

THE INTERSECTIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERNAL  
MIGRATION: GENDER, KINSHIP, AND CARE

by

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Anthropology  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

June 2016

DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: The Intersections of Transnational and Internal Migration: Gender, Kinship, and Care

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Degree awarded May 2016.

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

May 2016

Title: The Intersections of Transnational and Internal Migration: Gender, Kinship, and Care

This dissertation analyzes the intersections of different forms of migrations, and how such intersections shape and are shaped by gendered kinship and care relationships. In other words, I analyze how the ways in which people relate, and how they define and redefine their gender identities as they become mobile in diverse ways. This dissertation is based on ethnographic research conducted with the Zapotec community of Zegache, Oaxaca. Research took place in Oaxaca (Mexico), Mexico City, and Oregon.

I approach the study of different migrations from a transborder perspective that is able to better capture how the crossing of different borders (national, regional, ethnic, rural and urban) has different meanings and consequences for migrant men and women from Zegache. I analyze how different forms of mobility and migration are constructed and discussed in scholarly works and “in the field.” The definition of who is a migrant is even more complicated as we consider that men and women from Zegache often engage in more than one form of migration. Thus, women who migrate to Mexico City sometimes will also migrate to the U.S. Even if women don’t migrate, they are increasingly becoming mobile and commuting to Oaxaca City, and are often in families with transnational migrants. In the same manner, men who join the military

(which, I argue, is a form of migration) often become transnational migrants themselves. This dissertation looks at the articulations of intersecting migrations shows how relatedness and gender identities become constructed and re-constructed when people become mobile.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the support and guidance that my advisor, Lynn Stephen, provided while I was a graduate student at the University of Oregon. Dr. Stephen's insights and help were fundamental in the development of this manuscript. I would also like to thank my committee members: Lamia Karim, Stephen Dueppen, Kristin Yarris, and Jessaca Leinaweaver, who provided thoughtful feedback. Sandra Morgen, Madonna Moss, and Diana Baxter from the anthropology department, as well as Carlos Aguirre, from history, and Gabriela Martínez, from journalism, also influenced the direction of my research project at different stages of the process. The conversations I had with my fellow graduate students were also fundamental in my graduate education; I especially want to thank Samantha King, Joseph Henry, Rucha Chandvankar, Gennie Nguyen, Rupa Pillai, Kathleen Piovesan, and Tobin Hansen. Financial support was provided by the Tokyo Foundation through the OUS-SYLFF Graduate Fellowship for International Research, and by the Center for the Study of Women in Society (University of Oregon) through the Jane Grant Dissertation Fellowship.

My family has also been invaluable throughout my education. My parents, Juventino and Alicia, and my brother, Daniel, have provided unconditional love and support. My partner, Amy, has also provided unconditional love and support while pushing me to engage in philosophical thinking about anthropology and about my work.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the people of Zegache. Some of them were interested in my work and opened their doors for me in Oaxaca, Mexico City, and in Oregon. I would especially like to thank Nicolas, María, Amando, Guadalupe, Sinfioriano, Antonia, Juan, Urbano, Andrés, Sofía, Mateo, Maura, Dolores, Felix, Martín, Tomasa, Catalina, Misael, and Karina—

without their support I would not have been able to write this dissertation. I hope that this dissertation is a realistic representation of their struggles and their triumphs.



Para Amy, Alicia, Juventino y Daniel.

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## I. WHO IS A MIGRANT? THEORIZING MIGRATION IN THE FIELD

When I first arrived in Zegache in the summer of 2011 I was planning on doing research on traditional subsistence agriculture in the community but, as it often happens in ethnographic work, my plans quickly changed when my research actually started. While some people were interested in discussing traditional subsistence agriculture with me, most of the people I encountered (especially the men) wanted to talk about the United States. At the time I had been living in the U.S., in Oregon to be exact, for about a year, and most of the men who wanted to talk to me had lived in Oregon for different periods of time. Although I wasn't planning on doing research on migration, the interest that Zegacheños expressed in discussing their migration experiences led me to refocus my attention on transnational migration. However, after a few weeks in Zegache I realized that the term "migrant" was used in specific ways that obscured other forms of migration

Indeed, the ways in which the term "migrant" is gendered in Zegache started becoming more obvious when I began conducting interviews with women. After I expressed interest in speaking to "migrants," Teresa, a woman in her early forties, said she was open to talking to me but clarified: "I'll do it, but I'm not a migrant." Nevertheless, given my interest in understanding the role of women in local transnational migration and in the local economy, I decided to interview her. A few minutes into the conversation Teresa casually told me that she had just returned to Zegache about a year ago; she had, in fact, lived in Mexico City for 10 years. After this conversation with Teresa it became clear that local discourses about migration tended to acknowledge transnational migrants *as migrants* but not internal migrants, even when internal migrants and internal migration existed simultaneously in the community.

This dissertation analyzes the intersections of different forms of migrations, and how such intersections shape and are shaped by gendered kinship and care relationships. In other words, I analyze how the ways in which people relate, and how they define and redefine their gender identities as they become mobile in diverse ways.

The extensive study of transnational migration from Mexico to the U.S. has shown that migratory movements occur historically and respond to different circumstances. In the last decades, Mexican migration to the U.S. has shifted from “traditional sending areas”—Mexico’s central-west region and Zacatecas—to include new populations located in central and southern Mexico. This has also resulted in multi-ethnic migratory flows (see Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Riosmena and Massey 2012; Massey et al 2006). The increase in transnational migration from Oaxaca to the U.S. has been associated with neoliberal economic policies that restructured Mexican peasant and indigenous communities (e.g. Fox and Salgado 2004; Stephen 2007). However, transnational migration did not start in the wake of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and many Oaxacan communities have a long history of transnational migration that dates back to the *Bracero* guest-worker program. Oaxacan migration to the U.S. became a more generalized option during the 1980s, especially for communities that already had links in the U.S.

These national and Oaxacan migratory trends did have an impact on Zegache, but the migration experiences of Zegacheños and Zegacheñas are specific to their locale. In contrast to other communities, few men from Zegache were part of the *Bracero* program, and the community did not have strong transnational links. Thus, it wasn’t until the 1990s that men from Zegache started migrating in greater numbers mostly because they were relying on the networks established by neighboring communities in California, and particularly in Oregon.

The increasing numbers of transnational migrants since the 1990s suggested that Zegache was a “transnational” community in which the influence of Zegacheños and Zegacheñas *en el otro lado*, in the U.S., weighed heavily on the community. The significant proportion of men in transnational migration also seemed to point in the direction of a well-known image of Mexican towns with high rates of transnational migration and of women “left behind” (e.g. Salgado de Snyder 1993). And although the influence of transnational migrants affects the community in several ways (through remittances, the transformation of certain consumption patterns, and by promoting more transnational migration), the influence of transnational migration appears as less definite once we consider “internal migration.” As “internal migration” becomes more visible, the importance of men who join the military, and the agency of the women in the Zegache also surfaces. Internal migration has been an important historical option in the community for women who have historically migrated to Mexico City since at least the 1950s to work as domestic employees and nannies, but who are pressured by their families to “stay close” in case their care is needed in Zegache. As I talked to more women in the community, the apparent invisibility of internal migration, in contrast to transnational migration, is also connected to the pressures that women received, and continue to receive, to migrate or to stay put. Thus the invisibility of female internal migration is connected to local ideas of femininity that emphasize suffering and being physically present.

Moreover, the gendering of internal migration is not disconnected from transnational migration; rather, it is an intimate part of the migratory history of Zegache. As I talked to more women in the community, internal migration appeared associated with gendered kinship and care roles and responsibilities, and to local concepts of femininity that often resulted in male relatives migrating to the U.S. while female relatives migrated internally or did not migrate at all. In this

way, it seems, studying women's internal migrations offers an alternative to the common "invisibility" of women in transnational migration that was evident in Zegache, and that has also been addressed by migration scholars (e.g. Pessar and Mahler 2003), as women internal migrants become important actors in transnational migration even when they don't think of themselves as "migrants."

I shall argue in this dissertation that, in contrast to transnational migration, the invisibility of internal migration in Zegache is part of a gender order in which women have historically moved to Mexico City and other urban areas within Mexico. Women who migrate internally seek to relieve the financial burdens of their households by providing remittances and covering their own costs of living while, at the same time, being in a good position to travel back to Zegache if they or their relatives are in need of care. In contrast, men's care responsibilities are mostly connected to taking care of their relatives and families by providing for them financially. This allows men to travel longer distances and for longer periods of time, thus permitting a higher number of men than women to migrate transnationally. However, internal and transnational migrations occur simultaneously in Zegache. During my research it wasn't unusual to encounter families who had relatives in Mexico City and in the U.S. In many cases the relatives in Mexico City were women and the relatives in the U.S. were men.

Academic research has also tended to foreground transnational migration, particularly more recently. This was not always the case, however. Research on internal women migrants was an important entry point for social scientists interested in gender and globalization during the decades of 1975-1995 (see Arias 2000; Ariza 2007). However, with the rise in the transnational approach in the mid-nineties following the seminal works of Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992), Kearney (1995), and Rouse (1991), Mexican scholarship on



migration shifted its attention. The academic focus emphasized either female transnational migrants or the women “left behind” by male transnational migrants as internal migration became hidden from view in anthropological studies. In addition, Ariza (2007:463) contends that this shift also addressed a change in the socio-economic Mexican context. The increase in transnational migration, particularly male, meant that internal migrants diminished.

The notion that transnational migration displaced internal migration “on the ground” is not totally unsupported; however, it is important to analyze the assumptions on which it is based as well as its implications. For numerous scholars, internal migration seems to precede transnational migration in an historical sense (e.g. Ariza 2007; Cohen and Sirkeci 2011; Kearney 1986); for others, internal and transnational migrations appear as “either-or” options (e.g. Cohen 2010; Rees 2007; also see Skeldon 2006). These two assumptions—that (a) internal migration preceded transnational migration, and that (b) transnational and internal migration do not happen simultaneously—are based on changing frameworks for understanding peasant communities and their identities in relation to their migratory movements. The emphasis of internal migration as a rural-urban displacement of people stemmed directly from what Kearney (1995; also see Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Rouse 1991) defines as modernist conceptions of time and space that emphasized the “village” and the “nation-state” as pre-given units of social analysis. Under this model, rural-urban migration would result in modernization (Kearney 1986; Redfield 1952).

The prominence of transnational migration derived from a new wave in globalization studies that highlighted interconnection and mobility. Numerous scholars (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Harvey 1989; Rouse 1991; Knauf 1994) theorized globalization as part of a historical change that

lead to a transformation of time-space relations, often called “postmodernity.”<sup>1</sup> In this context, transnational migrants were identified as “emblematic subjects” of globalization and postmodernity (Kearney 1996; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Szanton Blanch 1995; Sassen 2000). Internal migrants, on the other hand, were left out of mainstream analysis as they were seen as neither emblematic subjects of globalization nor as the keepers of local traditions.

The newfound emphasis on transnational migration was also motivated, in part, by the important role that transnational remittances started having in global finances. However, feminist scholars sought to move away from “capital-centric” approaches to globalization and migration (Nagar et al 2002:277) by analyzing how non-commodity chains of production and reproduction shaped the ways in which different parts of the world are connected. These studies highlight the importance of kinship and care relationships when considering how people, but especially women, have to take into account the demands that their families place on them when it comes to taking care of, and caring about their relatives (see Leinaweaver 2011, 2013; Lutz 2008; Parreñas 2005, 2008; Ozegyn and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008; Safri and Graham 2010; Williams and Gavanoas 2008; Yarris 2013). I use these insights to argue that the women of Zegache who migrated, and who continue to migrate, within Mexico are not separate from the male transnational migrants who go to the U.S. Instead, I conceptualize internal and transnational migrations as connected at the intersection of kinship, care, and gender roles.

The acknowledgement of the importance of women’s migration within Mexico, and especially to Mexico City, also opened up new conceptual spaces in which other types of movements that are often absent or obscured in the anthropological literature of migration

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<sup>1</sup> The term postmodernity, as used here, refers to the name given to a particular historical period of globalization and not to the intellectual movement identified as postmodernism.

became obvious. As I stopped asking about migration (which, as we have seen, tends to be understood as necessarily *transnational* in nature), and started focusing more broadly on experiences of mobility, I came upon another interesting phenomenon. A large number of the men I talked to were, or had been, in the Mexican military. Although the experiences of men in the military could be disregarded as merely occupational—and not at all the stuff of migration—the conversations that I had with soldiers and former soldiers led me to consider joining the military as another form of gendered internal migration. When men from Zegache are enrolled in the military they often travel outside of Oaxaca, learn new skills (including cooking), and gain opportunities to advance their formal education. In addition, as men meet other soldiers from other parts of Oaxaca and Mexico they also redefine their indigenous and masculine identities in a similar way to transnational migrants. Therefore the central tenet of this dissertation is understanding internal and transnational migrations as interconnected processes that are shaped by the ways in which kinship and care relationships are structured in Zegache, but that, at the same time, also modify discourses on femininity and masculinity for migrants and non-migrants.

In emphasizing the interconnection of internal and transnational migrations, however, I am not approaching both types of movement in the same way. In fact, I seek to keep these two migrations as distinct. To do this I employ Lynn Stephen's (2007) concept of "transborder" to frame the specific ways in which internal and transnational migrations are gendered and experienced. The "transborder" concept allows for the analysis of internal migration that is sometimes lost in a merely transnational framework because it emphasizes "border crossing," but does not define borders solely in terms of national or political boundaries (Stephen 2007: 23). Within this framework, internal migrants who do not cross the Mexico-U.S. border can still cross ethnic, cultural, colonial, and regional borders within Mexico. But as I argue in chapter 3,

crossing some of these “internal” borders can have a more significant impact on the ways in which women migrants think about gender than crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. Thus, I argue that internal and transnational migrations are connected but distinct in significant ways, especially in relation to the experiences of crossing different types of borders.

In addition to broadening the analytic scope of the transnational framework, the transborder framework can also be useful for understanding the “intersectional racialized, gendered, classed, and sexual (im)mobilities as inscribed into landscapes and imaginaries of belonging” (Sheller 2014:793) that are part of new approaches in the study of mobility. Nevertheless, as I argue throughout this dissertation, it is important to keep the experiences of internal and of transnational migration disaggregated.

This contrasts with scholars who approach all forms of mobility as merely different in degree. For example, Jeffrey Cohen and Ibrahim Sirkeci (2011:63) argue that “Migration appears as one strategy among others. Internal migration, in this regard, is not different from international migration. What causes movement to be international or internal is largely the mover’s ability and resources.” They later add: “it is also obvious that there is no clear separation between internal and international mobility in terms of what drives people to move and how they make those decisions” (Cohen and Sirkeci 2011:67). Although I agree with these statements, I also consider such an evaluation of the differences between internal and transnational migration to be insufficient to capture how people and communities experience these distinct types of migrations.

First of all, the crossing of different borders has different implications that are not reducible to the experience of mobility itself; they derive from gender roles and gender expectations. Second, the experiences that men and women have—and how they translate into

different ideas gender roles, femininity, and masculinity—are also connected to specific networks of relatedness that include unique kinship and care relationships. Third, as I shall explore in the chapters that follow, crossing different borders means different things for different people. For instance, crossing the Mexico-U.S. border may convey a sense of masculinity for male migrants who engage in new technologies and in new forms of productivity that distinguishes them from men who have decided to stay in Zegache and continue to be *campesinos*, farmers. However, women who migrate internally, and who cross class and ethnic borders, as they travel to urban middle-class homes in Mexico City (relying on female social networks, and without male supervision), will develop more critical ideas about gender roles than those women who cross the Mexico-U.S. border accompanied by their husbands and brothers. All of these important distinctions are rendered invisible if we fail to understand internal and transnational migration as processes that are crucially connected but crucially distinct.

Moreover, the internal and transnational movements of Zegacheños and Zegacheñas also point to the importance of looking at how different forms of mobility articulate in specific historical moments. This requires looking at other forms of mobility that might not always be classified as “migration,” and looking at the ways in which people access different forms of mobility (e.g. public and private forms of transportation). Although throughout this dissertation I address the second point (the ways in which people access different forms of mobility), I mainly seek to problematize the first point: how do some forms of mobility get classified as “migration” and others do not, and remain invisible.

My dissertation contributes to the discussion of migration by expanding those forms of mobility that are classified as migration including military service, and internal migration close

by and far from home communities. For example, in the specific case of Zegache, neglecting the experiences of men who join the military can significantly transform the history of migration in their communities as it transforms the ways in which men have constructed and re-constructed masculine identities as they become mobile subjects. This insight, however, is not limited to men who join the military in Zegache but it could also prove fruitful when applying in other cases that are not considered “migration” but that involve the crossing of various borders in relation to service in the military and what often follows from it. This analysis could be applied to minorities in the U.S., such as Latinos, African-Americans, and Native Americans, who join the U.S. military and who cross class and ethnic borders, and often work in international settings. Although not all forms of mobility should be studied *as migrations*, the criteria for classifying some forms of mobility as migration but not others should be systematically addressed as part of a theoretical framework and not taken as given.

Defining what counts as migration is not exclusively a theoretical discussion: it is also a methodological issue. As I stated above, even people who have migrated do not always recognize themselves as migrants because the ways in which “migration” is locally defined affects their interpretations of their personal life experiences. In this sense, as an anthropologist, I also became critical of local narratives that disregarded some forms of mobility as not being about migration and, thus, devaluing the personal experiences of some migrants—especially internal female migrants. In my research I took all personal narratives seriously. At the same time, in attempting to understand the ways in which mobility and migrations are gendered I recognized that local discourses about “migration” were influenced by unequal power relations that disregarded internal migration. Thus, I try to engage in a critical dialogue about what counts as migration “in the field.” For example, the women of Zegache who had lived and worked in

Mexico City would not use the word migrant to define themselves even though their personal narratives resembled those of transnational migrants in many regards. The same can be said of men who joined the military, who would often recount the difficulties of adapting to new jobs and new contexts during their first weeks of service, the wide array of people they had met while in the army, and the skills that they had learned in the military. Methodologically this raises the question of how to define migration: Is it sufficient for people to label (or not label) themselves as migrants? Or should we discuss experiences that resemble migration even when people do not identify themselves “as migrants”?

The diverse experiences of the men and women from Zegache who migrated internally, transnationally, or who stayed in Zegache not only shaped my theoretical and methodological approaches, but also shaped the ethnographic research I conducted in Zegache, Mexico City, and in Oregon. In the next section I describe my research methods as I pay special attention to the ways in which my research was gendered by the men and women of Zegache.

## MASCULINE FIELDWORK AND ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The empirical findings analyzed in this dissertation have been collected in over 20 months of short-term and long-term ethnographic research spanning from 2011 to 2015, with members of the community of Zegache in Oaxaca, Mexico City, and in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. I conducted summer research in Zegache during the summers of 2011 and 2012. Although I visited Zegacheños and Zegacheñas living in Oregon intermittently from 2011 to 2013, I conducted more frequent and systematic research in the period of January to June of 2014 in Woodburn and Salem, Oregon. From September 2014 to August 2015 I carried out ethnographic

research in Zegache, Mexico City, and in Oregon. Throughout my ethnographic research I collected over 50 interviews from people in the community, as well as hundreds of informal conversations that were part of my participant-observation both in private homes and in public social gatherings.

My research was gendered-as male from the very beginning. After I managed to obtain permission to carry out fieldwork by the local authorities through explaining to them the objectives of my project—which was, at that time, about traditional subsistence agriculture—, they gave me a list of names of people who might be able to help me. The names they gave me were all men’s names. As the focus of my research changed from subsistence agriculture to migration, the gender of the people I spoke with and of those who shared their experiences with me continued to be predominantly male, as most transnational migrants in Zegache were men. However, as I sought to include more women I also started seeing how women with different life histories reacted to my presence.

The various attitudes of the men and women whom I tried (successfully and unsuccessfully) to interview reflected the articulations of their social positions and the ways in which I was gendered. Most of the men I interviewed, whether they were migrants or not, showed some nervousness when I asked if I could record the conversation. Once the interview started, however, they narrated their life histories with detail, emphasizing the challenges they had faced and how they overcame them. In short, for most of the men I interview the formal interview process was a space of masculine performance. In more than one occasion the men I interviewed took the opportunity to show me short videos, recorded on their phones, that portrayed them working in the fields of the Willamette Valley or when they were soldiers.



The attitudes of women, on the other hand, were more varied. Women who were migrants or who had been migrants, although more hesitant to be interviewed than men, were also eager to narrate the hardships they had endured. This wasn't the case with women who had not migrated. Women who had not migrated would often talk openly about their lives and their families in public spaces and in informal settings, sometimes they would agree to be interviewed, but as I arrived at their homes many would change their minds or express a degree of suspicion that they hadn't expressed before. I describe two encounters of this nature to illustrate this point:

- (1) One day I was getting lunch at a local stall situated in front of the church in Zegache. The vendor was a woman, Mireya<sup>2</sup>, in her late thirties or early forties. After a few minutes she started inquiring about my work in Zegache. I told her about my interest in studying the role of family ties in how men and women migrate. She talked openly about the migration of her husband and her son, and how she didn't know where her son was at the moment. She told me where she lived and agreed to be formally interviewed. The first time I arrived at her house a male relative responded to my call at the door. As Mireya came to the gate she told me she was sick and started asking me all sorts of questions about my research; she also expressed doubts about whether what she could say was useful. I reassured her by saying that her experiences were important, but also told her that she could say no at any point in time. She told me to come back in a week or so. She was feeling better when I returned; as we talked through the gate, a man was fixing a car inside Mireya's garage. He didn't intervene in the conversation but he was listening, and Mireya was aware of his presence. "You know, I'm really sorry, but I don't think I want to do this anymore," she said.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all of the names of my interlocutors have been changed to protect their identities.

(2) In the street where I lived in Zegache, there was a small corner shop where I bought snacks from time to time. The storeowner, Laura, was a woman in her late fifties. Her demeanor with me wasn't always warm but after being her customer for a few months I thought she would be willing to be interviewed by me, since we had already talked a few times. When I asked her to talk about her experiences a young couple, a man and a woman, came out of Laura's house and saw our interaction. With a slight tone of nervousness, Laura addressed them: "He says that he wants to know about my experiences, but what experiences have I had, right? I've always lived here. I don't really have any experiences." The three of them smiled at each other. I thanked her for her time and continued with my day.

Although it is difficult to say with certainty that these encounters, and others that were similar, would have been different if I hadn't been a male anthropologist, the reactions and attitudes to my research led me to reevaluate the relationship between methodology, the study of gender, and the positionality of all the individuals involved. Although I was aware that my presence in the community was a contentious issue among some men and some women (one of my oldest acquaintances in Zegache told me, after four years of knowing me, that some people in the community had questioned him on whether he hadn't been too quick to trust me), it was my interactions with women that made me reconsider the effectiveness of recorded formal interviews (Boehm 2012:25; Muelhmann 2013:16), particularly with women who hadn't migrated.

These experiences informed the ways in which I approached fieldwork with women. Instead of simply claiming a lack of accessibility to their experiences, I curtailed my efforts to participate in individual formal interviews, and opted for more informal, and, oftentimes, group

discussions that took place while women were busy working either at home or at their place of work. This proved to be a much more effective, and less stressful, option for me and for the women of Zegache I interviewed, especially in Oaxaca. Nevertheless, I still tried to interview women when they were willing to do so.

The different approaches that I took in my methodology were nonetheless used with different members of the same families: I would often interview the men, and speak informally with the women of a family. I had originally devised a plan to focus on specific families but as I started conducting participant-observation and ethnographic interviews it became clear that families in Zegache were not clear-cut groups or organizations, and that neither a household approach nor a formal kinship approach would suffice. Familial groups changed throughout my visits; people who were “close” at one point became distant, and people who I thought were not related were connected either in one way or another.

For example, one of the “families” with which I worked could easily be seen as three families: Maura lives in Zegache with her son Rogelio, his wife Lourdes, and two grandsons. Another of Maura’s son, Joel, lives in Woodburn, Oregon; he still calls her and sends money regularly but he hasn’t returned to Zegache in over 10 years; Joel has a son who is a U.S. citizen and who lives with his mother (but not with Joel). The eldest of Maura’s son, Roberto, also lives in Woodburn, with his partner, Jimena, and their two daughters. Maura and Roberto have been quarreling for the last few years, and Roberto doesn’t speak to Maura or to his brothers. In addition, Roberto’s wife, Jimena, had a son—as a single mother—who lives in Zegache, with Jimena’s sister. Jimena and Roberto have no plans of returning to Oaxaca, and actively avoid Joel in social events in Woodburn, Oregon. At different points during my research I thought that, perhaps, the brothers would reconcile but this didn’t happen, although it might in the future. The

point is, however, that in approaching formal and informal conversations about relatedness the boundaries and scope of who counts as “family” were often contentious and the discussions about the responsibilities of care of different family members was no less contested. Instead, my conversations focused on kinship and care as active practices that allowed the people speaking to define their own networks of relatedness and to include people who would be usually left out of kinship charts, such as friends and co-workers.

As I connected with individuals who were related through kinship and care relations to the people I met in Zegache, I was able to conduct ethnographic research in Oregon and in Mexico City. Many of the responses that Zegacheños and Zegacheñas showed towards me as a researcher in Oaxaca were also present in Oregon and in Mexico City, but each of these two locations presented different research experiences and challenges. In Oregon, for example, migrants from Zegache were extremely busy and often had long commutes from work during weekdays; they also attended family gatherings in different towns spread apart (sometimes by hours) in the Pacific Northwest (e.g. Eugene, Corvallis, Salem, Woodburn, The Dalles), which often complicated their schedules. Although women from Zegache living in the U.S. were more open to talking to me, they were in charge of taking care of their children and providing food for me and for other men. In Oregon most people from Zegache were connected in way or another, and I would hear about social gatherings and celebrations from more than one of my acquaintances.

