent, systematic, reasoned and hidden symbolic realm. This approach entails

interpreting individual action as a product of the force of this hidden realm and

emphasizing practices held in common. Consequently, anthropological subjects emerge

from 'culture'-based accounts as undifferentiated, lacking in agency and governed by

external forces (Abu-Lughod 1991). These anthropological subjects diverge from and

affirm the distinctiveness of the Western subject, self-identified as the unique subject of

freedom, individuality and agency.

The assumptions about the alterity of anthropological subjects that interpolate

'culture' shape the power-laden fields within which anthropologists and the intended

audiences of anthropological works engage with anthropological subjects. Yet, the

territorial dimension of 'culture' helps to obscure these relationships. 'Culture' presumes

that anthropological subjects reside in territorially-attached, seamlessly bounded semantic

realms that contain meaning and social relations (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). In drawing

from these assumptions to craft 'culture'-based accounts, scholars have depicted

anthropological subjects as residing in geocultural fields detached from the West, and

their social processes as generated and contained from within (e.g., Redfield 1960).

Anthropologists have often depicted indigenous people as bearing the 'truest' expressions of cultural difference – 'pristine' forms of alterity uncompromised by contaminating Western influences. As a result, assumptions about the difference and distance of anthropological subjects have often been particularly pronounced in writings on indigenous people (Appadurai 1988). Yet, while anthropologists analyzed indigenous peoples' 'cultural distinctiveness' as a product of internal 'cultural mechanisms', these subjects were suffering massive dislocations caused precisely by the links that connected them to others: victimization by state-led development schemes that appropriated their resources and mandated relocations (Tsing 1993, 2005), forced assimilation projects (Povinelli 2002); settlers' continued encroachment on their land and other resources (Collier 1994; Sponsel 1997); and continued violence and even genocide (Gordon and Douglas 2000; Menchú 1983).

Robert Gordon and Stuart Sholto-Douglas (2000) provide a compelling critique of anthropological complicities in these colonial processes in their investigation of the struggles of the 'Bushmen' during the 20th century. Gordon and Douglas juxtapose anthropologists' and others' repeated depictions of the San as residing in an autonomous geocultural realm of alterity with evidence of the exploitation, proletarianization, conscription into war and even genocide they suffered throughout the 20th century. While culturalist assumptions about the San often legitimated this exploitation, Gordon and Douglas make a compelling case that these assumptions have greatly facilitated exploitation by obscuring these processes.

A rather self-evident ethical stance toward 'culture' emerges from these critical reflections – one of rejection. Accordingly, many anthropologists have abandoned the

concept. Indeed, Lila Abu-Lughod (1991; also 1993) has promoted "writing against culture": that is, writing about and representing people's lives in a way that circumvents the construction of difference. Abu-Lughod focuses on the particularities of everyday experience in order to subvert culture. She explains (1993:27),

> By insistently focusing on individuals and the particularities of their lives, we may be better able to perceive similarities in all our lives... The dailiness, by breaking coherence and introducing time, trains our gaze on flux and contradiction; and the particulars suggest that others live as we perceive ourselves living – not as automatons programmed according to "cultural" rules or acting out social roles, but as people going through life wondering what they should do, making mistakes, being opinionated, vacillating, trying to make themselves look good, enduring tragic personal losses, enjoying others, and finding moments of laughter.

Abu-Lughod's explicitly ethically-motivated rejection of culture and focus on the particularities and felt experience of individuals' lives converges with other post structural desires to theorize meaning without an underlying entity or force called 'culture'. Post-'culture' approaches to meaning share an emphasis on the processuality, contestedness and territorial unboundedness of meaning. At the very least, processual approaches unsettle the notion that meaning is generated by an underlying entity (e.g., Watanabe 1992). At best, they regard meaning as existing only as fragmentedly articulated in process, as actors negotiate it within concrete and always shifting power-laden contexts (e.g., Stewart 1996). Furthermore, the severing of meaning from its territorial bounds has prompted a focus on how "global flows" form these power-laden contexts (Appadurai 1996; see also Tsing 2005).

In addition to devising post-'culture' anthropological approaches to meaning, some scholars have tackled 'culture's' production of alterity by laying bare the power-laden processes through which particular articulations of the concept take form. In this

vein, Quetzil Castañeda (1996:25) promotes the deconstruction of existing notions of cultural difference as an "ethical style of research":

> In this ethical style of research, the ethnographer consciously intervenes with an explicit (versus implicit) political and practical agenda in the politics of knowledge in which a cultural community is situated. The difference between this and a paternalist ethic typical of colonialist anthropology… is that the goal here would be to reveal the political dimensions of and the power relations underlying the representations of culture that are produced in and through ethnographic practices.

Thus, through the critical introspective turn in anthropology, anthropologists have devised new approaches to meaning and strategies for combating the apparent hegemony of culturalist assumptions in broader social life. In no small part, a desire to devise an ethical approach congruent with the desires, interests and struggles of the subjects of anthropological accounts has led this shift.

Nonetheless, Juan Julián Caballero, a leading Mixtec cultural revitalizationist, has identified precisely these innovations on 'culture' as hindering their efforts for justice. He writes,

> Among the problems we must face are some scholars who not only do not value indigenous cultures, but disqualify our work in favor of *cultural specificities*. [Julián Caballero 2001b:22; my emphasis.]

Juan Julián Caballero's concerns beckon transformations in the meanings of 'culture' that were underway even as anthropologists elaborated these critiques of the concept. Below, I examine how these transformations have unsettled understandings of the politics and ethics of 'culture'.

The transforming fields of 'culture' politics

While anthropologists have identified many ways in which 'culture' and those who wield it have contributed to the marginalization of those perceived as bearing it, in recent decades, members of groups marginalized by the denigration of cultural alterity have embraced cultural distinctiveness and promoted it as a thing of value in their efforts to fight marginalization. This culture-based strategy has been particularly important in indigenous rights activism, and especially among indigenous rights activists working through networks that articulate with the transnational level (Brysk 2000). These activists draw from the deep and widespread resonance indigenous culture gained through the colonial and postcolonial periods, even while fighting particular designations of indigenous culture as inferior. The corresponding culture-based efforts reverberate in two critical directions. First, celebrations of indigenous culture provide common footing for the establishment of communities with a sense of commonality and shared interests. Second, activists capture wider support for their efforts as they promote celebrations of indigenous culture that appeal to a wider audience. The effectiveness of these reverberations for advancing activists' aims depends on activists' adeptness in utilizing channels with familiarity while concomitantly remaking these channels in ways that diverse audiences find compelling and that contribute to their aims.

The recent adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations on September 13th, 2007 attests to their success. By gaining affirmations of their rights at the multilateral level, activists gain benchmarks that they can press their nation-states to conform to (Donnelly 2003). These efforts have effected a widespread –

if uneven and fragmented – codification of 'multicultural' principles, which ground affirmations of indigenous peoples' rights in their cultural distinctiveness.

The critiques of culture that scholars elaborated during the 1980s and 1990s seem ill-equipped to address the shifting terrain of 'culture' politics that culture-based indigenous activism and the related efforts to institutionalize multicultural principles beckon. While Lila Abu-Lughod's (1991) exhortation to 'write against culture' may combat the marginalization of anthropological subjects, it may just as easily undermine one of indigenous activists' most successful foundations for combating this marginalization. Kay Warren (1998) has drawn from her work with pan-Maya activists in Guatemala to illustrate the dilemmas that emerge between 'culture'-critiquing anthropologists and their 'culture' wielding informants. Warren recounts that she entered the field armed with critical perspectives positing culture as an invention, only to find that the Maya activists she worked with relied on essentialist depictions of Maya culture for their political efforts. Moreover, she observed that a critic of the pan-Maya movement deployed the same constructivist understandings of culture she subscribed to as a tool for undermining and discrediting pan-Maya activists' efforts (1998:41).

Observations that the culture critique can and has undermined indigenous peoples' efforts have reinvigorated anthropological debates over the politics of culture and the ethics of scholarly representations. In response, many scholars have identified the critique as ethically wanting, and sought alternatives. For example, Edward Fischer (2001, 1999) advanced a theoretical approach to 'culture' that he claims responds to anthropologists' critiques of the concept while still supporting activists' aims. He grounds his analytical framework in the notion of generative cultural principles,

underlying principles that drive change in ways that produce cultural continuity.

Fischer's approach effectively addresses critiques that the traditional culture concept's emphasis on how underlying structures produce continuity precludes understanding of change. Nonetheless, his focus on how underlying structural forces drive change conforms with the approaches to culture that have produced images of anthropological subjects as lacking individuality and agency. Fisher's proposal also fails to address concerns about how 'culture' contributes to the creation of hierarchies of human difference by disseminating the notion that there are 'different varieties of man', to paraphrase the early observations of Roy Wagner (1975:2).

More recently, Charles Hale (2006) has promoted a different tack. Hale (2006:104) charges that the culture critique errs – in the final instance – in its privileging of scientific and academic goals:

> Cultural critique, and the approach to ethnography it has spawned, is politically positioned, with primary (or even exclusive) commitments to the institutional space from which it emanates.

Although Hale gestures to the political and ethical concerns motivating the 'culture' critique, he ultimately characterizes critiques of culture as waged with primary concern for scientific goals. He asserts (2006:101),

> Proponents of cultural critique, driven by the search for ever-greater analytical complexity and sophistication, object to the politically induced analytical closure that activist research often requires. The criticism that follows from this position of cultural critique is not that activist research lacks objectivity or that it has become politicized but that it is simplistic, unproblematized, and undertheorized.

In contrast, he advocates an "engaged" form of "activist research", in which scholars who work with indigenous activists adopt a commitment to producing work that contributes to activists' goals. In the face of continual change – which shifting meanings of 'culture'

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exemplifies – Hale claims that this strategy enables scholars to contribute effectively and appropriately to indigenous peoples' ongoing struggles against marginalization.

In depicting the culture critique as a narrow reflection of (elite) academic concerns, Hale taps into more widespread criticisms of an apparent disconnect between academic works and everyday life, a critique that scholars have waged most boisterously against post-structural works. Other scholars working with indigenous people have also recently charged critics of culture with a reckless imperviousness to real world concerns. For example, Richard Lee (2006:471) recently cautioned anthropologists that

> There are signs of a dangerous disjuncture between anthropologists' views and those of indigenous people. Currently some anthropologists seem to be more interested in the constructedness of indigenous histories and identities, at the expense of focusing on their hopes and aspirations.

These characterizations of the ethics of the culture critique turn on assumptions that indigenous rights activists' strategies benefit 'indigenous people'. This claim, in turn, rests on the assumption that indigenous people have shared interests that indigenous activists willingly and effectively gauge and promote on behalf of all. Contrastingly, evidence of differences among indigenous people, and of the complex and varied ways in which these differences articulate with ongoing 'group' struggles, raise questions regarding to which indigenous people anthropologists should lend their support. Furthermore, the complex, shifting, dialogically-constructed terrain of culture politics raises questions regarding the extent to which actions that contribute to one's interests are self-evident. In the rest of this chapter, I analyze the implications of difference and the dialogical nature of politics for the politics of 'culture' and scholars' efforts to stake out an ethical approach to the concept.

"Situatedness" and the politics of representation

Most of the anthropological critique of 'culture' I synthesized above implicates the concept for *inventing* group difference. Recent trends suggest that this dimension of culture's inventiveness may contribute to subaltern peoples' efforts to combat marginalization. Yet, feminist critiques also implicate 'culture' for *obscuring* difference. Indeed, feminist scholars have assembled a massive body of work challenging claims that 'groups' share common interests. This dimension of 'culture' poses more intransigent dilemmas for cultural politics.

Feminist analyses of how forms of power and inequality with salience within and between 'groups' intersect to shape individuals' experiences (e.g., hooks 2000; Mohanty 1988; Narayan 1997; Nelson 1999) provide a particularly relevant and compelling challenge to assumptions that indigenous leaders promote commonly-held interests. In these works, feminists analyze how the different kinds of power relations we treat as isolated in theory interweave in practice, and shape individuals' experiences in the process. Owing to the multiple determination of these experiences of marginalization, subaltern women have often been forced to struggle against the denigration of their group identities even while engaging in broader alliances to promote their gender interests (hooks 2000; Merry 2005; Mohanty 1988). Likewise, they often encounter gender-based marginalization while collaborating to fight for 'group'-based interests (Afkhami 2001; Hernandez Castillo 1997, 1994; Moghadam 1994; Narayan 1997; Speed et al. 2006).

Feminist scholars have elaborated approaches to the politics of knowledge and representation grounded in these observations of the particularities that shape individual experiences. In one particularly compelling and influential analysis, Donna Haraway

(1988) observes that *all* knowledge is "situated" within particular contexts, and that all

claims to knowledge are consequently "partial": partial in the sense of the term as

incomplete as well as in the sense of the term as subjective (see Harding 1991 for a

different approach). This approach challenges scholars to consider the specific ways in

which all knowledge claims inhere a partiality shaped by speakers' social locations.

Interestingly, Charles Hale (2006:100) references this work in laying out the

justification for his 'activist anthropology' approach. He writes,

> Once we bracket objectivity and affirm the intersubjective character of social science
> research, one might expect the floodgates to open to a growing interest in activist
> research methodologies and their endorsement as legitimate scholarly activity within the
> discipline. For those who affirm the idea that knowledge is produced through a dialogue
> among politically situated actors, it would seem a relatively easy and logical step to
> incorporate this process more integrally into one's research method—especially when
> one shares a political alignment with the subjects of study.

Yet, Haraway's insistence on the partiality of *all* knowledge unravels Hale's

characterization of a singular plane of politics based on 'groups' of indigenous people, as

she directs attention to the forces that multiply and fracture interests and the alignments

they correspond with. Hale's "political alignment" entails an unacknowledged

prioritization of fields of struggle that simultaneously subjugates other planes of struggle,

such as those related to gender, class and age. Thus, Hale employs a superficial – a

partial – reading of Haraway's notion of "situatedness" to interpret the concept as

illuminating a path toward his approach.

Some recent works have indicated the salience of these insights into how multiple

planes of power and inequality interweave to shape people's experiences of

marginalization for indigenous activism. These works illustrate how the diversity of

indigenous subjects' social locations and experiences frames divergent interpretations of

their interests, and grounds engagement on varied fronts and in diverse forms of struggle. In these contexts, presumptions that the particular goals and strategies pursued by indigenous rights activists are the sole legitimate vehicle for indigenous rights struggles can contribute to the suppression and marginalization of other forms of struggle. So observes Kaushik Ghosh (2006) in his analysis of indigenous rights struggles in India. Ghosh describes the marginalization of a long-standing history of locally-situated rural indigenous peoples' political contest as movements articulating with the transnational indigenous rights movement have been privileged as the sole legitimate medium of indigenous activism. To make matters worse, Ghosh observes that elites and those indigenous people who have participated in the incorporative schemes of the Indian state have been especially well-positioned to take advantage of the opportunities the transnational indigenous rights movement has provided. Ghosh's account illustrates how assumptions that transnationally-articulated indigenous rights activists pursue the interests of 'indigenous people' contributed to the marginalization of those whom academics and others typically imagine as the ultimate beneficiaries of indigenous rights efforts.

Maria Elena Garcia (2005) has described a somewhat similar dynamic in her examination of indigenous rights efforts in Peru. Garcia describes discrepancies in how urban indigenous rights activists in Peru and the rural indigenous populations they aim to 'empower' conceive of their interests, and the contests these discrepancies produce. The urban activists promote an intercultural educational project whose cornerstone is the teaching of indigenous languages in indigenous communities. Through the educational project, urban activists aim to reverse denigrations of indigeneity produced through

colonial and postcolonial histories and promote the recognition and affirmation of indigenous culture as a thing of value in and for modern life among rural indigenous people. Yet, many of the intended subjects of these 'empowerment' initiatives reject the imposition of an intercultural educational project, regarding it as something that will consign their children to a life of poverty and exclusion in a wider racist social context. Indigenous rights activists regard these sentiments as evidence that a colonial false-consciousness has seduced rural people into rejecting their culture. Garcia describes the coercive strategies activists deploy, including drawing from the authority and threat of the state, as they work to impose this 'empowerment' on rural indigenous people. Consequently, in this case, too, a front and form of culture-based indigenous struggle with widespread legitimacy contributed to the marginalization of more locally contextualized struggles.

Feminist scholars' observations of the gender politics of formulations of 'culture' raise additional cautionary flags for facile claims that indigenous rights activists' interpretations of culture benefit 'indigenous people'. Feminist scholars analyzing contexts in which formulations of culture have provided a basis for mobilization have repeatedly described how male movement leaders uphold notions of culture in the name of group interests that simultaneously affirm their own authority and diminish women's power (Afkhami 2001; Moghadam 1994; Narayan 1997; Papanek 1994). Women active in the Maya Zapatista movement have fought these tendencies by taking advantage of the politicization of indigenous culture to challenge so-called traditions that negatively influence them (Hernandez Castillo 1997, 1994; Speed et al. 2006). In many cases,

however, women's exclusion from these formalized political spaces circumscribes their opportunities to influence activists' cultural constructions.

These observations attest to the relevance of calls for attention to particularity for current anthropological conversations about the ethics of indigenous cultural politics. The definition of 'progressive' politics varies among indigenous populations, as individuals' particular social locations shape their determinations of their interests, the struggles they engage in and how they engage in these struggles. Thus, a recognition of the particular ways in which factors such as gender, rural/urban residency, nation, socioeconomic status, class, education, age and other locally salient dimensions of social difference shape how indigenous people are situated is a necessary precursor to devising ethical approaches that contribute to the struggles and aspirations of 'indigenous people'.

Finally, there is an important degree of correspondence between the anthropological culture critique's call for attention to particularity to subvert the construction of 'group' difference, and feminists' call for attention to how conceptions of 'group' difference obscure the particularities of experience. The emphasis on particularities Lila Abu-Lughod (1993,1991) develops in her call to 'write against culture' is also responsive to feminist observations of how the particularities of social location differently shape experience and interests. Both of these critical approaches share an inherent danger, as their focus on particularity undermines a ground of commonality that facilitates collective action. Nonetheless, the explicit ethical concerns guiding this pursuit of particularity and a recognition of the situatedness of all knowledge claims (Haraway 1988) provide a measure of insulation from this danger.

In sum, despite claims of the ethical imperviousness of the culture critique, I arrive at the critique through a feminist and anthropological route driven by explicitly ethical concerns. The interweaving of multiple salient dimensions of difference in shaping people's experiences and interests makes ethics a complex and differentiated field. Consequently, I regard attention to particularity as a prerequisite for staking out ethical approaches. My approach in this work is explicitly partial – I analyze the politics of culture by examining how formulations of indigenous culture influence a particular group of rural, Mixtec-speaking indigenous women.

Beyond participation: The cunning of culture

Just as difference complicates the politics of culture, so, too, do the intricacies of political contest. Critiques of the politics of representation – of which the preceding discussion is part — direct attention to unequal access to important fora in which actors articulate interests, translate them into concrete strategies and pursue these strategies. These critiques typically rest on uncomplicated understandings of politics: individuals gauge their own interests and promote them when afforded the opportunity, and success arrives in the form of institutional capitulation to their demands. They hinge on the claim that if only effective strategies for creating a truer, more representative articulation of interests were invented, changes that respond to the interests of the diversity of indigenous people could be realized. Indigenous people could force the state to implement more responsive measures, which would gain material form as codifications of indigenous people's rights. In this progressive political process, (good) affirmations of

the rights of indigenous people would dislodge existing (bad) orientations towards indigeneity and obstructions to these rights.

'Progressive' readings of political change as a product of 'good' politics motivated by subalterns, or 'bad' politics driven by the state may be persuasive in their broadest outlines. Nonetheless, these readings eschew the dialogical nature of political contest. Even the most dramatic moments of political change are well analyzed as multiply-determined momentary accommodations in the context of ongoing struggle (see, e.g., Joseph and Nugent 1994). Importantly, the accommodations these struggles produce bear the stamps of the multiple parties engaged in these ongoing struggles. This distinctly dialogical productivity necessitates a more careful consideration of how particular changes can reflect and contribute to the struggles and aspirations of indigenous people, while simultaneously frustrating those same struggles and aspirations.

Transnationally-linked indigenous activists' articulations of indigenous alterity readily evidence the dialogical nature of 'culture' politics. These activists owe much of their success to their adeptness at remaking and redeploying *received* notions of indigeneity. They have seized existing conceptions of indigenous cultural difference, and reinterpreted and redeployed them as a foundation for their efforts. Kay Warren (1998) employed Gayatri Spivak's term "strategic essentialism" to describe these creative and inventive processes in her analysis of Maya cultural revitalization in Guatemala. For many, the term pegs an aura of frivolousness to indigenous activists' cultural claims. Yet, this is invention in an analytical sense, one deeply-situated and thus constrained by historical and contemporary understandings. As Tania Li [2000:151] notes,

...a group's self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed. It is, rather, a positioning which draws

upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle.

The notions of indigenous cultural alterity that transnational indigenous rights activists have adopted, refigured and deployed in their efforts resonate precisely because they play on historical and contemporary understandings with widespread currency. These ideas gain currency because they 'fit' with what we know about the world. They *seem* right and they *feel* right. While the contextual contingency of meaning challenges readings of indigenous activists' strategic essentialisms as frivolous and unauthentic, it simultaneously raises cautionary flags for the politics of contemporary formulations of indigenous culture: *What historical understandings do formations of indigenous alterity summon?*

The discourses valorizing indigenous culture with the most widespread resonance build on assumptions that the indigenous subject is exterior to the modern world. Indigenous rights activists frequently contend that this exteriority positions indigeneity to address the wants, ills and dilemmas of modern life. Most profoundly, fantasies of indigenous alterity play on Western desires to escape modern life. In addition, indigeneity can offer solutions to a whole host of modern dilemmas: indigenous people are better environmental stewards (Conklin and Graham 1995; Muehlebach 2001); they have more just social relations; they lack social differentiation and contest; etc. In short, indigenous cultural alterity becomes a metonym for better environmental stewardship, better social subjects, better economic models, or a more moral just version of modernity.

In reflecting on these dynamics, Beth Conklin and Laura Graham have critiqued how prevailing understandings of indigenous alterity circumscribe the discursive fields in

which indigenous activists articulate their demands. Conklin and Graham (1995:701) assert,

> In Amazonian identity politics, Indians' power – to the extent that they have any – derives not from traditional forms of money, power or patronage, but from Westerners' ideas about Indians.

These authors rightly critique the power relations constraining indigenous activists' strategies, though they most certainly overstate their claim. Indigenous activists have reformulated articulations of indigenous alterity in undeniably powerful ways. Activists have reformulated indigenous culture in ways that provide themselves and those they seek to represent with a prism for the understanding of self and other that challenges the historical denigration of the indigenous self. In the process, they have laid a foundation upon which groups of people with shared interests have been and are being formed. Finally, activists have deftly elaborated the substance of indigenousness in ways that support their political claims, particularly rights to self-determination and land (Muehlebach 2001).

Recent critiques of multicultural political reforms also evidence the over-determination of cultural politics, and its significance for gauging the politics of 'positive' formulations of culture. Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) and Charles Hale (2005, 2002) have recently elaborated critiques of multicultural reforms that challenge perceptions of multiculturalisms as facile capitulations to indigenous activists' demands. The capitulation vantage point obscures the channels for coercion and constraint multicultural reforms invariably create, even as they create new opportunities for indigenous people to ward off these forces. Both Hale and Povinelli argue that the multicultural reforms they examine pose dangers to indigenous people, as elites have

formulated and utilized them in ways to ensure their own rule. Povinelli describes how leaders of the Australian nation-state used multicultural reform to disarm the critique of the Australian nation-state's colonial relations. Settlers devised multicultural reforms, which they claimed provided a more expansive space for the indigenous other within the Australian nation. Crucially, this process did not involve a devolution of control. For Povinelli, the "cunning of recognition" is that within the multicultural nation, indigenous people must learn to maneuver these *settler constructions of alterity*, which includes knowing when and how to approximate and distance themselves from certain (valorized and repugnant) symbols of alterity. Povinelli observes (2002:49),

> At the most simple level, no indigenous subject can inhabit the temporal or spatial location to which indigenous identity refers – the geographical and social space and time of authentic Ab-originality... Producing a present-tense indigenousness in which some failure is not a qualifying condition is discursively and materially impossible.

Ultimately, rather than providing a greater space for indigenous participation in the Australian nation, Australian multiculturalism redefines the mode and terrain of government. Somewhat similarly, Charles Hale (2005, 2002) argues that Central American leaders have devised a circumscribed multicultural project to disarm the threat indigenous peoples' claims to self-determination pose to the neoliberal project. For Hale, "multiculturalism menaces" because it marginalizes those indigenous subjects who pursue more radical projects demanding self-determination. Thus, the dialogical nature of indigenous 'culture' politics unsettles facile distinctions between 'positive' and 'negative' readings of indigenous culture, along with the translation of these readings into multicultural reforms.

The examination of multicultural reforms intimates a final consideration. To the extent that these ideas 'work', they travel. Indeed, they only work *through* travel, as they

are formulated into policies and projects that are adopted and imposed in different places. These processes, too, are dialogical, but the "dialogue" here occurs within a much more expansive frame, within the diverse contexts in which projects and policies are devised and carried out. This study targets this understudied area of cultural politics. *How do these ideas travel?* What meanings do they beckon and acquire in the processes that Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2005) describes as "friction"?

Conclusion

Even in this apparent 'multicultural' age, where many scholars have urged anthropologists to abandon the culture critique, there are multiple reasons to linger on the politics of culture, as I do in this study. First, the emergence of 'positive' readings of indigenous cultural alterity associated with 'multiculturalism' does not necessarily signal the disappearance of 'negative' readings. Second, difference and the dialogical nature of politics give cause for approaching even 'positive' readings of indigenous cultural alterity cautiously and critically. Differences among indigenous people intimate that culture politics influence them differently. The dialogical nature of politics can introduce "menace" and "cunning" into apparently positive discursive articulations and multicultural reforms.

If calls for an ethical approach to 'culture' index a desire to contribute to indigenous people's struggles against exploitation and their efforts to negotiate better circumstances, responding to these questions about the politics of culture is essential. I engage these questions through the analysis I develop in the pages that follow. I examine contemporary formulations of indigenous culture, analyze the social processes through

which these formulations travel, and emphasize the implications of these processes for those among indigenous people who are perceived as bearing the most authentic expressions of indigenous culture. A key moment that Roy Wagner (1975) directed attention to in his critique of 'the invention of culture' over thirty years ago lies at the heart of the ensuing analysis: the adoption of culture as a frame for reckoning similarity to and difference from others. While Wagner noted how the adoption of the culture concept provided anthropologists with a unique vantage point, I analyze the social processes through which ordinary people are "incited" (Povinelli 2002:13) to view themselves and others – in varying degrees – as culture-bearers. In turn, I analyze how the differential dissemination of the concept influences relations among those whose experience the concept is used to narrate.

CHAPTER TWO: POWER AND INDIGENEITY IN MEXICAN HISTORY

The distinction between Indian and settler acquired singular importance with the colonization of "New Spain" in 1521. This distinction has taken different forms during the almost five centuries that have transpired since, as elites and indigenous people have renegotiated its meaning and its significance for shifting strategies of rule. This chapter examines these shifting configurations of indigenousness and strategies of governance in the history of New Spain and the postcolonial Mexican nation-state. I analyze four periods: colonial rule; the early nation-building period of the 19th century; the post-revolutionary early and middle years of the 20th century; and the period of crisis and neoliberal reform that began in the last quarter of the 20th century.

Two of the most significant transformations in this history occurred with the transition from New Spain to Mexico: the dismantling of colonial rule and the rise of the liberal model of the Mexican nation. A few short decades after Mexico had gained independence, elites advocating a liberal Mexican nation triumphed during the middle of the nineteenth century. They implemented a series of reforms aimed at ushering in a form of government grounded in the free, equal and self-determining individual.

The demise of colonial rule and the rise of liberal societies symbolize a great moral shift in Western consciousness: post-colonial nation builders created *just* liberal nation-states in the wreckage of the *unjust* colonies. In this historical rendering, above all else, the creation of separate institutions with distinct logics of rule for the government of settlers and indigenous people symbolize the immorality of the colonial state. The postcolonial liberal nation-state, grounded in the ideal of the free and equal individual,

appears in marked contradistinction and as solution to this unjust colonial organization of government.

Nonetheless, in surveying the history of indigenous people in Latin America, Hector Diaz Polanco (1997) observes that a distinctly colonial mentality of "indigenism" has guided Latin American governance strategies throughout colonial and postcolonial rule. He writes,

> ...indigenism... involves policies that have been thought out and designed by non-Indians to be applied to others. [Indigenism] does not assume any consideration of the points of view and interests of those others. Rather, it assumes a more or less blatant denial that these others have anything to say about their own affairs and destiny. [1997:23]

The continuity of indigenist governmentalities through colonial and post-colonial forms of rule reflects the modeling of the individual subject deserving of the rights necessary for self-determination in the liberal state on the modern European individual, itself construed in contradistinction to the indigenous. In this context, the spaces *mestizo* (of Spanish and indigenous heritage) elites afforded to indigeneity reflect what Elizabeth Povinelli (2002:12) describes as the shifting boundary that demarcates the "limits of tolerance" and sequesters "repugnant" expressions of alterity. During the earliest moments in which elites articulated a liberal imaginary of the Mexican nation, they afforded no place to indigenousness therein. Thus, liberal elites saw indigenous people as requiring leadership to acquire the willingness, desire and ability to participate in this rights-based nation. These limits shifted importantly from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, and again beginning in the latter decades of the twentieth century. I examine these shifts below, and analyze the opportunities they provide for indigenous people and the new dangers they create. I begin by examining how 'indigenousness' gained form and how its significance shifted throughout the period of colonial rule.

Colonial rule

The colonial imposition wrought an unparalleled disaster on the lives of the indigenous people of the land newly designated New Spain. The initial violence of the conquest yielded to a series of epidemics that ultimately diminished the indigenous population to a fraction of its pre-Conquest size. William Taylor's (1972:17-8) estimation of population decline in the Valley of Oaxaca is indicative: he estimates that 350,000 people lived in the Valley at the time of the conquest, and that this number had declined to 40,000-45,000 by 1630.[4]

In the context of this monumental decline, the indigenous people of the land faced severe social and cultural dislocations. The colonizers remade the indigenous social hierarchies that had provided the basis for meaningful social engagement, reducing indigenous social differentiation to elite rulers and commoners. Concomitantly, they forbid the indigenous people of the land from carrying out many of their everyday cultural practices. The colonists were particularly zealous in their intolerance for indigenous religion: they outlawed indigenous religious rites and destroyed sacred sites and other material artifacts related to the practice of religion. Even as the indigenous inhabitants of the land watched their communities dwindle and their social and cultural worlds disintegrate, their tribute burdens multiplied. Faced with this severe, multi-fronted dislocation, many committed suicide. Others simply 'wandered off in despair', abandoning their communities.

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[4] In fact, depopulation prompted Spanish administrators to institute a program of resettlement, or congregación, in which they relocated indigenous populations into more centralized and populous communities during the late 16th and early 17th centuries (Ouweneel 1995:762; see also Perkins 2005a; Terraciano 2000).

Yet, many communities survived. Those that did encountered the imposition of a colonial system with two primary goals: the extraction of the colony's wealth and the Christianization of indigenous people. The Crown devised a dual 'republic' system to pursue these goals, establishing a *Republica de indios* and a *Republica de españoles.* "Racial" group determined membership in these republics, and, in the process, determined individuals' rules, rights, and obligations to the colony. The dual republic system of government of New Spain provides a good example of what Kaushik Ghosh (2006:508) has deemed "exclusive governmentalities" – logics of rule in which assumptions about the alterity of indigenous people underwrite the imposition of separate and distinct modes and structures of government.

The Crown implemented colonial rule relatively quickly by recognizing and formalizing the rights of indigenous rulers, who were designated *caciques.* In short order, the colonizers imposed an additional government structure that functioned alongside of *cacicazgo.* The new *cabildo* or town-council system of governance included elected leadership positions responsible for governing local politics. In contrast to the strict hereditary requirements of *cacicazgo,* the *cabildos* were meant to function without regard for heredity. Nonetheless, *caciques* regularly occupied the highest *cabildo* positions, *gobernadores,* in practice (Ouweneel 1995).[5]

Ronald Spores (1967:120) has observed that *cacicazgo* provided a great measure of continuity in everyday villagers' experiences in the earliest years of colonial rule. Even so, *cacicazgo* was a crucial technology of colonial rule: *caciques* served as key

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[5] Terraciano (2000) identifies the declining status of women rulers as a major transformation in governance that occurred with the establishment of cabildos in Mixtec communities. Although colonial administrators denominated Mixtec women rulers as cacicas in recognition of their rule over Mixtec communities along with men, women were not afforded similar status in the new political institutions.

intermediaries for the administration of colonial rule. Thus, Michael Ducey (2001:527) aptly characterizes *cacicazgo* as "Janus-faced: on the one hand, it was part of the administrative system of New Spain, and, on the other, it was one of the few institutions staffed by the Indians themselves" (2001:527). The contradictions stemming from *caciques*' dual loyalties to the communities they represented and the colonizers they served made the *cacique*-community relationship rife with conflict.

While indigenous nobles had collected tribute in goods and labor on their own behalf prior to the conquest, as *caciques* they were also charged with ensuring that their communities met the requisite tribute and labor demands of the colony. Thus, *caciques* collected tribute on behalf of the Crown, in addition to on their own behalf. In addition, the *encomienda* system placed a major burden on indigenous peoples' labor and resources during the early years of the colony. The Crown devised the *encomienda* system to reward those who had played an important role in the conquest; *encomienda* gave these individuals the right to exact tribute in goods and labor from particular communities. The system was revamped in short time because of recurring reports of abuses by *encomenderos* (Díaz-Polanco 1997:8). The changes established a system of labor draft called *repartimiento* in which demands on indigenous peoples' labor were regularized and divided among *encomenderos*, the Crown, clergy and others. The new system required those making demands on indigenous people's labor to compensate them (ibid.). Nonetheless, Hector Díaz-Polanco (1997:8) rightly emphasizes that even as the changes made the system less susceptible to the whims and abuses of individual *encomendos,* they institutionalized the exploitation of indigenous labor.

Encomenderos were eventually replaced by *Alcaldes mayores*, Crown-appointed administrators who oversaw indigenous communities (Taylor 1979:15). *Alcades mayores* benefited from the *reparto de efetos*, through which they enjoyed a monopoly on providing certain goods to the communities whose administration they supervised. The *reparto de efetos* often led to an illicit practice, wherein *alcaldes mayores* supplied community members with raw materials to produce goods, which they purchased back at exceptionally low prices. In response, the Crown eventually outlawed the *reparto de efetos* in 1790 (ibid.). Nonetheless, it continued in many places, often through the collusions of *Alcades mayores* and *caciques* (Chance and Taylor 1985).

The Crown provided institutional mechanisms for indigenous people to fight the abuses of Spanish administrators, settlers and indigenous elites. Indigenous people were direct subjects of the Crown, and laws established and regulated the extent to which others could make demands on their labor and resources. Moreover, indigenous people had their own tribunals to press their claims. These mechanisms help measure the power of other members of colonial society, while also importantly corresponding with the non-economic motivations of colonization associated with the proselytizing agenda of the Church. William Taylor (1979:18-9) provides a useful reminder that the missionary aim was not simply a facile way of legitimizing the colonial enterprise, but a key agenda that importantly shaped the colonial experience:

> Iberian Catholocism was in the sixteenth century was a component of the government –
> not a separate compartment but an all-pervasive influence on the formation and
> implementation of state policy.

Accordingly, even as the Crown devised a colonial system aimed to exploit the labor and resources of the indigenous population, the Crown continually sought to 'protect' indigenous people:

> Royal paternalism carried with it a view of sedentary, converted Indians as perpetual minors, "niños con barbas" (children with beards), as an eighteenth-century priest put it, who needed special protection and consideration in order to learn the ways of Christian civilization and the obligations of royal vassals. Royal laws frequently enjoined "looking out always for the welfare of the Indians" and "giving greater protection to the Indians." [Taylor 1979:17]

Indigenous people quickly learned to navigate these opportunities to press their claims in colonial society. Indeed, most of the existing indigenous accounts of colonial life and life Prior to the conquest reside in court records.[6]

Indigenous people used the courts to pursue different kinds of struggles. For example, *cabildo* officials used these channels to fight abuses by Alcalde mayors (Terraciano 2001:150). Yet, as noted above, relations between communities and caciques were often particularly conflictual (Perkins 2005b; Ouweneel 1995; Terraciano 2000. Kevin Terraciano (2000) and Arij Ouweneel (1995) contend that the colonial reconstruction of indigenous leadership sewed the seeds of *caciques'* decline. Both authors argue that the Crown dismantled the ground of reciprocity – upon which pre-Hispanic rule was based – in the process of transforming indigenous leaders into *caciques*. This reciprocity had been contingent on leaders' fulfillment of key obligations including providing protection and religious services. Although the Crown institutionalized indigenous leaders' rights to exact tribute, *caciques* were not provided with the spiritual and material resources to reciprocate in a way that legitimated their rule in the eyes of those they ruled.

Given these circumstances, some communities complained to Spanish authorities about abusive *caciques* and refused to pay tribute beginning in the 16th century

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[6] For example, in his study of Mixtec history during colonial rule, Kevin Terraciano (2001:9) notes, "Most of the surviving sources were used as evidence in local civil and criminal disputes adjudicated by the Spanish alcalde mayor in a given administrative and legal jurisdiction, or *alcaldia mayor*".

(Terraciano 2000:33). Moreover, some subject towns sought independence from their *cabeceras* as early as the 1550s (Terraciano 2001:124). Disputes between *caciques* and those they represented became especially pitched during the 18th century, when the recovery of indigenous populations placed increasing stress on limited resources (Ouweneel 1995:763; Chance 2003). In this context of increasing land scarcity, conflicts arose as *caciques* sold lands to Spanish settlers that community members had regarded as their own (Chance 2003). Complaints against *caciques* surged after 1700 in the Mixteca, and many subject communities sought independence during the 18th century (Terraciano 2000:34). In acquiring independence, these communities ended their tribute burdens and disputes with *caciques* over rights to land (Monaghan et al. 2003:143; Perkins 2005b).

Yet, while many communities sought secession from municipal seats to rupture their relationships with their *caciques, caciques* and communities often *did* come together to defend interests emerging from a sense of shared community (Perkins 2005a:29). In fact, *caciques* occasionally ceded lands to subject communities (Monaghan et al. 2003:134) and purchased lands for the community (Perkins 2005a:25). Communities also sometimes sought and acquired the help of their *caciques* and former *caciques* in defending their property, which was often needed to demonstrate historical attachments to land (Perkins 2005a:29; Monaghan et al. 2003). Thus, John Monaghan and his colleagues (2003) report that some communities sought 'replacement' *caciques* when their leaders died leaving no one to inherit the position.

Ostensibly, the colonial hierarchy created two racially-distinct groups: *indios* and *españoles*. Yet, studies of *cacicazgo* provide a more complex and often contradictory

picture of how colonial hierarchies shaped conceptions of group identity and individual loyalties. I examine changing colonial conceptions of group difference below.

The shifting criteria for reckoning difference

Caciques unsettle the notion of a colonizing settlement of *españoles* with rights to the labor of a separate settlement of *indios*. The special place of indigenous *caciques* in the colonial hierarchy hints at how the practicalities of rule shaped the actualization of the colonial caste ideology into a system of governance, even at its inception. Likewise, distinctions among *españoles* became pivotal in the earliest years of the colony, as *peninsulares* (*españoles* born in Spain) claimed privileges not enjoyed by their *criollo* (*españoles* born in the colony) counterparts.

Although the dual-republic system only recognized *indios* and *españoles,* another group importantly shaped the conceptions of human difference that emerged in the interplay of received colonial categories and everyday experience – Africans. Spanish colonists initially enslaved indigenous people of the new land, but the decline in the indigenous population prompted them to bring African slaves to the colonies (Díaz Polanco 1997:24-5, 32). As the colony aged, processes of 'miscegenation' among *negros* (Blacks), *indios* and *españoles* further undermined the facile distinctions underlying the dual-republic system.

Beginning in the 16th century, 'racial' mixing prompted the elaboration of an even more detailed racial taxonomy. In addition to *peninsulares, criollos, indios* and *negros,* the emerging classification included *mestizos* (those of *español* and *indio* parentage), *mulattos* (those of *español* and *negro* parentage), and *zambos* (those of *indio* and *negro*

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parentage) (Katzew 1997:4). Later, in the seventeenth century, *castizos* (light-skinned *mestizos*) and *morizcos* (light-skinned mulattos) were added to these categories (ibid.). The result was a detailed racial caste system in which *peninsulares* occupied the most privileged position, followed by *criollos,* the *"castas"* of mixed parentage, *indios* and *negros.* Ilona Katzew (1997) rightly observes that elites' ongoing anxieties about how physical expressions failed to match the racial hierarchy prompted their ongoing struggles to capture and order the physical expressions of difference into a hierarchical caste system. As Katzew argues, the "casta paintings" elites created during the eighteenth century provide an especially compelling view into this elite panic over the actual physical blurring of 'race' in a system of racial hierarchy. Casta paintings usually included a series of sixteen paintings in which parents of different 'racial stock' were pictured along with their offspring, who were labeled and categorized.

In addition to the inadequacy of the racial hierarchy to capture actual physical differences effectively, the cultural criteria increasingly used to read places within the racial hierarchy further threatened the racial hierarchy. Katzew (1997:8) observes,

> The eighteenth century in Mexico saw the increasing blurring of social boundaries as the necessary consequence of racial mixing, but also of the change in the distribution of wealth. In addition to the frequency of intermarriage, which legitimized interracial liaisons, Mexico's society was marked by a more frequent "passing" of one racial/social category to another.

In part, this was influenced by the economic growth of the 18th century:

> The great economic expansion in Mexico during the eighteenth century allowed a number of families from lower social groups-descendants from Indians and slaves-to amass great wealth and buy their way into the elite by purchasing certificates of legal "whiteness" called *gracias al sacar* (thanks for letting out).

Ultimately, 'miscegenation' and economic transformations greatly shaped a shift toward the use of cultural considerations for navigating difference.

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The distinction *gente de razón,* or people of reason, gained widespread salience in the context of this system of 'racial' privilege that increasingly relied on cultural identifiers of status. William Merrill (1997) reports that the distinction was initially used to identify non-Spanish members of "castas" who were not indigenous and spoke the Spanish language (see also Vigil 1973). This early usage indicates that key cultural symbols acquired importance for determining the status of individuals within the 'racial' hierarchy. The culture-based hierarchical reasoning opposed *gente de razón* who dominated key Spanish cultural practices to their indigenous counterparts. Thus, in time, the term *gente de razón* came to include Spanish speakers, as well, and was used primarily to designate non-indigenous people from their counterparts according to cultural considerations. The growing salience of a cultural hierarchy signaled by *gente de razón* suggests a multidimensional change in reckoning difference.

In Oaxaca, Spanish and *mestizos* did not often settle outside of the *cabeceras*, or head towns, within the Indian towns. William Taylor reports (1979:27):

> The administrative and commercial cabeceras of Oaxaca generally were more
> Hispanicized and had more non-Indian residents that their *sujetos* politically subordinate
> communities, but even the cabeceras – Teposcolula, Nochixtlán, Tlacolula, Zimatlán and
> Ocotlán – were still largely composed of Indian peasant farmers.

