ETHNICITY AND ECONOMY IN RURAL MEXICO:
A Critique of the Indigenista Approach*

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The ethnic question has been central to the historical process of nation-state building or "nationalization" in Mexico (Adams 1967). To a significant degree, this process has been a criollo and a mestizo project (Aguirre Beltrán 1976; compare Anderson 1983, 1988). Accordingly, *indígena* identity has been imposed on the non-criollo and non-mestizo population by the Mexican state, with the identification process historically displaying arbitrariness and inconsistency across a range of biological identifiers (especially phenotype) or cultural identifiers (especially language) or both (Marino Flores 1967).[1] Following colonial precedents and in step with the evolving structure of political economy and society, the process of ethnic identification in postcolonial Mexico associated Hispanicity (via white skin color or Spanish descent or Spanish language) with the more valued locations higher in the ethno-class hierarchy and indígena identity with the lower, less-valued locations. In postrevolutionary Mexico, thanks to the contribution of anthropologist Manuel Gamio, the concept of mestizaje was stripped of biological content and culturized. Yet the mestizo project to Mexicanize indígenas through de-Indianization continued, as proclaimed by Moisés Sáenz, a leading *indigenista* intellectual of the early twentieth century: "The logical exit for the Indian is to become Mexican" (see Hernández Díaz 1991, 9–11; Aguirre Beltrán 1970, 131–32, 136). In both its discourse and in terms of practical policy, the mestizo indigenista project created conditions that led one scholar to conclude that being indígena in twentieth-century Mexico, collectively and individually, is a negative identity that denotes membership in a

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1. In order to conform to standard usage in Mexican anthropological discourse and to avoid the inevitably pejorative terms *Indian* and *indio,* we have decided to use the Spanish term *indígena* throughout this article to refer to people identified by themselves or others as Amerindian.

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subaltern class of rural direct producers who are subjected to economic exploitation, ethnic discrimination, and political-cultural domination (see Friedlander 1975, esp. 71; compare Knight 1990, 100; Hernández Díaz 1991, chap. 1; 1992, chap. 1).

In twentieth-century Mexico, under bourgeois mestizo hegemony and the lingering aftereffects of the Spanish colonial doctrine of *"raza"* and *"limpieza de sangre"* (and its odious caste system), the official indigenista ideology has been contradictory (Stolcke 1991). It has celebrated pre-Hispanic indigenous civilization as an essential source of national culture, while simultaneously promoting policies that link entitlement to full civil, political, and economic rights of national citizenship with learning Spanish and acquiring mestizo identity (Friedlander 1975; Riding 1984, chap. 10; and Knight 1990).

More specifically, since the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), Mexican state policy vis-à-vis the indígena population has either emphasized forging a strong homogeneous national mestizo culture through assimilation of indígenas (de-Indianization) or envisioned national culture in pluralistic and pluri-ethnic terms, in which nationalization of indígenas is perceived as compatible with respecting their culture, albeit with Spanish as the national language. This pluralistic policy, which is no less integrationist in its goals than assimilationist policy, has developed in counterpoint to an insurgent ethnicist and neopopulist (but not necessarily anti-Marxist) movement in civil society that rejects the concept of a unified national culture. It seeks instead autonomy for the national indígena minority or empowerment of the indigenous minorities and redress of their social and economic grievances (Bonfil Batalla 1981; Díaz-Polanco 1987, 51–60; Varese 1988).

Ethnopopulist discourse in Mexican studies superimposes the ethnic dichotomy of mestizo regional and national society versus indigenous *"etnia"* (an ethnically distinctive biocultural population occupying a particular territory, as defined in Aguirre Beltrán 1970, 131) on the economic dichotomy of capitalist market economy versus peasant subsistence economy (Nolasco 1972, 12–13; Bartolomé and Barabas 1986). This superimposition in effect ignores the presence of petty commodity production and small-scale capitalist accumulation in peasant communities and also obfuscates the extent to which these economic processes crosscut the ethnic divide between mestizo and indígena (compare with Cook and Binford 1990, especially 6–7).

Scholarly skepticism about the blanket applicability and analytical relevance of designating Mexican peasants as indígena is reinforced by the weight of ethnographic experience throughout most of rural Mexico, where ethnic identity has not been regularly invoked in popular discourse by rural people with reference to collective or self-identification (Nagengast and Kearney 1990, 62). This skepticism is also grounded in the recognition

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that to embrace indígena identity in Mexico is to seek to be discriminated against or dominated or exploited (Hernández Díaz 1991, 286).

Yet the turn away from collective or self-identification as indígena should not be construed as an embrace of mestizo identity (Hernández Díaz 1991). Neither should the assertion of a claim to indígena identity be assumed to imply a rejection of mestizo identity. From an outsider (etic) perspective that is informed about insiders' views (emics), it is possible to designate many rural Mexican individuals accurately as having hyphenated identities—indígena and mestizo or Mexicano. Only careful empirical research at the local and regional levels can determine the circumstantial and relational conditions surrounding these identities. For heuristic purposes, at least, it seems pointless to persist in viewing these identities as mutually exclusive or negating.

This skeptical posture regarding the degree of applicability of the designator "indígena" in Mexico today, especially as an exclusive identity, is also reinforced by the weight of ethnohistorical evidence pointing to reconstitution of indigenous institutions in key areas of precolonial Mexico, like the Oaxaca Valley during the colonial period. Accordingly, postcolonial institutions and cultural life in such areas are most accurately characterized as syncretic (Cook and Diskin 1975, chap. 1; Whitecotton 1977; Cook 1982, 16–18; Chance 1986). As prominent historian Alan Knight recently stated, "Empirical evidence points to the great gulf—of historical experience and cultural transformation—which separates twentieth-century Mexican Indians from their supposed sixteenth-century forbearers, and which consigns any notion of a collective psychological inheritance to the realm of metaphysics" (Knight 1990, 95). The "great gulf" posited by Knight calls into question, from an anthropological perspective, any general claim to collective cultural continuity between sixteenth-century Mexican Indians and rural Mexicans today (compare Knight 1990, 76). Finally, additional empirical support for this skepticism is provided by the paucity of cultural practices or socially reproductive institutions operating exclusively among one ethnic group in pluri-ethnic regional populations (Sçhryer 1990; compare Cook 1993, 326–27).

Given this ethnohistorical and ethnographic record that reinforces skepticism about the a priori designation by outsiders of rural Mexican populations today as exclusively indígena (as distinct from rural groups' claims to such identity), what sustains the ongoing anthropological debate about indígena identity in Mexico? The answer is clear: this empirical record does not help in understanding why the claims to indígena identity persist in much of rural Mexico today. In this regard, Aguirre Beltrán's admission rings even truer now than it did a quarter of a century ago: "the *indio* persists in feeling Indian and in conserving an identity different from the national one" (Aguirre Beltrán 1970, 136).