In Mexico City people were dispersed through different boroughs located at the outskirts of the metropolis, sometimes located in the neighboring Mexico State (*Estado de México*) (e.g. some of the boroughs where people from Zegache live are Iztapalapa, Azcapotzalco, and the municipality of Naucalpan, in Estado de México). In most instances I would introduce myself

through a phone call. In this initial phone conversations I would be interrogated about Zegache and about the people I had met in Oaxaca; such distrust, they would later say, was a product of bad experiences of extortion that they had experienced while in Mexico City. Although extortion is present throughout Mexico City, some of the neighborhoods where people from Zegache live, have been disproportionately targeted by groups of criminals who rely on robbery and extortion for survival. One of the ways to extort people is to rob a cell phone and then call all of the numbers in it. In many cases, people would call their relatives in Zegache to ask them about me before they agreed to meet. In relation to gender, however, things were quite different to Oaxaca and Oregon. For example, some of the women I met in Mexico City lived by themselves and they would meet me by themselves after overcoming their initial distrust. These ethnographic experiences colored the ways in which I describe and analyze the histories of the men and women from Zegache who live in the different locations of Oaxaca, Mexico City, and in the towns in Oregon in the U.S.

## OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is composed of six chapters. In the following chapter (2) I begin my analysis in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1921, focusing on how the agrarian reform that followed transformed the Oaxacan countryside and local politics in several communities, including Zegache. In Zegache the agrarian reform divided the community along agrarian politics that pitted the *comuneros* (those who favor communally owned property) and the *propietarios* (those who claim land is privately owned) around the 1940s, when the land tenure regime was being disputed. This division was later reframed in terms of national political parties. Although *comuneros* and *propietarios* migrate in similar ways, the conflictive settings that

developed in the community produced an environment in which migration became a viable option for men and women who sought to escape the local violence, acquire new skills, and provide financial resources to their families. The gendering of internal and transnational migrations were already present at this time.

In the two subsequent chapters (3 and 4) I discuss how gender roles and gender identities have shaped the different forms in which men and women migrate. In chapter 3 I contrast the ways in which women's mobility is experienced and how it is evaluated in relation to gendered kinship and care relationships. In particular, I contrast the experiences of women who migrated to Mexico City to those of female transnational migrants. I argue that women who migrated to Mexico City to work as domestic employees, and who relied on female social networks, were able to more effectively challenge patriarchal gender expectations in Zegache than transnational female migrants who often move with their spouses and within pre-established gender roles.

In chapter 4 I analyze how the local history of agrarian related violence influenced masculine identities by emphasizing ideas of risk and sacrifice that have shaped how men migrate internally and transnationally. Risk and sacrifice have been reinterpreted by soldiers, transnational migrants, and by men who decide to stay in Zegache. Although it might seem that men either stay in Zegache or migrate transnationally, I argue that joining the military is a form of internal migration because as Zapotec men from Zegache enrolled in the military they also cross different types of borders, and gain skills during their military service. Ideas of masculinity have changed and become more flexible and have incorporated the use of technologies, especially driving. I also show that there are conflicting masculine identities that are, nonetheless, continually changing.

In chapter 5 I address the fluidity and dynamism of relatedness in Zegache. I present a definition of relatedness that includes kinship and care relationships. I analyze how these two histories of relatedness provide insights into the ways in which gender, kinship, and care create relationships that mobilize people in both usual and unusual ways. I propose that in order to understand such histories, we should draw a careful analytical distinction between relatedness, kinship, and between two forms of care (care as a noun, as in ‘to take care of’, or *cuidar*, in Spanish; and care as a verb, as in “caring about”, or *querer* in Spanish). This analytical distinction is relevant to understand how gendered relationships and migrations are structured through kinship and care.

In chapter 6 I analyze how masculinity—based on the ideas of sacrifice and risk—creates a space of flexibility that allow men to reclaim some forms of cooking as masculine. However, masculinity is also shaped by and through women’s changing positions in different locations and social networks. Thus, I address femininity in relation to the ideas of suffering and caring that directly connect being a woman to motherly practices. As more women enter the workforce, attend college, and migrate (internally and transnationally), the ways of being a woman in Zegache (and elsewhere) have changed considerably. This is connected to changing forms of policing of “proper” femininity. I also analyze how masculinity and femininity are articulated intergenerationally through the use of emotions and emotionally charged relationships that create spaces of dialogue and conflict where different ideas of gender roles are enacted, negotiated, and resignified.

All of these chapters seek to analyze how different forms of mobility and migration are constructed and discussed in scholarly works and “in the field.” The definition of who is a migrant is even more complicated as we consider that men and women from Zegache often

engage in more than one form of migration. Thus, women who migrate to Mexico City sometimes will also migrate to the U.S. Even if women don't migrate, they are increasingly becoming mobile and commuting to Oaxaca City, and are often in families with transnational migrants. In the same manner, men who join the military often become transnational migrants themselves. Internal and transnational migrations are articulated in complex ways. Looking at the articulations of intersecting migrations shows how relatedness and gender identities become constructed and re-constructed when people become mobile.



Figure 1. Map of Mexico (with states divisions) indicating the locations of Mexico City (Mexico's national capital), Oaxaca City (Oaxaca state's capital), and Zegache (not to scale).



## II. ZEGACHE: MULTIPLE HISTORIES

Getting to Zegache is not that difficult if you already know where to find the taxicab stand, or if you know the times when the handful of buses run from Oaxaca City to Zegache. This ease of traveling wasn't always the case, as the history of Zegache's transportation system is linked to Zegache's social and political history. Not too long ago Zegache did not have public transportation that directly connected the town to the state's capital of Oaxaca City; before the first buses from the neighboring town of Santiago Apóstol stopped in Zegache twice a day (at 6 a.m. for pickup, and at 8p.m. for drop off) people had to walk approximately four miles to the Federal Highway 131 where they would try to board a bus. This certainly contributed to the comments I'd continually hear during my trips back and forth Oaxaca City and Zegache that described Zegache as being "isolated," and Zegacheños as being "closed minded" and "violent." Nevertheless, in most instances, Zegacheños didn't appear closed minded nor isolated, Zegacheños were willing to talk about their experiences in the Mexican military, in other parts of Mexico, and in the United States. However, as I hinted at in the Introduction, Zegacheños' common experiences doesn't mean that they are a unified or homogenous community, in fact Zegacheños are divided along political lines (regarding land tenure system and political parties), along gender lines, and even within their own families. In this chapter I discuss the histories of some of these divisions.

The multiple divisions in Zegache are not only relevant as background, they are also significant for understanding and explaining the structural context in which men and women have had different migration experiences, and have created different definitions of masculinity and femininity. I approach Zegache's history as a combination of multiple legacies that have

been redefined and re-appropriated through time. For example, I aim to show that the current division between political parties—the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party) or PRI, and the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (Party of Democratic Revolution) or PRD—can be traced to the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (and, perhaps, even to the Colonial period). I also approach Zegache’s history as a “multi-scalar” history that has numerous linkages to regional, national, and global socio-political contexts. In this sense, I use Saskia Sassen’s (2003) ideas about globalization and de-nationalization by proposing that Zegache’s history cannot be understood as part of a “nested” hierarchy that subsumes the local under the regional, the regional under the national, and the national under the global (Sassen 2003). Instead, the case of Zegache shows how there is a need to examine “different modes of regional-to-global interconnections” (Tsing 2002:471) while keeping in mind that global processes get constituted sub-nationally (Sassen 2003:3). This will be made even more evident once migration patterns are discussed in relation to Zegache’s history.

It was during the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution that the current political divide in Zegache got inscribed primarily as an agrarian conflict. As the Mexican bureaucracy established new regulations over the use of land, different local groups came together and used these channels to reframe an age-old conflict as a dispute over land, and over the ways in which land was owned. This prompted the opposition of those villagers who favored the communal ownership of land (*comuneros*), and those who claimed to be private proprietors (*propietarios*).

The conflict between these two factions was also made evident in the struggles over the local authority positions, both municipal and agrarian. These positions of formal authority were part of a civil cargo system tied to a religious cargo system. The religious cargo system involved the sponsorship of ritual activities for the community’s pantheon of Saints. Taking on the

sponsorship, known as a *mayordomía*, was a major financial undertaking that also resulted in the sponsors or *mayordomos* receiving respect, status, and prestige. The religious cargo system was also tied to the customary system of indigenous justice and government system now called *usos y costumbres*. These two systems will be explained in further detail later in this chapter.

The customary system of governance and justice represented in the *usos y costumbres* system did not appoint local authorities based on representative democratic electoral processes but on different criteria that included communal service and local prestige. However, the *usos y costumbres* system faced serious challenges in the 1990s. Even though, the *usos y costumbres* was legally recognized in Oaxaca during this time, some villagers from Zegache pushed for the change from *usos y costumbres* to the political party, ballot-based electoral system of choosing local authorities. As several national political parties (especially the PRI, and the PRD) were being embraced by Zegacheños and Zegacheñas, in the late 1990s, the conflict was re-inscribed as an electoral dispute between the PRI and the PRD.

These transformations were taking place at the same time as changes in migration patterns were occurring. Although Zegache has a long history of migration that dates, at least, to the 1950s when women's migration to Mexico City increased and seasonal migration within Mexico (especially to Chiapas) were common practices for many of Zegache's families, it was in the 1990s that migration to the U.S. intensified. This uptick in migration from Zegache mirrors patterns in other rural subsistence communities. Under new regulations that were a part of NAFTA, subsistence farmers in Mexico ceased to have access to government subsidies for basic crops and little or no access to credit. For those on the edge of survival, the lack of these supports meant they could not continue to rely on subsistence and small scale commercial farming to survive. Wage labor was essential, but a lack of jobs in Oaxaca and elsewhere encouraged many

to migrate elsewhere in Mexico, but primarily to the U.S. However, even as transnational migration became more popular in Zegache, internal migration did not stop. In fact, as I argue in this chapter and throughout the dissertation, internal and transnational migrations are continually intersecting in social and personal accounts through which we can see how globalization is a differentiated process that enables and restricts mobilities (Sassen 2000), and that creates “global households” (Safri and Graham 2010) that connect family networks in multiple locations through economic and non-economic chains of production. In this chapter I emphasize how globalization has informed both internal and transnational migrations, in an effort to articulate the ways in which the history of Zegache is “multi-scalar.”

This chapter starts in the second half of the XIX century when Mexico was governed what some historians have called “the Oaxacan dynasty,” referring to two powerful Oaxacan presidents, Benito Juárez (1858-1872) and Porfirio Díaz (1876-1880, 1884-1911), whose ideas and policies had powerful impacts in many aspects of national history (Chassen-López 1989). It was during this period (1858-1910) that, under the liberal banner, the first wave of modernizing projects started in Mexico and in Oaxaca. These policies reinforced old regional structures but also created new regional dynamics. Zegache is located in the valley of Zimatlán, in the region known as the Central Valleys of Oaxaca. In the first section of this chapter, I briefly describe the particular role that the Central Valleys had during the Oaxacan dynasty and in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). In the second section I discuss how the agrarian reform inscribed the conflict between two factions in Zegache as an agrarian conflict, and how it gave rise to the *comuneros* and the *propietarios*. However, changing national and regional political landscapes in the 1980s and in the 1990s created a new language of conflict based on the differences between two major national political parties that now permeates much of the ongoing local and regional

disputes over land, local politics, and government support. I conclude this chapter by tracing the historical migration trends in Zegache. Men and women from Zegache have always been “on the move,” and yet current literature on Oaxacan and Mexican migration tends to focus almost exclusively on transnational migration, often obscuring the experiences of internal migrants. In the case of Zegache, understanding past and present trends of internal migration is fundamental in understanding how different forms of migration intersect through kinship, care, and gendered relationships. In the two following chapters I expand the analysis of gender, and internal and transnational migration.

## REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN OAXACA AND THE FIRST WAVE OF MODERNIZATION

The official history of Mexico often emphasizes the role that the Mexican Revolution had in the distribution and redistribution of land to landless peasants that had been dispossessed by the long rule of Porfirio Díaz (roughly from 1876 to 1910). The Mexican Revolution is seen as a watershed moment that, to a great extent, abolished the *hacienda* system that consisted of large estates with indentured servitude, and that had had a significant role in Mexico. In addition, the official history goes, the Oaxacan peasantry did not play an important role in the revolutionary project. In fact, the Oaxacan peasantry (composed by a wide variety of different indigenous groups) has been described as “conservative,” “backwards,” and “anti-revolutionary” (Waterbury 1975). However, Oaxacan historians have challenged this view by claiming that the “atypical” Oaxacan case can be explained by analyzing the detailed history of how Oaxaca was transformed during the so-called Oaxacan dynasty (see Esparza 1988) that later interpreted the Mexican Revolution as an imposition “that came from the north” (see Chassen-Lopez 1989:163). In this section, I provide a brief account on how the long Oaxacan rule over Mexico and its liberal

reforms created regional differences in Oaxaca, and how these differences influenced the Revolutionary project in Oaxaca, especially in the Central Valleys where Zegache is located.

Before Porfirio Díaz occupied the presidency in Mexico, another Oaxacan president had started a liberal economic transformation of Mexico—especially of Mexico’s countryside. Benito Juárez, who like Díaz, came from an indigenous background, governed Mexico from 1858 to 1872 (serving five times as president). During his presidency, Juárez sought to eliminate communal property that belonged to the Church but also to indigenous communities that had preserved communal land since colonial times. This was an attempt by Juárez to eliminate those hindrances that kept Mexico from becoming a “modern” country; for Mexico to become modern, private property had to be installed. The implementation of these Reform Laws (especially the *Ley Lerdo* of 1856), had profound effects in Oaxaca’s villages and their relation to land, where most land had remained in the possession of indigenous communities since the sixteenth century because of Spanish land grants (Stephen 2002a:221). However, the effects of Reform Laws were shaped by the social, cultural, and productive landscapes that existed in the different regions that compose the state.

The modernization process that started with Juárez’s Reform Laws was followed by Díaz with infrastructural changes that included the constructions of roads and the expansion of Mexico’s railway system. These roads and railways were designed to incorporate the production of export crops from “Porfirian commercial agricultural development” (Chassen-López 1989) into the global market. The crops that were being produced were sugar cane, tobacco, and coffee. Because of the specific conditions that these crops need to grow and flourish (e.g. altitude, humidity, etc.) not all regions resulted as being equally suited to partake in the modernization process. Those regions that did participate (Tuxtepec-Choapam, the Istmo, the Cañada, and the

Costa) experienced the transformation of their landscapes, as the export crops required new labor-intensive relations of production that were not present in Oaxaca—a state that was still predominantly indigenous and rural.

The events leading up to the Mexican Revolution of 1910 are important in understanding the local political dynamics that emerged after the Revolution and that continue to shape the life and mobility of Zegache's inhabitants, even if it could be said that Zegache appeared somehow at the margins of the revolutionary struggle, the history of the Central Valleys during the Porfiriato and after the triumph of revolutionary leader Venustiano Carranza. As Venustiano Carranza attempted to disarticulate anti-revolutionary forces in the region he also transformed local political dynamics that were tied to land tenure systems.

### *The Porfiriato and the Mexican Revolution*

The economic and social policies put forward by Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz reinforced regional differences, and likely created migratory patterns between regions that were being used to produce export crops and those that were not.<sup>3</sup> In general, although most land in the Central Valleys region was not being used to grow and produce export crops, the villages in this region were also transformed. The long period of the Porfiriato transformed local elites, and wealthy inhabitants of Oaxaca City were able to establish and retain control over land and political structures in the Central Valleys—building links between the capital city of Oaxaca and larger outlying towns and agrarian centers (Esparza 1988:288; Overmyer-Velázquez 2006:17-18;

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<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Oaxacans from different regions also engaged in migration to other states. For example, people from the Mixteca region migrated seasonally and permanently to the state of Veracruz to work in sugar cane, banana, and coffee plantations.

Stephen 2002a:219-220). This local elite group, composed of “upper and upper-middle classes” was sometimes called the *Vallistocracia* (Valleys-trocracy) (Overmyer-Velázquez 2006). As Overmyer-Velázquez (2006) argues, members of the *Vallistocracia* consolidated their political influence through economic alliances and strategic marriages that helped upper and upper-middle class families merge “business interests with prominent positions in city politics” (ibid: 26), effectively transforming the countryside, while providing stability to the Porfirian regime. This was especially important because a significant part of the state’s labor force lived in the Central Valleys (in 1910, one in three Oaxacans lived in the Central Valleys) (see Ruíz Cervantes 1988:336-351).

After the Mexican Revolution started in 1910, those regions of Oaxaca that had been modernized in order to directly participate in the global market were more receptive to revolutionary ideas, while those regions that had only an indirect participation in export crops opposed the Revolution. As the revolutionary war encroached on Oaxaca City and threatened the regional political, economic and social structures that were embraced by the city’s elite families (the so-called *Vallistocracia*), a movement that opposed the Revolution was formed (see Ruiz Cervantes 1988). Like the *Vallistocracia*, this movement of *Soberanistas* (also known as the “defenders of Oaxaca”) (Ruíz Cervantes 1988:470), opposed the revolutionary project promoted by Venustiano Carranza at the time.

Venustiano Carranza, a rancher from the northern Mexican state of Coahuila, had supported Francisco I. Madero’s anti-re-election movement against Porfirio Díaz that is commonly seen as the starting point of the Mexican Revolution. Carranza did not enjoy the popular support of other revolutionary leaders; and he faced important opposition in southern Mexican states like Oaxaca. The Oaxacan *Soberanista* movement opposed Carranza’s



revolutionary project as he represented the Constitutionalist movement that came from the north, and that was also questioned by other revolutionary figures like Emiliano Zapata who expressed disappointment in the agrarian reform proposed by Carranza in the 1917 Constitution.

After almost five years of entrenched opposition, the Carrancistas defeated the Soberanistas in 1914. Once Carranza took over Oaxaca, one of his main objectives was to disarticulate the Vallistocracia and rid the state of the influence of the Soberanistas. This was done through agrarian reform (e.g. Knight 1991), through the direct and authoritarian imposition of local authorities, and through the militarization of the municipalities that were considered “anti-revolutionary.” According to Garner (1984), the process of militarization included “urgently” removing all of those local authorities that were deemed as “corrupted.” Corrupted authorities, or other civilians that were suspected of having contact with “rebels,” were subjected to execution, arrest, and they would often lose most or all of their possessions. The military officers that were in charge of enforcing Carranza’s new dispositions regularly committed abuses that were “ignored,” and often times entered into violent conflicts with municipal authorities.

My point here is not to provide a detailed historical account of the impact of the Mexican Revolution in Zegache or in the Central Valleys, but to provide a basis for explaining how land politics changed in the community as Carranza tried to remove anti-revolutionary factions in Zegache. For example, during an informal interview in the summer of 2012, an artist and activist from Zegache told me that, according to his grandfather, it was after the Revolution that a group of armed men came into Zegache to live. These men, former revolutionary fighters and probably Carranza supporters, had no respect for the local authorities that were based on communal assemblies and civic-religious obligations. Since they were armed, however, the local authorities could do little to control them, according to my study participant. Some families had to leave

Zegache because of the violence that overtook the village; the artist's family moved to Oaxaca City. Although the tensions within the community did not start with the Mexican Revolution, the context of war increased the tensions within local factions—not only in Zegache but in many other agrarian communities as well.

#### COMUNEROS AND PROPIETARIOS: THE INSCRIBING OF A CONFLICT AS AN AGRARIAN CONFLICT

The Mexican Revolution does not have a high profile in the social history of Zegache, according to people I interviewed. People do not talk about it nor do they mention it as an important event that changed the history of their village. Instead, the social history of Zegache revolves around different political disputes; for example, between opposing *barrios*, between *comuneros* and *propietarios*, between different political parties, and in general between those who have supported and opposed different communal projects. In this section I analyze one of the possible origins of the conflict between *comuneros* and *propietarios*. I start the analysis of this conflict in the aftermath of the Revolution, although it is possible that the opposing factions in Zegache could go back to the Colonial era when Zegache was divided in two *barrios* (or neighborhoods) with different ethnic identities (see Taylor 1972).<sup>4</sup> As I discuss in the following section, the current political divide between Priístas (those who support the PRI) and Perredistas (PRD supporters) overlaps with the dispute between *comuneros* and *propietarios* in significant ways.

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<sup>4</sup> The term *barrio*, which can be literally translated in English as “neighborhood”, implies a “sub-local” social identity and a social organization more than merely a physical location (see Chance 1996). In Zegache there are at least two *barrios* (*Barrio Mixteco* and *Barrio Santa Marta*), although some people mention a third *barrio*, *Barrio Centro*. The origins of the names are somewhat unclear, but it is likely that they originated during colonial times when the Spaniards formed a congregation in Zegache that, according to Taylor (1972:23), included Mixtec population living in the *Barrio Mixteco*. Today there is no recollection of Mixtec speaking people in the community.

Agrarian reform is often described as the “main accomplishment” of the Mexican Revolution, especially because it has been one of the largest land redistribution programs in Latin America.<sup>5</sup> However, agrarian reform was never the “most prominent issue” in post-revolutionary Oaxaca (Garner 1984:290). In fact, the language provided by the bureaucratic procedures of agrarian reform allowed many conflicts over territorial limits to resurface instead of being resolved. Land reform and land distribution in Oaxaca after the Revolution only represented 2% of the national total of redistributed land (Garner 1984:292).<sup>6</sup> Zegache’s request for communal land appears rather late in the aftermath of land reform after the Mexican Revolution (in the 1940s). To understand the timing of Zegache’s petition for land to the national government, we need to take into account possible local scenarios in which the conflict over land was part of a larger political conflict that aimed at controlling land used for subsistence agriculture, and that was being disputed within Zegache and with neighboring communities. The timing of the request may also be related to the isolation of the community from the capital and thus the difficulty of learning how to navigate new and complex national bureaucratic processes.

The importance of the period that immediately followed the Revolution, the incursion of Carranza supporters in the region, the request for communal land, and the conflict that followed cannot be emphasized enough. As the following section shows, it was also during this period that notions of masculinity became directly linked to agricultural labor and to the defense of agricultural land. This post-revolutionary masculinity was then transformed and reworked through different forms of male movement.

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<sup>5</sup> According to Arturo Warman (2003), from 1911 to 1991, more than 100 million of hectares of land were distributed to 30,000 communities which benefited more than 3 million families. The land distributed roughly accounts for about two thirds of all national rural land in Mexico.

<sup>6</sup> According to Richmond (cited in Garner 1984:292), in 1920 there were a total of 200,000 plots of land distributed nationally.

The information about this conflict is scarce and scattered, and it is only possible to get a glimpse of how it influenced, and how it continues to influence, the day-to-day interactions of Zegacheños and Zegacheños. My account of this conflict is constructed from a few key archival documents and oral histories I collected as part of my fieldwork. The first mention of the conflict between comuneros and propietarios in the archival record appears in a 1943 letter written by Zegache's municipal president to national agrarian authorities in which he requested the establishment of communal lands in his village (SRA 276.1/577). Although the technical work needed to resolve this petition did not start until the 1980s, it was at this moment that the character of the conflict was inscribed in agrarian terms. In this way, the conflict was articulated precisely through the language of agrarian reform and the two factions appeared: those who requested the recognition of communal lands were called *comuneros* and those who opposed it—on the basis that they had legally purchased land and paid the required taxes and thus no additional lands were necessary—were labeled *propietarios*.<sup>7</sup>

The first archival references to the agrarian conflict, in the 1940s, and the intensification of the local violence (both within the community, and with neighboring communities) in the 1970s, overlaps with what Zegacheños identify as *la época de los valientes*, the time of brave men. According to local accounts, during this time armed men prowled the streets of Zegache, flexing their muscles, threatening men, women, and children, and often engaging in violent acts. Local acts of violence intensified in the 1970s, when agrarian authorities, representing the *comuneros*, and municipal authorities started a conflict that involved agrarian authorities accusing municipal authorities of illegally buying and selling land. The intensity of the conflict

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<sup>7</sup> The inscription of local conflicts in agrarian terms was also seen in other parts of Oaxaca with the use of the term *agrarista* which is more closely linked to those communities that requested land in the form of *ejido* (e.g. Smith 2013; Stephen 2002a), since Zegache did not request *ejido* but *tierra comunal* the term used in Zegache is *comunero* and not *agrarista*.

seems to have decreased when one of Zegache's agrarian representatives was chased out of the village by a municipal president who favored private property. Other versions indicate that he might have been killed. This local history suggests that the Revolution modified the conditions that regulated the use of land, and the ways in which people had access to it. It also suggests that people who were siding with the "armed men," who arrived after the Revolution, were not supportive of the local government; this seems to be made evident in the 1970s violent conflict between agrarian and local authorities.

During this thirty year timespan (1940 to 1970), Zegache was also involved in land disputes with neighboring communities, especially with San Martín Tilcajete and Santa Catarina Quiané; some of these conflicts were characterized by violent clashes over land limits that directly affected Zegacheños's agricultural production. The complicated, and often violent, relationships between Zegache, Tilcajete, and Quiané did not originate because of the agrarian reform. In fact, Zegache and Tilcajete had already engaged in a political struggle over the Hacienda of Lachicubicha (also known as Lachicuvica) in the XVII and XVIII centuries. This pre-revolutionary conflict even prompted military intervention in 1896 (General State Archive, *Conflictos por límites de tierras, siglo XIX*. AGE, Oaxaca).<sup>8</sup> The dispute over territorial limits with Tilcajete was one of the main reasons that Zegache requested bienes comunales (communal land), and the defense of Zegache's land against Tilcajete's "invasion" is still an important element in Zegacheños' discourses about their community. The history with neighboring Quiané is similar in the sense that as Quiané's request for communal land was processed, villagers from

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<sup>8</sup> Information about these conflicts can be found in Spanish on the online archival catalog of the General National Archive (Archivo General de la Nación) (<http://www.agn.gob.mx/guiageneral/>). For example, the Instituciones Coloniales/ Real Audiencia/ Tierras (110)/ Contenedor 0201/ Volumen 395 file refers to how Indigenous people (*naturales*) of Santa Ana Sagachi (Zegache) opposed the claims by a local strongman, Felix Francisco de Velasco, on the hacienda Lachicubicha in 1721.

Quiané occupied land that Zegache claimed was theirs—prompting Zegacheños’s armed defense of what they saw as their land.<sup>9 10</sup>

Even if the local violent atmosphere gradually died out during the 1980s, the agrarian conflict did not stop in the 1970s. As the political landscape changed in Mexico and in Oaxaca, the agrarian dispute was re-interpreted in terms of political parties, which added new dimensions to Zegache’s internal conflict.

