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STUDENT CROSS-CULTURAL FIELD RESEARCH

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Expansion of the Mexican Lexicon: Cultural Aspects of English and Náhuatl Loan Word Usage in Guanajuato, Mexico

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The Mixing of Languages

Language mixing is inevitable. As two languages come into contact, a word is borrowed from one language and put into another, when speakers feel they can better express themselves through the use of their neighbor's vocabulary. Soon many words are borrowed to the point that they become permanent in that language, expanding its lexicon with a diverse collection of new phraseology. This may even create a new language, such as Yiddish, which was formed by the amalgamation of Hebrew and German.

Spanish is no exception to this phenomenon. Many languages have had their chance to add a few words to Spanish here and there. Such lexicon expansion may be seen in the various dialects of Spanish-speaking countries. One may easily note the difference between the Spanish of Spain and that of Mexico. The languages differ to the point that "in many areas of Spanish America the speech patterns are so funny that they cause Spaniards to laugh."[1]

According to linguist Hugo Mejías, there are three major factors to be considered in the adoption of all foreign words into the patrimonial lexicons. The first is prestige, or novelty, of the newly learned loan words. Second, there is the necessity to describe things or ideas that do not exist in the patrimonial language. And third is the result of bilinguals' use of the two languages.[2] This paper will show that these three factors have proven to be imperative in the expansion of the Mexican lexicon.

The two languages that have had the most prevalent effect on this lexical expansion are English and Náhuatl. English, acting as an adstratum, and Náhuatl, the primary Aztec language acting as a substratum, have proven to be influential languages in Mexico, providing a diverse collection of borrowed words. However, this lexical expansion has caused sociolinguistic controversy, because many academics have claimed that English, or Spanglish, is a linguistic infirmity that should be avoided by native speakers of Spanish in order to preserve its purity and reject cultural assimilation with the United States. Still, others claim that Náhuatl and its loan words must be preserved in order to maintain the cultural identity of Mexico. Therefore, over the past half century, the use of loan words in Mexico has not only been a linguistic phenomenon, but it has also become a pressing question of cultural preservation. Despite the desires of these academics to preserve Mexico's linguistic culture, the opposite is happening as Náhuatl words become far less frequent, while English words are increasingly expanding the Mexican lexicon.

Náhuatl Origins

Many people know that in 1492 Columbus landed in the Americas, but few realize that during the same year Antonio de Nebrija published the first Spanish dictionary and grammar guide. In this dictionary, Nebrija listed the Spanish word *barca* as a "small rowboat." Three

years later, in 1495, he published the next edition of his dictionary. This edition contained the indigenous word *canoa* with the same definition of a small rowboat.[3] After only three years, the first indigenous word had integrated itself into the Iberian Peninsula language.

Spanish and indigenous languages continued to blend at the turn of the sixteenth century. During this time, Hernán Cortés and his fellow conquistadores were marching through the region that surrounded the great Aztec city of Tenochtitlán (modern day Mexico City), trying to settle the area for the king of Spain, Carlos V. Cortés sent several letters known as the *Cartas de relación* to the king informing him of his conquests in the New World. Several examples of Náhuatl words, especially toponyms, were found throughout the letters that Cortés had scribed. In 1524, twelve Franciscan friars in charge of not only preaching the gospel but also teaching the Spanish language arrived in Nueva España. In order to keep control of the region, Carlos V commanded that all natives in Nueva España learn Spanish.[4] But the use of indigenous languages continued, because Náhuatl and other tongues were used every day by the people. These languages continued to flourish, even to the point that Felipe III commanded the friars to learn the indigenous languages themselves. New words integrated themselves into the friars' and conquistadores' Spanish, and the formation of the Mexican lexicon began.

Still, the dominance of Spanish was so strong from the beginning that the conquistadores' Spanish prevailed over the indigenous languages in many cases.[5] After the 1520s, Náhuatl itself began to be written in Spanish orthography. An abundance of documents survive from the colonial period, including annals, municipal records, poetry, formal addresses, and "The History of the Things of New Spain," a remarkable compendium of Náhuatl culture compiled by Indian informants under the direction of the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún.[6]

The process by which Náhuatl loan words integrated themselves into the Mexican lexicon was rather complex. Mejías explained that, "Of apparent simplicity, the adoption of indigenous loan words is actually a process of great complexity, subject to a series of conditions that facilitate it and a series of restrictions that try to impede it."[7] Mejías' three factors played a significant role during this time period. Because the conquistadores preferred the use of their native tongue over the indigenous options, many of the native voices and use of loan words became extinct. This leads us to our current situation, of which Marcos Morínigo said, "In our dictionaries there is a great mass of indigenous voices that constitute a dead weight (of unused words)."[8]

Nevertheless, during this same time period, indigenous Náhuatl words became popular in Spain. As we discussed earlier, the number one reason why loan words were accepted by the Spanish settlers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was because of the novelty of new phraseology. During this time, the Spanish columnist F. González de Oviedo justified his use of indigenous loan words in the following poem:

> If some barbaric words are found here, the cause is the novelty of what they are about; and do not take into account my language, that in Madrid I was born and in the royal household I was raised, and with noble people I have conversed, and something I have read, that you may suspect for yourself that I have not understood my own Spanish tongue.[9]

Today, many of the indigenous languages are indeed extinct. Some, such as Náhuatl, are sparsely heard in southeastern Mexico. Nevertheless, the influences of this language on

the Mexican lexicon are great and may be heard in all of Mexico. Words such as *chapulín* (grasshopper), *cacahuate* (peanut), or *abanico* (fan) are heard throughout the country without common knowledge of the vocabulary's origins. Some words are so common that they have been loaned into other languages. English speakers often use *guacamole*, *tequila*, and *tamales*, thinking that they are Spanish words when in fact they originate from Náhuatl.[10] Few realize that they are honoring Náhuatl as they use *tomato*, *maize*, or *chocolate*.[11] In fact, the name Mexico itself comes from the Náhuatl term *Mexih-ko*, which could possibly mean "the naval, or center, of the moon."[12]

Many believed that the indigenous influence on the Mexican lexicon was too great to measure. The linguist Alonso Zamora said that "the most valuable and notorious indigenous footprint is in the area of the lexicon."[13] Rafael Lapesa echoed his position by saying that "the most important contribution of indigenous tongues is within the lexicon."[14] In 1940, Darío Rubio hypothesized the influence was so important that if all the indigenous influence disappeared from Mexican Spanish, there would be a "horrible chaos" due to the resulting confusion.[15]

In 1965, Juan M. Lope Blanch headed up a study to learn more about the ever-expanding lexicon in the areas around Mexico City. During his study, Blanch recorded random conversations of participants ranging from those in the highest social class to people living in the streets. He also reviewed Mexican literature in order to find indigenous influences. In 1969 and again in 1979, Blanch published the results of his research. After having conversed freely with 490 people and reviewing all types of literature, he discovered that, not including toponyms, 3,380 examples of indigenous loan words could be found in Mexico City's lexicon. However, many of these examples were not used as much as in the past and contributed to the dead weight that Morínigo described. The total number of Náhuatlismos found by Blanch contributed to only 0.07 percent of the actual lexicon, disproving Rubio's horrible chaos theory. Blanch compared the indigenous lexicon to a drop of water in the ocean formed of ten or twenty thousand Spanish words.[16] Although Blanch disproved Rubio's theory, he reaffirmed the importance of the indigenous languages in the lexicon and in the culture of Mexico. After his research, Blanch expressed a geographical and sociolinguistic problem, when he noted, "The indigenous dictionaries do not indicate the difference between urban and rural usages"[17] or that maybe an isogloss of Nahuatlismos was needed.

In 1943, 1951, and again in 1956, the anthropologist Oscar Lewis spent time in the small village of Tepoztlán in the state of Morelos conducting research. During his time there, Lewis observed several factors that influenced the diminishing use of Náhuatl. He recorded that Náhuatl once was the village's main language and was spoken by most citizens. However, the use of this ancient Aztec language has dwindled over the past fifty years and given way to Spanish. According to Lewis, Náhuatl was still preferred at barrio meetings, ceremonial addresses, and fiestas. Most people in the village were still bilingual at the time of his field study in the 1950s. But Lewis noted this village in southern Mexico was experiencing a change that has been seen throughout Mexico. He wrote: "The younger generation has a distinctly negative attitude toward Náhuatl; people under thirty-five tend to be ashamed of speaking it in the presence of outsiders and frequently deny having any knowledge of it."[18] In the social culture of Tepoztlán, the novelty of Náhuatl had obviously worn off, leading to its diminished use.

Today many linguists and anthropologists are fighting to preserve this dying Aztec language and the culture it represents. The American anthropologist Jonathan Amith has spent the last few years in Mexico recording Náhuatl fables and personal histories. Amith and other academics are undertaking the "both daring and quixotic goal: to preserve Náhuatl so that native speakers don't discard their language as they turn to Spanish, which they need to compete in contemporary Mexico."[19]

The Phenomenon of Spanglish

In the past two hundred years, indigenous languages have given way to English. The tardiness of this process may be surprising to some since England and Spain have been associates in Western Europe for several centuries. However, there was a certain level of pride and animosity between the two countries that prevented language mixing. Several factors, such as religious conflict between the Catholics and the Protestants and the English defeat of the Spanish Armada, kept this pride alive and vibrant.[20] It was not until the U.S. and Mexico began to interrelate that the two languages had the chance to trade and borrow words. Juan Sánchez Méndez said: "[English's] influence has become particularly intense in the twentieth century. It has considerably displaced other languages of traditional culture, such as French. The situation of Spanish America is distinguished fundamentally from Spain by the influence that the United States has exercised over it since the nineteenth century."[21]

The lexical exchange between these two neighbors first began after both colonies won their independence from their respective mother countries. "When the different colonies (of Latin America) became politically emancipated the immediate models for the young republics were the political institutions and the constitution of the United States."[22] According to Méndez, this promoted the incorporation of an abundant amount of English loan words relative to politics and their institutions. Words such as *congreso* (congress), *senado* (senate), *secretario* (secretary), *corte* (court), and *distrito federal* (federal district) appeared in lexicons all over Latin America. But the majority of these borrowed words appeared in the infant Republic of Mexico, expanding its culturally rich lexicon. This began around 1810, seven years after the Louisiana Purchase when the U.S. and Mexico first became neighbors. The Santa Fe Trail, which opened in 1822, accelerated the process by causing increased travel between the two infant countries. One other important factor was the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in 1848, when the U.S. purchased two-thirds of the Mexican Republic for a mere fifteen million dollars after the Mexican–American War. Millions of Mexican homes became part of the U.S. almost overnight. Méndez said, "Throughout the 19th century the United States' influence would grow to the extent that its economic, political power and technology would allow. Also, the situation was various regarding the reception and degree of penetration of English loan words in the different Latin American countries."[23] The penetration of loan words to Mexico has been great.

As an adstratum, English continues to influence the Spanish language today, and many people have described the phenomenon of the two mixed languages as Spanglish.[24] English has spread throughout the Mexican republic in TV shows, movies, music, and many other ways. In 1972, José G. Moreno de Alba contributed the new influence of English to the fact that Mexico is so close to the U.S. and that there are many bilinguals in both countries. De Alba also warned the people not to adopt English words whenever possible. [25] In 1997, Roberto

González Echevarría, a professor of Hispanic literature from Yale, supported de Alba by saying that people should avoid Spanglish altogether, having noted that Spanglish is an invasion of Spanish by English and that it is a language of the poor and uneducated.[26]

Newspaper columnist Edwin S. Rubenstein wrote that Spanglish is also having a bad effect on English in the southern United States. Rubenstein said the Mexicans that come to the U.S. and begin to speak Spanglish have done worse and worse in their English learning abilities over the past ten years. He claimed that this "linguistic isolation is often associated with poverty, poor health, depression, and, most obviously, alienation from the mainstream American culture."[27] Rafael Cano described it as "a hodgepodge of Spanish and English universally considered as a linguistic infirmity of mortal consequences to the vitality of the Spanish language . . . throughout the world."[28]

This concept was proven to a degree by Blanch when he researched the Spanish of Mexican immigrants in the Southwest U.S. in 1986. He studied the immigrants' grammar skills and also took note of the Spanglish words he heard as he had done earlier with the indigenous lexicon of Mexico City. He found that few could correctly pluralize irregular words in Spanish and that they would often give him direct translations of English phrases. Many of these people would often speak in short, simple sentences.[29] Blanch concluded that the immigrants' Spanish had digressed lexically due to contact with English, but it had not become completely corrupted.[30]

Ilan Stavans of Amherst College said, "Spanglish is often described as the trap Hispanics fall into on the road to assimilation [with Americans]."[31] Stavans also agreed that many speakers of Spanglish could easily be considered uneducated, but he had a different point of view than most. Stavans said that Spanglish wasn't necessarily a bad thing and that this verbal transformation, or linguistic revolution, is indeed unstoppable, and Spanglish in itself is becoming a remarkable culture that we should all respect.[32]

Mexican Spanish is now undergoing a similar process to the one described in Lewis' research in Morelos. Stephen Trejo, a professor of economics from the University of Texas at Austin, reported on the intergenerational assimilation of Mexican Americans, saying that "by the time they are teens, second-generation Mexican Americans overwhelming [*sic*] prefer to speak English rather than Spanish, and by the third generation most Mexican Americans no longer speak Spanish at all."[33] Many Mexican Americans and other immigrants favor the use of English over Spanish, just as those of Tepoztlán favored Spanish over Náhuatl.

Indeed, Spanglish is utilizing the three factors for lexical borrowing defined by Mejías to expand Mexico's lexicon. Méndez summarized: "In principle, we can distinguish two different types of situations: that of the bilingual regions, like the Southwest U.S. or Puerto Rico, and that of the remainder of Spanish America, in which English influences as a language of international prestige. English loan words are especially concentrated in certain lexical fields in which American culture is vibrant, such as science, technology, commerce, mechanics, sports, etc."[34]

Lexical Expansion

Despite the academics' push to preserve the culture of Mexico, new words are integrating themselves into Mexican Spanish. But how is the lexicon changing? How do the influences

of Náhuatl and English in Mexico compare? Blanch called for an indigenous dictionary that defines the difference between rural and urban vocabularies.[35] Is there more of a tendency to speak Spanglish in urban areas rather than in rural communities, where there tends to be less U.S. influence? What might the social reasons for such a difference be? Even though the two areas are geographically close, how much of a lexical difference is there?

Middle-Ground Words

As mentioned, several words from both English and Náhuatl have become part of the Mexican lexicon. Some of these words have cemented themselves so deeply into the language that they have no Spanish alternative. For example, there was no Spanish word in the sixteenth century for the dark, bitter bean used to produce chocolate. Therefore, because of necessity, this particular Náhuatlismo had no problem entering the Mexican lexicon. But in the cases where there were words from both languages, one of the cognates prevailed. In his famous book on the history of the Spanish language, Rafael Cano explained, "The coexistence [of cross language synonyms] could have lasted for a while or it could have been resolved sooner or later in favor of the patrimonial possibility or the indigenous possibility [or English]. The solutions were, therefore, diverse according to the regions."[36]

However, not all of the cognates completely died out. There still exist many synonyms of Spanish, Náhuatl, and English origins in the Mexican lexicon today. These synonyms will be referred to as "middle-ground words." Words such as "owl" which have several alternate translations into Spanish (such as *búho*, which is general Spanish, and the Náhuatl loan word *tecolote*) are middle-ground words. In Mexico, either one of these words could be used for "owl" without any change in significance or comprehension. The Spanglish word *lonche* is easily interchanged with its Spanish counterpart *almuerzo*, both of which signify the midday meal. Of such word pairs Blanch declared that "it would be difficult to determine with precision if one of the concurrent voices dominates, as for its usage, over the other. Very diverse factors can intervene in it; family, sociocultural preferences . . . generations, etc."[37] Therefore, these middle-ground words give us a clearer view of where the social influences of English and Náhuatl are felt the most. The tendency of native Mexicans to use either one of the middle-ground words over the other in general conversation leads us to believe that one language has had a greater influence in that area.

Research Proposal and Methodology

The first significant research on dialects involving questionnaires was completed by the French linguist Jules Gilliéron and his fieldworker Edmund Edmont in France during the early 1900s. Edmont simply used a list of 1,500 items and for each item he asked his informant outright questions such as What do you call a "cup"?[38] Gilliérons' results showed significant dialectal differences among different genders and social classes of France.[39]

Over a decade later, Italian linguists Jaberg and Judd followed Gilliéron and Edmont's direct questionnaire methodology. In Italian-speaking areas, Jaberg and Judd also implemented indirect questions, which they felt would encourage interviewees to give more natural responses. Their fieldworkers would ask What is this?, while holding up a cup. Since then, most surveys have used indirect questions.[40]

The aforementioned middle-ground words were used in order to measure the effect of English and Náhuatl on modern-day Spanish in Mexico. A total of fifty-six middle-ground words were selected randomly, twenty-eight from each language. Flashcards were made with pictures of the middle-ground words (for example, a photo of an owl for búho/tecolote). These flashcards were used during every interview with the purpose of generating spontaneous answers as Jaberg and Judd sought to do. The interviewee was shown a flashcard and asked the simple question, "What is this?" He or she would reply with either one of the synonyms and the answers were recorded on tape and later transcribed. Each interview took on average 15–20 minutes.

The research was done in Central Mexico in the state of Guanajuato, located in the country's geographical center and about 175 miles to the northwest of Mexico City. Interviews were done in both urban and rural areas of the state. Urban areas for the research included the cities of Guanajuato and Irapuato. The rural areas consisted of communities called "ranchos" by the locals; these ranchos are named Santa Rosa, Comedorito, and La Estancia. These small communities each have a population between two hundred and five hundred people and are located between Guanajuato and Irapuato, about fifteen miles northeast of the latter.

A total of sixty interviews were conducted during May, June, and July of 2006. The interviewees consisted of a large variety of people, including doctors, lawyers, college graduates, goat herders, those who never went to school, etc. These interviews were done among these various social groups to better understand the expansion of the Mexican lexicon, including where and among who assumed expansion is occurring. The groups of this study include: geographical (urban vs. rural), genderlects (male vs. female), generational (forty years and above vs. thirty years and below), and educational (highly educated [college] vs. lower educated [no college]). The results of the sixty interviews will be used in each of these categories as they can be viewed in the following way:

Lexical Category	No. of interviewees that fall into this category
Geographical Lexicon	
Urban Interviewees	30
Rural Interviewees	30
Genderlects	
Male Interviewees	30
Female Interviewees	30
Generational Lexicon	
40 years ↑ Interviewees	30
30 years ↓ Interviewees	30
Education Lexicon	
Lower Education Interviewees (no college)	50
Higher Education Interviewees (college experience)	10

Therefore, a rural, fifty-five-year-old female of lower education will be seen as an interviewee of each of the lexical categories she belongs to during the discussions that will follow.

The social groups were split up thirty–thirty for all the lexical categories in this study; thirty urban and thirty rural, etc. The only exception to this was with the education lexicon because, of the sixty interviewees, every rural individual is considered to be lower-educated, and only ten of the thirty interviewees in urban areas had achieved a college-level education.

The final lexicon category was active vs. passive. For each flash card shown to an interviewee, a spontaneous answer was recorded. The interviewee was then asked if he or she had knowledge of the other middle-ground word. Knowledge of the unsaid word, or of the passive lexicon, demonstrates either that the word is barely coming into a language but has not yet arrived in everyday speech, or that the word is making its way out of a language as its synonym becomes the only option.

Overall Results

Over this two-month period, there were a total of 3,360 middle-ground words presented to the sixty interviewees. Only seventeen times during the interviews were neither of the middle-ground words recognized. Every other word was recorded with the Náhuatl, English, or Spanish synonym first.

For the Náhuatl/Spanish middle-ground words (1,677 answered in total), the Náhuatl synonyms were chosen 56 percent of the time. There is less of a difference with the English synonyms (1,666 in total), which were chosen over their Spanish counterparts only 51 percent of the time. The differences are more easily noted if rural and urban areas are compared. For example, including all the Náhuatl middle-ground words, the results indicate that they were chosen 62 percent of the time in the rural areas, while in urban areas they were chosen 49 percent of the time (*See* Figure 1).

These numbers clearly show that a strong Náhuatl influence continues in the everyday rural speech of Guanajuato, while Náhautl has begun to disappear in urban areas. No such difference was indicated with the English middle-ground words. They were chosen 51 percent of the time in both rural and urban areas, with a slight decimal point higher percentage in urban areas.

Rural   Urban

62 %   38 %   49 %   51 %

□ Spanish
■ Náhuatl
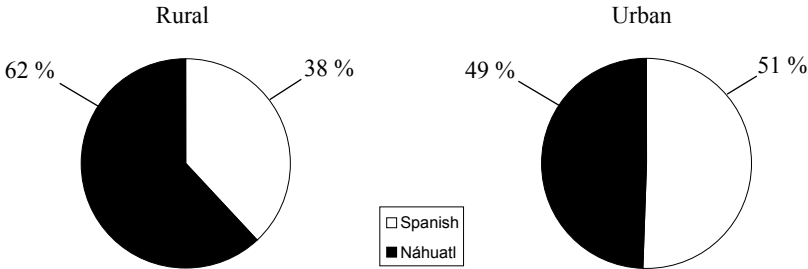
Figure 1: Unlike English, Náhuatl has a notable difference in influence between rural and urban areas.

The group with the single highest Náhuatl influence was the forty years and older, rural males. They showed a 67 percent tendency to choose the Náhuatl middle-ground words. The forty years and older rural women showed a 64 percent tendency. The thirty years and under urban male group proved to have the least amount of Náhuatl influence, producing the Náhuatl loan words spontaneously only 46 percent of the time.

The overall English results do not show us much of a difference among the groups. The difference between the highest and lowest tendency from the categories is only seven percent. However, more differences emerged as the results were broken down further.

Middle-Ground Word Categories

After sixty interviews, the fifty-six, middle-ground words were divided into four groups, based on the split between Náhuatl and English and their Spanish alternatives. These groups do not, however, include the passive lexicon data. The first group consists of the words that were chosen every single time over their counterpart. For example, the Náhuatl word *chapopote* (tar) was chosen spontaneously in all sixty interviews over the Spanish alternatives of *alquitrán* or *brea*. Fifteen middle-ground words make up this group. The group also includes the Náhuatl words *camote* (sweet potato)*, popote* (drinking straw)*,* cacahuate (peanut)*,* and *molcajete* (morter—a bowl for grinding); the English words *mofle* (muffler)*, ponchar* (to puncture)*, tenis* (tennis shoes), and *manzana de Adán* (Adam's apple); and the Spanish words *gis* (chalk)*, trapear* (to mop)*, cuenta* or *recibo* (bill)*, lavandería* (laundry mat)*, conectar* (to connect)*,* and *pastel* (cake).

The second, and biggest, group contains the words that were chosen between fifty and fifty-nine times out of sixty over their alternative. These twenty-three words are Náhuatl *guajolote* (turkey)*, papalote* (kite)*, milpa* (corn field)*, tlacuache* (opossum)*, elote* (corn on the cob)*, hule* (rubber)*,* and *chicle* (chewing gum); English *clutch* (clutch)*, reversa* (reverse)*, raid* (ride)*, pícher* (pitcher)*, poni* (pony)*,* and lonche (lunch); and Spanish *camioneta* (truck)*, pasto* (grass)*, ventilador* (fan)*, maleta* (suitcase)*, estacionar* (to park a car)*, pistola* (hand gun)*, cereza* (cherry)*, mosquito* (mosquito)*, oportunidad* (opportunity)*,* and *puerco espín* (porcupine).

The third group consists of words that were chosen between forty and forty-nine times over their synonyms. The nine words in this group are Náhuatl *tianguis* (market) and chapulín (grasshopper); English *rentar* (to rent) and *misil* (missile); and Spanish *lanzar* (to throw)*, eliminatorías* (playoffs)*, cuerda* (rope)*, gemelo* (twin)*,* and *ferretería* (hardware store).

Finally, the fourth group consists of the nine words that were chosen thirty to thirty-nine times out of sixty. These would be the middle ground words that can basically be interchanged and still be understood by the majority of speakers. The words consist of Náhuatl *guarache* (sandal); English *cliquear* (mouse click on a computer)*, calentador* (heater)*,* and *cachar* (to catch); and Spanish búho (owl)*, disco compacto* (CD)*, escarabajo* (beetle)*, teta* (nipple)*,* and *revisar* (to check). These words will prove to be of great interest as they are broken down into their different categories.

The total number of middle-ground synonyms used in this investigation was 112, each middle-ground word with two options. Of these 112 words, fifty-nine were recognized in all sixty interviews either by the participants' spontaneous first response or their passive lexicon knowledge. This data indicates that these words have cemented themselves into the Mexican lexicon and are understood by the majority of speakers. Another twenty-six words were recognized between fifty and fifty-nine times in the sixty interviews. It is easy to categorize these words in the same group as the first.

Finally, there were twelve words that were recognized less than twenty times in the interview process. These words give us an idea of the possible vocabulary that could be slowly leaving or just entering the Mexican lexicon. One example of a word that could be on its way out of the lexicon is the Spanish *embrague* (the clutch of an automobile). The data definitively indicates that the English "clutch" is replacing it. This could be caused by several factors, including a simpler way for auto mechanics to interpret car manuals. "Embrague" was chosen as a first

response once during the sixty interviews and was recognized fifteen times. The Spanish *batata*, which would easily be understood as a sweet potato in the rest of Latin America, seems to have never found a place in Mexico; it was only recognized sixteen out of sixty times. Generally we view the less-known Náhuatl words as the ones that are leaving the lexicon and the English words as the ones that have not found a home yet. The Spanish words, depending on whether their counterpart is Náhuatl or English, take their respective roles. The one Náhuatl word in the least recognized group is *moyote* (mosquito). The English words that have not made their mark in the lexicon, according to this research in Guanajuato, are *queque* (cake)*, atachar* (to attach)*, londrí* (laundry mat)*, mopear* (to mop)*,* and *bil* (bill). The least-recognized Spanish words in addition to "embrague" are "batata" (sweet potato)*, caucho* (rubber)*,* alquitrán (tar)*, bocado de Adán* (Adam's apple)*,* and *zapatilla* (tennis shoe).