Thus, 'miscegination' was not a great influence on notions of difference shaping these communities. Nonetheless, these shifts in reckoning difference likely exacerbated the tensions contributing to *cacique*-community conflicts. As discussed above, the colonial *cacique* system created an indigenous elite with contradictory accountabilities to colonial rulers and their communities. In addition, *caciques* were the vanguard in the adoption of goods, styles and skills of Spanish distinction. For example, in his study of the Mixtec experience during colonial rule, Kevin Terraciano (2001:203) reports,

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> In general, most native yya [*caciques*] owned furniture and a variety of European and native goods in the colonial period, whereas ordinary ñandahi [commoners] possessed very few European items and kept mainly native goods in their huahi [home].

Moreover, elite members of indigenous communities were among the first to adopt Spanish surnames:

> Yya [*caciques*] and toho [nobles] were the first to be baptized and the first to adopt Spanish names after the conquest. By 1550, most yya [*caciques*] and toho [nobles] had a Christian baptismal name and a calendrical last name. [Terraciano 2001:151]

In addition, many native nobles learned the Spanish writing system by the second half of the sixteenth century:

> European priests taught alphabetic writing to the sons and grandsons of native nobles who had practiced the art of writing on deerskin. [Terraciano 2001:15]

Possession of these goods, styles and skills of Spanish distinction conferred even greater status on *caciques*.

Indigenous modes of rule depended on and enforced a gulf between the nobility and commoners prior to the imposition of colonial rule. Nonetheless, *caciques'* use of Spanish goods, styles and skills as sources of distinction within the colonial 'racial' hierarchy – which subordinated the indigenous to the Spanish – introduced a thorny edge of betrayal to this gulf. As the colonial period matured and eventually yielded to the post-colonial Mexican nation-state, and the cultural reading of the 'racial' hierarchy gained sway, indigenous elites identified themselves with greater ease as *gente de razón*, along with others who spoke the Spanish language and used Spanish-inspired styles of dress, and in contradistinction to the indigenous commoners they had governed. This further complicated the ambiguities of *cacique* loyalties. In doing so, it undoubtedly further incited commoners' mistrust of and conflicts with *caciques*.

The early Mexican nation-state

In the beginning of the 19th century, native-born *criollo* elites disaffected by the privileges afforded Spanish-born *peninsulares* generated a movement for independence from Spain. They struggled for over a decade (1810-1821) before claiming victory in 1821. The victory was bittersweet, however, as it inaugurated a period of extreme instability and disarray that lasted throughout most of the century. Repeated coups, the loss of extensive territory to the United States, and the recolonization of the country by the French during the 19th century attest to the problems elites encountered in establishing control in the new country. Conflicts over the kind of government that should provide the bedrock for the new nation greatly contributed to this instability. These conflicts diverged along a conservative-liberal axis: conservatives sought to maintain the structures of power and privilege of Spanish rule, along with the integration of church and state, while liberals promoted a new model based on the individual liberties of the equal citizen, the rule of law, and the separation of Church and state.

Despite the divergences in liberals and conservatives' aspirations for the fledgling nation, they shared a common perception of the *indio* as inadequately prepared to contribute to a modern nation. Indeed, the trends toward a culturally inflected bi-modal racial hierarchy that were evident in the colonial period continued during the early Mexican nation-building period of the nineteenth century. Yet, while the *gente de razón* hierarchy utilized cultural characteristics to synthesize the frenzied differentiation of racial categories that occurred during the latter part of colonial society into *indios* and non-*indios*, early Mexican nation-builders reinvigorated the racial underpinnings of this distinction. They identified the *mestizo* offspring of the indigenous inhabitants of the

land and the Spanish colonizers as the essence of the emergent Mexican nation (de la Peña 2006; Stavenhagen 1998).

Liberals triumphed toward the middle of the century, and enacted key pieces of legislation to ground the emergence of the liberal state. Most importantly, they created the Ley Juarez (1855), which established equal citizenship and terminated the special privileges enjoyed by members of the Church and the military, and the Ley Lerdo (1856), which privatized corporate landholdings. Moreover, they established individual civil liberties in the Constitution of 1857.

Citizenship and land rights

The privatization of corporate landholdings in liberal reforms posed a great threat to indigenous people, as it included the lands the Crown had allotted for indigenous communities. In addition, liberal reforms brought less obvious threats to indigenous people. Kaushik Ghosh's (2006) analysis of how institutional contexts in India have shaped the strategies indigenous *adivasi* people have devised and utilized to resist marginalization and pursue their interests is useful for understanding the consequences of liberal reform in Mexico. Even as early liberal reforms in Mexico promised to rid the country of the scourge of colonial rule, they threatened to foreclose important channels where indigenous people exercised control in colonial society. Consequently, indigenous people repeatedly refused to relinquish certain colonial norms and institutions, even while embracing some of the opportunities the reforms provided.

For example, the shift to a citizenship-based polity institutionalized in the new *ayuntamientos* provided indigenous communities with the much-desired opportunity to

get rid of *Alcaldes mayores* (Ducey 2001). Nonetheless, as Michael Ducey (2001) observes, the 'racial' criteria for participation in the colonial *Republic de indios* had ensured a degree of control. Thus, the shift also brought with it the potential to undermine indigenous political control. Moreover, while the liberal strategists who drafted the Ley Lerdo were especially intent on dispossessing the landholdings of the Church, the law also mandated the privatization of the corporate landholdings of indigenous communities. The privatization of indigenous lands had a great potential to deleteriously influence indigenous people. It led in many cases to a great dispossession of indigenous lands and the creation of a landless peasantry. Nonetheless, the disarray that characterized most of the 19th century limited leaders' ability to enforce these measures, and the impacts of the measures were uneven. In this context, the ability of indigenous communities to manipulate colonial and postcolonial legal norms and their corresponding ideas about the place of indigenous peoples in the new nation was often consequential in determining their fate.

Thus, many indigenous people fought the deleterious consequences of post-colonial government by refusing to relinquish the norms and institutions of colonial government. For example, Michael Ducey (2001:531-2) describes how some indigenous communities rejected the imposition of the *ayuntamiento* and instead maintained system of governance they had used within the colonial *Republica de indios*. Thus, in communications with state officials, they referred to themselves as representatives of the 'Comun de indios', and retained governing positions that were not recognized as part of the new liberal Mexican government (ibid). At the same time, these communities

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appropriated liberal ideals of citizenship that had acquired salience to pursue their interests and claims including the critique of slavery (2001:532-3).

Jennie Purnell (2002) provides a similar description of how Oaxacan villagers deftly deployed colonial and postcolonial norms to fight the privatization of their lands legislated by Ley Lerdo. She describes how individuals claimed both individual (i.e., liberal) rights and communal (i.e., colonial) rights while pursuing resolutions to their disputes over land-holdings. Indigenous peoples' struggles to maintain their lands also contributed to the endurance of *cacicazgo* into the postcolonial world as communities relied on *caciques* to demonstrate their land rights (Monaghan et al. 2003). In examining these contests and others like them, Jennie Purnell (2002) and Francisca Mallon (1994) affirm how indigenous people successfully negotiated the meaning of liberal reform and the Mexican nation through these disputes.

Education

Although liberals and conservatives shared a common perception of indigenous people as ill-suited for participation in a modern Mexico, liberals argued that proper guidance would 'cure' indigenous populations of these 'impediments' (Mallon 1994:88). They identified the educational system as a key strategy for preparing indigenous people to participate in the modern nation. Francisca Mallon (1994) describes some of the conflicts these early educational efforts generated in her analysis of these efforts in the highlands of the state of Puebla during the late 1860s and early 1870s. She reports that villagers throughout the region initially pursued schools eagerly, as they anticipated that education would provide youth with the skills necessary for successfully achieving their

goals. The realities of education dashed these aspirations, however, as parents'

educational goals conflicted with those of educators and officials. Mallon (1994:82)

reports,

> ... as it came to be practiced in this region over these years, the expansion of schooling
> also became a way of teaching people how to march to the state's tune. Children needed
> to be schooled in the ways of ways of "civilization": getting to school on time, learning
> respect, making school a higher priority than the agricultural calendar or the family
> economy. Almost immediately, questions of enforcement and surveillance surfaced, as
> teachers experienced the frustrations of poor attendance and seeming nonchalance toward
> learning. In this context, education was no longer a popular aspiration to progress, in
> forms and with calendars that the people controlled. It became instead a potentially
> authoritarian and racist discourse about the need to force ignorant or religious villagers,
> almost without exception Indian, against their own judgment and for their own good, into
> the enlightened sphere of "science."

In response, frustrated parents frequently rebelled against the schools, and some pursued

efforts to establish private schools as an alternative (Mallon 1994:84). Where these

conflicts over the methods, substance and goals of education arose, educators and

officials explained them as evidencing parents' ignorance. Mallon (1994:88-89)

explains,

> Indian peasants, in this context, were not ready to participate in the public sphere; they
> put their family interests and their religious beliefs before their civic duty to educate their
> children. Racism became, in this context, a nested discourse of control: local, regional,
> and national intellectuals of liberal persuasion had the obligation to educate the masses in
> spite of themselves. The liberals were to create the citizen, through a process of
> education and surveillance.

Conflicts over the agenda of educational efforts have arisen repeatedly throughout the

postcolonial era, as parents have fought educational strategies that conflict with their

aspirations for their children.

The imposition of authoritarian rule

Porfirio Diaz (1876-1911) established centralized control and stability for the first

time in postcolonial Mexico by strictly imposing order and brutally repressing contests to

that order. In large part, he relied on *jefes politicos,* or political chiefs, to enforce order and pursue his program of economic modernization (Falcón 1994). Diaz deemed indigenous communal lands vacant and seized them, forcing the newly landless people to work in the mines and *haciendas* (Barry 1995:16). Consequently, the consolidation of indigenous lands that liberal reform had prompted accelerated during his rule. Most of the 200-400% increase in private land holdings that occurred in Oaxaca during the 19th century occurred during Diaz's rule (Chassen-López 1998:101), primarily in lowland areas of the state (Clarke 2001:34). The marginalization of much of the Mexican population through land expropriation contributed to Diaz's downfall. Over ninety-six percent of people in the countryside lacked land by the time a revolutionary movement ousted Diaz in 1911 (Cockroft 1983:91). Revolutionary leaders including Emiliano Zapata rallied against the Porfirian expropriation and consolidation of lands with their calls for *tierra y libertad,* land and liberty, which animated the seven year Revolution (1910-1917).

Francie Chassen-López's (1998) account of a contest over landholdings in Pinotepa Nacional – the major urban center of the Mixteca Baja region of Oaxaca – that intersected with the revolution sheds light into how the entrenchment of the division between *gente de razón* and *indios* intersected with the expropriation and consolidation of landholdings. Chassen-López reports that liberal legislation had led to vast consolidation of landholdings in the region under study, which provided the context within which Mixtec-speaking landless peasants attempted to take back the lands of a sizeable class of ranchers with relatively extensive landholdings. A chronicler of the events that unfolded who identified the ranchers according to 'race' characterized half of the ranchers as

"Mixtec" (1998:105). Nonetheless, they self-identified as *gente de razón* in the contest that unfolded, aligning themselves with the other large landholders struggling to maintain their vast landholdings against Mixtec-speaking peasants who self-identified as *"gente indÿgena"* or *"naturales"*. Thus, Chassen-López (1998:105) notes,

> By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the definition of an indio, of ethnicity, indicated cultural (language, dress, and customs) preferences far more than phenotype. Despite themselves having indigenous or African ancestors, as did mestizo or ladino middle classes throughout Spanish America, the Costeño ranchers felt no contradiction considering themselves white and assuming a denigrating attitude toward indios and Afro-Mexicans.

Chassen-López's reflections indicate that the process of realigning identities to a racially-inflected cultural hierarchy that had begun in the colonial period was very developed by the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast to the racial hierarchy originally grounded in a distinction between *españoles* and *indios*, in the conflict in Pinotepa Nacional, people identified themselves and their interests according to cultural indicators that differentiated *indios* from *gente de razón.*

Given the major place of concerns over lands in galvanizing support for the revolutionary movement, observers would anticipate that intersection of the conflict with the revolutionary struggle would aid the landless peasants. The revolutionary forces, did, in fact, adopt the side of the Mixtec-speaking landless peasants initially. Ultimately, however, they realigned and gave their support to the ranchers. This realignment proved disastrous for the landless peasants: the revolutionary victory enabled the ranchers to regain control of local government, and they persecuted those who participated in the uprising for years to come thereafter (Chassen-López 1998:116-7).

Nonetheless, the revolutionary victory generated institutional transformations of more far-reaching consequence for landless peasants, as it led to the institutionalization

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of agrarian ideals in the Constitution of 1917. Article 27, in particular, collectivized land ownership through the establishment of *ejidos*, communally-based land rights provided to peasants. Moreover, Article 27 provided for the restoration of communal lands to indigenous people as *comunidades agrarias.*

The twentieth century Mexican nation

Twentieth century Mexican nationalists strived to end factionalism and foment unity by promoting the *mestizo* as the cornerstone of the emergent Mexican nation, much as their nineteenth century counterparts had done following the war of Independence. Notwithstanding this similarity, perspectives on indigeneity and orientations toward the place of indigenous people in the Mexican nation changed dramatically following the revolution. Post-revolutionary national architects celebrated indigeneity as imbuing the *mestizo* nation with unique character and value. Nation-builders used archeological evidence to support the image of a distinctive Mexican nation with a glorious indigenous past (Gonzalez 2004), and commissioned music, literature, artistic works and architectural monuments to celebrate the combined indigenous and Spanish national heritage (De la Peña 2006:293).

This *indigenista*[7] incarnation of the Mexican nation, however, included a decidedly circumscribed space for indigenous people to participate in the nation. *Mestizo* elites celebrated indigeneity to the extent that doing so contributed to their efforts to create a cohesive nation with a distinctive character that distinguished it from other modern nations. Although they celebrated indigenous people and their own indigenous

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[7] *Observers* commonly characterize the celebration of indigeneity and concomitant pursuit of the 'assimilation' of indigenous people into the Mexican nation that predominated during the 20th century as *indigenista,* or indigenist.

roots as imbuing the Mexican nation with a distinctive flair, much like their nineteenth

century forebears, they aimed to devise a *modern* Mexico modeled on European forms of

nationhood, and they regarded most of the lived distinctiveness of indigenous people as

contrary to this effort.

President Lázaro Cárdenas's (1934-1940) reflection on the 'Indian Problem'

conveys the orientations toward the place of indigenous people in the Mexican nation that

emerged in this context. He asserted,

> Our Indian problem is not to maintain the Indian as Indian, nor of Indianizing Mexico,
> but it lies in how to Mexicanize the Indian [while] respecting his blood, preserving his
> emotion, his love for the land, and his unbreakable tenacity. [Quoted in Gonzalez
> 2004:143]

Cárdenas's references to "Our Indian Problem", "Indianizing Mexico" and "Mexicanize

the Indian" clearly designate the limits of indigenous peoples' place within this

indigenista nation. This nation was *mestizo,* and it was indigenist in Hector Diaz

Polanco's sense of the term. Indigenous people were not rights-bearing subjects,

empowered through liberal channels of citizenship to self-determination, but problems

for *mestizo* subjects to solve.

Just as for the liberal elites of the nineteenth century, twentieth century nation-

builders' 'problem' was to find effective interventions for transforming indigenous

subjects who lacked the desire and skills to participate in this nation into effective self-

governing liberal subjects (Foucault 1991; Gordon 1991; Lemke 2001). Yet, the nation

building of the 20th century added a further dimension to this 'problem' – nationalists

aimed to create indigenous people who preserved certain traits perceived to add value and

distinction to the nation. Thus, the law that created the National Indigenist Institute in

1948 includes the following claim:

These indigenous groups maintain cultural characteristics that can be utilized to the benefit of national culture, as they will continue giving the country the features that distinguish it from other communities in America and the world [Diario de Debates 24 de diciembre de 1948, cited in Hernández Castillo 2001:29; my translation.]

With successfully designed interventions, indigenous people would relinquish the cultural characteristics that impeded them from participating in the modern Mexican nation, but retain characteristics that would confer greater distinction on the nation.

Incorporation through education

During the early post-revolutionary period, nation-builders reset their sights on a federal education system as a means for creating this modern nation. The Secretary of Education (SEP) was established in 1921, and José Vasconcelos, a leading proponent of the modern *mestizo* nation and author of the influential book *La Raza Cosmica*, 1925, occupied the directorship of the organization during the first half of the 1920s (Lewis 2001:61). Vasconcelos worked to disseminate modern, "civilized" values throughout the country in his post as Director of the SEP during the first half of the 1920s. Stephen Lewis (2001:63) reports that Vasconcelos began this effort in 1922 by sending out "missionaries...to study the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of the people, to interest community members in education, and to recruit prospective teachers." He continues,

...these educators were expected to emulate the first Franciscans who arrived in Mexico almost exactly 400 years earlier. This time, though, the "good news" was overtly secular, emphasizing community development, modernization, and "incorporation" into the national mestizo mainstream through the dominant language, Spanish.

The "missionaries" and the educators that followed them were charged with teaching indigenous people the 'civilized' knowledge, orientations and skills required for participating in the modern Mexican nation. A teacher clearly articulated the civilizing aim of these efforts while reporting on the progress of his work. Stephen Lewis (2001:64-5) reports that the teacher related that

> a few ethnic groups in the state "have forgotten their prior life and now dress well, speak Spanish and have acquired some culture"—such as the Zoques and the Chiapanecas who inhabited the western lowland regions along the Grijalva River. The Mam, who lived along the Guatemalan border, were also "more or less civilized"; only the absence of schools had stunted their "development." The highland Maya, however, were "indifferent to progress" and "live[d] like savages." "The race possesses the great virtue of its love for work, they have good souls, and they are noble, obedient, [and] very respectful," he wrote. However, "among their defects is their exaggerated ignorance, their apparent denial of ideals, and their love of liquor."

The imposition of the Spanish language was one of the first priorities in this "civilizing" effort. Yet, the educating mission was not confined to the classroom. Teachers implemented vaccination and delousing campaigns, built basketball courts, led national festivals, and led movements for prohibition of alcohol in the communities where they worked (Lewis 2001:66-7).

Not surprisingly, indigenous people often rejected this project, along with its message of inferiority and the interference in daily life by outsiders. In recognition of this, ideas about the place of indigenous languages in the Mexican nation began to shift within the SEP in 1940, as strategists identified indigenous languages as important to the civilizing mission. By that time, however, the effort to incorporate indigenous people into the nation had shifted from the educational system to a newly created sector of government dedicated to addressing the 'Indian Problem.' Anthropologists would lead these efforts.

Incorporation through development

Although the civilizing effort was focused on the educational system during the 1920s and into the 1930s, Mexican anthropologists had claimed that the anthropological expertise best suited them for directing this work (de la Peña 1996; Walsh 2004). The articulation of this claim by Manuel Gamio, considered by many to be the founder of Mexican anthropology, was especially influential. Gamio asserted,

> Anthropology in its true and widest conception should be basic knowledge for the carrying out of good government because through anthropology one knows the population which is to be governed and for whom the government exists… [In Latin America] a minority made up of people of belonging to the white race, and whose civilization is derived from Europe, has been concerned only with its own progress, leaving aside the majority of indigenous race and culture. The obvious ignorance (even on the part of those who have wished to better the situation of the majority culturally and economically) is due to the fact that the majority indigenous population has not been studied in a sensible manner. [Quoted in Walsh 2004:142]

Gamio thus promoted a key anthropological role in the creation of a nation: anthropologists would facilitate "good government" by devising and conducting research on indigenous people, which policy-makers and program designers would utilize to generate policy that effectively reaches its goals. He put this vision into action as Director of the nation's first anthropological dependency, the Dirección de Antropología (1918-1934), which carried out research on indigenous people (Walsh 2004:130).

Gamio thus well positioned anthropologists to lead the civilizing mission when it was taken out of the educational system and established as a sector of governmental administration in its own right. The Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) administration took this step in 1935, when it established the Department of Indigenous Affairs, charged with coordinating, overseeing and implementing state policies for indigenous communities.
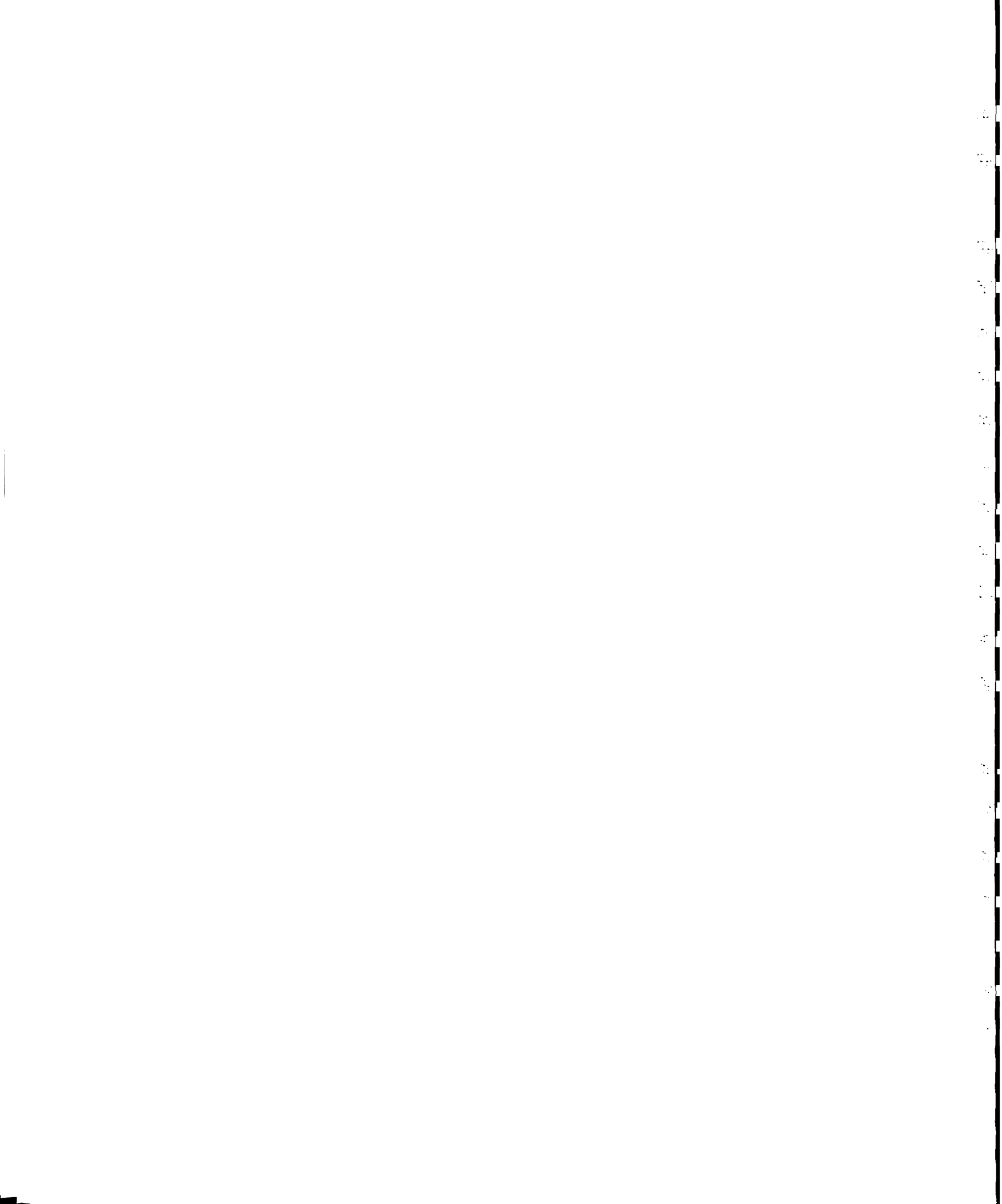
A leading anthropologist, Alfonso Caso, directed this organization. The National Indigenous Institute (INI) took over these activities in 1948 (de la Peña 2006:282).

Alfonso Caso again occupied the directorship of this organization. INI developed Indigenous Coordinating Centers (CCIs) in regions with large indigenous populations. The first of these was established in the highland region of the state of Chiapas, in San Cristobal de las Casas. Shortly thereafter, in 1951, CCIs were established in eight states, including Oaxaca (Gaillard 2004:258). As the Program expanded in the decades to come, there were fourteen in indigenous regions of Oaxaca in 1975 (Clarke 2001:170). The CCIs developed and implemented strategies for providing services aimed at "incorporating" indigenous people into the nation, including Spanish language education, health services, and training in industrial agriculture and tourist arts (Gonzalez 2004:143). Learning from the failures of the early *mestizo*-led education efforts, these centers employed bilingual "promoters" from the communities they were aimed to serve beginning in the 1950s (Julián Caballero 2002:50).

Another anthropologist, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, greatly influenced the direction the incorporation mission took as it matured. Aguirre Beltrán directed the INI from 1970-1977. In his work *Regiones de Refugio* (Regions of Refuge), 1967, he argued that the history of colonial and postcolonial exploitation had trapped indigenous communities into 'regions of refuge' by failing to provide them with the resources and skills to escape. Consequently, indigenous communities were left to the exploitation of the unscrupulous capitalists who took advantage of them as a labor pool that lacked other possibilities. In this reading, indigenous culture became not only an impediment to the modern

aspirations for the nation, but also a manifestation of colonial rule and a tool of exploitation.

Power and control in post-revolutionary Mexico

As discussed above, the early post-Independence period of the 19th century was marked by extreme instability, as the mechanisms of control and order constructed and imposed by the Crown were dismantled. The most important of these strategies of government had included gaining the complicities of indigenous elites and playing different interest groups – including indigenous commoners, *caciques*, *peninsulares* and *criollos* – against one another. In addition, the threat of violence and force always remained for those who failed to comply. A period of extreme instability began after these mechanisms were dismantled in the early 19th century. Order was imposed unevenly both geographically and temporally throughout the nineteenth century, and interludes of order imposed by strong arm rule punctuated the disarray.

In the twentieth century, corporatist channels became pivotal for gaining popular quiescence to governmental initiatives (Grayson 2007). The Cárdenas administration (1934-1940) created these channels (1934-1940). Cárdenas organized people into interest groups, including, most importantly, peasants (National Peasant Confederation) and workers (Confederation of Mexican Workers) (Grayson 2007:287-8). These unions were incorporated into the government, which staffed them and became responsible for responding to their needs. Through this organization, the ruling party, the Partido Revoluciario Institucional (PRI), channeled resources to peasants, workers and others as necessary to quell unrest and foment quiescence to state initiatives. The PRI utilized this

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structure to maintain authoritarian rule for over seventy years, until President Vicente Fox won the presidency in 2000.

Jan Rus (1994) has analyzed how these channels transformed the relationship between indigenous people and the state and the nature of indigenous communities themselves, focusing on transformations in the highlands of Chiapas. Rus (1994:267) asserts that indigenous communities in the region maintained the kind of internal orientation associated with closed corporate communities prior to the Cárdenas era. Following Eric Wolf's (1955, 1957, 1986) influential argument, this internal orientation and reticence toward outsiders protected them from the influence of *ladinos* (of Spanish heritage). *Ladino* elites often employed overt modes of coercion – including violence – to force indigenous people to assent to work demands and other aims. During the Cárdenas era, however, politicians effectively dismantled many of these protections. They did so by contracting local youth to convince other community members that participation in the union would help them pursue their interests. Moreover, politicians placed these youth in local leadership positions as bilingual scribes, and increased the import of these positions by empowering the scribes with access to resources.

As community members lent their support to the union, the politicians at the helm did, indeed, pursue initiatives in their interest. They supported takeovers of extensions of land belonging to large landowners, and implemented worker protections. Yet, the populist sensibility of the Cárdenas administration ended with the Cárdenas *sexenio*. When a new political era began, the politicians aligned with the large landowners now occupied the leadership positions in these organizations created to pursue workers' interests. The indigenous people populating the ranks of the union now supported these

leaders – even as they implemented initiatives that explicitly conflicted with their interests.

Twentieth century Mexican leaders devoted most of their work with indigenous populations to two ends: finding ways to exploit facets of indigenousness perceived as potentially contributing to the modern aspirations for the nation-state, and ridding indigenous people of characteristics perceived as frustrating these aspirations. Nonetheless, Alexander Dawson (1998:280) rightly emphasizes the importance of how twentieth century nation-builders "acclaimed [indigenous people] for the first time as an integral part of the nation." Indigenousness marked the undesirable other during four centuries of the history of New Spain and Mexico, from the moment colonists invented the distinction during the imposition of colonial rule, through the first century of the Mexican nation-state. In and of itself, this deep historical context marks twentieth century nation-builders' celebration of indigeneity as remarkable, even though *mestizo* nation-builders did not interpret this acclaim as legitimizing self-determination for indigenous people. More importantly, this celebration of indigenousness has provided the bedrock upon which indigenous activists have more recently pursued self-determination. I turn to examine more recent transformations in government and orientations toward indigeneity in the final section of this chapter, below.

Culture and the neoliberal turn in late twentieth century Mexico

Neoliberal reform and the genealogy of Oportunidades

During the middle years of the twentieth century, especially the 1950s and 1960s, successive administrations focused investment on large producers and manufacturers in

urban regions and in the north, while largely neglecting small-scale producers and enterprises in the rural and southern parts of the country (Barry 1995). The resulting inequalities prompted growing unrest during the latter years of the 1960s. Increasing tensions ultimately demonstrated the limitations of the corporatist mode of rule, which required ever-greater investments to quell dissent, and helped usher in a major transformation led by neoliberal principles.

President Luis Echeverría (1970-1976) responded to this growing unrest by reviving Cardenás' populist approach. Echeverría revived land redistribution, funded social programs to combat poverty and implemented large infrastructure projects while continuing to invest in manufacturing for export. The administration financed these investments through foreign loans, which lenders provided based on massive oil discoveries during the 1970s. Consequently, Mexico's foreign debt rose from 3.2 billion dollars in 1970 to over 100 billion in the 1980s (Otero 1996:6). When interest rates rose and oil prices fell in mid-1981, and sources of foreign loans disappeared, Mexico entered into an acute economic crisis and became unable to pay the interest on its debt. In response, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) negotiated a loan with outgoing President José Lopez Portillo (1976-1982), which was conditioned on the implementation of austerity measures and a program of economic restructuring aiming to reorient the economy under neoliberal principles.

Policy-makers devise neoliberal reforms to reorient national economies to a global economy. They draft measures with two particular goals: to avail international investors to national markets and to propel national producers to participate in the global economy in the areas where they are most competitive internationally. Thus, measures

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are taken to increase the attractiveness of foreign investment, including allowing the currency to float and acquire its value on the international market, depressing wages and deregulating industry. In addition, reforms dismantle trade barriers constructed to protect producers from goods produced more cheaply by outside producers. They also dismantle state programs that support producers, such as subsidies for inputs. Finally, state enterprises and services are privatized, simultaneously opening them to investors, providing capital for governmental expenditures, and reducing the cost of the government and the social sector.

Although Mexican leaders undertook early reforms under the pressure of the possibility of defaulting on their loans, they have more openly embraced neoliberalism since. In 1986, Mexico entered into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). A few years later, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) implemented a series of neoliberal reforms aimed at preparing the country to enter into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Salinas privatized Mexico's banks and sold off parastatal enterprises, opened the stock market to foreigners, removed restrictions on foreign investment and ownership, removed restrictions against foreigners holding land by the coast or border regions, and removed agricultural supports (Hellman 1997:5). By far, the most important reform measure the administration instituted was the reform of Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution. The Constitutional reform ended land redistribution and enabled the privatization of *ejido* lands (Stephen 1994). President Salinas signed the NAFTA in 1992, and it entered into force on January 1st, 1994.

The early implementation of neoliberal reforms in Mexico was devastating. Governmental supports for producers disappeared at the same time that the *peso* lost its

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value, prices of imports skyrocketed, and social services were dismantled. As Judith

Adler Hellman (1997:3) observes, the reforms produced particularly harsh consequences

because the state had been propping up industries with limited productivity. While

opportunities to generate income and many social services disappeared, the costs of even

the most basic goods rose, and the consumption of basic grains fell 30% during the 1980s

(Stephen 1997a:9-10). These extreme social consequences intimate important political

consequences, as well, since politicians had depended on their ability to dole out

resources in order to garner support. Indeed, neoliberal reforms dismantled the social

programs that had facilitated rule through much of the 20th century.

The Carlos Salinas de Gortari administration (1988-1994) devised a program to

address both of these deficiencies upon taking office, the National Solidarity Program

(PRONASOL). The Solidarity Program was designed to combat the negative effects of

neoliberal reform on the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, it created new

corporatist channels as it did so. Potential recipients of Program funds were required to

form Solidarity Committees, through which they directly solicited the government for

funds to carry out public works projects. The executive branch of the administration held

discretion over the doling out of these funds. Consequently, analysts contend that the

Program was ultimately designed to quell dissent and foment support for the governing

party (Pastor and Wise 2005:152-3; Piester 1997).

Mexico entered into a severe economic crisis once again when President Ernesto

Zedillo (1994-2000) took office in 1994. Moreover, Salinas had left the presidency

scarred by a particularly abhorrent display of corruption. In this context, in 1997, the

Zedillo administration devised a new program to fight poverty, called Programa de Salud,

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Educación y Alimentación (Health, Education and Nutrition Program), or PROGRESA (Pastor and Wise 2005:152-3). In contrast to the executive branch's clientelist channeling of resources through the Solidarity Program, PROGRESA was designed to be free from political interference. Population-level poverty indicators are used to identify communities for participation in the Program. Thereafter, censuses are conducted throughout recipient communities to collect information determining household eligibility for participation in the Program. Moreover, the designers of PROGRESA wrote an extensive process of evaluation into the Program bylaws, including external reviews by the International Food Policy Research Institute (see Adato, Coady and Ruel 2000). The Fox administration (2000-2006) expanded this program, renaming it Oportunidades.

Development officials associated with important transnational institutions, including the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), have praised the Program, promoting it as a model for other countries to emulate. In response, twenty countries have implemented programs based on the Oportunidades model. Moreover, early this year (2007), New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg met with Oportunidades officials in Mexico for assistance in designing a similar program in that city – Opportunity NYC.

Conceptualizing shifting modes of power in neoliberal Mexico

The establishment of strict predetermined quantitative indicators for participation in Oportunidades and the intensive review process are aimed to make the Program less subject to coercion, and thus move Mexico in the direction of "good governance". To the

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extent that *Oportunidades* is successful in this effort, it suggests a shift toward the more

diffusive forms of power Michel Foucault analyzed as characteristic of modern

"rationalities of government", or "govermentalities" (1991; Gordon 1991; Lemke 2001).

Foucault developed his analysis of modern forms of power from his examination of

transformations in government that occurred in Europe between the sixteenth and early

nineteenth centuries. While he observed a decreasing reliance on carrot and stick forms

of government during this period, he also noted the emergence of a new, more diffuse

form of power associated with the rise of liberal governmentalities (Foucault 1991;

Gordon 1991). Thus, while proponents of liberal modalities of government have

celebrated them as a form of government in which coercive state forces retract to

facilitate a greater measure of freedom for the individual, Foucault asserted that only the

diffusion of government facilitates this retraction of overt forms of state coercion.

This modern form of power revolves around what Foucault called "technologies

of the self" (cited in Lemke 2001:11), the strategies devised to teach people the requisite

orientations and skills for governing themselves in ways that correspond with and

facilitate liberal democratic modes of government. As Nikolas Rose (1996:45-6)

observes,

> Liberal strategies of government thus become dependent upon devices (schooling, the
> domesticated family, the lunatic asylum, the reformatory prison) that promise to create
> individuals who do not need to be governed by others, but will govern themselves, master
> themselves, care for themselves.

Thus, modern modes of government are expressed in all of the spaces wherein people are

taught to adopt the practices and orientations that correspond with the aims of

government, such as in schools and welfare programs (Cruikshank 1999). They are also

expressed in the scholarly institutions that produce the knowledge that informs the

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creation of these technologies of the self. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, governed individuals themselves are key sites of modern forms of government: as they adopt the aims of the state as their own, they discipline their own compliance. Foucault's definition of government as "the conduct of conduct" (cited in Burchell 1996:19) captures this diffuse form of modern power.

Observers have drawn from Foucault's insights to analyze the much more recent shifts in modes of power associated with the rise of neoliberalism. The pursuit of a further retraction of the state within neoliberal reform suggests an even greater reformation of the terrain of government (Bryant 2002; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Lemke 2001). I situate the ethnographic analysis of Oportunidades I develop in the ensuing chapters within this context of shifting forms of rule.

Indigenous activism and the genealogy of Mixtec revitalization

During the increasing social discontent of the 1960s, many indigenous professionals who had acquired formal education through the incorporating mission began to challenge the denigration and marginalization of indigeneity in the Mexican nation (de la Peña 2006:284). These challenges contributed to the emergence of a broader transnational movement promoting the rights of indigenous people, which came into force during the 1970s (Bonfil Batalla 1981). In these struggles, indigenous activists made the extremely salient move of adopting the celebration of indigeneity – greatly influenced by *mestizos*' 20th century brand of Mexican nationalism – as the foundation for their demand for self-determination. Activists fingered the incorporation mission as an ethnocidal project, and began to promote different kinds of approaches that would

build on, rather than destroy, their cultural distinctiveness. Moreover, they began to elaborate alternative models of a Mexican nation that could encompass self-determination, and develop strategies for pursuing these ends. For example, indigenous activists founded the National Alliance of Bilingual Indigenous Professionals (ANPIBAC) to promote an indigenous education that was not only bilingual but also bicultural (Julián Caballero 2002:37).

Anthropologists sympathetic to indigenous activists' cause resounded the critique of the incorporation mission, implicated anthropologists and developers for their complicity in this ethnocidal project and promoted ethnodevelopment as an alternative. Another leading anthropologist of the time, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, was at the forefront of this effort. He aligned with other leading anthropologists, including Salmon Nahmad and Rodolfo Stavenhagen, to devise a governmental program that would contribute to activists' aims (Nakamura 2000:18). They devised an educational program in ethnolinguistics to train indigenous professionals to direct development in their own communities in ways that resonated with their cultural distinctiveness (Nakamura 2000; Vargas Collazos 2001). Fifty-four young professionals from Maya, Mixtec, Nahua, Otomí, Purépecha, Totonaco and Zapotec-speaking communities participated in the three year program the first time it was held, from 1979-1982 (Nakamura 2000:30). Three current leaders of formal Mixtec revitalization efforts were among the fifty-four participants. Their formative training in the Ethnolinguistics Program places Mixtec cultural revitalization efforts at the heart of the incipient indigenous rights movement in Mexico.

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Mexican cultural politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century

Indigenous activism has flourished in the decades that have intervened since

formal, transnationally-articulated indigenous movements emerged in the late 1960s, and

activists have won many successes. Both the Salinas and Fox administrations revised the

Mexican Constitution in 1991 and 2001 in response to indigenous activists'

mobilizations. Article Four now reads,

> The Mexican nation has a multicultural composition originally founded in its indigenous
> peoples. The law protects and promotes the development of their languages, uses,
> customs, resources and specific forms of social organization and guarantees their
> members effective access to the full range of the state's legal authority (jurisdiction). In
> the agrarian judgments and legal proceedings they are part of, their own legal practices
> and customs shall be taken into account in establishing the law. [Quoted in Stephen
> 2005:135]

Likewise, state institutions charged with realizing development goals convey these

changing orientations towards indigenousness. For example, the Secretary of Social

Development, Josefina Vázquez Mota, introduced the National Social Development

Program, 2001-2006, with the assertion that development goals "...will be realized with

respect for the rights and dignity of people, including ethnic and cultural diversity..."

(SEDESOL 2001). In addition, the Program's seventh strategy establishes the primary

goal of development efforts in indigenous communities as "strengthen[ing] the

development of indigenous pueblos with equity and respect." It reads,

> Today, indigenous pueblos are identified as a group with one of the highest indices of
> poverty and that represents a high proportion of the population in the most marginalized
> localities. Indigenous Mexicans demand a viable alternative to achieve recognition and
> be considered and respected as integrants of national society, in the context of their
> cultural diversity. In this sense, the objective of the social policy will be oriented to
> confront the causes and conditions of exclusion, the backwardness and the marginality
> that confront indigenous communities, respecting their identity, their customs and
> culture, as well as their ecological systems which they develop around them. [SEDESOL
> 2001:105]

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The General Director of IMSS, Mario Luis Fuentes Alcalá, also signals respect for

indigenous culture as a fundamental principal guiding the Institute's work:

> ...The Institute has applied a holistic health care model that privileges voluntary and organized participation in indigenous communities with actions that contribute to the improvement of their health and well-being, with respect for culture, human rights, ethnic dignity, and the self-determination of indigenous peoples. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:5]

Thus, affirmations that cultural difference is a basis for respect are increasingly central in

how government functionaries working with indigenous peoples frame their aims.

It seems paradoxical that indigenous people have gained affirmations of their

rights precisely when neoliberal reforms have dismantled social programs. Francisca

Mallon argues that neoliberal reforms have contributed to this simultaneity by

dismantling the mechanisms through which leaders gained quiescence to their initiatives.

Mallon (1992:52) argues:

> At a very general level, the postrevolutionary state was built on an implicit contract, in which the payoff for suffering the authoritarianism of political *mestizaje* would be social and economic redistribution, plus an *indigenista* model of development. During the 1980s, however, the privatization of the state sector and the complete opening of Mexico to markets and capital in the United States have jettisoned the principles of redistribution and economic nationalism, development and *indigenismo* that defined the original pact.

Thus, neoliberal reforms exacerbated the conditions contributing to dissent among

indigenous people.

Charles Hale reads the simultaneity of neoliberal reform and multicultural accords

in a different way. Hale (2005, 2002) identifies a 'neoliberal project of neoliberalism' in

which elites attempt to manage indigenous activists' demands in ways that dissolve the

threat these demands pose. Hale (2002:519) asserts,

> At least officially, the PAN [Guatemalan governing party] defends the individual's rights to identify as Maya free from discrimination, celebrates the presence of Maya culture in contemporary Guatemala, and even endorses certain collective practices aimed at the preservation and valorization of Maya culture, especially in a folkloric sense, but also, in the preservation of Mayan languages, diversification of educational curricula and respect

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That is, leaders recognize a more expansive celebration if indigeneity than that which predominated during most of the 20th century, but in the process, sever it from the demand for self-determination. Hale contends that the resulting 'safe' expressions of multiculturalism that are codified in neoliberal multiculturalism have a "menacing" potential, as they contribute to the marginalization of expressions of forms of indigenous cultural politics that have greater potential for change. He asserts,

> The increasingly prominent discourse of multiculturalism among diverse groups of dominant actors and institutions in Central America has the cumulative effect, I contend, of separating acceptable demands for cultural rights from inappropriate ones, recognizing the former and foreclosing the latter, and thereby creating a means to 'manage' multiculturalism while removing its radical or threatening edge. [2002:507]

Hale's analysis provides a useful cautionary reminder to those who read multicultural affirmations as simple state capitulation to indigenous people's demands. Nonetheless, at the very least, his attribution of a 'neoliberal menace' to state-sponsored multiculturalism reduces the complexity of factors that produce these affirmations. Furthermore, Hale's contention that those who support these multicultural affirmations contribute to their menacing affects minimizes the importance and effectiveness of indigenous peoples' agency (c.f., Garcia 2007). The history of indigenous struggle in New Spain and Mexico provides ample evidence that *ladino* or *mestizo* desires do not determine the ends of these contests.