In postmodern discourse, the terms of the debate have shifted

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from provenance and content of the indígena cultural repertory, with its implicit concern for separating authentic from inauthentic elements or ascertaining the objective "cultural contents of ethnic dichotomies" (Barth 1969, 14), to a concern with human subjectivity or social consciousness and with human maneuver or social praxis in shifting political-economic conjunctures. According to this perspective, ethnicity, unlike national origin and language, is "subjective and may exist independent of cultural traits" (de la Garza et al. 1991, 5; compare Caso 1948). Thus the task of analysis shifts from weighing subjective insider claims against anthropologically determined cultural content to making a structural, functional, situational, or materialist analysis of the claimants' discourse.

ETHNICITY IN THE OAXACA VALLEY: AN OVERVIEW

In the Oaxaca Valley today, insider notions of individual or collective identity are by no means found only in communities that are designated as indígena and may also be found in mestizo communities. The same is true of discourse related to community-level institutions with economic relevance or content, such as kinship, fictive-kinship, reciprocity, wedding or other life cycle celebrations, *"mayordomía"* sponsorships, and civil-religious *cargos,* institutions that Lynn Stephen calls "kin-based institutions of solidarity and social reproduction" (1991, 29–34). In other words, these institutions are not definitive or unambiguous indicators of community ethnic identity or economic activities specific to indigenous groups (see Campbell 1990).

In the Oaxaca Valley by and large, the informed outside observer is hard-pressed to distinguish between mestizo and Zapotec nonlanguage forms of ethnocultural expression. Many cultural practices are shared by Spanish-speakers and Zapotec-speakers as well as by individuals who claim or do not claim Zapotec identity. For the most part, mestizos have just as much (or as little) sense of historical identity or community loyalty as Zapotec-speakers. Moreover, in neither group is a specific ethnic identity systematically asserted at the intervillage or regional level. Identities built around class, residence, occupation, or citizenship rather than around language-marked ethnicity have more importance outside the village.

Valley Zapotecs and mestizos tend not to refer to each other (or to themselves) in direct ethnic terms like *mestizo, indio, indígena,* or *Zapoteco,* although it is not uncommon for mestizo urbanites to use the term *indio* as a categorical pejorative for all peasants or members of the rural working class. Zapotec-speakers who also speak Spanish usually refer to their own language as *"idioma"* (language) or *"dialecto"* (dialect) rather than as *"Zapoteco"* (although they also have a Zapotec word for that language). Moreover, valley Zapotec-speakers, at least until recently, have not typically used the generic term *Zapoteco* to refer to their indigenous ances-

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tors. They refer to them in Spanish simply as *"nuestros antepasados"* ("our ancestors") or as *"los gentiles"* ("the gentiles"). Zapotec speakers tend to have a general sense of ties between themselves and their pre-Columbian ancestors, but they do not often express their consciousness in terms of concern with being Zapotec, even though they may have a particular Zapotec word to refer to their ancestors.

One exception can be found in Teotitlán del Valle, where the celebration of being Zapotec now goes hand in hand with exceptional success in tourist-oriented and capitalist-organized weaving on the treadle loom (Stephen 1991; Cook 1993, 310–15). Our own field experience and reading of the literature on Zapotec identity in the Oaxaca Valley inclines us to agree generally with Joseph Whitecotton's thesis that "[t]he designation Zapotec . . . has been more of an artifact of external observers than a meaningful unit for the people to whom it has been applied" (1977, 271).[2]

OPERATIONALIZING ETHNIC IDENTITY: ANALYZING THE OVSIP SURVEY DATA

Language is certainly the single most important identifying marker that operates to reinforce separate identity in Mexico, inside and outside ethnic groups or *"comunidades indígenas."* In the state of Oaxaca in 1990, 39 percent of the population five years of age and older (more than a million persons) spoke some indigenous language. Of these, 73 percent were bilingual (they also spoke Spanish), while only 19 percent were monolingual in an indigenous language. Of the speakers of indigenous languages, Zapotec was the language spoken by 34 percent, followed by Mixtec (24 percent), Mazatec (14 percent), Chinantec (9 percent), and Mixe (9 percent).[3]

Scott Cook and Leigh Binford's (1990) study of economy and society in the valley used the Oaxaca Valley Small Industry Project (OVSIP) data set and considered the possibility of ethnocultural explanations for specific economic patterns or behaviors, such as the division of labor by gender in the palm-plaiting industry and gender crossover in treadle-loom weaving (Cook and Binford 1990, 80, 96). Nevertheless, given that study's focus on the debate over "peasant differentiation" and the dy-

2. One anonymous reviewer made the point that "ethnicity" is most commonly used to refer to self-identity that emerges from opposition and conflict: "The fact that most organized social conflict in the Oaxaca Valley is between neighboring communities which presumably have the same cultural resources is no doubt a major reason why 'ethnicity' has not been more salient." This is a good point. Cook can also attest to the fact that in the Mitla-Xaagá-Albarradas corner of the Oaxaca Valley and its mountain hinterland, conflicts linked to the development, operation, and subsequent expropriation and redistribution of land from the former hacienda of Xaagá have tended to reinforce ethnic consciousness pitting Zapotecs against mestizos to a degree greater than average for the valley (see Cook 1983).

3. These figures come from *XI Censo General de Población y Vivienda 1990: Oaxaca resultados definitivos, datos por localidad* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, 1991).

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namics of commodity production, most of the available OVSIP data that could shed light on the possible role of ethnic identity in shaping the organization and performance of commodity production in the Oaxaca Valley was not analyzed in that undertaking.[4]

Village Ethnic Identity and Economic Organization in the Oaxaca Valley: The Empirical Record

The Oaxaca Valley Small Industries Project was conducted according to the premise widely shared by students of the Oaxaca Valley that the "rural Indian peasant culture of central and southern Oaxaca was a conglomeration of things pre-Spanish and of things Spanish" (Whitecotton 1977, 219). In this area, Whitecotton reported, "rural Zapotecs identified mostly with a community and very little with a Zapotec ethnic group," and therefore "Zapotec ethnicity" above the local level was found to be of "little consequence." Cook's field experience in several Zapotec-speaking communities that had been designated by the Mexican government and by anthropologists as "comunidades indígenas" convinced him that official and anthropological (etic) designations of discrete communities as "indígenas" did not automatically translate into a collective ethnocultural identity or anything else of systematic relevance for understanding local economy, society, and culture that did not require a posteriori determination.