#### RELIGION AND PARTY POLITICS IN ZEGACHE: THE REINTERPREATION OF THE AGRARIAN CONFLICT

Zegache’s agrarian conflict involved a struggle between agrarian and municipal authorities who identified with *comuneros* (communal property holders) and *propietarios* (private property holders) respectively. Today, and since the last decade of the XX century, the conflict has been reinterpreted as a conflict between political parties. This reinterpretation is based on a complex history that involves the challenging of the local and indigenous customary system of governance called *usos y costumbres*, and the changing national political context.

Before the 1990s, Zegache was governed by the local customary system of *usos y costumbres*. Although the term *usos y costumbres* is hard to define, as it represents different things for different communities and it is based on local experiences of self-government, I will provide a brief working definition. *Usos y costumbres* is a system of local governance and justice

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<sup>9</sup> Members of the Bufete Popular Universitario (BPU, University People’s Attorneys) were involved in this conflict, and they supported Zegache. The BPU was part of a larger scale social mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s, and it provided free legal assistance to labor unions and peasant organizations (see Martínez 1990; Stephen 2013).

<sup>10</sup> There are numerous agrarian conflicts in Oaxaca. The causes of these conflicts are diverse, and as in the case of Zegache, many of these conflicts are related to disputes over boundaries between communities and many of them date back to property titles granted during the Colonial period. As in the case of Zegache, some of these conflicts became even more complex with the agrarian reform that followed the Mexican Revolution.

administration that is based on decisions taken during communal assemblies. Local authorities are elected in these assemblies, that in past were mostly composed of men but now include female villagers as well. However, under the *usos y costumbres* system, “candidates” for municipal positions can only be selected from a pool of villagers that have already accomplished specific communal obligations, in the civil and religious cargo system and who have proven to be responsible and knowledgeable members of society. The communal obligations are associated with civil and religious celebrations in which people (generally as a couple) serve, without a salary, and sometimes paying out of their own pocket for different community celebrations and events. These obligations, or cargos, start with community members taking care of the local church by cleaning it, and making the appropriate arrangements in specific ceremonies (see Stephen 2005:237). As community members get more involved in the system they can become *mayordomos* and host major celebratory feasts in which the patron saints of the village are honored (in Zegache there are two main saints that are honored: *Dulce Nombre*, or Sweet Name, which takes place in January and February; and Santa Ana, which takes place in July and August). Since hosting one of these major celebrations requires considerable amounts of wealth (both in species and in cash) only well-off households can have this “privilege.”

The relationship between the *mayordomía* religious cargo system and the civil municipal cargo system is contentions not only in Oaxacan communities, but also in other communities across Mexico (see Chance and Taylor 1985; Monaghan 1990; Stephen 2005). In Zegache, as in many other communities, becoming a *mayordomo* conveys prestige and respect, and actively changes the status of the *mayordomo* in the community (see Stephen 2005:240). According to Zegacheños, the prestige and respect associated with being a *mayordomo* were important factors when local assemblies elected municipal authorities under the *usos y costumbres* system. Thus,

those who refused to serve as *mayordomo* were also interested in creating new channels to obtain political influence in the community.

Zegache followed this customary law until the late 1990s. The reasons why the community moved away from this system of customary law and governance can also be connected to the agrarian conflict. For the sake of brevity, I will provide one example of how and why customary law was opposed by villagers in some instances. In Zegache, local authorities chose *mayordomos* based on a set of criteria that emphasized previous community service, resources available, and marital status. Since being a *mayordomo* implied spending significant amounts of wealth, not everybody was willing to take on this responsibility. This led to the local authorities' decision to force this service upon some members of the community—resulting in the open rejection by some people of this obligation and their refusal to participate. Some community members saw people who refused to participate as going against tradition.

The customary law and governance system also required villagers to partake in unpaid communal labor (*tequio*), which often meant doing maintenance work in local buildings (such as church, the government offices, the cemetery, and the schools). Men, women, and older children were asked to contribute with their labor when the local authorities considered necessary. Those who did not engage in the *tequio* labor could be incarcerated for one or two days. This required, unpaid, communal *tequio* labor was also seen as an imposition by some people. According to local versions, the resistance to participate in these “traditional ways” increased in the 1970s when people resisted arrest, occasionally by violent means.

The conflict regarding municipal authorities and *usos y costumbres* needs to be understood in conjunction with post-revolutionary agrarian politics. The comuneros and the propietarios fought (and continue to fight) to gain control of the municipal government. The



importance of municipal government offices increased greatly by the late 1990s and 2000s when the Mexican state began to channel resources directly to county-level municipal governments. Although both comuneros and propietarios could participate in the local assemblies to make decisions regarding the community and to elect authorities, they would often look for ways to undermine and disrupt such meetings. Here is one example of that process. In 1979 Álvaro Herrera, an engineer from the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, traveled to Zegache in order to secure formal approval from a community assembly to work on the communal land granting process that the federal government was charged with implementing in the community (SRA 276.1/577:01114, 01115-01116). The meeting proved unsuccessful as engineer Herrera found out that the people attending the meeting (including the municipal president, Tomás Cruz) claimed to be private property owners, propietarios. The municipal president also stated that in Zegache they were not interested in communal land as everyone in the community was a propietario. Engineer Herrera describes how during the meeting the municipal president spoke “in dialect” (referring to the fact that he addressed the people in Zapotec, which he couldn’t understand), and those assembled failed to reach an agreement for a second meeting, the undercutting the progress of the effort to measure and title communal lands for the community.

In 1979, the national political parties, like the PRI and the PRD, did not appear in Zegache’s local election ballots, as authorities were still elected through *usos y costumbres*. But the local tensions within propietarios and comuneros, and the unconformities with the customary law system provoked a change in the political system of Zegache as it changed from *usos y costumbres* to political parties in the 1990s.

### *From Usos y Costumbres to Political Parties*

The changes in the customary law system need to be understood within Oaxaca's and Mexico's recognition of indigenous rights and the broader political context. The customary law system was only legally recognized in the 1990s, in the context of Mexico's ratification of Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization in 1990. The state of Oaxaca modified its constitution in 1990 to also recognize *usos y costumbres* in a majority of its many municipalities. The Zapatista rebellion of 1994 brought further attention to indigenous rights and autonomy and led to a long political process in which individual states were allowed to decide whether or not they would recognize *usos y costumbres*. The state of Oaxaca was a pioneer in this effort.

In addition, Mexico's political system was undergoing a "process" of democratization that involved the strengthening of two opposition parties that challenged the PRI rule. The conservative *Partido Acción Nacional*, or National Action Party (PAN), and the left-leaning PRD became important contestants in the national political scene. In fact, the long rule that the PRI established after the Revolution only ended in 2000 nationally when the PAN won the presidential elections (the PRI would return to the presidential chair in 2012). The PRI's rule in Oaxaca didn't end until 2010. Zegache's move away from the customary law system has to be understood in this national context, as well as in the village's internal struggle over the customary system.

According to some analysts (see Recondo 1999, 2001; Anaya Muñoz 2001) the "legalization" of *usos y costumbres* did not necessarily change the relationship between indigenous municipalities and the Mexican state; in fact, it was a political strategy used by the PRI to neutralize potential losses. The advocates of this argument contend that *usos y costumbres*

was already practiced in many municipalities and legalizing it barely changed the local situations (see Díaz Montes 2001:124; Recondo 2001:110).

In the midst of national political changes, Zegache became one of the few indigenous municipalities in Oaxaca to have implemented the electoral party-based system in 1998 and to abandon the civil-religious cargo system as a way of designating community authorities and leadership. Although, at the beginning, the PRI remained in office, several local versions suggest that representatives of the PAN moved quickly into the village creating an incipient opposition that did not last too long. Oddly enough, most people who supported the right-wing PAN later on joined the left-wing PRD in the 2000s—suggesting that in fact their motivation was more anti-PRI than in favor of the other political parties initially.<sup>11</sup> The PRD has been in office in Zegache since 2004, and it will be at least until 2016, having won a series of local elections for the equivalent of mayor, city council, and other offices.

The conflict between political parties and the agrarian conflict overlap in ways that suggest that we look at the ways in which the “multi-scalar politics of the local” (Sassen 2003:11) create connections that often do not respond to conventional scales of politics. In the case of Zegache, the PRI—the party that originally started the neoliberal turn in Mexico and the party that signed NAFTA in 1994—is associated with the defenders of communal land. The leftist party (the PRD) represents those in favor of privatization. In this instance the re-interpretation of the agrarian conflict as a conflict between political parties obscures historical relationships the *comuneros* and the *propietarios*.

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<sup>11</sup> Although this “alliance” might seem unintuitive at first, the PAN and the PRD also ousted the PRI from the governor’s office in 2010 when Gabino Cué was elected.

The seemingly unexpected consequences of the conflict between *comuneros* and *propietarios* can be better understood in the context of multiple and, apparently, contradictory political ideas (see Stephen 2002a:287-315). For example, the “land regularization” program of PROCEDE (*Programa de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Titulación de Solares Urbanos* or Certification of Ejidal Rights and Titling of Urban Plots Program established in 1992), that was part of the neoliberal set of economic policies that were part of NAFTA, sought to break up and privatize communal land holdings in rural Mexico in order to make the Mexican countryside more productive and competitive in relation to its northern neighbors.

In the case of Zegache, it would seem that if one group were to support the privatization effort put forward by the government it would be the propietarios, but the propietarios from Zegache actively opposed PROCEDE. The rejection of PROCEDE by the propietarios can be interpreted as part of a heightened suspicion about the agrarian conflict that has permeated Zegache’s history. It can also be seen as the result of the intricate ways that political discourses are appropriated and reinterpreted in regional and local contexts. Thus, propietarios, who favor the left-leaning PRD, opposed the PROCEDE. This is mostly because agrarian reform is linked to PRI governments. PROCEDE was also established under the PRI. Thus, propietarios believe that comuneros would be able to control the land, and land regulation since comuneros are affiliated with the PRI.

Although the move away from a customary law and justice system (*usos y costumbres*) and into the party system was rooted in the agrarian conflict, it is not reducible to agrarian politics. The electoral party system has created new types of political participation and manipulation that has also influenced migration movements. For example, the PRD won the 2008 local elections based on a promise to privatize land (without going through the

PROCEDE). In order to do this, in 2009, the elected municipal president demanded a \$5,000 peso payment (at the time the equivalent to approximately \$450 USD) from 629 villagers to facilitate the transition from communal land to private property (see Matias 2009). Numerous migrants were notified of these efforts by their relatives living in Zegache. The Zegacheño communities in Oregon and in Mexico City were also involved in either sending money specifically for this purpose or returning to Zegache to resist land privatization.

The re-inscription of the agrarian conflict as a quarrel between political parties has also created important political connections between Zegache and regional politicians. For example, in 2010 PRD municipal mayor Pedro Gaspar Chompa and his team were trying to complete a new road with the neighboring village of San Antonino Castillo Velasco. This project required that the municipal authorities extract construction material (sand and gravel) from one of the small hills that surrounds the village and that, in theory, is part of the communal lands. This created a conflict with the comuneros. The problem started when comuneros realized that unknown trucks were extracting materials without their permission. Immediately they decided to organize themselves and stop the extraction from the land of sand and gravel for construction. In July 2010, comuneros led by Eva Diego, a PRI congresswoman at the time (now she's with the PRD), testified in the state's congress that the mayor had misused municipal resources (Unknown Author 2010). At the same time, comuneros from Zegache were protesting in front of the state congress, demanding the removal of the municipal president, Pedro Gaspar Chompa (Pérez Santos 2010a). In November of that same year, in a direct confrontation in the community, the municipal authorities referred to the comuneros as "*guerrilleros*," which literally translates into guerrilla fighters, thus implying that comuneros would be willing to unlawfully use force and violence against the municipal authorities (see Pérez Santos 2010b).

These events show that the recasting of this conflict in terms of political parties has not converted violent contests into peaceful elections but, in fact, has reshaped existing conflicts in the community. The transition from a *usos y costumbres* municipality to a political party electoral democracy took place as young Zegacheños (especially men) started migrating in larger numbers to the U.S.

## THE HISTORY OF MIGRATIONS IN ZEGACHE

In order to understand the history of migration in Zegache we must look beyond transnational migration, a rather recent phenomenon, and consider internal and seasonal migration. Once we include internal and seasonal migration the perspective on migrants and migration expands and provides new insights into the ways in which gender and kinship roles influence who gets to go where and for how long. This also allows to expand our perspective from “transnational” experiences (which imply the crossing of international borders) that often leave out the crossing of other borders, such as racial, ethnic, and class borders, that are often crossed by internal migrants (see Stephen 2007:5-6).

As I’ve mentioned before, although transnational migration in Zegache dates at least to the 1960s and is connected to the *Bracero* program, it wasn’t a popular option in the community until the 1980s reaching its peak in the 1990s and 2000s. Before transnational migration was a popular option among Zegacheños and Zegacheñas, people in the community engaged in other forms of migratory movements. For example, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, entire families from Zegache were displaced as local conflicts escalated, and men and women had to flee Zegache and resettled in other parts of Mexico.

In the first decade of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, migration in Zegache mostly meant seasonally migrating to the neighboring state of Chiapas to pick cotton. This seems to have been a yearly activity in which both men and women participated, although it is very likely that the seasonal farmworkers were mostly men. This type of migration allowed young men and women to earn cash, and it also created relationships outside of the sphere of the house or the *barrio*. Seasonal migration extended until the 1970s but it stopped when cotton from India and China became a more profitable option.

Starting in the 1960s women also started migrating to Mexico City to work as domestic employees for urban and middle-class families. This was a widespread phenomenon and women from Zegache had social networks that allowed them to find work in Mexico City. Young women from Zegache, some of them in their teens, traveled through the now defunct train system from a nearby train station to Mexico City for 30 pesos (the equivalent to 2.40 USD at the time). Although the trip was long, the most difficult part of the experience was arriving in Mexico City in the dawn of the so-called “Mexican Miracle” characterized by accelerated urbanization and the growth of the middle-class.

The “Mexican Miracle” is a phrase that is often used to refer to a period of economic stability and growth that roughly occurred between the 1940s and the 1970s. The Mexican Peso, for example, maintained a stable exchange rate against the U.S. dollar for a period of 22 years between 1954 and 1976.<sup>12</sup> Economic stability was reinforced by programs of industrialization and urban infrastructure that intensified urbanization as people moved to the cities (especially to Mexico City) in search for work. As the urban middle-class grew, and the labor supply surpassed

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<sup>12</sup> This can be easily contrasted by looking at the high fluctuation of the Mexican Peso against the dollar after 1981 when the exchange rate went from 1 USD: 12.50 Mexican Pesos in 1981 to 1 USD: 2,289 Mexican Pesos in 1988. See <http://www.countdowntomexico.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=190>

the labor demand, men and women started taking on jobs in the service sector. Some of these jobs were in the formal economy (e.g. working in supermarkets), others were in informal sectors of the economy (e.g. domestic work, and childcare). In the 1980s the economy slowed down and jobs became scarcer, but the migration of Mexican from the countryside did not stop, creating infrastructural problems for the cities (as people would often build houses on land that did not belong to them, often without basic services). This also meant that migration to Mexico City became more complicated for Zegacheños and Zegacheñas. Numerous women from Zegache migrated to Mexico City during the Mexican Miracle, and participated in domestic work and childcare in middle-class households, especially as city dwellers considered having a domestic employee as a symbol of status.

Most women who relocated to Mexico City would be live-in domestic employees and only had Sunday off. Elizabeth, a women in her seventies, recounts her first experiences in Mexico City when she was a teenager in the 1960s:

“When I first arrived here I lived with a woman from the *pueblo*. She was the one who one day told me to go with her, and I did. In the beginning we would go out, *a pasear*, a lot, we would go everywhere. We would go to Xochimilco, Chapultepec [tourist sites in Mexico City], up and down; and even if I don’t know how to read, I never got lost. But that woman started going out with a boyfriend, so she wanted her privacy, and I didn’t see her as much. Then I started hanging out with another woman from the *pueblo*. She was older but I didn’t care, we would go everywhere. We would meet each other very early on Sunday, and then at night I would tell her “OK, let’s go back to work but I’ll see you next Sunday.””

After four years of working as a domestic employee, Isabel found a job in a manufacturing plant where five other women from Zegache worked.



Men also migrated to Mexico City but many of them joined the Mexican military. Men started joining the Mexican military in the 1960s. They were often deployed to other parts of Mexico, including Mexico City, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Tabasco, and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. Many of the men who joined the Military were young and single, and when they married they would either marry a woman from Zegache or a woman from the town closer to their Military base. If a man was deployed within the state of Oaxaca, for example, then his wife and children would stay in Zegache but if a man was deployed to Chihuahua or to Chiapas this often meant that their wife and children would go with them. In the same way, women from other states sometimes moved back to Zegache once their husbands retired or quit the Mexican military. Enlisting in the Mexican military is often the only option available for those young men who don't have enough economic or social resources to migrate to the U.S., who lack formal education and technical skills necessary to find jobs in urban centers, and who can no longer rely on subsistence agriculture. Joining the military provides these young men with access to formal education, technical skills, social security, and a steady salary.

The situation of men joining the military is similar to the case of women from Zegache who migrated to Mexico City during the Mexican Miracle. Women from Zegache migrated to cities as an increased demand for labor emerged in new factories and urban middle class households. In the same way, the increase participation of men in the military is connected to national and international political and economic contexts that have expanded the activities and the ranks of the Mexican army. Generally speaking, the Mexican military engages in three main actions: in providing support in cases of any type of disaster (Plan DN-III-E), in fighting and controlling "insurgent" movements, and in suppressing activities related to illegal drugs. The changes in the dynamics of the military have mostly changed because of the ways in which the

last two actions (counter-insurgency and combating illegal drugs) have been approached at the national and the international level.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the Mexican military was mostly concerned with combating a growing number of guerrillas and other social movements in the context of the Cold War and the Cuban Revolution of 1959. The Mexican military as well as other security forces were active participants in the *Guerra Sucia*, or Dirty War, in Mexico, which begun in the 1960s and that was characterized by the surveillance and repression of dissident groups and social movements. One of the best known insurgency groups of this period was Lucío Cabañas' *Partido de los Pobres*, or Party of the Poor (PdIP), which operated in the mountains of the southern state of Guerrero. The PdIP operated as a guerrilla movement until the early 1970s. The decline of the PdIP seems to have been a direct consequence of the expansion of military presence in the area, which led to massive repression and violence. Guerrilla movements were also present in Mexico City, particularly through the *Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre*, a Marxist-Leninist urban guerrilla that operated in Mexico City. The presence of guerrillas, insurgent armies, and social movements did not cease in the 1970s, and the military continues to have an active role in controlling and repressing such groups, especially in southern states such as Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Michoacán.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to counter-insurgency activities, the presence of the Mexican military in these four states (Chiapas, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Michoacán) is also predicated on the fact that drug

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<sup>13</sup> In addition to the PdIP, the *Ejército Popular Revolucionario* or Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) also has strong presence in Guerrero. Actions undertaken by the EPR have taken place outside Guerrero, including the adjacent state of Oaxaca. More recently, in Michoacán, a state neighboring Guerrero, there has been numerous uprisings by community armed forces, *Grupos de Autodefensa Armada* (Armed Self-Defense Groups). Of course, the most well-known guerrilla/social movement in rural Mexico is the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), which has historical ties to the Frente de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Front (FLN) that appeared in the late 1960s.

cartels operated in those states (see Figure 2).<sup>14</sup> Like in the case of Colombia and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC), the “war on drugs” and counter-insurgency strategies have important connections. The “war on drugs,” initiated by the U.S. government, increased military spending in Mexico and the Mexican army saw an important increase in the number of soldiers deployed to combat the production and trafficking of unauthorized substances employing 9,000 soldiers in 1985 to 94,000 in 2010 (Castillo García 2010). The expansion of the Mexican military, and the increase participation of men from Zegache in the military, coincided with structural adjustments (described below) that contributed to the intensification of transnational migration in Oaxaca. Joining the military, like transnational migration, became an important option for the men of Zegache.



Figure 2. Map of Mexico illustrating the location of the states of Michoacán, Guerrero, Oaxaca, and Chiapas (not to scale).

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<sup>14</sup> According to the Mexican daily *Excelsior*, in 2015 Guerrero was being disputed by five major drug cartels: The Hermanos Beltrán Leyva, the Familia Michoacana, the Pacific Cartel, the Jalisco Cartel New Generation, and the Caballeros Templarios (Vicenteño, David. “Cinco Cártels Pelean Guerrero; es la Entidad Más Disputada por el Narco” In *Excelsior*, September 23, 2015).

The increased participation of men and women from Zegache in both formal and informal cash economies transformed the town's infrastructure, which in turn facilitated other avenues to participate in cash economy. This is clearly reflected in the transport system. Before the 1970s, traveling to and from Zegache was a serious matter since public transportation was limited and, in most cases, people had to walk at least four miles to reach the highway in which they would be able to take a bus to Oaxaca City. The introduction of public buses to Zegache was a combination of an increasing demand for public transport to Oaxaca City—because of all of the men who joined the Military and who traveled constantly to Oaxaca City—and an increase in remittances and capital earned in the U.S. by the neighboring town of Santiago Apostol. The constant interaction with people of Santiago Apostol, who also used the same bus system, also provoked a rise in transnational migration in Zegache.

The rise in Zegache migration to the U.S. seems to be connected to the consolidation of social migrant networks of the neighboring community of Santiago Apóstol. Santiagueños and Santiagueñas were in the process of consolidating migrant communities in California and Oregon; and, at the same time, indigenous populations in southern Mexico intensified their transnational migration trends because of “economic structural adjustments” that had started in the 1980s). The structural adjustments comprised a wide range of governmental actions like the halting of land distribution to peasants and the ceasing of price support of crops such as corn, beans, and wheat—forcing small Mexican farmers to compete U.S. producers (see Fox and Salgado 2004; Rees 2007; Riosmena and Massey 2012; Massey et al 2006; Stephen 2002a; 2007). The effects of these structural adjustments and the expansion of regional migratory networks transformed how Zegacheños moved and worked. The end of price supports for corn had deleterious effects in Zegache not only financially but also in the use of land. Most of the

families in Zegache rely on unpredictable seasonal rainfall to grow their crops—price support and corn subsidies were important safety mechanisms when rains were erratic. Thus, for many Zegacheños migration and joining the military became a more reliable source of income than farming.

The first groups of Zegacheños who traveled to the U.S. in the early 1990s were led by men from Santiago Apóstol who acted as *coyotes* and as cultural brokers in the U.S. Men continued to join the Mexican military in the hopes of acquiring enough capital to make the longer trip to the U.S. Women's presence in the dawn of Zegache's transnational migration is not significant, and even to this day the majority of migrants from Zegache in Oregon are men.

However, this does not mean that women have not migrated to the U.S. This, nevertheless, needs to be understood in the context of gender roles in Zegache, and in wider Mexico, that were described above. As it is common in many instances, men's desire to migrate to the U.S. is often the result of a combination of factors that includes contributing to the house economy through remittances, saving money to pay debts, improving and/or constructing their own house (often adjacent to their parents' residence), and obtaining enough money to get married (considering the local marriage protocol). Women who migrate to the U.S. were often part of familial networks. In other words, while men migrate to the U.S. to find work and, thus, to acquire new experiences as individuals or to accumulate savings, women often migrate within a specific structure that had already delineated what their role in the U.S. would be. Moreover, as I discuss in the next chapter, as traveling became easier for people from Zegache and roads allowed a 45 minute commute to Oaxaca City, more women with higher formal education levels, found work in the service industry of a city that depends highly on tourism. Nevertheless, as Anna Tsing (2005:6) states, "the ease of travel [that roads] facilitate is also a structure of

confinement.” After the roads connected Zegache to Oaxaca City, many young men and women commute daily to work or to attend school in Oaxaca City, a city that is famous for its tourist industry.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I present a brief historical overview of Zegache after the Mexican Revolution. I argued that the Mexican Revolution modified existing conflicts and re-inscribed internal divisions in terms of agrarian politics: the division between comuneros (those with communally held land) and propietarios (those with privately owned and titled parcels). During the first thirty years of the quarrel between these two factions in Zegache underwent a period of intense violence often referred to as the *época de los valientes*, or the time of brave men. Violence was often directed inwards towards families in Zegache, but it was also the used against neighboring towns that were disputing land that Zegacheños claimed to own. As I show in the following chapters, this violent period had direct repercussions in migratory movements, as both men and women fled the violent atmosphere.

The complex land tenure system of Zegache involves competing forms of property: communally held land that is held in social tenancy and privately owned land. These two types of tenancy have resulted in conflict between the holders of each type of land. The dispute between comuneros and propietarios has been re-inscribed as a conflict between two major national political parties: the PRI and the PRD. The political party system replaced the *usos y costumbres* customary governance and justice system in the late 1990s, and it has changed the political landscape of the community. All of this affected the socio-economic framework that

structured how locals thought about movement as a source of securing a livelihood. In the 1990s, migration to the U.S. increased significantly.

However, migration to the U.S. was not the first form of border crossing for Zegacheños and Zegacheñas. In fact, the people of Zegache have a long history of crossing borders as they worked in the cotton fields of Chiapas, the urban middle-class households of Mexico City, the military barracks, and the agricultural fields of the Willamette Valley in Oregon. Zegacheños and Zegacheñas have a long history of crossing racial, ethnic, and class borders. Zegache has historically been a “transborder” community. In the following two chapters I analyze how gender roles have shaped the “transborder” experiences of women and men in Zegache.

### **III. INTERNAL AND TRANSNATIONAL WOMEN MIGRANTS**

In Zegache men and women have different migration trajectories. The different gendered kinship and care responsibilities of men and women shape their migrations significantly. Local notions of masculinity and femininity inform who gets to go where, why, and for how long. These ideas of masculinity and femininity are modeled within specific configurations of mobilities and immobility that are produced through complex and dynamic interactions between the local, the regional, the national, and the global. Although femininity in Zegache is defined in terms of being present, of “being there,” women of Zegache have been “on the move” at least since the 1950s as internal and transnational migrants. The mobility and the immobility of women is defined by local gender ideologies, by social networks, and by the transportation infrastructure in the region; it is through the articulation of these three factors that ideas about femininity and migration get discussed and constantly negotiated.