Mitchell Dean's (1999:66) characterization of the dynamics of contest through which governmental programs are produced provides a useful reminder of the complexity of factors that contribute to the creation of policies and programs:

> ...governmental programmes are produced by diverse agencies in complex relations of antagonism and collusion with one another [thus] politics should be regarded as a matter of struggle between such agencies whose outcome depends upon these agencies' capacity to mobilize intellectual and material resources, and on their tactics and strategies.

Multicultural and neoliberal reforms came together most explicitly in Mexico during the Salinas de Gortari administration. Salinas implemented constitutional reforms recognizing the rights of indigenous people within the multicultural nation while implementing a host of neoliberal reforms in preparation for the NAFTA, including the reform of Article 27, which ended land reform. In this context, Salinas undoubtedly hoped the multicultural measures would stem criticism of the reforms. In addition, the multicultural recognition certainly included the less radical kinds of culture-based rights Hale identifies as part of neoliberal multiculturalism.

Nonetheless, Mexico's multicultural embrace has been more half-hearted than that of its Central American neighbors. Shannon Speed (2005) notes that the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights within the constitutional reforms of 2001 constitute a retreat from the multicultural principles government negotiators agreed to when signing the San Andrés Accords in 1996. Speed compellingly argues that this retreat occurred because the government perceived the Zapatista vision of autonomy as posing too great of a threat (cf. Stephen 1997b).[8] Speed (2005) also notes that Mexican leaders frequently make claims to individual rights in order to circumscribe recognitions of group rights. In recent

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[8] These same circumstances prompted Oaxacan leaders to codify more expansive definitions of multicultural rights (see Stephen 2005:137-138), in this case to stem the likelihood that a similar uprising would erupt in Oaxaca.

years, concerns over indigenous women's rights, in particular, have become particularly contentious, and have provided many with justification as a basis for challenging the rights of indigenous people.

Finally, more fortuitous circumstances have also contributed to the creation and maintenance of some of the key spaces within which indigenous activists pursue their aims. For example, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and his colleagues' pursuit of an Ethnolinguistics Program appealed to the administration because it coincided with the recent expulsion of the Summer Language Institute (ILV), which had carried out the study of indigenous languages until that time (Nakamura 2000:18). The graduates of the Ethnolonguistics Program could fill this void by carrying out this work. The longer-term support graduates of the Program have received reflects similarly fortuitous correspondences in interests. In addition to the three-year period of training, the visionaries of the Ethnolinguistics Program devised a Program to support these professionals in their pursuit of studies of indigenous culture and language following graduation. While the training Program was discontinued after two classes graduated, resources continue be made available to assist these professionals in their efforts to research and document their cultures and languages. The desires of Mixtec revitalizationists to direct education in their communities correspond in an important way with politicians' efforts to decentralize governmental programs in the name of neoliberal reform.

This is the somewhat contradictory field of Mexican cultural politics within which I investigate the politics of formulations of indigenous culture in the pages that follow. I now turn away from the most formal realm of politics that I have analyzed in this chapter,

to examine the politics of these formulations of culture within everyday life. By way of

introduction, I provide a brief overview of the research methods and process below.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

I conducted ethnographic research for the dissertation during seventeen months between June 2003 and December 2004.[9] I began the research period by stationing myself in the Oaxaca state capital, Oaxaca City, where I conducted research on IMSS Oportunidades and Mixtec cultural revitalization for five months.

Figure 1: Map of Mexico

I lived in Pueblo Verde thereafter. Pueblo Verde is a small, rural Mixtec-speaking municipality located in the Mixtec region of Mexico. *La Mixteca* encompasses the western part of Oaxaca, the eastern side Guerrero and southern Puebla, and includes the Mixteca Alta ('High Mixtec'), the Mixteca Baja ('Low Mixtec') and the Costa Chica

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[9] This formal research period built on training and research I had conducted in Oaxaca, Mexico during the summers of 2000, 2001 and 2002.

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('Little Coast') sub-regions. Pueblo Verde is located in the mountainous Mixteca Alta region. From Pueblo Verde, I intermittently traveled to regional delegations of IMSS-Oportunidades and to national headquarters in Mexico City to conduct research on the Program, as well as to different regions in Oaxaca to observe Mixtec revitalization events.

Figure 2: Map of Oaxaca

Pueblo Verde's economic indicators reflect the marginalization that motivates economic development specialists and community leaders and members alike to pursue 'development'. The average annual income is $933 dollars, in comparison with the national average of $7495 (INEGI n.d.). The national human development scale, a ranking that quantifies indicators of health, education, economic and literacy, places the municipality in the second to worst of the five categories, medium low (ibid.). Thus, the municipal IMSS clinic implements IMSS-Oportunidades in the village.

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In addition, Pueblo Verde's geographical location – about twenty miles from the major commercial center of the Mixteca Alta, Tlaxiaco – locates villagers in close proximity to formal revitalization efforts. Pueblo Verde is relatively unique in its preservation of key characteristics associated with indigeneity in the context of facile intercourse with urban, predominantly mestizo centers. For these reasons, Pueblo Verde provides an excellent place in which to study how the subjects of these 'indigenous culture' laden projects respond to these perspectives.

Pueblo Verde

Experience in Pueblo Verde revolves around movement. A paved road connects the village to two regional centers, Tlaxiaco, and Chalcatongo, and people are constantly traveling to and from these locations and beyond. The abundance of transportation services attests to the ubiquity of movement. Among these services, the bus is most economical and the transportation of choice. It passes through Pueblo Verde on its way from Chalcatongo to Tlaxiaco every forty-five minutes, and return trips leave with equal frequency. On daily bus trips to Tlaxiaco, Verdean vendors travel to buy and resell produce in the regional market, or to sell their own produce; high school students travel to schools in other communities; teachers travel to the schools they have been assigned to in other communities, and teachers assigned to Pueblo Verde travel to their homes; and villagers travel to Tlaxiaco to purchase goods and access services available in the city. Some villagers return to working or studying in Oaxaca City, while others return from the capital. Less frequently, but still regularly, people return to and from Mexico City. And,

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occasionally, one encounters Pueblo Verde migrants to northern Mexico and the United States traveling on the bus to Tlaxiaco.

Few economic opportunities exist in Pueblo Verde, but villagers combine varied economic projects in their efforts to create a livelihood. Most villagers tend animals such as chickens, turkeys and pigs for consumption and sale. Most villagers also engage in agricultural production, typically growing corn and beans on small parcels of about a hectare in size. They use the corn and beans for household needs and sell surplus when it exists. Some villagers with sufficient land and resources plant additional crops for sale, such as green beans, tomatoes, squash and cilantro. In addition, many women buy produce and resell it in regional markets. Those with greatest need work as agricultural laborers: men earn about $5 a day, while women earn about $3.50.

In addition to agricultural activities, most families engage in craft production, either weaving palm hats or harvesting and spinning silk from silkworms. Many villagers also sell goods from their homes, including soft drinks, homemade alcoholic beverages such as *aguardiente* (fire water), beer and snacks. Several villagers have opened more formal businesses in the community, including variety stores, a video rental, phone service, and a business providing internet service. Some owners have hired young women to tend their businesses. Young women also provide domestic help to professionals in the village, often receiving compensation for part of their services in the form of room and board.

Wealth inequities define the village landscape. While the majority of residents *live* in adobe homes with dirt floors, many have constructed and are in the process of constructing relatively large cement homes. Most villagers have electricity and running

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Migrants and professionals, such as teachers, nurses, doctors and lawyers, have accumulated most of the wealth in the village. The ability to speak Spanish is a key skill facilitating access to the more remunerative opportunities available through migration, as well as for the formal education required for professional employment. A large minority of villagers, about 25%, lack these Spanish language skills (INEGI n.d.). More women than men face the obstacles posed by lack of familiarity with Spanish: 28% of women in the community are monolingual Mixtec speakers, in contrast to 18% of men (ibid.). Migrants have established large communities in Mexico City; rural and urban destinations in northern Mexico, such as Baja California and Tijuana; and destinations in the United States, particularly North Carolina, Washington, Minnesota and Florida. Most professionals lack opportunities for work in the village, and have pursued work elsewhere. Many maintain a base in the community, but travel to distant communities during the week for work. A few have been lucky to find positions in local or nearby institutions.

Working in Pueblo Verde

When I arrived in Pueblo Verde to begin the research, the clinic nurse invited me to live in an unoccupied room in her and her parents' home. I accepted that invitation, and their home and their family became the base from which I learned about family and community in Pueblo Verde. I was fortunate to live with a local family, as it provided

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me with the opportunity to observe and participate in local family life. While living with my host family, I experienced the rhythms of daily life and became accustomed with many of the multitudinous details of daily life that only strike visitors as noteworthy: who cooks, when and what people eat, where people sit, how people greet one another, how to deal with garbage, when people gather together, how to wash clothes, etc., etc., etc.

Living with a family also provided me with a local base from which to learn about village social life. Informal, mostly unplanned social gatherings comprise much of Pueblo Verde social life. People come together and chat for a few moments over a soda or beer on the porches of the several stores in the community, while watching an impromptu evening basketball game, or more regularly in the homes of *comadres* and *compadres*[10]. I learned most through 'hanging out' in these informal gatherings, where I listened to gossip and watched and heard how villagers defined and policed unacceptable behavior. In addition, I attended special social events, including the weekly masses held at the Catholic Church in the center of town; political meetings; the recurring parties held to mark birthdays, and the less frequent graduation ceremonies, baptisms and weddings; gatherings held to mark blessings of new homes; ceremonies held for spiritual cleansings and to give thanks for the harvest; holidays; and multiple annual festivals.

Oportunidades

Oportunidades is the primary program charged with realizing development objectives in Mexico. The Oportunidades model operates through the provisioning of so-

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[10] Comadres and compadres refer to relationships established through compadrazgo, roughly translated as god-parentage, in which villagers sponsor one another's children. Typically, the most important compradazgo sponsorship has been that related to baptisms, however, Verdeans establish these relationships for a myriad of events. Comadres and compadres are the fictive kin relations that are established between parents and the sponsors of their children.

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called conditional cash transfers (CCTs): low-income families receive cash payments contingent on their compliance with certain actions deemed essential for combating poverty. The Program recognizes women household heads as Program beneficiaries, or *titulares*. In order to receive Program funds, *titulares* and their families must undergo annual physical exams at their local health clinic and enroll their children in school; *titulares* must attend educational sessions, or *platicas,* at the local clinic aimed at helping them improve their own health and that of their families; adolescents in Oportunidades families must attend educational sessions focusing on sexual and mental health-related topics; and school age children must attend school. Qualifying families who undertake these responsibilities receive a basic stipend to help with meeting nutritional needs, which was about $15 per month during the research period. Pregnant and nursing mothers, families with young children, and families with members who suffer from malnutrition also receive nutritional supplements. Finally, payments are scaled in order to encourage parents to keep their children in school, especially girls.

The national health institutions, the Secretary of Health (SSA) and the Social Security Institute (IMSS), provide Oportunidades health services through local clinics. In this study, I focused on the branch of the Program that the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS) implements, IMSS-Oportunidades. Officials working in federal offices in Mexico City devise IMSS strategies, which doctors, nurses, assistants and volunteers implement at the municipal level under the guidance and supervision of state and regional administrators.

Oportunidades in Pueblo Verde

IMSS establishes links in communities by hiring local clinic staff to assist the doctors, and soliciting community volunteers to promote and oversee adoption of the behaviors the Program advocates. This strategy helps the Program overcome barriers associated with lack of familiarity with the local context, which can pose a particular challenge in communities where indigenous languages are spoken. Excepting the doctor, the service providers at the Pueblo Verde clinic are all villagers. They include two nurses, a rural health assistant, six health promoters and the twenty four-member health committee. In addition, community volunteers occasionally attend IMSS workshops on mental health topics and provide the training to others in the community.

The IMSS clinic in Pueblo Verde lies on the road at the edge of town. Its place just past the bridge and just prior to the steep ascent in the federal road that marks the departure from the community distances it from the center of the community. Moreover, a gated fence surrounds the clinic in the community, providing its personnel and goods with protection during the night. The clinic includes two consult rooms, a bathroom, a reception and waiting area. It also includes quarters for the medical doctor's residence. A Centro de Asistencia para Adolescentes Rurales (CARA), a Rural Adolescent Assistance Center, is located behind the clinic – a wooden building with a corrugated tin roof. As its title indicates, CARAs are intended as special spaces to educate adolescents. Inside, rows of benches face the front of the room, where a chalk board and didactic materials are available to assist health professionals. A smaller room located behind the benches houses a kitchen.

Oportunidades research methods

I conducted semi-structured and unstructured interviews with Oportunidades employees working at the national (2), state (2), regional (4) and village (7) levels in designing, studying, and implementing development interventions in indigenous communities. In the village, I interviewed the clinic physician, the two local nurses, the clinic assistant, and three locally elected Program "promoters." I collected information about Program objectives and strategies, service providers' experiences in carrying out their work, their perspectives on indigenous culture and their perspectives on the ideal family in these interviews. I also asked those involved in designing, carrying out, analyzing, or interpreting the Program's study of indigenous culture and reproduction about the study. In addition, I observed Program events, including regional training sessions for personnel and interventions with villagers through the municipal clinic. The interventions included weekly educational sessions for adolescents and women, 'community' work assignments for Program recipients, community days in which the clinic doctor and the nurses visited people in their homes and in a neighboring community, activities revolving around the dispensation of Program funds, and community meetings called to address concerns related to the Program. Finally, I collected Program documents and literature related to indigenous culture, family, reproductive health and development.

Mixtec revitalization

A handful of committed and passionate advocates of Mixtec revitalization can be credited with carrying out much of the work that led to the formal establishment of

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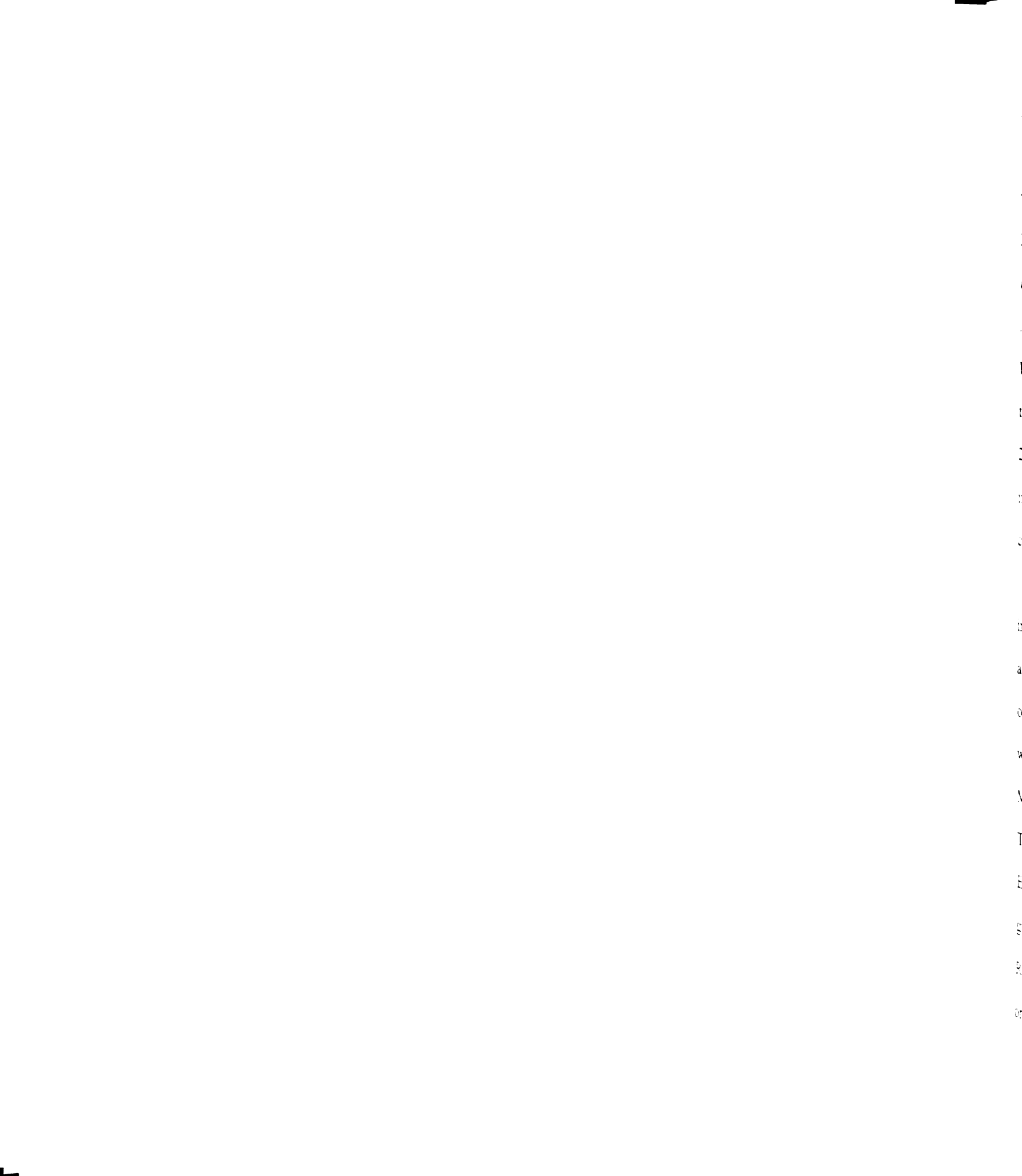
Mixtec revitalization efforts that exist today, especially Juan Julián Caballero and Ubaldo Lopez Garcia. The current formal Mixtec revitalization organizations, the CID Ñuu Savi, the Center for Mixtec Research and Dissemination, and the Ve'e Tu'un Savi, the Mixtec Language Academy, ultimately emerged from an encounter at a course on the Mixtec codices given at CIESAS-Istmo, the Isthmus branch of the National Center for Social Anthropology, in 1989 (Julian Caballero 2003:112). There, Juan Julian Caballero, Ubaldo Lopez Garcia and others began to discuss founding of an organization dedicated to conducting researching on Mixtec culture and disseminating the results (Romero Frizzi 2003b:210-211). Shortly thereafter, in 1990, they founded the CID Ñuu Savi. Scholars interested in conducting research on Mixtec culture meet in the organization, which contributes to the dissemination of their work.

Many of the founders and participants of the CID Ñuu Savi were especially interested in carrying out a Mixtec linguistic project to establish a common Mixtec alphabet and promote its use among Mixtec people. To this end, they organized a series of Mixtec Language Encounters through the CID Ñuu Savi, in which people working on writing the Mixtec language began to work together towards creating a unified written Mixtec language. During the Sixth Encounter, in 1997, they agreed to establish the Ve'e Tu'un Savi, the Mixtec Language Academy (Julián Caballero 2001a:93). Since the initial Encounter, in which approximately fifty people participated, the Ve'e Tu'un Savi has grown to include between 300-500 members (Julián Caballero 2001a:94). Revitalizationists have continued the work of creating a written Mixtec language in the organization's annual Congresses. In addition, the Ve'e Tu'un Savi provides language

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workshops to bilingual teachers, and, as of 2003, they had conducted about fifty workshops in twenty four communities (Julián Caballero 2003:77).

By creating the CID Ñuu Savi and the Ve'e Tu'un Savi, revitalizationists have established networks of like-minded intellectuals with whom they work in a formal project aimed at creating a unified Mixtec identity. They have communicated their work to a broader population through extensive publishing associated with the CID Ñuu Savi, but one still limited largely to highly-educated intellectuals. In contrast, the Ve'e Tu'un Savi's language workshops have opened channels to communicate their project to educators, and through them Mixtec youth and ultimately Mixtec communities.

Mixtec revitalization in Pueblo Verde

The IMSS clinic's obtrusive location on the landscape well symbolizes Oportunidades' influence on Pueblo Verde social life. Moreover, the clinic provides a nexus of social relations through which this influence can be observed, traced and measured with relative ease. Mixtec revitalization efforts stand in stark contrast, as revitalizationists cannot even begin to approach the degree of capitalization and organization of Oportunidades. Accordingly, they lack such a material presence on the landscape. I initially approached the primary school in Pueblo Verde as a kind of material corollary to the clinic, since revitalizationists target their efforts to the educational system. The director of the school informed me, however, that teachers do not implement a "bilingual Program." Although federal and state laws mandate bilingual education for indigenous communities, no corresponding educational programs have been designed and implemented.

Nonetheless, revitalizationists encourage teachers to take on the bilingual education mission as their own in the workshops they impart, and interviews with Verdean youth indicate that they have done just that. Thus, despite the fact that revitalizations' efforts have not ossified into a readily apparent social organizational structure on the Verdean landscape, youth reported familiarity with revitalizationists' ideas with regularity in interviews. Most significantly, young people repeatedly report having learned about the importance of local *'costumbres'*, or customs, especially *'el Mixteco'*, the Mixtec language, from teachers.

Mixtec revitalization research methods

Without knowing it, I first began working with revitalizationists during my initial trips to Oaxaca to study the Mixtec language and conduct exploratory research during the summers of 2000, 2001 and 2002. I arranged private Mixtec language courses with a Mixtec intellectual active in efforts to revitalize Mixtec language and culture during the summer of 2000, Ubaldo Lopez Garcia. I returned the following year to continue studying with Ubaldo Lopez Garcia and began studying the language with another leading revitalizationist, Gabriel Caballero Morales. Then, I participated in San Diego State University's six-week long Intensive Mixtec Language program during the summers of 2002 and 2003, which was taught by two other leading revitalizationists, Juan Julian Caballero and Marcos Cruz Bautista. I initially learned about these leaders' work and perspectives in these contexts.

In accordance with their intellectual work and educational focus, I was directed toward similar academic contexts and networks as I became more interested in learning

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about their work. I attended book presentations, academic conferences and public events held to celebrate Mixtec culture in which they presented their work. I supplemented these observations with my own in-depth formal interviews with two leading revitalizationists and an observation of a Mixtec language workshop given by a leading revitalizationist. In addition, María de los Ángeles Romero Frizzi (2003a) has published interviews with Juan Julián Caballero, Ubaldo Lopez Garcia and others, and Mutsuo Nakamura (2000) and Monica Vargas Collazos (2001) present detailed information on the history of Mixtec revitalization in their theses. Finally, revitalizationists have utilized print media to disseminate their perspectives on Mixtec culture to others. I conducted most of my "participant observation" on revitalization by reviewing and analyzing these abundant written materials.

Data analysis

I wrote field notes on my observations daily – on some occasions multiple times a day. In addition, I used multiple formal data collection methods to collect ethnographic data. I hired two local assistants during the research to assist with structured data collection, including a census and general interviews. In the census, we collected data on household size, names, ages and relations of household members, and wealth status indicators. I used the census to select a ten percent random sample of villagers over the age of fourteen for in-depth interviews examining ideas about family, culture, community and development. Nonetheless, the resulting sample reflected distortions in the population structure of the community stemming from migration trends, where young men are especially underrepresented and older women overrepresented. Thus, I

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reselected the sample, stratifying it so that it included equal numbers of men and women

(30 each) from the following age groups: 15-18, 19-35, 36-49, 50-64, and over 65.

Sixteen people from the original sample did not provide interviews, either because they

had left the community between when I conducted the census and when I conducted the

interviews, or because they declined. Men were both most likely to have left the

community in the interim and to decline interviews. In the end, I interviewed 44 villagers

in the general sample, with the age and gender characteristics signaled in the table below.

Table 1. Age and gender characteristics of village interviewees

Age Group	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
15-19	5	11	3	7	8	18
20-34	6	14	5	11	11	25
35-49	6	14	2	5	8	19
50-64	5	11	3	7	8	18
65 +	3	7	6	14	9	20
Total	25	57	19	44	44	*

* Note: Percentages add to more than 100% because of rounding.

Following the participants' preferences, my assistants translated fifteen of the interviews

into Mixtec, while I conducted the other twenty-nine in Spanish. With the permission of

the interview participants, I tape recorded the interviews. Two villagers preferred not to

have their interviews recorded. In both cases, I noted participants' responses to the

questions during the interviews, and entered those notes into the computer. Finally, I

interviewed key informants in the village, including the Municipal President and the

Priest in the local Catholic Church.

My assistants transcribed Mixtec interviews directly into Spanish, and I later checked the translations with a third Mixtec speaker. I personally transcribed the Spanish language tapes when I returned from the field. I reviewed the data and entered the interview data and my field notes into *NVivo*. I used the Program to categorize the data according to the underlying themes guiding the original research questions as well as themes that emerged from my observations while I collected and reviewed the data. For example, I coded perspectives on and observations related to family, development, community, and culture. I also coded more specific themes, such as ideas that large or small families are beneficial. Then, I used these categories to examine similarities and differences in how research participants discussed the topics.

After examining the qualitative data, I created categories to examine trends in villagers' perspectives and experiences more systematically in Excel. I examined whether and how villagers' perspectives and experiences diverge in relation to locally-salient dimensions of social difference, focusing on gender, age, wealth indicators, linguistic status, educational background. I used this data to examine divergences in villagers' perspectives of family. Then, I returned to the qualitative data for evidence explaining the emerging patterns. As I worked to elaborate my emerging hypotheses, the qualitative data repeatedly presented me counter-evidence that challenged me to reconceptualize my hypotheses. My observations of how the perspectives on indigenous culture and family conveyed in Oportunidades and Mixtec revitalization efforts intersect with those of villagers in the rest of this dissertation reflect this iterative analytical process.

CHAPTER FOUR:
CULTURE, POWER AND PATHOLOGY IN OPORTUNIDADES

This chapter examines formulations of indigenous culture in IMSS-Oportunidades.[11] I analyze how IMSS-Oportunidades programmers and service providers have construed indigenous culture and its significance while devising and carrying out new kinds of psychological strategies for pursing their objectives during the 1990s. I situate this entrée into psychology in relation to broader transformations in power linked with neoliberal reform. In this manner, the analysis offers insights into neoliberal incarnations of 'indigenous culture.'

I begin by linking developers' concerns with psychological states to broader transformations in power. Thereafter, I analyze how IMSS-Oportunidades researchers and program designers construed indigenous culture while devising psychological and more traditional kinds of strategies for pursuing their objectives with different subsectors of indigenous communities. Finally, I examine how service providers conceptualize the significance of indigenous culture as they carry out their work, and how they incorporate these ideas into daily IMSS-Oportunidades interventions.

Shifting modes of power and the emergence of psychological development terrain

Michel Foucault (1991; Gordon 1991; Lemke 2001) has described the apparent retraction of the state characteristic of liberal democratic and neoliberal modes of government as a process that generates new modalities of rule. Thomas Lemke (2001:12) depicts this as a "re-coding of social mechanisms of exploitation and domination on the

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[11] In 2000, IMSS-Solidaridad was renamed IMSS-Oportunidades. For the sake of clarity, I refer to the Program as IMSS-Oportunidades throughout.

basis of a new topography of the social domain." That is, as neoliberal reforms shrink the formal state sector, they contribute to shifts in sites of government from state to social domains. "Technologies of the self" (Foucault, cited in Lemke 2001:11) through which experts teach individuals to see themselves as certain kinds of subjects with certain interests, and to police their own behavior accordingly, are key to these transformations. Through these technologies, experts and everyday individuals alike become crucial agents of power and control in this governmentalization of the social.

Barbara Cruikshank (1999:4) has drawn from these insights to analyze the Californian self-esteem movement as one such 'technology of the self' – a "technology of citizenship," in her words. The California state assembly launched the self-esteem movement when it created the California Task Force to Promote Self-Esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility in 1983 (1999:88). Cruikshank describes how, from then on, the Task Force promulgated the idea that poor self-esteem causes 'social ills', including "'chronic welfare dependence', alcoholism and drug abuse, crime and violence, academic failure, teenage pregnancy, and child abuse" (1999:92). Accordingly, experts devised self-esteem based strategies for healing and reforming 'offenders' in order to combat these 'social ills'. The self-esteem approach is designed to induce changes in how individuals conceive of and relate to themselves, with the goal of prompting individuals to adopt the behaviors that the state promotes 'voluntarily'. Cruikshank (1999:90) writes,

> Working toward self-esteem is a way to subject citizens in the sense of making them "prone to" or "subject to" taking up the goals of self-esteem for themselves and their vision of the good society... Transparency is established between the individual's goal of achieving self-esteem and the social goal of eliminating child abuse, crime and welfare dependence. Those who undergo "revolution from within" are citizens doing the right thing; they join programs, they volunteer, but most important, they work on and improve their self-image.

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That is, experts devise self-esteem interventions to reconfigure and realign individuals' conceptions of their selves and their interests in ways that lead them choose to act in ways that correspond with state aims.

The genealogy of IMSS-Oportunidades Human Development

IMSS-Oportunidades began to engage psychological states as key terrain for pursuing their objectives in changing youth's reproductive behaviors during the mid-1990s. This work blossomed into the current Human Development approach, in which service providers carry out interventions targeting values, self-esteem, decision-making, social relations, assertiveness and gender. The connections IMSS-Oportunidades programmers made between pathological psychological states and pathological reproductive patterns (namely 'early pregnancy') correspond with those made by experts engaged in the Californian self-esteem movement. These similarities reflect common webs of influence and communication.

The webs linking the Californian self-esteem movement that emerged in the early 1980s with IMSS-Oportunidades' adoption of psychological strategies in their work with adolescents in Mexico during the 1990s travel through an organization called the Center for Population Options.[12] The Center's founders created the organization in 1980 to fight 'early pregnancy' in the United States. At the same time that Californian experts were devising self-esteem based interventions to combat a host of 'social ills' in California, experts working at the Center designed a similar assemblage of techniques for combating 'early pregnancy' in the United States. In 1985, the Center released the first iteration of

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[12] The Center for Population Options has since been renamed Advocates for Youth. It is located in Washington, D.C.

this program, which they deemed *Life Planning Education* (Hunter-Geboy 1995; CPO 1989). The Program targets how adolescents conceive of themselves and their relationships to those around them through activities that address individual identities, values, gender, goal setting, decision making, parenthood, sexuality, communication, employment and HIV/AIDS (CPO 1989).

Experts at the Center have revised the *Life Planning Education* program multiple times since they created the initial version. The first revision, in 1989, reflected a broadening of the Program's agenda from its narrow focus on 'early pregnancy' to incorporate strategies for fighting HIV/AIDS (CPO 1989). The Center's personnel have also contributed to the internationalization of the approach by forming international collaborations to produce versions of the Program for non-U.S. populations. A Mexican organization called the Center for Adolescent Orientation (CORA) was one of the earliest international collaborators. In 1987, the Center began to collaborate with the Center for Adolescent Orientation and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) to devise a version of *Life Planning Education* for Latin American youth (CPO and ADC 1990:2). This work led to the production of a version of the Program specifically geared toward Latin American youth, called *Como planear mi vida* (CPO and ADC 1990).[13]

The Center for Population Options' collaboration with the Mexican Center for Adolescent Orientation created a line of influence that shaped perspectives on how to address adolescent reproductive patterns in Mexico. Indeed, the first workbook that details Human Development interventions for IMSS-Oportunidades service providers –

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[13] The Costa Rican Demographic Association co-authored this Latin American version of the Program with the Center for Population Options,

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Los caminos de la vida (AFLUENTES 2000)[14] [The Paths of Life] – cites, closely

resembles and in some instances mirrors the activities laid out in *Como planear mi vida.*

Human Development and neoliberal reform

As I discussed above, Foucauldian scholars have argued that neoliberal reforms

transform the terrain of rule in ways that make self-governance strategies crucial modes

of government (Foucault 1991; Lemke 2001). Considered in relation to these

observations, the close temporal correspondence between the emergence and

entrenchment of neoliberal reform and the emergence and transnationalization of this

psychological approach is suggestive. This close correspondence also holds true in the

particular case of Mexico: IMSS-Oportunidades programmers incorporated the

psychological approach into the Program's repertoire of interventions on the heels of the

Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) administration's deep embrace of neoliberal reform (see

Chapter Two, especially pp. 60-65).

In my analysis of IMSS-Oportunidades' Human Development below, I signal

ways in which the subjects of Human Development bear the marks of this neoliberal

context. In the broadest sense, they reflect the imposition of a market logic on all of

social life that Foucault identified as a distinguishing characteristic of neoliberalism

(Lemke 2001). That is, participants of Human Development learn to become

"entrepreneurs of the self" (Lemke 2001:9) who regard themselves as works in progress

and continually act upon themselves to craft better, more productive selves. Secondly, to

the extent that Human Development training incites participants to adopt a sense of

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[14] This workbook was a collaborative effort that included the support of the World Health Organization, the Department of Health, the Department of Education, IMSS-Oportunidades and a Mexican non-governmental organization called Afluentes.

responsibility for social phenomena formerly regarded as the purview of the state (Lemke 2001:12), Human Development responds to the deficits of care that neoliberal reforms generate by defunding social programs.

In addition to drawing these links between neoliberalism and the subjects of Oportunidades, I analyze how IMSS-Oportunidades programmers and service providers have construed the significance of indigenous culture for this neoliberal subject-making. I begin below by analyzing how IMSS-Oportunidades social, psychological and anthropological experts researched and analyzed the significance of indigenous culture for this Human Development terrain.

Enculturing self-governance

In the late 1990s, IMSS-Oportunidades embarked on a research investigation to examine how indigenous culture influences practices and perspectives that impinge on fertility rates.[15] One of the lead investigators on the research team explained to me that they chose to focus on indigenous culture because they supposed that it was an important factor contributing to differences between indigenous and *mestizo* communities' reproductive health indicators. She recounted,

> So, the problem we had, well, that we still have, is that indigenous populations, in comparison with the rest of the population, have the lowest indicators, almost half of the *mestizo* population, no? So, for example, in number of children, indigenous populations practically double the number of children that urban women have. The maternal mortality also is practically double, infant mortality – that is, they are in totally adverse conditions .... To explain this situation, which in addition to what we already know about social conditions, economic conditions, and the social disadvantages in the country, we also considered that surely there must be cultural questions too, no? Because it isn't just the educational lag, or economic lag, or social lag, there was also a part – we also supposed that there were cultural questions, no?

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[15] IMSS undertook the investigation with the assistance of the Population Council, an international NGO dedicated to conducting research on themes linked with population control and reproductive health. The organization is headquartered in New York City.

In her explanation, the researcher stopped short of claiming that a 'cultural lag' contributes to poor development indicators in indigenous communities. That claim would have explicitly conflicted with the critique of *indigenismo* that gained force during the final quarter of the twentieth century, its challenge to the modernist denigration of indigenous culture and assimilation efforts, and the rise of a multicultural ethic of appreciation for cultural difference. In fact, she rewrote the history of 'indigenous culture' in Mexican development as she suggested that scholars have historically focused on social and economic factors to the neglect of culture, and characterized this inquiry into 'indigenous culture' as something novel. Nonetheless, her claim that indigenous culture frustrates the pursuit of development objectives corresponds well with the modernist perceptions that prevailed throughout most of twentieth century Mexican development.

So motivated by the sense that cultural forces contribute to differences in fertility patterns, a research team composed of specialists in sociology, anthropology and psychology assembled to explicate these forces. The researchers were especially interested in delineating how cultural forces influence youth's reproduction- and sexuality-related perspectives and practices. The prioritization of youth corresponds with the primary role youth's behaviors will play in determining the fertility trends of the near future. Nonetheless, when I asked why the study targeted youth, the researcher cited age-based differential enculturedness:

> It's more difficult for an adult to change – they do change, but it's much easier for an adolescent or a young person, no? ... That's why we focused on youth, because they are the ones with whom it is easiest to modify a series of habits.

That is, in comparison with adults, youth's more tenuous enculturedness enables them to change with greater ease. Notwithstanding this primary concern with youth, the researchers perceived adults' perspectives and practices as important influences on those of youth, and so included them in the investigation. Thus, investigators' perceptions of differences in how indigenous people relate to indigenous culture – or differential enculturedness – importantly influenced their early determinations of which populations to include in the study and why.

The research team selected the six largest indigenous populations in Mexico to include in the study, and each of the lead sociological, ethnographic and psychosocial investigators developed techniques to study how cultural forces shape reproductive patterns. The head of the sociological approach designed a questionnaire targeting knowledge, beliefs and attitudes related to reproduction, which was administered to 3490 individuals in 70 localities within the six indigenous populations (IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:23). The investigators applying the psychosocial approach conducted forty-eight focus groups in the six populations. In the focus groups, they solicited participants' descriptions of and orientations towards puberty, gender, unions, sexual and reproductive health, health services and recreation (IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:137).

For their part, the lead ethnographers selected a municipality from each of the six populations for three and a half month stints of intensive ethnographic research. They chose Pueblo Verde as the 'representative' Mixtec community for inclusion in the study. Regional IMSS supervisors familiar with each the communities underwent training in ethnographic research methods and subsequently carried out the ethnographic research. They employed observation and interview techniques to collect an abundance of data

related to the communities' settings, social relations, economies, and other broad characteristics, along with more focused information about norms and practices related to gender, sexuality and reproduction. One of the researchers explained in an interview that the unwieldy amount of data prohibited them from using an ethnographic data analysis program to analyze the data as they had originally intended. Nonetheless, the researcher asserted that the lack of an analysis program did not encumber their analysis, as important patterns in the data were readily discernible.

In the final report on the research findings, the authors present the data generated from the sociological questionnaires to illustrate how factors such as age, sex, linguistic status and education influence knowledge of and orientations toward family planning and reproductive health among the populations included. They organize the psychosocial focus group data in two forms. First, they present findings according to age and ethnic group. Then, they present characterizations of each of the six cultures, which include what the authors claim are "the determining repercussions of the local culture in participants' commentaries" (IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:137). Finally, the ethnographers contribute summaries of each of the communities, which include broad descriptors of the social, cultural, economic, political and geographic context, along with more detailed discussions of particular practices related to sexuality and reproduction. The ethnographers also evaluate the cases across the six communities, and examine orientations and practices related to reproductive trends that the six populations hold in common. Most of these commonalities relate to gender roles and sexuality; for example, the authors identify concern for women's virginity and the high value placed on motherhood as commonalities shared across the groups.

In Chapter One, I noted how anthropologists have contributed to modernist depictions of indigenous culture as fixed, static and agentless, and to indigenous people as trapped therein (see page 13; also Appadurai 1988). The authors' depiction of indigenous culture corresponds closely with modernist characterizations. For example, they reference their own research findings to support their claim of the fixity of the 'indigenous cultures' under investigation:

> Here one must recall the results of the previous anthropological studies of the same ethnic groups in relation to some aspects of sexuality such as virginity, marriage and procreation, which are examined in the chapter on background and justification. After more than two decades they continue to be in force, as this study brings forth. This indicates above all else that certain values and practices are above any questioning and remain unaltered, among constant changes generated, as already signaled, by acculturation. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000.:147]

The authors implicitly contrast this 'traditional' fixity with modern *mestizo* society, which, when afforded the opportunity, incites change through contact and acculturation.

Despite these correspondences between traditional anthropological depictions of culture and the culture of the final report, the culture of the final report diverges in a crucial regard: the fixity of traditional culture is not agentless, but rather a product of selfish and unscrupulous adults who impose cultural conformity on others in pursuing their own interests. The authors intimate this characteristic injustice of indigenous culture when describing how indigenous culture shapes behaviors that impinge upon fertility patterns. They write,

> The customs relating to union and early childbearing are profoundly embedded in deeply-rooted traditions about which if the majority of adolescents are against, the intense social pressure obliges them to accept them, if they do not wish to be rejected. Social marginalization acts consequently as an important force repressing change. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000: 138]

The introduction of a moral tinge to the different positions subjects occupy in relation to indigenous culture is an especially salient notion that shapes the researchers' analysis of

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indigenous culture and its relevance for their development strategies. Thus, in a similar

passage, the authors of the report clearly position the (modern) forces of acculturation on

the side of the youth-victims who are struggling to free themselves from the (traditional)

bounds of indigenous culture. They write,

> The generational gap is notable between parents and adolescent children in relation to the
> concept and practice of sexual and reproductive health, especially in that which concerns
> the use of family planning methods, but it is also true that when there are conflicts
> between what the *indigenas* consider convenient and the 'must do' indicated by the
> beliefs and customs, the latter prevail and determine the conduct to be followed, as occurs
> for example with maternity directly following marriage. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:146]

In another passage, the authors implicate these power-laden generational differences for

hindering program objectives. They state,

> As the information presented in the previous chapters suggests, acculturation has
> occurred at a rhythm more accelerated among adolescents and youth, in comparison with
> that which is observed among adults, especially those who within their nuclear families
> retain the authority. This is important because – in agreement with the ethnographies –
> they are the ones who assign, transmit and contribute to modifying the social patterns of
> conduct that mold family members and the indigenous community. [IMSS-Solidaridad
> 2000:144]

In short, the researchers construe indigenous culture as tool adults impose on youth in

pursuit of their own interests. In the process, adults prohibit youth from pursuing their

own best interests, and frustrate modern national aspirations. The psychosocial experts

further develop these assumptions in elaborating their analysis of how indigenous culture

impinges on development by shaping the perspectives, practices and psychological states

of indigenous people.

The psychosocial analysis

The conclusions of the psychosocial experts have had an especially important

influence on programming. In their analytical approach, these experts utilized the text

and observations of participants' behaviors recorded during the focus groups to identify psychological pathologies; they returned to this data for indications of cultural forces; and then deduced the cultural forces that cause these pathologies. Many of the conclusions they generate regarding 'pathologies' and 'culture' seem ill-substantiated, but the analytical strategy they employed to deduce links between particular 'pathologies' and cultural dynamics are particularly tenuous. Nonetheless, the authors implicate a litany of indigenous cultural patterns for producing psychological pathologies that cause individuals to behave in ways that impede development. In the analysis, the pathological products of these cultural patterns become, in turn, cultural patterns themselves that contribute to mal-psychological and -economic development. Some of the most important cultural characteristics they identify include inadequate parenting; excessive fertility; pregnancies in too rapid succession; low self-esteem; affective emptiness; codependency among women; poor unions; men's lack of concern for their families; a preference for male children; and a reliance on children for labor.

The psychosocial experts position indigenous people differently in relation to the cultural forces they identify as causing development-impeding pathologies. In its broad contours, their explanation mirrors the morally-tinged generational analysis of differential enculturedness described above. Thus, the authors argue that deficiencies in indigenous styles of parenting create psychological pathologies in indigenous youth that lead them to perpetuate their disadvantaged social positions by forming unstable unions and having too many children. They assert,

> The precarious communication within the family and the inadequate relationship between parents and children transform into the search for affect and for loving bonds among indigenous adolescents, which, because of social conditions ends, often, in poorly sustained unions and undesired pregnancies. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:139]

Moreover, the authors implicate excessive fertility as a key contributor to these inadequate parent-child bonds. They argue that high fertility contributes to the precarious communication in the family because it precludes mothers from establishing close and healthy emotional connections with their children. They explain,

> In effect, a basic foundation present in most of the groups was the necessity to fill the affective emptiness with which they grow. This emptiness has its basis in the mother-child relationship, which is formed inadequately. Among other causes, frequent pregnancies disallow the strengthening of this bond... [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:139]

This emptiness ultimately contributes to a vicious cycle of poverty, as youth attempt to fill their void by forming partnerships while young, and subsequently begin their reproductive lives prematurely. Premature fertility leads to excessive fertility, which precludes youth from investing their time and resources in preparing themselves to contribute more gainfully in the economy.