Geographical Lexicon

The first category is the contrast between the cities Guanajuato and Irapuato and the small ranchos that are fifteen miles away. Although the areas are geographically close, there is substantial lexical difference. As indicated in Figure 1, the ranchos offer a richer indigenous influence than the urban areas, where the novelty of Náhuatl is perhaps higher and its loan words are more socially acceptable. The first middle-ground word that demonstrates this is "beetle" (*mayate* in Náhuatl and *escarabajo* in Spanish). In urban areas, 90 percent of the interviewees gave "escarabajo" as their first response. However, in the ranchos, a drastically lower 33 percent chose "escarabajo." There is a noticeable change in the passive lexicon as well: 63 percent of the rancho participants recognized "escarabajo," while "mayate" was recognized by all. It's clear that "mayate" is more common in rural areas.

The next example is similar. Despite the fact that there is a professional soccer team from Guadalajara nicknamed the Tecolotes (the owls), this Náhuatl middle-ground word was only chosen 10 percent of the time in urban areas and was unrecognized by one participant. The opposite occurred in rural areas. "Tecolote" was chosen over "búho" 73 percent of the time, and búho was unknown to 37 percent of the interviewees.

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Despite the professional soccer team los Tecolotes, the Náhuatl synonym was only chosen 10 percent of the time in urban areas.

A third example is found in the middle-ground word "nipple" (animal or human). The Náhuatl *chichi* was recorded in the ranchos 63 percent of the time, while it was used 30 percent of the time in urban areas. Both *chichi* and the Spanish synonym *teta* were recognized by all sixty participants.

These three examples indicate the influence that Náhuatl has had in rural areas. In several cases, the Náhuatl word was the only choice because the Spanish synonyms were hardly known in rural areas. However, something quite different happens in urban areas: the native speakers prefer the Spanish alternatives even though they have knowledge of their Náhuatl options. Such is the case for urban interviewees with the middle-ground word "corn

field." Although the Náhuatl *milpa* was chosen in 100 percent of the rural interviews, its Spanish counterpart *maizal* was chosen 33 percent of the time in urban areas. Both words were recognized by all interviewees.

This data illustrates that although the urban areas tend to have a greater passive lexicon of both Spanish and Náhuatl words, urban area speakers more commonly lean toward the Spanish alternative. Rural areas show a more Náhuatl influence, but this could be because they simply do not have the same passive lexicon as their urban neighbors, meaning that they have no other synonym. One reason for this could be that the Náhuatl words were common in Mexico first, forming part of the substratum. Now the Spanish words are slowly taking their place, starting in the passive lexicons until they become part of everyday vocabulary, or the active lexicon. This lexical expansion usually begins in urban areas and spreads outward to rural areas.

One example is the middle-ground word "peanut." In most Latin American countries, the Spanish *maní* is the common translation. In Mexico, the Náhuatl *cacahuate* is used in its place. "Cacahuate" was chosen in all sixty interviews, demonstrating that it is the superior alternative in Mexico. Only by looking at the passive lexicon is there a noticeable difference between urban and rural knowledge of "maní" (*See* Figure 2). In urban areas, a total of 73 percent of the interviewees knew of the word "maní." In rural areas, 10 percent (three people) had ever heard it. This could be an early example of what is now seen with "tecolote" or "mayate." "Maní" is slowly making its way into the passive lexicon and someday might be heard in the active lexicon of native Mexicans.

As described earlier, Spanish words tend to be replacing the older, Náhuatl words. But the same process is happening to Spanish with English. Although the replacement process has not been happening for nearly as long, the data demonstrates lexical expansion with English words. One example that shows the difference between urban and rural areas is the English word "cliquear" (mouse click on a computer) or *presionar* in Spanish. In rural areas, "cliquear" was recognized 37 percent of the time, while in urban areas it was recognized 93 percent of the time. It was chosen as the spontaneous answer 30 percent of the time in rural areas and 73 percent in urban areas. Interestingly, of the eleven times it was recognized in rural areas, ten were possibly because of novelty or necessity. Thus, a similar process to other Náhuatl middle-ground words is seen with "cliquear." These words seem to first appear in urban areas and work their way through the passive lexicons until they finally reach the active lexicons of rural areas. The word-borrowing process with this particular expression seems to be accelerated due to the rapid progression of technology in the world today. Another example is the verb "cachar" (to
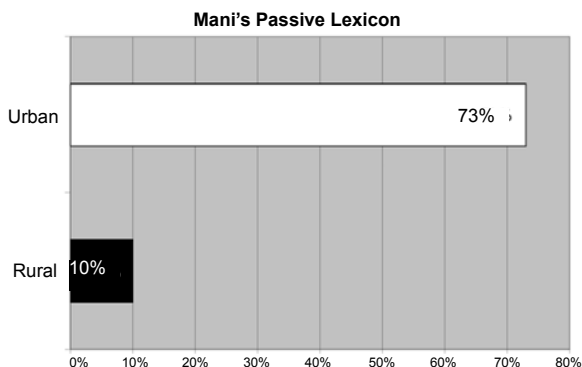

Figure 2: The passive lexicon of maní demonstrates an early stage of how words could start out in urban areas and spread to rural ones.

catch), *atrapar* or *agarrar* in Spanish. The English cognate was chosen 63 percent of the time in urban areas as opposed to 46 percent in rural areas.

Genderlects

This category explores the difference between the male and female lexicons of Guanajuato and investigates what words seem to be more prominent in a male's daily vocabulary and not in that of a female. The possible reasons for such dissimilarity between genders of the same area will also be explored.

"Mayate" and "escarabajo" provide a good example. As indicated in earlier data, "mayate" was more well known in rural areas than in urban ones. There is a similar difference with this word in the genderlect category. Females chose the Náhuatl alternative "mayate" 23 percent of the time, while males chose it 56 percent of the time. The passive lexicons were similar for the two groups; that is, both males and females had comparable knowledge of the terms. There seems to be no definitive explanation as to why males would choose this word over its Spanish alternative.

Another example, similar to the first, is the middle-ground word for the verb "to check" (English *checar*, Spanish "revisar"). With this word, males used the English option 53 percent of the time, and females used it 30 percent. Both the English and the Spanish words were recognized in every interview. Once again, there is no explanation for the difference. Only further investigation may reveal what is taking place.

One possible conclusion is that males always tend to use English words more than females, but examples from this category indicate this is not likely the case. Going back to the English word "cliquear," the data shows a strong tendency for females to use the English word over its Spanish counterpart (67 percent). They also recognized "cliquear" 73 percent of the time, meaning, just as the urban and rural categories showed us, that the majority of people who know the word use it. The males, on the other hand, only recognized "cliquear" 57 percent of the time and chose it 40 percent.

Another example of females using English more than males is seen with the middle-ground word for a music CD. The English "CD," pronounced in Spanish, and the Spanish equivalent "disco compacto" were both recognized in all sixty interviews; therefore, there is no phenomenon such as the one shown with "cliquear." Females chose the English "CD" over "disco compacto" in 57 percent of the interviews, but males did so in only 27 percent of the interviews. Once again, there is no explanation for this preference among females with some words and among males with other words. Neither gender seems to show a stronger tendency to choose the English middle-ground words over Spanish. The overall results for these genderlects show that males chose the English middle-ground words 52 percent of the time and females 51 percent, too small of a difference to consider.

One hypothesis for this distribution of English loan words might be that females spend a significant amount of time with their children. The males, whose primary duties are out in the milpa, spend less time at home. Perhaps the higher amount of contact with their children, who are exposed to new technology such as CDs and computers, causes technology-based loan words to become part of the females' lexicon sooner. This hypothesis, however, only answers the distribution of such loan words as "CD" and "cliquear."

However, a slight genderlect pattern emerges when we refer to the Náhuatl middle-ground words, which males tend to use slightly more than females do. As seen with the example of "mayate" earlier, several other Náhuatl words follow the same trend. Although this is not true for every Náhuatl middle-ground word, generally males employ these words with a slightly higher frequency in their daily vocabulary. Males were the only ones to use the Náhuatl "moyote" (mosquito) and *huist-lacuachi* (porcupine) as their first responses.

One example that proposes an idea as to why a slight lexical difference has occurred is the middle ground word for a cow's or goat's nipple (Náhuatl "chichi," Spanish "teta" or "pesón"). Both words were recognized by all participants. Males used the Náhuatl word 57 percent of the time and the females used it at a slightly lower 37 percent (See Figure 3).

Genderlects of Chichi

Female 37%

Male 57%

Figure 3: Due to the supposed vulgarity of the word "chichi," it was chosen 20 percent less by females than by males.

After the interviews, it was discovered that 60 percent of the female interviewees considered the word "chichi" to be vulgar and therefore did not use it, while less than 10 percent of males thought the same. This explains why there is a difference between these two genderlects concerning this middle ground word.

No real sociolinguistic conclusions come from the genderlect analysis due to the lack of a discernible pattern among them. There are certain influences with certain words, but nothing applies to all.

Generational Lexicons

The category of generational lexicons offers more of an idea of how words come into usage in any lexicon. As discussed previously, Lewis noted the start of a generational lexicon in the village of Tepoztlán, when he said, "The younger generation has a distinctly negative attitude toward Náhuatl; people under thirty-five tend to be ashamed of speaking it in the presence of outsiders and frequently deny having any knowledge of it."[41] The same is expected among the youth of Guanajuato.

The first example is the middle-ground word "grasshopper" (Náhuatl "chapulín," Spanish *saltamontes*). *El chapulín colorado* was a famous *telenovela* that ran for years on Mexican television. One would expect "chapulín" to be dominant in its use over "saltamontes." In the older generational group, participants chose "chapulín" at a high 90 percent and recognized it in every interview, and "saltamontes" was unknown to five participants. However, the younger group did not follow this pattern. They, as Lewis discovered, seemed to be pulling away from their indigenous roots. "Chapulín" was chosen only 47 percent of the time by the youth and surprisingly went unrecognized in three interviews. This is a similar process to what occurred
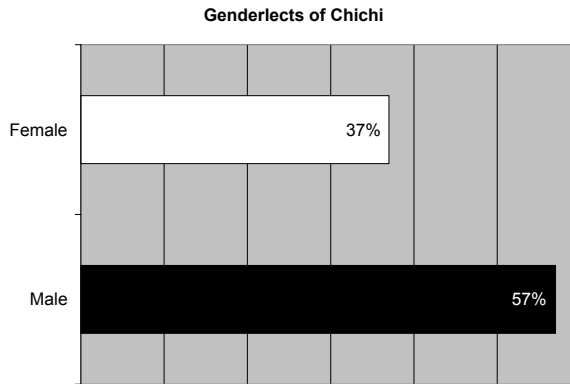
The fame of "el chapulín colorado" did not affect the lexicon of the youth.

in the urban vs. rural group. It appears as if the Spanish alternative is dominant.

Another example of a Náhuatl word leaving the lexicon is once again the Náhuatl "mayate." It does not show as drastic a difference as in the urban vs. rural category, but here "mayate" was chosen 47 percent of the time by the older group and 30 percent of the time by the younger. Also, in looking at the passive lexicon of "maní" and "cacahuate," the younger group's recognition of "maní" is 27 percent higher than the older group's, demonstrating once more that this word might enter the active lexicon of Mexico in the future.

The English middle-ground words of interest in the generational category demonstrate the type of words that seem to be integrating themselves into the Mexican lexicon. One word at the beginning of this process might be the English "londrí" (laundry mat). This word was not chosen by anyone spontaneously, but it was recognized 20 percent of the time by adults and 43 percent of the time by youth. An opposite effect is observed with the middle-ground word "sports playoffs" (English "playoff," Spanish *eliminatorias*). The English synonym was chosen over the Spanish 30 percent of the time by adults and 3 percent of the time by youth. Both older and younger passive lexicons seem to include "playoffs" due to the exposure of this word, such as on television. In a few more years "londrí" and "playoffs" may be in the active lexicon of several native speakers.

The middle-ground word "chance" (English *chance* and Spanish "oportunidad") is a perfect example of a word that could be at the beginning of its journey into the active lexicon of Mexico. Both English and Spanish options were known to all interviewees, both young and old, and "oportunidad" was chosen as the spontaneous answer for every adult. But seven members of the younger group chose "chance." This is just 23 percent of the participants, but it could be the beginning of what we have seen in other cases such as "saltamontes," and maybe a little further along in the process than "maní" and "londrí."

"Cliquear" demonstrates an accelerated process of lexical expansion that is hard to find elsewhere. Twenty years ago, this word would not be considered part of the Spanish language at all. But, as mentioned earlier, due to technological advances it has become necessary to include this word in the Mexican lexicon. In the generational lexicon, "cliquear," or *hacer clic*, reveals a noticeable difference between the youth and adults. It was said spontaneously by the youth 77 percent of the time and 30 percent of the time by the adults.

The passive lexicon divulges the same concept as before: of the thirty youth interviewed, twenty-five of them knew "cliquear" and, of those twenty-five, twenty-three gave it as their first response for a total of 92 percent (*See* Figure 4). Basically, the people who know the word use it. Only 47 percent of the adults from this category knew the word "cliquear" (fourteen of thirty). But of this 47 percent, nine of them chose "cliquear" as their spontaneous answer. Using the answers of those who have "cliquear" in their passive lexicons, it is possible to say that 82 percent of them are utilizing this word every day. The growth of "cliquear" is obvious among

the youth as well as in urban areas. For example, of the fifteen youth interviewed in urban areas, all knew the word and 93 percent of them chose it spontaneously. On the other hand, the opposite is true of adults in rural areas; 7 percent of this group had ever heard of the word "cliquear." The latter group consists of rural peasants who would not have much access to computers, creating a reasonable explanation for this drastic difference in the lexicon.

So, with few exceptions, a notable pattern exists in the generational lexicons, and it is similar to the one noticed in the urban and rural lexicons. English words are slowly taking the place of their Spanish alternatives, starting in the younger, passive lexicons and eventually making their way into the older, active ones, while Náhuatl synonyms are leaving in the same way.

Cliquear's Growth

Figure 4: The majority of people that know the word "cliquear" are using it in their active lexicon.

Education Lexicons

The purpose of this category is to propose one more way that vocabulary has entered the Mexican lexicon. Unlike the other categories, this one is not evenly split up between the number of interviewees. There are only ten in the educated group, all of them from urban areas. But they do come from a variety of educational backgrounds, including doctors, lawyers, psychologists, and other college graduates. One tends to believe that the more educated have a more proper active lexicon and a larger passive one.

The first example of interest in this group comes from the middle-ground words "owl" and "beetle." Both of the Náhuatl synonyms, "tecolote" and "mayate," were recognized 100 percent of the time by the educated. However, neither came up spontaneously in the active lexicons. Among the uneducated, we find the spontaneous responses for "tecolote" and "mayate" at 58 percent and 46 percent, respectively. With this active lexicon of Náhuatl words much higher among the uneducated than the educated, there is further evidence that Náhuatl vocabulary is slowly leaving the Mexican lexicon. The Spanish "maní" proves the same point through its passive lexicon. Among the educated, 80 percent recognized this word, while 34 percent of the uneducated people had ever heard of it. The Náhuatl "chichi," with its supposed vulgarity discussed earlier, was chosen 20 percent of the time by the educated group and 52 percent of the time by the uneducated group. Also the Spanish "batata" (Náhuatl "camote") was recognized 18 percent of the time among the uneducated and a much higher 70 percent among the educated. One more example of a word that could be finding its way into the Mexican lexicon is the middle-ground word "opossum." The Náhuatl "tlacuache" would not be allowed in the Spanish language due to its rules of phonotactics; nevertheless, as a borrowed word it is utilized quite often among Mexicans. Its equivalent *zarigüeya* is not nearly as well known as "tlacuahce." In the educated passive lexicon, "zarigüeya" was recognized 90 percent of the time, but it was only recognized 32 percent of the time in uneducated passive lexicons.
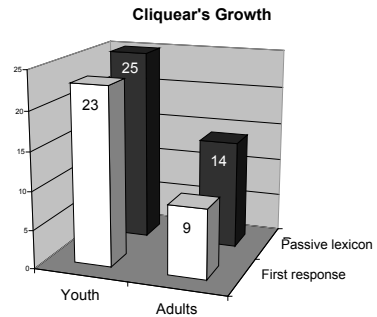
The same pattern seen before is seen in English middle-ground words. The fact that the verb "to park a car" exists mainly in the passive lexicon shows that this word has had some time to integrate itself into the lexicon but has not yet become part of the daily vocabulary of Guanajuato. The educated showed a 90 percent recognition of the English *parquear*, while the uneducated showed 72 percent. In a few years, "parquear" might be heard with a much higher frequency. "Cliquear" had a 100 percent recognition rate among the educated, but only 54 percent among the lesser educated.

The passive lexicon of the educated group is, on average, larger than that of those who have not received as much education. It is proposed that the words in the educated passive lexicon that are not in the uneducated passive lexicons will someday find their way into it and perhaps appear in several active lexicons as well.

Theories

Among the various examples of the fifty-six sets of middle-ground words, several patterns have manifested themselves throughout the corresponding categories. Although these patterns are not present in every example of every middle-ground word, they are present in the majority of cases.

The genderlects offered no real patterns and were quite unpredictable in their results. Several hypotheses have been mentioned but without much proof to support them. The only example with a good explanation was that of "chichi" and "teta" due to the word's perceived vulgarity. Therefore, there is apparently no major difference between the two genderlects of Guanajuato, Mexico.

However, throughout the educated, generational, and geographical lexicons there is a common pattern that words are taking to successfully enter and leave the Mexican lexicon. Generally speaking, Náhuatl has a greater influence in the uneducated, rural, and older populations, which together will be called the secondary group for this project. They have the tendency to choose Náhuatl in most situations. Examples such as "tecolote," "mayate," and "chichi" constantly appeared more as spontaneous first answers of the active lexicon of this group.

Also, it can be said that the passive lexicon of this secondary group is significantly smaller than that of the educated, urban, and younger groups, or the primary group. All throughout the research, the primary group showed greater knowledge of the Spanish and English synonyms. The best example of this is "maní," which appeared significantly more in the passive lexicon throughout the primary group. The recognition of "batata" (Náhuatl "camote") and "zarigüeya" (Náhuatl "tlacuache") in Spanish and "parquear" (Spanish "estacionarse") and "londrí" (Spanish "lavandería") in English was much higher among the primary group. The English "cliquear" is a strong example of how English is chosen over Spanish as a spontaneous first response in the primary group and how seldom it occurs in the secondary group's passive lexicon.

For a word to become a part of a lexicon, it needs to embark on a journey of several stages. As Hugo Mejías proposed, there are three main factors that facilitate lexical borrowing. There is no doubt that these three factors have had, and will continue to have, a significant role in the use of English and Náhuatl middle-ground words. All of the middle-ground words are obviously not at the same stage in their entrance into the Mexican lexicon, but this study

may be used to track where an individual word might be in this journey. One possibility is the following: loan words enter into the passive lexicon of the primary group as the population hears the words from an outside source for the first time. They begin to use the words, making them part of their active lexicon. With the increase of loan words in the active lexicon of the primary group, the words begin to enter into the secondary group's passive lexicon. The secondary group then begins to use the words in speech, for novelty, prestige, necessity, or whatever the reason may be. Several examples support this hypothesis. The Náhuatl "tecolote" would have been a part of the Mexican lexicon well before the Spanish "búho" appeared. "Búho," which was recognized 100 percent of the time in the urban group, appears to start out in the passive lexicon of urban areas. It was also chosen spontaneously 90 percent of the time with the urban group, showing how "búho" is moving through the active lexicon. Then it appears to have made its way into the rural passive lexicon where it was recognized 63 percent of the time. Finally, "búho" begins to appear in the rural active lexicon, 27 percent of the time in this case (*See* Figure 5).

As these new words become part of the Mexican lexicon, their synonyms tend to disappear. Synonyms usually first disappear from the active lexicon of our primary group, who stop using them in daily vocabulary. After that, the words become extinct in the primary group's passive lexicon; because of disuse, the population eventually forgets the vocabulary, causing a decrease in usage in the secondary group's active lexicon as well. Finally, words completely leave the Mexican lexicon when they are no longer present in the secondary passive lexicon. "Grasshopper" in the generational lexicon illustrates one way this might take place. The Náhuatl "chapulín" only appears 47 percent of the time in the youth's active lexicon and 90 percent of the time in their passive lexicon. Yet it shows up 90 percent of the time in the adults' active lexicon and 100 percent of the time in their passive lexicon (See Figure 6).

The Path Into the Mexican Lexicon

Primary Passive Lexicon   **Secondary Passive Lexicon**

búho 100 percent   búho 63 percent

Primary Active Lexicon   **Secondary Active Lexicon**

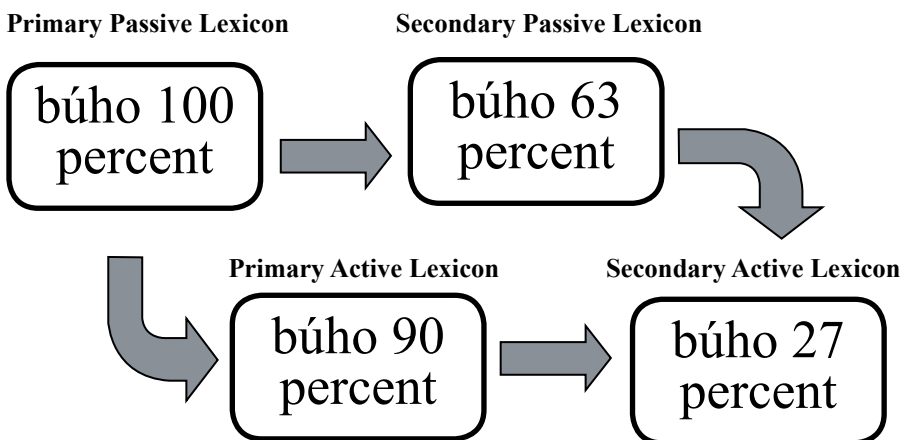búho 90 percent   búho 27 percent

Figure 5: One possibility is that a new word like "búho" starts in the primary group's passive lexicon and ends up in the secondary's active lexicon.
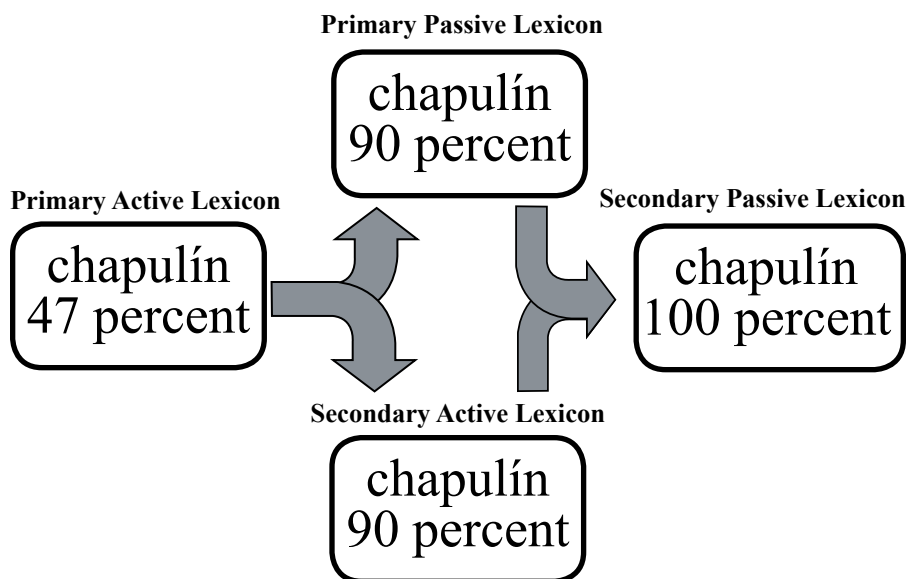
The Path Out of the Mexican Lexicon

Primary Passive Lexicon

chapulín
90 percent

Primary Active Lexicon

chapulín
47 percent

Secondary Passive Lexicon

chapulín
100 percent

Secondary Active Lexicon

chapulín
90 percent

Figure 6: For a word such as "chapulín" to leave, it starts disappearing in the primary active lexicon and slowly is forgotten in the secondary passive lexicon.

These are, of course, only possible theories that apply to some of the middle-ground words. Each individual word goes through its own unique and individual process, and there is no way to predict what will happen every time.

The classic example of the unpredictability of these lexical changes is the middle-ground word "chalk." The Náhuatl *tiza* is not common, and the Spanish "gis" (from the Latin *gipsum*) is the favored alternative in Mexico. "Gis" was chosen spontaneously in every interview, and "tiza" was recognized 40 percent of the time in the passive lexicon. But the interesting thing in this case is that the Náhuatl counterpart seems to be the one integrating itself into the Mexican lexicon. Of this strange occurrence, Blanch recorded, "In the life of words unexpected and curious things happen, like the example that is given in the case of 'chalk.' Tiza is a nahuatlismo of general use in Spain, while in Mexico is barely used. The 'white clay that is used to write on chalkboards' or tiza in Spain is in Mexico *gis* . . . that is used write on blackboards."[42]

In the case of some middle-ground words where neither alternative seems to be disappearing, the two alternatives are developing different meanings. The middle-ground word "twin" gives us an example of how this semantic change is occurring. Both the Náhuatl *cuate* and the Spanish "gemelo" can be used to describe a twin in Mexico. Both words were recognized in the passive lexicon in all sixty interviews and "gemelo" was chosen spontaneously in forty-eight cases. However, twenty-seven of the interviewees said that "cuate" is used to describe fraternal twins, while "gemelo" means an identical twin. This question did not form part of the interviews, so the twenty-seven who shared this information were not asked for it. "Cuate" has also become

slang in various parts of the country for "buddy" or "dude."[43] So instead of the non-dominant, middle-ground word disappearing from the lexicon, it could be taking on a new meaning. Other examples of the new definitions are not as blatant but can be seen, such as "mopear" for a dry mop, "zapatilla" as a high-heeled shoe, and *mazorca* as a dried corncob.