Many reasons existed for the OVSIP project to proceed with data collection and analysis on the assumption that the valley's rural economy was not organized along ethnic lines and that the rural-urban antinomy was much more important than the indígena-mestizo one in regional society. It was therefore assumed that the ethnic identity of local populations would not cause measurable differences in their economic organization and performance. Another assumption made was that ethnic or other social identities derived from indigenous language, locality, and similar factors would have to be determined through empirical analysis of objective and subjective behavior and conditions. For that purpose, data were systematically collected from a subsample of the total household survey population about attitudes toward and participation in the civil-religious hierarchy, the fiesta cycle of mayordomía, and reciprocity (*guelaguetza*). These institutions or cultural practices are widely accepted

4. The Oaxaca Valley Small Industries Project (OVSIP), known in Spanish as the Proyecto de Estudios Socioeconómicos sobre las Pequeñas Industrias de Oaxaca (PESPIDEO), operated between 1978 and 1983 under a research grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation. Scott Cook was the principal investigator. Additional funding for data analysis and write-up was provided by the University of Connecticut Research Foundation. For a more detailed description of the project and its data, see Cook and Binford (1990, 243–49). Cook and Joo wish to acknowledge Leigh Binford's contribution to our reanalysis of the OVSIP data set.

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designators of indígena status or of the reproduction of indígena identity at the local level (Diskin 1986; Stephen 1991).

The OVSIP project's methodological turn away from any a priori assumption that ethnic identity (as mestizo or indígena) deserved consideration as an independent variable meant that variables like locality, occupation, and class—rather than language—were used to differentiate the Oaxaca Valley population for analytical purposes (Cook 1990, xi–xiii; Cook and Binford 1990, chaps. 2 and 3). The analysis described in this article thus extends and in some sense completes the earlier analysis of the OVSIP data. In the process, the present study provides the basis for a retrospective empirical evaluation of the wisdom of the project's methodological turn away from using language as a valid or reliable indicator of ethnic identity villagewide.

The OVSIP data set covers six types of craft industries: treadle-loom weaving, backstrap-loom weaving, embroidery, hard fiber (palm and *ixtle*) processing (plaiting and twining), brick making, and mixed crafts (reed basketry, metate making, broom making, lime processing, thread spinning, and wood carving). Except for brick making (which is predominantly associated with local populations designated as mestizo), these craft occupations are mainly associated with local populations that are identified officially and in anthropological practice as Zapotec. Most of these occupations have pre-Hispanic origins, the most notable exceptions being treadle-loom weaving and probably brick making. None of them, however, have been immune to postconquest influences, such as thread spun from sheep's wool, backstrap weavings woven from factory-spun threads, and metates and wooden utensils made with steel tools. The historical and ethnographic records also show that many craft occupations in the valley division of labor have been subject to ethnic, gender, or locational shifts or crossovers in response to changing conjunctural conditions (Cook and Binford 1990).

Results of the OVSIP Survey Data Analysis

Because the original survey instrument was not designed specifically for studying the social construction of ethnic identity or the dynamics of self-identification and because we are focusing on the village rather than on the household as the unit of analysis, language is the most accessible and reliable objective ethnic marker for this reanalysis of the OVSIP data. It bears emphasizing that our methodological reliance on language as an ethnic marker of identity for local and regional populations places our analysis squarely in the mainstream tradition of previous anthropological studies of the ethnic factor in rural Mexico and Oaxaca (such as Marino Flores 1967; Nolasco Armas 1972; Ayre and Varese 1978).

The OVSIP survey data set contains information from a random

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TABLE 1 *Language-Indicated Ethnic Identity of Twenty Oaxaca Valley Settlements, 1977–1978*

Name of Community	Households in OSVIP Survey (N)	Language Spoken[a]		
		Zapotec (%)	Spanish (%)	Bilingual (%)
Zapotec				
Teotitlán del Valle[b]	79	17	0	83
Díaz Ordaz	68	11	2	88
San Miguel del Valle	25	10	0	90
Santo Domingo Albarradas	38	28	1	71
Santa Cecilia Jalieza	34	3	6	91
Santo Domingo Jalieza	69	0	23	77
Magdalena Ocotlán	37	1	27	71
San Pedro Mártir	38	1	5	93
Santa Ana del Valle	42	8	1	90
San Baltazar Chichicapan	64	15	2	83
Santa Lucía Ocotlán	51	3	2	96
Mestizo				
San Juan Chilateca	40	0	95	5
San Isidro Zegache	24	0	94	6
San Dionisio Ocotlán	27	0	100	0
San Jacinto Chilateca	35	1	75	24
Xaagá	55	1	99	0
San Lorenzo Albarradas	74	0	99	1
Santa Lucía del Camino	56	0	90	10
Transitional				
Santo Tomás Jalieza	54	0	58	42
San Pedro Guegorexe	42	0	55	46

[a]The figures in the columns are percentages of the total sample population by village.
[b] Because the OVSIP household survey in Teotitlán did not cover language, these figures were derived from the 1970 Mexican census.

sample of households in twenty villages on the languages spoken by the household head and the second principal household member (usually the wife in male-headed households). These language data, backed up by our ethnographic experience and knowledge of the region, provided the empirical means for classifying the twenty survey villages into three mutually exclusive language-derived ethnic categories: Zapotec, mestizo, or transitional. A given village was classified as "Zapotec" if three-quarters or more of the sample population spoke Zapotec either monolingually or along with Spanish. A village was classified as "mestizo" if three-quarters or more of the sample population spoke only Spanish and "transitional" if more than one-half of the sample population was exclusively Spanish-speaking, with no Zapotec monolinguals. Table 1 presents the results of

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the analysis of language data and the classification derived from it and identifies each village surveyed by name.

It is noteworthy that although this sample of villages was designed to include only settlements preidentified as having a high incidence of household craft production, almost half of them were categorized as either mestizo or transitional. This categorization obliged us to discard any a priori notion that participation in craft production was an unequivocal marker of indígena identity. The data presented in this table also show that our village sample is skewed toward Zapotec-speakers but also includes a substantial number of mestizo villages with a low incidence of Zapotec-speakers, thus providing a clear-cut division for comparative empirical analysis. Finally, these data show the extent to which Spanish predominates in the Oaxaca Valley and Zapotec tends to be spoken by bilingual rather than monolingual populations. The fact that monolingualism is evidenced only with Spanish-speakers and not with Zapotec-speakers combined with the high degree of bilingualism in Zapotec villages and the low degree in mestizo villages confirm the impact of *mestizaje* on rural society and culture in the Oaxaca Valley.

Table 2 presents the average median values (the mean of median values) of seventeen selected socioeconomic variables for the twenty villages grouped by the language indicator. With regard to income and expenditures (as measured by variables B, C, E, F, and G), households in mestizo villages earn more income and spend more than households in Zapotec and transitional villages. The difference between mestizo and Zapotec villages in total weekly household income (the sum of variables E, F, and G) came to almost ninety-six dollars for mestizos versus eighty-two dollars for Zapotecs. But this difference disappears when income per household member is calculated (by dividing the sum of variables E, F, and G by the value for family size), yielding slightly more than fifteen dollars for mestizos and Zapotecs alike. The reduction in income differences is a function of the larger average size of the household (shown in the table as FAMSIZE) in mestizo villages. This finding contradicts the expectation that Zapotec villages would have larger families due to a presumably higher incidence of extended families, a sociocultural hallmark of indígena status in Mesoamerican studies (Nutini 1976, 9–10). Finally, analysis of table 2 discloses that transitional village households have more workers (paid and unpaid) than either mestizo or Zapotec households. We have no explanation for this difference and doubt that a valid one can be advanced on the basis of the three-way classification.