This explanation corresponds with the cultural analysis as it pits especially encultured adults against their less encultured youth counterparts. Yet, the psychosocial experts devise a more complex sketch of conflict by integrating gender into this analysis. They identify men and fathers as wielding most of the power within the family, and characterize them as imposing their will on others in conformity with their own interests, and with indifference for the wellbeing of others. They assert,

> The absence and little participation of married men in the focus groups, despite the alternatives that they were offered, evidences the apathy and indifference towards the health and development of their family, which results paradoxical if one considers that they are really the ones who make the decisions about the family size and the woman's body. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:139]

In another passage, the authors criticize men for harming their children by failing to create close emotional attachments with them and failing to participate in their socialization. They state,

> It is striking that the paternal figure as a formative element that provides security and transmits to children an ethical code and social values, is little involved in the construction of affective relations and the establishment of norms of conduct within the family. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:139]

Men's lack of engagement in these areas of family life supports the authors' contention that indigenous men are indifferent to the needs of others.

In contrast, the authors depict women's position as complex and paradoxical, because women enforce cultural compliance while simultaneously being bound and subordinated by these same forces of compliance. They write,

> It is very important to note that when the woman breaks with the cultural pattern that corresponds with sexuality, she is socially marginalized. Unfortunately, it is the women themselves who contribute in an important way to perpetuating gender inequity. In the six ethnic groups under study, the woman in her position as mother or mother-in-law inculcates in her children patterns of behavior that discriminate against the female sex and take the social function of enforcing their proper behavior. In other words, the woman learns to adopt as her own norms of conduct that are afterwards applied against her. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:148]

In contradistinction to their male counterparts, the women of the authors' portrayal are extremely concerned with ensuring the wellbeing of the family. In fact, women's concern for others appears as a pathological tendency in the report. The authors contend that adult women seek to fill their own affective emptiness by serving others, and that indigenous girls become co-dependent as they observe and repeat their mothers' codependent ways:

> In the particular case of the indigenous girl, the maternal model is a mirror in which the girl acquires her identification as a woman. This model suggests to her that the affective shortcomings can be filled in relation to the other; in this learning, the woman becomes accustomed to give more than she can receive, giving more value and respect to others than to herself, which contributes to give her life meaning. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:139]

Thus, women occupy an ambiguous middle-ground in this analysis. The authors

characterize women as fully encultured subjects who victimize those with more tenuous

linkages to culture – youth – by enforcing cultural compliance. At the same time, these

same cultural forces victimize women. Women lack sufficient awareness of how

indigenous culture impinges upon them: they suffer from false consciousness.

Notwithstanding the authors' consideration of gender differences, youth occupy

an unequivocal position as victims in the report. The authors write,

> In the situation of the boy, the manifest paternal and maternal preference for male
> children could lead one to incorrectly assume that he is afforded a privileged position in
> the home. In reality, he is considered an additional support for the family economy.
> [ibid.]

Thus, the IMSS-Oportunidades report locates men as cultural perpetrator-aggressors,

positions women in an ambiguous position in which they oscillate between victims and

aggressors, and depicts youth as victims. This analysis of indigenous culture as a

medium through which men dominate women and children, and cause psychological

pathologies and inadequately defined selves in the process, generates a clear moral

imperative to save indigenous women and children from the bonds of indigenous men

and culture.

Research into practice: A cultural justification for self-governance

The research project closely shadowed IMSS-Solidaridad's nascent work with

psychology-oriented development strategies with youth under the rubric of Educational

Communication. In explaining how the research findings influenced Program practice, a

lead researcher indicated that there was an iterative relationship between the research and

programming. The investigator recounted,

> We were already working on some of the things with communication, sexual education and everything. But, the study gave us more elements to work on – you know, more detail, no? But this work was already in process for like a year. Around when we began to work with the study, this same year we began Educational Communication in relation to these sexuality themes, no? We could say that it strengthened the work that was being done as Educational Communication and grew into Human Development.

The research supported the Program's launch into the psychological realm of human experience by legitimating the shift with expert knowledge, on the one hand, and with an analysis of the particularities of experience in indigenous communities, on the other. Fittingly, the authors of the final report contend that its findings evidence the need to expand the Program's work beyond the biological focus. They assert,

> … [this] more precise knowledge about the level of human sexuality-related information and patterns of behavior among the indigenous people studied obliges a holistic approach which transcends the biological sphere to also include the psychological and the social spheres, and the system of values, beliefs and customs that govern conduct within the community. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000.:151]

This expansion into the psychosocial realm, of course, was already well underway.

Still, the research findings helped Program designers elaborate the Educational Communication approach into the current Human Development approach, and the recommendations the authors lay out in the report correspond closely with the current strategy. The authors make the following recommendations:

> Given the shortcomings identified in the study, strengthening the knowledge, attitudes and abilities of the participants is plainly justified in relation to: the anatomy and physiology of human reproduction; the health risks and harms linked to the sexual sphere; the strengthening and redirection of values; the strengthening of self-esteem and in particular the knowledge of oneself; the ability to make decisions and to negotiate when necessary; the capacity to relate with others, in particular with the family and with other adolescents, and to establish equitable relations between women and women, in the exercise of their rights and obligations. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000.:152]

In addition to calling for the provision of more information about sexuality and reproductive health to youth, the authors recommend interventions targeting youth's values, self-esteem, decision-making skills, relationships, and gender relations. These

recommendations correspond closely with the primary foci of IMSS-Oportunidades' Human Development approach, which include values, self-esteem, interpersonal communication, decision-making, violence, and gender equity. The authors propose this psychological package of interventions to free youth from their culturally-induced psychological pathologies, and enable them to gauge and act in their best interests. In doing so, these interventions will rid the nation of key impediments to development.

The desire to transform youth's subjective experience is central to IMSS-Oportunidades' Human Development approach. The report's authors convey this primary concern with youth's subjective experience as they advise service providers to address Human Development themes in a way "such that adolescents, without any pressure and with conviction...identify the necessity to change their lifestyles and decide to implement these changes" (IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:153). Programmers' targeting of the internal, subjective psychological environment that frames how individuals make choices distinguishes Human Development as a mode of power that works through self-governance.

Human Development training for IMSS-Oportunidades personnel

IMSS-Oportunidades Program designers have created workshops and written materials to guide service providers as they embark on this new psychological development terrain. I participated in a training workshop that regional supervisors provided to Rural Health Assistants in order to prepare them to impart Human Development training to adolescents in their communities. The workshop closely followed the activities laid out in the *Manual para el Fomento del Desarrollo Humano de*

la Población Indígena y Campesina (IMSS-Solidaridad 1999), and participants were

expected to use the Manual as a guide in their Human Development work with

adolescents in their communities. The authors of the Manual synthesize the links

between Human Development and the Program goals of changing behaviors in a manner

that closely parallels the perspectives conveyed in the research report. Most importantly,

they identify psychological pathologies among youth as key impediments to their mental

health, and cite these pathologies as simultaneously impeding national development

aspirations. They write,

> In realizing work together with the poorest population in the country, we have found that the psychological aspects that intervene in people's health must be dealt with if one desires for this population to improve their life conditions.
>
> From there a project focused on strengthening the human development of youth and adolescents has been conceived, which emphasizes, among other themes, the valorization of the self, aware as we are that a high self-esteem is necessary in the search for paths of self-realization and the practice of more healthy lifestyles.
>
> The main challenge of this new institutional work consists of working, in a focused manner, with adolescents and youth of both sexes in indigenous and *campesina* communities, with the fundamental goal of strengthening the development of their personal potential, improving their personal relationships and encouraging responsible decision-making. [IMSS-Solidaridad 1999:11]

The concluding reference to "responsible decision-making" gestures toward the criteria

programmers aim for individuals to adopt and use to navigate and determine the limits to

their own choices.

The Human Development training workshop was held in Tlaxiaco, a small city

located about an hour from Pueblo Verde. Most of the approximately forty workshop

participants traveled from communities scattered throughout the region to participate.

Over three quarters were women; their ages ranged from teenagers to their forties, with

most in their 20s and 30s. We sat in a large semi-circle, an arrangement that enabled us

to see one another and the workshop leaders at the front of the room. The workshop leaders, trainers in Human Development, guided us through many of the individual and group activities contained in the Manual. They interspersed the activities with occasional short introductory lectures. Over the course of the three days, we engaged the themes of human development; values; self-esteem; decision-making; social relations and assertiveness.[16] Upon return to their communities, participants were charged with organizing groups of about twenty adolescents for two-hour long sessions, in which they would teach the twenty-seven Human Development activities elaborated in the Manual.

To begin, the training includes a series of activities aimed at reconfiguring how individuals conceptualize of their own unique sense of selfhood in relation to those around them. Some of these activities aim to isolate and strengthen participants' sense of individual uniqueness. For example, we reflected on and wrote accounts of the day we were born; we thought about our names, where they came from, and whether and how they fit us. In other exercises, the trainers encouraged us to cultivate this sense of individual uniqueness by attaching it to particular qualities and desires. For example, we wrote ten sentences about ourselves, beginning with "I'm a person who…"; we wrote what we like and dislike about ourselves; we selected kinds of animal and minerals we would choose to be if we could, and explained why; and we imagined who we would be if we could be anyone for a day.

In addition, multiple exercises pinpoint and strengthen how participants distinguish their own interests from the interests of those around them. This process involves conjuring of a realm of "authentic selfhood." Thus, the group leader informed

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[16] The Manual also includes activities addressing gender equity, although we did not cover this theme in the workshop.

participants that our families and communities instill most of our values in us, and suggested that these values may often disagree with our "authentic selves." Then, she directed activities in which participants critically reflected on their own values, where they came from, and whether or not they resonate with their own unique individuality. In one, we each created a family shield with symbols representing family activities, ideals and values. In the ensuing discussion, the trainer encouraged participants to consider which of these family practices, ideals and values they liked and could be applicable to their lives, and which did not have a place in their lives.

During the exercises, the group leaders repeatedly tasked participants with sharing their reflections with the group. The kinds of reflections the trainers directed us to share challenge many local conventions of social intercourse. They pressed participants to share positive and negative qualities about themselves that would typically be deemed prideful or shameful in community contexts. The leaders also challenged participants to identify negative qualities about other group members and share them, a kind of open expression that is widely discouraged. The training provides participants with a safe context for experimenting with these techniques and in which to begin to address the barriers to adopting them. This component of the training strengthens the redefinition and realignment of self in relation to others by grounding the realigned subjectivities in new modes of social engagement.

While the group leaders encouraged participants to draw, strengthen and tighten boundaries that distinguish them from some, they concomitantly encouraged participants to reconceptualize the significance of the connections they do make, situating them in a sense of social commitment and 'responsibility'. As an organizing framework,

'responsibility' communicates a framing of a greater good that corresponds with a particular social alignment, and it provides individuals with a body of criteria for navigating their choices and determining the ends of their own freedom. Thus, 'responsibility' is a key discursive tool that connects Human Development with contemporary modes of power that work by realigning subjectivities in ways that incite people to govern themselves.

The 'responsibility' of Human Development effects multi-scalar alignments: leaders urge participants to take personal actions that contribute to the betterment of the family, the community, the nation, and the world. In accordance with this dimension of the Human Development's subjective reconfigurations, all of the participants of the workshop I participated in came to identify 'helping others' as an expression of their newfound appreciation for their unique sense of self. As Thomas Lemke (2001:12) signals, this personal sense of responsibility is responsive to the neoliberal deficit of care.

Furthermore, Human Development training promotes a conceptual shift toward regarding setting and striving toward goals as a vehicle for the expression, development and realization of the self. Thus, while leaders urged participants to translate the intimate experience of selfhood into unique qualities and desires that symbolized one's individuality early in the workshop, they directed participants to express this individuality as aspirations for the self, school, family and the world as we neared the close of the workshop. Moreover, the training provides participants with multiple tools – including estimating, calculating, quantifying and modeling their daily experience – for acting on their daily lives in ways that facilitate the achievement of their goals. For example, one exercise presses participants to consider whether the activities to which they dedicate

themselves in their daily lives assist in working toward their personal goals. As we created pie charts representing how we use our daily time for this exercise, the workshop leader informed participants of "the importance of taking advantage of every second because it is not coming back." In another exercise, the workshop leader directed participants to analyze our attendance at the conference as a successful instance of setting and reaching goals, and to consider what had to occur for us to participate. This facet of the training encourages participants to become the analysts, directors and gatekeepers of their daily lives, delineating priorities and blocking interferences that would impinge on these goals (Lemke 2001).

The lectures and activities of Human Development training target three dimensions of selfhood: they encourage participants to redraw the boundaries that differentiate themselves from others; to articulate this newly defined terrain of the self with interests; and to adopt a new conception of themselves and their lives revolving around identifying and striving toward goals. In interviews, IMSS personnel who had participated in Human Development training repeatedly expressed the linkages the training makes between individuality and personal goals. Indeed, they described striving towards personal goals as an expression of the valorization of the self. For example, a regional supervisor asserted that

> People become capable of reaching their goals once they have learned to accept themselves and love themselves.

Similarly, Adriana, a clinic nurse, described working towards goals as an expression of individuality:

> Personal development is something very personal. Very personal because each person has a different vision of her future. A person studies and trains each day more in agreement with her necessities - and she keeps climbing.

Among the providers I interviewed, Juana, Pueblo Verde's Rural Health Assistant, most clearly articulated the connections the training draws between self-valorization, the management of daily experience, and contributing to making a better world. She reflected,

> Yes, every time that I attend the course, they give us all of this information. So, it also helps us give ourselves value. It makes you feel like you have much to do in life, and, they tell us there also that, like, now that I know, I must teach others... I realized I can do so many things. And I can help my people.

These reflections indicate that Human Development training greatly influences how IMSS personnel conceive of themselves and how they relate to those around them.

Yet, IMSS-Oportunidades programmers devised the Human Development approach with more transcendental aims: to spur youth Program recipients to adopt the behaviors they advocate. Indeed, IMSS-Oportunidades programmers identify youth's voluntary adoption of the behaviors they advocate as the sole reliable evidence of their degree of Human Development. In this regard, the authors of the final report write,

> It must be emphasized that the knowledge must go further than simple information, because it has been proven that it is not sufficient in and of itself to generate adequate sexual attitudes and behaviors. This also requires an understanding of the topics addressed, so adolescents can appropriate this knowledge and apply it to their own benefit. This must be reflected in the adoption, by them, of new life styles and forms of behavior that contribute to reducing early pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and maternal and infant mortality, and contribute to making a sexually healthy and satisfactory life a reality for men and women. [IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:151]

Just as Barbara Cruikshank (1999) observes in her investigation of the Californian self-esteem movement, the proof is in the pudding: participants' adoption of the behaviors that the Program promotes provides indicates their psychological health. Service providers promote these behaviors by concretizing 'psychological health' and 'responsibility' into particular perspectives and behaviors in everyday practice.

Concretizing Human Development in everyday IMSS-Oportunidades practice

Although the Human Development training providers receive focuses entirely on promoting subjective transformations, the leaders and participants of the workshop deviated from the guide in at least two instances to concretize the subjective transformations they were discussing in actual behaviors. These spontaneous deviations accurately reflect how IMSS-Oportunidades personnel reckon diffuse discussions of subjectivity in relation to specific behaviors.

Significantly, in both of these cases, workshop participants made sense of discussions of dysfunctional selfhood by grounding them in the extremely salient Program concern of regulating fertility. In one instance, the group leader queried participants about the causes of early pregnancy. Participants responded by claiming that youth who form their families young do so because they lack love and communication in the home. In this interchange, the leader astutely incorporated the group participants' active participation to identify a delay in the onset of first pregnancy as an indication of psychological health. In another instance, while discussing self-esteem and decision making, group members attributed low self-esteem to women with many children, and argued that these women's low self-esteem prohibits them from making decisions. In this case, the trainer affirmed the observer's contention, and tasked group members with helping youth learn to make their own decisions. The links here closely resemble those in the first instance: low fertility symbolizes psychological health.

These deviations demonstrate the pivotal role context plays in shaping how participants translate diffuse discussions of responsibility and psychological health into particular behaviors. In her analysis of the self-esteem movement in California, Barbara

Cruikshank (1999:90) describes this as the processes through which "Transparency is established between the individual's goal of achieving self esteem, and the social goal of eliminating child abuse, crime and welfare dependence." This concretizing occurs often in everyday practice, as providers intermingle Human Development training with educational and medical interventions in their work with youth.

Although IMSS-Oportunidades personnel train providers to impart Human Development training *as a course* to youth in their communities, a lack of interest among community members beleaguers these efforts. In fact, around the same time that I participated in the Human Development workshop, a Pueblo Verdean young adult participated in a similar workshop in preparation to provide Human Development training to pre-adolescent youth. Reportedly, poor attendance hampered his efforts to reproduce the course in Pueblo Verde. Difficulties findings individuals who are capable, available and willing to impart courses, as well as individuals who are willing to participate, limit the frequency and reach of this form of Human Development training.

Nonetheless, programmers interweave discussions of Human Development themes into the health and educational interventions that comprise the bulk of the Program's everyday work with youth. The *Guía para el Cuidado de la Salud: Adolescentes de 10 a 19 Años* (IMSS-Oportunidades 2003), an informational pamphlet provided to adolescent recipients of care at the clinic, reflects and propels this interweaving. The guide serves dual purposes: it provides youth with information they can read at leisure to learn about their own health, and alerts them to the main concerns their providers should address during their consults. The guide combines the Human Development foci of family communication, decision-making, values and self-esteem,

with information aiming to promote particular behavioral changes related to family planning, sexually transmitted diseases, addictions, accidents and physical activity.

Moreover, the Introduction to the Manual used for training Program personnel in Human Development, *Manual de Desarrollo Humano Organizacional para la Calidad* (IMSS-Solidaridad n.d.:7), advises all IMSS-Oportunidades personnel to impart the training as they carry out their daily work with youth:

> This Manual aims to orient and stimulate health workers to apply some simple and new strategies, as well as to extend and diversify the application of knowledge and abilities that already exist in the operation of the Program, with the end of taking advantage of them in their everyday activities.

Thus, while the participants of the Human Development training course discussed above deviated from the course material to ground the subjective psychological states of Human Development in particular practices, namely fertility, this concretizing interweaving constitutes part and parcel of how service providers carry out programming in everyday practice.

Culture and Human Development in practice: Making healthy adolescent selves

In my analysis of the IMSS-Oportunidades study and the changes in programming it occasioned, I signaled the ongoing salience of modernist orientations toward indigenous culture that depict indigenous culture as a hindrance to modern development aspirations. Nonetheless, the researchers characterized indigenous culture in novel ways as they framed its significance for the psychological terrain of Human Development. They construed indigenous culture as a source of psychological pathologies that indigenous subjects differentially experience and bear. The researchers drew from these arguments to promote the expansion of psychologically-oriented interventions with the

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indigenous subjects they depicted as least culturally encumbered – youth. Ultimately, this expansion led to the current Human Development approach, which includes interventions aimed to treat the psychological dysfunction that programmers claim indigenous culture produces.

Despite the important role modernist assumptions about indigenous culture have played in shaping Human Development, 'culture' per se is not part of the Human Development training program. Nonetheless, in practice, service providers repeatedly invoke 'indigenous culture' while imparting Human Development training. In the process, they ground the subject of Human Development in the modernist dichotomy distinguishing modern and indigenous subjects. The resulting logic closely mirrors that prevailing in the study report, as it distinguishes the modern selves of Human Development from their indigenous culture-bearing counterparts. Adolescents learn that small families symbolize the healthy and responsible modern subject, while large families evidence the pathological, irresponsible, indigenous culture-bearing subject. To the extent that this modernist dimension of practice contributes to the realignment of youth's affinities, it simultaneously contributes to the Program's multi-scalar realignments in relation to 'responsibility'.

In the Pueblo Verde clinic, the nurses typically provide adolescent educational sessions, and they do so on a monthly basis while school is in session.[17] They usually hold the sessions in the CARA, the Center for Rural Adolescents, located directly behind

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[17] In practice, talks were often cancelled due to poor attendance, because the nurses are otherwise occupied, or for unanticipated interruptions.

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the clinic. Occasionally, they hold the sessions inside the clinic to take advantage of the TV/VCR[18] to watch videos addressing relevant themes.

At the time I conducted the research, the package of educational sessions intended for IMSS-Oportunidades adolescents included the themes of adolescence and sexuality; family planning; addictions; sexually transmitted diseases; HIV/AIDS; gender and health; and family violence. I observed sessions on gender and health, adolescent sexuality and family planning. Only one of these sessions explicitly dealt with family planning. Nonetheless, service providers repeatedly discussed family planning topics during these sessions. In fact, group leaders' preoccupation with family planning led them to misinform participants about techniques that protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) during the session on adolescence and sexuality. In this instance, the clinic doctor and primary nurse were using a board game to teach adolescents about sexuality. One of game's questions challenges players to name methods that protect against STDs. In response, clinic personnel and youth alike identified techniques for avoiding pregnancy, including IUDs and vasectomies, which do not protect against STDs. Group leaders very clearly established family size as an indicator of the psychologically healthy modern subject through these constant reminders.

At the same time that providers grounded healthy subjectivities in small families, they often simultaneously deployed the symbolism of especially encultured adults to illustrate pathological behaviors, orientations and selves. The connections the clinic nurse drew between culture, contraceptive use, and the Human Development theme of gender equity illustrate these linkages. In a session on gender and health, the nurse grounded healthy and pathological orientations toward gender in perspectives on

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[18] The Program participants had contributed to funds to purchase the television.

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contraceptive use: favorable stances toward contraceptive use reflect healthy and just gender orientations, while aversion to contraceptives evidences a pathological unjust gender orientation. Moreover, she went a step further to ground her illustrations of pathological unjust gender orientations in especially encultured subjects. The nurse thus overlaid modernist dichotomies on these pairings of fertility with subjective and psychological states.

In the session, the nurse reported that men with one or two children used to feel belittled and emasculated, but that people no longer subscribe to this notion. Deploying the discourse of 'responsibility', she claimed that people understand that men want to have only as many children as they can provide a good life for. Then, she referenced residents of a neighboring community where fewer people speak the Spanish language and more people don 'traditional' dress, and said that *those* villagers *do* perceive the use of contraceptives as emasculating, and they prohibit their wives from using contraceptives. The nurse deployed the symbolism of these especially encultured subjects to convey her point with clarity: *modern* people do not believe that using contraceptives makes men less masculine. In a way that shadows the multi-scalar realignments discourses of 'responsibility' evoke, modernist discourses promote subjective realignments by cultivating affinities between youth and the modern.

Significantly, the Verdean nurse used the symbolism of people from a neighboring community to demonstrate the salience of indigenous culture to the subjectivities that correspond with healthy and unhealthy gender orientations. Villager-providers also deployed symbols of especially encultured subjects of the same community. Nonetheless, program designers and non-villager IMSS-Oportunidades

personnel more typically depicted encounters between educated clinic staff and the culturally embedded communities where they work.

For example, in one of the vignettes enacted on a video[19] youth viewed during a session on family planning, a young man's *padrino,* or 'godparent', approaches a young woman's father to ask for her hand in marriage on behalf of his *ahijado,* or 'godson'. The father rejects the offer, citing concerns that the suitor will force his daughter to use contraceptives. The father believes using contraceptives would kill his daughter. Rather than using contraceptives, the father proclaims that women should have children naturally – 'as God gives them.' The father and the *padrino* go to the clinic to speak with the doctor to settle the matter, and the doctor informs them that contraceptive use will actually save the woman's life. The clinic doctor thus channels modern reason to combat older men's decidedly harmful ignorance.

The multiple vignettes in the video were designed to demonstrate the ill-effects of early and high fertility in rural communities, to approximate barriers to family planning in these communities, and to illustrate paths for resolving these barriers. The representations of indigenous culture these vignettes contain convey assumptions about generational and gender differences in how individuals experience culture that closely

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[19] The video, *Los caminos de la vida,* is a companion to the initial workbook provided to IMSS-Oportunidades service providers to familiarize themselves with the psychological approach: *Los caminos de la vida: Manual de capacitación sobre sexualidad e infecciones de transmission sexual para jóvenes campesinas y campesinos* (Rodriguez and Mayen 2000). A Mexican non-governmental organization called Afluentes took the lead in developing both of these materials. Although Afluentes specifically designed the materials for use in rural, *mestizo* communities, they are used more broadly in IMSS-Oportunidades. Indeed, in his brief introduction to the *Los caminos de la vida* manual, the then director of IMSS-Oportunidades, Javier Cabral Soto asserts:

> One of the key characteristics of this manual is that its possibilities are not limited to specific groups; the contents and exercises can be used as complementary elements of educational programs that promote health and the prevention of harms. [In Rodriguez and Mayen 2000:7]

Particularly when used in these broader contexts, personnel play a crucial role in interpreting the meaning of the materials.

resemble those the researchers articulated in their report on the study findings. Specifically, they depict older adults and men as agents who impose cultural conformity on women and youth to their detriment. As a symbol of cultural difference, arranged marriages effectively condense a reading of culture as an imposition that elders impose.

In the discussion following the film, the resident physician asked the group members whether they knew anyone who believed that contraceptives are dangerous, like the father portrayed in the film. In doing so, she incorporated the group members into an educated 'us' that she contrasted with their culturally-embedded older adult family members. Moreover, when participants affirmed, the doctor pleaded with them to help by educating these misinformed villagers. I examine how realignments such as these are influencing Verdean social life in my analysis of culture in Pueblo Verde later in the dissertation.

The program materials and providers iterated one of the most historically entrenched constructions of indigeneity in these sessions: the idea that indigenousness equals ignorance, and that both are the antipode of modern reason. In fact, personnel repeatedly described culture as a hindrance to indigenous peoples' ability to "understand" the need to adopt the practices the Program advocates. For example, when I asked Sylvia, the primary clinic nurse, whether she encountered barriers to her work, she identified *costumbres arriagadas,* or deeply-rooted customs. She replied,

> ...customs – some deeply-rooted ones, like for example people who say, 'I can't make a chimney because my house is too small.' It isn't that they can't; it's that they're *accustomed.*

Personnel working in different capacities in the Program repeatedly conveyed this notion that *la cultura arraigada,* the deeply-rooted culture, impedes Program efforts. In one

instance, a regional supervisor conveyed these sentiments along with frustration and

disbelief as he reflected on people's reticence to adopt the practices the Program

promotes. He claimed,

> You can tell people to stop drinking *atole* [a corn-based drink], but they aren't going to.
> Same with the *cuetes* [fireworks] that people use at *fiestas*. People have burned to death
> from them! You can suggest ways of making their use safer, but you can't make people
> get rid of things that are part of the cultural rootedness.

As programmers and providers drew from these assumptions to incorporate symbols of

ignorant culturally embedded villagers into their Human Development training, these

representations served as symbols of antipathy that demonstrate for youth how not to be.

Gender, culture and justice: The disempowered indigenous woman

A key figure that recurs consistently throughout Human Development training is

the wounded and disempowered woman. For example, one of the scenarios in the

Caminos de la vida video portrays a young woman who becomes pregnant shortly after

marrying, and barely survives childbirth. Afterward, the midwife tells her that she is too

young to have babies, and that she should wait before having another. In the discussion

following the video, one of the adolescents in the group noted that one of the points of the

video is that women should not have children before 25 years of age. The doctor

supported her observation, affirming that the ideal age to have children is from 25 to 35.

Moreover, she informed the group that having children in close succession is bad for

women, and that parents should space their children at least two years apart. The nurse

made a similar claim in the session on gender and health. She reported that having many

children is bad for women, and that having children in close succession harms women

because it fails to provide sufficient time for the uterus to shrink back to size between pregnancies.

This figure of the wounded woman echoes the depictions of gender presented in the findings of the investigation into culture and reproduction that I examined above. Patriarchy causes this symbolic woman's ailments. In particular, careless and callous men harm her by imposing their desires for large families on her without concern for her well-being or the well-being of any others. To make matters ever worse, this woman's lifelong experience of subjection renders her blind to her own oppression.

IMSS-Oportunidades programmers and service providers deploy this figure in multiple ways in the pursuit of multiple ends. In one particularly salient formulation, when integrated into the substance of adolescent training, the disempowered woman symbolizes indigeneity and the opposite of modern desires. For example, in the gender and health session examined above, the nurse cited men in a neighboring community who refused to allow women to use contraceptives as a symbol of indigenous cultural alterity. This impotent, violated, encultured subject stands in contradistinction to the modern self-directing subject that young women should aspire to be. When used in this way, the symbol of the disempowered woman condenses a particular reading and appraisal of certain practices and subjects – that is, large families and subordinated women – as negative markers of local distinction. Thus, the figure of the disempowered woman demonstrates to youth who and how *not* to be.

This figure imbues the family planning agenda with a moral cause, one that training in gender equity best symbolizes. Nonetheless, training in gender equity is a tool designed to facilitate the achievement of the Program's objectives. Accordingly, the

extent to which strategies for empowering women contribute to particular program

objectives of changing behaviors determines the bounds of concern for gender equity.

Adriana, a Verdean clinic nurse, referenced this limit during an interview. She remarked,

> Adriana: ... the woman is very discriminated against here – in every way. The woman is very rejected in all aspects. And especially when they live with their husbands. They think that the husband has to give the final word, although she can really do it. I hope that [the women] learn to decide for themselves, learn to make decisions about their own bodies, that husbands no longer manipulate [wives], and that he is no longer deciding for her. Because, I'm talking here about contraceptive methods because here the people like to wait for the final decision of the husband. For example, in family planning, if the husband says that the woman is not going to protect herself from having more children, and the woman, she doesn't want any more children, but he says yes, she also says yes! Women need to protect themselves to take care of their own bodies; they must not wait for the man's word, because if they continuing doing that, we are going to be very bad off. Very bad economically and socially, because bringing children into the world – I think that people must not bring children into the world just to bring them. [Children] need the necessary care so they can grow and can have a good education... There is so much *machismo,* and machismo does not permit women to develop as, as women.
> H.D.: You work with contraceptive methods, but, do you work more broadly in promoting women's ability to make their own decisions?
> Adriana: That they learn family planning. That is the intention.
> H.D.: Also, that women have more power?
> Adriana: Yes, that they have, that they feel – how can I put it? – that they have the capacity to decide for themselves.

Adriana clearly articulated how fertility reduction marks the periphery of the Program's

concern with women's empowerment.

In fact, while programmers have drawn from the links they established between

fertility and patriarchy to *challenge* gender inequalities while working with adolescents,

in other instances, these same links provide the justification for efforts to *channel*

women's disempowerment so it contributes to program aims. That is, programmers and

providers appeal to men's control over women's fertility and attempt to harness this

control to their efforts to reduce family size. This is evident in the first family planning

scenario from the *Caminos de la vida* video that I discussed above, in which the older

men go to the clinic to settle their dispute about the detrimental health consequences of

contraceptives. In this case, the doctor borrows the symbolism of planting to communicate why pregnancies in rapid secession negatively influence women's health. He asserts that "women are like the soil," which yields small fruits when sown year after year. The doctor thus appeals to the men not to 'plant so many seeds.' In a similar vein, in the discussion that followed, the resident doctor asserted that men should show their love for their wives by delaying and spacing out pregnancies.

This kind of complicity and collusion with men's control over women's fertility casts a shadow over the gender commitments of the program. Moreover, programmers' efforts to strike up patriarchal collusions to achieve their objectives to lower the fertility of especially encultured women attest to the divergences between how these women and youth encounter the program. In contrast to their adolescent counterparts, the Program deploys much more overt carrot-and-stick forms of coercion while working with these subjects. Furthermore, programmers employ these divergent tactics of impulsion to press youth and women to occupy very different places and fulfill very different roles in the nation. Youth will stake out the future development of the nation by continually striving toward self-improvement. Adult women, on the other hand, will carry out much of the labor needed to meet the nutritional and health needs of their families, a task that the neoliberal dismantling of social services makes more burdensome.

The Program integrates adult women into this particular role by designating female head of households as *titulares,* or official beneficiaries of the Program. As such, they must fulfill key *coresponsabilidades* to maintain their and their families' access to these benefits. Most importantly, they must attend monthly training sessions in which they acquire information and skills aimed at strengthening their ability to meet the

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nutritional and health needs of their families. The thirty-five topics providers address in

titulares' educational sessions include themes related to basic hygiene, nutrition, illness,

pregnancy, caring for young children, and the ubiquitous fertility regulation. Adriana, the

clinic nurse, explained the salience of women's familial commitment for the Program as

follows:

> Generally the women receive the talks because they are the ones who are the heart of the
> family and the woman is the one who cares for the children and she is the one who looks
> out for the wellbeing of the family, she is the one who controls the money in the house.
> That's why there is a focus on the woman, because she watches out for everyone.

That is, Oportunidades is designed to harness older women's familial commitment – the

same commitment that authors of the report on the findings of the indigenous culture and

reproduction investigation construed as pathological codependency – to national

development goals. This effort contrasts starkly with the program's repeated claims of

concern for and commitment to these women's empowerment.

Moreover, clinic personnel coerce *titulares* into carrying out varied activities by

threatening to withhold the financial assistance they receive from the Program.

Technically, *titulares' coresponsabilidades* consist of clinic health consults and monthly

educational sessions: upon acquiring three *faltas,* or absences, they lose Program benefits.

Nonetheless, clinic personnel often threatened participants with *faltas* if they failed to

comply with other clinic aims. For example, when the clinic held a vaccination

campaign, the staff informed the *titulares* during their educational sessions that they must

participate in the parade the clinic held to alert the community of the event, informing

each group where they needed to assemble for the event. In addition, the clinic staff

informed them that all of them, except pregnant women, must submit themselves to

vaccination. Similarly, when Program supervisors communicated to clinic service

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providers that all young pregnant women needed to undergo HIV/AIDS screening, the providers simply informed young pregnant Oportunidades recipients that they must attend the clinic – that very day – and submit to an HIV test. In another instance, when Program supervisors imposed numerical targets upon the clinic staff for administering cervical cancer screenings to villagers, the staff informed *titulares* that they were required to attend the clinic and undergo cancer screenings on the clinic's 'reproductive health day'. Clinic staff also coerced Oportunidades recipients to take their animals to the clinic's rabies vaccine campaign.[20]

This coerciveness extended beyond the clinic. For example, the trainer leading the Human Development workshop for Rural Health Assistants advised participants to hold a meeting with parents of adolescents upon returning to their communities, to inform them that they were going to be holding Human Development training sessions with adolescents. When some of the Assistants raised concerns that parents would not be willing to attend, the leader asserted that *Oportunidades* families must attend, or they may get an absence marked on their cards.[21] In addition, in Pueblo Verde, all of the *titulares* were 'required' to meet in the center of the community once a month to undertake a community-wide cleaning. A conflict arose when the Rural Health Assistant reported to her supervisors that the clinic staff was threatening the *titulares* with *faltas* if they failed to carry out the cleaning. Nonetheless, the supervisors did not force the clinic to stop the forced cleaning. Instead, the municipal government conspired with the clinic

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[20] The primary clinic nurse who coerced *titulares'* participation did not take her family's own puppy for a vaccination. Her failure to do so hints at the important influence of Program supervisors' pressure on service providers to meet targets. That is, her eagerness to vaccinate dogs was a reflection of supervisors' pressure to meet targets, rather than her concerns about rabies posing a threat to health. Similarly, when she considered undergoing an HIV test, she reported that she would travel to a medical facility to do so because the tests they used in the clinic were inadequate.

[21] In fact, based on her comment, I wrongly understood that Oportunidades youth were required to attend the Human Development course.

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staff to legislate the cleaning under local law. In a striking extension of this coercive logic, the Municipal President threatened to intervene with the *titulares'* federally provided assistance if they failed to carry out the monthly cleaning. Thus, like Oportunidades, the municipal government has strategized to harness *titulares'* commitment to ensuring the well-being of their families toward municipal 'development' goals.

The coercive logic mirrors the fundamental logic of the Program. Yet, an expansion of this carrot-and-stick coercive logic is not evident in interventions with other Program recipients. Service providers' recurring recourse to these forms of coercion with *titulares* corresponds with Program designers' calculations of the unique ways in which these recipients' victimization positions them to contribute to development, in combination with their assumptions that *titulares* are engaged in culture in a way that impedes their ability to "understand".

Conclusions

The examination of formulations of indigenous culture in IMSS-Oportunidades that I have undertaken in this chapter does not provide evidence to support recent claims of a multicultural shift in Mexico. Nonetheless, it does indicate important shifts in perspectives on the salience and significance of indigenousness. By analyzing these shifts in relation to new development strategies that have been designed in the context of neoliberal reform, this chapter offers insights into neoliberal incarnations of culture.

Programmers construed indigenous culture as a source of psychological pathology as they devised new psychologically-based development tactics for teaching youth how

to become the 'self-governing' and 'self-enterprising' subjects of neoliberal governmentalities (Lemke 2001). Through Human Development training, IMSS-Oportunidades Program designers seek to reorient youth's subjectivities in ways that lead youth to adopt the behaviors they promote voluntarily. Indeed, participants reported that they found the sessions useful because they learned information that would help them make choices in the future. The encultured subject, the antipode of modernity, figures importantly in these efforts. Programmers and providers uphold the ignorant, harmed, disempowered woman as a symbol of who not to be. Later in the dissertation, I analyze how this dimension of IMSS-Oportunidades subject-making shapes relationships among villagers.

In synthesizing Michel Foucault's perspectives on neoliberal governmentality, Thomas Lemke (2001:10) describes the diminishing place of concerns with pathology as the logic of the market expands and comes to encompass the totality of the social realm. The neoliberal subject is calculating, not pathological. Nonetheless, in this analysis of how 'culture' has influenced shifts towards neoliberal modalities of governance within Mexican development, I have observed how programmers construed culture as pathology. This is the pathology of those who fail to "understand" how to calculate, or, read in a different way, the pathology of those who refuse to calculate. These pathologized culture-bearers lie beyond the bounds of self-governance. Barbara Cruikshank (1999:4) notes that this transgression prompts the ends democratic modes of rule:

> It is in those cases where individuals do not act in their own self-interest or appear indifferent to their own development as full-fledged citizens that the limit of the liberal state at the threshold of individual rights, liberty, and pursuits must be crossed. [1999:4]

Accordingly, IMSS-Oportunidades programmers and providers utilize more outright

carrot and stick modes of coercion with these subjects. At the same time, programmers

require encultured subjects to fulfill distinct roles. *Titulares* are tasked with fulfilling

greater social and health responsibilities at a time that the has recoiled from these

functions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CULTURE AND POWER IN MIXTEC REVITALIZATION

Mixtec revitalizationists view contemporary Mixtec culture and language as reflecting and contributing to a distinctive Mixtec cultural orientation. Moreover, they view them as vestiges of a common history that belie the fragmented and extremely localized identities of Mixtec communities. Revitalizationists cite the rule of King Eight Deer during the eleventh century as evidence of the salience of Mixtec peoplehood in history. The Mixtec King incorporated the Mixteca Alta and Mixteca Baja regions into the Kingdom of Tututepec during this period, thereby bringing Mixtec people together under one leader (Jansen 2001; Ojeda Díaz 2002). In recalling this Golden Age of Mixtec peoplehood, the revitalizationist Balduino Flores y Flores (2002:100) cites the words of a Mixtec scholar, López Ramos, to marvel at how people in Mixtec communities have forgotten their noble essence:

> ...they have forgotten that they formed part of a grand nation of ancient America... As a result, the traveler who accidentally travels by the dusty Mixtec roads cannot discover there in the land but only a fleeting shadow of the majestic past which occasionally encloses this forgotten region.

In their efforts to redress this situation, revitalizationists have focused on reestablishing Mixtec peoplehood as a precursor for enabling Mixtec people to identify and defend their common interests. Juan Julián Caballero, a leading revitalizationist, grounds these efforts in a deep history as he asserts,

> ...We must begin by reconstructing the autonomy and the unity of the Mixtec which in one moment of prehispanic history the legendary Ocho Venado 'Garra de Tigre' tried to consolidate. [Juan Julián Caballero 1998a:438]

Moreover, he explains that promoting Mixtec culture, language and identity is necessary

in order to facilitate the empowerment of the Mixtec people, as he reasons,

> In the context of the discussion of autonomy and self-determination of indigenous
> pueblos, is it possible to propose Mixtec autonomy when the communities and the
> municipalities are dispersed, when the Ñuu Savi territory is located in three federal
> entities, conflicts over land between communities have not been resolved, there are
> numerous dialectical variations, there are other indigenous groups with distinct cultures
> within the Mixtec zone…, the deterioration in identity is growing as a result of migration
> and other influences? To propose today the autonomy of the Mixtec *pueblo* demands on
> one end a resignification of our own spaces: territory, language, culture, justice, history,
> etcetera, and on the other end undertaking a discussion with those who don't know or
> understand this reality so that they respect the difference. [1998:437]

Revitalizationists address these dual demands through their collective efforts by

publishing works on Mixtec culture and history for Mixtecs and non-Mixtecs alike in the

CID Ñuu Savi, and promoting Mixtec identity to Mixtec people through language

training via the Ve'e Tu'un Savi.

This chapter examines how revitalizationists have articulated Mixtec culture in

their efforts to define and bring into being a distinct utopian imaginary. I begin by

examining the facets of Mixtec culture revitalizationists highlight in their written works

below, and how they valorize these symbols of alterity as they link them to an alternative

modern project. Thereafter, I examine the conceptions of Mixtecness revitalizationists

employ as they carry out their efforts to realize this project.

Mixtec culture as communalism

Revitalizationists have addressed a wide diversity of themes in their many

published works. Notwithstanding this diversity, a common emphasis on communalism

as a distinctive and valuable Mixtec cultural foundation emerges from these works.

Revitalizationists advance a critique of the isolationism and alienation of mainstream

development approaches as they describe the superiority of communalism, and suggest that a Mixtec culture-based alternative utopian model of the future is grounded in a more just form of sociality. Thus, Marcos Cruz Bautista identifies communality as an 'orienting value' of all Mixtec values (2004a:75), and contends that while these values contribute to individual wellbeing, the "pseudo values" or "disvalues" that predominate among non-indigenous people lead to alienation and human commodification (2004a:53-4).

Ignacio Ortiz Cruz, a Mixtec philosopher who co-initiated and now serves as director of the Mixtec revitalization journal *Tu'un Savi: Palabra de la Lluvia* (The Mixtec Word), has developed more in-depth and nuanced analyses of communalism in a series of articles analyzing Mixtec sociality. Ortiz Cruz observes that Western societies reward individual experience while Mixtec communities reward service to community, and contends that these different reward systems correspond with distinctive Mixtec and Western worldviews. In one essay, he identifies solidarity as a foundation of Mixtec sociality that diverges from the competitive foundations of Western sociality. He explains,

> ... At its foundation, [solidarity] deals with individual progress and not individual competition. The individual must struggle to get ahead, not through competition, but through collaboration: improvement – collaboration vs. improvement – competition. Exacerbated individualism or selfishness will only have a relative place in our worldview as a foundation for communality, in comparison with the Western individualist worldview, in which it has more possibilities because it is innate. [Ortiz Cruz 2003:15]

Moreover, Ortiz Cruz observes that Mixtec sociality rewards service to community, while Western sociality rewards knowledge. He thus concludes that communality constitutes an organizing foundation for Mixtec social life. He states,

> For the Western world, a wise person is one who has experience and knowledge; but for
> the Mixtec world, the wise person would be one who also has served the community
> efficiently and honestly, reaffirming in this way the feeling of communality that matches
> his worldview. Precisely because of this, the basis of thought and action is fundamentally
> that which is called communality, that is, all that is related with communal life,
> communal power, the communal *fiesta*. [Ibid.]