Some words, however, do seem to be disappearing from the Mexican lexicon. The Náhuatl "huistlacuachi" (porcupine) is all but gone from either active lexicon; it was chosen once as a spontaneous answer in all sixty interviews, by a seventy-eight-year-old rural male. In the passive lexicon of all sixty interviewees, it was only recognized 35 percent of the time. In a few years, "huistlacuachi" might be all but extinct from the common speech of Mexico, along with several other Náhuatl loan words, and could contribute to the "dead weight"[44] of indigenous voices.

Other words seem to have stopped right in the middle of this process and show no tendency to be used more by primary or secondary groups. The middle-ground word for the verb "to catch" is a word which is right in the middle of the process. Both the English "cachar" and the Spanish "agarrar" are used interchangeably without hesitation and both were recognized in all sixty interviews. "Cachar" was more prevalent as a spontaneous response, but it showed up 55 percent (thirty-three out of sixty) of the time compared to "agarrar," which was chosen 45 percent (twenty-seven out of sixty) of the time. This is another example where both synonyms stay in the language and continue to be used for the same referent.

As Méndez suggested, the world of sports has offered up several borrowed words to the Mexican lexicon.[45] Baseball alone has provided words like *jonrón* (homerun) and *batear* (to bat). The middle-ground word for the position of the pitcher (English "pícher" and in Spanish *lanzador*) is more common in its English form (85 percent of all sixty interviews). But both words were recognized in every interview. However, with the middle-ground word for the verb "to pitch," there is a drastic difference between the noun and the verb; "pichear" was chosen 22 percent of the time as compared to the earlier-mentioned 85 percent of "pícher."

Conclusions

Each of the fifty-six, middle-ground words is having its own experience within the Mexican lexicon, proving what the neogrammarians said during the nineteenth century: "every word has its own history."[46] "Cliquear" is coming into the Mexican lexicon at a rapid rate, while other words seem to be taking their time. Why some words seem to enter the lexicon with ease when others never seem to get in is just another part of the history of all languages when they begin to mix. But indeed, all the borrowed words have entered the lexicon by using one or a combination of Hugo Mejías' three borrowing factors.

Some are doing many things to prevent the cultural and linguistic decay of Mexico. In 1982, there were numerous movements in Mexico City to protect the vitality of the Spanish language from invading languages such as English. Lines of poems paying homage to Spanish were written on the walls around the capital. One evening, a reference to the "immortality" of Spanish was altered with spray paint, replacing the word "Spanish" with "Náhuatl." Soon afterwards, a council to defend indigenous languages was formed.[47] Still, many people fear the extinction of this and many other indigenous tongues. The Mexican government has taken precautions to impede such an occurrence, but as Lewis said of the youth of Tepoztlán, Náhuatl is losing its prestige among Mexicans. Examples of this loss of

prestige were seen during two different interviews of this research. When asked about his passive lexicon knowledge of the Náhuatl "guajolote" (turkey), one twenty-seven-year-old urban male replied, "Yeah, I know the word, but I would never say it because I'm not from a rancho."[48] A similar opinion was heard from a twenty-three-year-old rural male participant who remarked, "Well, we say 'tecolote' here, even though we know it's wrong."[49]

Despite the many negative attitudes towards the "lexical infirmity" known as Spanglish, there is no end in sight to this unstoppable verbal transformation, or, as Stavans coined it, linguistic revolution.[50] Many bilinguals live throughout North America, and the necessity of new words for the ever-growing U.S. technology greatly hampers any forthcoming decrease of lexical expansion in Mexico. And, of course, one must take into account the fact that English itself is viewed as a language of international prestige throughout Latin America and the world.[51]

The selected middle-ground words from this study demonstrate several of the sociolinguistic views of speakers on the vocabulary and how a word's absence in the active lexicon contributes to the word's disappearance from the passive lexicon. Further research in both northern and southern Mexico will demonstrate if these patterns shown in Guanajuato are constant throughout the country and will contribute to Blanch's idea of an isogloss of loan words.[52] But within the state of Guanajuato, there is a tendency for the primary group to choose the English synonyms over the Spanish and the Spanish synonyms over the Náhuatl, while the secondary groups utilize their Náhuatl vocabulary on a much higher basis.

It is as unlikely that all Náhuatl will completely disappear from the Mexican lexicon as it is that one day English will take over the entire Spanish language. This project demonstrates another part of the unpredictable mutability of languages.

Academics have pushed for, and will continue to push for, the linguistic and cultural purity of Mexico. But after having studied the effects of both English and Náhuatl on Spanish, Blanch said, "It is an evident and indisputable fact that every language changes throughout the years; the linguistic changes usually consist of the replacement of a traditional form, be it phonetically, morphologically or lexical, by a new or borrowed form. The linguistic changes can occur over many years or at times even over many centuries."[53] This statement applies as much to all languages as it does to the expansion of the Mexican lexicon.

NOTES

1. "en muchas áreas de Hispanoamérica las formas de hablar son tan chistosas que hacen reír a los españoles." Carmen Curcó, "¿No me harías un favorcito?," *La pragmática lingüística del español* (Atlanta, GA: Rudopi, 1998). ed. Henk Haverkate, Gijs Mulder and Carolina Fraile Maldonado 141.

2. Hugo Mejías, *Préstamos de lenguas indígenas en el español americano del siglo XVII* (México, DF: UNAM, 1990) 15–16.

3. Rafael Cano, *Historia de la lengua española* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2004) 810, see also Ilan Stavans, *Spanglish: The Making of a New American Language* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003) 27.

4. Yolanda Lastra, "El contacto entre el español y las lenguas indígenas en México," *Trabajos de sociolingüística hispánica* (Madrid: Universidad de Alcalá, 1997). ed. Francisco Moreno Fernández. 13.

5. Lastra, 22.

6. "Náhuatl Language," *Encyclopedia Britannica* 27 Nov. 2007 <http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9372969>

7. "De aparente sencillez, el préstamo léxico de lenguas indígenas es realmente un proceso de gran complejidad, sujeto a una serie de condiciones que lo facilitan y una serie de restricciones que tratan de impedirlo." Mejías, 15.

8. "Hay en nuestros diccionarios una gran masa de voces indígenas que constituyen en ellos un peso muerto." Manuel Morínigo, *La penetración de los indigenismos americanos en el español; Presente y futuro de la lengua española* (Madrid: OFINES, 1963) 226.

9. "Si algunos vocablos bárbaros aquí se hallaren, la causa es la novedad de que se tracta; y no se ponga a la cuenta de mi romance, que en Madrid nascí y en la casa real me crié, y con gente noble he conversado, e algo he leído, para que se sospeche que habré entendido mi lengua castellana." Cano, 813.

10. Juan M. Lope Blanch, *Léxico indígena en el español de México* (México DF: El Colegio de México, 1979) 35.

11. *Ibid*.

12. Manuel Aguilar Moreno, *Handbook to Life in the Aztec World* (New York: Facts of Life Inc., 2006) 19.

13. "la huella indígena más notoria y valiosa está en el área del léxico." Alonso Zamora Vicente, *Dialectología española* (Madrid: Gredos, 1979) 317.

14. "La contribución más importante de las lenguas indígenas es en el léxico." Rafael Lapesa Melgar, *Historia de la lengua española* (Madrid: Gredos, 1981) 347.

15. Darío Rubio, *Refranes, proverbios y dichos y dicharachos mejicanos* 2nd ed. (México, DF: A. P. Márquez, 1940) 22–23.

16. Lope Blanch, *Léxico indígena*, 29–32.

17. "los diccionarios indígenas no señalan la diferencia entre el uso urbano y el uso rural." Lope Blanch, *Léxico indígena*, 20.

18. Oscar Lewis, *Tepoztlán, life in a Mexican Village* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963) 9.

19. Bob Davis, "Scholar's Dictionary of Aztec Language May Take a Lifetime," *Wall Street Journal* 24 Feb. 2006, eastern ed,: 37.

20. Stavans, 18.

21. "Su influjo se ha hecho particularmente intenso en el siglo XX que ha desplazado considerablemente a otras lenguas de cultura tradicionales, como el francés. La situación de Hispanoamérica se distingue fundamentalmente de la de España por el influjo que los Estados Unidos han ejercido desde el siglo XIX sobre ella." Juan Sánchez Méndez, *Historia de la lengua española en América* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2003) 453.

22. "Al emanicparse políticamente las distintas colonias, el modelo inmediato para las jóvenes repúblicas fueron las instituciones políticas y la constitución de los Estados Unidos. *Ibid*.

23. "A lo largo del XIX la influencia norteamericana iría en aumento a medida que crecía su poder político, económico y technológico. También la situación fue muy variada respecto de la recepción y grado de penetración de los anglicismos en los distintos países americanos." *Ibid*.

24. Stavans, 38–40.

25. José Moreno de Alba, *El español de América. El español de México* (México, DF: Asociación nacional de universidades e institutos de enseñanza superior, 1972) 23.

26. Roberto González Echeverría, "Is 'Spanglish' a Language?," *The New York Times* 28 Mar 1997, C 11.

27. Edwin Rubenstein, "For Hispanics, Spanglish is Killing English Literacy," *Liberty Post* 6 Jan 2006, 5.

28. "una mezcolanza de español e inglés universalmente considerada como una enfermedad lingüística de consecuencias mortales para la vitalidad de la lengua español . . . a través del mundo." Cano, 1121.

29. Juan M. Lope Blanch, *Español de América y español de México* (México, DF: UNAM, 2000) 125.

30. Lope Blanch, *Español de América* 129–130.

31. Stavans, 3.

32. Stavans, 14–15.

33. Steven Trejo, "The Intergenerational Assimilation of Mexican Americans," *CATO Institution* (2006): 20 Sept. 2006 http://www.cato-unbound.org/2006/08/22/stephen-j-trejo/the-intergenerational-assimilation-of-mexican-americans/.

34. "En principio, podemos distinguir dos tipos de situaciones diferentes: la de las regiones bilingües, como el Suroeste de los EEUU o Puerto Rico, y la del resto de Hispanoamérica, en la que el inglés influye como lengua de prestigio internacional. Los préstamos del inglés se concentraron especialmente en ciertos campos léxicos en los que despuntaba la cultura americana, como la ciencia, la tecnología, el comercio, la mecánica, los deportes, etc." Sánchez Méndez, 453.

35. Lope Blanch, *Léxico indígena*, 20.

36. "La convivencia pudo ser más o menos duradera o resolverse tarde o temprano a favor de la posibilidad patrimonial y la posibilidad indígena. Las soluciones fueron, por lo demás, diversas según las regiones." Cano, 811.

37. "Sería difícil determinar con precisión si alguna de las voces concurrentes predomina, en cuanto a su empleo, sobre la otra. Pueden intervenir en ello muy diversos factores; preferencias socioculturales, familiares . . . generaciones, etc." Lope Blanch, *Léxico indígena*, 46.

38. Chambers, J.K., Peter Trudgill, *Dialectology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998) 21, see also Gilliéron, Jules, *Atlas Linguistique de la France* (Paris: H. Champion 1902–1910).

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid*, 22, see also Jaberg, K., J. Judd, *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Südschweiz* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1928–1940).

41. Lewis, 9.

42. "En la vida de las palabras suceden cosas tan curiosas e inesperadas como la que se da en el caso de *tiza* precisamente, que es un nahuatlismo de uso general en España, mientras que en México es apenas empleado. La 'arcilla blanca que se usa para escribir en los encerados' o *tiza* en España es en México el *gis* . . . que se usa para escribir en los pizarrones." Lope Blanch, *Español de América*, 270.

43. Humberto López Morales, *Diccionario académico de americanismos; Presentación y planta del proyecto* (Buenos Aires: Asociación de academias de la lengua española, 2005) 80.

44. Morínigo, 226.

45. Sánchez Méndez, 453.

46. Lyle Campbell, *Historical Linguistics: An Introduction* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004) 224.

47. Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors; A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000) 20.

48. "Si pues, conozco la palabra, pero nunca la diría porque yo no soy de un rancho," From recorded interview in posession of author.

49. "Bueno, decimos tecolote aquí, aunque sabemos que no es correcto," From recorded interview in posession of author.

50. Stavans, 14–15.

51. Sánchez Méndez, 453.

52. Lope Blanch, *Léxico indígena*, 20.

53. "es un hecho evidente e indisputable que cada idioma cambia a través de los años; los cambios lingüísticos suelen consistir en la sustitución de una forma tradicional, sea fonéticamente, morfológicamente o léxicamente, por una forma nueva o prestada. Los cambios lingüísticos pueden ocurrir durante varios años, o a veces aun durante varios siglos." Lope Blanch, *Español de América*, 247.

Tourism, Arts, and Crafts Among the Southwestern Navajo: A Quest for Authenticity

Jennifer Francom

Introduction

Studying tourism in the Four Corners region is essential to decide if tourism is having adverse effects on local Navajo communities in the area; interviewing merchants, artisans, and community members helps to assess how arts and crafts are affected by the tourism industry and also how the process of commercialization occurs in a small-scale setting. Tourism plays a role not only in damaging and destroying material culture but also in diluting the culture as a whole on the reservation. Items such as baskets, rugs, pottery, and other forms of art are not quality representations of culture on the reservation, particularly in outdoor shops. The real representation of authentic Navajo material goods may be found only in galleries, Native American shows, and festivals. These authentic goods help to establish the Navajo as a people connected to their past but moving forward into the future. Tourism has a negative influence on Navajo cultural life, corrupting Navajo historical traditions and dividing the cultural goods market on the basis of value and quality.

In this paper, I will first cover the literature within the disciplines of tourism and anthropology, including a definition of tourists for the purposes of this argument, and I will be delving into the subjects of commercialization, tradition, and authenticity. Then I will explain the historical traditional methods of how each of the different crafts has been created, including baskets, rugs, pottery, jewelry, and a small section on painting and the performing arts. As a cross comparison, a section covering the commercialized methods of the same crafts will then be discussed, including a more complete discussion on the process of commercialization and commodification. I will then present the main argument of the paper in an evaluation of the markets available in the Southwest, why tourists and collectors choose the markets they do, and why artisans choose to sell at the markets they do. This paper will culminate in a discussion of tourism as a factor of diluting and slowly eliminating Navajo culture.

Literature Review

In this literature review, there are three important ideas to be discussed. First, what types of tourists are found in the Southwest, and what are their main target purchases? Second, what negative impact does tourism have on communities, and what are some telltale signs of this process? Finally, what defines authenticity and tradition in the Navajo goods market, and how do these terms play into the commercialization process? All of these topics are relevant to the main argument in that certain types of tourists contribute to the corruption of the Navajo goods market, which is divided on the basis of quality and value.

In the Southwest, there are two types of tourists. The first are the genuine Hawaiian shirt-wearing, camera-toting typical tourists. They are found everywhere and may be labeled Americans, but they are found across all cultures and societies. They stop to take pictures of rock formations they have never seen before and try to barter with the locals for valuable

goods. Their main goals are to be adventurers and to experience what they cannot experience in their own backyards, so they travel across the globe seeking new cultural discoveries and experiences. These tourists generally come from at least a day's drive away and want to experience any and every aspect of the new culture.

The second type of tourist found in the Southwest is not quite as obvious as the typical tourist and will be titled a "collector" for the purposes of this research. Instead of looking for an "authentic experience," collectors are mostly looking for "authentic items." A collector is a very different type of tourist because they do not always have to travel very far in order to find what they are looking for. Their interest is mainly in artifacts of material culture, not only to view on display, but also to purchase and own for their enjoyment. While the first type of tourists are easily convinced to buy small trinkets that may or may not have any cultural significance or value, collectors are looking for the best quality and most expensive taste in material goods. Most collectors have a specific style of craft that they specialize in or value above all other cultural goods.

There is a noticeable difference between the two types of tourists based on their desires and goals in visiting different places and shops. While most tourists stop at shops that are on the way to their next event, collectors travel specifically to visit certain shops and are not too concerned with other events unless the event includes a selection of the items they are planning to collect. The collectors mainly visit galleries and high-end trading posts in order to see the selection and pricing of the items they are looking for, while tourists may be found at any roadside stand that advertises the sale of authentic items.

While there definitely is a degree of emphasis in preserving local arts and crafts, the industries of these local handcrafted items have come under attack as their popularity and demand has risen. Using machines to mass produce these items to sell as cheap souvenirs or trinkets has become more and more popular in the Southwest; the tourist industry has certainly been at the forefront of this new onslaught of mass production and fabrication.

In her article, "Eastern Cherokee Experience," Betty Duggan argued against the negative aspects of tourism and its "overcrowding, labor shortages, prostitution, crime, environment degradation, [and] loss or replacement of authentic cultural traditions" (Chambers 1997:46–47). Others, like folklorist Patricia Atkinson Wells (2006), have argued that tourism is trying to market culture and disguise itself as helping while actually creating problems. "The concept of 'ethical marketing' is therefore an oxymoron," she said (5). Robert Wood agreed that tourism plays a part in "demeaning and distorting" the culture of the local community, by acts such as taking local ceremonies and performing them for public display, using sacred symbols in items for commercial consumption, or portraying the culture in a negative light by mocking or joking about certain aspects of cultural importance.

Erik Cohen (1989) discussed this process of commercializing culture in "The Commercialization of Ethnic Crafts." Cohen said the process of commercializing ethnic crafts is not an isolated phenomenon and includes such disciplines as politics, economics, religion, and culture. He noted two factors that relate to the process of commercialization. First, there is the "vitality of the local ethnic culture" (Cohen 1989:161). After a commercializing process has intruded into a cultural sphere, the vitality of the general culture must be evaluated to determine whether the commercialization catalyzed other

kinds of cultural activity or if the commercialization appeared because of a general decline in cultural arts among the community. The second factor is the company or group of individuals who primarily instigated the commercialization process. Cohen (1989) used the terms "spontaneous [commercialization]" when the process is initiated by a group of local people and "sponsored [commercialization]" when it is initiated by an external agency (165). From these two factors, different types of commercialization may be charted, depending on the vitality of the culture (in decline or flourishing) and what source initiated the commercialization (spontaneous or sponsored source).

Based on Cohen's research, the types and effects of commercialization in societies may be analyzed and often remedied. Commercialization does not always has negative affects; Cohen argued that many times commercialization may aid the culture in revitalizing material goods. Commercialization is primarily based on factors such as the vitality of the culture and what source initiated the commercialization as well as the community's acceptance or rejection of it, which again may depend on the source. However, from the Navajo point of view, which identifies and prides itself based on its ancestral traditions and craft, the concept of tradition is very important, especially when dealing with the creation of cultural items.

In Simon J. Bronner's (2000) discussion, "The Meaning of Tradition," he separates tradition into two main concepts—tradition in time and tradition in space—based on the processes of passing traits down through generations (time) or distribution (space) (2000:92). Bronner (2000) said, "Cultural tradition is presumably an item or pattern that represents culture," which would describe the cultural practices the Navajos take part in (98). Their items represent the history and processes that have been handed down from their ancestors and are, therefore, a large part of their culture. This process could also be described as "creating the future out of the past," which is fitting for this research that touches on the concept Bendix addressed with the invention of traditions (Bronner 2000:98).

Bendix particularly delved into this subject by looking at the idea of "invention of tradition," the process of carrying on cultural traits but with "reinterpretation and change" within the cultural system (Bendix 1989:132). Bronner's definition of tradition, however, is most fitting for this argument because this research deals with traditions that have been handed down through time, specifically passed down from the ancestors, and diffused among the different tribes in the Southwest. Nevertheless, I do acknowledge that traditions change and are reinterpreted over time. For Navajo cultural life, it is not the complete reinvention of tradition that supports the industry; it is the similarities to the processes and materials that the ancestors used to create these material items that remain important.

One particular issue that still needs to be addressed is whether the Navajo continue to make their items traditionally or enrich their production with a variety of items in order to get more customers. This question directly relates back to the discussion about tradition. How are the different types of artisans interpreting tradition, through Bendix's or Bronner's definition? The related debate on authenticity focuses in on the relative genuineness of an item, particularly what characteristics define an item as authentic. On one side of the debate, "the objects deemed to be authentic are those that seem furthest removed from the capitalist marketplace," meaning the items the capitalist marketplace has the least interaction or reflection on are the items that will be considered most authentic (Martin 1993:442).

Another side of the debate is brought up by anthropologist Richard Handler in "Authenticity," where he discussed the concept of authenticity paralleling the concept of sincerity. He related sincerity to the concept of being true to oneself, specifically quoting Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. This concept of sincerity holds one definition of authenticity as being authentic relates to being true "aside from any roles or pretence" (Handler 1984:3). For material goods, this means the artifacts are true and genuine as they stand alone in their most natural state. Handler (1988) elaborated on this issue, stating that "an authentic piece of living history is one that exactly simulates or re-creates a particular place, scene or event [or item] from the past" (243). Essentially, authenticity represents the closest simulation or re-enactment of the past; its purpose is to "replicate rather than interpret the past" (Handler 1988:243).

The authentically made items are the closest to replicating history and are considered the purest and most uncorrupted forms of the past. The issue of authenticity cannot be easily disregarded when researching the artistic practices of a tribe, where most authenticity is grounded in the traditional methods of that particular tribe.

No matter which definition of cultural authenticity they support, Navajo actions speak louder than words. This brings up the case in point: Why are certain Navajos selling cultural items for thousands of dollars, while others are selling similar items but only scraping by? This brings the argument back to Handler's (1988) definition of authenticity: it is the closest process to "replicating the past rather than interpreting it" (243). While the Navajo artisans include new aspects to their art, they try to maintain the same processes and materials their ancestors used. It makes sense that items Navajos consider more authentic would be more expensive, illustrating their definition of authenticity.

This literature sets up the theoretical base for the argument that tourism corrupts and destroys certain historical traditions through the lack of authenticity. Tourism as a discipline has looked into the ways that people who travel or accept travelers are affected by such interactions. The issue of commercializing cultural ways of life and practices illustrates the examples of how traditional methods help to identify and connect generations and practices within communities. Finally, the issue of authenticity solidifies the argument (at least from Handler's context) that authenticity is considered the item, event, or practice closest to traditional methods from the past, which will be the next subject of discussion.

Traditional Methods

Arts and crafts among the Navajo people are some of their most valuable traditional practices, but it is the process by which these crafts are made that gives importance to the items. Navajos uphold the belief of balance in all things. The term *hozho* (beauty, peace, harmony) describes the desired state of all things, including life, work, and crafts. History and tradition make certain items more valuable and authentic. Each item the Navajos make has a history, an influence, and a traditional process, as well as many qualities and characteristics essential to classify artifacts as authentically Navajo. Robert A. Roessel, Jr., a beloved Navajo educator, put it best when he said, "Navajo arts and crafts are what makes a Navajo and hence cannot be lost!"(1983:176). This section will primarily cover the traditional and historical processes of each Navajo craft. As an added portion, painting and the performing arts will be briefly covered in order to look at traditional Navajo aspects of those arts.

Baskets

Basketry is one of many areas in which Navajos distinguish and pride themselves. The process is usually very long and tedious and requires expert skill and knowledge. Navajo baskets are typically twelve to fourteen inches in diameter and about four inches deep in a shallow dish form, one of the required characteristics of an authentic Navajo basket. The baskets are weaved in a coil pattern counter clockwise, with ten to twelve stitches per inch, using natural materials, such as sumac and yucca. The sumac and yucca shoots are grown during the spring and early summer. When they stop growing, they are cut, split, and dyed. In order to create patterns of different colors, the shoots must be dyed in colored roots. The standard pattern for most baskets is a red center with striped black bands on either side of the red. The most popular colors are white, red, black, and gray.

There are two main tools used when weaving the basket: a comb and a long dowel. The comb is used to straighten and tighten loose coils that have been formed on the dowel. The dowel is used to guide the weaving. When braiding or weaving, the basket must be finished off in a certain pattern in herringbone or false braid and a traditional design must be worked into the pattern. The baskets of earlier generations were woven so tightly that they were used as water containers. One informant said "the baskets that would be used for this would be coated in pinon pine sap to prevent leaking." His mother weaved water container baskets, and he has them proudly mounted on his wall, along with her comb and dowel. Baskets are definitely an area of pride and identity for the Navajo. However, there is one other craft perhaps more widely known than the baskets.

Rugs

Rug weaving, similar to basket weaving, involves natural raw materials that make a rug more authentic. Before the Spanish came into the Southwest, the Navajos used cloth spun from wild cotton to weave their rugs. After the Spanish introduced more domestic types of live-stock, the Navajo started using the wool of sheep and other animals to spin cloth. The weavers shear the goats and sheep in the spring, wash the wool, and piece it to start a rug. A shop owner on the Arizona-Utah border said that most tourists smell the rug to determine what material was used in the weaving. She thought it was interesting that tourists would "come and smell the rug [and say] 'it must be her billy goat'" when they think the rug smells bad. To create the colors, different colored livestock are used. The shop owner's mother had been weaving for many years; the shop owner said, "My mother uses natural dyes, the sheep and goats are white, black, gray, [she] uses sandstone to make whites whiter, blend black and white to make gray." To get other colors, Navajos use dyes made of bark. Most of the tree barks are from Monticello, Utah (a mountain city to the north), where weavers obtain red, orange, and brown dyes.

The art of rug weaving is speculated to have come down with the Navajos when they migrated, handed down from mother to daughter. In earlier generations, a young girl would start learning how to use a loom from age five and would weave rugs until her hands were consumed with arthritis, and she could not weave anymore. One fifth-generation weaver who had learned from her mother (who in turn learned from her mother) said, "My grandmother is turning one hundred today, and when she was eighty she still wanted to weave because she was bored."