In this chapter I explore the relationship between femininity and migration, particularly through the social and material ways in which configurations of mobilities and immobility have been constructed, and how such configurations become articulated with diverse and dynamic notions of femininity. I analyze women’s mobility (internal and transnational migrations, as well as daily commuting) through a conceptual framework that problematizes the ways in which social networks and movement are gendered. I analyze internal and transnational migrations as processes that are interconnected through kinship and care relationships that are deeply gendered. In this sense, my analysis provides a new perspective on the ways in which women are continually negotiating their femininity through social networks that promote both mobility and immobility. I particularly focus on the experiences of female internal migrants who moved to



Mexico City as, I argue, they pose greater challenges to “traditional” gender roles<sup>15</sup> in their community because their experience as single young women navigating Mexico’s capital relying on female social networks allows them to obtain social legitimation by “claiming” migration experience and courageousness.

I begin this chapter discussing the study of Mexican women and migration, I consider the work of scholars based in Mexico and abroad. Although Mexican-based scholarship on gender and migration started as a means to explain and understand rural-urban migrations of women (see Ariza 2007; Arizpe 1977; Goldsmith 1998; Szasz 1993) more recent scholarship (especially in Mexico) has focused on transnational migrants. This change of focus is based on several factors and rests on the assumption that internal migration has been displaced, in importance and in magnitude, by transnational migration (Kearney 1986; Ariza 2007). An historical approach to migration shows that this is not the case in Zegache as internal migration is not only relevant but provides fundamental support for transnational migrants. This perspective offers an alternative take on the claim made by Pessar and Mahler (2003) regarding the invisibility of women in transnational migration because conceptualizing internal and transnational migrations as interconnected processes allows women to be important actors in transnational migrations even when they aren’t migrants themselves.

Local history and notions of femininity, through their gendered kinship and care relationships and responsibilities, have informed the ways in which Zegache’s women become mobile. In the second half of this chapter I analyze and compare four scenarios and three locations that women of Zegache experience and occupy. Based on oral histories and participant-

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<sup>15</sup> I use quotation marks around the word *traditional* to indicate that “traditional” gender roles are a social and historical construct, and that tradition can be used to legitimate and explain differential treatments for based on gender differences.

observation, I analyze the following four experiences: (1) living and working in the U.S., (2) daily commuting to nearby urban centers, (3) living and working in Mexico City, and (4) staying and returning to Zegache. These four scenarios are condensed into three locations: Mexico City, the U.S., and Zegache. The asymmetry between scenarios and places is due to the fact that I study the location of Zegache, Oaxaca as one place although I study two divergent experiences: women who stayed and women who returned. I do this to show how the experience of migration transforms how women experience a specific place, by transforming social networks and notions of femininity.

As I show in later chapters, people become mobile in complex configurations that arise historically and combine notions of masculinity and femininity, gendered kinship and care responsibilities, differential access to an array of social networks, and systems of transportation. These configurations also point to the fact that the women presented in this chapter do not only exist in relation to a nuclear family structure (which is typically the family of procreation<sup>16</sup>) but are part of larger networks that include both men and women, relatives and non-relatives, and co-villagers and new acquaintances.

## PAST ANALYSES OF WOMEN IN MEXICAN MIGRATIONS

Anthropologists and other social scientists have increasingly turned their attention towards transnational migration diverting attention from processes of internal migration. More significantly, the complex and historical relationship between transnational and internal

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<sup>16</sup> I use the terms “family of orientation” to signify the family where a person was raised (e.g. one’s parents), and “family of procreation” to signify the family that a person forms through parenthood or through shared residency (e.g. one’s romantic partner and children).

migrations has not been explored in-depth. Because female internal migrants are neither transnational migrants nor women “who stay” they appear marginal to the study of transnational migration. Even in cases that mention internal migration, or internal migrants, such references are not explored in the same detail as transnational migration. In this chapter I seek to counter, and complement, these views by analyzing the importance of studying female internal migrants. The experience of internal migration is significant for migrants themselves as they return to Zegache or they decide to migrate again (sometimes to the U.S.), and for the rest of the community. Taking internal migration seriously is also important in communities where transnational migration is dominated by men, which often obscures the role that women have within “global households” (Safri and Graham 2010) as internal migrants.

Scholars based in the U.S. turned their attention to women migrants in an attempt to correct the overwhelming male-centered accounts of Latin American and primarily Mexican migrants. The male-centered approach to Latin American migration was, in part, the legacy of the *Bracero* guest-worker program. As U.S.-based scholars increasingly turned to feminist approaches not only to shed light on women migrants already in the U.S. who were “portrayed as somehow detached or irrelevant to the labor force” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003:5) but also to the gendered effects of economic globalization that created new employment opportunities for women while, at the same time, constructing devalued “female-typed jobs” (the female “serving class”) (Sassen 2003:45-46) and creating a deficit of care in sending countries as women were forced to enter into “global care transfers” (see Parreñas 2005, 2008; Ozegyn and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2008; Safri and Graham 2010). In this regard, U.S.-based scholars moved from the “add and stir” approach to an intersectional analysis (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003) that focused on the

relationship between race, class, occupation, and migratory status (e.g. Menjívar 2003; Stephen 2007).

The intellectual trajectory of Mexican researchers is different but it converged with U.S scholars. Marina Ariza (2007) argues that the study of women as migrants in Mexico started in the mid-seventies and was motivated by two factors: (1) the rise of feminist perspectives on migration, and (2) the preoccupation with the increased number of rural women who migrated to the cities. In fact, as Ariza (2007:457) states in a footnote: “It was the *emergency* of female migration, as a topic of research, the entry point *par excellence* for the critical analysis of gender in population displacements.”<sup>17</sup> This focus on internal women migrants characterized the research on gender and migration in Mexico during two decades (1975-1995) (see Arias 2000; Ariza 2007).

There were major contributions that addressed the importance of women in growing urban centers, especially in the so-called “informal economy.” Lourdes Arizpe’s (1977, 1978) groundbreaking work analyzed the divergent trajectories of indigenous Mazahua men and women from two communities as they moved to urban centers in central Mexico. Later on, Ivonne Szasz (1993) would expand on Arizpe’s work as she studied the diversification of mobility of rural men and women from Malinalco (a small city located south of Mexico City) that migrated internally (regionally and to urban centers) and who started migrating to the U.S. These two scholars provided important insights in relation to internal migrations in pre-NAFTA

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<sup>17</sup> The translation and the emphasis are mine. The original text reads: “Fue la emergencia de la migración femenina como objeto de estudio la vía de entrada por excelencia de la crítica de género al análisis de los desplazamientos de población.”

Mexico emphasizing gender as a constitutive dimension that allowed and motivated women to pursue some jobs but not others in an increasingly industrial and globalized country.

However, with the rise in the transnational approach in the mid-nineties (e.g. Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Kearney 1995; and Rouse 1991) in the U.S., Mexican scholarship on migration shifted its attention. As internal migration became relegated in anthropological research, the academic focus emphasized either female transnational migrants or the women “left behind” by male transnational migrants (Preibisch, et al. 2002; Salgado De Snyder 1993). In addition, Ariza (2007:463) contends that this shift responded to a change in the socio-economic Mexican context. The increase in transnational migration, particularly male, meant that internal migrants diminished. Therefore, academic interest of Mexican scholars who had previously focused on female internal migrants shifted towards transnationalism, echoing their U.S.-based counterparts.

Although there is some empirical truth to the notion that transnational migration displaced internal migration “on the ground” it is important to question the extent to which this claim impacts the conceptualization and the study of the experiences of internal migrants, and how it affects empirical and theoretical understandings of the links between internal and transnational migrations. Exploring these links, I argue, can advance feminist understandings of how different experiences of mobility (internal and transnational migrations, as well as commuting) are shaped through gendered kinship and care responsibilities that are caught in the gears of regional, national, and global processes that produce changing notions of femininity and masculinity.

In this regard this chapter analyzes how “intimate relations and labor migrations cannot be separated from one another within the realities of everyday lives” (Boehm 2012:11) by

looking at how women in Zegache experience different forms of mobility. For women, mobility is enabled and constrained by different factors, including “non-commodity chains” of production and reproduction that are created through responsibilities of kinship and care, and that often result in “the feminization of staying or not moving” (Boehm 2012:47). However, the meaning of “staying or not moving” shifts once we move the lens of the analysis from the “transnational” to the “transborder” (Stephen 2007). A transborder perspective permits a broader understanding of how mobility influences gender roles even without the crossing of national borders. This shift also helps to situate how masculinity and femininity are constructed on both sides of the Mexico-U.S. border through the participation of men and women in specific zones of labor (e.g. Castellanos 2010; Ong 2006), and through the construction of race and citizenship (e.g. Leinaweaver 2013; Stephen 2007).

In the sections that follow I analyze the experiences of women from Zegache with diverse histories of mobility and immobility. I rely on insights from both Mexico and U.S.-based scholars to analyze how social networks emerge in specific localities, and how mobility is shaped by kinship and care responsibilities. I start by describing how the gendered space of Zegache.

#### GENDERING ZEGACHE AND WOMEN’S MOBILITY.

Men’s and women’s aspirations and movements are shaped by ideas of femininity and masculinity that are intertwined with responsibilities of care and kinship. These linkages become apparent when we look at how women’s care and kinship responsibilities have allowed them to migrate internally to Mexico City in order to provide remittances to their parents while also

relieving them of financial burden. In addition, local violence motivated the relocation of entire families to other parts of Mexico (in what could also be called displacement). In this section, I provide a more nuanced approach to the connections between gendered kinship and care roles, different forms of local violence, and changes in Zegache's transportation system in relation to women's mobilities and immobility.

Like many other parts of Mexico and Latin America (and probably in the rest of the world), in Zegache women's roles are more closely associated with what has been defined as "the domestic sphere," while men's roles are seen as part of the "public sphere".<sup>18</sup> However, this dichotomy blurs the ways in which the distinction between "domestic" and "public" spheres is created as it ignores the dynamics that, based on ideas of proper femininity, pressure women into assuming roles as care providers and that also police the mobility of women.

Women are expected to cook most of the time, for intimate family meals, special celebrations, and for *jornaleros* or hired day laborers who work in the family agricultural plot. Women are also expected to perform other activities related to the house, such as cleaning and taking care of infants. Men, on the other hand, are seen as providing sustenance to the family, which typically involves agricultural production, construction, joining the military or the police, and different occupations as transnational migrants. It is interesting to point out that although women are also heavily involved in agricultural labor, they will often only identify themselves as "helpers"<sup>19</sup> while men will actively identify as "peasant" or *campesino*. Thus, while women's

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<sup>18</sup> There is ample literature that supports this claim across Mexico. For example Boehm (2012), and Goldring (2001).

<sup>19</sup> Patricia Pessar (2003:34-25) has also found this type of response among Dominican female migrants in the U.S.

role as care providers reduces their mobility, men's mobility is facilitated and encouraged as it is seen as connected to work occupations.

As is the case in other communities of Mexico, male migration has also resulted in an increase of female house heads, at least in *de facto* household heads (e.g. Preibisch, et al. 2002). In other words, although men who are absent from the community might still be perceived as household heads, their authority and decision making power can be tenuous and mediated by women. This should not be mistaken with an idea of women's empowerment since local customs of patrilocality and patrilineality are at play, and significantly shape decision-making processes. In Zegache, it is usually men who inherit land, agricultural and urban plots, while women do not frequently receive land from their parents. This leads to a patrilocal residence pattern as women, once married, move to the land inherited by their husbands which is usually located within or next to the house of their husband's parents and brothers. Thus, when men migrate their wives are often heavily supervised by their mothers-in-law leading to what one woman in Zegache described as *tutelaje de la suegras*, or tutelage of the mothers-in-law.

The *tutelaje de las suegras* (tutelage of the mothers-in-law) merits special attention as it shows how kinship roles are gendered and how femininity is policed. In addition, as I discuss later, it also shows how changing notions of masculinity and femininity disrupt patriarchal forms of dominance. The word tutelage derives its meaning from the Latin *tutēla* and it is defined by the Oxford dictionary as "Protection of or authority over someone or something; guardianship," such protection and guardianship, according to the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, often implies taking care of those who "do not possess total civil capacity." In this sense, the *tutelaje de las suegras* can be defined as a responsibility bestowed upon the mother-in-law, reinforced by gender and kinship roles, to act as both the protector of the family and the guardian



of a newlywed woman who does not yet possess the knowledge of an experienced wife and mother. In this sense, mothers-in-law are seen as having the capacity to police and chastise their daughters-in-law (*nueras*) if they believe they aren't behaving in a properly feminine way. As daughters-in-law move in with their in-laws, following "traditional" patrilocal residence patterns, they also assume domestic responsibilities. This means that they are responsible for cleaning, cooking, and child-rearing, activities that reify femininity in terms of domesticity. According to oral histories, making tortillas is an activity where the *nueras* and *suegras* positions are exemplified. Numerous women narrated how daughters-in-law would frequently be publicly ridiculed if their tortillas were not round enough or big enough, as mothers-in-law would hang their odd-shaped tortillas in the church's patio. Moreover, if the *nueras*' performance during the tortilla preparation was seen as deficient, the *suegras* would burn their hands directly on the hot cooking surface called *comal*.

The *tutelaje de las suegras* also points to the importance of analyzing hierarchical relationships among women as a field where ideas about kinship and gender are negotiated and disputed. The complex relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, which will be exemplified in numerous ethnographic examples throughout this dissertation, has only been studied peripherally in relation to migration and gender roles (e.g. Boehm 2012:42-43). Numerous studies that analyze the relationship between migration and gender roles attempt to provide a balance of women's gains in terms of autonomy. For example, Goldring (2001) compellingly argues that in communities of Mexican immigrants in the U.S., men "tend to be more interested in returning to Mexico" than women (p. 507). For Goldring, this discrepancy is explained because men lose authority in the family processes and control of the household as they lose status (see also Boehm 2012:75-78; Pessar 2003:29) while women experience "a

relative gain in status in the United States” (Goldring 2001:507). This also rings true in the case of Zegache but, as I show in the next paragraph, the analysis has to consider the role of the mother-in-law in the negotiations of gendered performances within the household in Mexico. In this sense, the analysis of gender roles has to be based on an understanding that conceptualizes “women” (and “men”) as negotiating and constructing their gendered identities within complex kinship and care networks through multi-pronged relationships that take place in different spaces.

Social and technological changes have transformed how mothers-in-law police their daughters-in-law yet the *tutelage* continues to emphasize the importance of women’s “domesticity” and their responsibility to “be present.” Home-made tortillas have been displaced by tortillas bought from a *tortilleria* (where tortillas are produced mechanically), and buying tortillas has become a more acceptable practice. The absence of the sons/husbands in the house has modified the position of mothers-in-law in relation to their daughters-in-law as their reporting of “unfeminine” or “suspect” behavior can become controversial if it is not enforced by the son. A strict mother-in-law will often report to her migrant son the comings and goings of his wife. As I will explain in a later chapter, these multi-pronged relationships create dilemmas of care that often go beyond the parties involved. In the particular case presented here, the migrant son has to carefully consider how enforcing the *tutelage* will be perceived not only by his wife but also by his children. In this regard, a woman who works in a bakery in Oaxaca City told me: “my mother-in-law calls my husband [in California] and tells him that I have been gone all day but my husband knows that I have to work, so he doesn’t say anything to me. I mean, I still make sure that my children have all of their meals.” As women enter the labor market in different capacities, the space of proper femininity is redefined and expanded, and yet continues to be

anchored in care responsibilities particularly in relation to providing care through child-rearing. These transformations also modify the *suegra-nuera* relationship as the structural position of the mother-in-law is increasingly being displaced from a surveillance role to a care-taker role in Zegache (the *suegra* becomes an *abuelita*) as the mother-in-law can provide childcare when the daughter-in-law is working. In the context of migration, the structural position of the mother-in-law is mostly irrelevant in the day-to-day activities due to the almost inexistent ability to police the activities of the daughter-in-law but it can become relevant if the mother-in-law requests special financial help from her son, or asks him to return to Zegache.

The perceived domesticity of proper femininity is not exclusively enforced by the in-laws but it is present through the care responsibilities that women have within their families, especially as daughters. As I discuss in the following section, women's mobility has been significantly tied to the possibility of returning home, temporarily or permanently, to provide care on a relatively short notice while having the option of quickly and cheaply returning to their city jobs if needed, especially given the availability of "female-typed" jobs that while underpaid and undervalued are constantly in demand (Arizpe 1977; Sassen 2003). For such reasons, families would be less opposed to allowing young, single women to migrate by themselves to Mexico City (or to other urban centers) while they would vehemently oppose single women to migrate transnationally.

Zegache's migration history has to be understood as a diverse set of interlocking relationships that produce differentiated mobilities and immobility. A central aspect of these interlocking relationships when discussing migration is gender, and the care and kinship responsibilities of women. Women in Zegache have been part of several migratory movements,

both as independent and as associational migrants.<sup>20</sup> In order to better understand how gender is reconstituted historically in a multi-sited community I compare the experiences of women with divergent migrant trajectories, women who stay in Zegache, and women who commute to Oaxaca City on a daily basis.

I start by discussing transnational migration and commuting to provide a point of comparison with migration to Mexico City. Like in the case of migration to Mexico City, these two forms of mobility are connected to the transportation infrastructure as well as to gendered kinship and care responsibilities. Mobility presents challenges to “traditional” gender roles and creates spaces of defiance even as they are still produced within a patriarchal regime.

The transborder experiences of women from Zegache in Mexico City differ from transnational migrants since the latter mostly migrate to the U.S. as associational migrants within well-defined gendered social networks. On the other hand, although commuters travel to Oaxaca City every day to work and study, their responsibilities of kinship and care do not shift in significant ways because they are still surveilled by local men and women in Zegache’s taxis and buses. The ease of travel to Oaxaca City clearly contrasts with the burdensome journey to Mexico City. Female migration to Mexico City has allowed women to gain skills and a sense of autonomy that is independent of male relatives as they often relied on female social networks to find employment and to pass time in a city deemed as dangerous.

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<sup>20</sup> I use the terms “independent” and “associational” migrants as they used conventionally in migration literature. “Independent” migrant often migrate without the company of their nuclear family, even if they migrate accompanied by other relatives. “Associational” migrants migrate accompanied with their nuclear family, even if this only means migrating with a spouse.

## “THERE AREN’T MANY COUPLES HERE”: WOMEN AND TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION

Oaxacan migration to the U.S. and the consequent formation of Oaxacan transnational communities are historically tied to the *Bracero* guest-worker program, and to the increase of Oaxacan migration to the U.S. as a result of the North American Free Agreement (NAFTA) and Mexico’s structural reforms that preceded it (see Chapters 2). Although situating Oaxacan migration within a framework that highlights “regional” migration dynamics is useful (see Riosmena and Massey 2012), it is still important to consider the diversity of migratory trajectories even among Oaxacan communities.

Few men from Zegache were part of the *Bracero* program and, because transnational migration did not become a popular option until the 1990s, only a few men were able to regularize their status through Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986. It wasn’t until the increased militarization and policing of the Mexico-U.S. border in the early 2000s that men started settling in the U.S. permanently (see Massey et al 2006:119). Before that Zegacheños were seasonal transnational migrants who returned to Zegache during the winter months (November through March). This setting did not propitiate the relocation of the entire families and women did not participate in seasonal transnational migrations.

The jobs that men and women from Zegache have in Oregon are also significant in understanding the underrepresentation of women in Oregon, especially when comparing it to other ethnographic studies and with processes of internal migration. Other populations of Mexican origin have diversified the range of occupations to extend beyond agricultural jobs. This is mostly apparent in the incursion of domestic work and the service sector. Obtaining access to more diverse occupations is also a reflection of growing social networks that provide information about possible work opportunities; the longevity of such networks is a vital factor.

Scholars have documented how in other Mexican and Central American transnational communities men and women have entered into the service sector, and how women have created social networks that help them finding jobs in manufacturing plants and as domestic employees (Aquino 2012; Andrews and Shahrokni 2014; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjívar 2003). In contrast to these communities, Zegache's social networks provide a diversity of jobs that are still mainly agricultural and, thus, more closely associated with men. Although this is certainly changing, especially in those communities of Zegacheños living outside of Oregon (principally in Washington and in California). The occupations that are available through Zegache's social networks continue to emphasize the connection between male migration and agricultural work linked to the *Bracero* program.

I met Silvio and Sofia in Salem, Oregon in 2013. The first time I saw them, they commented that Silvio was celebrating 20 years of his first journey to the U.S.; Sofia moved to the U.S. after getting married, in Zegache, in the late 1990s. Silvio, like most men from Zegache who live in Oregon, works agricultural jobs.<sup>21</sup> Sofia, on the other hand, has held temporary employment cleaning offices. When I asked Silvio why there weren't more women from Zegache in Oregon he replied: "There aren't many couples here; it's mostly single men or men who sent money back home who live here." This assertion points to various aspects of the intersections of care and migration. First, it suggests that women from Zegache in Oregon are, almost always, part of a married couple.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in distinction to female migration to Mexico City, single women don't often migrate to the U.S. Second, it emphasizes the significance for

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<sup>21</sup> I use the term "agricultural jobs" to engulf a wide set of agricultural, forestry, and animal-husbandry jobs.

<sup>22</sup> Although civil unions (*unión libre*) are a common practice in Zegache, as in other parts of Mexico, I use the term "married" because most of the couples who migrate are, in fact, married through the Catholic Church.

women to be present for their children in Zegache while men's responsibility is to find employment to provide sustenance.

In addition, most of the couples who live in Oregon are constituted by a man who has lived and worked in the U.S. for several years (and who is likely to have crossed the Mexico-U.S. border without documentation on several occasions) and a woman who migrated to Oregon after getting married (in most cases only having to cross the Mexico-U.S. border once). This is the story of Silvio and Sofia, as well as of other members of the Zegache community in Oregon and in California. I visited Silvio and Sofia at their house in Oregon on numerous occasions and, although the burden of cooking was relieved by the possibility of buying prepared meals, it was always Sofia's role to buy and serve food. When we attended events, she was also in charge of their children while Silvio socialized with other men from Zegache. Sofia works temporarily, but she hasn't developed networks in her workplace, as her main responsibility is to her children and husband.

In the same way, other women who work are responsible for taking care of their children or finding people to take care of them. Ramona moved to Oregon after she married an experienced migrant. She works the night-shift in a cannery "because this way I can take care of the children during the day." The same gender logic applied to Jimena who works full-time in agricultural fields but is responsible for taking her two daughters to her sister-in-law so that she can take care of them while she and her husband are working.

These examples show that the mobility of women in transnational migration does not change the fixity of gender relations within the couples but does allow some flexibility (i.e. other women can take care of your children). As women move across the border (often without proper documentation) they are relieved of their care responsibilities with their family of orientation as

their family of procreation takes priority. This transforms the dynamics between siblings in relation to who takes care of aging parents. Transnational women migrants are no longer under the “tutelage of the mother-in-law.” As I explained earlier, the mother-in-law represents a figure of authority that can effectively exercise pressure on the daughter-in-law through gossip, and by creating a sense of incommensurable care obligations for the son.

Therefore, transnational female migrants often enjoy more autonomy when engaging in social activities. Women occupy public spaces, especially in relation to their children’s school, as they attend school meetings (e.g. Goldring 2001), and they acquire skills that are often reserved for men in Zegache, such as driving. These positions and skills, as well as the physical distance from their extended families, grant women a certain degree of autonomy without completely ridding them from the “double day” or from men’s supervision. However, the intermittent access to paid work and the pressure for women to think about child-rearing as their main occupation (see Pessar 2003) frame transnational female migrants’ “transborder” experiences (Stephen 2007) and their access to “the social process of employment” (Menjívar 2003:121), which limits their exposure to “dissimilar worlds and to new behaviors and ideas” (Menjívar 2003:118-119).

#### **WORKING CLOSE TO HOME: COMMUTING AND WORKING IN OAXACA CITY AND ZEGACHE.**

Unlike transnational migration, daily commuting between rural and urban Mexico has not been the subject of extensive research. Historically, scholars dealing with the relationship between rural and urban Mexico have concentrated on urban enclaves of indigenous and rural migrants (e.g. Castellanos 2010; Mora Vázquez 1996). In recent years, however, social scientists have redefined mobility as to include daily movements and commuting (e.g. Andrews and Shahrokni



2014; Cohen and Sirkeci 2011; Scheller 2014). In addition, Latin American scholars have also sought to re-conceptualize the “rural-urban” divide (e.g. Kay 2008).

These two approaches help to situate the ways in which the demand for labor and the construction of roads reconfigure regional dynamics. Before the 1980s, migrant men and women from Zegache would be more acquainted with Mexico City than with Oaxaca City as the migration route often took them from Zegache directly to Oaxaca City’s train station and then to Mexico City. Most women over 40 years told me they had only a few years of formal education. There wasn’t a *secundaria* (Junior High-School) school in Zegache, and they had to walk or ride their bicycles to Ocotlán or Zimatlán using unpaved, dirt roads that were challenging during the rainy season and at night. At this time, commuting to Oaxaca City was not an option, and women who worked in Oaxaca City had to move permanently. This also meant that most women did not attend school beyond the elementary level, while some men received additional formal education through their participation in the military.

The history of the construction of roads is part of ongoing national, regional, and local phenomena. For the purpose of this section, suffice it to say that the road that connects Zegache to the Zimatlán-Oaxaca City highway was the result of a combination of factors including the restoration of the church by a well-known Oaxacan painter, the increased participation of men in the military, and the initiative of local entrepreneurs to begin the local bus service. The construction of the narrow two-lane road, as well as the opportunity to work and study in Oaxaca City while living in Zegache solidified regional dynamics as it continued to blur the “rural-urban” divide.

The current ease of travel between Zegache and Oaxaca City has resulted in more formal education for both men and women, and many Zegacheñas have obtained bachelor’s degrees

from Oaxacan universities. It has also resulted in an increased flow of people who commute for work. This is especially true for women who are often part of Oaxaca City's service sector, as they are employed in bakeries, clothing stores, internet cafes, and hotels.