In accordance with this primacy of communalism, Ortiz Cruz identifies 'helping each other', is "the greatest expression of [Mixtec] moral practice" (2004b:16). In contrast with IMSS analysts' contentions that individuals are forced to forgo their individual interests to help others in indigenous communities, Ortiz Cruz suggests that helping others is a distinctive expression of Mixtec selfhood. He reports,

> [Helping each other] does not force the individual nor subject the individual to sanctions
> on the part of the community. ... We do not think that we will recuperate what we give,
> we do not even keep an account; it is a voluntary thing [...] it is spontaneous [...] an
> expression of good will as is our custom [...] it is helping a brother of the people. [Ortiz
> Cruz 2004b: 16]

He also challenges the notion that communalism conflicts with individual well-being, and asserts that individual interests resonate with community interests within communal sociality. He asserts,

> [Solidarity] suggests collaboration, not competition; one is an individual of the
> community, not an individual against the community; I am me for the community and the
> community is for me; planet earth is not an arena of everyone against everyone, but a
> house for all... [Ortiz Cruz 2004a:18]

For his part, Juan Julián Caballero (2002) highlights the importance of work in Mixtec socialization as a foundation for this distinctive and more just communal sociality. Following this work, Marcos Cruz Bautista (2004a) has developed a similar analysis in his Masters thesis. Julián Caballero contends that Mixtec communalism provides a more just foundation for establishing hierarchy than its Western counterpart,

as it enables Mixtec community members to place one another 'exactly where they

deserve to be' based on their contribution to the community. He argues,

> To know how to work responsibly and honestly does not require demanding recognition
> from others, as the society observes who carries out their obligations and who does not.
> One way of bestowing this recognition is by assigning each person their own place,
> exactly where they deserve to be. An act of this recognition is the giving of community
> *cargos* that are assigned in community assemblies, which are exactly what one deserves.
> That is, beginning from the recognition of fulfillment of domestic and community work,
> one gains access to political participation. [2002:162]

Thus, although Mixtec foundations for sociality sustain hierarchical relations as do their

Western counterparts, revitalizationists contend that the communal values Mixtec people

use to distribute personal and political power among community members make this form

of sociality more just.

Education

Revitalizationists have directed much attention to *indigenista* educational efforts

in explaining the forces that have led and continue to lead Mixtec people to reject Mixtec

identity. For example, Gabriel Caballero Morales, a founding member of the Ve'e Tu'un

Savi, argues,

> This racist and exclusionary policy extremely damaged the self-esteem and the
> conscience of the Ñuu Savi, as such, and because of this – and with reason – many do not
> want to know about the language and the culture, so they do not continue suffering this
> social inequality which still is present in our days. [N.d.:2]

For his part, Juan Julián Caballero has drawn from personal experience and ethnographic

research in his natal community and another Mixtec community to publish multiple

critiques of *indigenismo* (1982, 1989, 2002). In these works, he reports that *indigenista*

teachers banned the use of Mixtec not only among youth, but also by adults. They also

prohibited the practice of traditional medicine, the donning of traditional clothing and

other practices perceived as contrary to the modern Mexican nation *indigenista* teachers were charged with realizing (1989:43). Moreover, Julián Caballero contends that the Mexican educational system continues to lead indigenous people to reject indigenous identities, implicating in particular the Western cultural perspectives and values embedded in the curriculum. [Marcos Cruz Bautista (2004a) also wages this critique.] Consequently, Juan Julián Caballero notes that indigenous people must hide markers of indigeneity in educational contexts to avoid humiliation (1998b:101,103; 1989). He concludes that, as a result of this educational bias, most professionals learn to reject Mixtec culture during their training, and that these teachers, doctors, anthropologists, agronomists and other professionals contribute, in turn, to the rejection of Mixtec culture in communities.

In response to these concerns, revitalizationists have focused their efforts to combat the denigration of Mixtec identity and promote a pan-Mixtec identity on educational reform, especially Mixtec language instruction. Juan Julian Caballero reports that by promoting the use of indigenous languages in schools in indigenous communities, they aim to transform education from a vehicle that denigrates Mixtec identity to an institution that promotes it. He explains,

> Until today, the denigration that the Mixtec language and culture have suffered in school have [led to] the rejection of Mixtec values and traditions. As a result, children begin to deny their identity and the culture of their parents. In this sense, it has become extremely important for the school system to facilitate and promote the use of the maternal language for boys and girls. [2002:166]

As revitalizationists promote the use of the Mixtec language in schools, they fight these tendencies for schools to contribute to the denigration and fracturing of Mixtec identity by enforcing the adoption of the Spanish language.

The linguistic focus has an additional, more transcendental salience: Revitalizationists intend to use the written language as a foundation for reestablishing 'the autonomy and the unity of the Mixtec people which in one moment of prehispanic history Ocho Venado tried to consolidate', as Juan Julián Caballero describes their aim in the quote above (1998a:438). In part, revitalizationists have prioritized the linguistic project because they anticipate that the standardized written language will facilitate better communication among the Mixtec people, enabling communication across existing dialectical boundaries. In doing so, the language project will help them transcend some of the historical divides that the imposition of localized political structures during colonial times initiated (Julián Caballero 1998a:439). Importantly, revitalizationists perceive the language as inhering a Mixtec cultural essence that will bring Mixtec people together in a uniquely Mixtec cultural frame. Juan Julián Caballero (2001b:8) cites the words of a Mixe linguistic revitalizationist, Leopoldo Valiñas Coalla, to convey this elemental importance. Valiñas (1983:8-9) asserts,

> This alphabet must be seen not as a bunch of letters that would be the solution (to who knows what problem), but as a holistic graphic system of socialized expression that permits ethnic identification and ethnic conscientization. This alphabet must be considered as a weapon of defense and consolidation of ethnicity.

In short, Juan Julián Caballero asserts that in revitalizing the language, they aim to

> ...recuperate the sense of belonging to a territory with its own history, culture and language, leaving aside the territorial, political and linguistic barriers reinforced from outside since over five centuries ago. [2001b:7]

Thus, he describes the Mixtec linguistic project as entailing a "politics of autonomous vindication of the Mixtec *pueblo*." (2001b:9)

While revitalizationists organize their efforts to conduct research on Mixtec culture and publish their findings through the CID Ñuu Savi, they direct most of their

energies for realizing this vision towards the linguistic project through the Ve'e Tu'un

Savi. The organization has established the following priorities:

> To standardize the writing, systematize the study of the language from its phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantical and lexicographical aspects, (...) To contribute to defining language policy at the national, state and regional levels. To propose that the Mixtec language is included in the curricula of schools of different levels that function in the region, and (...) that the [Ve'e Tu'un Savi] is the organization that revises and determines the criteria for elaborating texts such as grammatical, vocabulary, dictionaries and literature in this language, in addition to promoting a policy for developing the language throughout the Mixteca. [Academy de la Lengua Mixteca 1998, quoted in Nakamura 2000:156]

The Ve'e Tu'un Savi works on two primary fronts: first, revitalizationists work with one another to devise priorities and elaborate a universalized Mixtec alphabet and methodology for teaching the language in annual congresses; second, they train teachers in this knowledge in workshops. They occasionally work on a third front, providing workshops to other groups. Below, I draw from my observations of this third front to analyze how revitalizationists build community through linguistic analysis. Although this particular context diverged from those of teacher workshops and congresses, I focus here on the details of the linguistic analysis strategy that revitalizationists utilize in their work on all of these fronts.

Establishing commonality through difference via linguistic analysis

Although revitalizationists carry out most of their efforts to promote the language in workshops with primary school teachers, they have also occasionally provided training to communities in response to their requests, as well as to the public. Priests sympathetic to revitalization goals have facilitated at least some of the programs that have not been linked to the formal educational system, organizing them through the Catholic Church. I

attended a session for one of these in November of 2004, a Diplomado in the Mixtec language. Participants traveled from diverse regions of the state to a monastery in the town of Teposcolula for two days each month to participate in the Diplomado. Most of the approximately forty participants were catechists from Mixtec-speaking municipalities. During the year-long course, they studied the Mixtec orthography revitalizationists are developing, and they would receive a formal certification of their training upon finishing.

I had communicated with the revitalizationist teaching the course a couple of times about attending, and he had agreed. Later, when I called to confirm my attendance, he was unsure about whether it would be proper for me to participate, and informed me that he would need to confirm it with the group. His concerns reflected problems that had emerged when a foreign researcher from the Summer Language Institute attempted to participate in a community workshop – the participants forced him to leave.[22] Thus, the instructor suggested I attend the Sunday session in order to give him the opportunity to gain permission from the group. I agreed to arrive with the possibility that I may not be permitted to observe.

I arrived just before 9:00 on the Sunday of the November session as the instructor indicated. He introduced me to a couple of people involved in organizing the course and then showed me to the classroom. The tables were organized in a semi-circle to enable participants to see him at the blackboard in the front of the room as well as one another. He gestured for me to sit in a chair he had pulled chair back a couple of feet back from the tables, and I sat with the others who were waiting for the class to begin. While the

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[22] The Summer Language Institute has been widely critiqued in Mexico as evidence of foreign colonization. Nonetheless, members of the Institute have collaborated with revitalizationists and contributed to the Ve'e Tu'un Savi congresses (Nakamura 2000:149-50).

last of the students were trickling in, a priest played songs on his guitar. His simple white cotton pants and shirt communicated his commitment to Mixtec revitalization, contrasting with the clerical attire typically worn by Catholic priests. I introduced myself to the people sitting next to me, who were young adults in their twenties and thirties. Most of the participants seemed to fall into this age group, although there were also several men who I guessed were in their fifties. I also noted a rarity within revitalization events and most other events in the region – there were equal numbers of men and women participants.

The instructor initiated the session and introduced me soon after. He took care to establish clearly to me and the others my unique status as a visitor who would not be participating in the course, something he also indicated when he signaled a place for me to sit apart from the group. Nonetheless, shortly after the class began the students sitting next to me gestured for me to join them at the table. Later, as materials were circulated, they invited me to share their materials to read along with the group exercises they were carrying out.

The instructor had asked them to write an account from their community in their dialect of the language, and the first activity was dedicated to analyzing their work. One by one, the participants took the accounts they had written on oversized sheets of paper to the front of the room and taped them to the blackboard. Although each participant had applied the universalized alphabet to write their account, many of the accounts were written in markedly divergent dialectical forms. The instructor guided each one in a linguistic analysis, signaling verbs, subjects and pronouns. The analysis demonstrated to participants that a common grammatical structure connected them linguistically, despite

the dialectical differences. In his descriptions of educational workshops, Mutsuo Nakamura (2000:166-176) describes the same teaching method, in which instructors ask participants to contribute a word or account from their particular community and then the group analyzes it in a way that lays bare a common underlying structure. This approach teaches teachers and others how to understand and work with the dialectical differences they encounter inside and outside of the classroom. It also serves as a powerful metaphor for the underlying forces that revitalizationists contend link participants despite their distance.

After analyzing participants' accounts in the Diplomado, the instructor led a discussion and analysis of the sacred ceremonial language used by elders. He asked participants for the terms they use for knowledgeable elders, and they gave at least seven different terms, including *tonnisa'nu, racha'nu, teje'nu, tenija'nu, tanisa'nu, tenisa'nu*, and *tene'nu*. As he had done with the accounts, he took care to write out the differences in words among participants and signal the underlying structural tendencies that determined the differences. The instructor focused on two examples to examine this sacred ceremonial language: one in which an elder was asking for a couple to be their child's godparents, and another in which an emissary was requesting a woman's hand in marriage from her parents. These two examples have significance as practices all of the participants appear to have familiarity with in their own communities, while not being recognized as part of modern *mestizo* society. The jokes that arose as people talked about the case of asking for a bride evidenced how it made a particularly good foundation for building a sense of shared experience. One participant quipped, "Oh, what a great offer, but I have to talk with her family about it." Another offered, "Why don't you come back

in like five years and I'll have an answer!" At the same time, the instructor grounded the

discussion in a sense of shared history. He did so as he discussed the sacred language

that seems to be disappearing, and linked this, in turn, to pre-colonial Mixtec history.

Casual observers of dialectical differences in the Mixtec language are typically

struck by the distance they reference. In fact, dialectical differences preclude some

neighboring communities from communicating with one another in the Mixtec language.

These circumstances convey separation in history and continue to contribute to division

in the present. Thus, work focusing on dialectical differences could easily contribute to a

sense of distance. In this case, however, the instructor strengthened a sense of

commonality through his particular approach to linguistic analysis. He did so by

grounding his discussion in the particularities of participants' everyday experiences,

focusing on experiences that participants share with one another and that are widely

perceived as beyond the boundaries of *mestizo* modernity. The instructor's analysis of

underlying linguistic structures and his discussion of a common Mixtec experience in

history strengthened this commonality.

Brotherhood and its limits

When revitalizationists decided to create the Ve'e Tu'un Savi, they debated

whether they should hinge membership in the organization on political commitments or

linguistic skills. Many professionals in communities have the skills required to

contribute to the linguistic project. Nonetheless, as my overview of revitalizationists'

perspectives on education above suggests, they perceive these professionals' educational

experience to taint their orientations and lead them to counter the political aims of the

movement. Juan Julian Caballero, in particular, contends that most professionals'

attitudes contradict revitalization goals:

> These professionals' actions are underpinned by their rejection of their ethnicity... This attitude has contributed to the *disindianization* of others in their community: youth, adults and children, above all else. This sector of indigenous renegade professionals tend to be those who renounce participation in community development activities and they represent a danger when dealing with creating projects to revitalize indigenous cultures. [1998b:99]

In contrast to the negative orientations towards Mixtec culture Julián Caballero attributes

to professionals, he identifies a desire to defend Mixtec culture as one of the most

important prerequisites for contributing to the project. In this regard, he writes,

> The project of writing the Mixtec language system represents, in a certain way, the politics of autonomous vindication of the Mixtec *pueblo*. Members of this millennial *pueblo* slowly incorporate themselves into this project in different non-conformist tasks. Not easy tasks, they require an attitude of resistance and defense of everything Mixtec, in addition to a professional education, in agreement with a specific kind of project. [2003: 83]

Accordingly, Ubaldo Garcia Lopez, also a founding member of the CID Ñuu Savi and the

Ve'e Tu'un Savi, recounts that when a regional head of education mandated that bilingual

teachers attend the Ve'e Tu'un Savi's annual Congress, the organization's members

responded by restricting membership and prioritizing a commitment to the broader

Mixtec cultural revitalization project (Romero Frizzi 2003b: 231). Nonetheless, most

members of the organization are bilingual teachers most members are bilingual teachers

(ibid.), while most of those who occupy leadership roles have higher degrees, namely in

the fields of anthropology, linguistics and education.

Limiting membership in the Ve'e Tu'un Savi has shaped gender relations in the

organization. Men predominate in the priority setting and strategy defining fora of the

congresses. In part, the disparity reflects gender biases in the higher echelons of higher

education. In addition, the congresses take place over a period of days at sites that vary from year to year. They conflict with most women's responsibilities in the home, and husbands are typically otherwise reluctant to consent to their wives' attendance. Nonetheless, revitalizationists report that women constitute a significant proportion of participants in the workshops for bilingual primary school teachers, for which regional educational supervisors mandate attendance. Mutsuo Nakamura made the same observation in his dissertation study of Mixtec revitalization efforts, where he reports that most of the participants in the workshops he observed were women, and most were between twenty and thirty years old (2000:166-167).

Revitalizationists build a sense of commonality as they work in congresses and workshops by analyzing the particularities of participants' linguistic and everyday experience in ways that ground them in common cultural, historical and linguistic foundations. At the same time, differences in how they incorporate key symbols of Mixtec culture into these distinct contexts ultimately foment different degrees of togetherness and establish different kinds of power relations. At least in part, these differences reflect revitalizationists' estimations of divergences in how different groups of Mixtec people relate to Mixtec culture. Thus, revitalizationists have incorporated symbolic practices of communalism in ways that highlight egalitarian relations in their work with one another in the congresses, having established that those working in this arena share common political sensibilities. They have not integrated these symbolic practices into workshops with teachers, who they perceive as more likely to have adopted anti-Mixtec culture orientations during their educational training. Revitalizationists address barriers to the adoption of a Mixtec identity as they work with teachers in

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workshops, and draw from the authority and coercive powers of the state to press

teachers to teach the Mixtec language to their students. I examine these differences in

more detail below.

Embodying communalism in congresses

Revitalizationists meet in annual congresses to forge their work of analyzing the

language and devising a universal alphabet and orthographic system. Juan Julian

Caballero explains that the formalized revitalization organizations have an additional,

more transcendental significance, as they provide a space within which revitalizationists

have begun to delineate a distinctive utopia grounded in Mixtec culture. He reports,

> At this moment, the Ve'e Tu'un Savi as well as the CID-Ñuu Savi and other
> organizations constitute a space of reflection that has been emerging with the work of
> those who desire to contribute to the return of their own image to this millennial territory.
> In addition, it provides an excellent opportunity to discuss, analyze and propose what
> kind of society we want as Ñuu Savi. [Julián Caballero 2001a:95]

In this meeting space, participants of the Ve'e Tu'un Savi establish relationships with one

another grounded in symbolic practices of communalism, particularly sharing food and

lodging, and employing kin terms to refer to one another. These symbolic practices

emphasize alterity in their contrast with the individual emphasis prized within *mestizo*

modernity, while concomitantly emphasizing a particular dimension of this alterity that

revitalizationists have identified as inhering a potential to anchor a better kind of

modernity.

In Mixtec communities, people employ the symbolism of the family and the

intimate social relationships therein to create and sustain the particularly close social

bonds associated with communalism. Sharing food in communities is an important

practice associated with social proximity, as Juan Julián Caballero notes:

> When eating, some families follow the custom of everyone eating from the same plate, which symbolizes family union; it is not that they lack utensils, but the importance is the profound significance implied by eating together. When new marriages are formed, the couple must get used to sharing the same plate of food, water and the *tortilla*, that is, if it is the *tortilla*, the man as well as the woman must eat half and half; if they do so with enjoyment and happiness, it is a sign that they will understand each other very well... [2002:141]

Similarly, Marcos Cruz Bautista asserts that sharing food and sleeping quarters in Mixtec

communities produces a sense of solidarity and a collective orientation among Mixtec

people:

> Sons share a plate with their fathers and daughters with their mothers, and they live and sleep in the same room. From a young age, this makes the child feel accepted and feel comfortable sharing the same plate with other children in the house or in the community's *fiesta*. As a result, [notions] of solidarity are installed in children that in other spaces and times as adults they tend to practice in the name of solidarity. This is the origin of collective work: *tequio*, the *guetza* and mutual help. [2004a:48]

Revitalizationists adopt these practices of sharing meals and accommodations when they

meet for Congresses. They also adopt the practice of referring to one another using kin

terms, as Juan Julian Caballero describes,

> In our encounters and reencounters we address each other as *ñani* [brother] and *ku 'va* [sister] to indicate that despite the distance and the lack of awareness of the existence of the other, we share the same language, the same history, the same poverty, and the same process of colonization. [2001b:27, note 10]

In his reflections, Julián Caballero describes how these practices, by their particular

nature, promote and strengthen engagement by fomenting a sense of commonality. At

the same time, by structuring their engagements with one another according to these

symbols of communalism, revitalizationists reaffirm the salience of a facet of Mixtec

culture that they have held up as extremely significant because of its potential to anchor a

superior modern project. Thus, Juan Julián Caballero concludes that their "most significant [achievement] is the reencounter of the original Ñuu Savi as *ñani* [brother] and *ku'va* [sister]" (2001b: 4).

Power, authority and difference in Mixtec revitalization

At the time of the research, a leading revitalizationist estimated that they had trained between three and four hundred bilingual primary school teachers.[23] Typically, thirty to forty bilingual primary school teachers participate in the language workshops revitalizationists provide to teachers. Therein, over the course of three or four days, revitalizationists instruct the teachers on the Mixtec alphabet and how to use it to write the dialectical instantiations of the language where they work. Based on his interviews with a workshop leader, Mutsuo Nakamura (2000:153-155) reports that revitalizationists have devised a four-pronged approach for their workshops. First, they prompt participants to reflect on how they define their own identities, and Mixtec culture in relation to these identities, and to analyze the political processes that have shaped their self-conceptions. Next, they discuss the political importance of writing in the Mixtec language. Afterward, they distribute and discuss the basic alphabet they have devised. Finally, they carry out writing exercises in which they learn to employ the alphabet and orthographic rules to analyze dialectical variations and write them. This final work occupies most of participants' time and energy.

Juan Julian Caballero relates that these workshops, like the congresses, provide an important space for forging broader Mixtec vindication work. He writes,

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[23] Here I draw from my interviews with leading revitalizationists; revitalizationists' published interviews and essays; and Mutsuo Nakamura's dissertation research on Mixtec revitalization efforts (2000:166-176). I cite these published works where relevant.

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The reading-writing in Mixtec workshop (there have been about fifty in communities at time of writing) has converted into an excellent space for the discussion and analysis of different problems dealing with Mixtec identity. [It has also provided] the opportunity to propose new approaches for the development of Mixtec writing, not only linked to culture, but others of political and economic character in the region. [2001b:17]

Notwithstanding the parallel with the agenda-setting context of the congresses Julián Caballero implies, the contexts of learning revitalizationists establish in workshops and the kinds of relationships they establish therein diverge from those of the congresses. The divergences reflect revitalizationists' perceptions that teachers and other highly educated professionals adopt a negative orientation toward Mixtec culture through the educational process.

Consequently, in Mutsuo Nakamura's (2000:166-167) observations of workshops with teachers, he depicts the 'discussion and analysis of problems dealing with Mixtec identity' that Julián Caballero references as occurring within the confines of the hierarchical relationships created within the workshops. Nakamura reports that in the course of providing teachers with training in Mixtec linguistics, workshop leaders emphasized the importance of writing and speaking the Mixtec language, and taught workshop participants about the forces that lead them and others to reject Mixtec identity (ibid.). Revitalizationists' recourse to the threat of state power to press recalcitrant teachers to implement the Mixtec-language education they promote best evidences the distinctly hierarchical relations of the workshops, and their marked divergence from the communal-relations of the congresses. In this regard, one leading revitalizationist explained in an interview that he directs teachers' attention to specific legal precedents that oblige them to teach indigenous languages during workshops, including the *Ley*

Estatal de Educación (State Education Law) and the *Ley de Derechos de los Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas* (Indigenous Peoples and Communities Rights Law).

Revitalizationists' reliance on state channels of power and authority to force Mixtec people's participation in their linguistic efforts evidences relatively widespread opposition to these efforts. Above, I noted that revitalizationists criticize teachers for adopting derogatory perspectives on Mixtec culture through their educational training. For their part, however, teachers typically raise concerns about parental opposition to teaching the language. In fact, sporadic reports intermittently emerge of communities where angry parents have forced teachers attempting to teach the Mixtec language to leave. Many parents' opposition to Mixtec language education stems from their observations of how Mixtec cultural characteristics and lack of facility with *mestizo* practices and the Spanish language have impeded their efforts to access income generating activities while concurrently making them targets of poor treatment. In this context, many insist on Spanish language education as essential for preparing their children to access the best opportunities available.

Maria Elena Garcia (2005) has observed similar dynamics in her study of indigenous rights activism in Peru. She describes how activists working in non-governmental organizations that promote indigenous rights through educational reform often encounter opposition from parents. Like Mixtec revitalizationists, these activists regard parents' opposition to reform as evidence of false-consciousness, and they perceive differences in orientations towards utilizing indigenous language in the classroom as reflections of relatively corrupted and uncorrupted vantage points. Within this context, NGOs promoting multicultural education, like their Mixtec counterparts,

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draw on the power of the state to impose their views on reluctant community workers and indigenous families. Thus, García observes the paradox that "these efforts to help indigenous people 'chart their own course' often mean in practice that indigenous people must follow the course set by the state" (2005:113).

Garcia rejects the false consciousness explanation for these differences in perspectives, and instead examines how the different circumstances within which parents and activists estimate the utility of education produce these divergent perspectives. Understood in this way, parents' willingness to relinquish practices marked indigenous reflects their evaluation of how the denigration of these practices in wider society will impinge upon their children's opportunities, rather than conveying parents' own disdain for these practices. García's observations of the underlying dynamics that generate these conflicts affirm the ongoing need to change the attitudes and actions of those who use indigenousness as a basis for denying access to political power and economic resources. This work is more difficult and dangerous to carry out than work that places the burden of change on indigenous peoples. In this context, parents' objections to Mixtec language education constitute an important critique of the placement of the burden for change on indigenous people.

Conclusions

At the end of the Diplomado session I attended, I thanked the instructor for allowing me to attend, and remarked that I had been especially interested in observing because it was difficult for me to conceptualize how they conduct their work without seeing it. I was referring to my doubts about how they used a universal orthography to

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teach people to write divergent dialectical variations that in some cases revitalizationists

had never encountered or considered. Moreover, I wondered how they could do so in a

way that generated a sense of social proximity. In contrast, he understood my

uncertainties as emerging from the fundamental cultural differences between us, and

replied, "Well, yes, you wouldn't be able to understand because it isn't your culture.

They understand because it's their culture." His comments and the underlying

assumptions about cultural difference they convey correspond with Kay Warren's (1998)

characterization of Mayan revitalization efforts in Guatemala. Warren (1998:37)

observes,

> Mayanists assert there is a culturally specific indigenous way of knowing: a subject
> position no one else can occupy and a set of interests no one else has to defend.

This basic notion that fundamental or essential cultural differences differentiate people

into groups is the crux of anthropologists' critique of 'culture'.

Nonetheless, Joanne Rappaport (2005) has recently argued that scholars

mischaracterize indigenous activists' representations by labeling them essentialist. In her

investigation of indigenous rights activism in Colombia, Rappaport foregrounds how

people from diverse circumstances negotiate their differences as they work to advance the

rights of indigenous peoples. By privileging difference, she provides a unique

perspective on the diversity of contexts, perspectives and aims that indigenous activists

and their collaborators navigate in working towards goals that are at least

commeasurable, if not necessarily shared. She draws from her observations of the

complexities in how indigenous rights activists define insiderness and outsiderness to

argue that indigenous activists' representations are not essentialist. Her observations of

these complexities correspond with my own, though I disagree with her conclusion that

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this complexity challenges the designation of activists' cultural representations as essentialist.

When the Mixtec instructor quoted above suggested that as a non-Mixtec I could not understand their work, he conveyed a dichotomous understanding of Mixtec identity, presumed to be a primordial byproduct of socialization. His wariness about allowing me to participate in the workshop and his caution in delineating a space for me apart from the others when I did attend also conveyed these dichotomous, primordialist assumptions. Nonetheless, revitalizationists also perceive circumstances as shaping individuals' ability to appreciate the value of this Mixtec essence. These understandings combine to influence the multiple nodes revitalizationists perceive particular subjects as inhabiting in relation to Mixtec culture. These conceptions importantly influence revitalizationists' work with particular subjects and ultimately the implications of this work for different Mixtec villagers.

Revitalizationists perceive the women who carry out what they identify as women's "traditional" roles in social reproduction as most intimately engaged in culture, and as natural bearers and defenders of Mixtecness because of this work. One leading revitalizationist cited these "traditional" roles and the key role women play in ensuring the viability of Mixtec culture when I asked him to describe Mixtec cultural values. He asserted,

> A woman who is an authentic Mixtec woman takes care of her children from birth. She provides everything. She always carries her baby. She sleeps with the baby. The baby is always with her. From there the child acquires family love.

Moreover, when I asked him whether the family has an important or special role in Mixtec cultural revitalization efforts, he replied,

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> Yes, the family is the foundation for ensuring the continued reproduction of the culture. And the person who has the key, key role is the mom, because she motivates the child. The mom motivates the child to speak the language. She motivates him to do so. She is the one who continues broadening and ensuring for the development of the child's language. She teaches, evaluates, corrects. The mom is key. Then, siblings, the more the better. They ensure help.

Josefa Gonzales Ventura (1996), one of a small minority of women who have held leadership positions in formal Mixtec revitalization efforts, similarly describes Mixtec women as natural defenders of Mixtec culture.

These perceptions of how gender influences enculturedness hint at other criteria that revitalizationists identify as important influences on individuals' relationships with Mixtec culture. In addition to the concerns about formal educational experience that I discussed earlier in this chapter, revitalizationists identify migration as a key process influencing individuals' orientations toward Mixtec culture. These concerns about education and migration reflect revitalizationists' wariness of the educational system, *mestizo* lifeways and globalization as especially potent forces that denigrate and corrode indigenousness. Age-related differences in relationships to Mixtec culture reflect the influence of these forces. Thus, as Marcos Cruz Bautista (2004b:4) differentiates Mixtec people according to their orientations towards Mixtec identity, he singles out "adults, the elderly, women and some Mixtec professionals who practice the language and culture with their children and with the children of their *pueblo*" from those who "identify with the culture of the Other, the Spanish or English one." Despite these forces of differentiation, Cruz Bautista maintains that "*el ombligo recuerda*", the belly-button remembers. That is, Mixtec youth absorb the Mixtec essence through their connection with their mothers during socialization, and this essence remains even for individuals who deny it.

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In sum, revitalizationists employ multiple criteria to estimate the extent to which certain individuals bear and embrace Mixtec culture, estimations which they draw from to devise particular strategies for working with particular kinds of subjects. Thus, political orientations may facilitate or preclude individuals' participation in revitalization efforts despite their primordial links to Mixtec culture. I discussed above how revitalizationists have cautiously limited the participation of those perceived as not sharing their political objectives. The reverse is also true: non-Mixtec scholars committed to the goals of Mixtec cultural revitalization participate as members in the CID Ñuu Savi, and the Ve'e Tu'un Savi invites non-Mixtec collaborators to contribute to congresses.

Moreover, this chapter has examined how these assumptions about the political sensibilities of different groups of people and the nature of their links to Mixtec culture shapes the particular strategies revitalizationists utilize to integrate participants into revitalization efforts in different capacities. The symbolic practices revitalizationists utilize in the congresses to strengthen shared identification in Mixtec identity correspond well with their depictions of the more transcendental salience of Mixtec culture, as both emphasize commonality. In contrast, revitalizationists establish distinctly hierarchical and coercive relationships in working with individuals they perceive as unlikely to adopt the perspectives and practices they promote voluntarily. These relationships prove contradictory when juxtaposed with revitalizationists' key claim that commonality is the basis of Mixtec sociality. Within this comparison of different subjects' places in revitalization practice, the absence of a final group of subjects whose perceived natural links with Mixtec culture make them central to revitalization efforts is noteworthy. The

perceived natural culture bearers – those who Marcos Cruz Bautista identifies as "adults, the elderly [and] women" in the quote above – are conspicuously absent from revitalization practice. I examine this contradiction in detail while examining how revitalization efforts influence social life in the village in Chapter Nine. First, however, I turn to examine Pueblo Verde social life.

CHAPTER SIX: MOVEMENT AND MEANING IN PUEBLO VERDE

As I noted in Chapter Three, Pueblo Verde is a village of widespread short- and long-term migration. Women, especially those with limited formal education, predominate among those who remain in the village, as men, youth, and those with more extensive formal educational training pursue employment and educational opportunities elsewhere. The 'women who remain' undertake much of the work needed to maintain the social relations that ultimately link Verdeans who are present and absent together. This chapter examines these women's struggles to create continuity and foment sociality in the context of this widespread movement.

In the process, I analyze how the "historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning" that Tania Li (2000:151) identified as contextualizing, facilitating the emergence of, and informing ongoing articulations of indigeneities shape Verdean social dynamics. I observe that villagers have been positioned and have positioned themselves in different ways in relation to denigrations of indigenousness, and I argue that these differences produce an important social dynamic that shapes Verdean social life. The women who are most engaged in maintaining everyday social life tend be regarded as bearers of culture, and, accordingly, they suffer some of the poorest treatment meted out based on denigrations of indigenousness. Many of these women have strategized to protect themselves from poor treatment related to denigrations of indigenous identity by limiting their interactions with the *mestizos* who typically propagate them. Nonetheless, some villagers' adoption of negative orientations towards indigenousness frustrate these women's efforts, as villagers increasingly encounter these

denigrations within the community. I adopt the distinction between those who bear culture and those who wield culture to analyze this differential dissemination of 'culture' and the social dynamics it produces. I pursue this distinction in later chapters, as well, as a key dynamic in the politics of 'culture'.

Movement in Pueblo Verde

Pueblo Verdeans' diverse backgrounds frequently surprised me, as I encountered things, perspectives, attitudes and practices that conflicted with my expectations for an 'indigenous community'. For example, at a celebration held to mark the blessing of a new home, I found myself seated across from a thirteen year-old girl who was wearing a tee shirt that said "Porn Star". On another occasion, I encountered a young woman with bright red hair and an earring in her nose as I walked to the center of town during festivities for the municipal patron saint celebration. In addition to being antidotes for romantic notions that indigenous communities are isolated from the rest of the world, these incongruencies symbolized more subtle and widespread divergences in community members' everyday experiences, perspectives and practices. In large part, these differences reflect great and diverse flows of villagers to destinations near and far in pursuit of educational and economic opportunities.

In many ways, the flows of people shaping everyday life in Pueblo Verde resemble those John Monaghan observed twenty years ago in a rural Mixtec municipality called Santiago Nuyoo, which is also located in the Mixteca Alta region of Oaxaca. Monaghan described how the village emptied out in the mornings and came to life as people returned during the afternoons:

As I became familiar with the rhythm of daily life in Nuyoo, I came to realize that the emptiness of the town during the day was typical. Early in the morning, an hour or two before sunrise, the *Centro* empties out, as men, and later women who carry the day's food, go off to their gardens and fields. Only small children and two or three of the household's women stay behind, to prepare the evening meal and to carry out chores. Then, beginning about three in the afternoon, the *Centro* begins to fill up once again, as people return from the agricultural work. By late afternoon, there are people lounging in front of each household, children run in the streets, and young men and boys play basketball on the court next to the Nuyoo church. [1987:6]

Like Monaghan, I observed how many adults and young adults rose early to complete tasks outside of the community and returned in the late afternoon in Pueblo Verde, while many women remained in the community to complete work there. Villagers often described the activities structuring this rhythm in ways that resonated with Monaghan's observations in Nuyoo: men carry out the more arduous agricultural labor while women make their food and take it to them in the fields. Nonetheless, Verdeans' travels to diverse destinations to undertake varied activities for differing periods of time disrupt these orderly notions of the movements of everyday life, along with the assumptions about the gendered division of labor that underlie them.

Twenty out of the forty-five villagers age fifteen and older that I selected for a stratified random sample for in-depth interviews had migrated in their lifetime. In addition, thirty–four of the forty-five interviewees asserted that a direct family member had migrated, including a total of seventy-six immediate family members. They included one father, seven husbands, twenty siblings, twenty-eight sons, six daughters, and fourteen children of unspecified sex. Most former migrants and family members of migrants in the sample traveled to Mexico City (19), followed by the United States (11), Tijuana (7), Oaxaca City (7) and agricultural destinations in northern Mexico (6). While many informants did not indicate the sex of the migrating family member, those who did showed clear gender trends in migration, with thirty-six of forty-two migrants being men.

In addition, my census data reflects the predominance of men among migrants in the form of a diminishing percentage of men of working age in the village, as shown below.

Table 2. Gender distribution of villagers in census by age group (N=910)

Age Group	Female		Male		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
5-15	111	12	113	12	224	25
15-20	60	6	62	7	122	13
20-30	65	7	48	5	113	12
30-40	66	7	35	4	101	11
40-45	37	4	19	2	56	6
45-55	45	5	33	4	78	9
60-70	55	6	36	4	91	10
70+	49	5	24	3	73	8

Among the vast majority of community members who spend extended periods of time outside of the municipality in their efforts to generate a livelihood, vendors remain most engaged in village life. A few professionals (teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers) work in the municipality, and a few others work in regions close enough to enable them to commute daily. Nonetheless, most work in other communities. They commonly leave the municipality Sunday afternoons or early Monday mornings and return Friday afternoons. Young adults also frequently reside outside of the municipality during the week to pursue their education at the high school level and beyond.

In addition to these daily and weekly sojourns, villagers spend longer periods of time in more distant locations, and some establish themselves in other sites in Mexico and beyond more permanently. Most migrants travel to Mexico City. The majority of men working there have found employment in factories and as construction workers, while most women work as domestic servants. Numerous villagers have also developed

their professional careers there. Despite Mexico City migrants' distance, they maintain a central role in Pueblo Verde life not only through their informal relationships, but also through their more formalized contributions to the community and political life. In fact, a long time Mexico City resident held the position of municipal president during the time I conducted the research. His leadership position reflected the engagement of migrants in general, and Mexico City migrants in particular, in Pueblo Verde life.

Villagers also frequently migrate to destinations in northern Mexico and beyond. Many have spent time picking tomatoes and strawberries in the notorious large-scale agricultural businesses in the valley of San Quintín in northern Mexico. Some interviewees indicated that their entire families had traveled to take advantage of the contributions children make to piece work. While many informants reported having traveled for more limited periods, such as a few months or a year, a substantial Pueblo Verde community resides in the main destination in the region, Camalú. More recently, young women have found work in urban sites as domestic servants in the United States/Mexico border region, particularly Tijuana. Villagers also reside in the United States, where they have found employment in rural and urban settings throughout the country, especially in North Carolina, Minnesota, Florida, California and Washington.

Table 3. Villagers' income-generating activities (N=45)

Activity	#	%
Agricultural production	41	91
Sale of surplus production	34	76
Straw weaving	32	71
Oportunidades assistance	31	69
Agricultural laborers	18	40
Remittances from migration	17	38
Produce vending at regional markets	7	15
Silk spinning	6	13

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because informants
reported multiple income-generating activities.

In the absence of many community members, those who remain undertake varied

activities to generate a livelihood. Agricultural production is a key component of

livelihood strategies for almost all of those who remain in the community. Over ninety

percent of interviewees reported engaging in agricultural production, and seventy-six

percent indicated that they sell surplus at markets. Many villagers also purchase produce

and resell it at regional markets (fifteen percent of informants). Forty percent

occasionally work for pay as "*mozos*", or agricultural laborers on local farms, while two

people (out of forty-five) reported generating cash by plowing local fields with their

oxen. In addition, most families either weave straw (seventy-one percent) or spin silk

(thirteen percent) to generate income. Informants also reported a variety of less common

income generating strategies, including operating corn mills, selling tortillas, selling

prepared foods, working at a Tlaxiaco restaurant, performing music and professional

occupations. Most villagers also indicated receiving support from other sources, namely

Oportunidades (sixty-nine percent) and remittances from family members who have

migrated (thirty-eight percent).

The family I lived with during the research exemplifies the pervasiveness of movement in Pueblo Verde. My hosts, *na* Beatriz and *ta* Rodolfo, have nine adult children. The two oldest have established their homes and raised their own families close to their parents in the San Isidro barrio of Pueblo Verde. They combine a variety of agricultural and other activities to support their families.

After marrying, two of their daughters moved with their husbands to the urban destinations where their husbands found formal employment, and they raised their children. One of these two daughters, Estér, established a home with her professional husband and children in Oaxaca City, where she raised her family and worked as a seamstress. She travels occasionally to the village, and her siblings often visit her when traveling to the state capital. The other of these two daughters lives with her family in Mexico City and was estranged from her parents during the research period.

Five of Na Beatriz and Ta Rodolfo's adult children are professionals. The youngest lives in their household, although she stopped communicating with her parents during the research period after a conflict. She was lucky to find professional employment in the community, although she traveled on weekends to a distant school to complete her nursing training during most of the research period.

A second professional daughter, Mari, lives directly next to them. Mari's husband, Maclovio, works in a restaurant in Seattle, Washington. He returned for a couple of months during the research period. Mari and Maclovio held a baptism celebration for their children during his return, before he headed back to *inka ladu*, the other side. When I began the research, she had gotten permission for a temporary leave of absence from her teaching work based on her pregnancy and later her early

motherhood. She combined a variety of jobs to generate income to support herself and their children during this professional leave, including selling clothing in the weekly market, which required intermittent trips to the nearby state of Puebla to purchase items. At the end of her leave of absence, she faced the possibility of losing her teaching position if she did not return. Nonetheless, teaching meant rising early Monday mornings to travel to a distant community and residing there during the week. She initially took her youngest daughter with her, but the baby became ill, and Mari attributed it to the poor living conditions. Ultimately, she left the position.

The second of na Beatriz and ta Rodolfo's sons, Tomás, is also a teacher. He was lucky to find work in a school in the neighboring municipality, enabling him to commute daily. His wife, Luisa, is an administrator at a primary school in a community two hours away. Luisa is absent most of the time, because she works too far to commute daily. She leaves for work Sunday evenings or early Monday mornings, and returns Friday afternoons.

Andrea, a young single mother, is the third of the siblings who works in the educational system. She rents a room in the nearby city of Tlaxiaco. Nonetheless, during the week she, her son and a domestic helper live in the distant community where she teaches. They often return 'home' to her parents' house on weekends. Na Beatriz and ta Rodolfo's final daughter, Alejandra, lives and teaches in Tijuana with her husband and their two children. She returned to Pueblo Verde during the research period for her nieces' baptism celebration.

Movement and meaning

These movements pose dilemmas for sociality, and especially community-building. In their examinations of community in rural indigenous communities in Mesoamerica, John Monaghan (1995) and John Watanabe (1992) contend that community emerges through shared experience in common space. Monaghan (1995) identifies community as "something decidedly secondary that emerges out of particular relations and interactions" (14). For his part, Watanabe (1992) examines the "shared conventions of act and artifact through which people enact their community" (1992:xi). He communicates the importance of cohabitance for community-building in the following passage:

> Together, place and people precipitate commonly held conventional premises about how to get along in that place with that people... I take the resulting community to represent the emergent, relatively bounded sociality of individuals who, by virtue of continuity in time and contiguity in space, come to recognize common commitments and concerns as well as conventional ways of dealing with those concerns, regardless of how they change through time. [1992:12]

Pueblo Verde community members' occasional and frequent distance poses barriers to creating community through the interactions these observers identify with sociality in small indigenous communities. In addition to the barriers caused by absence, differences in experiences and the differences in perspectives, preferences, expectations and practices they cause would seem to pose a significant impediment to creating a sense of community in moments when villagers do come together in shared space.

Nonetheless, transnational scholars observe that migrants often overcome these barriers by reenacting symbolic practices to maintain a sense of cultural continuity in their destination sites, and by contributing to their home communities to maintain their presence despite their distance (Kearney 1995; Rivera-Salgado 1999). In this regard,

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Gaspar Rivera-Salgado references how Mixtec communities have transformed notions of citizenship and community to facilitate migrants' continued participation in community life. He contends that, as a result, Mixtec communities divided by distance have successfully formed single transnational communities:

> ...through the constant movement back and forth of migrants and the concurrent flow of information, money, goods, and services, the communities of origin and their various satellite communities in northern Mexico and the United States have become so closely linked that in a sense they form a single community, a transnational community. [1999:1451-2]

Transnational scholars' observations suggest the declining importance of place, and particularly of home, in community processes.