There is a legend that explains the beginning of Navajo weaving. In Navajo mythology, Spider Woman, who is considered holy, learned how to weave from a spider and then passed on the wisdom to the Navajo people. In acknowledgement and gratitude to Spider Woman, the Navajo used to leave a hole in the middle of their blankets, just like spiders leave holes in the middle of their webs. However, traders refused to buy the blankets with the hole in the middle, so the weavers had to come up with a new way of acknowledging Spider Woman. A spiritual outlet tradition was created by designing a thin life line from the center to the edge of the blanket (Locke: 1992). This life line is thought to preserve the owner from "blanket sickness" and represents the weaver's feelings about life. The shop owner in Arizona also talked about the life line as a secret among the weavers. It shows that the blanket does not have a beginning or an end. Most weavers practice this tradition to acknowledge Spider Woman with their weaving.

There is a taboo or warning to those that do not use the life line. It is a phrase similar to "cobwebs in the brain," or the belief that whoever denies the tribute to Spider Woman will have cobwebs spun in their head. A weaver talked about the life line as not closing herself off to anything in life; it is more representative of beliefs about life. The weaver's mother rarely used the life line, and so the weaver was taught to rarely use it; according to her, how often you used it depended on how traditional your family was.

The Navajos set up three-rung looms, which are strung up with string and a base with two vertical sides that hold the entire loom up. Every different color in the rug has different strands that have to be held separately. The more colors in a rug, the more complicated it is to make; similarly, to make more intricate patterns involves more intricate weaving. The weaver kneels on the ground in front of the loom and uses three sticks and strings to compact the thread into the pattern. Many weavers said that it takes three to four months weaving about four hours a day to complete a three by two foot rug. Obviously, weaving is a long, drawn-out, and difficult process but, depending on the materials and technique used, may make a profit in the end.

Two similar traits found among the baskets and the rugs are the natural raw materials and the traditional processes that do not use conveniences of the twentieth century. The more natural and connected to older generations the artifacts are, the more valuable they are and the more they will sell for in shops or trading posts. While rugs and baskets are considered traditional aspects of Navajo identity, pottery and jewelry are not afforded the same consideration. In previous generations, Navajos were not known for their pottery work, and many Navajos admit that silversmithing was passed on to them from the Spanish and Mexicans.

Pottery

At many of the roadside stands, pottery is one of the hottest commodities for those who can transport it. There is a pottery factory in Blanding, Utah, that prides itself in Navajo and Ute styles. Pottery has been attributed to other tribes besides the Navajo in the area. Archaeology exhibits and museums display the centuries of ceramic history that have been discovered in the Southwest. Whatever the history, for the Navajo, pottery is definitely a craft that has been adopted as their own and given cultural traits and life among Navajo galleries and roadside stands.

As with many of the other cultural goods, the emphasis on natural raw materials makes pottery more traditional. The Navajos, while not known extensively for their pottery, started creating it after other tribes in the area during the 1700s. The designs on the pottery were very simple and were used for practical reasons, such as cooking and storing food supplies. Most pots were covered with pinon gum (similar to the baskets), which is the sap from pine trees. For a very long time, the Navajos had a reputation for the most poorly executed pottery in the area. Over time, they adopted it from other tribes, individualized it, and made it one of their own cultural traits.

Unknown to many people in the Southwest are certain taboos of pottery making. In more traditional families, there are taboos that restrict and regulate pottery creation and rules that protect the potter and other people surrounding them. It is considered bad luck for the potter to carve a human or religious figure on a pot, and bad luck for the figure as well. The pottery should always be made away from other people, and while making the pottery, the potter has restrictions on his or her behavior. The potter cannot swear, think bad thoughts, or jump across ditches.

Many women are deterred from making pottery because of these taboos and others specifically placed on female potters. One main taboo against female potters is that menstruating women are banned from making pottery. If the taboos are broken, severe consequences follow: the least would be a broken or cracked pot, and the most severe might be blindness or death. Most of these taboos are only believed by the most traditional families; most potters follow their own rules and restrictions. One contemporary Navajo potter said there are certain designs that have to be "okayed through the tribal elders."

Even though there are modern conveniences and advances in the realm of pottery, many Navajos, who consider their work very traditional, do not use them. The pottery clay is farmed from certain areas of the ground; many potters do not use pre-made clays. Most of the pots are not even thrown on a wheel but are hand formed. After being sculpted, the pot is usually left to dry so that the glaze will take hold. The glaze is gathered from the pinon pine trees and stewed until ready to cover the pot. Some potters like to imprint materials on the outside of their pots with rocks, twigs, and corn husks, creating texture on the exterior. The pots are then fired to crystallize the glaze in a handmade kiln and cooled. They bake the pots in natural kilns that do not have electrical thermometers or heat gauges to measure how hot the kiln gets in order to protect the pot.

Pottery is very important to the culture of all Southwest Native Americans. It has the richest and most concrete history and is displayed in many museums in the Four Corners area, such as the rich Anasazi pottery collections in Blanding. Pottery as a representative of Native American tribes is also important in considering the cultural goods and crafts the Navajo chose to adopt into their own cultural heritage. Pottery represents the extent of the connection between tribes in the Southwest and is a uniting factor among the tribes.

Jewelry

While pottery may be seen as the most historic craft in the Southwest, jewelry might be the most universal. Each tribe has its own distinctive and unique design that is recognized and marketed among all the tribes. Many silversmithing influences in the Southwest are

attributed to the Spanish-Mexican influence. Spaniards taught the Native Americans how to meld silver and create jewelry. One of the first Navajo silversmiths taught a Zuni silversmith who in turn taught a Hopi silversmith, diffusing knowledge and skill throughout all the other tribes in the area.

The Navajos are noted to have been wearing silver conch belts around the mid 1700s. One history book documented:

> Silversmithing is not an ancient art among the Navajo. They did not learn the craft until after the middle of the nineteenth century, although they had been wearing silver for many years. They acquired knowledge of the art from the Mexican plateros (silversmiths) who lived in villages in the upper Rio Grande valley and at the southeastern edge of the present Navajo reservation (Adair 1944:103).

Similar to the other crafts, silversmithing was a result of adaptation and adoption into Navajo culture. From the Navajo influence came new traditions and designs, such as the squash bottom necklace, which is said to have been inspired by the silver pomegranate that Spanish men wore around their trousers.

Silversmithing went through episodes of popularity and decline, relative to general production quality. There were years when many of the Navajo pieces were of shoddy craftsmanship and would not sell at the market. However, the silversmithing and goldsmithing quality, along with the use of semi-precious stones, has definitely improved from earlier generations. Jewelers mine their own stones and silver and have the tools (such as a settling tank) and knowledge to use them. Some designs are very intricate and complicated, requiring time and patience. Patience is definitely the most valuable quality for a silversmith. An experienced silversmith said, "If there is too much heat, too fast and any unevenness in   the conditions, the metal will become too brittle and break." The emphasis he placed on the importance of working with the metal in its most malleable state shows the utmost importance that patience plays in metal working. The silversmith related the same concept to life, when he said, "If you don't take things calmly and live an even life, the metal will break."

Raymond Locke, a Navajo historian, wrote about Navajo silversmithing as a very successful trade. Locke said, "More quality Navajo silver is being produced today than at any single time and is bringing in higher prices than ever before—there is little danger of silversmithing disappearing" (Locke 1993:26). The selection of jewelry keeps growing, as well as the availability of raw materials and gems to the jewelers and the increase in popularity among the tourists, who love to buy jewelry.

In considering the validity of this paper's argument, that tourism diminishes the value and quality of items in the Navajo goods market, it is important to take in how things were (and still are in some areas) traditionally constructed. These traditional processes, as discussed previously, create value in the authentic Navajo goods, value that is then transferred into the market and to Navajo culture in general.

Commercial Trinkets

This paper mainly focuses on the market of cultural goods divided on the basis of quality and value. This division is most apparent in the way that material goods are made and is demonstrated through the traditional and commercialized methods of creating the

goods. The realm of commercial trinkets involves many processes that have not come from generations of experience or knowledge but from the desire to sell a product. It is important to create an in-depth definition of what is considered a commercialized product, what commodification is and how it takes place, how each cultural good is commercially made in comparison to the traditional methods, and what the criteria are for authenticity within Navajo cultural life.

As discussed before in the literature review, a commercialized product is a product that has been made for the primary goal of profit—sometimes to the point of disregarding ethical controversies. This includes, for the purpose of this study, taking trinkets that are not culturally related or traditionally made and selling them for similar or lowered prices. Commercialization helps to create mediums where these items in the Four Corners area may be sold for pure profit without addressing the lack of tradition or the issue of authenticity. The primary concern in commercialization is that the crafts sold for profit are often not authentic cultural expressions. The artisans who sell these items rely on new, advanced technology and faster techniques rather than quality, tradition, and authenticity. Tourism starts to corrupt authenticity through the commercializing processes of taking items that would otherwise be traditionally made and producing them faster, cheaper, and inferiorly.

Commodification is different from commercialization because of one small factor: the items are considered "authentic cultural expressions." However, in this concept the ideas, symbols, stories, and material goods are corrupted from the traditional sacred and cultural importance of a given society. The artisans, who may or may not be a part of the society, manipulate traditional cultural symbols and materials in order to gain profit. This manipulation is often seen in sacred cultural performances, such as taking certain aspects of medicine men performances and performing them in public or selling the sand paintings used by the medicine men at outdoor shops or in galleries. These items are known to be sacred to the Navajo, and the process of manipulating them in order to gain profit, even if the crafts seem to be authentic, becomes a matter of ethics.

After discussing the traditional process of Southwest items, it is only fair to also address the other side of the coin: the commercially made trinkets. In each example, the process includes one or more aspects that indicate the artifact is not traditionally made. This divides the market between traditionally made goods that use raw materials from the wild and commercialized products that use automated machinery and fabricated materials for such items as baskets, rugs, pottery, and jewelry.

While walking through a typical roadside stand that advertised baskets, jewelry, and rugs, I came across a collection of baskets. I was surprised to find the price so low, but when looking intently at the craftsmanship, I could immediately tell why. In a craft where tightness of weave says it all, the straw-like weave was practically coming undone. It was as if a pile of dead weeds had been pulled up and woven together by a sloppy machine to make a Navajo basket. A stamp of paint had been slapped in the middle, without any weaving on the exterior or even any distinction between different strands. I asked where the merchant got all of his blankets and baskets, and he told me "the stuff comes from all over the Southwest, Mexico, California, New Mexico, New York and sometimes even across seas from different places." The price reflected it; one could purchase this basket for just fifteen dollars.

In a reputable trading post, I came across a different phenomenon with the commercially made rugs. The large room was absolutely covered, floors and walls, top to bottom, with rugs. While I was investigating the rugs for quality, price, and maybe a life line or two, an older man who had been in the business for at least fifty years said these rugs were made in Pakistan. Looking at the weave and the price, which was still considerably expensive, there seemed to be very little difference in workmanship and quality. "The only difference," he said, "is in the way that they tie the ends. A person could retie the ends the same as the Navajo do and a person would never be able to tell the difference." The owner then showed me an authentic Navajo rug that was priced around $2,500 and, when looking at the price tags of others, I realized the significant difference: Pakistan rugs would only sell for around seven hundred dollars. The price for the rugs depends on the process and time that is invested into a certain product. The Pakistan rugs are weaved on semi-automatic looms, which cuts the weave time practically in half; the Navajos weave everything by hand with old-fashioned looms and materials.

While a traditional pot is typically begun completely from scratch, using native materials, a commercialized pot is not. Many of the pots at the outdoor shops and at the pottery factory are made with clay shipped in from the East Coast, not from anywhere in the Southwest. The clay is then shaped on a wheel or sometimes by hand. It is then fired in an electronic kiln, which accurately and precisely measures the temperature. There is no human monitoring involved and the kilns are usually timed to turn off after the pot has been completely fired. Many artisans do not take the time to glaze and then solidify the glaze; most of them use paint. One roadside stand owner said that she and her family "airbrush the pots outside of the house [across the road] with an airbrush gun in different popular designs." Scenic backgrounds of the Navajo Reservation are often popular with the tourists.

In the pottery factory, which particularly prides itself in having resident native artists, the artisans use airbrushed stencil designs. This obviously does not take much skill or time, and the products are sold for an average price. One quote from this factory's brochure said, "Artists are free to use individual expression within the limits of the pottery line they are painting" (Cedar Mesa Pottery Factory). This statement was humorous to me, because most of the pottery was very uniform in look, and the only difference was in the shapes molded out of the clay. Overall, the lack of skill involved in using an airbrush gun over a stencil is unimpressive and doesn't require native knowledge.

Jewelry is relatively less commercialized than the other areas, or at least the commercialism is less apparent. Here the raw materials dictate how valuable a particular piece of jewelry is; the rareness of the stone also dictates value and price. Gallery artisans often talk about how roadside vendors use fake stones and low-grade silver. One sad fact is that most customers cannot tell the difference between real and fake stones, making it easy to rip them off. The vendors use plastic that looks like real turquoise or other stones and paint it similar colors as the genuine stones. Many tourists do not have the slightest idea what is or what is not a real stone and whether it is precious, semi-precious, or rare.

From these examples of commercialized items, we find two main criteria that indicate authenticity: the process by which an artifact is created and the materials that are used to make it. The traditional process involves generations of knowledge and skill usually passed through familial lines. These artisans choose not to use automatic looms or modern conveniences that

would speed up the process; the product is created slowly and deliberately, ensuring more accuracy and quality. Most of the materials are found on the reservation, which most Navajo consider sacred ground. They use natural items: bark from trees, clay farmed from the ground, and natural dyes. The importance of the process and materials is manifest in the price these quality items are sold for, according to the time and skill involved. The more similar a process is to that of the artisan's ancestors, the more authentic is the artifact.

The issue of authenticity must also be discussed when referring to traditional versus commercialized methods of creating cultural material goods. As discussed earlier, an authentic item is defined by the artisan's distance from the commercial or capitalist market, including the manufacturing process, materials used, and overall quality. The commercialized items represent corrupted historical knowledge and a break in the line of tradition. Navajos who do not carry on their tribe's traditions help to diversify the items they sell, but, by doing so, they minimize their own tribe's traditions. Galleries display items made with skills initiated by the ancestors; the older the artisan, the wiser and more experienced they are, so their products are worth more.

Mary Holliday Black, an experienced Navajo basket weaver, is an example of the traditional artisan. Black has baskets on display at the Smithsonian Institute and has been teaching her children the same craft. Her baskets are worth thousands of dollars, and Black sees basket weaving as a way of preserving a very important cultural art for her people. "One of the reasons we want to keep basket making going among our people," she said, "is because they are important when a person gets healed, to bring rain, for weddings, the Fire Dance, the Seven-Day Ceremony" (Navajo Baskets: 2006). Authenticity of Navajo crafts, as typified by Black's baskets, is tradition in its purest form—not historically corrupted nor altered and staying true to the generations of artisans before.

Choosing Between Markets

The main argument of this paper focuses on the role that tourism plays in dividing the goods market between two primary groups: tourists and artisans. It is essential to look at the reasons and backgrounds that certain tourists and artisans have which would make them choose to buy or sell in a particular market. The choice of market is what best illustrates what value may be found in each; it is almost totally defined by the difference between buyers and sellers.

The division among goods markets for the tourists is based on the people who shop at the galleries and the people who shop at the outdoor shops. By the definition discussed earlier, a collector is classified as primarily in search of authentic items and tourists as seeking an authentic experience. It is interesting to note that because of this classification, the market advertises to the customers' goal. For example, outdoor shops do not try to cater to collectors, and galleries know that most tourists are busy and will not have the time to stop in at a festival or show to buy items they consider overpriced.

Collectors stereotypically have a certain taste or collection in mind, such as a particular tribe's style, and are usually attracted to functions that display that style. Most of the high-priced gallery items are displayed and sold at auctions, shows, festivals, and art galleries. Gallery items are a higher-class style, mainly concerned with sophisticated tastes. Collectors choose galleries because the items are what they want in their collections or on display in

their homes. Works by certain artists are very valuable and more fashionable to display as interior decorating pieces. Collectors generally research and plan in advance the galleries they want to visit. One of the main hubs for collectors is Santa Fe, New Mexico, where there is an abundance of arts and crafts and plenty of competition for artisans. The collectors have an opportunity in places like Santa Fe to view all of the current trends in Navajo art, including new designs or appealing ideas. All of the items collectors buy (trendy or not) are still handmade in the traditional Navajo way with raw materials. The traditional process is what makes the items authentic, even if they incorporate small aspects of new designs or ideas. This authenticity, the materials and methods that re-create the craft as Navajo ancestors created it, makes the cultural item valuable to the artisan and the collector.

The choice between markets is a little easier for the typical tourist because it is mostly based on convenience. Tourists who come from abroad like to buy jewelry because it looks authentic and is easy to travel with. They particularly like the Zuni-style jewelry because of its precise cut and fit within the silverwork collage. It is a matter of practicality. Also, many of the tours through Arches or Canyonlands have pre-appointed, brief stops at certain trading posts and gift shops, giving tourists a chance to stop and buy a small memento. If the tourists have their own transportation, they might stop and take pictures of the panoramic view of the Navajo Nation and the rock formations unique to the area. The outdoor shops are set up in opportune locations where the tourists might stop and take pictures, providing a chance to look at the jewelry, pottery, and weaving crafts.

Domestic tourists, however, may be a little less practical than their international counterparts. Jessica, a shop owner, told me, "A popular item among domestic tourists is the airbrushed pottery, particularly the pitcher-shaped design." Domestic tourists may travel all over the country with their purchases in a car and never worry about them having to be packed for air travel. To these tourists, experiencing another culture is similar to going on an expedition; souvenirs are a piece of the adventure that will constantly remind them about the experience they had.

While tourists and collectors choose a market based on desire or practicality, for artisans, markets are often merely a way to make a living. For some it may not even be a choice, but a way of life. The artisans' choice is based on many variables, including background, career goals, proximity to large cities, and economic status.

One artist at the Navajo Arts and Crafts Festival in Flagstaff, Arizona, was willing to talk about his trade. A young man in his mid-twenties, he made pottery as a hobby; he was an artist who had combined aspects of the old with the new, the living art. For example, one piece was a horsehair design pot (which looks like sharp splatters of dark paint on top of lighter paint) with a Navajo man wearing jeans and Converse tennis shoes etched on the outside. The artisan was similar to many of the other artisans I met at the festival. He first started out at an art school and began experimenting with different art styles. He dabbled in painting, charcoals, and other sorts of art, but he liked to create pots and dinnerware. Similarly, others who sold items on a gallery scale started out in art schools, where they learned different aspects of painting styles and designs. This indicates that generational knowledge may not be the only key in choosing a market, but outside education and influence are factors as well.

The choice of material or the cultural benefit in creating artifacts also influences which markets artisans choose. Many outdoor shops are only looking for a way to make a profit. For

this particular reason, these markets cater to tourists and create items that may not be considered Navajo crafts. Gallery artisans, however, enjoy art and may benefit from artistry as a hobby. They are not necessarily interested in the payback or profit they receive, but they are interested in the market and the satisfaction creating their craft gives them. A Navajo artist talked about the art he created as "a flexible entity that has to be based on what the artist wants to create and experience." Some outdoor shop owners and artisans would like to experience the arts as he does; however, there are some economic setbacks because of location.

Location is a main factor in the material goods industry because it dictates the places and materials accessible to an artisan. Most of the gallery artisans live close to larger cities and have communication networks that make shows and festivals readily available to the public. This also gives the artisans opportunities to visit museums and other shows in the area, which may be educational and beneficial to their artistic style. Location also indicates what kind of employment the artist has, be it a hobby or small business. Larger cities have much better opportunities for employment, not only providing wages to further invest in the arts, but also providing freedom to make the crafts in the artist's own style and form. Roadside stand owners do not have this same freedom because of economic restraints partial to the location of their residency.

The proximity to a larger city and the economic status of an artisan go hand in hand because these factors directly relate to the artisan's relation with his or her particular craft. A person who lives on the outskirts of the reservation has no real opportunities for other employment, and the business owner and his or her family are dependent on checks from the government, and the income from the crafts. Shop owner Jessica said her family "makes the material goods all winter and then just concentrates on selling them during the summer." These people are then restricted to their very limited resources and abilities to provide a living because, on the reservation, no large industries or job pools are available.

When gas prices go up and tourism goes down, it adversely affects their business which cannot provide for all of their needs. It forces the artisan to market to a certain clientele, creating products that may not reflect the tribal traditions and may not be made in the traditional way because of lack of materials and time. As discussed earlier, many gallery artisans work in the larger cities and thus obtain materials and enjoy a higher standard of living. Those of a higher economic status are not affected by the industry of tourism in a way that would affect how and for what reason they create their items. Economic status not only indicates which market an artisan will choose but also to what degree commodification and commercialization occur. Economic circumstances dictate what is and is not appropriate to market to other people for commercial gain, and as time goes by and conditions worsen, more items may also be made available for sale.

The tourists' and artisans' choice of market is a primary indicator of the division of the cultural goods market as argued in this paper. The cultural goods market is divided on the basis of value and quality, inherent in the process and materials used to create the items. Stemming from the same definition of authenticity that has been used throughout this argument, the reasoning for the division is determined by the processes and materials. The misuse or lack of acknowledgement of ancestors' traditions not only separates a particular item from being classified as authentic but also breaks the line of tradition and corrupts historical knowledge.

The corruption lies in the fact that if traditional lines are broken and other methods of creating cultural goods are passed on as authentic, the artifacts no longer represent the community they initially did. Nevertheless, as discussed in the previous section, there are many different reasons for why the artisans choose different markets, such as economic factors. This conclusion brings the argument to its final section when discussing the right to make a living, how tourism has had an impact, and how Navajo culture is slowly becoming diluted.

Tourism and Making a Living: The Dilution Factor

The Navajo Reservation surprisingly advertises extensively for tourist industries through national parks, cultural material, good signs, food, and other means. While tourism in general has a very negative influence on the cultural material goods, it does provide some positive factors in other sectors. Tourism provides new employment, and, even though the increase may be very small in more remote parts of the reservation, it does promote at least seasonal growth. In some small areas of southern Utah, shop owners migrate up from Arizona for the summer to set up shop in more popular areas. In some ways, this helps to create a universal Native American identity because so many tribes adopt traditions from each other and try to maintain unity. Finally, as remote as some places are on the reservation, tourism exposes both the Navajo community and the visiting tourists to cultural diversity and differences that may help people be more accepting and understanding of other cultures, although this view is fairly idealistic.

However, material cultural goods are suffering from tourisms impact, which may also affect other aspects of Navajo culture. This can be called a "dilution factor," where certain aspects of a culture or society become weaker and contribute to other aspects becoming extinct. There are other causes that contribute to the dilution factor besides the cultural aspects. Decreases in population and more diversified youth also play a role in Navajo culture's dilution.

A natural process occurs when older members of a tribe die—knowledge and skills are lost with them. Many skills, ideas, and stories about history and the tribe itself are lost along with a dying generation. Similar to other cultures, cultural values and knowledge are lost to younger generations. Youth may not consider the same things important as their ancestors did and may not want to carry on Navajo traditions. Ideas that may have not been shared or passed on affect tribes such as the Navajo. There may be confusion in what the Navajo tribe stands for and what kind of identity it portrays.

Surprisingly, many Navajo ideas, rights, and cultural ways are carried out by those other than the Navajo tribe. In fact, in many of the Navajo schools, the ancient ways of weaving and making pottery are not taught by Navajos but by Caucasians who have an interest in the field. One Navajo said, "These teachers do a good job though." A book the Navajo recommended to me was written by a Caucasian author, who many say portrays the Navajo people in a correct light. There are also activists who could be classified as Native American "wannabes." They are Caucasian, though they dress and act like Navajos. One family I came across dressed like Navajos and even performed in traditional Navajo dance competitions, many times winning awards. Thus, people other than Navajos are carrying on the cultural traditions.

Navajo youth are starting to play a role in the dilution of their own culture as well. More and more Navajo youth are leaving the reservation, out of necessity, and looking for opportunities

elsewhere, including higher education and the military. Many did not like the idea of scraping by every year by trying to sell trinkets on the side of the road. On the other hand, the youth do not like being away from the spiritual and supportive side of their tribe. Their identity means a lot to them. A newspaper article in the *Deseret News* talked about this specific problem in Monument Valley, Utah. Unsure of the role her Navajo heritage will play in her life, the first member of her family headed to college said, "It's going to be tough for a while because my mom says life is tough" (Romboy 2006). More and more youth plan on leaving the reservation and starting life somewhere else where they can support themselves practically.

Combining the two aspects of a dying older generation and an exiting younger generation opens the possibility of a gap to ancestors' knowledge. It begs the question of who will carry on the traditions (not to say there will not be a limited few who still live on the reservation and are content with that life). Decreasing numbers of people on the reservation means fewer outdoor shops, which, for the purpose of this argument, might be seen as a good thing. However, it brings up the contradiction of fewer people living the Navajo way of life, meaning less of the Navajo way of life in general.

Obviously, I acknowledge that the Navajo people cannot live exactly how their ancestors did in every respect. However, Navajos are not the main people who judge their work as authentic or not. It is primarily trading post owners, festival judges, and tourists who decide whether items are authentic. While some of these critics may be Navajo, they join in with the others in representing the Navajo cultural goods as an art that prides itself in referring to its ancestral past materials and methods. As the Navajo rock band Blackfire said, "The Diné [Navajo] are people of the earth," and as such they should use the earth's natural resources to create things and represent their tribe in a traditional way.