The ease of travel has changed daily routines and has increased spatial mobility for women, yet this hasn't necessarily meant a change in gender roles. In fact, the participation of women in the urban workforce and in higher education while remaining in Zegache often implies that they have to continue with their gendered obligations at home. For example, Cesarea, a dentist, studied in Oaxaca City and works in Zegache. However, due to the lack of clients, she learned hairstyling. Cesarea runs a small dental clinic/hair salon but her main responsibility is to her children as the family income is mostly provided by her husband's grocery store. Another example is Carmela. She works at a bakery in Oaxaca City, her husband lives in California. In an interview she told me: "At first my husband didn't want me to take this job because he thought I wouldn't be able to take care of the kids; but I can manage. Now, when I return home [in the evening], I cook for them and make sure that they do their homework."

Daily commuting has given women in Zegache the opportunity to develop outside of their hometown and to acquire technical skills and knowledge to pursue personal goals and careers. Yet, as the cases of Cesarea and Carmela show, their careers are frequently put on hold because it is the husband who has the responsibility to provide for the family (even if he has less formal education), and their work is seen as something they do "in addition to" being a wife and a mother. Therefore, the construction of roads and the possibility of daily commuting can be interpreted as a "patriarchal accommodation;" it provides increase mobility for women but such mobility takes place "within" existing standards of male domination (Andrews and Shahrokni 2014:150).

## NAVIGATING THE CITY: ZEGACHEÑAS IN MEXICO CITY

The migration of indigenous, rural women to Mexico City was an important topic of study for Mexican scholars during the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s as “internal displacements” were not only the “entryway” for the study of gender and migration but they were also a matter of national importance for a country believed to be on the threshold of “modernization” (e.g. Ariza 2007; Arizpe 1977; Kearney 1986). Structural changes, and the increased rate of industrialization and urbanization, are reflected in the sustained and accelerated growth of Mexico City’s metropolitan area, which increased from approximately 3 million inhabitants in 1950 to 13 million in 1980.<sup>23</sup> In 2015 Mexico City had a population of 21.2 million.

The subnational context that created a continued demand of rural labor in the country’s capital, both for women and men, interacted with the local context in ambiguous ways. During the 1960s and through the 1980s, Zegache was not an easy place to live, especially for women. Although the incentives to leave Zegache for Mexico City vary, in the next section I present the histories of three women who migrated to Mexico City during the 1960s and 1970s. The histories of Carolina, Elizabeth, and María show the ways in which care and kinship relationships produced gender violence as they intersected with other forms of local violence.

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<sup>23</sup> This information is even more significant if we consider the growth of metropolitan areas (outside of the “urban core”) (Cox 2011) that have historically become the home of internal migrants, including the people of Zegache that I have met and interviewed.

### *The Violence of Caring*

Carolina migrated to Mexico City in 1964, when she was 16 years old. Carolina describes her father as a violent man who, rumor has it, was responsible for the death of his wife when Carolina was 13 years old. Being the oldest daughter, Carolina was obligated to take care of the house and her siblings (three women and three men). Her father's violent attitudes and behavior did not stop with the death of his spouse, however, and Carolina was also abused physically. "I wanted to find a way out of that situation, *una salida*. I couldn't stay there. I felt bad for my siblings, they were still children [...] So I married a man from a neighboring town but he, too, was violent so I went to Oaxaca [City] and from there I took the train to Mexico [City]."

In Mexico City, Carolina found a job through an aunt who worked as a domestic employee. She also found another romantic partner with whom she had children and bought a house in Mexico City. After an initial period of five years without visiting Zegache, Carolina started returning and visiting her relatives. Finally, in 2000, Carolina relocated to Zegache to take care of her father, who had become ill, and none of her siblings wanted to assume responsibility for his care. Because of this, Carolina now complains that she can't leave Zegache for more than a few days at a time to visit her daughters in Mexico City.

The importance of kinship and care relationships in Zegache, and the influence they have on internal migration is also highlighted in Elizabeth's story, my second example here. I met Elizabeth in a taxi in Zegache; she confirmed that the town's climate had radically changed since she left for Mexico City in 1967, at the age of 14. In the 1960s, Zegache experienced a period of violent internal conflict that resulted in numerous deaths; women were also targeted, and stories of sexual abuses abound. At the age of ten, Elizabeth became an orphan.

“My aunt, my father’s sister, took care of me. She was all the family I had. I remember one day, I was still very little (*una chamaca*), I was walking on the main street when I saw a group of ten or twelve men on horses, rifles in hand, creating a dust storm. I started running and when I got to my aunt’s house I said ‘they are coming.’ They [her uncle and aunt] grabbed their rifles and stick them out through holes that they had made in the walls, that’s why you see holes in houses’ walls, to point the gun before asking who’s there. My uncle in one hole, my aunt in another, with their rifles. They saw them approaching and *pum*, they let the first bullet fly, more were approaching and *pum*, the second bullet. One of them died there, others were injured. They left. That time we got away, they were coming for us.”

After Elizabeth’s new guardians passed away in the midst of the local violence, Elizabeth decided to take the train to Mexico City; she paid 30 pesos (roughly USD 2.40 at the time) for a one-way ticket. In the following section I elaborate more on Elizabeth’s history in Mexico City, but suffice to say here, although Elizabeth didn’t know how to read or write, she found regular work as a domestic employee and in a clothing factory, jobs she got through social networks of women from Zegache who lived in the capital.

Though my last story shows a different trajectory from Zegache to Mexico City, it also involves violence. Maria migrated to Mexico City at the age of 12 when her father was accused of being sexually involved with a married woman and the woman’s husband threatened to kill him; in the 1960s this threat was not to be taken lightly. “My father had some ‘problems’. He was *muy mujeriego*, a womanizer, and a man found out that he was seeing his wife and wanted to kill him.” Maria’s father sold his land and moved the entire family to Mexico City. After relocating, Maria was obligated to work as a domestic employee, she was 14 years old.

Maria currently runs a small corner shop in Iztapalapa, Mexico City's most populated borough (and an area of Mexico City's metropolitan area where many Oaxacan migrants settle). Sitting inside the cage-like structure that surrounds Maria's shop in order to prevent robberies, she tells me:

Maria: "My father was too rigid. He forced me to be a maid (*servienta*) when I was 14 years old"

Iván: "Where did you work? How did you like that kind of work?"

Maria: "I worked downtown, and I had a terrible experience. I quit when I was 15 years old."

Iván: "What happened after that?"

Maria: "Well, I got married but now I'm separated. My husband was very lazy. Although I was working at home, as a housewife, he still wanted me to continue working outside of my home. We have been separated for 20 years now, and let me tell you something, men are dead to me—honestly. I no longer need to be with a man now. Now I'm independent."

I have presented three stories that are part of larger life histories of three women who migrated to Mexico City in the 1960s and the 1970s to provide ethnographic context for my later analysis. These three fragments highlight the role of violence in shaping migration through kinship and care relations; they also show how migrating to Mexico City became a "transborder" experience that removed women physically and socially from Zegache in diverse ways. In the next section I explore the importance of female social networks and the transborder experience in Mexico City as a source of social legitimation.

*Working in the City and Female Social Networks*

Recounting her experiences in Mexico City, Elizabeth tells me:

“When I first arrived here I lived with a woman from the *pueblo*. She was the one who told me to come with her, and I did. In the beginning we would go out, *a pasear*, a lot. We would go to Xochimilco, Chapultepec, up and down; and even though I don’t know how to read, I never got lost. But that woman started going out with a boyfriend, so she wanted her privacy, and I didn’t see her as much. Then I started hanging out with another woman from the *pueblo*. She was older but I didn’t care, we would go everywhere. We would meet each other very early on Sunday, and then at night I would tell her ‘OK, let’s go back to work but I’ll see you next Sunday.’”

This passage presents two recurring themes in the experiences of women from Zegache in Mexico City. First, it points to the importance of female social networks. Second, it emphasizes the successful navigation of Mexico City and some relative independence (and having at least one day a week off from work). These two aspects of women navigating Mexico City with the support of female social networks are fundamental in understanding how the transborder experience of internal migration can challenge “traditional” gender roles even when such mobility is constrained by the family—because, as I explained earlier, women could migrate to Mexico City temporally and they were expected to eventually return to Zegache.

The importance of female social networks can be observed in the cases of Carolina and Elizabeth as both women relied on female relatives and friends to find jobs available for women. Female social networks create new ways in which migrant women socialize. These networks are

based on kinship and care relations and do not involve male supervision. Although in Zegache there are spaces reserved for women's socialization, such spaces perpetuate the symbolic and physical divisions between women and men by emphasizing the role of former as caregivers and of the latter as sustenance providers. The female social networks in Mexico City erase this distinction.

One of the most significant components of the transborder experiences of women within these female social networks is the sense of autonomy that they gain while navigating a difficult urban terrain. This sense of autonomy, articulated in Elizabeth's pride at never getting lost despite not being able to read, is also found in Maria's rejection of male support to run her business. For other women like Lorenza, who lives in Mexico City, her experience of autonomy has led her to openly question the idea of marriage and to oppose "traditional" weddings because of the high costs involved.<sup>24</sup>

These transborder experiences extend beyond Mexico City and their influence can be seen in other contexts. As the cases of Elizabeth and Carolina suggest, it is not uncommon for other women in Zegache to have access to these networks. The most common route is through kinship. For example, Carolina's sister and niece have both migrated to Mexico City. For women connected to these networks, mobility increases. The effects of these experiences are even palpable in women who return to Zegache and get married but remain more critical of their gender roles. This is especially true of women who openly question their husbands' decisions. Cecilia lived in Mexico City for six years and when she returned to Zegache she married a local transnational migrant who returned to Oregon for a period of 10 years after their youngest

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<sup>24</sup> Lynn Stephen (2005:215-216) has also documented how women who had migrated to Mexico City, Tijuana, and Rosarito were also pivotal in creating women's weaving cooperatives in Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca.



daughter was born. Cecilia's husband returned to Zegache six years ago. When I interviewed Cecilia she told me that she didn't know what her husband had been doing in the U.S. since he didn't return with enough savings to justify his years of absence. Most women with migrant spouses who had no migration experience would not criticize their husbands' decisions in such a concrete way.

As I explain in the last part of this section, these challenges and criticisms are part of a process of social legitimation that allows women to "claim" experiences of migration that are often monopolized by men.

#### *Claiming Experience: Social Legitimation and Female Social Networks*

Women migrants who are part or have been part of these female social networks challenge gender roles in Mexico City and in Zegache. The challenges they pose to "traditional" gender roles while living in Mexico City are enabled by the physical distance but also, more importantly, by the establishment of social networks of mutual support among migrant women. Women in Mexico City are still part of kinship and care networks in Zegache and in other places (including the U.S.) but supervision by their male relatives is weakened by spatial separation.

One possible explanation of the challenges posed by internal migrants to "traditional" gender roles is provided by Andrews (2014), who contends that women with internal migration experience are more critical of migration and, thus, tend to evaluate it in negative terms. However, as I explain in this section, in the case of Zegache this is only part of the answer.

Interpreting these challenges to "traditional" gender roles as an effect of social remittances is also suggestive. Social remittances have been defined as "the ideas, behavior,

identities and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-country communities” (Levitt 1998:927). According to Levitt (1998:937-939), the potential impact of social remittances is related to four factors: the nature of remittance itself, the nature of the transnational system, the characteristics of the messenger, and the target audience. In addition, social remittances can be considered “negative” when they set “bad examples” for the “receiving community” (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011:19). Although the idea of social remittances is a compelling explanation for the challenges that the women described in this paper present to “traditional” gender roles, I argue that this concept does not fully explain how these challenges work, especially when we consider that some female returning migrants are labeled as “bad examples,” and are challenging entrenched systems of gendered kinship and care responsibilities. In this sense it is useful to think about social remittances as part of “affective struggles” in which women, located in a subaltern position, argue for changes in the prevailing order (Besserer 2000:385).

Following Besserer’s (2000) analysis of “affective struggles” in two Oaxacan transnational communities, where women face resistance in the face of regimes that continue to emphasize ritualized respect over free choice when it comes to women’s romantic partners, helps to contextualize the situation of returning internal migrants. In the case of Zegache, we must take one step back and analyze how female internal migrants are able to challenge “traditional” gender roles through their own transborder experiences. I argue that the potentiality of women’s challenges to “traditional” gender roles is validated by the fact that women who migrated to Mexico City by relying on female social networks can “claim” migration experience, which is often the monopoly of men (see Muehlmann 2013:129; and Tsing 1993:128).<sup>25</sup> Women from

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<sup>25</sup> It is true that women who migrate transnationally are also able to claim some form of migration experience. However, the migration experience of women who crossed the border once is not seen as significant when compared to the multiple crossings of their male relatives and partners.

Zegache who acquire jobs and live in one of the biggest cities in the world, without male supervision, and in occupations that are often reserved for women are able to obtain social legitimation by asserting their ability to navigate a city feared in Zegache for its dangerous streets and criminal activity. Thus, women not only defy the narrative of fear of the city instilled by their relatives but also create their own narratives of courage that partially legitimate their opinions and ideas.

#### WOMEN WHO RETURN, WOMEN WHO STAY: CARING TOO MUCH, AND BEING FORCED TO CARE

In the previous section I analyzed the differences between female transnational migrants and daily commuters, and internal migrants. I contend that migrating to Mexico City represents a more direct confrontation to prevalent gender roles because it challenged the male-centered kinship structure in which these gender roles were embedded. In other words, the reliance on female social networks created new ways in which migrant women organized that did not rely on male approval and that often times was based on temporary relations of caring—what I call *cariño*. In addition, women who migrated to Mexico City are also positioned differently in relation to other female migrants and to non-migrants because they can “claim” migration experience often monopolized by men, while also sending remittances to support their children, their parents, and other relatives.

In this last section I explore how women who have never left Zegache think about migration as they reflect on their own upbringing in discussing migration with their relatives. In Zegache, young women are discouraged from migrating to Mexico City as they are warned about the city’s potential for sexual abuse and violence. Numerous stories about women who migrated

to Mexico City and were sexually assaulted abroad in Zegache, although these are counteracted by the stories of women who have been sexually abused in Zegache. Returning to Besserer's (2000) approach to sentimental regimes, one could say that internal migration emphasizes the apprehension that young women feel as they have the choice to migrate to Mexico City and become targets of sexual violence far away from home, or to stay in Zegache and become targets of sexual violence in their hometown. This dilemma was expressed by Rosa in 2014 when she first told me about the domestic abuse that she had suffered and how "everybody knew about it." She said that she had thought about moving to Mexico City when she was younger, to work as a domestic employee, but she had heard rumors of sexual assault by the employers and she did not want to take that risk. She also told me about how one of her aunts had been sexually assaulted in Zegache and, in order to escape the stigma of sexual assault, she had resorted to going to Mexico City. While her twelve year-old daughter prepared the tortillas, Rosa went on to speak about sexual assault in Zegache.

The threat of sexual violence and stigmatization that is associated with independent female migration reinforces "traditional" gender roles even for those women who have never left. However, female migrants are often at odds when they return to Zegache. On the one hand, their personal and professional transborder experiences allows them to pursue less traditional gender roles in the community and allows them to "claim" migration experience and to challenge their own male relatives (as we saw earlier). On the other hand, they are frequently stigmatized, especially if they return as single mothers, particularly because they aren't seen as viable romantic partners (I expand on this below). Returning to Zegache is a highly gendered experience. For these reasons, many independent female migrants who return to Zegache only do

so temporarily, as the challenges they pose to “traditional” gender roles are not easily accepted in their hometown.

*Wanting to go but not going: Women who stay*

Rosa is a woman in her mid-forties, she has never lived or worked outside of Zegache. Her husband is a former soldier and a former transnational migrant; he did not like the U.S., so he returned to Zegache to work in local construction projects. Their house is not made of *material* (no cylinder blocks, no concrete), the walls are made out of wood, the roof is tin, and the floor is dirt; this is no longer common in Zegache. I met Rosa through Jimena, her sister-in-law (Rosa is married to Jimena’s brother), in 2013. Jimena migrated to Mexico City when she was a teenager, and later migrated to the U.S. When Jimena introduced me to Rosa, they were sitting in Rosa’s front patio as they both cleaned beans.

The difference between the experiences of these two women, whose relatedness is multi-pronged is suggestive because it illustrates the wide array of experiences that women in Zegache have, and how they talk about them. When I met Rosa, in 2013, Jimena told me that she had been insisting that Rosa join her in the US. I asked Rosa if she would like that; she says that she would and she tells her husband (Jimena’s brother) that she wants to leave him: “He says that I should just go, that he doesn’t care, but I know that if I left he wouldn’t be too happy.”

Rosa’s desire to move, even if tenuous, reveals that her husband would need to approve her decision, and might also need to migrate himself. Rosa’s “joke” about going to the U.S. could be seen as an indirect commentary on her husband’s control of her mobility in the context of domestic violence and abuse that Rosa suffers. For Rosa, migrating presents itself as an

improbable option and, perhaps, it would be easier for her to entice her husband to migrate—thus, gaining some freedom and tranquility by “staying behind.”

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, sexual violence appears both as an incentive and as a deterrent to migrate. Rosa’s story about her aunt is a common one in Zegache, as women were caught in the double-bind of staying and possibly suffering sexual abuses, or migrating and having people assume they had suffered sexual abuses. Moreover, the migration of young women to the city was perceived as a lack of proper parenthood that signaled that one’s father couldn’t take care of his own daughters. Marcia, a woman in her late seventies, told me that after her father wouldn’t let her go to the City—Marcia wanted to go as she had female relatives there who invited her. “My father said: ‘you don’t need to go anywhere, you have everything you need here. You must stay here and get married. That’s what women are supposed to do.’”

The threat of sexual abuse and the potentiality of violence in Mexico’s capital becomes a central element of women’s experience both for those who stay and for those who migrate to Mexico City, it reproduces the “sentimental order” of gender roles in Zegache that discourages women from migrating by themselves (see Besserer 2000). However, at least implicit in Rosa’s story, staying can at least reduce the stigma of gender violence because when “everybody knows” the woman’s reputation is not at stake.

### *Divergent Experiences of Women in the City: Different Return Experiences*

Many female internal migrants decide to continue their lives outside of the town of Zegache: they form social relationships and start families in other cities (especially Mexico City), or join

their romantic partners in their own migration trajectories; they are also less likely to “stay behind” in Zegache. Women who do return to Zegache act upon their critical perspectives on “traditional” gender roles by establishing their own businesses or by relying on kinship networks that provide support for single women who are, in some instances, also single mothers. However, not all women are able to do this; moreover, not all women even find it desirable to construct kinship and care networks outside of their hometown’s well-established social networks.

The experiences of migrant women in Mexico City are evaluated differently in Zegache. The evaluation that the community makes of a return migrant affects both men and women but is gendered in significant ways. Men who return without the material proof of being a successful migrant (e.g. a house, a car, savings) are labeled as lazy; they are also suspected of having “vices” such as drug or alcohol problems, or even other women. Although certain aspects of their behavior might still be criticized as not complying with local notions of masculinity (especially if their efforts show a lack of ability to cope with risk and to make sacrifices for their families) they are rarely ostracized or stigmatized. Women, on the other hand, are evaluated harshly, ostracized, and stigmatized upon their return as they are more willing to engage in activities outside of their homes and in interactions that challenge local ideas of proper femininity (e.g. agreed to be interviewed by a male anthropologist).

After Carolina returned to Zegache she opened a small cafeteria to provide breakfast and lunch to groups of daily commuters and temporary workers. Her rough and standoffish attitude has made Carolina a well-known local figure. However, this “fame” is accompanied by negative descriptions of Carolina as people call her a *bruja*, a witch. Carolina’s experience returning to her hometown without a husband and as a single parent is common among returning female migrants. Returning to Zegache is especially hard as a single mother. While single male

returning migrants are seen as good matches for civil union and marriage, single female returning migrants are seen as having deviated from the standards of femininity and are not considered suitable marriage partners.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the unwillingness of men to accept a single mother as a romantic partner is justified locally because of the belief that it is natural for men to be reluctant to accept other men's children.

Thus, returning to Zegache is a temporary option for most of female internal migrants and they often opt to return to Mexico City or marry men who are more accepting of single mothers, most of whom are older transnational migrants. Jimena and Ruth returned to Zegache but their transborder experiences in Mexico City made them less afraid of transnational migration, and more aware of the relationship between autonomy and work. When Jimena returned as a single mother she decided to migrate to Oregon and leave her son with her mother. In Oregon she started a romantic relationship with a man from Zegache, 20 years her senior (50 years old at the time), named Roberto. Roberto had a turbulent youth and had never married. They now have a ten year-old daughter and work in Oregon's agricultural fields. Ruth has a similar story: when she returned to Zegache she met Cesar, a transnational migrant who had returned to visit. Cesar had lived in California for 25 years and had never married. For Ruth, deciding to migrate with Cesar was a good choice. In their California home she told me, "he has been very supportive, he has pushed me to learn how to drive so that I don't have to depend on him to find work or to take care of the kids. He even helped me during my first day as a domestic [employee] here." These two examples signal the importance of men's changing attitudes towards "traditional" gender roles.

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<sup>26</sup> This situation is not exclusive of the women of Zegache as the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* states women from Mazahua and Nahua communities who migrate to Mexico City are also discriminated and not considered suitable marriage partners in their communities of origin (Olivares Alonso, 2014).



Like Carolina and Jimena, Raquel migrated to Mexico City and entered into a romantic relationship with a man in the country's capital and returned to Zegache as single mother. Like the women presented earlier, Raquel worked as a domestic employee, which is a highly stigmatized occupation, especially for young unmarried women. The stigma is often hard to shake, and it forces women to reconsider their life options in Zegache.

In 2011 Raquel lived in Zegache, where she remained until 2014. When Raquel returned to Zegache she worked at a small non-profit organization that hires local people in both commercial and non-commercial restoration projects. However, in 2014 she left the community because she encountered “problems” at her job, and returned to Mexico City where she now works in a factory. In this sense it is important to point out that although women who migrate without male companions do get a sense of autonomy as they are no longer under the authority of their parents or in-laws (see Stephen 2002b), “punitive and regulatory social conditions” influence gender and sexuality (Butler 1988:527) through stigma and social sanctions enforces through gossip and different forms of social isolation.

This experience of stigmatization and the desire to leave are not shared by all of the women who return or who plan to return to Zegache. The case of Maria is an interesting one, as she plans to return to Zegache after she sells her house and corner shop in Mexico City. Maria sponsored the town's most important religious celebration (she was the *mayordoma* for Zegache's patron saint) in 2012. Thus, Maria has mobilized communal respect by engaging, as a single woman, in a ritualized activity that is ideally performed by a married couple, or by single men (often migrants). Being a *mayordoma* was a life-changing experience for Maria, as she had to invest decades of savings to host the patron saint's *fiesta*. Nevertheless, Maria validated her position within the community by occupying a civil-religious position and by “appropriating” the

sentiment of ritualized respect that is not often associated with a single woman (see Besserer 2000).<sup>27</sup>

However, for other women whose experience of living in Mexico City has been channeled by their kinship and care responsibilities, their options are different. This is exemplified by Cruz and Beatriz. Cruz migrated to Mexico City following her father's strategy to allow her to migrate to the city temporarily. Cruz's father, a former transnational migrant, returned to the community eight years ago to find his wife sick and in need of special care. Cruz is an only child and when her father returned to tend his fields, Cruz also had to return to take care of her mother. Beatriz, on the other hand, worked in the local government for three years, four of her siblings (three brothers and one sister) are transnational migrants, and three of her sisters live in Zegache and in nearby urban settlements. After Beatriz's government job ended, her husband decided to move to Mexico City with Beatriz and their one-year old son. For Beatriz, the experience of being a young mother in Mexico's biggest city has not been one of autonomy. Instead, she is afraid to go out with her son and spends most of her time alone inside the house, waiting for her husband. She returns to Zegache as often as possible, where she has the support of her parents and nephew, who often take care of her son.

The gendered responsibilities of kinship and care became an important factor in Cruz's migration trajectories. In Beatriz's case, moving to Mexico City is experienced more as a confinement than as a form of mobility. The ways in which specific social networks provide different experiences is highlighted by the case of Beatriz, who didn't migrate as a single woman

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<sup>27</sup> The unusual opportunity to become a single woman *mayordoma* was not only a product of Maria's commitment with the patron saint but also because as the *usos y costumbres* system was replaced by the political party system—and being a *mayordomo* is no longer a requirement to serve in the local government—there is less interest in hosting local *fiestas* and in some occasions the municipal government has had to cover the costs as volunteers are sometimes lacking.

within female social networks but as a wife and a mother and as part of a nuclear family of procreation. Although both Cruz and Beatriz have some criticisms of “traditional” gender roles they are not able to act upon their views given their social networks and the lack of autonomy that connects them to Zegache and Mexico City.

## CONCLUSION.

In this chapter I show that the gendering of migration in Zegache occurs through the differentiated responsibilities of care and kinship that men and women have and through the conceptions of masculinity and femininity that inform mobilities and immobility. Single women in Zegache are discouraged at the family and the community level to migrate to the U.S., and while migrating to Mexico City is permissible (as long as women continue to fulfill their roles as daughters) the risks (real and exaggerated) of this form of mobility are always present.

In addition, in this chapter I have highlighted the importance of internal migration, especially for women and the differential impact it can have on women’s lives. As is the case in other ethnographic studies, transnational migration is dominated by men and women who are involved in this type of movement are often seen as “associational” migrants who move to the U.S. with their spouses. Thus, scholars have often created a dichotomy between women migrants and women “who stay,” leaving women who are internal migrants out of academic discussions. Yet, the experiences of internal women migrants in urban Mexico should be taken seriously if we are to have a better understanding of the diverse migration trajectories that women and men (as we will see in the next chapter) have. This is not meant to take away the importance of

transnational migration but to complement how indigenous populations in Mexico move, and have moved throughout the last century.