Yet, in directing much recent attention towards how migrants maintain community out of place, scholars have largely neglected the work that those who remain 'home' undertake to create and maintain community in these difficult contexts. Shawn Malia Kanaiaupuni (2000) seeks to redress this imbalance by illuminating the important roles nonmigrant women play in this translocal community-building work. She argues,

> Deeper analysis reveals the intense effort required to create and maintain family solidarity and continuity in origins when men migrate elsewhere. Both at home and in interactions outside the home, nonmigrant women actively construct the symbolic unity of the family. Constant references to absent members socialize children about their fathers and prepare them for the upcoming return home. References to dates of departures and returns are kept explicitly vague, thereby instilling some sense of the migrant's presence. For example, "*ya viene*" could describe a husband returning next week, next month or during the holiday season six months from now. [Kanaiaupuni 2000:13-14]

In addition to maintaining migrants' place in the family and community through these constant reminders, Kanaiaupuni contends that nonmigrant women play an important role in carrying out the social obligations that determine the status of the household within the community. She reports,

> ... while her husband is away, a wife ... sustains the household within a larger domestic setting -- the community. In this way, important social links established in the

community of origin are preserved and solidified over time by women and remaining household members. [2000:18]

Thus, Kanaiaupuni observes that nonmigrant women play a key role in creating and sustaining these transnational communities. The symbolic salience of women as symbols of home (Hendrickson 1995) suggests an additional key way in which nonmigrant women contribute to transnational communities, through their significance as key symbols of the home that migrants imagine and to which many repeatedly return.

In addition to these observations of women's contributions to the particular symbolic imaginings that sustain transnational communities, in contexts of widespread male migration, the women who remain in the community carry out most of the everyday work of social life that transforms "home" from a geographic space into a community with special import. The rest of this chapter examines how Pueblo Verde women villagers carry out this work, signaling some of the barriers and triumphs they face in building community in the presence of such widespread absence.

Gender, sociality and community

In Monaghan's observations on the Mixtec community of Nuyoo, cited above, he noted that "Only small children and two or three of the household's women stay behind, to prepare the evening meal and to carry out chores" (1987:6). In Pueblo Verde, older women and women with limited levels of formal education comprise the majority of 'the women who remain' to maintain the home front, as younger girls and women have increasingly pursued formal education and professional employment outside of the community. These women carry out much of the work necessary for establishing and maintaining the relationships that constitute Verdean sociality, including the especially

important reciprocal relationships of *compadrazgo* (fictive kin) and *guesa* (informal exchange). Through relations of *compadrazgo*, adults form strong social ties with one another by 'sponsoring' one another's children. Verdeans establish especially powerful and reverential bonds through the *compadrazgo* relationships they create for baptisms, when adults take on the responsibility for lifelong 'sponsorship' of their *ahijados* ('godchildren'). Verdeans also establish a myriad of less powerful bonds in seeking support – in the form of gifts or other contributions – to celebrate special events, such as graduations, weddings and baptisms.

Villagers come together frequently for relatively intimate gatherings held to mark more common important moments, such as birthdays, and for special ceremonies, such as to bless new homes, give thanks for the harvest, or spiritual cleansings to promote healing. Through *guesa,* women exchange help and goods with one another to support one another's efforts to mark special occasions with special events. Many of these *guesa* exchanges occur within the context of *compadrazgo* relations. Female family members and *comadres,* adults who have established bonds by 'sponsoring' one another's children through *compadrazgo,* often assist one another in making the preparations for celebrations, which often include *mole* or *pozole.*[24] Nonetheless, on many occasions *guesa* exchanges transcend family and *compadrazgo* relationships, as women not linked by family or fictive kin relations contribute work and/ or goods for celebrations that will later be 'repaid'. *Compadrazgo* and *guesa* relations enable Verdeans to come together in

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[24] *Mole* is a characteristically complex sauce women prepare as an accompaniment for chicken and turkey dishes on special occasions. The composition of the sauce differs from community to community, and Verdean women view their red *mole* as a symbol of municipal distinctiveness. In addition to this tomato- and chile-based version, they also prepare a black bean-based mole for special occasions, including for spiritual cleansings and the Day of the Dead festivities. Women also often prepare *pozole,* a hominy-based dish, for special occasions.

larger groups to celebrate, at the same time that they frame much of everyday social life (see Stephen 1991 for a description of these relations in a Zapotec community).

Women sustain these relationships on a daily basis by informally gathering to visit as they carry out their varied everyday activities. Some of the most important and common activities include preparing meals, washing the dishes, caring for household animals, washing laundry, weaving straw, spinning silk, traveling to markets to purchase household goods, selling household goods, cleaning, working in the *milpa*, and hulling corn. During the lulls in the day when the pressures of simultaneously carrying out multiple tasks abate, these women often gather with their sisters and *comadres* to offer or receive a soda or a beer and visit.

My host's busy day slowed down during the afternoons, between when she finished preparing the afternoon *comida* and before family members arrived to eat. In these quiet moments, she would sit spinning silk on her *petate,* which covered the dusty ground, and her sisters and *comadres* frequently stopped by to visit. They would sit together, invite one another to a soda or a beer, and talk while weaving straw or spinning silk. People often gather to socialize in the village's variety stores, as well, one of which was located next to where I lived. During the day, women pause there to take a break from their errands, invite or receive a soda or a beer, and visit for a few moments with sisters, *comadres* and others. Through these informal daily encounters, women reinforce the relationships that sustain the formalized reciprocal relationships that link villagers together in ways that ultimately support greater sociality, especially *compadrazgo* (fictive kin relations) and *guesa* (mutual exchange).

Thus, the women who remain in Pueblo Verde play a central role in maintaining everyday and less frequent sociality. Within these different realms of sociality, many women also play important roles as cultural gatekeepers, as they attempt to enforce compliance with certain practices and perspectives and to punish those they perceive as transgressing important values. In the case of the latter, women who fail to uphold ideals of propriety for engaging with men are a common target of critique. As women discuss these transgressions in *kuentu,* or gossip, individual criticisms transform into a more extensive circle of shame, ostracism and rejection through which transgressors are punished for their perceived transgressions. This social critique typically has limited potential for changing behaviors when directed at the young women who are frequently the targets of criticisms, because of the young women's more tentative connections to these social networks. Nonetheless, gossipers typically direct their critiques to the female family members of the 'cultural offenders' who are engaged in these circles, in addition to the offenders, and these family members bear the burden of social disapproval.

The nonmigrant Verdean women also play a key role in maintaining broader sociality by maintaining the nexus of 'home' to which Verdeans traveling to destinations near and far repeatedly return. Through their everyday work, the 'women who remain' facilitate the intersections of food, family and social life that constitute this nexus of home. During the research period, I watched as shifting configurations of people shared meals in my hosts' kitchen. Sisters, daughters, sons, sons-in-law, *ahijadas,* grandchildren, *comadres and compadres,* nieces and nephews, and others arrived and left. Many of the arrivals and departures were predictable, and many were not. When family and visitors arrived, they visited and ultimately shared a meal as my host urged,

"*kaani staa*", eat (literally, eat *tortilla*). The resulting mutual-imbrications of the 'women who remain', home and *pueblo* is evident in the most celebrated of all aspects of Pueblo Verde life, the festival. I examine festivals as a point of Verdean unity, and the role of women within them, below.

Community-building and pride in *vikos*

In analyzing contemporary problems in Mixtec communities, both developers and revitalizationists emphasize shame. Developers contend that overly-restrictive communal social relations cause shame among indigenous youth, while revitalizationists argue that the denigration of Mixtec identity causes Mixtec people to feel shameful about their culture. Nonetheless, I was struck by villagers' strong sense of pride when I began working in Pueblo Verde. On many occasions, my host excitedly informed me of special social occasions that were occurring, such as weddings, spiritual cleansings, house blessings, confirmations and graduations, and advised me to take my camera so I could record the special practices.

Among the facets of life that villagers described as special, they were most proud of the *vikos* (festivals), especially those held to honor the patron saints of each of the four neighborhoods and the municipality. They repeatedly asked me if I would be there for the *viko ka'nu* (big festival), the municipal patron saint celebration held on September 21st each year. They told me that I must attend, and punctuated their own assertions of its spectacularity with their observations that many migrants return on these dates to enjoy the celebrations. In fact, the patron saint festivals, especially the *viko ka'nu*, are remarkable moments when Verdeans come together in all of their diversity to celebrate.

In reporting on his research on migration in the Mixtec center of Juxtlahuaca, Gonzalez

(1999) also observed the significance of festivals as special occasions when migrants

return 'home'.

> The fiesta is a moment in the cycle of migration in Juxtlahuaca where migrants make
> their appearance after many years abroad. ... Their return during the fiesta is significant
> in several ways. Socially, it discloses to community members (and themselves) their
> profound links with their home region. Indeed, it may be the only time when they can
> feel a definite part of their natal community, as they join kin and friends to celebrate
> important village rituals within their religious calendar cycle. It is these ritual ties, which
> Michael Kearney and others have stressed, which give rise to the designation of Mixtec
> migrants as transnational peoples, maintaining homes, livelihoods and a profound sense
> of community on both sides of the border. [Gonzalez 1999:172]

Gonzalez's contention that festivals in Juxtlahuaca provide a unique space in which

'community' coalesces in an inclusive form that incorporates migrants and non-migrants

corresponds with my own observations in Pueblo Verde.

Localized admiration of *vikos* and more diffusive admiration for many of the

particular practices that occur within them converge in creating the conditions that

facilitate the emergence of this unique space of Verdean community. Within the local

orientations of indigenous communities in the region, festivals hold special significance

as symbols of regional identities. The symbols of localized identities celebrated in

festivals – especially food, clothing and dance – correspond with the limited array of

indigenous cultural characteristics celebrated in national lore as imbuing the Mexican

nation with distinctiveness. Developers and bureaucrats have also capitalized on the

popularity of these images of cultural distinctiveness while promoting tourism. Thus, in

festivals, many migrants encounter one of the few facets of Verdean lived experience that

is celebrated within the broader contexts in which they live. This celebration of

indigeneity starkly contrasts with the pervasive denigrations of indigeneity and *"indios"*

within the *mestizo* social spaces migrants more frequently encounter. This confluence of

forces contributes to migrants' and non-migrants' coming together to build community

and celebrate their Verdean identity in festivals, especially the *viko ka'nu*.

In Pueblo Verde, a procession through the four barrios of the village marks the

beginning of patron saint festivals. Men advance in front, lighting firecrackers to alert

the community of the procession and the formal beginning of festivities. A band marches

behind them, playing music. Women and girls wearing the 'traditional' clothing[25] of

long silk *enaguas* (skirts) in bright colors, white blouses trimmed with red embroidery

and black and white silk *rebozos* (shawls) follow the band. Many also wear ribbons

woven through their braided hair. They carry bouquets of flowers in their arms as they

proceed, and pause intermittently to dance. Women's prominence in marking the

beginning of the festival is significant, especially when considering the broader salience

of the festival as a celebration of local distinctiveness within both the regional and

national contexts. Women, with their distinctive clothing, symbolize Verdean

distinctiveness. During the last several years, the procession has changed dramatically in

ways that highlight the women, and the changes have renewed many Verdeans

appreciation for the festivals. The procession used to include a dozen or so young girls,

but has on recent occasions swelled to include hundreds of women. Distinctions among

women within the procession attest to the symbolic resonance of links between women,

their dress, and home. First, women organize and proceed according to neighborhood.

Second, during the 2004 festival, a contingent from Mexico City donned *enaguas* in a

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[25] Villagers describe this clothing as traditional. It corresponds with the clothing donned by older women who have not adopted Western styles of clothing. At the same time, many Verdeans referred to improvements in women's 'traditional' clothing as they described the positive changes 'progress' has brought to the village.

particular style that distinguished them from the other women. Both of these distinctions create even closer symbolic linkages between the women in the processional and 'home'.

When the procession arrives at the church of the patron saint being honored, a mass is held to begin the celebrations. Following the mass, the women and village officials share a special meal with any others who wish to attend. Thereafter, a basketball tournament begins. School children and their teachers organize a program of performances in the evening. Finally, the festival culminates with a social dance at night. Several days of special events encompass these main activities during the week of the *viko ka'nu*, including daily masses, an exceptionally large market, game booths, and special activities such as professional dance performances and fireworks.

Transcending difference to celebrate community in the Programa

Because festivals bring Verdeans together in all of their diversity, they simultaneously evidence the triumphs of, and barriers to, social engagement and community building this diversity poses. The educational programs, in particular, bring the greatest spectrum of people together, as people gather across generational differences to celebrate with the children. The educational program for the San Isidro patron saint festival, held to honor the patron saint of the barrio where I lived in the village, encapsulated some of the difficulties the differentiation of experiences among Verdeans poses for social engagement.

Large crowds of people gathered around the San Isidro basketball court that doubled as a stage for the event. In the crowds, young children ran around playing in the festive costumes that were crafted for their performances. Many little girls wore long

dresses, some in bright red and others in bright green, colors which salute the Mexican flag. The little boys along side them wore cowboy outfits, with checkered flannel shirts, jeans, and big, black felt *sombreros*. Many of their nearby mothers wore straight, knee-length, dark skirts; short-sleeved blouses or tee-shirts; and dark, close-toed shoes, a common outfit among thirty- and forty-something year old mothers in the village. In addition, some slightly younger women who attended the event with their mothers wore these fashions, suggesting their orientation to the norms of modesty with currency in the village. The fathers of the small children were also in the crowds, many socializing with other men and wearing long-sleeved button-down cotton shirts and black pants or slacks. Like their female counterparts, some younger men wore similar styles that suggested their engagement with village notions of style. In contrast, groups of teenagers and young men and women formed circles scattered throughout the crowd, openly excited about seeing one another and being seen more than the *programa*. Many of the young women donned fashionable clothing styles that were designed in Mexico City, New York, and other fashion centers in the not-too-distant past, and only appeared in my fashion-consciousness when I arrived in the village. Young men also donned their finest, often including jeans, stylish shirts and very nice shoes. Some wore leather jackets. In contrast, older men observing the events wore palm *sombreros*, light colored, long-sleeved button down shirts, dark colored slacks and *huaraches,* sandals. Most of the older women wore long *enaguas,* embroidered blouses, sandals and *rebozos* wrapped over their hair and shoulders, which many used to cover much of their face. They commanded respect in their quiet and deliberate social interactions, although many young people were too distracted or disinterested to respond appropriately.

During this *programa,* the teachers introduced each of the performances over a speaker system that was often inaudible because of its poor quality. They began with the youngest children's performances and continued through those of high school students. Most of the children performed 'traditional' dances in 'traditional' clothing, although many of the dances they enacted and costumes they wore were drawn from state and national-level celebrations of indigenous culture, as opposed to practice in the municipality. Teachers pleaded with the audience to 'show the children how much they appreciated the performances with a great round of applause', and seemed bewildered that observers would only give a lukewarm show of their appreciation. Nonetheless, applauding conflicts many villagers' ideals of modesty. In addition, the many monolingual Mixtec-speaking villagers in the audience did not understand the teachers' Spanish language pleas. Communication barriers associated with the language and the sound system also impeded many observers from understanding the comic scenes that a couple of groups of adolescents enacted, although they did provoke some laughter. The disjunctures culminated in one of the last performances, which challenged expectations for modesty in relation to sexuality. Two high school girls in mini-skirts and knee high boots took their place in the center of the stage waiting to begin, while the teacher who introduced the performance made some suggestive comments. They danced more popular music, during which a few drunk men in the audience made cat-calls.

While working in Pueblo Verde, I was struck by these kinds of scenes, in which Verdeans came together in such diversity. I considered that villagers had developed an exceptionally open attitude towards cultural differences in order to maintain community in the context of this diversity. In fact, villagers did demonstrate a remarkable tolerance

for difference in special circumstances such as these, as well as in more quotidian

contexts. Nonetheless, as I spent more time in the village, I learned about the struggles,

frustrations, pain and insecurities villagers experience as they try to reconcile their

desires for cultural continuity, control and community in this context. I examine how

denigrations of indigenousness contribute to these struggles and shape Verdean sociality

in detail below.

The dark side of bearing indigeneity

In festivals, as many villagers don the clothing styles that the majority of the

'women who remain' use in their daily lives, they affirm and bask in this celebration of

Verdeanness. Yet, they do so only briefly. Beyond the protective environment of the

festival, the distinctiveness the dress symbolizes makes those who don it key targets of

the worst treatment meted out to denigrate indigeneity and those who symbolize it. Thus,

those villagers who are celebrated as bearing culture in the context of the festival

typically encounter maltreatment when leaving the community.

Many of these villagers claimed that the different styles outside of the community

circumscribed their ability to meet their needs, and thus prohibited them from living

elsewhere. In one instance, Esmeralda, a 42-year old woman who had lived in Mexico

City, claimed that her lack of literacy made leaving the community an anxiety-provoking

proposition. She asserted, "I don't know how to read and I don't know how to write and

I'm afraid to leave!" A few women claimed that they would starve if they tried to live

outside of the community because of their inability to find anything to eat. Other women

explained that their lack of Spanish fluency made it impossible to do basic things like

using public transportation systems – in multiple cases, women expressed the latter sentiments to me in Spanish.

I initially interpreted these expressions of insecurities literally, being quite experienced myself with how lack of familiarity and limited linguistic skills can frustrate a person's efforts to function in a new place. In fact, most of the villagers who spend most of their time in the community have limited Spanish language skills and formal education, which in and of themselves make navigating life outside of the community difficult. Nonetheless, imperfect Spanish language skills do enable villagers to meet their basic needs as they maneuver in *mestizo* society. At the same time, a faltering domination of the Spanish language, styles of dress, and other symbols of indigeneity identify these villagers with the much-maligned "*indio*" in *mestizo* society, and mark them as targets of poor treatment outside of the community. Adriana, a 27-year old professional woman, hinted at how a faltering domination of the Spanish language makes villagers vulnerable to poor treatment when I asked her whether she was proud of her community. She responded, "Yes, although many people think that we are poor Mixtecs and we don't speak Spanish!" Ismael, a young man with strong village ties despite having lived most of his life elsewhere, also indicated how villagers who lack extensive Spanish language skills encounter poor treatment when they leave the community. He explained,

> More than anything, when people go other places they feel rejected for being from here. That is one of the causes of low self-esteem. That they don't speak Spanish well.

Observing these circumstances, I came to regard these villagers' frequent references to practical factors that limit their ability to navigate *mestizo* society as ways of

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communicating more transcendental insecurities produced by the hardships they have endured outside of the community.

Many villagers vigilantly work to protect themselves from this kind of treatment in Pueblo Verde by insisting that aspiring community members demonstrate their willingness to engage in local social life on Verdean terms. These efforts evidence how broader denigrations of indigeneity shape everyday social life, and accord with Carole Nagengast and Michael Kearney's (1990:73-4) hypothesis that the inward focus of many indigenous communities reflects a response to marginalization within broader relations of inequality.

Verdean gate-keeping conventions

I hired a local research assistant to help me with my structured data collection methods, including the census and the semi-structured interviews I conducted with a stratified sample I selected from the census. Having a local assistant to help me learn how to approach people and ask for interviews was invaluable. She knew where people lived and how to approach them and their homes. In addition, people trusted her with their questions about me and the research, and they felt more comfortable talking with me because of her presence. She also translated interviews for those who preferred to conduct them in Mixtec.

We began early in the mornings to try to catch people before they left to undertake work outside of the home. Invariably, as we approached people's homes, we heard the patter of women forming the freshly-made tortillas that they then placed on the

comal[26] to cook, which was itself placed over an open fire. With my assistant in the lead, we would begin to approach the home. She would tentatively call "*xixi*" [she-she], aunt in Mixtec, or "*na*", 'grandmother', depending on whether we were headed to a home where a middle-aged or older woman lived. In response, a voice would call "*ve*", yes. My assistant would respond, "*Iyoni?*" Are you there? The voice would respond "*Iyoli.*" I am here.

We slowly approached peoples' homes and she explained the nature of our visit. Most frequently, we spent a long time just chatting about why I was there, what my experience was like being there, and their rumors about and experience with the United States. For many, my efforts to learn Mixtec supported my claim that I was intrigued about learning about life there. As we sat talking, the women would often offer my assistant and me a *tortilla* fresh from the *comal*. My assistant would enthusiastically confide in our host with a mixture of surprise and pride that, 'Yes, she eats.' More than my efforts to speak Mixtec, my willingness to share *tortillas* suggested the possibility that I was committed to forming relationships with Verdeans. Often, others would appear for a brief period to observe my assistant and me. After they interviewed me and I interviewed my host, my assistant and our hosts would express their cautious approval of me because I sat on the same chairs and shared the same food as them. They summed up their appraisals with the conclusion, '*no es especial.*'

Verdeans repeatedly criticized people for being *muy especial*, literally 'very special'. They leveled this critique against those who are unwilling to engage in social life on the same terms as everyone else, and demanded 'special' food and 'special' accommodations. Many similarly criticized those who thought they were better than

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[26] A *comal* is a round cooking implement for making *torillas*.

others with the judgment, *se creen*. In contrast, villagers expressed approval of those who demonstrated their commitment to local social engagement with *"él si come"*, (he does eat), or *"ella si habla"* (she does talk).

Many Verdeans employ these conventions to ensure that those who engage in the community do so in a way that accords with local experience, rather than denigrating this experience as an expression of indigenousness. Moreover, many use these idioms to warn others of those who reject conventions for local social engagement. Contrastingly, my own experience in interviews evidenced how villagers also use these idioms to assuage concerns about certain people who seem likely to denigrate local experience. Through these gate-keeping conventions, villagers attempt to shield themselves from the widespread discrimination that many encounter when traveling outside of the community. Thus, these idioms evidence how denigrations of indigenousness in their multiple historical formulations shape Verdean sociality.

I was initially pleased to find that all I had to do was eat *tortillas* to prove my commitment to the community. Nonetheless, villagers were vigilant in their measured acceptance of me into the community, and many seemed to doubt whether the appreciation of Verdean people and life that I professed represented my *true* feelings. A nearby store owner and widely-recognized gossip who befriended me often questioned me about how much I *really* liked the community. I repeatedly told her what a wonderful community it was, and how much I enjoyed being there. One day, she accusingly reported to me that a group of people gathered on her porch burst into laughter when she asserted that *la güera* (the white woman) loved it there, and then considered that I might return to live there some day. Their laughter made her doubt my sincerity, and left her

feeling betrayed. Many villagers never trusted me enough to risk these feelings, and took a more cautious approach of repeatedly enjoining me to prove my trustworthiness. As a result, despite my initial enthusiasm over the seeming ease with which villagers allowed me to enter the community, I sometimes grew tired of having to prove myself. On a couple of such occasions, my assistant and I engaged in battles of wills when I grew tired of eating when I was not hungry. She unrelentingly insisted that I comply.

Absence, doubt and betrayal

Despite my occasional refusals to comply with these repeating demands for me to prove myself, for the most part, I respected villagers' cautiousness. It seemed entirely appropriate given the historical and ongoing contexts within which non-community members have typically denigrated aspects of local experience deemed indigenous, along with the people attached to this experience. I was surprised to find, though, that villagers commonly utilize the same gate-keeping mechanisms with other villagers. For example, Sylvia, a young professional Verdean woman, recounted to me how a couple of teachers derided her one day for declining their invitation to share a drink with them. When she explained that she did not have time at that moment to stop, they criticized her for thinking she was too good for them, "*se cree,*" and for "*menospreciando*" (undervaluing) them by rejecting their invitation.

The use of these conventions among villagers corresponds with widely held perceptions that youth, migrants and highly-educated villagers increasingly adopt the negative views of local experience attached to denigrations of indigenousness that many villagers associate with leaving the community. In interviews and in more informal

contexts, many villagers voiced concerns about how those who leave the community for educational and economic pursuits change. For example, Adriana, a 27-year old professional woman, expressed her disaccord with the 'inappropriate' behaviors migrants to the United States adopt as they take on 'the culture of the Other.' She explained,

> There are many young people who go to the United States. When they return, they bring the customs from there with them and they want to apply them here. In reality, these practices look bad here. It's seen poorly here. And, they speak, they speak all mixed together, no? And, they speak even some words, um, very obscene. So, … sometimes they prefer to focus on the Other's culture, and they are not content with the culture that we have here, when it's a beautiful culture. They must not take the culture of the other!

Concerns about migrants' denigration of local experience comprise a subtext of Adriana's complaint that is especially clear when she speaks about how migrants focus on the 'Other' and insists on the value of 'Verdean culture.' Teresa, a 58 year old monolingual Mixtec-speaking villager hinted at these concerns as she commented,

> I worry about how people think differently, especially the way that young people think. They study and they leave and they begin to change their ways of thinking.

Similarly, Juan, a 29-year old man who spends his days working in the *milpa,* asserted,

> The people, the young people, there are some, … oh how they change! Some of those who leave, well, they think poorly.

When Esmeralda, a 42-year old woman, reflected on this tendency, she heatedly defended Verdean experience. She reported,

> Sometimes people leave and return and say that they don't like their town because they leave and say that there is nothing here – they say, and what are we going to eat? Like, there is nothing if they are lazy. If they don't work, well, there is nothing because they aren't looking for it. But, if you look, well, I think there is. Yes, like I lived with my son, I tell you, and I went to Tlaxiaco, I went to Chalcatongo to find, to sell, even if it was just a *tortilla* or an exchange. Yes, there is. Yes.

Tendencies for some villagers to adopt denigrations of indigenousness pose a particularly great challenge to Verdean community-building, as some refuse to engage in social conventions precisely because they are social conventions. Moreover, the adoption of

denigrations of local experience by some villagers seems to pose especially poignant dilemmas for those who have suffered most from perceptions of them as bearers of indigenousness.

Conclusions

This chapter has examined Pueblo Verde social life within a broader context in which community members increasingly reside outside of the municipality. In contrast to the wide current interest in how migrants construct transnational communities out of place, this chapter examines how those who remain in place work to create community, most of whom are women. This approach suggests the partiality of migrant-oriented accounts that celebrate 'transnational communities' as evidenced in key events, such as festivals. In addition to the triumphs of community-building in the face of widespread migration that festivals indicate, Verdean migration causes great contradictions and emotional challenges for those who remain. Esmeralda, cited above, communicated the feelings of pain and abandonment she has suffered while remaining in place as so many loved ones leave. Through tears, she explained,

> No, well, I get sad too, because, everyone left. Well, [my daughter], she was always around. She was in Oaxaca City, but she would come every month or two weeks to visit, but now she left and now she doesn't come anymore. It's so sad, too. My son says he'll be back soon. He only went for a year and he'll be back, he says. Because, you know, his wife is here.... Well, who knows if he left for a year or who knows. He said that there was no money, and that's why he had to leave to work. It was okay because my daughter was around. She was in Oaxaca, and she brought everything that is in my house. She said, 'buy sodas, mom, buy everything you need.' She brought eggs, everything this one day, and... and she left and she said she was going *there*.

A sense of betrayal stands out among the many emotions Esmeralda conveyed in her often-tearful interview. In fact, concerns about betrayal are recurring themes in Verdean

gossip, and preoccupations with betrayal prompt many villagers to repeatedly challenge 'outsiders' and 'insiders' alike to prove their sincerity.

As I have analyzed Verdean sociality in this chapter, I have focused on how broad denigrations of indigenousness shape the challenges Verdeans confront in their efforts to build community. I have identified some villagers' adoption of denigrations of indigenousness as a central tendency shaping Verdean social and cultural processes. Villagers' critiques of those among them who adopt denigrations of indigenousness evidence the adoption of 'culture' among Verdeans. These critiques also affirm the unevenness of the adoption of the culture concept. In this chapter, I have highlighted the dilemmas produced by the unevenness in the adoption of 'culture' as a conceptual tool that some villagers *wield* along with the unevenness of culture as an essence that some villagers *bear*. I continue to examine this distinction between those who wield culture and those who bear it as I examine the politics of different representations of indigenousness in Verdean social life in the rest of the dissertation.

I have focused on struggles between those who remain and those who leave while providing an overview of Pueblo Verde sociality in this chapter. I provide a closer examination of how gender, generational, and economic factors shape Verdean social and cultural processes as I turn to examine struggles over the Verdean family in the next chapter. This examination of the Verdean family situates my ensuing analysis of how developers' and revitalizationists' conceptualizations of culture shape Verdeans' contests to define the ideal family.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CHANGING VERDEAN FAMILY

In interviews, I asked Verdean villagers whether and why the family is important. Many signaled to me with a smirk that the answers to these questions were obvious, but struggled to convey the importance of family in words. Ultimately, they explained the family's importance in reference to its utility in enabling them to meet their most elemental social and material needs. As the table below indicates, eighteen respondents mentioned social needs, while sixteen signaled material needs.

Table 4: Importance of family, N=29

Importance of family	#
Being together	18
Helping each other	16
The place where we learn values	2
To have someone to pass things on to	1

Note: Many respondents provided multiple responses.

Verdeans' responses correspond with the key importance of the family in ensuring the individual's well-being in recent history. In material matters, individuals have met their productive (subsistence) and reproductive needs through the gender division of labor in the family. In the symbolic sphere, male household heads have represented their families in formal politics, while female household heads have tended to predominate in less formal social networks and arenas.

Remarkable changes have occurred in Pueblo Verde families during the last couple of decades, influencing the forms villagers' families take, and the organization of work and responsibility within them, as well as the salience of family in everyday life. In this chapter, I analyze these changes within the context of broader processes of economic

transformation, examining how families have reorganized their families to accommodate the exigencies of income-generating opportunities and their desires for access to increased goods and services. I describe the shifting generational power-relations that have occurred as some villagers have reorganized their families, along with generational differences in villagers' perceptions of the relative importance of wealth and social relations. Then, I examine how these dynamics shape ongoing familial transformations, using the example of some women's contests over gender inequalities within unions as a case in point.

Family in Verdean history: Age, gender and power

One of the most valuable characteristics of ethnographic research is that researchers observe what people do in addition to asking them what they do. I was repeatedly reminded of the importance of this dual approach when I listened to villagers' depictions of the family. They regularly described the family in idealized ways that conflicted with my observations of the present. In addition, the vignette I used to open this dissertation, in which my hosts insisted on the acceptability of only one family form, demonstrates the politics of representations of the family. That raises dilemmas for my reliance on oral accounts to characterize the Verdean family in history. Nonetheless, older villagers' accounts of their personal life experiences indicate ways in which these characterizations correspond with as well as conflict with their lived histories. Thus, I rely on villagers' personal accounts to suggest that the (idealized) historical sketch of the Verdean family that I outline below corresponded more with lived experience in recent

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history than it does now. Thereafter, I examine ongoing contests over the family in contemporary life.

In interviews, two-thirds of Verdean informants over forty years old (15/22) reported that they began their families through arranged marriages. Many specified that their in-laws 'asked for them *well,*' indicating that arranged marriages were the correct way of forming a relationship at the time. Young men were considered ready for these unions in their late teens, beginning around seventeen or eighteen years of age, when they mastered the requisite level of responsibility, maturity and skills. Considerations of their readiness reflect their responsibility for representing the family in the broader community, making decisions on behalf of the family, and contributing a distinct set of labor skills to the family economy. In contrast, girls were considered marriageable when they reached around twelve years of age. Since they were not expected to make decisions on behalf of the family, their readiness was determined by the age at which they demonstrated their ability to carry out the domestic tasks they would be charged with carrying out as wives and mothers. These expectations for girls' and women's place in Verdean unions correspond with those the leading Mixtec revitalizationist Juan Julian Caballero describes in his own community of San Antonio Huitepec. He relates,

> If the girl has reached 12 or 13 years old, she is considered old enough to form a partnership with the person who arrives to 'ask for her hand', as the only requirement is that she knows how to work responsibly and has complete knowledge about women's own activities, as well as knowing how to conduct herself responsibly in life. [Julián Caballero 2002:92]

The formal courting in arranged marriages occurs between the proposed couples' parents. In Pueblo Verde, the young man's parents or an emissary would typically approach the young girl's parents on his behalf, and, with gifts in hand, ask her parents

for her hand in marriage. The process of negotiating these unions could last a year. Although young men's parents carried out the process of negotiating on their behalf, young men influenced, if not determined, their parents' choice of mates. Girls, however, were typically not consulted in their parents' decisions about whether to accept or reject the suitor's offer.

In successfully established unions, the newly formed couple constituted a new family entity in the community. Nonetheless, the husband and his wife typically resided in his extended family's homestead, and contributed their energies to the reproduction of that larger entity. The young man would continue contributing to his family's subsistence production by carrying out agricultural-related work in the *milpa* – work villagers regard as more physically taxing than women's work. For her part, the young girl would carry out the tasks associated with women's work, which focus more on the domestic sphere, involving tasks related to raising young children, preparing meals, doing laundry, and other reproductive tasks.[27] Importantly, she would now contribute this work to her new family under the watch of her mother-in-law.

A full third of informants over age forty related that they did not form their unions through arranged marriages, but instead established their relationships through some kind of direct encounter. For example, a few respondents reported that they and their partners decided on their own to marry; a couple of others indicated being forced to marry because of the kids; one claimed having been pressured by his partner to marry.[28] Common law marriage norms have marked couples as married when they begin to live

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[27] Despite the general correctness of these trends, assumptions that women solely engage in reproductive activities centered on the domestic sphere obscure women's participation in productive and subsistence oriented activities.

[28] The latter made this claim in relation to his marriage to his wife who had since died. He did so in the presence of his second wife.

together, effectively applying the social recognitions and corresponding expectations, duties, and benefits of marriage to the large proportion of people who did not 'marry well'. Thus, Verdeans have recognized families forged through legitimate and unsanctioned unions as social units with corresponding place in society and contribution to society.

In a recent work, Marcos Cruz Baustista (2004a), a leading Mixtec revitalizationist, drew from the comments of an informant from his natal community in San Juan Mixtepec to explicate the gender differentiated expectations for the skills, aptitudes and perspectives men and women must master in Mixtec unions. The informant explained,

> ... If it is a man, he must know how to work the land, that is, know how to realize all of the activities to make the land produce and care for it, that includes to work, till, make rows, plant, clean, mound the earth around the plants, pick, clean the field after the harvest, and know how to raise and care for domestic animals, to know how to cut wood, which implies having the necessary knowledge of nature and her phenomena. In addition, he must investigate his social values of which we have been speaking and his personal values, which are: respect, honor, honesty, loyalty, bravery, prudence, equanimity, intelligence, etc.
> And if it is a women she must know all of the domestic tasks; know how to gather wood, know how to prepare *nixtamal,* know how to make *tortillas, totopos, atole,* know how to cook and prepare food, know how to sweep, know how to wash clothes and in relation to her behavior, she must be respectful, honorable, honest, and soon they investigate her training for collective work; principally in that in that dealing with her participation in *tequios,* mutual help, *guetzas*, and they also investigate her social and personal values including respect, honesty, honor, loyalty, prudence, equanimity, intelligence, etc, but above all obedience. If she demonstrates these attitudes and aptitudes, she is fit. She has the essential experience and knowledge to be a good wife. To be a good wife is to respond to a commitment of great importance, because the greatest importance for Mixtecs is to be able to maintain a new family, that is to say, to have the attitude and aptitude to get food for oneself and one's family ...." [Eligio Sanchez, quoted in Cruz Bautista 2004a:68]

His characterization corresponds closely with those offered by many Verdean men and women. In short, they described women and men as making distinctive and complementary contributions to the family.

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This complementary construction of families necessitates 'working together' and thus resonates with multiple villagers' assertions that one literally cannot survive without the family. At the same time, Cruz Bautista's informant references hierarchical dimensions of men and women's relationships as he claims that girls fit for marriage must demonstrate 'above all obedience'. Women of all ages conveyed their disaccord with gender inequalities. They did so by complaining about girls' inabilities to influence their parents' choice of their mates in arranged marriages. Many women also criticized the pervasiveness of domestic abuse. The brutality many women suffer in their relationships provides a particularly compelling basis for criticizing depictions of Verdean partnerships as complementary. Thus, it would be misleading to characterize gender relations as hierarchical *or* complementary, as Verdean women and men express different kinds of power in different realms and in different ways.

Recognition of young men as singular representatives of the family in local political channels establishes gender inequities in formal politics. Upon marriage, young men receive recognition as *comuneros* and the corresponding right to participate in the communal assemblies where local governance decisions are carried out. They also receive the duty to participate in *tequios*, or communal work assignments.

Despite men's dominance in formal political channels, perceptions of male and female unions as working together to complete a family have predominated in less formalized arenas of local sociality.[29] Moreover, the distinction between these more formalized and less formalized arenas is less marked than it may seem, as many of these less formalized arenas of local sociality have facilitated men's ascent in formal politics

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[29] This trend is suggestive in consideration of Kevin Terraciano's (2001) observations of how Mixtec women's status fell with the imposition of colonial structures of governance.

by increasing the prestige of the partnership. *Mayordomia*, or saint sponsorship, and *compadrazgo* are the most important among these. Men and women have both typically been regarded as contributing *mayordomos* for the annual fiestas carried out in the saint's honor (see Stephen 1991 for a similar observation in a Zapotec community), and as co-participants in *compadrazgo*.

In sum, individuals have relied on the family for meeting their most basic material and social needs. Accordingly, those who lost parents at an early age recounted especially difficult experiences as youth. Multiple interviewees in their sixties and older explained that they were unable to attend school because they were 'orphans'. In most cases, they lost the economic security needed to support education when they lost one of their parents. For some men, this meant that they had to contribute to the family's livelihood as young boys by working in their own subsistence plots, or working as laborers in others' plots. For women, the loss of a parent could signify an arranged marriage at an especially young age, or worse. Young men not infrequently abducted mates who attracted them, and those without family to protect them were especially vulnerable to these attacks. Na Maria, a 72 year old woman, recounted how she was "stolen" at eleven years old because she was an orphan:[30]

> Assistant: How old were you when my grandfather asked for you?
> Na Maria: You know, I didn't have a mother or father. I was eleven years old.
> Assistant: And why did you get married?
> Na Maria: I was stolen. [Laughter.] It's true – I was stolen. You know, I didn't have a mother or father, or anyone to defend me.

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[30] During these abductions, if a young man successfully held a girl for at least a night, the parents had little recourse but to recognize the union. In some cases, local authorities assisted with these abductions by locking the young couple in jail during the night.

The accounts of the particularly difficult situations those without family suffered attest to the elemental importance of the Verdean family in ensuring individual well-being.

The changing economic context

I spent most of my time in the village with women. Spending time with men seemed risky given my single status, and I was wary of upholding stereotypes of Western women as failing to uphold local standards of modesty. Nonetheless, spending most of my time with women made me insecure about my perceptions of men's contributions to everyday community life. I asked villagers how men spent their days to check whether the limited informal research time I spent with men was coloring my emerging assessments. Those I queried always responded by describing to me the gender division of labor I described above, explaining that men leave early in the morning for the *milpa*, while women remain in the home to prepare the meals, taking them to the men in the fields later in the day. These accounts conflicted with my own observations. Although many of the men who remain in the community do conduct agricultural activities, many women do, as well. I frequently encountered women heading for the *milpa* in the morning and returning in the afternoon. I also encountered women taking their bulls to pasture daily.

I returned to my notes from daily observations and my census and interview data to examine these incongruencies between my own perceptions and villagers' accounts. My formal data, in particular, was designed to counter any biases resulting from my own tendencies to spend time with certain groups in the community. They supported my sense that men were disproportionately absent. In fact, when I randomly selected a

sample of villagers over the age of fifteen from the census for more targeted interviewing, the sample turned up mostly women, reflecting the gender and age imbalance of the community. It is likely that even the marked gender imbalance evidenced in the census overstated men's presence in the community, as I was unable to locate multiple young men when I returned for interviews. In some cases, they appear to have left in the interim, although I also noted a tendency among villagers to report absent members of the family as residing in the household.

The gender discrepancies in Verdeans' accounts of what they do and what I observed them to do initially piqued my interest in how villagers perceive of how their activities resonate and conflict with who they are. As I examined villagers' descriptions of Verdean work, I noted a broader tendency among villagers to emphasize agricultural work and de-emphasize or exclude the rest: they consistently described an idealized subsistence-based family economy and division of labor, apparently sensing that the other activities that they engage in do not constitute an authentic expression of what Verdeans do. Nonetheless, their descriptions of their work histories and my own observations testify to villagers' reliance on myriad income-generating strategies, and the long place these have had in Verdeans' personal economic histories.

In addition to working the *milpa*, many older men (sixty years old and over) reported migrating to different parts of the state and the nation-state to generate capital. In fact, the eight respondents sixty years old and older when indicated that they had migrated during their lifetime were all men. They reported traveling to different regions of Oaxaca to buy and sell regional goods; to the neighboring states of Chiapas, Veracruz and Puebla to work as hired laborers on plantations; and to Mexico City to work in

construction. They also typically had acquired some limited formal education, which gave them some Spanish and literacy skills useful for navigating the greater *mestizo* society. All of the interview participants over fifty years old who reported having some formal educational experience were men. Thus, the interview data suggest that villagers did more than *milpa*, and most of the villagers who undertook these additional income-generating strategies were men.

Verdean women fill in for their absent partners by carrying out the agricultural work villagers readily describe as men's work and representing the family in communal assemblies and *tequios*. This temporary occupation of male spaces corresponds with scholars' observations in other contexts of widespread migration in Mexico (Buechler 2005; Kanaiaupuni 2000). These studies indicate that women's occupation of these spaces does not signify a challenge to prevailing gender inequities and a corresponding change in women's status. Rather, the exigencies of migration temporarily place gender-expectations for work in relief (Buechler 2005). Villagers' denial of women's occupation of male spaces in Pueblo Verde suggests how these observations resonate with villager experience: filling-in does not seem to signify a challenge to or shift in gender relations. Nonetheless, these migration-linked processes in Pueblo Verde are part of broader economic transformations associated with villagers' expanding desires for things and the shifting avenues available and strategies villagers devise to access them. Within the broader social and narrower familial transformations these processes have facilitated and necessitated, women have openly contested inequalities and contributed to shifts in gender relations in the process.

Gender and generation in the restructuring of the Verdean family

Women's efforts to fill in for their partners during their absences indicate how villagers' income-generation activities transform their families. At least as influential, however, are other family members' declining contributions to subsistence production. Adult children, in particular, increasingly dedicate themselves to agricultural, factory, construction, service and professional employment. In addition, younger children typically direct much of their time, energy and resources towards educational preparation for these pursuits. These transformations belie villagers' accounts of the subsistence-based distribution of responsibilities in their families, as they entail an important shift from the ideal of men carrying out subsistence and income-generating strategies, and women carrying out domestic activities and filling in for men in their absence.

Many villagers have redelineated the division of responsibilities within families according to generation and gender to accommodate these income-generating strategies. Thus, professional parents often leave their children in the care of grandparents during their daily or weekly absences. Sometimes grandparents also care for children for months or even years at a time while parents are working further afield, for example, in the United States. In addition, many grandmothers prepare meals for their adult children and their families in order to facilitate adult women's engagement in income generating activities. Thus, many families have redelineated the gender-based distribution of family work along the lines of generation, and older women have taken on reproductive responsibilities for the entire extended family.