Others, including myself, recognize that the slow loss of culture through loss of knowledge and skill reflects poorly on any society. The prospects of education and financial stability separate people from their homeland and culture. Wherever members of a tribe go, they will take aspects of their cultural knowledge with them, but it is never complete. Only on the reservation, completely surrounded by the history, knowledge, and members of their tribe, are they completely immersed in their culture. Tourism is a catalyst for such loss of skill and knowledge because it creates an economic profit to those outdoor shop owners who might otherwise create items authentically. However, it does create the possibility of those youth leaving for education, financial security, or other hopes of becoming gallery artisans in a separated satellite of culture somewhere else.

This brings the argument to the main point: the loss of cultural knowledge that occurs through corruption of traditions is diluting Navajo culture in general. The advent of tourism divides the market into two different categories: galleries and outdoor shops. The owners of outdoor shops, while trying somewhat successfully to make a living, convince and persuade their children to move elsewhere and pursue other dreams. Their children want economic stability and security, but they also want to maintain their cultural heritage. The fewer people who live on the reservation, the fewer people there will be carrying on the traditions and passing them on to their own children.

There are also other factors diluting Navajo culture, such as language, performance, and basic daily life. In the realm of language, more and more children are becoming bilingual,

speaking both Navajo and English. Unless they are living on the reservation, this restricts the use of their native tongue. Linguist Kevin Stewart believes revival attempts to salvage more of the language may be made, but the overall use and vastness of the vocabulary decrease significantly. This can also be looked at through the medium of their cultural performances. The more they modify performances for public display, the less sacred the performance. The Navajo way of life has been decreasing over the decades with the influx of more technology that the Navajos do enjoy having in their lives. Traditional ways are becoming a thing of the past in Navajo cultural life.

It is not wrong to make a living on the reservation; however, economic stability and security, whether Navajo or not, are of importance to many Navajo youth. Tourism creates the division of goods that divides quality gallery items from those in outdoor shops. By causing abandonment of cultural traditions, tourism corrupts the historical past of the tribe, contributing to the further dilution of Navajo culture.

Conclusion

Tourism has an impact on Navajo cultural life by dividing the cultural goods market into a traditional goods market versus a commercialized goods market. This division directly stems from the basis of authenticity, or the definition of what is considered valuable among Navajo material goods. Authenticity among goods is based on the processes, historical aspects, and raw materials from which the items are made. The market for buyer is generally based on their desires and convenience, depending on the type: tourist or collector. The market for artisans may be pinned to background, career goals, proximity to large cities, and economic status. All of these arguments combine to slowly dilute the Navajo cultural life, which will sadly reduce other aspects of the Navajo culture as well, perhaps to extinction someday.

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Slaughtering the Sacred Cow:
Redrawing the Borders of Africa

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> *Foreign imposition of artificial states and their continued entrapment within the concepts of statehood and sovereignty are sure to occasion the extinction of Africa unless those sacred cows are set aside for now to disassemble African states and reconfigure them.*
>
> —Makau wa Mutua

Imaginary Sacred Cow

The African landscape consumes all six senses. The lush green carpet of vegetation cascades from the valley floor up the sides of mountains lapping at the peaks, over hills, swallowing small villages that dot this borderland. In just a few days of driving, I crossed the internationally recognized boundaries of Ghana and Togo perhaps a dozen times. Our rented taxi crawled up the side of a Ghanaian mountain only to descend down the Togolese side. Back and forth we wove our way between two sovereign West African nations without realizing we had done so. No crossing guards, no border check points, and not even a "Welcome to . . . ." sign marked our international travel. Local dialects did not change. Tribes and religions remained constant. Even the currency was the same. The only indication that a border had been crossed was the line drawn in my map book, purchased in a foreign country's bookstore thousands of miles away. Local farmers may live in Togo and walk to their farms in Ghana. International boundaries have very little meaning to the Ewe people of this region. Contrast this experience with crossing the border at Israel's West Bank. Perhaps the only similarity would be the lack of a "Welcome to . . . ." sign.

National borders are artificial constructions. They attempt to legitimize, define, and institutionalize vague, usually foreign, notions of distinction between groups of people. Sometimes these artificial lines are mutually respected and elicit little conflict. However, in other situations, this artificiality may be cited as the cause of hundreds, if not thousands, of violent conflicts over the centuries. National borders may be vague and difficult to delineate. By nature of their purpose, they are continually being redefined and renegotiated. This process is healthy in order for the borders between two nations to be reciprocally agreeable. In some relatively peaceful areas, such as the Canadian–U.S. border, this renegotiation is less visible, but for the people whose property may straddle the *international* border, it holds more meaning.

In the house of my childhood, I recall the idea of starving African children used as a motivation to eat all of my vegetables. There are few places on the planet that illicit the universal sympathy that Africa does. It seems that many people in the West simply expect that the political problems, famines, diseases, wars, and suffering on the continent are natural. These general sentiments are not, however, inexplicable. Media images of an emaciated African child lying in the dirt, unable to muster the energy or will to brush flies away from her eyes, remain seared in my mind. Empirical evidence shows that more conflict and starvation occur in Africa than anywhere else. The question begs: Why?

International boundary lines may have caused more violent conflicts than any other single factor. Nowhere are border conflicts more apparent, more common, or more persistent than in Africa. A recent Internet query of "Africa AND border conflicts" on Google News produced more than 620 articles.[1] Similar searches of "Asia AND border conflicts" and "Europe AND border conflicts" yielded less than a fifth of this number. Why are African border conflicts more often reported than in other areas of the world? Are there actually more border disputes, or might the purveyance of media focus be explained in other ways? Regardless of the reasons behind the amount of news coverage, Africa has significant political stability problems, and instability often emerges in armed conflicts.

Between 1989 and 1998, the world saw 108 armed conflicts. More than 80 percent of these took place in Asia and Africa (Juma 2005, 428). From a Western perspective, these conflicts are either *international*, "of, relating to, or affecting two or more nations," or *domestic*, "of, relating to, or originating within a country" (Merriam-Webster 2005). In the African context, this distinction does not exist. The Western distinction of international conflict is made when traditional tribal boundaries happen to coincide with the arbitrary international boundary lines. When that is not the case, they are categorized as domestic or internal conflicts. Even more disturbing than the arbitrariness of these distinctions is the international communities' perceived level of obligation in these cases. An international conflict is much more likely to receive international attention, be it political or media, than an internal struggle. Westerners often forget that this distinction and the adherent responsibilities are entirely artificial—created by people far removed from the local borderlands.

Scholars have written about a "cycle of conflict" in Africa (Juma 2005, 430). In the attempt to create national unity and political legitimacy, African states encounter three flash points where armed conflicts most often occur. First, a fledgling government is often at risk when it has recently gained governance over a country. Second, conflicts often erupt when a governing power beings to show signs of weakness, internal inconsistency, or disunion. Finally, a scramble for power after the collapse of a central government is the third most common time for violent conflicts:

> Generally speaking, the crisis in most African countries begins with a civilian or military leader assuming power. With the assistance of the donor community, he systematically overruns all institution of government—the military, the civil service, the judiciary, and the entire banking and commercial sectors. He then transforms the state into machinery for amassing wealth for himself, his cronies, and tribesmen to the exclusion of the majority. The leader eliminates opposition by bribery, infiltration, assassination, intimidation, and simple divide and rule tactics. Out of frustration, a rebel group emerges and wages war with the intention of wresting power from the leader. A peace process is launched, often by neighboring states whose leaders are no better. The leader is often deposed with or without a peace accord, and the strong rebel group comes to power. And the cycle repeats itself (Juma 2005, 431)

This cycle is evident as nearly all African nations may be placed at some point along this circle. For example, South Africa would be placed between #1 and #2. The Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of the Congo may be closer to #3. By contrast, Western nations

would be much more difficult to pin to a specific point on this circle. Britain, France, and the U.S. would not fall anywhere on the chart. They seem to be on a totally different cycle than developing nations. Developing nations in other parts of the world do not fit clearly either. India, Indonesia, and Bangladesh seem to be outside this cycle. Why is Africa stuck in this spiral of conflict? Many of these stability issues and problems of national unity and identity manifest themselves along social faults or ethnic boundaries. The tragic state of violence, instability, and corruption followed by political upheaval is not the result of ancient tribal animosities, as some Western diplomats would like to dismiss, but rather the cancerous legacy left by colonialization (Powers 2002, 327).

#1 Ascension to Power

#2 Internal Weakness

#3 Scramble for Power
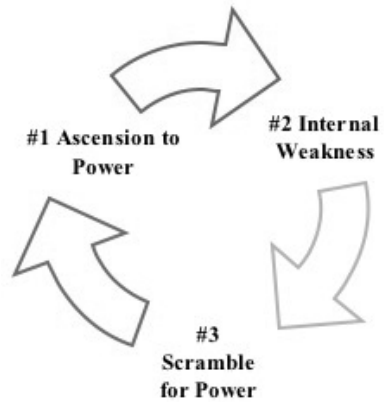
"Ancient hatred" has become a political buzzword in the past few years, a Pontius Pilate-type self-absolution of involvement in difficult, complicated situations. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton used the term to describe the violence in the former Yugoslavia.[2] Others have applied it to Israeli–Palestinian violence,[3] Christian–Jewish animosity,[4] Western–Islamic tension,[5] and many other ethnically sensitive international confrontations.[6] Closer examination of these cases of ancient hatred, and many others, show that there is very little "ancient" about it; the hatreds are relatively recent and constructed by those ethnic elites and political entrepreneurs taking advantage of situations rooted deep in colonial domination and fueled by neocolonial exploitation[7] (Robbins 2002, 268–274).

Eric Hobsbawm convincingly argued that much of ethnic identity is constructed by forward-thinking elites (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2003). National identity is largely forged by the combination, cohesion, and creation of easily identifiable symbols, myths, and loyalties. For example, the traditional garb of the Scots is a fabrication of entrepreneurial non-Scot elites. Most people with even a fleeting knowledge of Scotland generally have a basic understanding of the respect given to the Scottish tartan. Hobsbawm illustrated how this invented tradition had very little impact on Scottish identity until after the 1880s. From that point onward, tartans took on ever-increasing symbolism.

The shift occurred when a British textile maker cleverly advertised and created a connection between current clan groups and kilt fabric patterns. A strong connection was made between clan identity (and by extension, Scottish identity) and specific tartan patterns. There is currently a web page designed to identify, and of course purchase, hundreds of different Scottish tartans.[8] Needless to say, the British textile maker made handsome profits off of this invented "tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2003, 15–42). What has come to clearly identify a large population of the United Kingdom is purely an invented tradition.

Hobsbawm argued that this is common in many different areas of the world. Interestingly, this phenomenon may generally be traced back to the mid- to late-1800s. It seems that at the time of declining colonialism, heightened international regulations, and the beginning of ethnic

interconnectedness, people were more anxious to create group unity through specific symbols. It was during this time that most national flags, anthems, and nicknames were instituted. According to Hobsbawm, this is thanks to the manipulation of political and social elites.

Why are conflicts in Africa so common? I argue that African conflicts are largely the result of the perpetuation of the colonial experience, specifically with regard to national boundaries. Van Evera provided a remarkable systematic approach to understanding conflicts which is helpful in this discussion.

Summary of Conflict and War Causation (adapted from Brown 2001, 29–30, Table 1)

I) Immediate Causes of Conflict
    A) The greater the proportion of groups seeking autonomy, the greater the risk
       of conflict.
    B) The more hegemonic the goals that power-holding groups pursue towards one another,
       the greater the risk of conflict.
    C) The more severely power-holding groups oppress powerless minorities living within
       the states, the greater the risk of conflict.

First, in Africa, each nation is made up of separate, formerly sovereign groups. Their desire for self-rule and autonomy has not been changed merely because they were grouped into a nation by others. They are distinct groups with unique heritages, but, most importantly, they were all formerly independent.

Second, during colonization in Africa, colonial powers entertained only fleeting ideas about helping or protecting non-Europeans living in their empires. Philanthropy was limited to missionary and economic endeavors. It would be difficult to argue that the goals of colonial Europe were anything but self-interested. Local policies and institutions were intended to support the hegemonic goals of the empires at large, not the local people.

Third, the colonial powers utilized a system of indirect rule to govern their holdings all over the world. This system utilized minority elites as local rulers. Colonial governments traditionally chose local rulers from disenfranchised populations. This placed them on a level separate from the rest of the population and allowed them to act with impunity toward the general population. Over time, this favoritism became institutionalized, and privileged access to education widened the social gap between ethnic groups. A foreign minority using a local minority to enforce laws through violence and force cannot help but foster animosity.

Violence between the favored groups and the majority has erupted on a large scale. Many scholars attribute this legacy of colonial favoritism as the root cause of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The area of Rwanda and Burundi is largely populated by the Hutu and Tutsi tribes. Hutus comprise about 80 percent, while the Tutsis constitute 15 percent. During colonization, the ruling Belgian government chose local leaders from the minority Tutsi ethnic group. These Tutsis were given education, wealth, and power over the Hutus. Minority rule almost always produces animosity among the majority in one form or another. The Hutus felt slighted and oppressed by the Tutsis. As the Belgian empire collapsed, the Hutus regained control over the territory. Violence and retribution erupted against the former Tutsi leadership. Succeeding government leadership oscillated between Tutsi and Hutu groups. Each new ascension to power was coupled with violent revenge for past wrongs. New governments sought to

establish legitimacy by punishing the other ethnic group. The 1994 genocide seems to have been decades in the making. Hutu leaders felt the threat of encroaching Tutsi-led rebel groups and deemed it time to purify the land, to make it solely Hutu again.

Van Evera stated that there are two safe circumstances in dealing with nationalist and identity problems. "Two safe conditions exist: where national statehood is already attained; and where it is not attained, but clearly cannot be" (Brown 2001, 37). African nations exist, but they exist more on the maps and in the imaginations of Westerners than they do in actuality. Also, because legitimate statehood is not attained, peace may only prevail, according to Van Evera, if the possibility of sovereignty does not exist. Vast empires of ancient Africa were powerful and sovereign prior to European colonization. Powerful educational and cultural capitals such as Timbuktu and Addis Ababa, and the vast empires of the Mende, Dinka, Ashanti, Zulu, and Masaai, speak to the strength and expanse of previous African kingdoms. Their reemergence is not a surprise. According to Van Evera's postulate of peace, Africa is in dire straits. Thus, steps must be taken to change the variables of this equation if peace is possible in Africa.

It is overly simplistic to dismiss current conflicts as unavoidable and primordial in nature. This approach disregards colonial and neocolonial responsibility while continuing to blame the victims of nefarious foreign policies. Understanding the crowning event of Africa's colonization is imperative to place it in a proper context.

Africa's Undoing

"The Berlin Conference was Africa's undoing in more ways than one."

—de Blij and Muller

In the cold winter months of 1884–85, dozens of foreign dignitaries assembled in Berlin to negotiate the colonial claims of all of the major European powers. Two characters dominate the literature about the Scramble for Africa and the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884–85: King Leopold II of Belgium and Henry Stanley. Leopold was the ruler of the tiny Belgian nation during the last half of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, a determined ruler whose ambitions were far larger than Belgium. He was overheard lamenting that the country he would rule was only a "small country, [with] small [minded] people" (Hochchild 1998, 36). His interest in trade and mercantile was well known throughout Europe, but a more defining characteristic was cleverly hidden from public scrutiny: he was insatiably greedy. There were no specific locations of particular interest; the king simply wanted any colony from which to extract economic resources.

As one of the most skillful politicians of his time, Leopold created a reputation of pure goodwill and philanthropy. His orchestration of philanthropic Belgian attitudes and endeavors are classic tradition-inventing described by Hobsbawm. Leopold cast himself as the compassionate monarch and went to great lengths to establish various organizations with lofty philanthropic names to solidify his public image. Despite the financial sacrifices to assist native causes and to fight Arab slave traders, his ultimate goal was to acquire a territory to supplement the Belgian economy. Leopold lusted for a private fiefdom to rule outside the meddling of the hostile, anti-monarch Belgian Parliament. Central Africa gave him just such an opportunity.

Stanley was an avid and accomplished explorer, and the man who is said to have uttered the famous line, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" after searching out the reclusive professor in the vast African interior (Hochchild 1998, 30). Leopold recognized Stanley's unflappable drive for accomplishment and fame and hired him to explore and map the impenetrable Congo Basin. Stanley is blamed for initiating many of the horrors and atrocities subsequently committed against the people of Central Africa (see Conrad 1963 and Hochchild 1998).

After funding many exploratory expeditions into the Congo, Leopold held a monopoly on trading routes, maps, and information regarding available natural resources in the area. At the Berlin Conference of 1885, unsurprisingly bankrolled by Leopold, Belgium volunteered to magnanimously accept responsibility for the "worthless" Congo Basin. Thanks to Leopold's exploratory efforts, Belgium was the only European nation with inside knowledge of the Congo Basin, so it was not hard to convince the rest of the European powers that the territory held no real value. At the conference, Leopold finally succeeded in securing a colony for Belgium. Now that the facade of philanthropist had provided him with his greatest desire, Leopold allowed his greed to ravish the Congo. Over the next few decades, tens of millions of native Congolese were literally worked to death or executed for failing to work. Hundreds of millions of francs worth of natural resources were taken from the region and deposited in Leopold's personal bank account.

Contrary to the common perception, the Berlin Conference was never intended to draw African national boundaries. "The orderly division of Africa was meant to defuse colonial tensions and avoid the risk of war among the conferees" (wa Mutua 1995, 1127). At that point in history, Westerners did not think Africa was made up of independent nations. Without this foresight, colonial powers divided, carved up, and combined groups of people with no regard to geography, languages, religions, political structures, or tribal conflicts. "The actual boundaries in Africa were less important to the colonialists than avoiding conflict among themselves. . . " (Herbst 1989, 682). Clearly, African interests were not a consideration when the lines that now delineate national borders were created, but, surprisingly, these borders have persisted.

Stable State Building

There are three necessary elements to building a stable nation and society. These are provided in order of importance. First, borders must be consolidated. This process is essential for a nation to exercise governance over a specific territory. Often, territorial boundaries form along natural population or geographic cleavages. Mountain ranges, rivers, and linguistic, religious, and cultural differences all provide natural separations in large populations. An essential part of national sovereignty and cohesion is the natural expanding and contracting of national spheres of influence. European powers have been negotiating borders for hundreds if not thousands of years. It is ironic and inconsistent that the borders of modern, industrialized Europe have undergone much more change in the past century than those of Africa. The inability of African nations to define their own borders perpetuates conflict.

In West Africa, a view of ethnic groups shows boundaries that are wide from east to west but short from north to south. This is common throughout the region. Distinct ethnic and linguistic groups are layered one on top of another like pancakes. Clear east-west lines

are evident, but north-south borders snake and weave between dozens of groups. Imagine the confusion and problems created when European powers made long north-south slashes in the geopolitical landscape, assigning community and identity to groups that may have never had previous interaction. It is now obvious why national identity, cohesion, and unity are still in chaos.

Second, nation building requires centralized institutions. Essential institutions, from a Western paradigm, include a standing military, roads and waterways, education, central government and taxes, etc. Colonial powers established many of the necessary institutions for their territories. However, since decolonization, little has been done to improve or upgrade these infrastructures. In Ghana, the educational and medical systems are still operated in the same style as the 1950s British systems. Nurses wear World War II era uniforms and use equally dated techniques. The Cold War and chronic economic problems have not allowed these institutions to be updated or replaced. The skeleton of state institutions is present, but they are quickly decaying and succumbing to the pressures of overuse and underfunding. These institutions have a shelf life that has expired.

The final element of building a stable nation is the development of a singular national identity—or at least mutually agreeable plural identity. How and why national identity may lead to conflict is hotly debated (see Brown 2001). Singular national identity has generally not emerged in African nations.

The main reason for the inability of African states to define what it means to be a member of their nation is still unclear. However, it is clear that the average African feels more loyalty to a traditional leader, a chief or king, than to their elected representative. I recently asked a friend of mine from Ghana to describe himself. He used terms Ashanti and African long before he used the term Ghanaian. I asked him what it meant to be Ghanaian. His reply was that it did not mean anything to him. "I think that I am a Ghanaian because that is the country where my tribe is, but I am Ashanti first. If being Ashanti mean being Ghanaian, then I am Ghanaian" (Gibb 2005).

A hodgepodge of religions, languages, and customs do not easily coalesce into a singular identity, especially if the pressure to coalesce is external. Often, political candidates are supported on the basis of their tribe. The current leader of Ghana, President J.A. Kufour, enjoys a generally high approval rating and public support largely because he is from the royal family of the largest ethnic tribe in the country.

Illegitimacy of Colonial African Borders

There are two key reasons why the borders established by the Berlin Conference and subsequent treaties are illegitimate. First, no African delegates were present at the conference. This is an example of "taxation [or more appropriately exploitation] without representation." Nonparticipation of colonies was common as European powers carved up the world for their own benefit. The fact that this situation is ubiquitous does not justify it. Second, many of the African states at the time of the conference would have qualified as sovereign political entities under contemporary international customary law. Literature from the era indicates that nations should be considered political entities if they held distinct territory, utilized centralized governments, and had established judicial powers (wa Mutua 2005, 1125–26). One caveat

was also established by European powers: new states had to be recognized by all members of the international community. This provided veto power for the colonial powers to disqualify others from the statehood club. Without this final, morally questionable, and logically oblique caveat, African kingdoms such as the Ashanti, Zulu, and Maasai could have convincingly argued for international political recognition.

The fact that there was some indecision over the political status of the powerful African groups is evident by the insistence of treaty signing by exploring Europeans. "Effective colonial rule was imposed by 'treaties of protection' between African rulers and European powers, usually after a war, through coercion, intimidation, deceit, or any combination thereof" (wa Mutua 2005, 1132). European colonizers had a schizophrenic approach to treaty signing. Sometimes they insisted on them, but at other times no treaty was even discussed. "It is difficult, if not impossible, to sustain the legality of the 'treaties of protection' even under extant European law at the time. Treaty law was clear about who could enter into a treaty and what conditions gave it binding authority. Only states had treaty-making power by virtue of their sovereignty" (wa Mutua 2005, 1333).

If this had been the case, why was Europe signing treaties with African tribes and kingdoms? "The treaties were invalid because European law did not recognize African political entities as states, with treaty-making power, and the rulers of those entities as heads of state; they were mere 'chiefs' of 'tribes'" (wa Mutua 2005, 1134). Either the African political units were legal states or they were not. If the native groups did constitute legal states, then the signed treaties were illegal based upon the international laws regarding treaties at that time, but if they were not legal entities, the confusion was ubiquitous among exploring Europeans. These treaties were weak attempts to legitimize massive land and resource acquisition. The treaties were seriously flawed and would never hold up under even passing scrutiny. So why was the charade so common? Obviously, there was widespread ambiguity over the political status of the groups the colonizers encountered.

Legitimacy is of the utmost concern in any discussion of nationalism and national identity. Internal legitimacy cannot be created by outside powers; it must arise naturally and organically from the will and unity of the people. In the absence of internal legitimacy, the ruling powers will be forced to pressure, coerce, and demand the participation of the people in the process of government, or they will usurp absolute power in the form of tyrannical dictatorships. This pattern has been seen in the despotic regimes of Sese Seko Mobutu in Zaire, Charles Taylor in Liberia, and Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe. In Africa, the nations' elites worked with the colonial powers to establish independence. The color of the skin of the rulers did not affect the rural villager's ability to make and sustain a living. Unfortunately, silence from the masses was interpreted as consent by the ruling elites. In order to retain the resources and international recognition the former colonies enjoyed, the elites maintained the same national boundaries established by the 1884 Berlin Conference. Interestingly, for most nations, the idea of redrawing the borders was not entertained. The emphasis of independence was to change governance over the same geographic area from European to African rule. This acceptance of standing borders did not receive the attention that it deserved. By defaulting to the boundaries drawn in the Berlin Conference, the newly independent African nations continued the illegitimacy of those borders. The boundaries

lacked internal legitimacy at the time of incorporation into new states. If policies are immoral when they are made, they never will be justified merely to maintain the status quo.

The post-colonial state is just a reincarnation of the same purposes of colonial states. The African states were not given the freedom to develop or unify on their own terms. Political leaders and despotic regimes were propped up by the Cold War super powers for various purposes, least of which was the benefit of the African people.

> Even in cases of extreme distress, they were not allowed to fail. External border challenges were overruled by the major powers to maintain the inherited state system. The end of the Cold War, however, resulted in the flight of Western collaborators, and for the first time in history the pirates in power were left exposed. In the aftermath, the fragility of the post-colonial state has been unmasked by its failure and, in several instances, collapse (wa Mutua 1995, 1161).

The U.S. and USSR supported, funded, and defended some of the most bloody and tyrannical dictators in Africa. The zero sum game of Cold War international politics left no room for ambiguous national boundaries or their renegotiation. This situation ensured the perpetuation of colonial boundaries and their accompanying ills.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) was established at the beginning of the period of African independence. The OAU was founded by ruling elites of various African nations in 1963. This was a time of Pan-African fervor among many on the continent. Leaders looked forward to an Africa for the Africans. However, this idyllic goal was tempered by international demands and the heightening Cold War. In response to these pressures, the OAU adopted a legal position of *uti possidetis*, a theory of "let's just keep it the way it is" with regard to national border disputes. Borders were not up for discussion among members. This policy perpetuated colonial-based problems at a time when Africa could have dealt with them, and the policy may be cited as a key component of many of the continent's subsequent violent conflicts.

As a group of people grow in population and land holdings, there comes a time when their claims of territory come into conflict with the claims of neighboring groups. This is seen in much of European history. As barons and kings claimed sovereignty over land and people, they were constantly redrawing their spheres of influence according to what power they could maintain.

> Also, owing to both centripetal and centrifugal forces, their [European] governments tended to look for a size that was optimal for efficiency. Newly independent African governments, by contrast, ruled in territories, large or small, which have not changed appreciably since independence. Their borders have generally not been allowed to expand or contract to reflect the capacity of the incumbent regimes; nor have African governments achieved a strength congruent with the vastness of their territories (Spears 2004).