More specifically, in this chapter, I have argued that women from Zegache who engaged in internal migration to Mexico City pose greater challenges to “traditional” gender roles in their community because their experiences as single young women navigating Mexico’s capital by relying on female social networks allows them to obtain social legitimation by “claiming” migration experience and courageousness. I contrast migration to Mexico City with transnational migration and daily commuting. Although both transnational migration and daily commuting challenge to some extent “traditional” gender roles, women from Zegache who migrate transnationally often do so as part of couples and within gendered social networks, while commuting allows women to work and study in Oaxaca City but as part of a “patriarchal accommodation” that reproduces “traditional” gender roles that need to be fulfilled in addition to women’s work or as a deterrent to their professional careers.

The importance of internal migration not only stems from the challenges it poses to “traditional” gender roles, it also illuminates the relationship between gendered kinship and care responsibilities, and different migration trajectories. Although internal migration has not received as much scholarly attention as transnational migration, I contend that the experiences of female internal migrants in Mexico (and in other parts of the globe) must be understood as connected to transnational migration because women’s work (both paid and unpaid) is usually part of transnational migration processes. In the case of Zegache, studying internal migration is fundamental to understanding gender roles and the gendering of transnational migration processes.

#### IV. MEN, LAND, AND MIGRATION

As with the women of Zegache, men's life trajectories are diverse. Most men in Zegache have engaged in a wide array of occupations that often involve risk, and are framed as public manifestations of courage and as a sacrifice for the family. In addition to "traditional" subsistence agricultural work, joining the Mexican military and migrating to the U.S. to work in seasonal commercial agriculture, are two of the most common options for the men of Zegache. Although not all of the men in Zegache have been involved in these three experiences, many of them have. A common pattern that I found while doing research was of men who worked in subsistence agriculture until they were old enough to join the military, after a few years in the military most men would return to Zegache only to leave to the U.S. In this chapter I focus on the ways in which men from Zegache have established a set of masculine identities based on notions of risk and sacrifice that have historically facilitated and constrained their mobility through "labor corridors" that extend across Mexico and the United States. As I elaborate in chapter 6, these corridors have created a sense of "masculine familiarity of work" that permits men from Zegache to acquire knowledge and skills not readily available to women, which facilitates their movement along these corridors, while, at the same time, has also redefined what activities "count" as masculine.

The concept of "labor corridors" is based on Aihwa Ong's (2006) notion of "zoning technologies" but it differs in significant ways. Ong (2006:103) defines "zoning technologies" as the "political plans that rezone the national territory" and, in this way "sovereign states can create or accommodate islands of distinct governing regimes within the broader landscape of normalized rule." In contrast to the "technological" and "economic zones" that arise out of

“zoning technologies,” “labor corridors” are not, in themselves, necessarily “planned” but emerge from gendered, racialized, and socio-economic arrangements that create and channel the mobility of specific populations. These arrangements are produced at the articulations of local, national, and global policies that might be linked (directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally) to the populations that they mobilize. The labor corridors that the men of Zegache traverse connect the Mexican military to the U.S. commercial agricultural system.

The experience of indigenous men in the Mexican military has not been extensively studied by anthropologists.<sup>28</sup> It is important to point out that participating in the Mexican military has been, at least since the Porfirio Díaz’s regime (see Neufeld 2007), divided between middle- and upper-class high-rank officers who are mostly from urban contexts, and rural lower-class rural “common recruits” (also see Lozoya 1971). Indigenous soldiers, thus, became part of “labor corridors” created at the intersection of racial and class dynamics historically created in the Mexican territory. These labor corridors were modified with the increased need of the Mexican military to participate in counterinsurgency movements starting in the 1960s, as well as with the ongoing “war on drugs” that required a larger number of soldiers (see Chapter 2). In the specific case of Zegache, the labor corridors also expanded to include the U.S. in the 1990s as the effects of NAFTA on the Oaxacan countryside created more transnational networks and exerted pressures on communities that relied on subsistence agriculture. Through the notion of the corridor I try to convey the image of restrained and, at least partially, directed movement.

Thus, while women are mobilized through care and kinship responsibilities, men are mobilized through their labor, as well as through the skills and knowledge that they acquire

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<sup>28</sup> There is, however, a long list of historians who have addressed issues of race and indigenous identities in numerous Latin American armies, at different historical periods (e.g. Adams 2010; Carey 2010; Foote and Horst 2010; Sanders 2010).

along the way. The masculine identities of Zegache are anchored in diverse experiences of risk and sacrifice that have been historically created in relation to labor corridors both within Mexico and between Mexico and the U.S. Such experiences do not only refer to the relation of men and labor regimes, but are intimately connected to historically situated kinship and care relationships. Therefore, to understand how masculinity is constructed in the different sites that men inhabit it is not sufficient to look exclusively at a particular nation-state at a specific point in time, but to look at how masculinities have been constructed through different interactions that occur at the family, the national, and the transnational level.

In this sense, it is important to understand the “domestic frame of reference” (Gutmann 2007:147) in which masculinity is constructed and in which the experiences of men are validated as masculine. As Matthew Gutmann (2007:17) points out male identity is defined as “what men say and do ‘to be men’, and not simply as what men say and do.” For these reasons, masculinity has to be understood within the historical context of Zegache’s changing masculine occupations that modify not only how men relate to new occupations but, also, how they continue to relate to other men and women within their families. I argue that for Zegacheños masculinity is linked directly to notions of risk and sacrifice that have developed historically in relation to the defense of the land, the participation of men from Zegache in the military, and, in recent decades, to male transnational migration. In contrast to assumptions that masculinity is mostly defined by “breadwinning” I claim that although breadwinning is important it is not, in itself, the determining element of masculinity. The way in which breadwinning is accomplished, that is, the actions that allow a man to become a breadwinner, need to be couched in terms of sacrifice and risk in order for breadwinning to remain masculine (thus, for example, an office job is not by itself masculine but it needs to be “masculinized”). This is also related to the flexibility of

masculinity and to the ways in which men have “masculinized” some activities, such as cooking, in the face of an increasing number of women “breadwinners.”

I start this chapter by exploring how risk and sacrifice were produced historically in post-revolutionary Mexico as indigenous agricultural populations became Mexican peasants and were pressured to defend their land and other agricultural tools from competing factions and from neighboring towns. The violent atmosphere that was created after the Mexican Revolution started mobilizing men and families as they moved out of Zegache and relocated in urban areas. After the violent aftermath of the Revolution gradually came to a halt, men from Zegache started enrolling in the Mexican military. Enrolling in the military became a form of internal migration in which men were able to learn new skills, have new experiences, and earn a steady income. For many, however, being a soldier did not challenge the peasant masculine identity and, in some cases, was understood as part of being a “family man” (in terms of providing for one’s family but also in terms of a family tradition of participating in the military; see Chapter 6).

The Mexican military became, thus, a way in which young indigenous able-bodied men could receive formal education while earning a steady salary and gaining new skills. In Zegache it preceded transnational migration but, like transnational migration, it was also part of a structure that mobilized marginalized groups. The relationship between becoming a soldier and then becoming a migrant is not surprising as the transnational labor corridor allowed soldiers and former soldiers to acquire different forms of mobility. For these reasons, most of the transnational migrants from Zegache are former soldiers. Crossing the Mexico-U.S. border is viewed as a masculine experience of risk and sacrifice; however, once in the U.S. notions of masculinity are broadened to include a sense of efficiency and accuracy in performing physically taxing tasks, and through the establishing of a masculine familiarity with technology. As more



men than women engage in occupations that require operating machinery, technology is incorporated into emerging and transnational ideas about masculinity. In the last section of this chapter I analyze how driving has been “gendered” as masculine. The gendering of driving, and the historical changes in Zegache’s occupations and mobilities also presents how ideas about masculinity are disputed and validated in specific historical contexts. In this chapter I touch upon some of these changes in masculinity.

#### BEING A MAN IN THE MEXICAN COUNTRYSIDE: PEASANTS AND MASCULINITY

The Mexican Revolution was ambiguously received in the Central Valleys that, according to historian Francie Chassen-López (1989), saw the armed movement as an imposition from Mexico’s northern, *mestizo* elites. In some parts of the Oaxacan Central Valleys, the agrarian reform, through which the new revolutionary government sought to establish alliances and legitimation, successfully transformed local politics and gained sympathizers (see Garner 1984; Ruíz Cervantes 1988; Stephen 2002a). In Zegache, the imposition of pro-revolutionary factions created a strong divide in the community that resulted in armed violence and that also stagnated land redistribution. The current conflict between *propietarios* and *comuneros* is a legacy of the post-revolutionary conflict, and continues to define how men move within and between transnational “labor corridors.”

At the height of the violent period known in Zegache as the *época de los valientes*, the time of the brave men, in the 1960s and 1970s, being a peasant was not a task without the risk of violence (see Chapter 2). Land, oxen, and ploughs, elements necessary in subsistence agriculture, were targeted in the internal conflict and in the boundary disputes that Zegache had with the

neighboring towns of San Martín Tilcajete and Santa Catarina Quiané. During this time, Zegache was still relatively disconnected from Oaxaca City, and state and federal authorities had little to no presence in the community. In this context, being a peasant in Zegache implied obvious risks and sacrifices. In this section, I explore the national and local processes that created a masculine peasant identity that still informs and shapes the masculine familiarity of work; even as subsistence production is in decline in Zegache, the notions of risk and sacrifice that had a significant role in the 1960s and 1970s continue to inform how men define their occupations as masculine—perhaps even more than “breadwinning.”

In order to understand the connection between masculinity, land, and agriculture, I analyze how the violent conflict in Zegache shaped ideas about risk and sacrifice as related to subsistence agriculture, familial histories, and membership in the community. In turn, these ideas about masculinity and peasantry also overlapped with the revolutionary and agrarian reform official and unofficial discourses that shaped the relationship between indigenous and rural populations in Mexico for the last century. I contend that the current expressions of masculinity in Zegache are still rooted in a discourse that emphasizes family connections, through land, as well as risk and sacrifice. These masculine expressions enable mobility through specific transnational labor corridors but restrain this mobility outside of such corridors.

### *The Masculine and Non-Indigenous Identity of the Mexican Peasant*

Before proceeding to the specific analysis of how Zegache’s local violence shaped and continues to shape local masculinities, I discuss the relationship between access to land, peasant identity, and masculinity in Mexico. It is important to note, however, that this area of scholarship is

underdeveloped. The historical and anthropological accounts that study masculinity have not often looked at indigenous and rural communities, and have concentrated on urban settings (e.g. Gutmann 2007). In fact, much of the work done on masculinities in Mexico is still based on psychoanalysis, literary, film analyses, and not on empirical studies. Nevertheless, important contributions to this area have been, for example, Ana Maria Alonso's *Thread of Blood* (1995) and Daniel Nugent's *Spent Cartridges of Revolution* (1993) that address the formation of peasant communities in the state of Chihuahua (what was previously New Vizcaya, and later Northern Mexico). More recent studies on rural masculinities have tended to focus on the experiences of migration, highlighting how migration has become a central component in establishing a masculine identity (e.g. Boehm 2012; D. Cohen 2006). However, some of these studies have obviated the intricate processes that shape masculinity within the family and within Mexico.

The Mexican Revolution, and the subsequent agrarian reform, created a discourse in which the rural and indigenous peasant was primarily defined in terms of a Mexican national identity, and in terms of a male gender identity.

Throughout the history of Independent Mexico, indigenous identities have historically been considered problematic because they highlight the contradictions of an allegedly homogeneous and uniform Mexican *mestizo* identity (e.g. Brading 1988:76; De la Peña 2005:722; Stephen 2002a:85). Although several attempts have been historically made to dismantle these indigenous "local" identities, it was perhaps the "indigenous as peasant" discourse celebrated during Mexico's post-Revolution agrarian reform that more clearly reshaped the relationship between indigenous communities and the Mexican state through granting official access to land (e.g. Dawson 1998; De la Peña 2005).

In Zegache almost everybody ascribes to the “peasant” identity: *Somos de campo* (we are from the countryside), *aquí puro campo* (only agriculture here), or *aquí somos campesinos* (we’re peasants here) are common ways to describe the town and the town’s inhabitants, regardless of their identity as *comuneros* or *propietarios*.<sup>29</sup> These descriptors signal a social class, a geographic rural location, and a historic position in relation not only to the Mexican state but also to other Mexicans who inhabit urban spaces. Being from a rural town, a peasant, appears as a class identity that is not necessarily indigenous. In contrast to other indigenous communities in Oaxaca (Aquino 2012; Stephen 2002a) and in Mexico, the movement for indigenous rights in Zegache has been mostly driven by non-indigenous state intermediaries while, as explained in Chapter 2, political parties simultaneously influenced the local political structures and replaced the *usos y costumbres* with a political party system.<sup>30</sup> This is not to say, of course, that indigenous identity does not have a significant role for the men and women of Zegache, but rather it points to the fact that political actions have not been influenced by the *la emergencia india*, Indigenous rights movement, like in other parts of Oaxaca (e.g. Stephen 2002a; Aquino 2012).

The *campesino* identity is also gendered. Although everybody identifies Zegache as a peasant community, men and women will often answer the question of “what do you do for a living?” differently. While men will often say “*soy campesino*,” or “I am a peasant,” women will

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<sup>29</sup> As I explained in Chapter 2, *comuneros* are a Pro-PRI faction that claims that Zegache’s agricultural land is communal and, thus, it cannot be sold without the community’s approval. On the other hand, *propietarios*, claim that land is, and has been, privately owned and, thus, the community does not have any authority over land transactions. *Propietarios* have historically aligned with the PAN and are currently PRD supporters. The conflict has reached violent episodes in recent history but most people contend that the solution should be two have to property regimes.

<sup>30</sup> Thus, for example, in 2012 murals depicting the “rights of Indigenous peoples” were painted on walls around the community. One of these murals informed passersby of the importance of communal assemblies in municipalities governed by local customary traditional law (*usos y costumbres*) even if Zegache is not governed by *usos y costumbres*.

acknowledge their “help” in agricultural work but emphasizing their role within the home: “I’m a homemaker but I do help my husband in the fields.” This gendering of the peasant identity is connected to the agrarian reform. As Tanalis Padilla (2008:163-164) argues “agrarian reform, by upholding the peasant household as a unit with gender-specific roles, reinforced rural patriarchy,” and in some instances women were instructed by official pamphlets of their proper role as their husbands’ supporters. The gender-specific roles were also reproduced in Zegache through local violence that draw direct connections between land ownership and courage, especially considering that men were the main beneficiaries of the agrarian reform (see Razavi 2009).

In addition, official and unofficial portrayals of the institutional heroes of the Mexican Revolution reinforce the image of the Mexican male peasant. Take, for example, the image of Emiliano Zapata, the quintessential Mexican peasant, *hombre de campo*, who defends his land. Although Zapata’s personal character and history are still debated in academic and public circles, even after his image was “retooled” and “sanitized” (Zapata does not appear as a womanizer, and he doesn’t drink—two aspects commonly associated with the Mexican macho), Zapata and his followers are still portrayed as armed peasants, with a pair of oxen and a gun (as expressed in a poem by Manuel Mejía, as cited in Stephen 2002a:46-47). This image of the armed peasant, fundamental in the creation of the “peasant class” in Mexico (Stephen 2002a:47), was a reality in post-revolutionary Zegache. Land, oxen, ploughs, and families had to be protected through violence; subsistence agriculture became a risky activity that, nevertheless, was necessary if land and property were to be maintained.

*“There was a time when they stole oxen”: The Risks and Sacrifices of Being a Peasant*

Although it is not entirely clear in the historical accounts available or in the oral histories that I collected, violence between families and between *barrios* (or neighborhoods) intensified in the 1940s, precisely because of the agrarian conflict that followed the Mexican Revolution. In addition to the internal conflict, Zegache also had conflicts over boundaries with neighboring communities that aggravated local violence as men had to defend their land and were often armed. This context, as well as the relative isolation of Zegache because of the lack of roads and communications, made subsistence agriculture a risky occupation.

“In 1974, when the conflict with Quiané was going strong, I decided to go back to tend my fields. My family thought that I was crazy but I couldn’t abandon my land,” a man told me as we looked over the María Sánchez Hill, an important landmark in the region that is still disputed between Zegache, Tilcajete, and Quiané. “Back in those days—the man continues—you always had to carry your rifle, just in case.” The violent atmosphere that surrounded those who had to *cuidar la raya*, watch over the town’s boundaries, to protect their community’s territory and their own agricultural land was also experienced within the streets of Zegache. The histories of the *partidos armados*, or “armed parties” as they are often described, abound in the older generations that lived through the violence, and in the younger generations that saw the last days of these groups of armed men.

The *valientes*, or brave men, that roamed the streets of Zegache were involved in intra-communal and inter-family disputes that led to a never ending cycle of personal vendettas and revenge. Because of these disputes, people died and left the community; others faced difficult

working conditions as not only land had to be protected but also oxen and ploughs.<sup>31</sup> Land was occupied when families left Zegache fleeing the violence, sometimes after realizing that subsistence agriculture was a dangerous activity. Those who stayed, however, also faced ongoing economic uncertainty as oxen and ploughs were heavily targeted.

“There was a time when they stole oxen,” is a phrase commonly heard when people narrate the not too distant past. “During that time—a woman said—there were problems for the ploughs and for women. Since there weren’t any fences, people had to sleep with their plough tied to their beds.” Ploughs and oxen were particularly important before tractors were regularly used in the community because it was the only means to prepare large plots of land. Thus, much in the same spirit as the poem by Manuel Mejía (in Stephen 2002a:46-47) paraphrased above, oxen were a fundamental part of the peasant masculine identity (I explore the relationship between masculinity, ploughs, and tractors in a later section in this chapter).

In addition to the numerous personal experiences and personal histories that connect all of the families of Zegache to this violent period that reshaped families and mobilities, there are narratives that specifically link the violence of the *valientes* to the agrarian conflict. Even if such disputes did not seem to be directly connected to agrarian conflicts, the motivations for violence figuratively and literally bled over into the agrarian conflicts between *propietarios* and *comuneros*, also engulfing those villagers that didn’t own land. “*Comisariado que ponen, comisariado que matan*; commissioner that they elect, commissioner that they kill,” said Anatolio. He was referring to Santiago Meza, the *comisariado de bienes comunales*

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<sup>31</sup> Although there aren’t any exact numbers of the people who died, people who lived through this period recount how at times they would encounter several bodies lying around the community. In Zegache there is also a saying that people use to evoke this violent period: “Antes decían, que si no se moría alguien, no estuvo buena la fiesta,” “In the past, if there was a *fiesta* (a celebration) and people didn’t die they say that the *fiesta* wasn’t that good.”

(commissioner in charge of managing communal lands) who, when violence reached its peak in the 1970s, suddenly disappeared from the official records and from the community.

A combination of factors gradually changed the violent atmosphere in Zegache. As younger men were encouraged to seek opportunities outside of the town's boundaries, men from Zegache started joining the Mexican military and, thus, as indigenous peasants became incorporated into the lower ranks of the military a new labor corridor allowed a specific mobility for men of Zegache who, as I explore in Chapter 6, created familial traditions of soldiering that both overlapped and clashed with the masculine peasant identity.

In addition, the cycle of revenge literally died out as men involved in such vendettas aged, were imprisoned, or left the community. A name that resonates with the closing of this violent period is that of Eusebio Venegas. Eusebio, who passed away in 2012, is considered by some a "hero" and by others a murderer. According to Eusebio's family, "he wanted to clean the community. He got tired of all the *valientes* who were killing people in Zegache. This got him into a lot of trouble, so he had to leave Zegache. He was imprisoned for 20 years." Implicit in these statements is Eusebio's use of guns to threaten and harm other men from Zegache.

Eusebio was one of the last *chingones*, men who were feared but whose displays of violence are generally considered excessive and damaging.<sup>32</sup> Even during that violent phase, different masculinities were possible. Zegacheños who were not directly involved in the armed parties engaged in violence were accustomed to carrying guns. Yet they also valued risk and

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<sup>32</sup> The term *chingón*, from the verb *chingar*, has produced numerous interpretations that range from psychoanalytical interpretations found in Octavio Paz's classic work *El Laberinto de la Soledad* (The Labyrinth of Solitude) in which the Mexican author affirms that *chingar* is a masculine, active, and cruel verb that conveys violence, more specifically sexual non-consensual violence. The term *chingón*, which invokes the act of *chingar*, can also be interpreted as someone that can exert power (see Castellanos 2010:150) or someone "who can *chingar* but who cannot be *chingado*" (Alonso 1995:81).



sacrifice as a way to reclaim membership in their community through the successful protection and maintenance of their land, their oxen, their plough, and their families.

This sense of risk and sacrifice associated with the hard life of the peasant remains today as families and men continue to contrapose the masculine experience of the peasant to the masculine experience of the transnational migrant. “*La vida en el campo es difícil*, life in the country [as a peasant] is hard—a man tells me—when men return from the U.S. they don’t get used to life here.” Therefore, even if transnational migration has become a “masculine” experience in Zegache, “staying” in Zegache and maintaining “family” presence is also constructed around the ideas of risk and sacrifice, especially when it is opposed to the “Americanization” that transnational migrants experience while in the U.S.—the failure of return migrants to adapt to life in the *pueblo* is interpreted both as a betrayal of their origins as well as a form of weakness.

“Staying” in Zegache and maintaining a family permanence is a “masculine” behavior that implies sacrifice; as men “give up” the opportunity to be surrounded by more material comforts. For women, however, “staying” is construed as a “natural” response to their kinship and care responsibilities. The gendered differences of “staying” are related to structural conditions around land inheritance and the permanence of last names. As stated before, land is generally (but not always) inherited by male children. This also means that the youngest son is pressured to return, or to stay, in order to preserve the family’s land. “*Las mujeres son las que le dan en la torre al apellido*, women are the ones who destroy the last name,” said Benancio. For Benancio, who was enrolled in the Mexican military for over 20 years, returning to the *pueblo* is important because as large numbers of younger men leave, Zegache’s agricultural fields face an

important challenge. “In the past, everyone worked in the agriculture; young and old. Now that young men don’t want to work in agriculture, well, then I don’t know who will stay here.”

Benancio’s last comment, the preoccupation of the future state of Zegache as a rural and agricultural town in the face of transnational migration, is a frequent subject of debate among younger and older generations of men. Alejandra Aquino (2012) documents a similar situation in the Zapotec Oaxacan town of Yalalag. In Yalalag, the high migration rates have led to a “communal disintegration” that complicates the functioning of local institutions, such as agriculture (Aquino 2012:124-125). Other scholars have documented an increasing “feminization” of rural and non-industrialized agriculture in Mexico linked to male migration (Preibisch et al 2002). Increased migration rates and a lack of interest in agricultural activity by the younger generations have propitiated a concern among Zegacheños and Zegacheñas about the future state of Zegache if agriculture is abandoned. Ironically, past local violence and the agrarian conflict has connected the defense and the maintenance of land to masculinity.

For example, Manuel, who was in the Military, and lived in Oregon for 10 years, remembers how he returned to Zegache because an opposing faction in the local agrarian dispute was threatening his family: “they were asking for money and throwing rocks at my house. I knew I had to come back.” Thus, masculine peasant identity has decelerated the process of “feminization” in Zegache, and has also framed generational debates around migration in terms of competing masculinities.

The intersection created during the violent phase of local history known as the *época de los valientes* in the aftermath of the post-revolutionary agrarian reform in Mexico created a robust sense of masculinity. The masculine peasant identity constructed around ideas of risk and sacrifice has influenced men’s mobility, and contributed to the participation of men in the

military and in transnational migration. However, as the example of Manuel and others show, agricultural labor continues to be an occupation, a section of the transnational “labor corridors,” through which masculinity can be constructed as it continues to be an arena where younger generations seek the social legitimation of their masculinity, especially by older men who endured the *época de los valientes*.

In the following section I analyze how transnational migration and joining the Mexican military, two of the most common ways in which men become mobile. In contrast to other scholars who have presented the experience of transnational migration of indigenous and rural men as a sort of “crisis of masculinity,” or as a “destabilization of masculinity” (see Alcalde 2011; Boehm 2012); I found significant continuities that root Zegache’s multiple masculinities in ideas of risk and sacrifice that are prevalent in local masculine peasant identities. This is not to say that the military and the transnational experiences are articulated in the same way as male peasant identity; as a matter of fact, these masculine identities often come into conflict with one another by holding different narratives of masculine risk and sacrifice. Rather, focusing on the creation of masculine labor corridors (and moving away from the concept of “crisis”) demonstrates the flexibility of masculinity.

## FROM PEASANTS TO SOLDIERS

In exploring the concept of masculinity I argue that men from Zegache who become soldiers and who migrate to the U.S., two of the most common male occupations besides subsistence agriculture, do so because it is part of a familial tradition and of a process of social legitimation that validates their masculinity in their interpersonal relationships not only with women but with

other men. The notions of risk and sacrifice, that informed much of the peasant male identity described above, also shapes younger generations of men who did not experience local violence in the same degree as their fathers and grandfathers but who partially inherited the discourse of risk and masculinity as a frame of reference. Yet, by joining the military and by engaging in transnational migration, two occupations that involve risk and sacrifice, they are able to partake and to redefine their masculine identity through other experiences, skills, and knowledge. In addition, like with subsistence agriculture, the Mexican military and transnational industrialized agriculture are structured through transnational labor corridors that simultaneously marginalize and allow men from Zegache to use their familiarity of work and transition between these zones.

In this section, I analyze transnational migration and joining the military in relation to the men's mobilities through transnational labor corridors and in relation to different conceptions of masculinity that, even if rooted historically in Zegache's history, diverge from the male peasant identity.

*"My uncles said I wouldn't survive, so I had to prove them wrong": Joining the Military as Masculine Tradition*

As stated in the opening paragraph of this chapter, numerous men in Zegache followed the trajectory from peasant to soldier to transnational migrant. Joining the military is, in fact, a common experience for the men of Zegache, and although it is more common to specific families almost every family in Zegache has or has had a relative who is in the military. In this section I focus on the discourse of being a soldier and being a family man.