Regarding household status vis-à-vis means of production, the Zapotec village households display a relatively large proportion of renters of key agricultural means of production (such as ox teams and carts) who spend larger amounts on this rental. Yet Zapotec households also lead the

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TABLE 2 *Average Median Values for Seventeen Socioeconomic Variables in Twenty Oaxaca Valley Villages Grouped by Language-Indicated Ethnic Identity*

	Ethnic Indentity		
Variable Label	*Zapotec (N=11)*	*Mestizo (N=7)*	*Transitional (N=2)*
A. BUYCORN[a]	8.045	6.857	8.000
B. FAMEXPWK[b]	30.136	42.714	29.000
C. FAMINCWK[c]	30.409	43.143	18.000
D. FAMSIZE[d]	5.409	6.286	5.500
E. INCWKHED[e]	33.045	44.286	29.500
F. INCWKL21[f]	19.909	14.643	10.500
G. INCWKLY2[g]	29.227	36.857	22.250
H. LNDWKTOT[h]	1.355	1.229	1.400
I. LNDWRKD1[i]	1.055	1.114	.900
J. NETINCWK[j]	.091	.071	-5.000
K. PAIDJOBS[k]	1.545	1.857	2.000
L. RENTMP[l]	8.818	4.500	3.250
M. RENTVAL[m]	26.000	24.643	7.500
N. SALEVAL1[n]	43.682	312.357	55.250
O. TOTVALAN[o]	39.455	22.786	28.250
P. TOTVALMP[p]	25.409	11.500	2.500
Q. UNPDJOBS[q]	.545	.357	.500

NOTE: All monetary values are as of 1979, when 1 U.S. dollar equaled 22.50 pesos.
[a]Number of months corn was bought
[b]Family spending last week
[c]Family income for last week
[d]Number in household
[e]Weekly income (1) of household head
[f]Weekly income (1) of second household member
[g]Weekly income (2) of household head
[h]Total area of land worked (in hectares)
[i]Area of type 1 land (irrigated in 1/10 hectares)
[j]Net weekly household income
[k]Number of paid working housemembers
[l]Rents or borrows means of production
[m]Expenses for rental of means of production
[n]Market value of products produced in 1 cycle
[o]Value of animals
[p]Value of means of production (agricultural)
[q]Number of unpaid working housemembers

other village household categories in the total value of agricultural means of production and farm animals owned.

The survey analysis also shows that mestizo village households produce a much larger volume of products for the market (see the SALEVAL variable). Rather than construing this finding as supporting the ethno-populist thesis that equates mestizo with market economy and indígena with subsistence economy, we think that it is simply a reflection of mes-

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TABLE 3 Pearson Correlation Matrix for Seventeen Socioeconomic Variables

Variable Label	*Ethnic Identity*	*Probabilities*
A. BUYCORN	-0.109	(0.647)
B. FAMEXPWK	0.137	(0.565)
C. FAMINCWK	0.017	(0.943)
D. FAMSIZE	0.228	(0.335)
E. INCWKHED	0.081	(0.736)
F. INCWKL21	-0.168	(0.479)
G. INCWKLY2	0.023	(0.925)
H. LNDWKTOT	-0.030	(0.901)
I. LNDWRKD1	-0.038	(0.873)
J. NETINCWK	-0.108	(0.652)
K. PAIDJOBS	0.375	(0.103)
L. RENTMP	-0.310	(0.183)
M. RENTVAL	-0.144	(0.545)
N. SALEVAL1	0.204	(0.388)
O. TOTVALAN	-0.188	(0.427)
P. TOTVALMP	-0.274	(0.243)
Q. UNPDJOBS	-0.111	(0.640)

NOTE: Chi square is 336.776, degrees of freedom equal 153, and probability is less than .001.

tizo identity prevailing in handmade brick production, which yields substantially higher annual sales revenues and income than any other craft industry in the Oaxaca Valley (Cook 1984, 25; Cook and Binford 1990, 137).

The economic variables identified above are the only ones shown by our survey data analysis to reflect any degree of patterning by village ethnic identity, and that patterning appears to be of little analytical significance. Moreover, it is impossible to derive any pattern of economic improvement or differentiation in these villages when moving sequentially from Zapotec to transitional to mestizo areas, a pattern often assumed to occur according to the modernist-developmentalist paradigm's concept of mestizaje. The survey data show transitional village households to be much worse off than their Zapotec counterparts in levels of socioeconomic performance.

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients for the same seventeen socioeconomic variables and language-indicated village ethnic identity. The Bartlett chi-square test for the correlation matrix is statistically significant (see table 3). As can be inferred from this table, all the correlations between ethnic identity and the socioeconomic variables are very weak. The highest correlations are only 0.375 (PAIDJOBS) and -0.310 (RENTMP). Considering the probabilities associated with each correlation coefficient, we find that no correlation is significant. Nevertheless, we cannot conclude that the variables are completely unrelated despite the weak correlations.

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We also subjected the entire matrix of twenty villages and seventeen variables to multidimensional scaling (using the MDS module of SYSTAT) to measure the "distance" in terms of similar and dissimilar values for the socioeconomic variables or between villages with regard to those values. These distances reveal the importance of ethnic identity as a determinant of socioeconomic performance. Similarities were expressed in a two-dimensional distance plot.[5]

In the MDS plot of all seventeen socioeconomic variables with ethnic identity (ETHNICID), the latter is relatively isolated from the socioeconomic variables (stress of final configuration = 0.178). With the exception of the variable for household size (FAMSIZE), the distances between ethnic identity and the socioeconomic variables are generally long, and it does not tend to cluster with them. By contrast, income-related variables (N, B, E, C, F) tend to cluster together, as do property-related variables (I, P, O, H) and the variable for number of paid employees in households (PAIDJOBS or K).[6]

In the final step of this analysis, we examined the MDS plot for the twenty villages to ascertain the similarities in clustering between the villages grouped by ethnic identity. If ethnic identity is an important determinant of socioeconomic conditions in these villages, three distinctive clusters should appear in the plot linking ETHNICID and socioeconomic variables. Our analysis disclosed only one discernible cluster in the plot, which is composed of one transitional village (San Pedro Guegorexe), four Zapotec villages (Teotitlán del Valle, Santa Cecilia Jalieza, Santo Domingo Jalieza, and San Pedro Mártir), and four mestizo villages (San Juan Chilateca, San Isidro Zegache, San Jacinto Chilateca, and Santa Lucía del Camino). The remaining three mestizo villages (San Dionisio Ocotlán, Xaagá, and San Lorenzo Albarradas) are distantly situated from the mixed cluster. The other Zapotec villages (Díaz Ordaz, San Miguel del Valle, Santo Domingo Albarradas, Magdalena Ocotlán, Santa Ana del Valle, San Baltazar Chichicapán, and Santa Lucía Ocotlán) and the second transitional village (Santo Tomás Jalieza) are randomly scattered throughout the plot. This configuration suggests only that Zapotec villages are somewhat less homogeneous than their mestizo counterparts in socioeconomic similarities.