A major step in the development and organization process of new states is the negotiation of national boundaries. This essential step cannot be imposed by outside forces. Each sub-national group must individually assent to the new government. In the geographic interior of the state's power structure, this assent is generally assumed and is cause for little discussion. However, the further geographically the sub-national groups are from the power center, the

more power they retain to decide with which national power they will align. It is natural that the traditional power structures, tribal kingdoms in particular, follow this same pattern. Power is diffused over greater geographic distances.

With modern nations, an essential step of development is to negotiate where allegiances lie. If ethnic and traditional conflicts arise after a group has elected to align with a particular nation, it is that nation's right to deal with the problem in appropriate means outside of the intervention of the international community. However, in the event that the dissatisfied ethnic group was never allowed to choose their allegiances, the national government does not hold those rights. Functionally, it is as if the sub-national group is being held captive by the government. If the exploitation of natural resources is also considered, the situation begins to look more like ethnic slavery.

Africa's unrest over the past half century is due to a gap in the development and maturation of the nations. Creating a nation without the process of boundary negotiation is like becoming an adult without adolescence. Adolescence is a natural step in human development—without it, there would be a lack of experience and growth necessary to become a functional, healthy adult. Africa was deprived of this important growing period by the butchering Berlin Conference of 1884. Loyalty to these conference lines does not legitimate them; it only perpetuates wrongs committed over a century ago. Time does not legitimate wrongful acts. It only calcifies them. "It will not suffice to democratize the post-colonial state; as a fundamentally undemocratic entity in concept and reality, it is incapable of genuine democratization. Africa's political map must first be unscrambled and the post-colonial state disassembled before the continent can move forward" (wa Mutua 2005, 1162).

A New Sacred Cow

The answer for African national stability may lie in a Federation of African States. Federalism allows for varying degrees of interconnectedness and contact. Economically disadvantaged traditional groups have a much higher internal motivation for friendly associations with neighbors. This motivation is of a much different caliber and tone if there is an external requirement for such associations. Granted, this will allow resource-rich groups to have more economic bargaining power, but this was also the case before the Scramble for Africa changed African boundaries.

A Federation of African States will be more powerful than any regional economic association. However, the bureaucracy of such a mammoth organization may be impractical. Smaller regional federations will more likely be organized. Under this proposal it would not be unexpected for a federation of West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa, North Africa, and Southern Africa to be established. These regional organizations will be more responsive to the individual needs of the smaller participating groups. It is feasible that there may be hostile relations where one regional entity ends and another begins, but due to the freedom each group has to decide their own participation, conflicts will be avoided and reduced.

It is easy to see who the critics of this proposal are and where their loyalties lie. Inside Africa, the harshest criticism of redrawing national borders comes from ruling elites and military leaders who perceive any loss of territory as a loss of personal power. Decisions that affect millions of impoverished people based upon the defense of personal power holds cannot

be accepted. Similarly, international scholars, state rulers, and international organizations are not likely to accept this proposal. However, this does not stem from logical argument but rather from a general aversion to ambiguous national boundaries and new state formation. Although exact boundaries, stable states, and current governments are easier to deal with, a brief season of ambiguity is easier to accept than perpetual conflict.

Although generally unpopular, the task of redrawing Africa's borders must be undertaken. To maintain the status quo of violence, instability, and corruption is immoral. To stand by and watch a continent digress into anarchy would be a great crime against humanity. However, the task must not repeat the mistakes of the past. Foreign powers drew lines that completely disregarded local power systems, religions, linguistic and ethnic groups, and kinship organizations. As demonstrated above, this led to the problems currently plaguing the African nations. "Traditional institutions could provide a stable system of conflict management because they operate on the bases of commonly acceptable standards, and not necessarily through the arbitrary rulings of a despot" (Juma 2005, 492). Many people who study and create policy regarding Africa will balk at the idea of putting traditional leaders in political power. However, there are few members of any society more in touch with cultural values than the elders.

> The position of elders in African communities has not changed, despite new political organization. They are still considered paragons of wisdom and command respectability from the entire membership of the community and beyond. In terms of conflict resolution, they are a great repository of first hand information on the historical aspects of the conflict, its cultural ramifications, and the actors involved, and can inspire confidence in a cause of action that seeks to bring peace. Against a backdrop and an enduring call to empower local peace makers and encourage ownership of peace initiatives, the institution of elders in African communities makes a powerful intervention (Juma 2005, 496).

Reverting back to traditional governance for boundary making is not without significant difficulties. First, identification of traditional power structures is problematic among populations that may have undergone mass migration or displacement during the last century. Second, some traditional leaders may currently participate in the state governments. This will create an obvious conflict of interests. Finally, and most significantly, traditional "political power in pre-colonial Africa was exercised not over land but over people" (Herbst 1989, 679). The ability of traditional institutions to efficiently govern is currently unclear. However, preliminary efforts to reincorporate the traditional leaders into public roles have proven promising.

The decisions of where to put the national borders must be taken up by the people at the local level. It is utterly foolish to assume that multinational organizations, academics, or even international political groups could appropriately draw national borders in Africa. The confounding variables are too nuanced for anyone but the local groups to understand. The local tribal elders, chiefs, and religious leaders know where the cleavages in the populations lie. By allowing these local leaders to arrange, negotiate, and govern to whom they owe allegiance, regardless of current national borders, the majority of the violent conflicts will be ameliorated. Ethnic groups and warring bands are expected to form cohesive, unified, fairly homogenous nations. This will reduce the need for armed border crossings and the potential for violent conflict.

The new political landscape is difficult to predict. On a land mass with thousands of languages, dialects, and ethnicities, the new Africa could include hundreds of small, ethnically homogenous states. This explosion of small, poor nations will be difficult to deal with from an international relations standpoint. However, globalization and free-market economic forces will assist in natural consolidation.

In feudal Europe, principalities combined and coalesced more often for economic advantages rather than in response to brute force. Over a period of a few years, smaller African nations will see the need to unify and coalesce into larger, more economically viable federations. There is a critical mass of taxable population necessary to form and run a government. Many of these homogenous groups will not have this population. In these cases, economically poorer groups will have a survival incentive to coordinate and begin non-hostile negotiations with their neighbors.

A prime example of this future possibility is the Zarma[9] of western Niger and Burkina Faso. This group lives on the precipice of extinction. The Sahara Desert is claiming more of the Zarma's traditional land every year. Livestock husbandry and subsistence-level farming do not allow the luxury of hostile regional politics. Without consistent state assistance, the Zarma will quickly die off. Therefore, their self-interest is for regional political cooperation. Also, because of their resource-depleted land, they have little risk of dispossession of it by other groups.

The Yoruba of Nigeria's oil and resource-rich Niger Delta are an opposite example. These people's traditional land sits on top of one of the world's vastest crude oil deposits. Initially, one may think that they, under the proposed traditional group consolidation, would cut themselves off from the rest of Nigeria and say "Good riddance!" in the process. However, there are neither the technological skills, the business contacts, nor the infrastructure necessary among the Yoruba to get the oil to market. They would have the prerogative to sit on the resource, but coordination and cooperation will not be far off when children and families are starving. In all likelihood, the Yoruba will form economic ties with much of the current Nigerian groups. The main difference between current ties and these possible future ties is who does the tying.

Currently, the Nigerian groups are offered no option besides interaction. This outside, unnatural force facilitates many of the hostilities that lead to current levels of violence. It is as if two feuding brothers are being forced to hug as one holds an ice cream cone, while the other is dying of starvation. There is a low chance of peaceful interaction between these two brothers. However, if there is no outside coercion, the cone-holding brother is quite likely to offer a share of his ice cream in a mutually beneficial agreement. Though simplistic, this analogy is not entirely unrelated to the current problems in Nigeria.

It is quite possible that many of the boundaries will eventually be the same as the current ones. This is not a failure in the process. It will have allowed the nations to determine and establish their own national borders—the first essential step of national development robbed by the Berlin Conference. National boundaries in Africa have long been held as a "sacred cow." There is no negotiation over their placements or effects on the continent. This paper has shown the problems, both past and future, that have plagued Africa because of an unwillingness to address the border problems. Only through a mass butchering of the sacred African cow will the nations be free. Partial, tentative, or corrupt attempts to dismember the cow may prove the destruction of the entire continent—a reality the rest of the world cannot accept.

NOTES

1. I performed these searches at http://news.google.com on 17 March 2006.

2. http://www.clintonfoundation.org/legacy/050799-speech-by-president-at-luncheon-in-houston.htm

3. http://answering-islam.org.uk/Authors/JR/Future/ch13_islams_ancient_hatred.htm

4. http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/story.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=3574197

5. http://www.likud.nl/press186.html

6. http://www.guardian.co.uk/quaketurkey/Story/0,2763,201835,00.html

7. http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/Africa/Rwanda.asp

8. http://www.tartans.scotland.net/ "Tartans of Scotland; the definitive guide to tartans on the web" A link takes you to a page to "Buy a Piece of *your history* for only $7!" (emphasis added).

9. Zarma is also often transliterated as *Zerma*, *Djerma*, *Dyerma*, or *Zaberma* (Britannica).

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Secrets of a Successful NGO: A Case Study of ASEI's Microfinance Strategy in El Salvador

Chelsea A. Ruiz, socio-cultural anthropology

Introduction

ASEI

La Asociación Salvadoreña de Extensionistas Empresariales del INCAE, (INCAE's Salvadoran Association of Business Extensions,) or ASEI, is an NGO[1] based in San Salvador that provides low-interest[2] loans to responsible, enterprising individuals. ASEI opened its doors in 1993[3] right after El Salvador's twelve year civil war ended, and began loaning money in the Grameen style. The Grameen, or village bank system, is a lending method in which small business loans are apportioned to groups of clients. Village banks, also known as group banks, cultivate group solidarity, which supports the clients in repaying their loans. Many NGOs throughout the world use this lending system. These loans enable microentrepreneurs to increase their income and better provide for their families. Of its many benefits, village banking stimulates local economies and gives a feeling of confidence and self-worth to those who repay their loans successfully. According to Ricardo Segovia,[4] ASEI's general manager:

> Microfinance is a valuable tool. . . . Of course it's not the panacea or only solution, nevertheless, it's one way of working with the sectors of microbusiness in a serious and stimulating way so that this same sector will develop in time. I think that there are still and will be "mystery" in finding models that work so we can accelerate the reduction of poverty (e-mail to author, 9 April 2006).

ASEI's Microloan Process

The microloan process begins when a promotor (hereafter referred to as a loan officer) travels to an area selected by ASEI headquarters, walks around the neighborhood, talks with people, and searches for potential loan clients. The loan officer determines who the respected, longstanding community members are and the composition of the neighborhood. Once a prospective loan client is found, he or she is informed about ASEI and the loan service. The loan officer explains that these loans are small, usually a few hundred dollars, and are for the purpose of investing in the client's business. During this initial exchange, the loan officers, who are usually women,[5] also informally interview the potential loan client to see if they fit ASEI's criteria. Once mutual interest is established in an ASEI microloan, the loan officer instructs the potential loan client to gather several neighbors who would also be interested in a microloan. This is the beginning of a group bank.

A group bank consists of five or six microentrepreneurs who all live in the same neighborhood. This composition is essential, because although ASEI's microloans are portioned out individually, repayment of the loan is the responsibility of the group. This means that if one member fails to make a payment on time, the entire group is considered delinquent, and the group must make the entire payment if they are to have future opportunities to borrow a larger amount of money from ASEI.

Once an interested group has been gathered, the loan officer holds three formational meetings where the potential group bank is taught their responsibilities as borrowers and the procedures and rules of ASEI's lending process. Upon completion of the three meetings, a fourth meeting is held with the group bank, its loan officer, and the area supervisor. This finalizing meeting is conducted by the area supervisor, who quizzes the group to ensure they are properly informed of their rights and responsibilities. At this point, the bank name and weekly meeting times are solidified and the checks are distributed and signed for.

The Need for Microloans in El Salvador

El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. It has been battered by colonialism, war, and natural disasters, and currently struggles through an economic crisis. Isabel, a forty-four-year-old ASEI staff member, explained, "When people don't have money, they don't have options of what to do when they don't have work. Here in El Salvador there is no work" (Informant 8, 31 May 2006). The high cost of living and low wages, combined with widespread unemployment, has forced much of the workforce into the informal sector of the economy or toward gangs and illegal activities. These factors combine to create a climate of need in which NGOs like ASEI have an incredible potential to improve their clients' life condition.

Like much of Latin America, El Salvador's workforce suffers from a lack of jobs, forcing many, especially women, into the informal sector of the economy to make a living. Common entrepreneurial enterprises in San Salvador include small stands selling food such as *pupusas*, (tortillas stuffed with meat, cheese, or beans), candy, and chips; or stalls in the market selling everything from hammocks, hairclips, and toothpaste to clothes, fruit, and pirated CDs and DVDs. However, without training or access to credit, starting up a small business is nearly impossible. Banks, of course, lend money, but the majority of the people who most need these loans do not qualify as they have little credit or collateral. Even those who have both may be unable to afford the interest rates.

El Salvador is currently experiencing an economic crisis where there is a shortage of employment and a comparatively high cost of living. This is frustrating for the majority of the Salvadoran population that is willing and able to work but unable to find employment. Even those who have jobs are usually not paid a living wage. The change from the Salvadoran *colón* to the American dollar[6] and the inflation that followed, combined with the failure to raise wages, has made life more difficult for the Salvadoran people. Recent price hikes in energy[7] and transportation[8] have increased the economic strain. "Right now the economic situation is really tough," expressed Alicia, a thirty-two-year-old store owner and ASEI loan client. "You have to find yourself again, because getting a loan is a big commitment that you have to follow up on and find a way to pay it" (Informant 15, 2 June 2006).

ASEI's High Loan Repayment Rates

If we define a successful microfinance program in terms of loan repayment rates, then ASEI is thriving. ASEI's loan repayment rate is between 97 percent and 98 percent in an industry where 95 percent is considered normal.[9] In this paper, I argue that this success is a result of four main factors: 1) ASEI's facilitation of microloans and the incentives offered for timely repayments, 2) the village bank model where responsibility for loans is shared among

bank members, 3) the relationships formed between loan officers and their clients and among fellow group bank members, and 4) the clients' dedication to hard work as microentrepreneurs. I will demonstrate how these factors help ASEI's loan clients make their payments punctually, resulting in ASEI's success in the microfinance industry.

This paper will proceed as follows: I will review a selection of academic literature on microfinance and describe the research site and data collection techniques I used in my original research for this paper. Afterward, I will discuss the four factors that contribute to ASEI's success in the microfinance industry. Finally, I will reconcile the discrepancies between the academic research and the realities I encountered in my study of ASEI.

Academic Literature on Microfinance

Despite the desperate need for NGOs like ASEI that provide microfinance services, academic literature in the field of international development has been critical of the effectiveness of NGOs. I will review opinions and arguments against and in favor of microfinance. I will then describe ASEI's approach to microfinance through their loan clients' and employees' statements, and the reader may decide if the village banking system has merit, despite the criticisms.

Recent discussions in the fields of international development and applied anthropology have focused on the failures of development projects due to ignorance of and unwillingness to allow for the societal values of the community in which the project is attempted. Current opinion centers on the premise that the absence of grassroots-generated projects undermines support for the development venture and ensures the projects will not be sustainable after the aid organization leaves. Even with participatory input in the initial development of the project, inconsistencies in application are said to spell disaster for the outcome of the attempted project.

Historical Background

It has become apparent since their debut in the 1970s that, despite their good intentions and valiant efforts, NGOs have often failed to meet their goals of providing credit and training to the disadvantaged and disenfranchised. When NGOs first emerged, it was widely believed that they could do no wrong. The dictatorial and structurally inflexible model for providing aid practiced by the World Bank and other government programs was hailed as the answer to poverty. However, in the wake of thirty years of failed projects, some with disastrous results, there has been a move toward a general disillusionment with microcredit development projects. I propose that although these recent criticisms have provided essential insight into the weaknesses of microfinance, the system itself still works and is a solution worthy of pursuit, discussion, and funding in the fight against poverty.

Criticisms of Microfinance

Criticisms of microfinance include the assertion that development projects often fail to reach their targets: the poorest of the poor. Additionally, projects' inabilities to achieve self-sustainability have hurt the image of NGOs as viable components of the solution to social and economic problems. Scholars and development proponents are beginning to realize that credit alone is insufficient in most cases to improve the living conditions of the poor. There are also social, political, familial, and gender concerns that take part in determining the success or failure of any credit-based project. Scholars and analysts have come to realize that projects

designed by business professionals, economists, and wealthy government officials thousands of miles removed from the intended beneficiaries often ignore the infinite number of complex "x" factors involved in the development process.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when microcredit began to take off, there were fewer nonprofit organizations, and the main groups that practiced this new system of aid were governments and large, well funded programs such as the World Bank. Unfortunately, many of these groups, the World Bank in particular, implemented their programs in a very authoritarian manner. In more recent years, as problems and complaints have been voiced, the methods used by the World Bank have come under attack as scholars and those involved in development have recognized the grave mistakes caused by this rigid approach to development.

Despite NGOs' attempts to practice constituent-friendly aid, their smaller scale and lack of stringent regulation has caused them to be scrutinized as well. In "NGOs: Fighting Poverty, Hurting the Poor," Sebastian Mallaby addressed this problem:

> NGOs claim to campaign on behalf of poor people, yet many of their campaigns harm the poor. They claim to protect the environment, but by forcing the World Bank to pull out of sensitive projects, they cause these schemes to go ahead without the environmental safeguards that the bank would have imposed on them. Likewise NGOs purport to hold the World Bank accountable, yet the bank is answerable to the governments who are its shareholders; it is the NGOs' accountability that is murky (2004:52).

The same concept is also expressed in Serena Cossgrove's 2002 article, "Levels of Empowerment: Marketers and Microenterprise—Lending NGOs in Apopa and Nejapa, El Salvador." Cossgrove asserted that the former view of NGOs as apolitical and operating without agendas or biases is faulty. She contended that NGOs support, or are subversive to, government policies. Cossgrove maintained that neutrality of any party involved in development, whether it is a government, donor, NGO, or constituent, is impossible, and that ignoring the underlying biases that exist can have grave consequences for the project and people on whom the experiment is being conducted.

Another important topic in the debate over the efficacy of microcredit programs is credit as the principle type of aid. Through trial and error, scholars and development workers have concluded that monetary aid alone is insufficient to propel people out of poverty. It is now widely accepted that credit must be paired with training, whether it be technical, business education, or gender-issue awareness, as well as support groups that promote empowerment and social equity. It is clear that monetary aid needs direction and support for it to be effective in raising the standards of living for its recipients. Linda Mayoux conveyed this principle in "Tackling the Down Side: Social Capital, Women's Empowerment and Micro-Finance in Cameroon," where she explained, "Where micro-finance programmes have merely used existing forms of social capital to reduce costs, benefits for women have been limited" (2001:444).

Benefits of Microfinance

Despite arguments against the capability of microfinance, there are proponents in development who extol its benefits. Rae Lesser Blumberg enumerated the positive impacts of credit and training, including increased self-confidence, perceived respect from clients' families,

greater control over fertility decisions, more say in domestic well being decisions (such as when to take a child to the hospital or the length of time a child, especially female, is allowed to attend school), and more input in household economic decisions (Blumberg 2001:286). Blumberg held that when a woman is exposed to support groups provided by development projects, the weekly meetings give her previously unavailable opportunities to break *purdah* and leave her house. At the meetings, she can learn from other MEs (microentrepreneurs), make friends, reaffirm the importance of educating children and improving health and hygiene, etc. (Larance, 1998). She also will hear about family planning, and Steele, Amin, and Naved (1998) found that Bangladeshi women microcredit clients were 1.8 times more likely to use contraceptives than nonclients in the same village—even after taking into account prior contraceptive use (2001:290n. 14).

In Sam Afrane's article, "Impact Assessment of Microfinance Interventions in Ghana and South Africa—A Synthesis of Major Impacts and Lessons," he concurred:

> The additional effects of the economic gains [of women] by way of their enhanced ability to contribute to family finances, reduces dependence on their husbands, improved self-worth and confidence, increased social involvement in community affairs, and so forth, justify the greater focus of microfinance projects on women in many countries (2001:56).

Another relevant aspect of the debate currently receiving attention is gender. An understanding of gender yields insights on how the development project will interact with the relationships that compose the community. Gender relations play a major role in determining a project's ability to succeed and become sustainable or fail and possibly worsen the conditions of the women and the community at large. The empowerment of women through microcredit and training is often cited as the goal of projects. Authors have addressed how this delicate factor has been handled with mixed results.

Gender awareness may empower women to take control of economic aspects of personal and family life and occasionally political and social life. It is essential to understand how women utilize credit in order to design projects that best serve their needs and wants. According to Blumberg, women tend to have better repayment rates and use aid differently than men:

> 1) Women MEs [microentrepreneurs] have so much less access to alternative sources of capital than men that they will bend over backwards not to lose what might be the first outside help they have ever gotten, 2) Women MEs are less likely to divert monies to liquor or other recreational consumption (nor, except in direst emergency, are they likely to decapitalize their business for family needs), 3) Women, ethnic minorities, and the very poor tend to be more intimidated by authority and may make payments even in circumstances where better off, more sophisticated men have stopped doing so. Some also might argue that since loan officers tend to be disproportionately male, they might be able to intimidate women into better repayment habits. However, in my own work in Ecuador (Blumberg, 1997c, 1997d), I studied men vs. women loan officers and explored this very issue. Both male and female loan officers reported that women MEs were more responsible, better paying clients (2001:293n. 17).

Notwithstanding the positive effects microfinance can have on women who participate in it, there have been problems associated with poorly designed programs. These problems mainly include a failure to account for the ramifications of development projects on gendered relations within a community, as Mayoux explains:

> Even in the areas where women had noted positive changes there were serious concerns that because women were able to get access to credit, husbands felt less obligated to give them their own money and there was less pressure on men to contribute to the household. Women were taking loans and incurring responsibility for repayment from low-income and barely sustainable economic activities, increasing their work burden, while men were the ultimate beneficiaries with an increase in disposable income (2001:439).

Recent research and academic literature highlights the defects and shortcomings of poorly designed and implemented microfinance projects. This negative press has exposed the development industry to intense scrutiny and criticism. Although this evaluation, or impact assessment, is a constructive and necessary step towards improvement in programs and services offered by governments and NGOs, it has also led some to believe that microcredit is not a viable solution to poverty. While recognizing that microcredit cannot be the only solution, I argue that it is one tool developers, both in governmental and nongovernmental sectors, can use to improve the quality of life for low-income and otherwise disadvantaged persons.

ASEI's Microfinance Strategy

Despite the many problems that have been linked to poorly designed and shoddily implemented microfinance programs, the benefits definitely outweigh the drawbacks. ASEI's microfinance strategy promotes empowerment, community, and economic stimulation. Its program empowers people to do what they would already be doing if they had the resources. One of the reasons ASEI works so well is because its growth is built on the needs of the communities. ASEI refrains from dictating to its clients what to sell or even how to run their businesses. Provided the business has been operating for a year or more and engages in legal activities, ASEI respects the client's business. ASEI adds resources to what their clients have already built and know will work for them. From the initial loan until the final payment and the closing of the group bank, it is up to the clients to invest in and make something more of their businesses to improve their condition.

These microloans also stimulate micro- and macroeconomies because they uphold the jobs that the people have created in El Salvador's employment vacuum. A loan given to a microentrepreneur in the informal sector benefits not only that individual but also the individual's family. Clients who make more can afford to send their children to school and give them the opportunity to receive more education. A client's successful business also positively influences his or her neighborhood, creating an example of success and cultivating community pride. The growth of businesses in neighborhoods develops the macroeconomies of cities, regions, and the country as a whole.

How My Original Research Differs from the Academic Literature

One of the main differences between Blumberg's research and mine is that there is a proliferation of microloan opportunities in El Salvador. Salvadoran women in urban areas, where ASEI primarily works, are surrounded by various lending facilities such as microcredit

NGOs, loan sharks, and banks. Many ASEI loan clients have taken out loans previous to working with ASEI, and some are paying off other loans simultaneously. Another difference I found is that Salvadoran women are more empowered than the women in Blumberg's study and are intimidated by authority no more than the men. The authority figure of the loan officer is not what prompts Salvadoran women to make timely payments. Instead, it is the relationships the loan clients form among themselves and with their loan officers.

Additionally, the indigenous population of El Salvador has been integrated into the mestizo culture for generations,[10] and they are accustomed to urban life in a country that is heavily influenced by Western ideals. Furthermore, many loan clients are single mothers,[11] who are less likely to have their husbands capitalize on their credit. Emiliana is a sixty-two-year-old ASEI loan client and single mother who sells traditional Salvadoran candy:

> Author: What does it mean to be Salvadoran?
> Emiliana: I'm proud to be Salvadoran.
> A: Yes. Why?
> E: Because Salvadorans, we are workers. Not all of us, but I'm proud, because I like to work.
> A: Is there anything else?
> E: Well, I'm a single mother . . . thanks to my God, my children aren't in the street, because I like to work (Informant 33, 21 June 2006).

In general, Salvadoran consumers of microloans are better informed and acquainted with the loan process and are not dominated by husbands who will spend the loan money irresponsibly. These factors contribute to ASEI's clients' abilities to repay their loans.

Original Research Methodology

My research for this paper was conducted in El Salvador during the period of May–August of 2006. This research was the senior thesis for my undergraduate degree in socio-cultural anthropology at Brigham Young University. The study was conducted in the four regions of El Salvador: the Central, Paracentral, Occidental, and Oriental, with the majority of my efforts spent in the capital, San Salvador, in the Central region. I worked primarily in the southern, wealthier half of the country, focusing on El Salvador's wealthiest city, the capital. Although there are marginalized populations within the urban areas, the standard of living on the whole is much higher in the capital than in the northern departments of the country, namely Chalatenango and Morazán, which I did not visit.