The military also offers men from Zegache tangible benefits such as a steady income, health insurance, and an inexpensive way to acquire technical skills (e.g. construction, auto

mechanic skills, etc.), and formal education. Men who join the military also have the opportunity to travel within Mexico. Soldiers spend most of the times in military bases, training, cleaning, and other maintenance activities; however, soldiers also have to make long expeditions in search of marihuana and poppy fields, and clandestine labs. Both in the military bases and “in the field,” soldiers not only learn and test technical and social skills, but they also engage in interactions that cross ethnic, race, and class boundaries. For these reasons in this section I argue that joining the military should be considered (and studied) as a form of internal migration, which is especially significant in contexts, like Zegache, that until recently did not have strong social networks in the U.S.

In order to speak about the experience in the military as part of the process of becoming a “family man,” I start with a story that goes against the most frequent narrative of men from Zegache (that is, men go from peasants, to soldiers, to transnational migrants). The story of Miguel is particularly illustrative because it highlights how single, young men are also “family men.” Miguel, 26 years old, is the third generation in his family to have joined the Mexican army. His grandfather completed his three-year initial contract in the 1960s, and his uncles (who now live in California) also joined the military in the 1980s. Miguel first migrated to California when he was 18, then he joined the military when he was 22.

I met Miguel in October of 2014 through his grandfather, Teodoro. At the time, Miguel was the only person living with his grandparents, at their grandparents’ house. He had recently finished his contract in the military and was deciding what his next step would be. For these reasons, Miguel helped his grandfather in subsistence agriculture, especially by driving a small pickup truck and a tractor that Teodoro’s son bought with remittances from the U.S. Miguel, like numerous former soldiers, would often sport his military wear while working in the fields. He

also showed me pictures of him while on military duty, for example, next to marihuana and poppy plantations.<sup>33</sup>

I had seen Miguel a year before I met him but in 2013 Miguel was withdrawn and rarely interacted with me. In 2014 he seem much more confident and he actively sought ways to discuss his military and migration experience. Miguel migrated when he was 18, used a tourist visa that he was able to obtain through his residence in Sonora, where he resided with his mother for a few years. In the U.S. Miguel worked alongside his uncles at a ranch in Jackson County, California. It was the experience of working with his male uncles (both former soldiers) that got Miguel interested in joining the military: “When we were up there, in the ranch [near Sacramento, California], my uncles started making fun of me. Telling me how I wouldn’t survive in the military so I had to prove them wrong.”

In the military Miguel engaged in a number of tasks and occupations. After the initial training, Miguel was part of a group of soldiers that searched and destroyed marihuana and poppy plantations in the Mexican highland regions. He and his team would often be parachuted from a helicopter (Miguel showed me several short videos of these instances, videos shot with his cell phone). During these long treks Miguel was additionally in charge of carrying cooking utensils and cooking supplies. He cooked in improvised kitchens in the mountains. Later in his short military career, Miguel was in charge of administrative duties at the military hospital in Oaxaca City.

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<sup>33</sup> The practice of showcasing one’s military experience through photos or military paraphernalia is common in Zegache, especially through different wall décor pieces. These wall décor pieces are often clocks or calendars, manufactured by the Mexican army, sometimes dedicated to the soldier’s family. In one particular occasion I encountered two framed photos (approximately 8 x 11) hanging as central pieces in a family’s living room. The photos portrayed the “man of the house” next to a poppy field, and next to a marihuana field. The man appeared in full military attire.

Thus, for Miguel, joining the military was not so much a decision influenced by a national pride and a desire to serve in the military but was a product of his family context in which men claim social legitimation through narratives of risk and sacrifice. Teodoro, Miguel's grandfather, is the patriarch of the family and a well-known figure in the community. He lived through the *época de los valientes*, he picked cotton in the neighboring state of Chiapas, and he was in the military for three years. Teodoro didn't become a transnational migrant but through his experiences he claims social legitimation through the male peasant identity and through staying in Zegache. On the other hand, Ramiro and Camilo, are both former soldiers and undocumented migrants. The risk and sacrifice of being a soldier and of crossing the border without documents becomes central in the social legitimation of their position as family men. Miguel crossed the border with a tourist visa and lived in the proximity of his mother. Thus, Miguel's claim to manhood was disputed intergenerationally by his grandfather and his two uncles who still claimed that being a soldier would prove impossible to Miguel

The differences between Miguel, Ramiro, Camilo, and Teodoro are both generational and historical. Men from Zegache who joined the military during the 1960s and 1970s were few, as this wasn't yet a popular life choice in the community. The motivations for enrolling in the Mexican army were directly connected to economic necessity. Teodoro describes his enrollment in the military: "I used to sell *chiquihuite* (basketry); one day I went to Oaxaca to sell my merchandise. A man approached me and asked if I wanted to earn 20 pesos a day. *Mozos* (day laborers) used to earn 2 pesos. I didn't think twice." For Teodoro the need to sustain a family influenced his decision to join the military, given the few economic opportunities available to him. For many men of Teodoro's generation this was one of the first experiences outside of Zegache. In fact, many retired soldiers from Teodoro's generation often narrate how they never

got the opportunity to travel within the state of Oaxaca and how they are more familiar with other Mexican states, particularly Chiapas, Chihuahua, and Guerrero. In this sense, the labor corridor from peasant to soldier was established through the context of local violence, the reduced economic opportunities for people from Zegache, and the historic racial dynamics of the Mexican military. In the next generation, the labor corridor was reinforced by familial traditions of soldiering.

Ramiro and Camilo, and other men who joined the military in the 1980s and 1990s, also did so out of economic necessity but they had been influenced by the experience of other local men and, especially, of their own male relatives. For many of them, as I explain later, joining the military was a stepping stone that allowed them to gain experiences, skills, and money so that they could migrate to the U.S. Miguel, on the other hand, and young men who have joined the military in recent years have not only benefited from the experiences of previous generations but have also had a different generational experience due to the construction of roads, schools, and remittances, as well as Zegache's social networks in other parts of Mexico and in the U.S. For example, Miguel was able to attend a private high-school because her mother found an office job in northern Mexico and, eventually, migrated to the U.S. relying on economic and social resources that his relatives provided for me.

Thus, for Miguel, and other men from Zegache, who have robust conceptions of masculinity anchored in a local peasant identity that emphasizes risk and sacrifice, and further cemented through histories of local violence and dangerous occupations, joining the military becomes a way to become a "family men" not exclusively through breadwinning and providing sustenance but through validating their identity as equal in relation to other male relatives.



I would like to close this section with a story as recounted by Germán, a man in his late forties who recently retired from the military. At a *bocado*, a festive gathering in which godparents are celebrated, Germán told the following story:

“When I was in the military two young brothers from here ended up doing their initial training with me in Oaxaca. I knew their mother, so one day I was visiting my family and I went to see her. I asked her if her sons had sent her any money. She said they hadn’t. I knew that they had already received a couple of salaries so I thought I had to do something about it. When I saw these two youngsters in Oaxaca, I told them that I needed some money, I needed them to “help me out,” *echarme una mano*; me being their superior, they couldn’t refuse. They lent me the money. Then I did it again, when they got their next salary. I was able to collect around 6,000 pesos (roughly 500 U.S. dollars). A few days later the two young men came up to me, asking me for their money. I looked at them and said: “You know what? I won’t be able to pay you, I don’t have the money, but you know what... You should give your mom a call.””

Germán’s parable-like story touches on the intersection of sacrifice and family responsibility, and it sums up how ideas about masculinity are connected to “breadwinning” but, more importantly, to the idea of being a “family men” understood broadly. Additionally, in order for such experiences to be socially validated by other men and community members, they need to include self-sacrifice and risk. Later that night it was revealed that one of the two brothers drown and died during the initial military training. This tragic event only reified the risk involved in trying to become a soldier. Such notions of sacrifice and risk also appear in narratives about male transnational migrants. Contrary to numerous accounts that address the transnational migration experience as a new “rite of passage” for rural and indigenous men in Mexico, I argue that

because of the long history of violence and the incursion of men from Zegache in the military, local conceptions of masculinity are not radically challenged through the transnational migration experience. This in no way means that ideas about masculinity do not change, rather it means that masculinities cannot only be theorized in relation to one nation-state but they have to be theorized at different levels of analysis, including family relations that are outside of the “nuclear family.”

### TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION: RISK, SACRIFICE, AND ODD JOBS

Transnational migration is still predominantly male in Zegache, with most migrants working in seasonal agriculture in Oregon. In this section I analyze transnational male migration in relation to the labor corridors that allow male migrants to transition more easily between subsistence agriculture, military life, and seasonal agriculture. Although transnational migration does alter existing notions of masculinity, the already robust familial and local notions of masculinity that emphasize sacrifice and risk permit transnational migrants to frame agricultural work and other “odd jobs” within a masculine identity. This contrasts with other studies on peasant masculinity that emphasize the centrality of “autonomy,” particularly in relation to a nation-state (see Alonso 1995; Nugent 1993).

Transnational migration gives shape to another segment of the labor corridor that historically followed the enrollment in the military in Zegache. As former soldiers returned to Zegache, in the 1980s and 1990s, with new practical and technical skills, as well as with important “transborder” experiences (Stephen 2007) acquired both within the military ranks and

in their deployment destinations, they encountered their work opportunities curtailed as national and international economic policies worked in tandem against subsistence agriculture.

The experiences that compose transnational migration are filled with difficult moments in which the migrant (and the potential migrant) must show “valor” and courage in the face of adversity. The act of crossing the Mexico-U.S. border is, in itself, filled with danger, and people are constantly pushed to the limits of their physical abilities (see de León 2015). However, the dangers and risks faced do not end once the border has been crossed. As I argued in the previous chapter, the historical predominance of male transnational migrants in Zegache is used discursively to validate the risks and sacrifices that men make when they cross the border, especially when they have crossed it on multiple occasions. This is contrasted with women who live in the U.S. who often cross the border fewer times. In fact numerous men remember the exact number of times they have crossed the border. For example, a local musician told me that he had “jumped” over the U.S. more than 50 times. Other men also narrated their multiple border crossings.<sup>34</sup>

Although it is tempting to see the crossing of the Mexico-U.S. border as a qualitatively different life experience than those that underwent by peasants and soldiers, for numerous men of Zegache the continuities are obvious. The skills and knowledge gained through agricultural work in Zegache and through the Mexican military do not appear as disconnected either from the act of crossing the Mexico-U.S. border without proper documentation, or from industrialized seasonal agricultural work in the U.S. West Coast. The continuity of the transnational labor

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<sup>34</sup> Although crossing the border is always framed in terms of risk and danger, men from Zegache are well aware of the historical changes that Mexico-U.S. border has gone through: thus, crossing through Tijuana-San Isidro, or through Ciudad Juárez-El Paso, more common in the 1980s and 1990s, is not seen as dangerous as crossing through the Sonoran Desert.

corridors forges connections between masculine identity, skills and knowledge, and patterns of mobility.

The continuities that link transnational labor corridors for the men of Zegache are articulated in Arnulfo's narrative about the difficulties of crossing the Mexico-U.S. border as an undocumented migrant. Arnulfo retired from the military in his early 40s, after more than 20 years of service, his experience in the Mexican army had become routine: "I always get up at five in the morning and take a walk. That's part of the discipline that I acquired in the army." Arnulfo currently lives in a Seattle suburb, in the state of Washington. There he works as the main and sole cook of a small fast food restaurant owned by a Chinese woman. Arnulfo crossed the Mexico-U.S. border twice, once in 2008 through Tijuana, and then in 2012, through the Sonoran Desert, in Arizona. I asked him if crossing the desert was difficult. He replied, very calmly, "Everybody told me that it was difficult, but in the military I would walk for weeks carrying heavy loads with little food. I had to walk for three days so it wasn't too hard." Arnulfo adds: "We were close to the end of the trail, and the *migra* [Border Patrol] spotted us. The *coyotes* [smugglers] told us to hide and to wait for them to return but I followed them, I thought it was safer that way. At the end, only three [of more than 20 people] made it across." Arnulfo's narratives parallel narratives of other Zegacheños who, when asked about agricultural work in the U.S., speak about their familiarity with agricultural work since childhood. These narratives that highlight the linkages and the continuities in the labor experiences of the men of Zegache in a way diminish claims of masculinity solely based on transnational experiences. Like in the case of Miguel discussed above, the social validation of a masculine identity is framed within the intergenerational masculine experiences of risk and sacrifice.

However, transnational migrants are exposed to new occupations and to new labor regimes that differ in important ways to subsistence agriculture and military life. Masculine identity in Zegache is anchored in notions of risk and sacrifice, and transnational migrants move within specific transnational labor corridors that reinforce these associations. Transnational migrants often describe their own work in the U.S. in terms of risk and sacrifice, sometimes redefining these terms and, as I explore in the following chapter, redefining certain activities and occupations.

*Piece-rate Masculinity: Agricultural Work and Technology in the U.S.*

The act of migrating itself can be define in terms of “valor” and courage. But being able to endure, *aguantar*, the adverse conditions and forms of labor encountered while in the U.S. can also be construed in terms of “valor.” On the other hand, not being able to endure those conditions, can be interpreted as going against masculine notions of risk and sacrifice. Roberto analyzes the experiences of his brother-in-law in this way. Roberto’s brother-in-law who only endured a very brief period in the U.S. “He’s such a coward! —Roberto said. He couldn’t even stay here for a year.” Although at first glance it might seem contradictory that “staying” in Zegache and “staying” in the U.S. can both be interpreted as masculine it is not. In fact it highlights the central notions of risk and sacrifice, while it signals how “breadwinning” is not necessarily masculine but it becomes masculine when it is part of a larger narrative of masculine risk and sacrifice.

Transnational male migrants from Zegache are already accustomed to working in agriculture when they arrive in the U.S. However, a significant change takes place as they move

from non-industrialized agricultural activities oriented to family subsistence to industrialized agricultural activities structured by global markets.<sup>35</sup> This change also transforms how notions of masculinity are tied to the peasant identity. Men from Zegache move away from a masculine peasant identity tied to the defense of the family land and, instead, talk about their capacity and efficiency in performing specific agricultural jobs (such as vegetable and fruit picking)—this contrasts with women, who are more likely to talk about other aspects of their jobs, like their schedule and the people they meet. For men, like Roberto, being able to pick strawberries with speed and accuracy has become a central element in the redefinition of a masculine identity. In this context, masculinity is redefined through the sacrifice of grueling physical work that often results in pain and chronic illness (see Holmes 2014). In addition, the risk of injury is also enhanced in piece-rate agreements (which are very common for Zegache migrants) that reward fast movements.

During a baptism and first communion celebration held in the spring of 2014 near Woodburn, Oregon, Roberto showed me his hands, still red from the strawberry juice, his fingers were crooked. “Look at my fingers, they are still swollen from the picking.” I had picked up Roberto, Jimena, and their two daughters earlier; it was a Sunday but both Roberto and Jimena had gone to work for half a shift. “Today was a good day. I was the second best picker; only a youngster surpassed me,” Roberto proudly told me. Jimena, who had also been picking strawberries that morning, added: “He is pretty fast,” but did not comment on her own picking abilities.

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<sup>35</sup> For example, picking strawberries (Holmes 2014). Stephen (2007:236-237) also describes the Willamette Valley, where many Zegacheños work, as a place that links an increasing number of Mexican immigrants and seasonal commercial agriculture to global capital.

As with Roberto, numerous men from Zegache speak confidently about their efficiency at performing numerous and diverse tasks related to agricultural work. Such comments included references to the number of blueberry and strawberry buckets they could fill, but they also referred to the ways in which they had mastered complex tasks that included different types of machinery and technology.

For example, Joel and Rubén, work in a plant nursery and although their daily obligations change depending on the season they often mention the *bolear* season as the most demanding, and as the most rewarding. *Bolear* refers to the process known as “earth-balling” in which the roots of a tree or a shrub are dug out of the ground in a circular shape, and are later covered in plastic material. Once the roots have been packed in plastic they resemble a “ball.” *Bolear* requires learning to use special digging machinery that speeds up the process; the speed, however, requires accuracy as placing the automatic shovel-like equipment can also ruin the plant’s roots. Thus, an important part of being an effective *boleador* is directly related to the ability to control and operate machines. Being good at *bolear* is quantifiable as not only the number of plants that one is able to pack is important but also how much time you spend on each plant depends on your ability and efficiency.

Although fruit picking and earth-balling are different processes, men from Zegache are able to articulate a form of piece-rate masculinity that links notions of risk and sacrifice to efficiency and to the ability to learn new technologies. Thus, while other scholars discuss the experiences of Latino men in the U.S. as “stripping” them of their masculinity (Boehm 2012:73) and as emasculating (Alcalde 2011:465-466) I contend that although transnational migration transforms how diverse and divergent masculinities are perceived it is not an emasculating process for the men of Zegache. Men from Zegache redefine their masculine around notions of

endurance and sacrifice in the context of physical demanding labor, new technologies, and new risks that include injuries and accidents.

### *Christmas Trees, Hops, and Other Odd Jobs*

Besides fruit and vegetable picking, and working in plant nurseries, two of the most common occupations for Zegacheños are harvesting hops (the female flowers of the hop plant used in beer production), and cutting and packing Christmas trees. Both of these occupations are seasonal and require a great degree of familiarity with complicated processes that involve specialized machinery. In this section I further describe how these occupations within the transnational labor corridors in which people from Zegache move reinforce masculine notions of risk and sacrifice, and the masculine familiarity with technology. Before proceeding, it is important to note that the participation of men from Zegache in these two occupations (hop harvesting, and cutting and packing Christmas trees) was produced in very specific circumstances that “pushed” them into seeking new opportunities.

Numerous men from Zegache narrate how, in the past, they were able to migrate seasonally to Oregon. Men from Zegache would take advantage of the particularly short and intense agricultural season in the Pacific Northwest (Gamboa 1990). This changed after the September 11 attacks on New York’s Twin Towers in 2001 as the Mexico-U.S. border was militarized, the human and financial costs associated with crossing the border increased. Male migrants were disincentivized to cross the border on a yearly basis (e.g. Riosmena and Massey 2012; Massey et al 2006). As Zegacheños started staying in Oregon during the entire year they also realized that they couldn’t limit themselves to seasonal agricultural work that took place



from March to October, especially as electric bills went up during the cold winter months. At the same time, year-round permanence also allowed Zegacheños to expand their social networks beyond their hometown networks, which also included people from the neighboring town of Santiago Apóstol. Through these networks built in communities in the Willamette Valley, like Salem and Woodburn, men from Zegache were able to find occupations to help them endure those winter months and they also secured positions for yearlong employment.

Throughout my conversations with men from Zegache I was slowly made aware of a wide range of odd occupations. In addition to the conventional jobs that undocumented migrants perform in the Pacific Northwest like reforestation work, cattle keeping, and seasonal agriculture, the men I interviewed had worked collecting moss for Christmas decorations, and trapping fishing worms in the forested areas between Washington and Oregon. Although the end result of these jobs seems quite festive, the men narrated long and lonely walks in dense forests of the Cascades Range as they climbed trees and descended to muddy riverbanks in the Pacific Northwest's unpredictable and inclement weather. In fact, the production of festive commodities was a domain where men from Zegache would often be present, especially in the cutting and packing of Christmas trees, and the harvesting of hops used for beer production.

Before proceeding to the narratives of the men who worked cutting and packing trees, and harvesting hops I would like to start with a brief description of these two jobs; these descriptions will also help to frame how both of these occupations fit within the labor corridors that link peasant, soldier, and migrant masculinity through the tropes of risk and sacrifice.

Every year, during August, and sometimes September, men from Zegache participate in the *jape* (hops) harvesting. Across the Willamette Valley it is easy to see where hops are growing as metallic cables rise from the ground forming a triangle from which the hop plants will hang.

The flowers, which appear in the upper part of the triangle, are harvested and immediately boiled in the nurseries' facilities. Because the harvesting season is only between two and three weeks, the nurseries and the hop farms have double shifts during the season; this means that hop flowers are harvested and processed 24 hours a day. The process of harvesting hop flowers requires a complex interaction of people on the ground whose jobs require precision; some of them cut the vines as others drive a sort of moving staircase at a rhythm that allows the cutter (who's riding on the top of the staircase) enough time to cut the flower without moving too fast or too slow. In addition, when the flowers are being boiled they emit a strong odor that makes it difficult to breath and that impregnates the clothes of all of the people present.

Zegacheños have been involved in hop harvesting since the 2000s. Although some Zegacheños now work year-round in the production of hops, most of them only work during the August-September harvest season. Even if the harvesting of hop is not particularly risky, men who work twelve-hour shifts and endure the strong scent of boiled hops discuss their experiences in terms of sacrifice. This is especially true for those men who work during the night shift—this shift is mostly reserved for people who have gained the trust of the farms' owners. Moreover, hop harvesting is also experienced within the piece-rate masculinity framework that emphasizes efficiency and accuracy. Men talk about “finding their place” in the hop harvesting process as not all of them are able to perform every task with the same efficiency and accuracy. This is also directly linked to the learning of new skills and knowledge about how to operate machinery that, although specific to the hop harvest, reshapes how men approach technology within the transnational labor corridors.

However, it is perhaps the cutting and packing of Christmas trees that best shows how risk and sacrifice permeate men's lives, and test their endurance. Harsh conditions, isolated

wooden areas, and the constant threat of injury from cutting and carrying heavy tress imbue the month of November and part of December for the men of Zegache. Most of the Zegache's male transnational migrants that I interviewed and talked to have participated in the Christmas tree industry at least once in their lives.<sup>36</sup>

The Christmas tree season lasts between four and six weeks, usually starting in November and extending to mid-December. During the Christmas tree cutting season men work between 12 and 15 hours a day, seven days a week. In some instances, the trip to reach the spot where the trees are located takes several hours; in these particular spots trees are hauled out of the forest by helicopters. The already difficult job of cutting trees and placing them on a conveyor belt, where they are mechanically packed, is even more difficult and dangerous when trees become slippery in rainy and cold weather. One person I interviewed, who had been working in the Christmas tree season for almost 10 years, told me that in 2013 a tree fell on him, breaking his leg. This didn't discourage him from returning in 2014. Other men from Zegache told me that they had tried cutting and packing Christmas trees but that it was too hard, and too dangerous.

Transnational male migrants continue to frame their masculine identity in terms of risk and sacrifice. However, the variety of occupations that they undertake while living in the U.S. is diverse and requires them to redefine risk and sacrifice in contexts that are different from the peasant masculine identity and from the experiences in the Mexican military, thus a sense of piece-rate masculinity is created as men transit through the transnational labor corridors that place them in industrialized agricultural fields, plant nurseries, hop harvesting, Christmas tree

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<sup>36</sup> In fact the only ones who had not participated in the Christmas tree industry were those migrants who had never lived in Oregon or those who, having lived in Oregon, never stayed during the months of November and December.

cutting, and other odd jobs. In addition, such transit across these occupations also allows a familiarity with technology that becomes gendered as masculine. In the following section I analyze how one specific way of operating machinery, driving, is also reshaping masculine identities in Oaxaca.

## THE PLOUGH AND THE TRACTOR: DRIVING, AGE, AND MASCULINITY

As I have mentioned before, the oxen-pulled plough was not only a central element in agricultural labor but since it is considered “a man’s job” (see Gonzalez 2001:136-137) it was also a symbol of the masculine peasant identity forged in Zegache in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution. This was especially evident when ploughs were targeted in familial and local disputes in the past. However, migratory movements and joining the military have changed how oxen pulled ploughs are perceived and used, and thus have changed how masculinity is expressed intergenerationally through agriculture and through technology.

My conversations with Teodoro exemplify how tractors are gradually replacing ploughs, and how driving tractors is being gendered as male by younger generations of men. Teodoro used to have oxen but, he tells me, “feeding them was a lot of work: we had to get fodder every day, give them a lot of water, and the bulls can be aggressive at times.” Now, Teodoro relies on his grandson, Miguel, to drive the tractor that his son bought with remittances from the U.S. Miguel lived in the U.S. for three years and was also in the military.

Due to increased male migration, and to the fact that more children and youth are attending school instead of tending for animals, providing fodder for oxen, horses, and mules (animals that are used to pull ploughs and carts) has become more burdensome and, given the

influx of remittances, animal traction has been replaced by small trucks and tractors. This has led to an increased reliance on motorized vehicles, an activity which is mostly taken up by men who have learned how to drive while in the U.S. or in the military.

During one occasion I accompanied Miguel and Teodoro to their agricultural fields. Miguel was driving an old Nissan pickup truck; Teodoro had decided to ride in the back of the truck while Miguel and I sat on the front cabin. I asked Miguel how he had learned to drive: “I learned to drive all sorts of vehicles in the U.S., my uncle [Teodoro’ youngest son] worked in a ranch and taught me.” As with hop pickers and Christmas trees workers, being able to operate motorized vehicles and different types of machinery becomes a central element for male transnational migrants. These new abilities and knowledge also help to frame Zegacheños’ indigenous masculinities as more robust in contrast to other men who have had different experiences. Miguel added: “[In the military,] at first they wouldn’t let me drive, I didn’t have any official proof. But one day we got stuck; the guy who had the driving certificate couldn’t really drive so I told the commander ‘I know how to drive’; at first he didn’t want me to do it, but I convinced him. After I grabbed the wheel, we got back on the road in no time.”

Due to the occupations that male transnational migrants undertake within the transnational labor corridors that channel their mobility, driving automobiles has become gendered as a masculine activity. Matthew Gutmann (2007:190) discusses the importance of tracing how certain practices, like alcohol consumption in Mexico City, become “degendered” through time. In the same vein, Jason Pribilsky (2012) analyzes how the administration of money is “regendered” as male in the Ecuadorian male migrant community in New York City. Here, however, I want to highlight the ways in which the gendering of certain activities, such as

driving, is connected to generational experiences of what masculinity is and, also, to the creation and reproduction of the different forms in which men and women are mobile or immobile.

The masculine familiarity with driving is clearly related to age as it is mostly men under 45 who know how to drive. Most of the men who drive have either lived in the U.S. or have been enrolled in the military; this is reflected in the few men over 45 years of age who know how to drive, and who have been transnational migrants or soldiers. Some of the older men who don't know how to drive continue to argue that oxen pulled ploughs were actually better for the soil and for agricultural production. One man in his eighties said the following: "The tractor pushes and presses the soil down, it doesn't let it breath; the plough is softer and it mixes the soil but it lets it breath at the same time." This sort of commentary is part of a larger critique of older men to younger generations who aren't as invested in the land as they were, and who get partially blamed for the reduction in corn harvest in the last few decades.