Overall, we conclude from the tabular and MDS plot analysis that the OVSIP survey data disclose more significant variations within vil-

5. For reasons of editorial expediency, it was decided not to publish the figures for these MDS plots. Anyone wishing to obtain copies of them may do so by contacting the authors.

6. To further clarify the role of ethnic identity, another MDS plot was drawn excluding the ETHNICID variable (stress = .176). Except for the shift in the clusters from one side of the plot to the other, the configuration of the variables in the plot is almost identical. This finding demonstrates that ethnic identity is relatively independent vis-à-vis the socioeconomic variables.

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lages of the same ethnic identity than between villages of different ethnic identity. We cannot assert, however, that no association at all exists between ethnic identity and the socioeconomic variables.

Results of the Analysis of Other OVSIP Data Relevant to the Relationship between Ethnic Identity and Economy

The OVSIP data files also include transcribed texts of responses to four open-ended questions on participation in and attitudes toward civil-religious hierarchy and mayordomía. This interview was conducted with a subsample of 160 craft producers (74 men, 82 women) from eight different villages. The OVSIP files also include household survey data from several villages regarding participation in the system of ceremonial reciprocity (guelaguetza). Our analysis of these two additional sources of data shows no significant differences in attitudes or experiences among informants that can be related to the language-marked ethnic identity of their villages.

More specifically, this analysis shows that participation in cargos and mayordomías varies according to socioeconomic status and religious affiliation (as might be expected, Protestants do not sponsor mayordomías). Middle- and upper-strata Catholics exhibit the highest rates of participation. When informants were asked why they participate in mayordomía sponsorship, they made such statements as "Village custom is the law" and "One must comply." Yet a broad consensus holds that voluntary service or ceremonial expenditure is preferable to obligatory service or expenditure. Agreement is also widespread that ceremonial or festive cycle participation is becoming increasingly expensive and burdensome on household budgets, leading to much less activity and smaller-scale activities than in the past. Economically successful households continue nevertheless to participate voluntarily in the fiesta cycle by staging large-scale celebrations. These informants expressed more support for the idea that these changes are positive rather than nostalgia about the "good old days" when more villages participated more actively. Once again, no significant differences in attitudes on these matters could be found according to the language-marked ethnic identity of respondents.

Concluding Summary of the Results of the Analysis of OVSIP Data

Our reanalysis of socioeconomic variables from the OVSIP data set seeking significant relationships at the village level with language-marked ethnic identity failed to find any that compel us to redefine its minimal role in shaping contemporary regional economic structure and performance. A minimal role for ethnic identity was the underlying assumption of Cook and Binford's previous analysis (1990). That assumption

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appears to be validated by the analysis presented in this article. We are now on firmer empirical ground in arguing that class crosscuts language-marked ethnic identity vertically in Oaxaca Valley society. For example, Zapotec-speakers can be found at any level of the local class system. Also, because most local participation in the artisanal division of labor is not restricted by ethnic identity, mestizo or indígena communities may participate in the same branch of artisanal production (as in treadle-loom weaving, palm plaiting, and embroidery). One of the few exceptions is metate production, which is carried out only in Zapotec-speaking communities, although Magdalena Ocotlán did not participate in this craft until the first decade of the twentieth century (Cook 1982, 166). Finally, the patterns of wealth deployment and distribution in the OVSIP multivillage sample (and probably throughout the rural economy of the Oaxaca Valley) crosscut the division between indígena and mestizo.

Although we are satisfied that these conclusions are accurate for the OVSIP data, broader theoretical and analytical relevance is limited by two sets of conditions: first, the shortcomings of theory and method in the traditional anthropological approach to studying ethnic factors and economy in Mexican studies combined with the inherent complexities of the subject; and second, the resurgence of ethnicity as a claimed basis for social identity and political or economic activity by rural Mexicans and its impact on research. The concluding part of this article presents the results of an effort to rethink our approach and to suggest directions for theory, method, and analysis that might make future anthropological work on the interplay between ethnic identity and economy more reliable than it has been to date.

TOWARD AN OPERATIONAL APPROACH TO ETHNICITY AND ECONOMY IN MEXICAN STUDIES: DEALING OBJECTIVELY WITH SUBJECTIVITY

The Problem

The high incidence of references to being "indígena" or "mestizo" in the ethnographic literature on rural Mexico goes hand in hand with a plethora of theoretical claims casting the ethnic factor variously as a historical or political prime mover, a heuristic independent variable, or a primordial cultural-psychological identifier. These claims are manifestations in Mexican studies of a global process of postmodern disorder in which, as anthropologist Jonathan Friedman has observed, "the decline of a homogenizing modern identity has led to increasing ethnification of national social space and increasing ethnic conflict" (1993, 207).[7] The

7. Friedman's thought-provoking essay contains many propositions and potential hypotheses that merit empirical consideration. We do not share his belief, however, that the "politics of cultural identity" in many Third World nation-states necessarily implies wide-

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prolific and unquestioning use of the modifier "indígena" in the social science literature to identify rural Mexicans today seems to contradict the ethnohistorical and ethnographic record regarding acculturation and sociocultural mestizaje.

Scholars who study the "new ethnicity" or what Anthony Smith termed "the ethnic revival" (Smith 1981) tend to view the process in either primordialist or situationalist terms. The primordialists view ethnic consciousness as being as elementary or fundamental as kinship or gender. This primordial drive provides a persisting basis for group oppositional identity (as in "us" versus "them") that demands expression, or what George Scott has referred to as "ineffable affective significance" that "most often surrounds images of the group's distinctive past" (Scott 1990, 147; compare Geertz 1973, 259). Most scholars who reject primordialism are inclined to view ethnicity as a situationally shifting identity that is imaginable or adoptable by different classes, class fractions, or social groups according to their fluctuating existential circumstances (or oppositional relations) of internal and external origin. These two opposing views of ethnicity are difficult to reconcile. The situational-circumstantial view is more compatible with the operational and empirical approach to anthropological research that we favor. In short, we agree with Peter Worsley that "[e]thnic and racial identity . . . takes on quite different meanings in different contexts, depending on who uses them for what purposes. They are relative, situational categories, not absolutes" (Worsley 1984, 242; compare Knight 1990, 74).