During the twelve weeks (from 16 May 2006 until 16 August 2006) I was in El Salvador, I conducted seventy-nine interviews: eighteen with the management staff in ASEI's central office, fourteen with loan officers from each of ASEI's four areas of the country, forty-three with ASEI clients both new and experienced, two with family members of ASEI clients, and two with directors of other microfinance NGOs that ASEI works with in the country. Key informant Ricardo Segovia, ASEI general manager, was my main informant for ASEI matters, and he is the president of ALPIMED, a network of ten microfinance institutions (including ASEI). Segovia has an engineering degree and has studied in the U.S., Latin America, and the Middle East. He has been happily married for twenty years and has three children who have attended, or are currently attending, universities. He is a spiritual person who professes

to be both Evangelical and Catholic. Segovia is mild-mannered and very amiable but also possesses the ability to clearly and firmly express his expectations when occasion demands. We met many times formally, once or twice a week for thirty to sixty minutes during the three months of my stay. During these meetings, we talked about everything from ASEI to religion and faith, politics, poverty, family, and education. He was very invested in my study, and I felt he did everything in his power to make it a success. Segovia was a gracious employer and teacher whose conversations intrigued me and whose character deeply impressed me. I would characterize our relationship as a professional friendship.

I met often with Segovia and wrote notes of our informal interviews. I also have e-mail from him and an informal interview on tape. My interviews included ASEI staff, managerial employees in the central office where I worked, and many of the loan officers who directly recruited and cared for the clients. In addition to interviewing the employees, I observed their relationships with each other in the office environment and in the field. Interviews with the managerial staff and loan officers were conducted in the garden, conference room, or my office at ASEI. I interviewed the clients and their family members either in their homes, in the home of a bank member, or in my office at ASEI headquarters. The two interviews with directors of other NGOs were conducted in their offices.

Data Collection

I gathered data primarily through informal and unstructured interviews and observation. The interviews included a structured portion followed by an informal portion and projective questioning. I practiced participant observation constantly in the home I stayed in, on the bus, at work, at a local Latter-day Saint church I attended, and in other social situations, such as cooking with the landlady or talking with friends at a restaurant.

All seventy-nine of my informants gave me verbal consent to record their voices. In a few cases, I was unable to record audio but took notes of what the informant said along with my questions. I made sure to take a notebook with me everywhere I went so I could record observations, thoughts, and questions. I reviewed my notes every night and typed them up, adding other, more detailed information as I recalled it. I also transcribed and coded my interviews daily.

Potential for Skewed Data

Due to the close involvement of Segovia and an influential member of the Board of Directors, Jorge Peña, halfway through my twelve weeks, I was asked to interview more clients than I had originally anticipated in order to perform a sample size calculation of quantifiable data. This not only meant that I had to forego my plans to interview different types of informants, but also that I would be restricted to the Central and Paracentral areas in order to spend more of my time interviewing clients and less time traveling to the farther Occidental and Oriental areas.

An additional disadvantage to this request was that I would also be interviewing clients in my office at ASEI's headquarters. The clients I had formerly interviewed were in their homes, and I had been accompanied by their trusted loan officer or area supervisor, helping the clients feel at ease with my questions and indifferent as to my intentions. However, in interviews at my office at ASEI's headquarters, the atmosphere was more tense. My motives were scrutinized, and

clients' responses were more hesitant and guarded. The clients I interviewed were unaware of Segovia's direct involvement. I wondered at first if clients were being selected for me, but after several office interviews, I discovered that these people were chosen on a volunteer basis.

Clients often came to the office for various reasons, such as to complain about their service, pick up a check, or other special circumstances. After they had completed their business, a staff member would announce that a few dollars would be offered to anyone willing to stay for a twenty-minute interview. Given these circumstances, I do not believe my data was compromised by the involvement of Segovia or Peña.

ASEI's Involvement

The management staff and Segovia, in particular, afforded me much support in my research. As mentioned, Segovia took great interest in my field study and was involved every step of the way. I was given a desk in a quiet office and a computer with an Internet connection and access to a printer. Segovia introduced me to all the management staff and explained my project and the ways I would need assistance from them. He allowed me to sit in on important meetings, and his personal assistant, Violeta Álvarez, was always available to help me with anything I needed, such as setting up appointments for interviews. Segovia made time to meet regularly to discuss my progress and revise my schedule. We reviewed my project proposal when I first arrived in order to make concrete plans. Before I left, we read through the proposal in its entirety in order to discuss what I had learned and to allow Segovia to share his thoughts and make minor corrections.

Four Factors of ASEI's Success

ASEI's high loan repayment rate is a result of four main factors: 1) ASEI's facilitation of microloans and the incentives offered for timely repayments, 2) the village bank model where responsibility for loans is shared among bank members, 3) the relationships formed between loan officers and their clients and among fellow group bank members, and 4) the clients' dedication to hard work as microentrepreneurs. These factors help ASEI's loan clients make their payments punctually, resulting in ASEI's success in the microfinance industry.

ASEI's Facilitation of Microloans

The first factor that contributes to ASEI's high loan repayment rates is the way they facilitate their microloans, and the incentives they offer clients to make timely repayments. ASEI facilitates the loan process in several ways: providing formational meetings where the loan and repayment expectations are taught, low interest rates, a safety system for first-time borrowers where they are given lower loans and payments, access to supervising loan officers, and the repayment plan. In the formational meetings, a loan officer explains ASEI's policies and procedures and teaches the members how they will be expected to function if they choose to receive the loan. These meetings also give the group and the loan officer a chance to get to know each other better and get used to working as a group. Anna, thirty-three, is a member of ASEI's staff:

> Generally, when communal banks are formed they give discussions to identify who will be the members that they will integrate into the communal bank. They try to investigate the clients by way of the discussion with their same group partners that will include them in the bank. In these formational meetings the methodology is explained and they try to

diminish the risk that someone will receive credit and not pay it. An investigation of the business is made to see if they really do have a business. You verify if the person lives in the community that she says or that their friends say. This is what we try to do in the training meetings (Informant 21, 21 June 2006).

I witnessed a finalizing meeting where the area supervisor quizzed the group on ASEI policies and the loan client rights. The area supervisor then double-checked that the individual apportionments of the loan were correct, that all the group members met ASEI's requirements, and that they all still wanted the loan. Once these conditions had been satisfied, the area supervisor distributed the checks and the meeting adjourned.

In addition to the formational meetings, the competitive interest rates ASEI offers also contribute to its ability to provide quality microcredit services. Compared to large institutional banks that charge higher interest rates for a small business loan, ASEI's 3 percent rate[12] is quite low. Banks also require collateral in the form of a home or car, which inhibits many from qualifying. ASEI accepts smaller forms of collateral such as stereos, televisions, refrigerators, ovens, cars, and other similar items. By accepting more forms of collateral and offering comparatively lower interest rates, ASEI accesses more potential clients and reaches clients who are lower on the poverty spectrum.

Along with the low interest rates, ASEI also has a safety system built into the amounts first-time borrowers qualify for. These lower amounts,[13] regardless of past experiences with other lending institutions, help ASEI secure lower delinquency rates because clients first practice with smaller loans and smaller weekly payments and then move to larger loans. After a group has repaid its loan in full, the group bank closes, and the amount that return clients may petition for depends on how well they paid their previous loan. The record of loan repayments is kept for the individual bank members and for the group bank. This provides greater incentive for the members to make punctual payments and to choose group members who will repay the loan with fewer problems.

Another feature of ASEI's managerial prowess is its easy access to the group bank loan officers. Each group bank's loan officer is expected to be present at each weekly meeting. This way, if a problem develops among group members or with individual payment issues, very little time passes before the loan officer hears about problems firsthand and may take steps to rectify the problem.

During the weekly meeting, the designated treasurer of the group bank collects each individual's payments. This is done in full view of the rest of the group to provide witnesses so members cannot accuse the treasurer of taking bank money and so members cannot claim they made a payment they actually did not. At his or her convenience during the week, the treasurer takes the lump payment and deposits it in the local bank account that ASEI set up for the group. These procedures give the loan clients more control over their payments and minimize the loan's disruption in their lives.

An additional incentive ASEI provides for clients to make payments, besides increasing loan amounts for clients with good records, is the savings program. Each weekly payment includes principle, interest, and savings. This is an incentive to make payments, because the clients are paying themselves. This sentiment is expressed by two clients from a group bank comprised of middle-aged women from a town in the western area of El Salvador:

Author: What would you change about ASEI and the loans if you could? For Maria, the payments are a little high.

Nadia: Today there are a lot of lending institutions. There are both high and low [payments].

A: But in the other institutions, do they have savings programs or not?

N: No.

Beatríz: There are some, yes.

A: Some yes, some no. Why do you think it's a little higher [at ASEI]?

N: Because we save. For this reason, because when we're paying we're saving. I feel this is a good program . . . it's a good change, an opportunity to save. . . . It's a good thing, and as we say, it's a habit that can be taught. A habit of saving (Informants 9–14, 2 June 2006).

Once a loan has been repaid, the group bank is dissolved and each member is entitled to his or her savings. In practice, however, many clients[14] continue to borrow from ASEI and accumulate savings. The goal of ASEI is for clients to accumulate enough savings through the successful repayment of loans that they are able to invest their savings in their businesses and not require loans. In the words of Catalina, a twenty-eight-year-old single mother and ASEI loan officer, "More than anything, [what is important to the clients is] the credit we offer, the level of savings, because not all institutions have savings" (Informant 78, 29 July 2006).

Village Bank Model

Another key reason for ASEI's success in the microfinance industry is the village bank model. Village banks or group banks (these terms are interchangeable) provide built-in support to encourage and help clients repay their loans. The loan is given in its entirety to the group and is then portioned out to the individual members. It is the responsibility of the group to select its members carefully. Alicia, a thirty-two-year-old ASEI loan client, who runs a small store, explained: "They [the other members of the group bank] are hard workers, responsible. . . . I'm not going to bring a person [into the group bank] that won't work. I'm not going to bring a person that I think won't be responsible, because it affects everyone" (Informant 15, 2 June 2006).

During weekly meetings, the treasurer of the group collects the loan payments from the members and deposits them into the group bank account. If a member falls behind on his or her payments, the entire group is held responsible, and the record of the entire group is jeopardized. Therefore, the group has a vested interest in the success of each of its members. When difficulties such as illness or theft befall a member, it is up to the rest of the group to help pull the struggling member through. And when worst comes to worst, it is the group that collects the collateral from a client who has not paid. The policy's structure contributes to the clients' willingness and ability to repay the loans, and thus to ASEI's success.

Relationships Among Group Members and Between Loan Officers and Their Groups

The relationships formed among fellow group bank members facilitate efficient loan repayment. The following explanation is from Sofía, a twenty-five-year-old ASEI loan officer:

Author: Do your clients work well together in their groups?

Sofía: Yes. Yes.

A: Why?

S: In the first place, they all know each other. All of them are from the same community. This is a very specific point. They all know each other . . . in any problem they ask for help (Informant 19, 17 June 2006).

Since each loan officer is assigned to and recruits from specific areas, all the members of the group banks live close to each other. They know each other and recommend each other, because they want to make sure their fellow bank members are trustworthy and will repay their portions of the loan. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of the loan ensures that the members are willing to cooperate with each other.

Most of ASEI's loan clients are women,[15] and the meetings are a chance for the members to discuss their business problems and foreseeable hiccups in payments. Since most businesses are run from home, home life and business are inextricably connected for ASEI's clients. The members of the group banks have known each other for years, and many are close friends. These meetings are an opportunity for women to socialize and may often function as group therapy when individuals are experiencing rough times. The bank meetings are a chance for the women to express themselves in an emotionally safe environment. In banks where these relationships are formed, they help the group function smoothly, because everyone tries to look out for each other and work together to repay the loan.

CHARACTER OF LOAN OFFICERS

In the absence of a consumer relations or marketing department, the loan officers and clients are ASEI's publicity, because they are in direct contact with potential clients and represent the organization to the public. The salary for ASEI's loan officers,[16] although above minimum wage, is still low, and the nature of their work is very difficult. ASEI's loan officers travel long distances by bus and on foot to reach clients. Their work involves maintaining the banks and includes more than just attending the weekly group meetings. The loan officers must possess highly developed interpersonal and conflict-resolution skills and often provide psychological counseling to help the members of their banks. The nature of the job helps draw hardworking, considerate loan officers who sincerely care about their clients and value their work. The following conversation I had with Eva, a thirty-two-year-old wife and ASEI loan officer, depicts this sentiment:

Author: What do you like the most about being a loan officer?

Eva: Perhaps, communicating with people.

A: What is the most difficult part of being a loan officer?

E: The most difficult thing about being a loan officer [is] coming home late at night. . . . It's very difficult for us.

A: How?

E: We travel by bus, right. This explains that aside from bus fare . . . the risk we have, sometimes, in the communities, right. This is really difficult for a loan officer, *to know* that one has the responsibility, *to know* that one has to come to dangerous areas, but we are there because the people there need us.

A: Please describe the clients in your area.

E: It's beautiful to have the opportunity to grow with people in addition to feeling like one person can make a difference and help others (Informant 18, 3 June 2006).

A similar exchange occurred with Mario, a thirty-one-year-old and recently married loan officer:

Author: What do you like most about being a loan officer?

Mario: What do I like about being a loan officer? Well, to work with people. To work with people and try to help them with the difficulties that they have economically with their business. What I like is to help the people to develop their business.

A: What is the hardest thing about being a loan officer in your area?

M: What is the most difficult? Well, collecting.

A: Why?

M: Because, there are clients that are hard headed. There are clients that have the bad habit of not paying their debt. This is the most difficult thing for us.

A: Yes. Are there many of these types of people in your area?

M: Well, it's the minority, but we have ten clients like this . . . hardheaded, but it's the minority.

A: What do you think about the clients in your area? What are they like?

M: Well, the majority are good people. They work hard, the majority are responsible. Responsible, and they work well as a team, in a group (Informant 76, 22 July 2006).

Following are additional loan officers' responses to questions about their job and constituents:

What do you like the most about being a loan officer?

Well, the work of sharing with a lot of people, different situations they pass through. To give them help with morale (Informant 19, 3 June 2006).

Ah, making a contract with the people. I like working as a loan officer to have a contract with the people, to meet people, make friends, right, and to know how the people are involved with each other. Sometimes we don't know the level of poverty and we believe that we're poor, and here we have people that are poorer than us (Informant 30, 17 June 2006).

What is the most difficult part of being a loan officer?

Look, the most difficult thing, sometimes, is to want to help the people but not to be able to. The most difficult thing, sometimes, is the zone where one works because they are risky zones (Informant 30, 17 June 2006).

The most difficult thing is to know how to find solutions to problems (Informant 50, 1 July 2006).

Well, it's not difficult, because I like the work. (Informant 54, 1 July 2006).

Please describe the clients in your area.

Look, the people I have known here in the zone I'm in, I feel they are people who search. They are people who work to be able to subsist, right, because the level of life they have sometimes doesn't allow them to improve but only to subsist (Informant 30, 17 June 2006).

My clients are, well, they're people born here, they're hard workers, right, they're fighters, right . . . day to day they try to sustain for their children, they try to overcome (Informant 31, 17 June 2006).

The relationships loan officers form with their clients also encourage high repayment rates. Loan officers play a key role in the environment of the meetings. In addition to serving as the liaison for ASEI and the clients, loan officers are often sought for psychological counsel by their clients. The fact that the majority of loan officers are women[17] also helps the clients feel that their loan officer understands and even empathizes with what they are going through. My research indicated that most client–loan officer relationships are friendships. This bond cultivates trust, which encourages the clients to make their payments punctually and establishes open communication when problems arise. Following are quotes from three loan officers about their job and the clients they work with:

This is why I'm here with ASEI—because of the love I have for my clients (Informant 51, 1 July 2006).

It's beautiful to have the opportunity to grow with people in addition to feeling like one person can make a difference and help others (Informant 18, 3 June 2006).

The people are so giving with you because of any little thing they offer you. They're very friendly and ask when we have vacations when we're going to return. Yes, I tell them, I'm going to return in fifteen days. Good, because we don't like change. No, there's not going to be any change. In the areas where I am the people are very caring (Informant 39, 24 June 2006).

The selflessness and care the majority of ASEI's loan officers show to their clients demonstrates their commitment to help their group banks. The loan clients, in turn, respond well to the support and are more inclined to do their best to repay their loans promptly.

Loan Clients as Hard Workers

As microentrepreneurs, ASEI's loan clients are dedicated to hard work. The self-motivation and tenacity associated with starting one's own business are qualities that help loan clients make their weekly repayments despite difficult circumstances. In the absence of employment opportunities, they have created their own. ASEI merely offers to be a part of what enterprising Salvadorans have already begun. ASEI's prerequisite that loan clients have a business for a year or longer helps ensure that only serious and successful clients who have the ability to repay the loan will be extended credit.

The requirements for an ASEI loan also help ensure that the people who have been given loans will repay them. Potential clients are microentrepreneurs who are, by nature, industrious and willing to take risks to benefit their families. The fact that they have businesses speaks to their character and work ethic.

Additionally, many of ASEI's loan clients are single mothers who are struggling to support their families alone or are trying to augment the income of their partners.[18] For these clients, the decision to accept a loan from ASEI is more than simply an advantageous investment opportunity, it is a necessity for their continued survival. Ana, a member of ASEI's staff, explained:

Well, what I've mostly observed, because in my area there are also more women than men. They're few. Perhaps in the majority of banks there are no men. They open one or two in each bank or there aren't any. And women are more responsible. We have the responsibility

of the home, we have children. We are more attached to the home and trying to get ahead by whatever way we can. The same happens to our clients. They have businesses and know that there depends all the income for their home, for their food, for their clothes, for their housing. And many women are single. They don't have a husband or life partner to help them. So the number of women is greater (Informant 21, 12 June 2006).

Many of ASEI's clients are grateful for the opportunity the loans afford them to improve both their businesses and the lives of their families. Many refer to the loans as a blessing. In the absence of other alternatives, ASEI's loan clients repay their loans faithfully. Elena, a single twenty-six-year-old loan officer, elaborated:

We work with informal sectors. The clients are simple people, more than anything, women who try to give a better life to their children . . . education, food for their children. We work with people who work arduously, and that's what they want, a better life. They want to improve economically; it helps them improve their lives (Informant 79, 29 July 2006).

Cultural Value of Hard Work

The prevalent attitude among the interviewed ASEI loan clients and staff was that hard work was the only way to get ahead in life. As Rosa, a forty-six-year-old loan client, stated, "People say that to progress is to work" (Informant 24, 14 June 2006). Another client, forty-nine-year-old Josephina, responded similarly when I asked her what it meant to progress: "Well, to work and to be responsible" (Informant 32, 21 June 2006). Most clients expressed this same sentiment that work was the way to get ahead and improve their situation in life. This faith in hard work also gives Salvadoran microentrepreneurs control over their difficult economic situation. Sofia, a thirty-nine-year-old loan officer, expounded:

Because Salvadorans, we are enterprising. We are hard workers also. I feel that to be Salvadoran . . . [is] to not be defeated when faced with a problem. We're always looking for a way out. With all that's happened, the earthquake . . . we're still wanting to progress. So, for me it's a pride to be Salvadoran (Informant 30, 17 June 2006).

Instead of waiting for a handout or resigning themselves to poverty, many of the informants I spoke with expressed their determination to do everything in their power to provide for themselves and their children. Another client, thirty-nine-year-old Lolita, explained what it means to be poor:

Author: And do you think that you are poor?
Lolita: Well, yes. I'm sacrificing and working, but I also think that I'm moving forward.
A: So, do you think that one day you won't be poor?
L: Yes. God willing, no. I don't want greatness either. . . . At least to rest, because I will work less. I don't want to just live day to day. Yes.
A: What does it mean to move forward?
L: Well, to work a lot. To work (Informant 61, 5 July 2006).

This quote illustrates the saving mentality attached to work, and though the work ethic of many clients is strong, many feel overworked and underpaid. It attests to the difficult economic situation in the country and shows that the response of many of ASEI's clients is to keep on doing what they have always done: work. The attitude that work is the only way to

move forward in life motivates loan clients to make their repayments promptly and contributes to ASEI's success.

Analysis

Much of the current debate over the efficacy of microfinance and NGOs has criticized microcredit for failing to reach the poorest of the poor. In this particular respect, ASEI's microfinance strategy is no exception, because all of their loan clients are relatively successful microentrepreneurs who are capable of repaying a small loan. ASEI's strategy involves working with those who are the easiest to help—low-risk clientele. This is by no means a criticism; in contrast, I assert that it accounts, in part, for ASEI's success and longevity within the country.[19] Salvadorans welcome aid, especially if the aid creates jobs, because many people are eager and willing to work hard. In this paper I have discussed four factors that contribute to ASEI's success as a microfinance institution: management that facilitates the repayment of microloans, the village bank model, personal relationships developed among bank members and between group members and loan officers, and the loan clients' dedication to hard work.

I have argued that ASEI's effective management facilitates loan repayment. Although this factor involves the more mundane administrative side to running a successful NGO, the importance for an NGO to function properly on its higher levels cannot be underestimated. Administrative discrepancies have often contributed to the failure of NGOs and development projects. Poor administration has often resulted in inadequate service to a project's constituents as well. ASEI's staff genuinely cares about its constituents and tries to bring them the highest quality service possible. I submit that although this is not the sole contributing factor to the success of a development project, NGO, or of ASEI, it does play a crucial role, nonetheless.

Shared responsibility for loans also encourages punctual repayment. The collective nature of group credit records and payments ensures the members work together and communicate. The village bank model ASEI employs to administer its loans is another important factor of its success. Village banking has been shown to be successful in India and Africa, and ASEI has proven that the Grameen model of microfinance works in Latin America as well.

The personal relationships, formed between the loan officer and client and among clients, also help members repay their loans. Many other development projects and NGOs that have failed to accomplish their goals have shared ASEI's desire to help alleviate poverty and empower clients. Certainly many have also shared the essential component of effective management. A major difference between failed development ventures and ASEI is the quality and depth of personal relationships formed on the most basic hierarchal levels of the institution: client to staff and client to client. I propose that although this elusive factor may not be cultivated purposefully by ASEI, the relationships between clients and staff is a determining component of ASEI's success.

The cultivation and impact of personal relationships in a development venture merit further study. One of the problems that faces development projects, NGOs, and for-profit ventures is the inability to translate the goals and vision of the organization down through

all the levels of the institution. If nonprofit organizations could train staff at every level of the organization to share the creator's vision, I postulate that service to their clients would improve, as demonstrated by ASEI.

Despite these essential components of a successful NGO, an organization cannot accept full credit for the success or full blame for the failure of the venture. The constituents of any project also determine its outcome. In ASEI's case, their clients' value of hard work motivates and encourages them to repay. This is a result of the unique cultural and economic situation of El Salvador which heavily contributes to the successfulness of ASEI's microfinance program. The combination of high unemployment and a resilient and resourceful population has created an atmosphere conducive to the success of well structured and well administered microfinance institutions such as ASEI. Salvadorans' faith in work as capable of changing their lives allows them to have faith in themselves and ASEI. ASEI benefits greatly from this cultural attitude toward work, which accounts in a large part for the NGO's success. It is the loan clients who do the work, while ASEI acts as an active supervisor and facilitator. The system works well because the decisions and responsibility are placed in the hands of the clients. Through ASEI, clients are empowered to change their own lives.

Conclusion

This paper contends that the sound business practices of ASEI, combined with their loan clients' economic situation and the value clients place on hard work, have contributed to its success as a microfinance institution. ASEI's longevity and growth within the country attest to the fact that the model is sustainable and has the power to improve the lives of the poor. This case study was intended to add to the discussion of microfinance NGOs and their efficacy. I hope this information on ASEI will serve as a positive example of the inspired program of microfinance in action. In Segovia's words, "We happily share with our friends that we believe that microbusiness is one of the principle generators of employment and wealth" (e-mail to author, 22 August 2006).

NOTES

1. NGOs, nongovernmental organizations, provide aid to impoverished parts of the world. The aid may range from small business loans to wells for a clean water supply, business training, educational ventures such as literacy programs, and medical services.
2. ASEI's 3% monthly interest rates are low compared to the interest rates the banks charge.
3. ASEI has had legal NGO status since 1991 and began its microcredit program in 1993.
4. Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals. Exceptions include ASEI's general manager, Ricardo Segovia, his administrative assistant, Violeta Álvarez, and a prominent member of ASEI's Board of Directors, Licensiado Jorge Peña.
5. Sex of Total ASEI Loan Officers

Female	21/28	75%
Male	7/28	25%

6. 1 January 2001 marked the change from the *colón* to the dollar. The exchange rate is 8.75 *colones* to the dollar.
7. In mid-June 2006 a government-mandated price hike increased the cost of energy up 14%.
8. As of 1 July 2006, the government withdrew its subsidy of gasoline for public transportation buses. There was a simultaneous additional mandated price increase from 20 to 25 cents for

large buses and 23 to 25 cents for smaller buses.

9. According to a personal communication on 27 September 2006 with Ricardo Segovia, ASEI's general manager, the delinquency rate has oscillated between 2% and 3% in the past eight months.

10. In 1930, a peasant uprising over better wages and land spurred what is known as *La Gran Matanza*, or "The Great Killing." This massacre left an estimated 30,000 natives dead, and thousands of other indigenous peoples were forced to abandon their traditional dress, language, and customs. Although some hints of indigenous culture have been preserved, this event effectively eliminated the native culture of El Salvador. Today, the majority of the population is mestizo both linguistically and culturally. Physical appearance designates many, especially rural Salvadorans, as racially indigenous, and some claim it as their ancestry, but socially, Salvadorans have been almost completely assimilated into the mestizo culture.