In exchange, adult children contribute earnings to supplement the extended family's subsistence strategies. They also provide their parents with access to goods and

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services that they would otherwise be unable to afford. During interviews, older interviewees identified these goods and services as critical contributions to the improved quality of life they have experienced during the course of their lives. In fact, these villagers repeatedly commented on the *positive* ways in which access to outside goods and services had improved their lives in response to a question I had devised to query whether they had perceived *negative* changes. These villagers responded to my question about whether there were any changes they had seen during their lifetime that concerned them by recounting with amazement that they lacked shoes, soap, beds, access to Western medical care, and other necessities in the past, and passionately emphasizing how access to these goods and services had improved their lives. For example, when I asked Na Ilaria, a sixty-two year old woman whether there were changes she had seem that concerned her, she responded,

> We were sadder before. Now there is some milk, and other things – we didn't used to have that. Before, instead of using soap we used plants to wash. We used to leave for Tlaxiaco and Chalcatongo at 2:00 in the morning to sell. There weren't even sodas or soap!

Na Eustolia, a fifty-five year old woman, similarly conveyed her summation of these changes as positive after reflected on them.

> Assistant: Has the town been changing?
> Na Eustolia: Yes, it has been changing. Like the people of my generation, as you see, I see from my vantage point still because I am always in front of the fire [cooking]. I'm humble, in the home lets say, it began to change when people started to leave, but this hasn't been going on for a long time. They dress differently, they go traveling getting some money. Then they build a house, the houses are getting better. And in my case I don't go anywhere and that's why things have remained as they were before.
> Assistant: Does it worry you that all of this has been changing?
> Na Eustolia: No, on the contrary, I'm happy. On the contrary, the pueblo is improving. It the future it will be better. And it's worse if we are poor. All of the children are changing. The change is for the good.

Older men conveyed similar opinions. For example, Ta Eusevio, a sixty-four year old man, reported,

> Before there was no electricity, water, we didn't have the highway. Everything was dark. Now there's light, potable water, we have the highway. I like the changes. I hope we get more help for more change.

Ta Abraham, a seventy-four year old man, also reflected positively on the changes he had witnessed during the last couple of decades:

> Ta Abraham: The clothing is changing because before people used only the white shorts, white pants, only sandals – they used to call the sandals we used *huaraches de bolla*. And it has been changing. Because the older women used to wear only ugly skirts. Everything is changing. Everyday there are more people speaking Spanish, this is changing – there wasn't any of this a while back. Another thing is that there were people who traveled carrying baskets, they carried their baskets on their backs. The would go far, to Tlaxiaco, to Santa Cruz, to San Miguel, but anywhere they traveled they left and returned carrying their baskets. It's changing because now no one walks. Everyone travels by bus now. It used to take three or four days for people to return from their trips.
> Assistant: Do you worry about the changes you have seen?
> Ta Abraham: No, no, because we suffered more like that. Like children, they were born and they would have to carry heavy things on their back, that's why we got sick, because there are places where it rains or its very hot and we get hot and drink water and that's why we get sick afterwards. Now things are changing and we don't suffer as much.

I had anticipated that villagers would convey concerns about changing social relations in response to this question, especially older villagers. In fact, many villagers did, but older villagers tended to emphasize the positive changes, and even conclude that it would be best to get rid of local practices that impeded villagers from facilitating continued change. Ta Abraham arrived at this conclusion in his reflections, implicating the Mixtec language in particular as an impediment to villagers' capacities to acquire goods and services. He reflected,

> What is changing is that now there are more houses, now there are more people who speak Spanish, and everything ... And its good that the school was established and that it is still here and hopefully the children are concerned, too, because it will continue to change. Like the Mixtec language, those who are growing up want to get rid of it because there are more schools. Well, its better really that it changes truthfully because if

we only speak like we do here [Mixtcc] when we travel and we try to buy something we can't find the words to say.

As his reflections intimate, in addition to the way that these villagers' ages constrain them from accessing these opportunities, lack of skills, especially facility in the Spanish language, limit their abilities to generate capital and access these resources. Thus, they largely depend on their children for access to these goods and services. As I indicated above, some families have responded by redelineating family responsibilities according to age and gender, in effect exchanging the reproductive labor, subsistence labor and limited capital generated by older adults for greater access to goods and services from their adult children.

In his study of *The Decline of Community in Zinacantán: Economy, Public Life and Social Stratification, 1960-1987,* 1992, Frank Cancian describes a decline in the status of older adults within the context of the Maya community's increasing political and economic integration with broader economic and political processes. Cancian explains these in relation to youth's successful capture of new economic opportunities that arose in the 1970s, as well as the increasing importance of civil offices, in which youth often predominated. The economic transformations Verdean villagers signal and the ways they have shifted familial responsibility and cooperation in response to them correspond with Cancian's observations of changes in age-based status differentials in Zinacantán. In Pueblo Verde, these familial shifts signal a relative empowerment of youth and disempowerment of adults as the latter come to depend on the former for access to capital. This realignment of power in the family has important implications for ongoing contests over the meaning of the family in Verdean society and the delineation of power within.

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Hints of discordant desires in villagers' changing perceptions of ideal family size

Above, I identified 'working together' as a basic principle of Verdean families. In fact, more people working together has often constituted an effective strategy for generating a livelihood through subsistence production, as more hands could contribute to labor needs and in doing so help to protect the family against the vagaries of nature and output. The relatively large families of villagers over forty years old reflect this logic: these villagers had an average of 6.8 children per family (median 6.5).

Nonetheless, many villagers report that the cost of educating children has shifted the economics of 'working together' in the family. Villagers' observations of transformations in the economics of families correspond with John Caldwell's (1976) insights into shifts in children's relative costs and contributions to the family associated with demographic transitions. As villagers observe, children's contributions to the family economy through agricultural and domestic activities have been curtailed, at the same time that they require additional costs associated with education. In fact, as Table 5 indicates, those informants who had not yet begun their families at the time of interviewing reported wanting an average of 2.4 children, half of the average 4.8 children indicated by respondents aged forty and older.

Table 5. Family size preferences according to age, N=38

Age	1/2		2/3		4		6		Other	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
15-19	2	5	3	9	1	3	0	0	0	0
20-29	0	0	7	18	0	0	1	3	0	0
30+	0	0	3	9	1	3	2	5	19	50
Totals	2	5	12	36	2	6	3	8	19	50

Shifting fertility patterns in the village correspond with villagers' indications of changes in their familial preferences. As indicated in the table below, only one of the nineteen people less than forty years old had five children or more, in comparison with twenty-two of the twenty-four people aged forty or older had five children or more.

Table 6. Live births according to age (N=43)

No. Live Births	Age Groups						Total	
	15-19		20-39		40+			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
0	7	16	2	5	0	0	9	21
1	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	4	9	1	2	5	12
3	0	0	2	5	1	2	3	7
4	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	2
5	0	0	0	0	3	7	3	7
6	0	0	1	2	7	16	8	19
7	0	0	0	0	6	14	6	14
8	0	0	0	0	2	5	2	5
10	0	0	0	0	2	5	2	5
11	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2
12	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2
Total	7	16	12	28	24	56	43	100

Often, however, villagers seemed not only to be evaluating the changing costs and contributions of children when they concluded that one can no longer afford having many children: changing material desires inflect their evaluations of how many children they can afford. A conversation between two relatively wealthy young professionals during a festival held in honor of the Patron Saint of one of the *barrios* evidences these changing desires. One of the two cousins had returned with his family from Mexico City for the *fiesta,* and they both had gathered in the kitchen of one of their parents to eat dinner, drink beer and chat for a while during the first evening of the fiesta. As they sat at the

kitchen table, which was housed within a wooden shack with dirt floors, they commiserated about how much more difficult it was to make ends meet in the current day. As evidence, they noted that their parents could support ten children in their day, but that they struggled to meet the needs of two. Nonetheless, the professional son and his wife own multiple homes, multiple cars and luxury goods including a television, a stereo and a VCR, which contrast markedly with his parents' limited material wealth. Their comments highlight a generational discrepancy in desires: their parents contribute to the family economy in order to gain refrigerators, shoes and health services, while they aspire to cars, multiple homes and vacations.

In addition to their different economic desires, an important divergence appears to be emerging between older and younger adults according to their levels of engagement in local sociality. These networks typically afford older adults with more prestige and esteem, and, as a result, they have typically pressed younger adults to uphold social obligations and social norms to ensure their good standing and that of their family members. Older parents often press their children to uphold these obligations and norms with the caution that they will have to rely on them in the future. In addition, older villagers often use other means to press younger family members to uphold social norms that would reflect poorly on the family members and jeopardize their positions when they are transgressed. Nonetheless, while older adults continue to rely on these networks for economic resources, those younger adults who have successfully accessed more material wealth through professional employment, migration or other means are not as materially tied to these networks. Increasing economic security enables some of those who perceive the social networks as burdensome to escape them. For example, Sylvia held a large

'modern' banquet to celebrate her graduation from nursing school, and commented that the modern celebrations were much preferable to the 'traditional' ones in her community, because she did not incur the ongoing 'debts' associated with the *guesa* exchanges in her community. Moreover, this security provides some youth with the ability to maintain themselves without the contributions of their parents. Thus, for some, a parents' disapproval of their failure to uphold these networks or of social transgressions does not necessarily threaten their economic viability. It may, however, do so for their discordant parents. I examine how these shifting power relations in the family shape ongoing contests over gender inequalities below.

Renegotiating gender, power and romance

Most revitalizationists argue that Mixtec gender relations are complementary, but not hierarchical. Juan Julian Caballero expresses these sentiments when he claims that "everything seems to be articulated in the life of the indigenous matrimony, and it only appears impeded when one of the partners is of non-indigenous origin" (2002:88). Nonetheless, Verdean women of different ages expressed their disaccord with the women's status within the family. During interviews, many women recalled the fear they felt at having to leave their families and begin a life with people they didn't know. Na Mariaelena, a 51-year old woman recounted her reticence to the formation of her union with her husband when she was fourteen years old:

> H.D.: How did you get married, or how did you decide to get married?
> Na Mariaelena: Well, I just did it. It wasn't my idea, because I had to get married. It was by force because my father and mother told me, "Daughter, someone has asked for you, so you have to get married."
> H.D.: You didn't want to?
> Na Mariaelena: Well, no! I didn't want to get married, because I was just a girl. But, the father decides.

Not surprisingly, given these sentiments, some girls fought against the unions. In fact, some wedding *madrinas,* or female sponsors, counted among their tasks ensuring that the bride-to-be did not escape. Other girls never reached the wedding ceremony, as they outwitted their parents and intended suitors by running away during the extended year-long process of negotiations leading up to the wedding. Migration was not necessarily a sure way to escape from arranged marriages, though, as several women report having had their marriages arranged while living in Mexico City. These villagers' accounts conflict with revitalizationists assertions that outside interference has generated women's disaccord.

Arranged marriages have all but disappeared in Pueblo Verde during the last three decades. The table below, which summarizes interview data, reflects this transformation: the vast majority of the villagers who were over forty years old formed their unions through arranged marriages, while none of those under forty did so.

Table 7. Unions among married villagers (N=41)

Age	Arranged Marriage		Other Union		Total	
	#	*%*	*#*	*%*	*#*	*%*
Under 40 years old	0	0	18	44	18	44
Over 40 years old	16	39	7	17	23	56

Youth's increasing movement within the village and beyond, associated with increasing levels of formal education and economic transformations, is one of the most important changes facilitating these trends. Increased movement has reduced parents' ability to monitor the behavior of youth and impose their expectations, creating spaces within which young people have sought to rewrite their relationships in ways that empower them. Villagers observe that growing migration to urban destinations increased

girls' awareness of different styles of forming relationships, and, armed with this knowledge, they increasingly rejected arranged marriages. Women and girls' ongoing discontent with gender inequities continues to shape these changes.

These struggles continue to contribute to ongoing trends towards increasingly flexible and less formal unions. The table below summarizes Mexican census data which indicates that formal marriage ceremonies dropped ten percent between 1990 and 2000 in the community, at the same time that free unions doubled from four to eight percent.

Table 8. Changes in marital status in villagers 12 years old and older, 1990 to 2000.

Year	Marital status										Total
	Single		Formal union		Free union		Separated/ divorced		Widowed		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
1990	340	33	557	55	41	4	11	1	69	7	1018
2000	421	35	542	45	100	8	18	15	122	10	1203
Change	+81	+2	-15	-11	+59	+4	+7	+14	+53	+3	+185

Data source: INEGI (n.d.) Sistema de Indicadores para el Seguimiento de la Situación de la Mujer en México. Electronic resource, www.inegi.gob.mx, accessed November 15, 2006.

Young women address the same kinds of concerns their mothers and grandmothers felt and sometimes fought against over the limited power they were afforded in their unions as they struggle to make their current unions better for them. Despite this commonality, older women's intimate engagement in and reliance on social networks for connections, esteem, and resources differently constructs their interests in relation to young women's propriety. Consequently, young women frequently encounter their mothers and their grandmothers as their greatest adversaries as they struggle to remake unions in ways that afford them more power.

Women's honor, sexuality and monogamy

Villagers recount the importance of prohibitions against girls' and women's interactions with boys and men in public in shaping women's conduct and social status in history. Nonetheless, changing norms led IMSS researchers to conclude that women's virginity and monogamy are not major concerns among Verdeans villagers' (IMSS-Solidaridad 2000:69). Young people increasingly come together and scope out potential mates in public spaces, such as at the basketball courts in the evenings, as well as at dances and at school. I was surprised by this seeming laxity in concern over young women's virginity in the family where I resided. Just a few days after I arrived in the village, a male friend of my host's single, twenty-eight year old daughter spent the night alone with her in her large room, which she had divided into a bedroom and a living area. No one seemed to object to his presence. I was even more surprised the following day, when another young man arrived, who turned out to be a man she had been dating for several months. Throughout the duration of the research period, he visited multiple times each week for overnight stays.

I came to understand that many older villagers' seeming permissiveness reflects expectations associated with common law marriage norms, which recognize marriage as a social process carried out over time that includes sexual relations, leads to pregnancy, and is cemented by a couple living together. In this context, many villagers' perspectives on virginity and premarital sex may appear remarkably permissive because they impose marital norms on relationships that other observers would not consider marriage. Like these observers, many youth conceive of their encounters as part of 'courting', and

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conflicts arise when they do not uphold other villagers' expectations that they will formalize their relationship.

Policing young women's honor: Gender and generation in contests over unions

When Adriana became pregnant, her partner, who was already committed to another relationship, refused to parent their child. In an interview, she recalled how other villagers stigmatized her for her single-parent status, and described how many villagers label single mothers as *cualquieras,* or whores. Her reflection intimates the social contest and critique that emerge when women fail to uphold certain standards for propriety in establishing relationships. As noted in Chapter Five, *kuentu,* or gossip, is one of the key forms of social control villagers employ to pressure others to conform to their ideals for behavior. Gossipers especially criticize young women who fail to uphold these expectations. For example, Teresa, a 64-year old woman herself criticized by many as a gossip, critiqued a 15-year old girl's courting behavior. Teresa criticized the girl not because she had spent time alone in the *milpa* with a young man, but because she then sought another boyfriend. Guadalupe, a 42 year old single mother of three children, conveyed similar sentiments from her perch on Teresa's porch, where she reported that she informed one teenage girl, "If she wanted to go off with a boy then she was old enough to get married!"

Teresa warned of the consequences of failing to uphold these expectations for monogamy one day when explaining the scene we happened on, where a man of about sixty years was beating his partner with a stick in the middle of town during the middle of the day. Teresa indicated the woman was his third partner, that the man had a history of

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brutal violence, and suggested that he had killed one of his first two partners. After passersby stopped the attack we witnessed by pulling him off of his partner, he stumbled over to Teresa's porch. She refused to serve him, seeking to distance herself from the spectacle and reasoning that she might somehow be held culpable if she served him alcohol after what had just happened. Nevertheless, she claimed that the woman had provoked the beating with her improprieties. She explained,

> Well, that woman comes here to work, not to look for men! Just like you. You're here to work. Just like me, I'm here to sell firewater, not find a man.

Gossip affects those most intimately engaged in the social networks linking gossipers and their eager listeners, and others who define their goals and seek esteem in relation to these networks. The failure of subjects to uphold these expectations in the first place suggests their likely distance from these norms, and from the associated power of gossipers. Nonetheless, shame and the marginalization it can cause influence the family members of subjects of gossip who are engaged in these networks, and whose social status is intimately bound with these networks.

For example, one afternoon while I sat with a shifting group of about eight women on Teresa's storefront, the women began talking about Adán, a young man cited who had terminated a relationship with his 'wife' and begun another. While Adán got away with an enjoinder to maintain this relationship, the women were less forgiving of his former 'wife', who had terminated the relationship and returned to her first partner. They vented their discontent by talking at length about the positive qualities possessed by his new girlfriend in the presence of his old former 'mother-in-law', whose cheeks grew increasingly crimson until she finally got up and left. In a context where these social linkages ground social status and shape material wealth, the ruptures in these linkages

caused by gossip have significant implications. As a result, female family members engaged in these networks often have much at stake in ensuring that their younger family members uphold expectations for monogamy and formalizing commitments. Given the high stakes of the shaming in social networks in relation to young women's improprieties, villagers involved in these networks have often taken measures to pressure their family members to uphold their expectations for relationship formation. In one case, the parents of a teenage girl were so unsettled by their daughter's unformalized relationship with a local young man that they enlisted the assistance of the authorities to force the young couple to marry. The couple still refused. The couple's refusal aptly symbolizes how the relative empowerment of youth vis-à-vis their elder counterparts is contributing to the outcomes of ongoing struggles over the Verdean family.

Conclusion

Villagers of all ages recounted gender-related contests over the family. Their reflections attest to the salience of these struggles in Verdean history. Moreover, in their stories, Verdeans indicate how age has influenced villagers' perceptions of their interests and, accordingly, the positions they stake out in relation to these contests over the family. Youths' increasing economic status vis-à-vis their elder counterparts has shifted age-based power relations in recent years, propelling transformations in the outcomes of these gender-based familial contests. In the next two chapters, I examine how Oportunidades service providers' and revitalizationists' efforts intersect with these dynamics to influence Verdean contests over the family.

CHAPTER EIGHT: ENCOUNTERING OTHERS WITHIN

In Chapter Six, I argued that articulations of indigenous culture have importantly influenced Verdean sociality, and prompted a divergence between those who bear indigenous culture and those who wield it. Thereafter, in Chapter Seven, I examined how shifts in the context within which villagers engage in ongoing contests over the ideal family are influencing the outcomes of these contests. In particular, I argued that desires for goods associated with 'progress' and villagers' different abilities to access these goods are prompting shifts in generational power relations. These shifts, in turn, are shaping the outcomes of villagers' ongoing cultural struggles, including those dealing with the family.

In this chapter, I turn to examine how IMSS-Oportunidades shapes villagers' contests over the family, along with their contests over the value of the distinctiveness of local experience, through family planning interventions. As I do so, I examine how the Program contributes to the divergence among villagers in those who wield culture and those who bear it. Moreover, I closely examine how that distinction influences villagers' relationships with one another.

The value of large families in Pueblo Verde

During interviews, Verdeans cited a wealth of advantages to large families. The most frequently cited advantage was linked to family economies: more people working together can produce more wealth and resources. As many observers have noted especially for agricultural economies, children often contribute essential labor that helps

the family meet its members' consumption needs (Caldwell 1981). Informants often cited this contribution when they remarked that bigger families are advantageous because people accomplish more by working together. A couple of people, commenting on this reality, observed that whether or not children pose an economic asset or burden to the family economy depends on lifestyle: large families are still only economically burdensome when parents send their children to school. Many villagers also cited the advantage of large families for family economies outside of agricultural production, within villagers' extraordinarily diversified contemporary family economies. In these cases, one or two siblings may help with local agricultural production, one may help with selling surplus at regional markets, a couple may pursue professional degrees in other regions, and others may migrate to Mexico City, northern Mexico, or the United States for work. Thus, multiple villagers observed that whether or not children contribute to the family economy or burden it depends on the age of the children: as they grow older they make greater contributions. Villagers noted other economic advantages of large families, as well. Most intriguingly, several people noted that parents work as hard as necessary to ensure that their children's needs are met. So, as opposed to children draining wealth from the family through the consumption of resources, they cited having more children as a wealth creation strategy because it motivated parents to work harder.

Table 9. Advantages of large families (N=27)

Advantages	#
To contribute to family economy	12
To help parents when they are older	8
To share time with others	7
To help each other out	5
To get more government support	1

Note: Many respondents provided multiple answers.

The second most frequently cited advantage of larger families was to ensure that parents have enough children to take care of them in old age. The fact that elderly people without children are the population with the direst circumstances in Pueblo Verde today attests to the acuity of many adults' concerns with ensuring they had enough children so that at least one helped in their old age. Informants also often cited larger families as valuable because they provide a basis for *convivencia,* or sharing time with others. Finally, several people mentioned that larger families in general are advantageous because family members help each other out.

Although villagers young and old ultimately cited an array of advantages of large families, when I queried about the advantages of small families, almost all of them responded that small families are preferable because large families cost too much. Villagers' praise of small families was remarkable for multiple reasons. First, many respondents who asserted the superiority of small families had relatively large families: while thirty-two of the forty-four interview respondents asserted advantages of small families, half of them had between five and twelve children. In addition, in multiple cases people who had their children before the introduction of discourses of choice, control, and planning explained their families with these ideas. For example, a mother of six explained that she chose to have six because more would have been too many. When I responded by asking her how she had kept herself from having more, my suggestion that she employed some kind of technique to keep her from having more children left her speechless.[31] Even a couple of informants who had clearly suffered because they had too

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[31] Older women's and older men's responses often indicated that they perceived large families as beneficial and acted accordingly. Nonetheless, men typically controlled fertility, and gender differences in their responses suggest that the physical and work burdens of pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing led at least some women to desire more control over their fertility decisions. Scholars working in other parts of rural

few children claimed the superiority of small families. In fact, people often asserted the superiority of small families with such conviction that I felt compelled to skip the question that followed, about whether there were advantages to large families. Nonetheless, I asked all of the questions as a matter of protocol. When I immediately queried whether there were advantages to large families, many people initially seemed surprised by the question. After thinking for a moment, they often proceeded to enthusiastically report on the advantages of large families in their experiences. On more than one occasion, informants who had just concluded to me the superiority of small families changed their minds and asserted that people should have large families.

Villagers' responses to my questions about ideal family size reflect the recent history and current context of family planning promotion, within which clinic personnel have promoted the superiority of small families as reasoned and denigrated large families as unreasoned. In constructing these explanations, providers draw from longstanding colonial discourses that identified those who spoke Spanish and used Spanish style clothing as *gente de razón*, or people of reason, in contrast to indigenous people (see Chapter Three). Thus, IMSS-*Oportunidades* personnel often explained large families as a product of too much cultural enmeshment and its corollary, insufficient education. For example, the clinic doctor argued that insufficient education leads people in rural areas to have many children despite inadequate resources to care for them, and indicated that Oportunidades is meant to redress this educational shortfall. She explained,

> Principally the program Oportunidades is in the rural communities because that is
> precisely where much of this [family education] is lacking. In the families, and they were
> families that lacked the necessities sufficient to take care of them. They lacked adequate

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Oaxaca have described women's extensive knowledge and use of methods for regulating their fertility (Browner 1986). I did not ask individual respondents whether they used these methods unless they first broached the topic.

education. So, now, the program is working so that everyone knows about family education. The mothers of families, so that they are aware, no? Of how many children they should have. How many they want to have. And, methods of family planning are discussed with each one, and talking seriously about how important the decision that the woman makes is about in which moment and what methods they want, no?

Others explicitly situated culture within these links between education and fertility, contrasting the unreasoned cultural approach of 'awaiting the children God sent' with the reasoned planning approach. For example, when I asked Adriana, the part-time clinic nurse, whether large families were a part of Mixtec culture, she replied that Mixtec culture causes large families because it is a *"cultura muy arraigada,"* a deeply-rooted culture. As she continued, she linked this deeply-rooted culture with lack of education and large families: "It was because they lacked sufficient reason, media, and orientation that they followed this family rhythm." She signaled these connections in another way when I asked about the notion that large families are disadvantageous because they require more money. She replied,

> It's true. For those of us who use reason, who think of necessities. Other people say, *'Los que mandan Dios'* [Those that God sends].

Thus, providers conveyed perceptions that the effects of culture render especially encultured sectors of the community immune to reasoning, and to the broader educational strategies they employ to press these villagers to have smaller families.

Unreasoning and silencing

Villagers' descriptions of the locally-salient benefits of large families suggest that those who approached their families by awaiting *"los hijos que Dios mandaba"* strategized to have as many children as possible, which contrasts with the disinterestedness suggested by the interpretation that they awaited 'whatever God sent'.

Nonetheless, villagers widely employ this language to explain shifting perspectives on ideal family size as a transformation from the unreasoned approach of awaiting 'whatever God sent' to a more reasoned planning approach. For example, in Eustolia's reflection on how villagers' approaches to forming their families have changed in recent history, she characterizes family creation prior to the introduction of family planning as guided solely by nature:

> Now many people come and teach us. Its like, I don't know, but I hear people say 'we have to take this medicine'. 'We have to wait a while after having one child before having another.' 'Have two, or up to three, no more.' But before – nothing. One came after another and another, until they stopped coming. I had twelve and four died – two girls and two boys…

Continuing, she cites a local discourse contending that prior to the introduction of family planning, villagers didn't know where babies came from:

> It's like they say, we lived between the two of us and we didn't know how it was that the babies came and that's the way it went until they stopped coming.

These discourses negate the locally-salient reasoning underlying large families, and in so doing denigrate local experience. In interviews, some villagers recounted how clinic personnel employed coercion and violence to force them to acquiesce to smaller families, indicating that conflict and violence have surrounded efforts to unreason large families and denigrate local experience.

Mario, a 70 year old man, captured the top-down approach clinic service providers used to teach villagers the virtues of small families when he explained, "We had many children because there was no doctor around to tell us to only have a few." Multiple villagers who were unwilling to voluntarily undergo interventions aimed at ensuring they did not have any more children recount that clinic personnel took additional measures to gain their compliance. For example, when I asked Esmeralda, a

42-year old mother of five, how many kids she had wanted, she responded, "Well, I just wanted three I was thinking, but, well, .. umm, plus two..." I asked how it was that she ended up having five children instead of three, but she instead explained that she did not have more than five because the clinic nurse threatened to impose a fine on her if she refused to undergo a tubal ligation.

> Esmeralda: Well, I had five and the nurse that is here, [Mary] – because she had just began, no? Or it had been three years since she began – and she said, 'I'm going to give you a 500 peso[32] fine!' she said, and I thought, that's a lot of money! And I did it, I went to [nearby city]. And then I didn't have any more kids.
> H.D.: Oh, because of the surgery?
> Esmeralda: Yes.
> H.D.: But, the fine...?
> Esmeralda: (laughing) Yeah, she said she was going to give me a fine. Because of that, to avoid the fine, I went to [nearby city].
> H.D.: Was she serious, or was it a joke?
> Esmeralda: Who knows, because I think she was serious!
> H.D: Oh.
> Esmeralda: Because after, well... But I also, I didn't want to have any more kids because it's a lot. And I didn't have any money either, and my husband was in Mexico City!

Esmeralda's indications of her doubts about whether to have a tubal are suggestive, especially when compared to the experiences of other women whose unequivocal desires for more children were obstructed when IMSS physicians performed tubal ligations on them without their awareness or consent.

Elena, a 44-year old mother of six, went to the hospital for health care assistance in delivering her baby and the doctor performed a tubal ligation on her without her consent. When I asked her how she ended up having six children in an interview, she explained that she had her last child via cesarean section. I asked, "And after you didn't get pregnant anymore?" She responded that she didn't. "Because you didn't want to have anymore children?" She laughed, "Because they didn't want me to – the doctors." In contrast to many other villagers' indecisiveness about the relative merits of small and

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[32] About 50 dollars.

large families, she had a clear preference for large families. In fact, she is one of the few informants who did not identify advantages to small families.

Soledad, a 50-year old victim of domestic abuse, also reported that a physician performed a tubal ligation on her without her consent when she traveled to the regional hospital for treatment after being beaten by her husband. She had seven pregnancies, but lost five, more than one due to her husband's abuse. She explained that she had wanted many children because she would have enjoyed being together in a big family and because there would have been more people to help each other out. But, she reflected, "There were few children – I wasn't able to have many." The doctor capitalized on her request for medical assistance with the wounds she acquired from her husband's battery to perform a tubal ligation on her without her consent. In the process, they ended her hopes of having a larger family.

These accounts suggest that service providers have used threats of withholding resources to coerce those women who were uncertain about whether they wanted more children to comply with clinic demands, while resorting to force with those who refused to comply. Other women observed the violent and coercive means through which physicians imposed their ideas of ideal family size on some villagers, and as a result feared family planning. Eustolia, a 55-year old woman, recounted the fear she felt as she observed how service providers submitted other women to 'family planning', and the hardships she endured as she strategized to avoid exposure to it. She explained,

> Na Eustolia: ... I had 12 children and four died – two girls and two boys.... And what was I going to do if there was no medicine? Not even one pill, there was nothing. Just now, when the nurses came along, they said that women go and they cut their stomachs! And, because of this people certainly had fewer children! The truth is, I was really scared that they would cut me! So, I had two more children..., and they kept saying and saying that they were going to give me pills. Like, then they would scare us

by saying that if we didn't protect ourselves when we had sex we could die. And, well, I was scared…
Assistant: So, you were scared?
Na Eustolia: Yes, I'm scared to go to the doctor. I'm really afraid, even for childbirth. I'm not going to lie, I absolutely will not go. If my nine months are complete and my stomach begins to bother me, my medicine will be nothing more than a couple of plants. I use this and nothing else and that's how my baby is born. That's how it's been with 12 kids; I didn't take one pill.

The fear na Eustolia so eloquently expressed evidences the power of the threat of forced sterilization, and the likelihood that this threat led many to deny desiring large families. In this context, the assertion of local reasonability and the cultural embeddedness it signified could be a basis for 'having her stomach cut.' Moreover, she conveyed her continued anxiety over the possibility that a provider may perceive her to still be fertile, as she repeatedly promised that she was no longer capable of becoming pregnant.

Assistant: So, you just stopped getting pregnant?
A Eustolia: Until it stopped. I tell the doctor the same thing – you know how they ask so much. We have to tell them everything, because we are in Oportunidades and we tell them everything. I've told the doctor the truth. I stopped having kids… Yes, we stopped. We won't have anymore. It's the truth. I'm not going to tell lies claiming to be on the pill, or something, no. Because I was afraid, that's why I had all of the kids I had until they stopped coming.

While a Eustolia passionately conveys her continued fear of being forced to undergo surgery, other women more quietly conveyed in interviews that they chose not to enroll in Oportunidades, despite clear indications of their need, because they 'could not comply with the requirements'.

To the extent that 'the women who remain' symbolize local distinctiveness, their perspectives could make them targets of forced surgery. Their minds and bodies constitute a key terrain in ongoing contests over the value of local experience, and indigeneity. In this context, the forcibly sterilized bodies of some women attest to the

power propping up the notion that large families are unreasonable, and the underlying denigration of local experience.

Educating youth

Clinic personnel convey their assumptions of villagers' differential enculturedness and its implications for their ability to reason to adolescents in their educational sessions. Program materials, the clinic physician and the nurses employed symbols of especially encultured adults to educate youth about incorrect behaviors. For example, during a session on gender equity, the clinic nurse, Sylvia, anchored her discussion of the declining significance of fertility in defining masculinity in a neighboring community that is perceived as especially encultured. She asserted that people no longer subscribe to the notion that using contraceptives makes a man less masculine. Her observation thereafter that men in the neighboring community continue to do so and prohibit their wives from use contraceptives because they fear their wives will be unfaithful would seem to contradict her original contention. Nonetheless, she drew from the symbolism of these especially encultured subjects as backward to support her contention that people no longer believe that using contraceptives impinges on masculinity.

Significantly, Sylvia, a villager and clinic nurse, hinged her reference to an *other* on a neighboring community that is perceived as more culturally embedded, where the Spanish language is less widespread and 'traditional' dress is more widely used. In contrast, the Program material depicts encounters between educated clinic staff and culturally embedded people within the same community. For example, the video on family planning discussed in Chapter Seven depicted a father who was considering a

proposal for marriage on behalf of his daughter. The father initially rejected the proposal based on his understanding that contraceptives can be lethal, but the clinic doctor educated him and the *padrino* that this was a misconception. Significantly, in the discussion following the film, the resident doctor incorporated the group members into an educated 'us' that she contrasted with their culturally-embedded older adult family members. She asked the group members whether they knew anyone who believed that contraceptives are dangerous, like the father portrayed in the film. The participants affirmed, and the doctor urged them to help by educating these uninformed villagers.

Although service providers clearly cite indigenous culture as a culprit in hindering reasoning, ambiguities in the relations of causality between education, culture and lack of reason enable some villagers to focus on educational differences as they adopt these perspectives to categorize others as different from them in the community. Thus, those who explained some villagers' large families as products of insufficient reason understood this deficiency as a product not of culture, but of insufficient education. The perceptions Salvador, a 31-year old local neighborhood leader, conveyed in an interview illustrate. Salvador contrasted reasonable villagers with small families to their unreasoned counterparts in his account of the changes in how people in Pueblo Verde approach planning for their families. In his explanation, he echoed the views of clinic personnel that the educational system provides villagers with reason, thus enabling them to perceive the advantages of small families.

> Well, it used to be that people wanted lots of kids, no? Now I don't think that young people think that way. Because, you know how before, because people didn't have schooling, they didn't go to school, and... well, that's why school is important, because more than anything it gives reason.

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Although villagers' initial responses to my queries about ideal family size suggested that they had arrived at a consensus over the superiority of small families, deeper probing revealed villagers' ongoing divergences over the value of large families and local experience. An interchange between my 31 year old educated, bilingual research assistant and Na Eustolia, a 55 year old monolingual Mixtec woman with no formal education, attests to these ongoing contests:

> Assistant: Are there people who say that if we have few children, we'll live better?
> Na Eustolia: There are people who say how lucky you are to have children!
> Assistant: What, when there are many?
> Na Eustolia: When there are many.
> Assistant: But, if there are few children, do you think people would live better?
> Na Eustolia: Well, I think a little good and a little bad. But, put my response that it's best if there are many children.
> Assistant: That it's good?
> Na Eustolia: Yes.
> Assistant: If there are few – you say that it's better why?
> Na Eustolia: Well it's better if there are few because we don't have enough for our expenses, but what are we going to do if we already have the children?
> Assistant: And if there are many children it's also good?
> Na Eustolia: Well, it's good when there are many children because we have people to be together with. If we just have one or two, they leave, and we stay alone and then we don't have anyone to talk with.

Although my assistant ultimately conveyed Na Eustolia's assertion large families are beneficial, she refused to do so until na Eustolia acquiesced to the idea that smaller families are better. Na Eustolia's reliance on my assistant to communicate her perceptions recalls the shifting generational power relations that are shaping these contests.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed the conceptions of cultural difference Oportunidades service providers advance to villagers while pressing them to adopt smaller families. IMSS-Oportunidades designates enculturedness as prohibiting the

ability to reason, and providers identify the 'women who remain' as especially encultured. Importantly, in educational programs, service providers press youth to adopt their perceptions of certain villagers as more encultured and less reasoned, and to promote and vigil conformity with Program aims in the community. As they provide youth with a culture frame for conceptualizing the value of local distinctiveness, they contribute to distinctions between those who bear culture and those who wield it. The perspectives and bodies of culture-bearers constitute the terrain of battle in the ensuing contests over ideal family size, in which villagers simultaneously dispute the value of local experience. As the perspectives and bodies of the women who remain symbolize the value of the distinctiveness of local experience, the denigration of their perspectives and the violation of their bodies by IMSS-Oportunidades personnel and villagers alike symbolizes a deeper process of denigrating Verdeanness.

CHAPTER NINE: VALORIZING 'CULTURE' IN VERDEAN CULTURAL CONTESTS

Thus far in the dissertation, I have argued that perceptions of the 'women who remain' as quintessential bearers of indigenous culture have led them to bear much of the hardships caused by the denigration of indigenousness. To the extent that observers deem their experiences as emblematic of culture, these women's self-defensive acts often resonate with broader efforts to defend indigeneity. Thus, they would seem to be the first beneficiaries of revitalization aims. Nonetheless, revitalizationists have largely excluded this sector of the population from their efforts, as they focus their attention on the educational system.

The educational focus provides a convenient way for revitalizationists to harness state resources and authority in pursuing their efforts. It also attests to the firm grounding of revitalization in modernity. One leading revitalizationist discussed the congruence of modernity with revitalization goals during an interview, citing the use of computers to write the Mixtec language to support his claim that the movement is not against 'development' and to evidence how revitalizationists draw from modern and traditional elements. Because revitalizationists often affirm oppositions between indigenousness and modernity in articulating the value of indigenousness, the modern focus imbues their efforts with a fundamental contradiction: it excludes those who provide the movement with symbolic weight from actively participating in it. The investigation in Pueblo Verde suggests that revitalizationists may contribute to the processes they seek to combat by empowering youth with 'culture' in their ongoing cultural contests and excluding many

of the community members who are waging battles that resonate with their aims. I examine these tendencies below.

Culture and the uneven enculturing of selves in Pueblo Verde

In my examination of the changing family in Chapter Five, I related how older adults repeatedly responded to the questions I had designed to gauge *negative* sentiments over change by affirming the *positive* changes they had seen. Some of these villagers were so moved by the positive changes they had seen that they expressed their willingness, even eagerness, to relinquish practices or behaviors perceived as impeding their abilities to acquire greater wealth. Thus, the limited ways in which older villagers conveyed a conception of their everyday practices as having a more transcendental salience in relation to development typically reflected negative appraisals of these practices as impeding progress. My efforts to target my questions more precisely towards their concerns about losing "culture" were no more effective. "Culture" lacked resonance for villagers over the age of fifty. Like "culture", *costumbre*, or custom, objectifies certain traits and practices, bestowing on them a new dimension of meaning grounded principally in their inheritance from the past and their distinctiveness from *mestizo* ways. Although some of these villagers were more familiar with *costumbre*, many seemed to regard *costumbre* as something that by nature is not lost, an interpretation that preempts the emergence of concerns about losing *costumbres*.

By contrast, the perspectives youth communicated during interviews indicated that they had adopted conceptions of *costumbre* and culture attached to positive valuations of these practices. Youth readily discussed culture and *costumbre,* the value

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of both and the importance of protecting them. Moreover, they reported discussing these themes in school. The table below displays the number and percentage of interviewees in each age group who were familiar with the concept of *costumbre*. While seventy-three percent of interviewees under thirty years old indicated familiarity with the concept, only twenty-four percent of those thirty and older did so.

Table 10: Familiarity with *costumbre* concept according to age group (N=44)

Age	Familiarity with *costumbre*	
	#	%
15-29	11/15	73
30+	7/29	24

There were also clear differences among those who indicated familiarity with the concept in relation to how they interpreted it. The vast majority of villagers under thirty years old – eighty percent – identified fiestas as *costumbres*. Multiple younger villagers also cited the language, followed in decreasing frequency by the *milpa*, food and dress. Although the greatest percentage of older villagers also cited fiestas, only thirty-one percent did so. Moreover, one third of these villagers qualified their answers by remarking that although fiestas were a *costumbre*, they had changed a lot during their lives. The informant in the older group who cited weddings as a local *costumbre* similarly noted changing marital practices. Older villagers also listed a wider array of *costumbres,* adding 'the town history', 'eating simply', 'drinking firewater' and 'taking care of children' to those listed above. Finally, one reported that *costumbres* differ in every family. Thus, while younger adults conveyed a limited array of practices and

objects as *costumbres,* those older adults who indicated familiarity with the concept interpreted it in ways that suggest that, as the primary subjects of these practices taken to symbolize cultural distinctiveness, they drew from their own lived experience to interpret and qualify the concept. I present these trends in tabular form below.

Table 11: *Costumbres* identified according to age (N=44)

Costumbres	Age			
	15-29		30+	
	#	%	#	%
Fiestas	12	80	9	31
Language	5	33	2	7
Milpa	3	20	5	17
Dress	2	13	0	0
Food	2	13	0	0
Straw weaving	1	7	3	10
Tequios	1	7	1	3
Weddings	1	7	1	3
Get togethers	1	7	0	0

Note: Many respondents provided multiple responses.

Verdean villagers' responses to my questions about the importance of the Mixtec language also reflected age-related differences in the adoption of the culture concept among villagers. Most younger villagers described the value of the Mixtec language as residing in its symbolism of their unique cultural heritage. For example, one respondent

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asserted, "[Mixtec is] very important because it is something original from the community that no one can take away from us if we don't stop speaking it." Another responded, "Mixtec is important because it characterizes our *pueblo*, the unique way of dressing and talking." In contrast, older villagers located the value of the language in its utility for communicating. In this vein, many responded that the Mixtec language was important because they did not speak Spanish, or because "that's the language we speak here". Some respondents who followed the same kind of approach of locating the value of the language in its utility arrived at the conclusion that Spanish is important. Several of these respondents asserted the necessity of having both languages to be able to function effectively within and outside of the community. A few asserted that Spanish was most important, claiming that without it one cannot eat, and on that basis asserted that the Mixtec language is not important.

I present data on how villagers described the value of language, either in relation to its utility or as a symbol of identity, organized according to age in the table below.

Table 12: Importance of Mixtec language according to age (N=42)

Age	Description of importance of language					
	Mixtec utility		*Spanish utility*		*Mixtec identity*	
	#	*%*	*#*	*%*	*#*	*%*
15-29	5	12	1	2	9	21
30-49	6	14	0	0	3	7
50+	12	29	6	14	0	0

Sixty percent of the youngest villagers interviewed described the importance of the Mixtec language in relation to its value as a signifier of Mixtec identity. Among thirty to forty-nine year old villagers, forty percent described the importance of the language in

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relation to Mixtec identity, while sixty percent explained its value in relation to its utility. Finally, all of the villagers over fifty years old explained the value of language – Mixtec and Spanish – in relation to its utility.

In sum, villagers' discussions of language and culture indicate that most younger villagers have adopted conceptions of local practices as having additional value as symbols of indigenous cultural difference, while older villagers have not. The latter generally lacked familiarity with discourses promoting *costumbre* and culture as bases of pride. Although a substantial minority of older villagers indicated familiarity with *costumbre*, they were typically unsure in their use of the concept and did not explicitly link it with a political critique of the marginalization of indigenous peoples. In contrast, younger villagers regard key *costumbres* as contributing to their own unique worth as indigenous peoples, and they perceive their links to these practices as lending value to their selves.

For Mixtec revitalizationists and other indigenous rights activists, the power of the cultural symbols they advance lies in their ability to reference a broader way of life and orientation. Nonetheless, Verdeans do not appear to understand these symbols and their value in the same way. Rather, for Verdean youth and younger adults who have adopted these concepts, the value of these symbols stems from their inclusion in a relatively small set of unique expressions of difference that are increasingly valued in the larger *mestizo* world. Thus, the significance of the *fiesta* lies in its appreciation within the larger *mestizo* world, and its corresponding ability to bestow value on those associated with it, not in its harkening of a more diffusive unique cultural essence that infuses everyday experience in the community. As a result, youth do not interpret these

valorizations in ways that challenge the facets of Verdean experience that have been denigrated on the basis that they symbolize indigenousness. On the contrary, in some cases youth interpret these valorizations in ways that affirm the denigration of local experience. Below, I examine these dynamics more closely through a comparison of three women's experiences in adopting and making sense of "culture". I focus on the three villager-health providers who work at the clinic: Juana, Adriana and Sylvia.