Predictably, anthropological inquiry has been greatly affected by the global process of "ethnification" and has often been in the forefront of the postmodern celebration of what David Harvey calls "the authenticity of other voices and other worlds" (Harvey 1989, 49). Ironically, however, in recent anthropological work on Mexico, few major studies at the extra-village level of analysis have combined systematic survey research with anthropological fieldwork or have focused on public attitudes and values related to major questions of ethnic and social identity. Recent anthropological contributions to Mexican studies have been relatively silent

spread erosion or dilution of an ideology of national citizenship or identity as well as weakening of the mainstream developmentalist-modernist ideology asserting that economic growth and improvement in material living standards will result from industrialization. In our view, the quest for empowerment by various popular constituencies in Mexico—whether on the basis of class, gender, ethnicity, or regional identity—is compatible with an acceptance of the hegemonic developmentalist ideology of the government run by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). This quest reflects simply a desire for more equitable distribution of the material benefits of the dominant economic development plan or more direct involvement in policy formulation within the existing hegemonic framework. In this sense, the popular movements associated with the new politics of cultural identity are reformist rather than revolutionary. As such, they are best understood as merely negotiating within the hegemonic framework rather than pursuing a counter-hegemonic project.

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about ethnicity, ethnic relations, and social identity at local and regional levels from the perspective of national culture or national citizenship, with a few notable exceptions (such as Margolies 1975; Arizpe 1989; Schryer 1990; Lomnitz-Adler 1992). And few studies have rejected the tendency to view ethnic identity in mutually exclusive terms in order to advocate the thesis of multiple identities that are situationally claimed.[8] This trend is somewhat surprising, given the emergence of popular movements seeking empowerment in the Mexican federal system and the growing political literature addressing this issue (see Foweraker and Craig 1990). The tendency probably reflects the extent to which anthropological thinking about rural Mexico remains hostage to the indigenista paradigm and its obsessive focus on the parochial indígena "Other" (Cook 1993).[9]

In opposing the postmodernist and deconstructionist tendency to belittle the notion of objectivity in social science inquiry by replacing it with ambiguous notions of multiple discourses and knowledge or power, we maintain that scientific objectivity is both achievable and necessary in such inquiry. Theoretical principles or concepts, whether Marxist or non-Marxist, can and should be subjected to what Daniel Little defined as the "multitude of empirical methods and procedures through which social scientists interrogate the social world to test, falsify, and confirm their hypotheses and theories" (Little 1993, 365). This empirical approach is all the more important given the penchant for self-deception and invention often characterizing individuals caught up in the ferment of ongoing ethno-populist movements (Campbell 1990, 52; Hernández Díaz 1991, 281–82).[10]

8. In their recently published study, Arthur Murphy and Alex Stepick seem to hold this view when they state regarding the Oaxaca Valley, "Migrants from indigenous villages self-consciously manipulate their identity by behaving like Mexicans in the city and as indigenous people when in the village" (Murphy and Stepick 1991, 217). Yet in the preceding paragraph, they muddle this insight by asserting "In the city [Oaxaca de Juárez], people's identity is Mexican, not Zapotec-Mexican or Mixtec-Mexican." This statement apparently is meant to apply only to long-established city residents and not to recent migrants, or it is meant to be interpreted in outsiders' rather than insiders' terms. In any case, we think that Murphy and Stepick are by implication right on target in viewing rural Oaxacans from villages designated as "indígena" as having hyphenated identities as Zapotec-Mexican, Mixtec-Mexican, and so on (compare Cook 1993, 321–22).

9. Three notable recent studies that break the anthropological silence on national identity are Arizpe (1989), Schryer (1990), and Lomnitz-Adler (1992). It is worth recalling here that in their typology of Latin American subcultures, Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris observed about their category of "modern Indian types," "The Indians of each community generally think of themselves as ethnic units separate from other Indian groups and from the nationals of the country in which they reside . . ." (Wagley and Harris 1974, 38). They also distinguished Indians from peasants: "Unlike the Modern Indians, Peasants generally consider themselves to be nationals of the country in which they reside" (1974, 39).

10. This discussion does not imply that we reject the thrust of postmodern discourse or fail to appreciate the importance of its critique of modernist discourse, especially postmodernism's focus on the politics of language and its analysis of subjectivity. But we share Robert Albritton's reservations about the three postmodernist excesses that he identifies: collapsing distinctions, new dualisms, and one-sidedness (1993, 26–28).

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Ethnicity, Location, and Incidence of Craft Production: Objective versus Subjective Dimensions

The assumption is pervasive that a direct linkage exists between craft production and indígena identity in Mexico regarding historical origin and contemporary participation at the village level. Hence June Nash's thesis that the "artisan potter or weaver . . . may continue to be the agent in transmitting the program of the ancestors" (1993a, 20) strikes a resonant chord among many students of Mexican crafts (for example, Stephen 1993; Nash 1993b; Eber and Rosenbaum 1993).

The typical consumer of most Oaxaca craft products views them (with the help of government and private-sector propaganda) as authentic artifacts of indígena labor and artistic expressions of indígena culture (Novelo 1976; Cook 1981; Kaplan 1993). Even anthropologists, who recognize the non-indígena provenance of a particular craft industry like treadle-loom weaving, still insist that its practice is a main element of indígena identity (see Stephen 1991, 12). According to Stephen, the weavers of Teotitlán del Valle construct and project their Zapotec identity through a "claim on textiles . . . as the originators of treadle-loom weaving in Oaxaca." She notes further, "It is irrelevant to Teotitecos that the technology and materials that they used to produce the first weavings were brought by the Spaniards" (Stephen 1991, 20). Only a thin line separates this position (predicated on the premise that the ethnic identity of weavers is whatever they say it is) from the axiomatic a priori identification of artisan industry with indígena artisans. In other words, the anthropological identification of craft and indígena is still made even when the technology and most raw materials used to produce particular craft products are demonstrably non-indígena in origin and the products are designed, styled, and used mainly by non-indígenas (as in the embroidery industry in the Oaxaca Valley and in treadle-loom weaving of all acrylic, most cotton, and some wool products).

The problem here is not that present-day artisans in Oaxaca choose to identify themselves and their products as Zapotec but that the anthropologists who study them often fail to consider the probability that such artisans have multiple identities deriving from their participation in an array of nested structures of social relations, ranging from household and family to nation-state and international system. Such identities defy prioritization in terms of absolute significance in the artisans' daily lives (see Wolf 1956; Lewis 1960, chap. 4). Also, the problem arises of abandoning the task of empirically verifying claims to Zapotec identity (or any other indigenous identity) made according to the producers, the production process, or the products in terms of any rigorous cultural-historical framework that includes a definition of Zapotecness that embraces many criteria in addition to language (compare Carrasco 1951; Whitecotton 1977,

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14–15). Ethnographers who focus on the problem of ethnic identity (whether mestizo or indígena) in contemporary Mexico should rigorously examine any claim to it within a framework that assumes multiple sources and dimensions of sociocultural identity among rural Mexican populations. The ethnographer's task is to analyze and compare these claimed identities in terms of situational, class, and historical factors (see Cook 1993, 332).