11. Sampled Client Marital Status

Single				
	Single	12/41	29.27%	
	Widowed	3/41	7.32%	
	Divorced or Separated	2/41	4.88%	
	Total single	17/41	**41.46%**	
Non-single				
	Married	12/41	29.27%	
	Accompanied	12/41	29.27%	
	Total non-single	24/41	**58.54%**	
Unknown		*II*		

12. According to two loan officers (Informants 31 and 76) on two separate occasions, ASEI charged 3% interest as of August 2006.

13. $100–150 was a typical first loan as of August 2006.

14. Sampled Loan Client's Time with ASEI

Cycles:	Months:	Years:			Totals:
1	4		10/43	23.26%	
2	8		8/43	18.6%	
3	12	1	11/43	25.58%	**67.44%** in first 3 cycles
4	16		3/43	6.98%	
5	20		3/43	6.98%	
6	24	2	4/43	9.3%	**90.7%** in first 6 cycles
7	28		0/43	0%	
8	32		0/43	0%	
9	36	3	1/43	2.33%	
10+	40+	3.3+	3/43	6.98%	

15. Sex of Sampled ASEI Loan Clients

Female	38/43	88.37%
Male	5/43	11.63%

16. As of August 2006, the starting monthly salary of the sampled ASEI loan officers was $228.57 plus $20 for transportation. The country's legal minimum wage is $158.00 a month.

17. Sex of Total ASEI Loan Officers

Female	21/28	75%
Male	7/28	25%

18. Marital Status of Sampled ASEI Loan Clients

Single				
	Single	12/41	29.27%	
	Widowed	3/41	7.32%	
	Divorced or Separated	2/41	4.88%	
	Total single	17/41	**41.46%**	
Non-single				
	Married	12/41	29.27%	

	Accompanied	12/41	29.27%
	Total non-single	24/41	**58.54%**
Unknown		*11*	

19. Since 1993 and as of July 2006, ASEI has loaned over $3.4 million in its thirteen years of operation. In the month of July 2006 alone, ASEI served 5,821 clients.

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Drug-Induced Female Power: the Relationship Between the Use of Oxytocins in Childbirth and the Concept of Sakthi in Southern India

Shawna Sando

Introduction

Consider the power of medicine: we can modify and heal the human body, practically performing miracles. This power is not limited to the medically trained; the patients make the ultimate choice of whether or not they wish to seek care. So the power of medicine lies not only in physicians' knowledge but also in the decision of patients to use that knowledge.

Childbirth, as a necessary aspect of health care, demands several choices by both patient and provider, the specifics of which differentiate among cultures. Though variations abound, the universal nature of childbirth is an intense process through which several complications may occur, manifested in the worldwide maternal mortality rate of 529,000 women per year (WHO 2005). In order to reduce this grave statistic, energy must be spent toward empowering women with culturally appropriate birthing options. Unfortunately, there cannot simply be a universal method for delivering a baby. Each country and culture has its own traditional techniques, and any universalized method may be contradicted by a number of sociocultural and economic issues specific to that region.

Globalization is inevitable; however, in order to make a smooth transition, possible pressures on both health and culture should be assessed before introducing new knowledge. More than forcing new technologies upon a culture, the balance lies in the ability to choose which innovations to accept. My goal in assessing emerging childbirth technologies in southern India was to ensure that the most appropriate technologies were being implemented. However, in order to make that assessment, I had to learn what was both medically and culturally appropriate with consideration for Tamil culture.

With the influx of modern ideas comes the impetus to change; in some cases, that leads to elimination of tradition and in others simply to adaptation. In order to test this greater clash of culture and science, I chose a specific point of possible contention. In general terms, the concern was whether introducing Western medicine in childbirth was interfering with Tamil cultural beliefs. More specifically, *sakthi*, traditionally known in Tamil culture as divine female power, is a term that has now been expanded beyond this spiritual reference to become a more general definition of strength. One must wonder what social factors are driving this evolution. Perhaps one force is the use of a Western labor-inducing method, oxytocin injections. Is the changing perception of sakthi affected by labor-inducing drugs? Are there additional micro-level reasons for modernity escaping tradition in southern India? And is this a preventable cause for concern?

I will first describe my field site and the methods used. Then I will explain sakthi and Sintocin, an oxytocin-like drug, in their relationship to childbirth. Finally, a discussion of religion and childbirth will lead into my conclusions.

Field Site

During the summer of 2006, I spent six weeks conducting research in and around the city of Coimbatore in south-central Tamil Nadu. Coimbatore and the surrounding villages have a population of 1,865,234 (Wikipedia). As the textile capital of India (and perhaps the world), Coimbatore is a rapidly modernizing city. Several movie theatres, chain restaurants and stores, hotels, and universities line the streets. A large contributor to this growth, on a national level, is the access to urban life from the surrounding rural villages. Transportation and roadways allow for this commute. From large automobiles to bicycles, several modes of transportation are available and used daily. The majority of mid- to lower-class Indians most commonly use the buses. For a couple of rupees, one may easily ride a bus within the Coimbatore city limits or to villages about an hour's distance from the urban center. Auto rickshaws and taxis are also available for a greater price, but they are frequented more by foreigners and members of the higher class. Villagers who live outside of Coimbatore view the city as a place for commerce, recreation, and education. Weekly trips to the market for fresh fruits and vegetables, occasional afternoons at the movies, and the majority of shopping needs are conducted in Coimbatore.

Additionally, Coimbatore has the best medical facilities in the area. Kovai Medical Centre and Hospital (KMCH), a private hospital, and PSG College of Technology (PSG), a grant-supported school and hospital, are both located in Coimbatore. Both are well equipped and fully functioning, even by Western standards. Additionally, at the government level there is a large hospital, not far from Coimbatore's train station, that serves approximately three thousand outpatients daily (V. Aram, personal communication, 12 June 2006). All three of these facilities, though funded by various means, fall under the umbrella of tertiary institutions, the highest level of care.

Tamil Nadu divides its health care facilities into two categories: government and private. Under each of those two categories are three main branches: tertiary, secondary, and primary (the lowest level of care) (Van Hollen, 2003). The government institutions are generally considered inferior to the private due mostly to more crowds, less funding, and less expensive care. Coincidentally, as one goes further from the city, the medical facilities become less technologically advanced, sparsely staffed, and less sanitized. During my stay, a primary health care center fifteen kilometers outside of the city was meant to serve fourteen villages and approximately fifty thousand people (Vjay, personal communication, 10 June 2006). The staff consisted of three doctors and eleven nurses, three of which were specially trained to provide antenatal care. The facility itself was rundown and unclean. Though this facility is more conveniently located and offers affordable treatment, the conditions mandate that medical cases requiring machines and advanced equipment be referred to a tertiary-care facility. Overall, bridging the gap between the quality of care in tertiary- versus primary-care facilities would make a substantial difference in health care in southern India.

Methods

My research consisted of mostly semi-structured interviews with eighteen pregnant and postpartum women. All but three of these interviews were conducted in a group setting. Information was recorded with both notes and a tape recorder. Though these women all lived within thirty kilometers of one another, their living statuses, economic abilities, and choices varied. From my perspective, it was difficult to specifically categorize women within the Indian

socioeconomic spectrum. The geographic distribution of poverty and access to money are not entirely predictable. For the sake of presenting an image of the medical environment in the Coimbatore area, the informants will be categorized by the location of their antenatal care and their place of delivery. This is not to assume that women who attended only tertiary care facilities were the wealthiest. Factors such as proximity to one's home, concern for health care, desire to pay additional costs, and knowledge of available options all weigh into the decision of where women receive care.

Within that context, sixteen of the interviewed mothers delivered their children in the big general hospital in Coimbatore, a government tertiary institution that serves a wide range of patients. Fifteen of those sixteen women also attended antenatal visits at the government hospital, while one woman received antenatal care at a primary health care center closer to her home. Of the two women who did not give birth in the general hospital, one delivered in a primary health care center and the other at KMCH, a private tertiary hospital.

Another categorization of my informants is their level of education. The education system in Tamil Nadu is also divided by private and public institutions. Both of these institutions, however, require tuition for all ages. The private schools, of course, are of a greater quality and also require the greatest amount of tuition. There are nongovernmental organizations, such as Shanti Ashram, that provide scholarships for schooling at all levels. However, the funding is not enough to provide all children with equal educational opportunities. Most children attend school through twelfth standard, twelve years of formal schooling, unless they are forced or desire to leave to begin work. Less children continue on to college. Though some of my female informants did work, the majority of them did not attend college. It may be assumed that, besides the minimal amount of general health learned in schooling, most of their biological and health care knowledge came from peers and the media. In general, it would seem that with minimal knowledge there would also be less selectivity in where and to what degree health care is obtained.

The conservative culture adds additional consideration for two reasons specific to decisions surrounding childbirth: the authority of the father and his family over the process, and the presence of caste division and connections with the care provider. Generally speaking, the father and his family have the final say in decisions made about everything from birth control to breast-feeding. This is not to say that the mother has no control over her own body, but the pressure and importance of having children draw additional attention from the family.

The government encourages families to have no more than two children; in the Hindu community of Tamil Nadu, families with more children than that would most likely be viewed as irresponsible (M. Moothi, personal communication, 20 June 2006). This restriction on family size coupled with the dowry system creates pressure to have at least one male child (Jejeebhboy, Merrick & Visaria, 1999). The system of offering a dowry payment with a betrothed daughter has become increasingly expensive and burdensome. This is not the case just for members of lower castes; dowry expectations increase with wealth and are of equal concern to the wealthy. In this case, rather than viewing familial input as disempowering to the mother, it could be seen as a sense of relief.

Due to the considerations surrounding the birth of a child in India, it is understandable that additional family members would be involved in the decision making. However, it is important to differentiate between the family advising the mother and the family excluding

her from the decision altogether.

Though I saw few examples of this in my own research, Cecilia Van Hollen, author of *Birth on the Threshold*, associated the barrier created to health care access with caste divisions (Van Hollen, 2003). Though a woman may desire to receive the best care possible and is willing to pay for it, she may feel socially restricted from visiting a private hospital. Another implication of this apparent barrier that I did find evidence of is with the patient-doctor relationship, especially at the primary-care level. It seemed that the less prevalent health care facilities, which serve a less affluent economic group, kept a greater distance between the doctor and patient. It was more common at this level of care for complete trust to be placed within the physicians' care and for physicians to be aware of their superior status. In this trend, less individualized care occurs; patients, especially in labor, receive a uniform pattern of care and would never consider making choices throughout the process. In the private sector, more patients are aware that they are paying for the care, creating a reciprocal relationship with their physicians. Additionally, many women with the capability to do so opt for care in the private sector because they prefer to choose female doctors over male doctors (S. RenKedevi, personal communication, 8 June 2006). This is most likely an implication of the conservative culture, but might also reflect an overall desire to be comfortable with the caregiver.

In addition to mothers, I also interviewed three assistant professors of public health, two practicing obstetricians, one pediatrician, three medical students, a hospital pharmacist, and a Hindu priest. Information supplied by these informants supplemented that derived from the mothers and provided a useful contrast. This variation of informants helped to form a more complete picture of childbirth in southern India.

Besides interviews, I used observations as an additional research method. I spent approximately forty hours in the delivery ward of the KMCH private hospital, where I saw several women undergo the labor process and witnessed a birth. I also spent much time observing activities in Hindu temples in an attempt to assess the connections between religious views and physical health. My field area was predominately Hindu, as were the majority of my informants.

Defining Sakthi

Widespread Hinduism has led to the dovetailing of Indian culture and Hindu beliefs. This merger of culture and religion has led to concepts that have deep religious significance to be superficially classified as an idiosyncrasy of Indian culture. For instance, the caste system and the cow being seen as a noble animal are examples of this misconception. Another such example is sakthi, generally understood as female power, though it is much more complex. For a Western mind, this concept is difficult to grasp. Initially, I was under the impression that each woman had a sort of threshold she would hope to fill with sakthi, as if there were a quantitative measure for the force. However, through speaking with informants, it became apparent that sakthi is not kept as a reservoir but is rather an ever-attainable strength.

Even with a more accurate perception of sakthi, it is an idea that seems so inherently imbedded in the context of Tamil culture that it is difficult to decipher its true definition and importance. In fact, many ideas originally derived from Hinduism have seeped into culture and are now more associated with Tamil culture than specifically with Hinduism. In the

Tantra discipline of Hinduism, god is considered to be both male (Shiva) and female (Sakthi). Shiva is potential energy and Sakthi is kinetic energy. The analogy used in the *Essentials of Hinduism* is that Shiva is comparable to fire and Sakthi to its burning power; they are always inseparable and one at the same time. Technically, since Sakthi is kinetic energy, this female power would have been responsible for creating the world (Bhaskarananda, 2002). In a traditional interpretation, the term has deep spiritual relevance.

Though the concept of sakthi may be defined by theological means, how does that same concept affect society today? Is there a conscious recognition of sakthi in the specific Hindu context? The term is easily recognized by southern Indians. It is common to use god and goddess names for stores or commercial goods. One such good is a line of dairy products called "Sakthi." Their slogan "as pure as a mother's love" implies a connection between the female power, or sakthi, of a mother and the advertised beverage. Children benefit from both in a similar fashion. Oddly enough, there is also a children's television show entitled *Sakthi Man*, a superhero who has the strength and ability to save people in danger. This re-emphasizes the earlier notion that sakthi is a kinetic energy but also presents the term, as it seems to be more colloquially used today, as a synonym for strength.

I was shocked one day while playing with some of the village children when a young girl flexed her bicep for me and exclaimed, "sakthi!" with a big smile on her face. I then flexed my own arm and asked if that, too, was sakthi. She replied that it was (Sonya, personal communication, 20 May 2006). In this case, what exactly was her definition of sakthi? This young girl, most likely not yet comprehending the Hindu implications of the word, was obviously made aware of its general context by her own social and familial observations. In the 1980 edition of the *Powers of Tamil Women*, Wadley stated that, to the villager, sakthi is a natural energy which is essential for all actions, from physical movements to thought processes. In its most basic sense it is a form of energy, manifest primarily in females, but small amounts may be present in males, as well. Furthermore, Wadley argued that understanding sakthi may lead to a comprehension of woman's power in Tamil society. The idea of women being innately filled with sakthi stems from their reproductive abilities. The power may also be gained, or rather enhanced, by women learning to control their powers, especially their sexuality.

A more abstract image of sakthi in Tamil society is the *Valai Kappu*, or *cimantin* ritual. This ritual displays the pregnant woman as the goddess Sakthi. Cimantam is clearly a deification of the needy and vulnerable pregnant woman; the worshippers supplicate the deity and seek to fulfill her wishes in order to both gain her beneficent protection and forestall the dangerous outcome of her dissatisfaction (Van Hollen, 2003). The ritual is still performed commonly and has become more elaborate than in the past. It is a tradition practiced by Hindus and non-Hindus alike. All but one of my informants celebrated this ritual when they were pregnant with their first child. In reference to childbirth, most women told me that they felt sakthi was needed to deliver the baby. Most of them did associate the power with religion and noted that prayer was necessary to access this power, a concept not far from a Christian prayer. A group of women from the village of Sunda-aprom explained sakthi as the power needed to push the baby out (Focus group, personal communitcation, 30 May 2006). They drew an energy-flow diagram with arrows leading from the top of the mother's head to the opening of her vagina, as if the initiation of this kinetic energy force begins as a mental

process and continues to travel through the physical organs involved in labor.

The concept of sakthi is most likely difficult to grasp because it is a subjective term that varies with each individual's perception of strength and power. However, the term is definite in that it is recognized to some degree by all members of Tamil culture, which means it inherently affects social norms.

Use of Oxytocins

One application of each woman's concept of sakthi is the perception of pain in childbirth. In India, controlling the pain is done not through reducing the level of pain but through shortening the time of pain by inducing the labor. Oxytocin is the hormone that both induces contractions and signals the creation of breast milk. Synthetically created oxytocins are used as a labor-inducing drug; they increase the speed of contractions and inherently amplify the pain. In the U.S., oxytocins are often used under the brand name Pitocin in conjunction with pain-killing procedures such as epidurals (Ladewig, London, & Olds, 2001). In southern India, however, the oxytocin-like drug Sintocin is used on its own under the belief that a quick, painful labor is more beneficial than a less painful one.

The problem that the Western mind generally associates with the use of Sintocin independently is that if a painkiller as well as oxytocin is available, it should be used to minimize the pain. Though painkillers (analgesics) are available in India, they are not used due to their high cost. Yet the health of patients should be held in greater regard than the financial elements involved. The concern of the Indian government in obstetrics and gynecology has been on female infanticide and family size for a number of years (Poffenberger, 1975). It is only in recent years that the focus has begun to broaden beyond those subjects. In 1988, the per capita spending on maternal and child health care services in Tamil Nadu was 5.23 rupees, which was lower than the average Indian rate of 7.19 rupees (Van Hollen, 2003). This situation has improved from 1988, but there is still need for revision.

In an interview with the pharmacist at PSG, a private hospital, I obtained a closer estimate of medical costs today (Samandam, personal communication, 12 June 2006). PSG uses approximately four hundred milliliters of Sintocin each month. The cost is sixteen rupees per milliliter from a local distributor called Reatna, whose parent company is Pfizer. At the onset of labor pain, 2.5 milliliters of Sintocin are normally injected, compared to the one milliliter normally used in the U.S. Throughout the labor, up to ten milliliters may be injected. At the maximum injection, the cost averages at the reasonable U.S. equivalent of approximately four dollars. When added on top of a five thousand rupee private hospital stay, the price of Sintocin injections seems insignificant, so there is no economic reason for questioning the drug's use.

Though the mothers in my study were well aware of the costs involved, they were ill informed about the drug itself. When asked, none of the mothers were aware of the proper drug name, Sintocin, or exactly why they were given the drug. The almost unanimous response when asked if they were given any injections during labor was, "Yes, I had drips," in reference to the IV used to inject the Sintocin. When asked the purpose for the injection, the response was, "to make the baby come" (multiple informants, personal communication, 20 May–25 June 2006). Sintocin would "make the baby come," but this was a general explanation, devoid of any of the physiological implications of which one might expect a patient to be aware. Two

informants admitted to requesting the drips based on the suggestion of their own mothers and female neighbors. The majority of my informants simply took the doctor's advice, assuming it was a necessary procedure.

These labor-inducing drugs do have possible side effects for both the mother and child. Cervical lacerations, uterine rupture, and water intoxication are all possible complications for the mother. The baby may experience fetal trauma, decreased oxygen supply (which leads to an irregular heart beat), and hyperbilirubinemia, also known as jaundice (Wilson, Shannon, & Stang, 2001). Though these negative results would most likely occur only with an overdose, it does give reason to monitor routine use and to inform mothers about the drug.

This use of oxytocin is one way that biomedicalization, technologic and scientific innovations in medicine, is occurring in India (Clarke, 2003). Though an increase in biomedicalization may benefit a society, it is also important to consider cultural aspects that affect medical treatment. The introduction of Western medicines and technologies into a less-developed society should open up more opportunities as far as health care is considered. Instead, it seems that the trend is to do away with old techniques and only use the new ones. Completely adhering to Western techniques is when science begins to clash with culture, and the problem is not that new medicines are being used but how they are being used. Instead of assuming that most modern technologies are the best care option, patients should see them as an additional option to older treatments. This would encourage the patients to understand the effects and benefits of various drugs and not to rely solely on the advice of the medical professional.

Higher doses of oxytocin are used in south-central Tamil Nadu than in the U.S., as Sintocin was routinely used in a hospital setting. Western authorities might consider this routine use of Sintocin an overuse of the drug. Additionally, the use of Sintocin without a combined analgesic could be considered a misuse of the drug; however, these are both matters of cultural perspective in varying medical atmospheres.

Childbirth and Religion

Though there did not seem to be any direct correlation between an increase in sakthi and the use of Sintocin, there were definite connections between religion and childbirth. In a conversation with Vino Aram, a pediatrician and professor at a medical school in Coimbatore, she mentioned the increased religious focus that a friend of hers developed when pregnant. According to Aram, a devout Hindu, there should be an increase in the devotion to religion when a woman is pregnant. Hindu women generally do more regular scripture reading in preparation for motherhood. Women are also encouraged to learn more about their family and personal god so that they can pass that information on to the baby. However, not all of my informants felt the need to have this heightened religious focus during pregnancy. Perhaps this focus on spirituality is most common among women of a certain social and economic status, or perhaps it is the choice of each individual mother (Vino Aram, personal interview, 9 June 2006).

The experience of a young woman in Chavadi reinforces this concept of the mother impressing religion on her children. Soundary, a twenty-year-old, was a college student who had concerns about the results of an exam that would determine her future career options. An astrologer who had visited their home suggested that she begin visiting the temple weekly in

order to alleviate her distress and receive results from the gods. Soundary may not have paid heed to the astrologer, but her mother took his suggestion seriously. Soundary began going to a goddess temple in Coimbatore every Friday because of her mother's devotion. A mother's religious calling begins in pregnancy, continues through childbirth, and plays a role in a grown child's life.

Sumathi, an informant from the village of Parvati Puram, had a birthing experience that was greatly influenced by religion. She previously had a miscarriage and was nervous about her current pregnancy and childbirth. While at the hospital, her labor was progressing slowly. Her uncle, a devout Hindu, brought an offering to the temple on the hospital grounds. He requested that the gods give his niece strength and protection throughout her labor. Sumathi said that soon after her uncle returned, her labor progressed, and she delivered the baby. She believed that the birth occurred because the gods had granted her sakthi (Sumathi, personal communication, 15 June 2006). Religious practice is a definite choice, one which Sumathi believed enabled her to have a successful birthing experience. Five of my informants visited the temple prior to giving birth and admitted to praying during labor. Like the social evolution of many other traditional Hindu concepts, Sakthi's religious roots may reflect the progressing presence of the term itself in South Indian society.

Conclusions

Initially, my proposal statement read as follows: Is there a relationship between labor pain and contractions (*piracava vali*), sakthi (divine female power), and the use of oxytocin (a labor-inducing drug) in the southern Indian village of Chavadi? However, due to a lack of informants and translators in Chavadi, it was necessary to alter the focus of my research. Additionally, due to the expanding definition of sakthi, my research was revised to find that the meaning of sakthi is indirectly affected by the use of Sintocin.

The indirect relationship between sakthi and the use of oxytocin is the connection of sakthi to making choices. As stated by Van Hollen, "'Choice,' the decision-making process, is never a matter of free will of rational, value-maximizing individuals, but, rather it is always enacted in political-economic contexts and shaped by socio-cultural factors such as gender, class, caste, and age" (Van Hollen, 2003). From an optimistic, Western perspective, I was initially skeptical of this claim by Van Hollen, but I have come to reconsider its possible validity. There are several factors involved in choices made in life and childbirth; as the factors related to decision making begin to evolve, would it not make sense that the choices would follow suit? Why are women requesting or blindly accepting injections of Sintocin and making it a common aspect of childbirth in India? The straight answer one might hear from an Indian woman is that it increases the rate of her birth, reducing the time she feels pain, but what she might not be aware of is that it also increases her pain. Could there also be underlying reasons for the injections, such as the woman's ability to afford it? Or is the status of a Western medicine an expected treatment for "modern" women? Could the ability to have choices such as these be a reconstructed definition of sakthi? The use of Sintocin is not about what this specific drug does to the woman's body during labor; instead, it is about her ability to use it. The ability to make a choice is also a form of power.

If this definition of sakthi continues to change, women may begin to feel empowered not

only by receiving the drug but also by knowing the implications of receiving it and why it is being injected into their bodies. A continued change in this female empowerment could filter out into other problematic areas. For instance, if women gain a stronger voice, would as many babies be aborted due to their sex? Would women be impregnated unnecessarily? This indirect relationship between Sintocin and sakthi is just one socially significant aspect of the concept of sakthi in relation to woman's health and childbirth.

The routine use of Sintocin is an illustrative example of a contrasting use of allopathic medicine from the general Western use. Though it is beginning to be routinely used, it is important not to entrust all responsibility in doctors and drugs. The use of Sintocin specifically is not a pressing problem, but my fear is on a larger scale. With the increased influence of allopathic medicines and women seeking hospital births, will it become a trend to simply rely on the drugs and the doctors? If the definition of sakthi truly is changing as a result of women gaining increased social and personal responsibility, then making choices should also become a respected right. A slight and seemingly harmless injection may have greater implications than the surface value allows for. The future definition of sakthi is indeterminable, but the hope is that women will rely on the root of its strength to empower themselves.

Based on my research, I surmised that women in the greater Coimbatore area prefer labor-inducing drugs for both socioeconomic and religious reasons. Western drugs are becoming more commonly used in hospitals, and mere routine use may outweigh the belief that experiencing pain will increase one's sakthi. It is not the literal use of the drug that increases a woman's sakthi, but the pain she is able to endure and her ability to make a choice that proves her power within society.

Name	Age	Village	Religion	Children/Ages	Delivery Location
Suganthi	25	Kuniamuthur	Hindu	1 male, 10 mon.	Hospital
Malatly	31	Machampalayam	Hindu	1 male, 8yrs & 1 female, 5yrs	Hospital
Sasikalam	27	Machampalayam	Hindu	1male, 5yrs & 1 female, 3yrs	Hospital
Vimala	24	Machampalayam	Hindu	1, 3yrs	Hospital
M. Sharmila	33	Machampalayam	Hindu	2 males, 11yrs & 5yrs	Hospital
B. Suganthi	27	Machampalayam	Hindu	1, 5 mon.	Hospital
K. Agneeswari	31	Machampalayam	Hindu	2, 10yrs and 2yrs	Hospital
K. Hemalatha	32	Machampalayam	N/A	1, 3yrs & pregnant	Hospital
A. Sukilaurn	27	Machampalayam	Hindu	1, 5yrs	Hospital
R. Thangamani	21	Machampalayam	Hindu	1,7yrs	Hospital

Data from Initial Survey of Indian Mothers, 5/20/2006

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