Adopting 'culture' in Pueblo Verde: Juana, Adriana and Sylvia

Clinic villager-health providers are compelling subjects for investigating how revitalizationists' promotions of indigenous culture intersect with denigrations of indigenous culture. While villagers with the highest education levels typically have the greatest exposure to revitalization perspectives, clinic personnel are among the few highly-educated villagers who spend most of their time in the village. In addition, IMSS researchers' and program designers' implication of indigenous culture as an impediment to development, and the corresponding strategies providers are charged with carrying out, typify the kinds of programs indigenous rights activists seek to combat. In this context, providers' adoption of "culture" as a positive point of identification provides an excellent vantage point for examining how people make sense of these two sets of perspectives, and the possibilities and limitations of these accommodations.

Juana

Of the three women, Juana, the thirty-six year old Rural Health Assistant, seems to most typify what one might associate with the valorization of indigenous culture, and

her aspirations for her community most accord with those of revitalizationists. She considers herself an advocate of the community, especially the women she works with in her talks, whom she refers to as *"mi gente"*, or my people. Her deep appreciation of local experience challenges denigrations of Verdean experience linked with devaluations of indigenousness. In the course of my interview with her, she mentioned a wide array of community practices and characteristics that she considers valuable, including forms of sociality, values, the environment, work styles, the family division of labor and the knowledge of elders, in addition to the more commonly referenced symbols of distinction, including the language and 'traditional' forms of dress. For example, when I initially asked her how she would describe the community to someone who had never been there, she emphasized Verdeans' welcoming social conventions:

> Well, Pueblo Verde is a very tranquil community, very respectful. The majority of people know the *dialecto*. They are very simple, also very kind. Any person – when I do my home visits, ah!, they always give me my *tortilla*, my soda. I mean, people really take care of us – it's very nice. ….

Later in the interview, she identified how family members work together as a special dimension of Verdean experience:

> People are simple, hard working. … Almost everyone goes to the markets; and the *señoras* are those who go. … They are very hard workers, *las senoras*. And the *senores* stay home and take care of the animals. … And what I think I like most is how even children are involved. Parents inculcate them with the notion that they have to work, and so even then children go to Tlaxiaco and go along with their little carts and there they have their little cilantro, there, and they also sell their vegetables. The little ones.

Finally, she intimated her deeper appreciation for the distinctive knowledge of the community through her assertion that they "must take care of the [older generation]," adding, "We learn so much from them."

Juana's aspirations for the future correspond with her valorization of local experience. When I asked her what changes she hoped to see in the next twenty years, she initially remarked on the need to find new ways of generating income, and grounded her claims of this need in the recollections of older villagers who had most suffered from want. She responded,

> It would be to educate people, orient their so they change their ways, so that in time they have a better life than the one they are living now. Because before, the great-grandparents – oh my! They lived so sadly. Terribly! For example, my mom said that they walked from here to Chalcatongo, which is almost a day and a night to get to Chalcatongo. To buy their corn and everything, they had just a few tortillas to eat – I mean, one tortilla for each child, no more! And nothing more than a tortilla because there was no food. So, now, well, thank God we do have, like there is water, people learned to work the field, we grow a little food, and now we feed ourselves.

After establishing the need and desire for new income-generating opportunities, Juana described a vision of the future that builds on the local distinctiveness of the community. In this vision, she emphasizes the need to provide education to villagers to enable them to improve their agricultural production techniques, as well as providing them skills in other select areas. She continued,

> I think my hope would be that the people change their way of living so they would be able to do a wider variety of jobs, like, for someone to come and give a course on construction, or agronomy, more than anything to change the way they work the land, so they produce more, for example. Because now people use many chemicals so the *milpa* produces. It's very artificial. But I think people can change, eh? They can change. It's a question of whether we help one another.
> H.D: And, you didn't mention bringing businesses here for –
> - Ay, no! No, I don't want businesses to come here. They would harm people.

When I further queried her about what would need to happen for these changes to occur, she focused mainly on education, and included the talks she provides to Oportunidades recipients as part of this education.

> People need to study a bit more. I mean, all of the people should study, and the talks we give, they should think about them so they can change. Because we give talks, we give talks, but they enter in one ear and go out the other. So, they need to retain them and

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understand them. They would change, too. I mean, if they understand the talks, they will change. Yes, because if I tell them to sweep their houses every day, they can do it... But there are people who don't do it. So, people need to be more educated.

In her response, Juana clearly communicates an assumption that villagers sometimes fail to grasp or act in their best interests, which resonates with more widespread denigrations of some villagers as lacking reason. Nonetheless, she stands out among the three women for her appreciation for local distinctiveness, and she conveys this appreciation as she delineates a vision of a better future grounded in grounded in the current Verdean experience. Thus, she concludes,

> They need to have more varied ways of living, but they must not leave the countryside. Because the countryside is so beautiful, and from there we can get everything. It's just a question of working it.

Juana's perspectives on the value of local experience and those who embody it have led her to clash with other members of the clinic repeatedly. One of the more recent aggravations she complained about in the interview was how the other members of the clinic staff hold impromptu meetings and threaten Program recipients with the possibility of losing funds if they do not attend. She related,

> Another thing that I don't like and that bothered me is that they don't give us prior notice. I mean, they should notify us, no? Say 'after the community cleaning people will have to stay because there is going to be a meeting'. But, they don't inform us. Instead, at the last moment they say, people who don't stay for the talk will get an absence. That – no – that isn't the way to do things. I mean, the people do understand, and what if at the same time they had another appointment? But, they stay because it's the law! It shouldn't be that way. For example, if you say, I want a certain amount of people here. Well, tell them. Tell them – send them a reason. 'You know what? People will have to stay because we are going to vote for representatives.'

In addition to this complaint, Juana successfully advocated on behalf of the Program recipients she works with, who live in an outlying *rancho* about fifteen minutes away from the town center, to reduce their requirements for participating in the monthly cleaning of *centro*. Their required participation was reduced from monthly to bimonthly.

Moreover, she successfully petitioned her supervisors for the right to hold these women's educational sessions in a building in the *rancho*, ending the requirement that they travel to the clinic. By far most contentiously, Juana complained to her supervisors about other staff members' misrepresentation of the Program as requiring participation in the monthly cleaning. She explained her critique in the interview:

> The truth is that they came up with the idea once again to hurt people, because, in the Program Guidelines, it doesn't say that we have to sweep. We have to sweep only when we have the desire to do so because it's our community. This is what we have to make people understand, that they need to understand how to do it, but to force them to do it – no – it's voluntary. We need to work on behalf of the community, no? But, most people don't understand. Well, think about it – 'we'll give them an absence!' That's what we do!

Juana was unsuccessful in her efforts to end the 'mandatory' cleaning.

Juana's defense of local experience, her challenging of denigrations of local experience and those taken to embody it in her own work, and her locally-situated aspirations for the future correspond closely with the perspectives and aims of revitalizationists. Nonetheless, she understands "culture" and efforts to promote it in a way that has no relevance for her defense of local experience.

Juana claims the right of communities to protect their distinctive cultures, asserting "Every community has their culture, their traditions, and, well, it shouldn't be lost." Nonetheless, her conception of culture and traditions does not encompass the local experience she defends in her daily life. Rather, like other community members who have adopted the culture concept as a point of pride, Juana identifies as culture particular symbols that have been celebrated as exotic emblems of distinctiveness in a broader world that increasingly prizes these symbols. She cites the language and the 'traditional' dress as especially important symbols. She emphasized language when I asked her if she had encountered revitalizationists' promotions of local culture in the community:

Um, the only thing I have heard is what the teachers say.
H.D.: The teachers?
Yes, the teachers. Because there are not any signs or anything, and nobody has come to talk about how we should protect the culture. The only thing I have heard from the teachers is that I think they now give classes in the *dialecto*. I mean, they are also concerned about [protecting the language].
H.D.: They probably work with the importance of protecting the culture and the language?
Yes, and the language.

Her reference point of observing teachers' promotion of the language led her to emphasize this as a dimension of local experience to be appreciated for its distinctiveness and preserved accordingly. Significantly, her reflections indicate that she did not understand teachers' promotion of the language as attached to a broader defense of culture.

Juana signaled the special dress Verdean women don during the pilgrimages they make during patron saint festivals as a particularly valuable tradition. She asserted,

I really like the regional dress. I love it. Have you seen when they do the pilgrimage? [*van de madrina?*] They look beautiful!

In fact, when I asked her what part of the culture was most important to her, she indicated the dress. While virtually all villagers speak Mixtec, relatively few don the long *enaguas* and *blusas* on a daily basis, predominantly older women. [See Hendrickson (1995) for a study of women, dress and the construction of identity in a highland town in Guatemala.] Nonetheless, the dress becomes available to all women during the patron saint festivals, as I described in Chapter Five. During these moments, the dress and those who wear it symbolize both the distinctiveness and the beauty of Pueblo Verde. Consequently, donning the dress and participating in the pilgrimages constitute a special way for women to embody and affirm their Verdean distinctiveness. Juana does not participate in the pilgrimages and don the dress; her failure to do so undoubtedly both reflects and

contributes to her ambivalences surrounding Verdean culture, and especially her relationship to it. Thus, in addition to understanding Mixtec culture as located in a very circumscribed array of symbolic practices and objects, her own link to these practices is unsure. Not surprisingly, she does not describe her defense of local experience as relevant to Mixtec culture and revitalizationists' efforts.

Adriana

Adriana, the twenty seven year old part-time clinic nurse, has not only participated in the pilgrimages, but took on a leadership role organizing a group of women for the pilgrimages for the patron saint festival during the year I conducted fieldwork. In correspondence with her active engagement in the *fiestas* and the pilgrimages, she is a passionate proponent of Verdean culture. She waxed poetically about Verdean culture during our interview:

> ...[Ours] is a very beautiful *cultura*. It's something marvelous ... Something very special. I think the *cultura* is very beautiful, and I hope the young people think that it's important, conserving *tradiciones*. They shouldn't take other *culturas*. They should accept the *costumbres* that we have. And yes, I would like the *cultura* here to continue. Because the truth is, everything – the *cultura*, the *fiesta*, the food, the language – it's something special.

While she cites key symbols other villagers often identify as positive symbols of Verdean distinctiveness – including *fiestas*, the language, and food – she also extends this appreciation for cultural difference to include the orientations and social conventions of older people. Thus, she lamented the changing orientations and social conventions of youth:

> The older generation is very joyful. They get together often. They are very accessible for whatever one wants. But, the younger people are a little proud. They don't have much respect. They've lost the value of sharing time together. The older women, they dance and smile...

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She also directed a more pointed critique at migrants for denigrating local experience

when they return to the community, reporting,

> .. There are many young people who go to the United States. When they come back, they want to use the *costumbres* that they have in the United States here. Like, for example, something that you can see is the clothing. They don't want Mexican clothing anymore. They prefer foreign clothing. ... And they act as it they could care less. When, really, that looks bad here. It looks bad. And they talk, their talk is all a mixture, no? And, they even use some words, um, very obscene words.
> So, [migration] is one of the reasons why sometimes [young people] prefer to focus more on outside *culturas*, and not be content with the *cultura* we have here.

In congruence with her more expanded interpretation of culture, Adriana decries migrant

youths' changing ways of speaking and styles of dress – the more commonly cited

symbols of cultural distinctiveness – while also referencing broader attitude changes and

the denigration of local experience.

Nonetheless, Adriana conveyed the limits of her appreciation for Verdean

costumbres and *culturas* later in the interview, as she discussed the importance of

preserving culture. She asserted,

> I say it is important for people to keep maintaining the same *culturas*, the same *tradiciones*, the same *costumbres* that the community has. Although yes there are some *costumbres* that sometimes affect the community. For example, *machismo* and inequity, gender inequity, right? These are some of the customs that affect the community a lot.

Her suggestion that people should preserve '*culturas*' and '*costumbres*' as long as they

do not 'affect the community' indicates a circumscribed conception of culture that

conflicts with revitalizationists' aims of using Mixtec culture as a foundation for

envisioning a different kind of development.

Multiple scholars have examined the complex processes through which women

participating in the Zapatista movement have worked to affirm the value of Mayan

cultural distinctiveness while challenging interpretations of that distinctiveness that

reaffirm gender inequities (Hernandez Castillo 1997, 1994; Speed et al. 2006). I initially

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understood Adriana's comments in a way akin to these descriptions of Zaptista women's challenges of 'traditions' that affirm gender inequities. In fact, like the Zapatista women, Adriana engages in rights-based struggles on multiple fronts in her everyday life, including her defense of "culture" and her defense of women's rights. Nonetheless, as Adriana talked more specifically about offending customs, she indicated that customs that impeded family planning goals, rather than women's rights, were the primary issue. She elaborated these ideas when I asked her about changes she would like to see in the next twenty years. She responded,

> Well, I hope that in twenty years people have a different vision of their health and themselves.... Because here the woman is very discriminated against in every way. In all aspects the woman is very rejected. And more when they live with their husbands. They think that the husband has to give the final world, although she also could do it. And I hope that they learn to decide for themselves, learn to decide about their own bodies, so that the husband is no longer manipulating her and speaking for her. Because, I'm talking about contraceptive methods because here the people, they like to wait for the final word of the husband. For example, in family planning, if the husband says that the woman is not going to use contraceptives so she won't have children, and the woman says [that she doesn't want more children], and he says yes, she also says yes. And what I hope is that they learn to decide for themselves. So they take good care of their bodies, [I hope] that they no longer wait for the husband because if they continue like this we are going to be very bad off. Very bad economically and socially because bringing children into the world, I think they shouldn't be brought just to bring them. They need necessary care so they can grow and have a good education... There is so much machismo, and machismo does not let women develop as women.
> H.D.: You work with contraceptives, but do you work more broadly in promoting women's abilities to make their own decisions?
> Adriana: Learning to plan the family. That is the intention.
> H.D.: Is it also that she gains power?
> Adriana: Aha. That she has, um, that she has, that she feels, - hmm , how could I explain? – so she gains the capacity to decide for herself.

Conflicts between Adriana's views of the defense of women, the defense of "culture", and her professional work may suggest that she is in an early stage of making sense of these ideas. Nonetheless, she ultimately established the limits of appreciation for cultural difference at the point where they interfere with Program aims.

Adriana's expanded sense of the realm of culture suggests possibilities in terms of the potential for culture to develop into a valorization of local experience to challenge denigrations of that experience. Nonetheless, she defines culture in a way that diffuses its ability to disrupt the Program's and her own denigrations of indigenousness and those who embody it, and the coercive strategies pursued in accordance with these beliefs. Correspondingly, throughout the research period, she continued to draw from the idea that some community members lack sufficient reason in coercing them to change their behaviors and in supporting Sylvia's coercive measures. In short, her interpretation of culture rests comfortably alongside of devaluations of Verdean culture based on denigrations of indigeneity.

Sylvia

Sylvia enthusiastically self-identifies as a modern Mexican woman. On one occasion, she proudly announced, "Soy *muy* Mexicana y *muy* moderna!" [I'm very Mexican and very modern!] In drawing from her modern sensibilities, she has often concluded that local experience lacks value. For example, she expressed her discontent with the offerings of the community as she lamented to her friends, "No hay *nada* aquí!" [There's *nothing* here!] In accordance with Sylvia's appreciation for things modern, one of her coworkers predicted that she would need to build her life elsewhere, and claimed that she was destined for greater things.

In marked contrast with Juana's praise of social conventions in the community, Sylvia often suggested that the practices associated with indigenousness were inferior to *mestizo* ways, which she referred to as "Mexican". Thus, when Sylvia, (like Adriana) gained the distinction of being one of the first women to hold a position in the local

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government, the municipal president was constantly harassing her for failing to comply with her duties. Her failure to carry out her duties reflected her perception of duties associated with her unpaid political position as secondary to her income generation efforts. She also complained about *guesa* relations of mutual help as burdensome, and chose to hold a formal banquet-style celebration in a neighboring city to mark her graduation from nursing school to avoid *guesa* obligations. At the celebration, she informed me, "This is how we do things in Mexico," and asserted that the banquet was superior because it enabled her to avoid all of the 'debt' incurred in village celebrations.

Although Sylvia reasoned the superiority of "Mexican" and "modern" ways of doing things, she unwittingly conveyed her shame about local practices on one occasion. I had noticed that her father hung a bulb of garlic in her doorway, which she removed as soon as she saw it. Her face turned pink when I asked her what it was for; she dismissed my question, claiming ignorance about its meaning and purpose, and quickly turned on her heel and walked away. Her momentary lapse in composure indicated how broader denigrations of indigeneity have shaped her estimations of the value of local experience (or lack thereof), and have informed her efforts to disassociate herself from Verdean identity.

Nonetheless, like the other women, Sylvia identified her Verdean identity as a salient part of her self-concept. She reflected, "My roots are here, and there is pride in knowing where I come from." In fact, Sylvia has encountered discourses promoting indigenous pride as distinctly modern, and has incorporated them into her frame of reference accordingly. She reflected that when she observed broader interest in local culture among teachers and others who arrive in the community, it peaked her own

interest, and prompted her to consider, "Why not me?" Thus, she asserted that rescuing *costumbres* is important, and reported that she plans to speak Mixtec with her child. She also reported that she has been considered creating a radio program talking about local culture.

Sylvia's familiarity with revitalization discourses has done little to disrupt her perceptions of the lack of value in local experience. On the contrary, she arrived at the same conclusions of villagers' inadequacy in evaluating her own community in relation to 'modern' promotions of cultural pride. She critiqued,

> People here aren't interested. We aren't noticing that it's being lost. Parents don't make their children speak Mixtec. They aren't interested in conserving the language. *Costumbres* have been lost, as well. We aren't worried about it.

While Sylvia derided herself and fellow villagers for lack of interest in protecting the culture, during other moments she questioned assumptions that villagers' distinctiveness is of the same ilk as that which is more widely valued. In fact, when I asked her how she would describe Mixtec culture to someone who knew nothing about it, she offered a textbook-like description with traditions that were not evident in Pueblo Verde. She reported,

> There are seven regions in Oaxaca – the Mixtec is the most mountainous. The ground is not very fertile. The Mixtec region has important traditions, like the *jarabe mixteco,* which is a Mixtec dance. The region has a very unique form of traditional dress, including a skirt with a black wool border, a bordered blouse, and *huaraches.* The region has traditional *comidas...* The climate is *templado.*

Her definition unsettles Pueblo Verde's engagement in Mixtec culture; indeed, Verdeans do not use the 'traditional dress' she describes. Moreover, at times, Sylvia drew from these valorizations of Mixtec culture to denigrate Verdean practices. For example, when I attended her parents' annual ceremony giving thanks to the earth for the harvest, she

laughed at the fact that they gave thanks to Saint Christopher, claiming that the religious impositions were ridiculous in comparison with the old, 'true' Mixtec deities.

Interestingly, Sylvia seems to be the only woman among the three who understands culture as a more transcendental entity that includes not only key symbolic practices, but also broader orientations and ways of being. In that sense, her understanding of culture most closely resonates with that of revitalizationists. Their views also correspond to the extent that they recall an authentic Mixtec subject. Nonetheless, Sylvia draws from these notions to further denigrate local experience. As in Adriana's case, Sylvia's engagement with culture resonates with rather than conflicts with the assumptions underlying her coercive work with Program recipients. In fact, interviewees implicated Sylvia for some of the most egregious examples of coerciveness, including threatening to fine a woman if she failed to undergo a tubal ligation.

'Culture' in cultural processes in Pueblo Verde

Although I have focused here on IMSS villager-health providers, Adriana and Juana's circumscribed understandings of culture correspond with more general trends in the community. So, too, does Adriana and Sylvia's interpretation of culture in ways that do not unsettle their devaluation of local experience and those taken to embody it. The perspectives of Francisco, a thirty-one year old *rancho* representative, evidence this correspondence. Francisco remarked,

> I'm interested in rescuing the culture, because if it gets lost, well, I think it would be, I don't know, a sad *pueblo*, because nobody would speak Mixtec. I think it must be rescued when it's possible. And, because of that I think that rescuing is important, rescuing the languages, the cultures, the *fiestas*, because in this way more than anything else the culture lives. If we stop doing this, for me it would be sad. Then there wouldn't be any fun, any togetherness. That's why I think fiestas are important.

His circumscribed conception of culture and the value it provides to the community enabled him to make these claims despite having explained large families as a product of older people's insufficient reason moments earlier.

In fact, I often noted that younger villagers affirmed the value of Verdean cultural distinctiveness while concurrently applauding the triumph of reason over the ignorance of older villagers. I found this perplexing, as I assumed that revitalization discourses would most empower the especially encultured subjects perceived to symbolize indigenous difference. On the contrary, not only did younger villagers often interpret these discourses in ways that failed to disrupt underlying denigrations of indigenousness, but they also drew from these discourses to affirm these denigrations in cases, as Sylvia's comments illustrate.

'Culture' and familial contest: Beatriz and Sylvia

Empowering youth with 'culture' also appears to contribute to broader trends empowering younger villagers with more formal educational experience vis-à-vis their older and less formally educated adult counterparts. For example, Sylvia drew from discourses celebrating indigenous culture to support her position in the dispute that arose between her and her mother when she refused to establish a formal commitment with her partner. When she initially told me that she was pregnant, I asked Sylvia whether her decision not to get married would bother her parents. She claimed that although her parents would prefer that she marry, they knew that as a 28-year old woman Sylvia made her own decisions. Nonetheless, it became clear as her mother's silence grew during the days that followed that she was, in fact, very unhappy about her daughter's decision not

to marry. Sylvia and her mother's mutual miscalculation of the meaning of Sylvia's relationship reflects ambiguities surrounding the significance of dating-related behaviors. Sylvia read her parents' non-interference in her romantic life as a showing of their regard for her autonomy. Her parents, however, afforded her this freedom with the expectation that she would ultimately conform to their expectations. The misestimation ultimately caused great pain, suffering and division in the family.

A strong sense of betrayal on both sides of the conflict was only intensified by the fact that, according to all accounts, Sylvia had been the object of special treatment as the youngest of the family. In fact, she and everyone else initially became aware that her mother was unhappy with her decision not to marry when her mother stopped serving her first, and stopped reserving the best foods for her. Later, Sylvia reflected on her mother's anger and expressed her own feeling of betrayal in language that echoes similar sentiments expressed in a myriad of distant places: "I guess I let her down. I didn't know she expected a white wedding from me!" Sylvia responded to her mother's silence by enlisting the support of her older sister. Shortly, all communications between the two sisters and their parents ended.

In the context of the escalating conflict, Sylvia's father expressed his bewilderment one morning when I came into the kitchen and asked where everyone was. "Who knows! They don't even talk anymore" he said. He continued, signaling the path running through the family *solar,*[33] which is the most direct way from Sylvia's house to her sister's house, where they now shared meals: "They don't even walk through here. Who knows what they talk about down there! Did they say anything to you? I think the older one is the one who is causing the trouble. Why is she involved? What is she angry

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[33] Garden within the household compound.

about?" On other occasions, he expressed his anger over how he felt Sylvia had betrayed him after he had given her so much support.

Nonetheless, her mother's feeling of betrayal and her resulting bitterness were much more intense. In fact, Sylvia's father deceived his wife and got together with his daughters on a couple of occasions. Na Beatriz occasionally gave indications of the depth of her rage. For example, when I suggested on one occasion that she needed to see a nurse for her cough, Na Beatriz said, "There is no nurse. The nurse is dead!" And she laughed harshly. On other occasions, especially after having several drinks, she broke down and expressed her hurt, sense of betrayal and grief over the ruptured relationship with her daughter.

The intense anger, betrayal and grief both women felt when Sylvia decided not to formalize her relationship and Na Beatriz responded negatively to her decision reflects the extent to which both women's interests were intimately tied up with Sylvia's decision. Sylvia was especially wary of making a formal commitment because she feared becoming dependent and suffering in her relationship as she had witnessed her mother. Given these aims, her mother's disaccord symbolized her lack of concern for her well-being, which deeply wounded her. For her part, Na Beatriz withstood her husband's battery because she perceived that good women did just that. Her recompense has come to her in the form of prestige as an older woman. Her daughters' actions threatened this prestige with scandal and shame. As such, her daughters' actions similarly symbolized a lack of concern, in this case for the circumstances that have afforded her mother power and prestige as an older woman.

In their extended conflict, Na Beatriz and Sylvia used the strategies at their disposal to express their anger with one another and attempt to force one another to acquiesce to their positions. Na Beatriz initially expressed her anger and disapproval through the food she served Sylvia, as she quit serving her daughter the best foods first. Sylvia lacks the time and skills for carrying out reproductive labor, including meals, that her mother possessed, as well as her mother's social status. Nonetheless, Sylvia's wealth enabled her to adjust to the consequences of her mother's actions, and to counter those actions with her own. She countered the critique her mother waged in the form of food by setting up her kitchen elsewhere: Sylvia, her sister and her sister's family began to prepare and share meals together, adding insult to injury with the implication that her mother's cooking was not acceptable. Sylvia also reclaimed the refrigerator that she had provided to the family kitchen, leaving her parents with no way to preserve food. For her part, Na Beatriz attempted to use her social status to interfere with Sylvia's sponsorship of a young girl for her graduation. Before the conflict, Na Beatriz had facilitated the sponsorship and urged her daughter to take on the role. Afterwards, Na Beatriz attempted to convince the mother of the girl to replace Sylvia with a new sponsor. The mother refused.

In short, the disagreement over Sylvia's decision prompted an extremely damaging dispute between extremely strong-willed women who had at their disposal and deployed very different kinds of resources. Na Beatriz's efforts to press Sylvia into acquiescing to her position correspond with her position in the family and the community. Although she continued providing her daughter with meals, Na Beatriz began providing Sylvia with meals perceived of less quality. In addition to intervening

on this most basic material level, Na Beatriz attempted to interfere in her daughter's social standing by as she attempted to convince the 'sponsee' to choose a different sponsor. Lacking Sylvia's wealth, most other young women are unable to support themselves without the assistance of a partner, let alone family members, and the threat to their social standing would have further jeopardized their future economic security. Nonetheless, Sylvia's wealth enabled her to establish her kitchen elsewhere, and she brought her sister into the conflict in the process. They paid Na Beatriz's sister for *tortillas,* and hired a domestic assistant to help Sylvia's step-niece in carrying out the domestic chores.[34] Moreover, Sylvia's wealth undoubtedly influenced her 'sponsee's' loyalty to her. Thus, Sylvia's wealth enabled her to wage and withstand attacks and counter-attacks that she would otherwise not have been able to do. Thus, changes in wealth importantly configured the path the conflict ultimately took.

Sylvia also deployed modernist conceptions of indigenous culture within the contest. For example, when she stopped eating at her mother's kitchen, she reported that the food her mother prepared was insufficiently healthy for a pregnant woman. In doing so, she claimed a superior scientifically-legitimated knowledge-base, and juxtaposed that with her mother's 'ignorance'. In addition to utilizing modernist denigrations of indigenous culture, Sylvia deployed affirmations of indigenous culture to the same end. In justifying her decision, she asserted that she would follow the "local tradition" of common law marriage.[35]

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[34] Sylvia's sister, Mari, acquired step-children when she married, as the mother of her husband's first two children abandoned them. Mari's husband, Maclovio, spent most of his time working in the United States. The hardships his two children experienced in Mari's 'care' attest to the continued importance of the family in ensuring villagers' well-being.

[35] Her use of tradition was ironic in multiple ways. Firstly, she employed revitalizationists' promotions of culture to characterize and legitimate a practice that they regard as anti-tradition. Secondly, villagers have used common law unions to impose expectations of commitment on partners who failed to make a formal

The modern/traditional paradox of revitalization

Villagers interpret revitalizationists' defense of culture in a way that curtails their ability to use the concept to challenge the ongoing denigration of certain practices, people and things perceived as embodying indigenousness. Although conflicting with revitalizationists' perspectives and aims in certain ways, these interpretations resonate with an important assumption embedded in denigrations of indigenousness that revitalizationists do not challenge: the idea that expressions of indigeneity only have relevance when they are grounded in modernity. Revitalizationists oppose this assumption in words, as they locate the salience of Mixtec culture in its detachment from modernity. Here, the value of Mixtecness for contributing new utopian possibilities resides in its detachment from modernity, which makes Mixtec culture fertile ground for imagining superior *non*-Western ways of envisioning the future. At the same time, however, revitalizationists' prioritization of the educational sphere and their particular focus on establishing the written language as a vehicle for creating a pan-Mixtec identity from which participants will imagine the future excludes those especially encultured Mixtec subjects who provide the movement with its symbolic force. In this regard, revitalizationists' efforts are consistent with a modern view of those without formal education as irrelevant for, if not posing hindrances to, the work of imagining the future. From this vantage point, it seems more accurate to explain villagers' and revitalizationists' understandings of culture as diverging in relation to their different weightings and designations of the particular modern and traditional elements that should

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commitment, while Sylvia advocated common law marriage to support her efforts to avoid this commitment.

contribute to the project of imagining a better future for Mixtec people, rather than explaining villagers' interpretations as opposed to revitalizationists' efforts.

Conclusion

Reneé Sylvain (2005) has described how some San groups have acquired better access to resources and representation by deftly representing themselves in ways that correspond with essentialist portrayals, while, in the process, affirming essentialist views that further entrench the exploitation of others. She asserts,

> The Omaheke San illustrate the consequences of these instrumentalizing and essentializing trends. When the idea of culture becomes instrumentalized in the struggle for resources, then, in situations of extreme marginalization and class inequality, it easily becomes another instrument for continued exploitation. [Sylvain 2005:366]

Thus, Sylvain identifies the differential positioning in relation to material resources as a key factor that produces divergences in how essentialist views of culture influence the subjects of these discourses.

My examination of how Mixtec revitalizationists' conceptions of culture influence villagers also indicates that 'positive' essentialist views of indigenous culture empower some while disempowering others. In this case, I link these differential consequences to the differential positioning of villagers in relation to Mixtec activists' promotions of culture – some as subjects who wield culture and some as subjects who bear culture. Thus, the empowerment of youth with "culture" contributes to ongoing trends disempowering older adults and those with limited formal education vis-à-vis their younger and more educated counterparts.

In the next and final chapter, I synthesize the insights gleaned from my examination of 'indigenous culture' in Pueblo Verde. I draw from the conclusions I have made throughout the dissertation to reflect on the politics and ethics of 'culture'.

CONCLUSION: THE POLITICS OF 'CULTURE' REVISITED

Indigeneity acquired singular salience with the Spanish imposition of colonial rule in the land newly designated New Spain. Remarkably, even while ongoing struggles and shifting strategies of rule have transformed perceptions of the substance of indigeneity during the five centuries that have passed since then, the singularity of this salience has persisted. In New Spain, the colonizers articulated indigeneity as the antithesis of civilization, and crafted a dual system of governance based on this idea. The overturning of colonial rule during the first half of the 19th century precipitated a major remaking of indigeneity. Liberal leaders intent on creating a modern nation depicted indigeneity as a barrier to modern nationhood. Nonetheless, they regarded indigenousness as curable: through proper intervention, indigenous people could become modern Mexican citizens. The rise of the *mestizo* during the 20th century led to a further remaking of indigenousness. Twentieth century nation-builders promoted 'indigenous culture' as an important foundation of national identity that imbued the Mexican nation with distinction. Nonetheless, like the liberal nation-builders that preceded them, they sought to emulate the modernity of European societies as they worked to create a decidedly modern nation. As they designed programs to prepare indigenous peoples to participate in this modern *mestizo* society, they attempted to divest indigenous peoples of the distinctive traits that they perceived as conflicting with the modern vision.

More recently, indigenous rights activists have contributed to the emergence of more expansive understandings of the value of indigeneity and its place in modern life. In Chapter One, I argued that the anthropological critiques of culture that came into force

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during the 1980s are ill-equipped for the terrain of culture politics these recent transformations have created. In particular, evidence that critics of indigenous rights movements have deployed critical perspectives on culture to undermine indigenous people's struggles unsettles the ethics of the 'culture' critique. Nonetheless, rather than dismissing the critique, I argued that three dimensions of politics justify a return to the question of the politics and ethics of 'culture': the dialogic construction of politics, the processes through which meanings travel, and difference. To conclude, I return to consider the study findings in relation to these three dimensions of political practice. From there, I distill some final observations on the politics and ethics of contemporary formulations of cultural difference.

Before doing so, however, I want to pause briefly to reflect on the salience of 'negative' interpretations of indigenous culture in Mexican development. My investigation of orientations toward indigenous culture within contemporary Mexican development indicates the 'menace' of a neoliberal *incorporation mission* in Mexico. These findings diverge from Charles Hale's (2005, 2002) observations of the "menace" of "neoliberal *multiculturalism*" in Central America. The staunchness of 'negative' readings of indigenous culture in Mexican development during this apparent multicultural moment is striking. Importantly, the 'negative' readings of indigenousness identified here are not fragments of the pre-multicultural sensibilities of an earlier era. Rather, IMSS-*Oportunidades* researchers have construed indigenous culture in a way that corresponds with efforts to create the self-managing, self-enterprising and responsible indigenous subjects that facilitate the retraction of the neoliberal state (Lemke 2001). The novelties in how researchers conceptualized indigenous culture while devising new

development strategies in the context of neoliberal reform evidence the contemporaneousness of these formulations of indigenous culture. Like Hale's neoliberal multiculturalisms, these conceptions of indigenousness are products of the ongoing struggles through which people reckon indigenousness in relation to shifting modes of power.

The marked salience of 'negative' readings of indigenous culture in Mexican development undermines assumptions that 'negative' readings of indigenousness yield to 'positive' ones, as it indicates ways that multicultural and assimilationist modes of power co-mingle. This co-mingling is pivotal to the meanings of 'positive' affirmations of indigenous culture, as it conditions the contexts within which people encounter and interpret these understandings. This point returns me to the three dimensions of the politics of culture that this study revisits:

Dialogue

In Chapter One, I suggested that the dialogical tacking back and forth of politics challenges facile determinations of 'progressive' and 'regressive' 'sides' in culture politics. This dialogical constitution is most obvious within the most formal political domains. For example, representatives of key constituents of multicultural accords often gather in high-profile meetings to negotiate policy, and the resulting accords typically bear obvious indications of their multiple constitution. In other kinds of contexts, however, this mutual constitution is less readily evident. Such is the case with indigenous activists' discursive strategies, which leads many observers to treat them as autonomously generated. Yet, indigenous rights activists' discursive strategies are as

dialogically constituted as political accords tacked out in tense negotiations. The need for intelligibility, in particular, crucially constrains activists by forcing them to formulate their strategies within contemporaneous and past understandings. Because of the colonial roots and colonial and postcolonial histories of 'indigeneity', the need to frame indigenousness intelligibly imposes crucial limitations on these discursive strategies.

This study demonstrates how the dialogical contingency of Mixtec revitalizationists' discursive strategies influences the politics of their culture claims. Alterity has been the crux of indigeneity since the colonial imposition of the concept. Rather than challenging assumptions about the alterity of the indigenous subject, Mixtec revitalizationists reframe this alterity as something of value to the modern world in order to press their demands for inclusion. They contend that the alterity of 'Mixtec culture' uniquely positions them to contribute novel solutions to address the deficiencies of modernity.

This strategy has proven very powerful: indigenous rights activists have generated widespread support for their efforts, and, with this support, have successfully negotiated new spaces for them within the nation and the world. Nonetheless, revitalizationists' contradictory claim predicates indigenous people's place in the modern nation on their absence from it. The positioning of the indigenous subjects revitalizationists deem as most encultured in relation to revitalization efforts evidences the consequentiality of this contradiction. Revitalizationists celebrate women with no formal educational training as repositories of indigenous culture. These women provide revitalization efforts with much of the symbolic significance that invigorates their work. Yet, *by definition,* the same conditions that lead revitalizationists to designate these villagers as bearers of the Mixtec

essence – their lack of engagement with 'modern' forces – precludes their participation in the decidedly modern project revitalizationists aim to realize.

This dynamic illustrates the fallaciousness of the claim that critically evaluating indigenous rights activists' cultural claims undermines the interests of 'indigenous people'. The need for intelligibility forces indigenous rights activists to frame their "positive" interpretations of indigenous culture in terms that make sense within a history of colonial and postcolonial understandings. Consequently, these ideas are not revitalizationists' alone. Rather than making autonomous assertions that self-evidently contribute to the interests of indigenous people, indigenous rights activists' claims are contingent twists on received understandings that have themselves been tacked out through histories of ongoing struggle. While the recent transformations in orientations toward indigenousness activists have prompted provide important new spaces for indigenous people to participate in the nation, in the process, they affirm and entrench deeply held assumptions that indigenousness conflicts with modern aspirations.

Travel

In Chapter One, I also suggested that the processes through which meanings travel complicate the politics of 'culture'. The concern with how meanings travel highlights a particular dimension of the dialogical nature of politics – the resonances meanings acquire as people interpret and negotiate them in diverse contexts and circumstances (Arce and Long 2000; Tsing 2005). Thus, the analysis of travel brings into view the particularities of the meanings that emerge in specific locales. It can also

illuminate important logics and contradictions embedded in original meanings, as my analysis of interpretations of culture in Pueblo Verde indicates.

The *gente de razón* discourse evidences how the colonial history of denigrations of indigenousness has shaped and continues to shape Pueblo Verde experience. As I explained in Chapter Two, the distinction of *gente de razón* emerged in a colonial context of increasing 'racial miscegenation' that compromised the race-based colonial hierarchy. The ascent of the *gente de razón* hierarchy signified a marked rise in the salience of cultural indicators for determining social status. Ultimately, the distinction of *gente de razón* came to distinguish 'people of reason' from their culture-bearing *indio* counterparts at the bottom of the racio-cultural hierarchy.

In Pueblo Verde, young, highly educated villagers deploy the discourse of *gente de razón* to reckon indigeneity and position themselves, others and local experience in relation to it. As read through its opposition to *gente de razón,* indigenous culture gains local purchase as dimensions of local experience considered irrelevant or contrary to modern aspirations. Thus, villagers who use the *gente de razón* idiom do so to critique and distinguish themselves from the culture-bearers among them. This twist on the *gente de razón* hierarchy – indigenous people deploying culture to distinguish themselves from other indigenous people – likely gained force during twentieth century incorporation efforts.

The investigation of the neoliberal subject-making efforts of IMSS-Oportunidades offers insights into a key contemporary social field that contributes to the remaking of this distinction. IMSS service providers depict culture as the antithesis of reason in their training sessions with youth. While youth utilize this training to mold themselves into

reasoned subjects, at the urging of IMSS service providers, they also draw from it to teach the culture-bearers among them. Models of culture politics that pit postcolonial elites who malign indigenousness against indigenous self-defenders cannot capture the muddied field of culture politics this dynamic produces. The indigenous subject of neoliberal Mexican development *wields denigrations of indigenous culture against the culture in him and herself as well as in others*. This dynamic directs attention instead to the technologies through which people are incited to adopt certain orientations toward culture, and the implications of these technologies. Like the dialogic contingency of indigenous activists' discursive strategies, this mode of culture politics challenges assumptions that certain actors pursue certain interests.

In this account, I have foregrounded how formulations of indigenous culture shape the experiences and struggles of the women perceived as culture-bearers. Verdean women with limited formal educational experience are widely treated as bearers of cultural difference. Consequently, they have suffered the poor treatment meted out in denigrating indigenousness more often than other Verdeans. They deploy varied strategies to fight this denigration, such as restricting their movement to the village as much as possible, carefully monitoring entrance into the community, and using their social networks to punish those they perceive as disrespecting local norms. In a context in which many villagers have adopted denigrating orientations toward indigeneity, these women's efforts to ward off denigrations of themselves and their experience place them in a difficult and contradictory position. To the extent that they restrict their movement to the village, they become dependent on others for access to the material goods they desire; many of those they depend on adopt disparaging orientations toward local

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experience and those taken to bear it. I analyzed developers' and revitalizationists' formulations of culture within this context of struggle, discord and contest.

The study demonstrates how IMSS-*Oportunidades* contributes to the disempowerment of villagers presumed to bear culture. As symbols of culture, these women's minds and bodies are targets of reform and discipline by IMSS-Oportunidades service providers and reformed villagers alike. Remarkably, revitalizationists' efforts contribute to, rather than challenge, the denigration of indigenous culture that contributes to the disempowerment of the Verdean 'women who remain'. Verdeans who encountered revitalization efforts did understand them as celebrating something special about local experience. Nonetheless, Verdeans did not read revitalization discourses as valuing those dimensions of local experience that had been maligned as indigenous, and hence irrelevant and contrary to social life. Much to the contrary, Verdeans read revitalizationists' claims in ways that affirmed their perceptions of the irrelevance and contrariness of most of the distinctiveness of local social life. Villagers' interpretations of revitalization efforts capture the contradictions inherent in revitalizationists' orientations toward culture. In revitalization, as in Mexican development, culture-bearing subjects appear as superfluous to modern aspirations.

Difference

Feminists have long claimed that a focus on gender provides pivotal insights into social life. So, too, is the case here. Because the 'women-who-remain' symbolize cultural distinctiveness, their experiences and struggles offer crucial insights into the heart of culture politics. If it is true that these women bear much of the burden of

negative formulations of indigeneity, to the extent that they do so, they symbolize in material form the denigration of the essence of indigenousness itself. That is, as symbols of indigenous culture, these women are targeted by efforts to manage and control all that is distinctive about indigenous people.

The evidence of how 'positive' and 'negative' readings of culture collude in marginalizing these women illuminates crucial limitations and perils of the idea. 'Indigenous culture' is a colonial distinction grounded in the assumption that indigenousness is contrary to modernity. IMSS-*Oportunidades* program designers and service providers disseminate this colonial distinction as part of their efforts to root out barriers to modernity. Revitalizationists have effectively created and claimed broader spaces for participation in the modern nation by affirming this distinction. Nonetheless, this study suggests that inclusion is predicated on wider exclusions of locally salient ways of living and reasoning. What ethical postures should scholars adopt in relation to dimensions of local distinctiveness that have not been designated as valuable to modern desires? Here again, facile distinctions between 'positive' and 'negative' readings of culture obscure important dimensions of the politics of contemporary formulations of 'culture'. In doing so, they impede efforts to stake out ethical stances toward the concept.

Conclusions

The findings of this study have broader implications for how scholars approach indigenous people's struggles. Observers almost universally regard formal indigenous rights movements with attachments to transnational circuits as the center of indigenous people's struggles against marginalization [see Ghosh (2006) for an exception]. This

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study illuminates how women deemed bearers of culture struggle against marginalization in the intimate contexts of their daily lives. These women's daily struggles emerge as a crucial political front in ongoing contestations against the marginalization of indigenous people. Considering indigenous politics as enacted in multiple fields and on multiple fronts further complicates our understandings of indigenous politics, since, as this case demonstrates, struggles carried out on different fronts and with different tactics can clash. This context makes the ethics of scholarly alignment much more involved, and trickier: With which indigenous rights struggles should scholars align?

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