In short, any meaningful concept of ethnicity must embrace objective and subjective indicators that are perceivable and significant to insiders and outsiders alike. It should also include the political economic, social organizational, and cultural dimensions of inter-ethnic relations. Viewing ethnicity as a purely subjective and instrumental phenomenon and thus reducing it to an identity "used in different ways by people in various situations, usually to stake a particular claim" (Stephen 1991, 12; compare Campbell 1990) may be acceptable in political analysis. But such a perspective should be replaced by a broader view in analyses that purport to privilege ethnicity in the total system of social relations.[11]

If discrete ethnic group identity is to have ramifications beyond the micro-level of a local population and outside the confines of an esoteric anthropology of local idiosyncrasies, it must be identified both internally and externally and its existence must be significant to local-level practitioners as well as to outsiders located at higher levels of the wider system (compare Barth 1969, 11; Adams 1990, 152). Given the pervasive politicization of ethnic identity in pluri-ethnic nation-states like Mexico and its susceptibility to deception, invention, opportunism, or manipulation by insiders and outsiders alike, it is crucial that anthropologists approach the study of ethnicity with as much operational and analytical rigor and attention to the interplay between subjective and objective factors and outsider and insider factors as possible.

Rethinking the Indigenista-Ethnopopulist Paradigm: Mestizo versus Indígena as a Heuristic Assumption

The following working definition of *ethnic group* has relevance for the Oaxaca Valley situation: an ethnic group is largely a biologically

11. Undoubtedly, fundamental epistemological dimensions like objective versus subjective and insider (emic) versus outsider (etic) often seem to get confused in discourse about ethnicity. From the perspective of economic anthropology, Cook has written about the need for operational method informed by these considerations (1974, 803–8). Harris remains the best source on emics and etics in broader anthropological discourse (1980, 32–41). The important methodological point is that the subjective-objective and emic-etic vectors interpenetrate internally as well as externally or intervectorally, thus highlighting the importance of operational procedures in attempting to disentangle what is by nature entangled. Schryer's (1990) study of ethno-class relations in the Huasteca region sets a high standard to emulate regarding operational control over subjective versus objective and emic versus etic factors (compare Cook 1993, 323–30).

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self-perpetuating social collectivity identified by myths of a common provenance and by identifying markers (Barth 1969, 10; Adams 1990, 152). We emphasize the qualifier "largely" because the ethnographic record for Zapotec communities in the Oaxaca Valley shows that while endogamy (marrying within the community) predominates statistically, it is by no means practiced exclusively in these communities. The reference to "myths of a common provenance" raises important questions about the mechanisms and results of intergenerational cultural transmission as well as about how to operationalize concepts like historical memory or consciousness for empirical research. In Mexico, as in Guatemala, these questions imply conscious and existentially grounded identification with a particular locality, together with some sense of its history as represented in local documentary and oral tradition. Accounts of this history may also link the founding of particular local communities to another precursor community or to a wider grouping of localities.

Identifying markers refer primarily to objective cultural phenomena and especially to what Fredrik Barth refers to as "overt signals or signs—the diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity, often such features as dress, language, house-form, or general style of life" (1969, 14). Among these, we highlight the importance of language because the Oaxaca Valley has experienced a well-documented historical process of reduction of cultural differences between ethnic groups and the development of a generalized syncretic rural culture. As Margarita Nolasco Armas observed, "In Oaxaca, the indigenous problem . . . is not a problem of cultural material, that is to say, of dress, habitation, or use of actual indigenous artifacts; these [traits or customs] can be substituted by mestizo ones and continue being indigenous" (Nolasco Armas 1972, 11). By implication, then, the indigenous problem in Oaxaca is one of culture viewed processually. But in our view, there is a limit beyond which substitution of indígena customs with mestizo customs implies, objectively and etically (anthropologically) speaking, the replacement of indígena identity by mestizo identity, despite subjective assertions or claims to the contrary.

It cannot be denied that the low profile of ethnicity in structuring social relations in the Oaxaca Valley is not characteristic of certain other regions in the state where ethnopolitical movements have emerged, like those among Triquis, Chatinos, Mixes, and Zapotecos Juchitecos (de la Cruz 1986). These important cases merit the special attention of carefully designed and theoretically informed empirical research as an antidote to the seductiveness of what Howard Campbell has labeled as "the politics of cultural revivalism" (Campbell 1990). In this regard, recent work by Hernández Díaz (1991) and Binford and Campbell (1993) is exemplary.

Complicating (and some would say compromising) anthropology's role in the study of ethnicity in Mexico has been the historic role played by anthropologists in formulating and implementing Mexican state pol-

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icy vis-à-vis the indígenas—the *política indigenista* that is rooted in the colonial era but has undergone permutations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (see Caso et al. 1954; Adams 1967, 1990; Aguirre Beltrán 1970; León-Portilla 1979; Riding 1984; Knight 1990). In the aftermath of the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968, anthropologists have become prominent advocates or consultants for popular oppositional movements among Mexican indígenas. Inevitably, then, anthropologists practicing in Mexico have served as handmaidens of official política indigenista and the Indian reaction to it, whether acting as servants of one branch or another of the Mexican government or as students or advocates of the interests or agendas of indígena constituencies. Given the extent to which anthropology has become embedded in statist, classist, and ethnopopulist discourse and practice, it is especially challenging for anthropologists to approach Mexican ethnicity operationally and analytically at the level of small organized communities in civil society where it is "existentially grounded . . . in everyday life" (Worsley 1984, 287).

The main question for anthropological inquiry into ethnicity is no longer one of authenticity in any primordial or historical sense but how and why presumed ethnocultural identities or affiliations originate and are represented within complex structures of asymmetrical relations of class and power. Granting that the declared allegiance to a group's shared culture is socially sufficient to establish group membership regardless of the overt and objective content of that culture or the practice of it, we contend that any analytically meaningful concept of ethnicity must also be identifiable with a distinctive and objective cultural content that is meaningful to and practiced by insiders and observable by outsiders. Nevertheless, the historically shifting content of particular cultural forms and practices must be weighed against the record of how, why, and by whom given forms and practices are ethnicized in particular situations and conjunctures.

The situationalist position on ethnicity among Mixtec-speakers involved in migratory labor in northwestern Mexico and California has been eloquently and insightfully presented by Carole Nagengast and Michael Kearney in a way that is compatible with a focus on historical consciousness. As they explain, "we take ethnicity not as an ontological given, a natural fact of life, but as a social construction formed from the interface of material conditions, history, the structure of political economy, and social practice. In other words, we contend that there is nothing automatic about ethnicity; it is one way (among others) in which people define themselves and are defined by others who stand in opposition to them. Ethnicity can be a mode of expressing consciousness, of defending the status quo, or (potentially) of organizing social protest" (Nagengast and Kearney 1990, 62).

A common flaw of studies focusing on indigenous identity in Mex-

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ico is that they fail to place situational limits on it, assuming that those who identify themselves as indígena in one situation also do so in all other situations. In reality, a weaving merchant from the town of Mitla may identify himself as Zapotec in his hometown weaving workshop, as a Mitleño in Oaxaca City where he buys yarn from a distributor, as a Oaxacan from Mitla when visiting Mexico City, and as a Mexican citizen from Oaxaca when living in the United States as an undocumented worker. The ability to shift between indígena and mestizo or Mexican identities situationally (as between home village and regional town or city) is presumably lacking today only among monolingual speakers of indígena languages in Mexico, leaving a large majority of bilingual indígenas who are likely to be practitioners of hyphenated ethnicities (defined as language plus cultural ensembles).

Only when indigenous language is connected to a broader and distinctive cultural repertory and set of practices among a local population should collective self-identity be interpreted anthropologically as mestizo or indígena. A complete and empirically identifiable package must exist—language plus other cultural elements and practices tied to specific sets of shared expressions of historical consciousness—to justify an anthropological claim to specific ethnic identity. A majority of any given local population designated as indígena must collectively believe that "what we are saying and doing now is tied to what our ancestors were saying and doing." If such a collective belief can be demonstrated empirically as shared by a majority of community residents, along with their participation in culturally distinctive activities and practices of social reproductive significance, then the anthropologist is justified in using the designation *indígena* in reference to that community. In this way, the designation will be made with a much higher degree of reliability than that associated with the methods relying on language markers or subjective claims. Chances are, however, that many and perhaps most members of such communities in Mexico today are also situational practitioners of Mexican mestizo identity.

To avoid misconstruing or overlooking situational identities, we can follow Oscar Lewis's lead in looking for multiple sources of social identity, some of which may have no specific ethnocultural content. Lewis merits recognition as the most prominent anthropological pioneer of the "national citizen" approach in Mexican studies (Cook 1993, 331). He was convinced of the need to combine sociocultural and political economic interpretations of village, region, and nation in Mexican studies and to understand peasant villages through the regional and national sociocultural systems of which they are a part (Lewis 1970, 388). He therefore rejected "ideological localism whereby each little community is treated as self-sufficient and isolated" (Lewis 1963, xx–xxi). This approach separated him methodologically from the indigenistas, enabling him to study

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Tepoztlán as "part of the larger culture of Mexico" (1963, xxi) and to document what he interpreted as an "increasing identification of Tepoztecans with the Mexican nation and with the state of Morelos" (1963, 38). Lewis remains among a handful of anthropologists who have seriously examined *"Mexicanidad"* rather than indígena descent as a source of social identity among peasant villagers in Mexico (see also Wolf 1956, 1958; and especially Bartra 1987 and Lomnitz-Adler 1992).

Lewis's situational and socio-spatial loci of social identity need to be tied to prevailing political economic conjunctures as a necessary step in materialist analysis. Although the ties may not be direct and unmediated, the materialist paradigm assumes nevertheless that ethnic and other culturally mediated social identities (especially those that take political forms of expression) are likely to be responsive to cyclical market-driven or state policy-driven shifts in macroeconomic performance and consequently reflective of the distribution of value between discrete social classes and sectors. Thus the materialist paradigm would anticipate the proliferation of identity-conscious social movements or projects involving various impacted sectors, classes, and regions in the wake of the crisis set in motion in Mexico by the 1982 devaluation of the peso and in response to the sweeping liberalization policies of the Salinas regime. The combined impact of these factors culminated in Mexico's becoming part of a North American common market, with profound implications for the national structure of relations of distribution (Barry 1992, 132–33; Grinspun and Cameron 1993, 10, 12–13).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In sum, we propose that external observer-analysts should cease to designate a given Mexican population as indígena (or Zapotec, Mixtec, and so on) unless they are prepared to demonstrate empirically fulfillment of the following criteria: first, the presence of a given ensemble of language plus other cultural elements and practices that are representative of a particular indigenous type; second, proof that the people so designated consider the designation meaningful; third, the economic, social, cultural, and political conditions involved in determining its meaningfulness to them; fourth, the situationality of indígena identity vis-à-vis other social identities, including mestizo and Mexican; and finally, the conjuncturality of the claimed identities and the social projects organized around them. Attributions of indigenous identity derived only from the objective language indicator or from unsubstantiated subjective claims, especially when other situational or fundamental identities are ignored, offer limited analytical significance at best and may be analytically counterproductive.[12]

12. The failure to place situational limits on indígena identity is typically associated with

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While the population of Mexico today is predominantly Mexican and mestizo in identity and participates in a capitalist economy in the throes of complete restructuring as a North American common market, anthropological discourse is still evoking the vision of nonmarket involvement in persisting indígena village utopias. The time has come to rid anthropological theory of anachronistic concepts and ideas and to construct a post-indigenista paradigm in which ethnic identity (whether indígena or mestizo) is perceived as simply one among many possible socially constructed identities "formed from the interface of material conditions, history, the structure of the political economy, and social practice" (Nagengast and Kearney 1990, 62).

This effort should not be construed as negating the potential of ethnicity as a social force on behalf of a narrowly economistic and class-driven view of politics. In an era of intensifying class and ethnic differentiation and confrontation, such a project is as anachronistic as is its ethnopopulist nemesis. Rather, the effort we are advocating should leave anthropology better equipped conceptually and methodologically to produce valid knowledge about the ever-increasing complexities of daily life within the Mexican branch of the developing North American (and global) capitalist division of labor. Within this developing structure, the unresolved grievances that nourished the Zapatista movement in the Revolution of 1910, exacerbated by recent profound changes in state policy and in economic conditions, have erupted anew in the guise of neo-Zapatismo to challenge the end-of-century *"proyecto tecnocrático"* for integrating Mexico into North American capitalism.

the assumption that it is the primordial and exclusive identity of a particular Mexican etnia or ethnic group. This tendency is illustrated in an article published recently by Anya Peterson Royce (1993) on music, dance, and fiestas among the Isthmus Zapotec of Juchitán, long a mecca for ethnopopulists and cultural extremists in Mexico. In her opening paragraph, Royce acknowledges that Juchitecos are exposed to "alternate identities" and possess the knowledge to "choose the best of Mexican and other national cultures" but "choose to be Zapotec." For her, Zapotec seems to be a single cross-situational identity for all Juchitecos, regardless of their sex, age, education, class, occupation, religion, politics, family background, and migratory experience. It is our hope that the position we are advocating in this article will promote skepticism among readers regarding any past, present, or future ethnographic claims of this kind about discovering a homogeneous and pervasive sociocultural identity among a heterogeneous local population in Mexico, especially when the claim is unsupported by systematic empirical analysis of alternative situational identities.

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