Knowing how to drive has not only changed the way masculinity is expressed in the agricultural field—with men driving tractors and pickup trucks instead of animal pulled ploughs and carts—it has also changed how masculinity is constructed within the home, as a flexible set of intimate relationships that are reproduced through gender and age hierarchies on the road. Take, for example, the Rodriguez family. With three sons living in the U.S., Lorenzo, 65, and Martha, 63, have two cars parked in their garage while neither of them drive. Martha tells me that, in fact, one of the cars doesn't work because it hasn't been moved in a long time and animals have eaten part of the cables. Lorenzo and Martha use a mule pulled cart every day when they go tend their fields. If they need to use the car, they must ask one of their sons (a former migrant who doesn't live with them) to drive them. Lorenzo never learned to drive; he never joined the military nor did he migrate. As he took me to see his animals, including two bulls,

Lorenzo proudly tells me that he never left Zegache, he never found a reason to leave. For Lorenzo, his oxen are still central in his notion of masculinity, a notion that is being displaced by younger men who know how to drive.

In previous sections I had analyzed Miguel's migration trajectory. In contrast to other Zegache men, Miguel first migrated to the U.S., and then later returned to Oaxaca to join the military. As part of this analysis I claimed that it is not the act of migration itself what allows men to claim a "proper" masculine identity (see D. Cohen 2006) but it is, I argue, how migration is constructed in terms of risk and sacrifice. In the case of Miguel, who migrated to the U.S. as a semi-documented migrant, joining the military was an important component in the social validation of his masculinity in the context of his family. In addition, driving and being able to manipulate machinery, such as tractors, has helped cement his masculinity in contrast to older men from Zegache like Lorenzo and Teodoro, Miguel's grandfather. As migration trajectories change, and as more male teenagers are able to attend college, notions of masculinity in Zegache are changing and driving has become an important way in which teenage men and young males are able to establish a masculine identity within their homes and in the community.<sup>37</sup>

For example, Alberto is only 18 years old. His grandfather, one of the *valientes*, passed away recently. Alberto's father, and his two uncles, were in the military and later migrated to the U.S. His father returned to Oaxaca, but Alberto's uncles remain in the U.S. Alberto attends college in Oaxaca City, he commutes every day by bus. He listens to American and British pop, and he plays in a rock and roll band. I list these facts to establish that Alberto attempts to move away from notions of masculinity that men like Teodoro, Lorenzo, and his grandfather embrace

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<sup>37</sup> In fact, all of the taxi drivers who make trips between Zegache and Oaxaca are men. The treacherous roads filled with trucks and busses have resulted in fatal accidents on several occasions. Driving a taxi is also seen as a "risky" occupation.

but, also, from notions of masculinity embraced by his father and his two uncles. Alberto, like Miguel, has also found in driving a way to claim his masculinity. He is in charge of driving his mother and his grandmother to the nearby regional market when his father is not around. If it wasn't for Alberto, both his mother and his grandmother would have to take the bus leaving their car parked in their house. In this sense, Alberto continues to espouse the male control and supervision of women's movement (see Stephen 2002a:47).

Driving has become a gendered activity that is directly connected to recent reconfigurations of masculinity in Zegache. The gradual substitution of animal traction by motorized vehicles perhaps does not originate from pre-existing notions of masculinity but from a larger socio-economic context that includes the participation of men from Zegache in the military and in transnational migration. Nevertheless, through the gradual substitution of ploughs by tractors shows that generational and life experiences shape the ways in which masculinity is expressed, in this case through the gendering of driving motorized vehicles. In addition, the gendering of driving is also related to the kinship and care structures, and to the actual infrastructures that have limited women's movement (see Chapter 3).

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I argue that the mobility of men from Zegache is directly related to transnational labor corridors and to a sense of masculinity anchored in ideas of risk and sacrifice. This contrasts with the mobility and immobility of women, who are linked to kinship and care responsibilities. The transnational labor corridors within which men from Zegache move have been historically created through a combination of local, national, and international events. The



movement of men within these labor corridors has also reinforced and reshaped how masculinity is constructed, and how men of different age and generations think about masculine identities.

As men from Zegache move from subsistence agriculture, to soldier life, to transnational migration they gain new skills and engage in new occupations. Men also redefine what counts as masculine as they gender the use of technology, especially through driving. Movement within these labor corridors is produced in specific historical contexts that are also reflected in intergenerational disputes over changing symbols of masculinity, such as defending agricultural plots to crossing the Mexico-U.S. border, and trading the oxen pulled plough for the tractor. Although in this chapter I focused on male intergenerational disputes to masculinity, in a later chapter I address how young women have also redefined what counts as masculine through the use of emotions and affect.

Throughout this chapter I also argue that notions of risk and sacrifice, associated with the masculine peasant identity and created at the intersection of national agrarian policies and local violence, have colored what it means to be a man in Zegache. In contrast to the literature on masculinity that highlights breadwinning as the principal factor in masculine identities I propose that, at least in Zegache, the ways in which one achieves breadwinning are more important in terms of “what men say and do ‘to be men’” (Gutmann 2007:17) than simply focusing on what men do. In chapter 6 I analyze how “what men say and do ‘to be men’” has been redefined to include “traditionally” feminine activities such as cooking. In this way, I analyze how transnational labor corridors have created a “masculine familiarity of work” while, at the same time, femininity has been associated with staying, caring, and suffering.

## V. GENDERED RELATEDNESS AND MOVING CARE

Roberto and Jimena met in Oregon while they were both undocumented migrants. Although they are from Zegache, they had never met while in Mexico. Roberto's contentious youth took him from Zegache's agricultural fields, to the military barracks, and then to the U.S. Jimena spent her teenage years in Mexico City as a domestic employee and, when she returned to Zegache as a single mother, decided to migrate to the U.S. I met Roberto and Jimena in Zegache, in the summer of 2011. They liked to talk about Oregon with me, especially since they wanted their U.S. born daughter to return to the Pacific Northwest. After a difficult year of family additions and separations they were finally reunited in Oregon in 2013.

Felix and Susana own a small cafeteria in Zegache, where they have been living since they returned from Las Vegas, Nevada in 2010. Like in the case of Roberto and Jimena, Felix and Susana met in the U.S. but decided to return to Zegache with their two young children, who are also U.S. citizens, Felix was born in Tlaxcala, Mexico and migrated to the U.S. Felix had never been in Oaxaca, before "returning" to Mexico; neither a Zegacheño or connected to Zegache through family relations, Felix is part of a small number of people who have, in fact, migrated to Zegache mobilized by a dynamic relatedness that not only makes of Zegache their new home but that actively incorporates them into the social, religious, and cultural fabric of the town.

In this chapter I analyze how these two histories of relatedness provide insights into the ways in which gender, kinship, and care create relationships that mobilize people from Zegache in both usual and unusual ways. I start by providing a definition of three core concepts in this chapter: Kinship, care, and relatedness. I propose that, in order to understand histories such as those of Roberto and Jimena, and of Felix and Susana, we should draw a careful analytical

distinction between relatedness, kinship, and between two forms of care (care as a noun, as in ‘to take care of’, or *cuidar*, in Spanish; and care as a verb, as in “caring about”, or *querer* in Spanish). As I show throughout this chapter, relatedness, kinship, care as a verb, and care as a noun coexist in multiple configurations and in multiple sequences. Nevertheless, maintaining analytical distinctions between these terms is relevant to understand how gendered relationships and migrations are structured through kinship and care.

I start this chapter by presenting a brief overview of the two histories of relatedness that are analyzed in this chapter. As I elaborate on the aforementioned concepts, I will touch on other histories of relatedness to support and expand my argument. The histories of relatedness, however, will be fleshed out throughout the chapter. In the second section I articulate what I mean by relatedness, kinship, care as a noun, and care as a verb. In the third section I put the histories of Roberto and Jimena, and Felix and Susana in historical context. Providing this historical background also situates how local, national, regional, and international socio-political changes have a direct impact on the social relationships that are forged, strengthened, and abandoned. I then elaborate further on how kinship and care relations are structured differently, and what are some of the ways in which kinship relations decrease in importance while other relationships, for example romantic relationships, gain importance. I also discuss how friendship fits within this framework of relatedness. I do this by relying on Raymond William’s concept of “structures of feelings” (see also Zavella 2011). The structures of kinship, and care, like the different forms of migrations analyzed in the two preceding chapters, are also gendered. However, as I discuss in the next chapter, femininity and masculinity are constantly being redefined and, in turn, redefine the gendering of kinship and care structures. I end this chapter by discussing how relationships of care, especially those of friendship and romantic partnership, can

sometimes have an impact on how and when people decide to move or, in the case of Felix, to “return.”

## TWO HISTORIES OF RELATEDNESS: TWO DIFFERENT OUTCOMES

Felix, who moved to Zegache in 2010, might seem like an unusual ethnographic subject in an ethnographic study of a Oaxacan community. Until 2007 his personal connections to Oaxaca had been limited to temporarily sharing an apartment with three Oaxacans in California. He migrated to the U.S. from Tlaxcala, Mexico. He moved to Zegache after marrying his third wife, Susana, a Zegacheña whom he met in Las Vegas in 2007. Looking carefully at the case of Felix highlights how relatedness, through different configurations of care and kinship, can create movements that seem to be outside of circuits considered by migration scholars who concentrate on communities of origin and migrant communities in the receiving country. Like numerous current inhabitants of Zegache, whose connection to Zegache started because of relationships based on care, particularly romantic relationships, Felix has made the Zapotec town his home, and actively participates in the social and economic life of this rural town of 3,000 inhabitants. Analytically speaking his experience escapes research on communities of origin—since, as we will see, his motives for migration are different from those of other men in Zegache—and migrant communities in the U.S.—because he no longer lives in the U.S.

Born in the state of Tlaxcala, in Central Mexico, Felix started working in the service sector when he was 16 years old. He learned to cook while he was employed, first, by the Mexican restaurant chain VIPS and, later, by a Denny’s restaurant franchise. During 10 years of continuous employment in the restaurant industry, Felix traveled around Mexico and moved

from dishwasher to restaurant manager. After getting married and having children, Felix decided to open a poultry slaughterhouse so that he could spend more time with his family in Tlaxcala. Felix brought live chickens, slaughtered them, cleaned them, and then sold them. At the beginning the business seemed promising, prompting him to request several loans to expand his business. Things were looking up for Felix until one day he arrived at the facilities where he kept the live chickens to find that hundreds of them became ill while others had died. Unable to repay the loans that he had taken out to grow his business, Felix rode the bus to Tijuana and crossed the Mexico-U.S. border. He hoped to earn enough money to rebuild his business.

Although Felix is now surrounded by a large number of people who have migrated to the U.S., starting with his wife and his father-in-law (one of the few *braceros* who are still alive in Zegache), Felix did not belong to a social network with a rich history of migration. He describes his journey to the U.S. as difficult precisely because of this: “Where I’m from [Tlaxcala] there weren’t many people who had migrated, and I didn’t know anybody on the other side.” Through people he met on the bus to Tijuana he managed to secure a *coyote*, and then to get a job at a restaurant in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

In contrast to Felix’s migration trajectory, Susana’s migration is part of a larger transborder social network that includes internal and transnational migrants. Starting with her father, who lived and worked in Oregon as a *bracero*, Susana had important kinship ties in the U.S. Like numerous women from Zegache, Susana had first worked in Oaxaca City as a domestic employee, and then later migrated to the U.S. accompanying her brothers. Although they had strong ties in Oregon, Susana and her brother moved to Nevada in hopes of finding work more easily.

As I explain in more detail in the following sections, Felix was married to a woman from Tlaxcala but ended the relationship after he returned to Tlaxcala for the first time. However, Felix was also involved with a woman from Chihuahua while living in Los Angeles. It was because of this romantic relationship that Felix decided to move to Las Vegas, Nevada where he started working as a cook and later became an electrician. Susana and Felix met while Susana was looking for work cleaning offices and houses. While in Las Vegas, Felix's mother passed away, prompting Susana to think about her own aging parents. Because of different family issues that Felix had in Tlaxcala, they decided to return to Zegache.

Like other women in Zegache (see Chapter 3), Jimena migrated to Mexico City as a teenager. While in Mexico City Jimena was not only a domestic employee but also a nanny. Because of her work she was able to travel with the family that employed her: "I liked Mexico City, and because I was able to travel, I got a chance to see different lifestyles," she once told me in her living room. Like other women I talked to that had migrated to Mexico City, Jimena had forged relationships of care with people in the Mexican capital. One of these relationships led Jimena to give birth to a son outside of wedlock, and she became a single mother. Upon her return, Jimena had a hard time readjusting to Zegache (especially as a single mother), and decided to try her luck in Oregon, where she met the man from Zegache who would later become her spouse, Roberto

Roberto's life trajectory is similar to many of the men discussed in Chapter 4. He was first involved in subsistence agriculture, and he also defended *la línea*, the town's limits as part of the community's security committee. The role of this committee is to monitor any encroachments on community land. Along with his two younger brothers, Roberto later joined the Mexican military where he learned to cook, and was then able to work as a cook in

Querétaro, in Central Mexico. In the 1990s, and partly motivated by the migration networks of the neighboring town, Roberto migrated to Oregon. Roberto lived in California and in Washington but decided to settle in Oregon in 1999.

Jimena and Roberto met through a cousin of Jimena who was also Roberto's housemate in Oregon, in 2003. Their daughter Noemi was born in Portland, Oregon in 2005. Following the economic crisis of 2008, Roberto, Jimena, and Noemi returned to Oaxaca in 2009. However, as I further elaborate in this chapter, for personal and familial reasons it was difficult for them to "feel at home" in Oaxaca and during our numerous conversations in 2011 and 2012, both Jimena and Roberto expressed their desire to return to Oregon for numerous reasons: to reunite with friends and relatives there, and to escape the tensions with Roberto's family. In addition, since Noemi is a U.S. citizen, they wanted her to study and learn English while she was still in elementary school. In 2013, and through a series of border crossings that mobilized their friends and relatives, Roberto, Jimena, and Noemi resettled in Oregon. Jimena, who was the last to make it to the U.S., brought with her Amelia, their new daughter born in Mexico.

As I expand on various aspects of the migration trajectories of Felix and Susana, and of Jimena and Roberto, I also explore how different forms of migration combine different concepts about what it means to be related. Some of these concepts are based on kinship, others are based on care. In order to understand how these different concepts of kinship and care overlap and diverge, I build on the definition of relatedness proposed by Janet Carsten (2000). In this dissertation, relatedness is conceptualized as encompassing both kinship and care, and their complex and dynamic interconnections. Yet, I argue, it is important to maintain an analytical distinction between kinship and care. This distinction is relevant because although kinship and care overlap, they shape relationships in different ways, and in order to analyze relatedness we

should study the dynamism that exists between structures of kinship and structures of care. In addition, I propose a nuanced view of the concept of care. Care can be both a noun and a verb; these two forms of care are influenced by gender roles and migration trajectories, and pose difficult choices to migrants and to their families. This definition of relatedness will add to the literature on migrant communities that tends to focus on social networks based on the hometown and on the family. Although numerous scholars have studied the importance of hometown organizations (e.g. Fox and Bada 2004; VanWey et al 2005) and the effects of migration on the family (e.g. Zavella 2011; Boehm 2012), the relationships formed outside of these two networks have not been analyzed in-depth.

By analyzing migration histories through the framework of relatedness it is possible to see how migrants' actions and decisions are linked to gender roles, and to migration experiences that can challenge social networks such as those based on kinship and common origin and can include social ties based on shared ideas, shared residence, and shared employment history. These histories of relatedness also enable us to look at the ways in which ideas about gender, care, and family shape and are reconfigured by migration processes from multiple perspectives and in multiple locations. The relationships of care and kinship that are forged and abandoned show some of the intricate ways in which migration experiences and relatedness are connected.

## RELATEDNESS, KINSHIP, AND TWO TYPES OF CARE

A few months before Roberto and Noemi returned to Oregon, in the summer of 2013, Jimena sent me a text message asking me to call her. On the phone, she told me that Noemi would be flying into the U.S., while Roberto and Jimena would try to cross the Mexico-U.S. border



without documentation. Although Roberto's brother, Joel, lived in Oregon, Jimena mentioned that it would be Maricela, a woman from the state of Durango, in northern Mexico, who would be taking care of their daughter while they made the arduous journey across the desert. The decision to select Maricela, and not Joel, as Noemi's guardian was not light-hearted. Joel, Roberto's brother, had been in Oregon since 2000 and once had a good relationship with Roberto and Jimena but, as I explain later, this had changed. On the other hand, Roberto and Jimena's relationship with Maricela had intensified during the couple's last few years in Oregon, and even while they were in Oaxaca. Maricela met Roberto and Jimena through work. They became close friends. For Roberto and Jimena, Maricela and her family were an important social factor in their desire to return to Oregon in the summer of 2013.

In July of 2013, Roberto made it across the border but Jimena was detained by the U.S. Border Patrol and sent back to Mexico. At the time, Jimena was pregnant. A few months later she gave birth, in Mexico, to Amelia. Roberto and Noemi reunited in Maricela's house, where they lived for a few weeks but, "because she didn't have any space," they moved into the garage of a man that Roberto met during his first months in the U.S., in 1999. The relationships between Roberto and Jimena, and Maricela, as well as their relationship with Joel, fit well within the framework of relatedness (see Carsten 2000; Sahlin 2013): meaningful connections that do not obey simplistic analytical associations between the biological and the social. Following from the structural and relational dynamics of Roberto and Jimena's daily life activities of caring, anthropologists should not rely on formal kinship structures to account for how migrants care for one another within and across borders.

### *Relatedness and Kinship*

The concept of relatedness originates, in part, as a response to kinship studies that emphasized the analytical distinction between biological and social forms of kinship (Carsten 2000:3-4).

Relatedness, as proposed by Carsten (2000), seeks to move away from the normative and “highly formal analysis” of kinship systems, while emphasizing the different local practices and discourses that surround the meaning and experience of being related, of being connected. Under the framework of relatedness, kinship, then, should be understood not as a local interpretation of biological connections (Schneider 1984) but as a local set of practices and discourses about the processes that create connections. In Sahlins’ (2013) terminology, relatedness refers to the processes that create “mutuality of being” are what constitute kinship.

The framework of relatedness, its critics claim (e.g. Galvin 2000; González Echavarría et al 2010; Holy 1996), does not go beyond a mere description and has added little to previous notions of kinship. In the view of these scholars, the idea of relatedness has obscured the study of kinship precisely because its conceptual flexibility makes it hard to define. As a solution, for example, González Echavarría et al (2010) propose that anthropologists look back to biological procreation and cultural reproduction as the bases for kinship and, thus, leave out other relationships that occur between different groups that might not share the same discourses around social relations. This narrow definition of kinship shows that the concept of relatedness, as proposed by Carsten, is important precisely because it provides a powerful critique of the functional analysis of formal kinship studies, and because it seeks to include social relationships that are significant not only for the anthropologists but for the people the anthropologists study as well.

However, the criticisms raised by scholars like González Echavarría et al (2010) should not be totally discarded. As it stands, relatedness can be interpreted as a concept that can become trivial since it could be used to describe one and all relationships because it emphasizes the intricate connections between “biological” and social relationships. Yet, I argue, relatedness as a concept should not retreat into a narrow definition of kinship, as some of its critics have suggested. Instead, it should draw an analytic distinction between kinship and care relationships that avoids the biological-social dichotomy. What I mean by this is that although it is true that the biological-social dichotomy should be avoided because it is false and not theoretically productive, a distinction between kinship and care relationships and structures is useful because understanding the interactions between relationships and structures of kinship and care not only explains how they originate, or their potential normative content, but also how they can change temporally and how they can influence individuals and groups of people in specific local contexts.

This way, relatedness permits the analysis of specific contexts where relationships like the one that Roberto and Jimena had with Maricela could develop. It also enables us to explore the tensions surrounding the “hard work” of maintaining social relationships, especially considering that some of these social relationships might create conflicting demands of time, care, and economic resources that create different possibilities and pose difficult choices for the people involved. Using this definition of relatedness we can think of Roberto and Jimena’s avoidance of Joel as connected to the difficult living situation of the couple in Oaxaca, where they lived next to Maura (Roberto’s mother) and the decision that Joel (Roberto’s brother) had to make. We can also explain the fact that Jimena sent Amelia with her sister in the Bay Area, who she had not seen in more than ten years, and not with Roberto or Maricela, as an indication that

“sisterhood” has strong implications when it comes to providing mother-like care, after Jimena was sent back to Mexico while attempting to cross the Mexico-U.S. border.

In the same way, this framework of relatedness also helps to analyze Felix’s decision to abandon his family in Tlaxcala because he thought they had taken advantage of him while he was a migrant by not saving his remittances and not using his remitted money “to maintain the family”— the first time he returned from the U.S. he found that his wife had only saved about ten percent of the money he had sent. He also sent money to his siblings so that their mother could be in a private medical facility; instead they used the money to buy expensive clothes and new home appliances. He later found out that she had died in a public hospital. These were some of the family issues that led Felix to more or less abandon his family of origin in Tlaxcala and be able to incorporate himself into the kinship and caring structures of Zegache. Thus, Felix now sees himself as being from Zegache more than being from Tlaxcala. This is directly connected to his wife, Susana, but especially to his children. Although Felix had children with other women in Tlaxcala and in the U.S., he says “I had never enjoyed my children, I was always away, and that’s why I want to stay here [in Zegache] to enjoy my son and my daughter.” Felix’s children are being raised as Zegacheños, and Felix has been incorporated to Zegache not only through his family but through his work and through his religious service as a *mayordomo*, hosting one of the most important religious festivities in Zegache. Like in the case of Roberto and Jimena, for Felix and Susana relationships of care and kinship occasionally create conflicting demands of time, care, and money, they also present different choices that spread inter-generationally (see Yarris forthcoming).

Moreover, the distinction between kinship and care is important because kinship and care are often conflated. Kinship relations often seem to presuppose care relations and this

assumption blurs the fact that care and kinship are so closely associated not because there is a necessary natural connection but because, in many instances, care and kinship practices and discourses overlap significantly in daily life. In the definition used here, relatedness is composed of both kinship and care relations. The divergence between these two concepts is more easily discernible in studies that emphasize the disruption between kinship and care. For example, studies on adoption (e.g. Leinaweaver 2008) and on the lack of family care (e.g. Biehl 2012) suggest that the relationship between kinship and care practices and discourses are not fixed but flexible and mobile, and are linked to larger socio-economic structures that include multiple actors. Here, kinship and care relations appear as dynamically overlapping and diverging. Such overlaps and divergences occur at the confluence of local, regional, national, and international situations. Different migration experiences create different dynamics between relationships of kinship and care, while also modifying gender identities. The two family cases analyzed in this chapter highlight how kinship and care relations are intertwined in dynamic ways but at the same time they highlight why relatedness is composed of care and kinship relations, which are analytically distinct. For example, why did Roberto and his daughter Noemi chose to live with a “friend” and not with Roberto’s brother when they returned to Oregon? What led Felix to completely extricate himself not only from his family of orientation and his previous family of procreation but also from a place he called home for more than 25 years to resettle in Zegache? More broadly speaking, how do people who are not from Zegache become incorporated into the community through relatedness?

Here, I define kinship as relational, constitutive of the self, specific and permanent, and defined in terms of “being” and not of “doing” (Faubion 2001:11-12). I also interpret kinship, as a practice, as not stemming exclusively from individual egos—it is not ego-centered—but as

incorporating the discourses and practices of other people who surround these individual egos (Sahlins 2013). Take, for example, the relationship between Roberto and Joel. Joel, Roberto's brother, currently shares an apartment with Joaquin. In addition to living in the same house, Joel and Joaquin are from Zegache, work in the same plant nursery, and play in the same soccer league on Sundays. It is likely that, at this moment, Joel considers Joaquin more "like a brother" than Roberto. Yet, Joel's relationship with Joaquin is qualitatively different from his relationship with Roberto. Joel and Roberto's relationship is marked by the fact that the larger community sees them as brothers (they "are" brothers, even if they don't "do" brotherly things) and, although, permanence might be too strong of a word, their lives are materially tied because their living spaces in Oaxaca are next to each other (due to inheritance) and because they share a great deal of relatives. The importance of distinguishing between kinship ("being brothers") and care ("like brothers") relationships is made clear when thinking about the differences between Joel's relationships with Roberto and Joel (Figure 1).

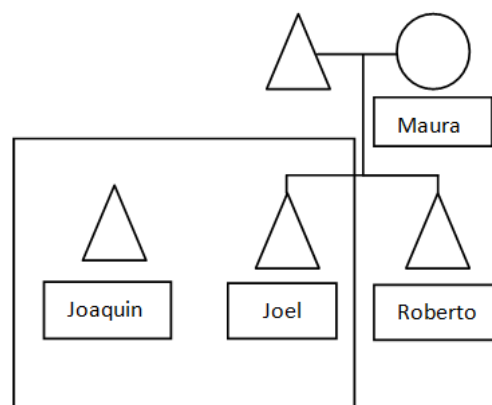


Figure 1. The box indicates that Joaquin and Joel share living space, yet they are not related as "brothers."

The difference between being family and being “like family,” and the importance of the larger community are also apparent in matters of resettling, house building, and remittances, especially in relation to romantic relationships between a man from Zegache and a woman from a different area of Mexico. For example, on numerous occasions I heard comments about how it was foolish for men to build houses in their girlfriend’s hometowns because not being “family,” nor from the same community, the investment could be lost if the relationship ended even if, at the time of the construction, they thought they were “like family.”

### *Care as a Verb, Care as a Noun*

The topic of care has received careful analysis in anthropology and in other social sciences. Analyses of care explore how state institutions provide, or fail to provide, health care (Biehl 2012), and how migration has transformed how care is provided; for example, who provides care for children when their mothers have migrated, (Parreñas 2005; Yarris 2013). In sociology there is a large body of work that looks at the commodification of care through the analysis of the relationship between domestic employees and their employers (Hongandeu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2008; Romero 2002), and how such processes intersect with non-commodified care that connects households and families (Safri and Graham 2010). All of these perspectives provide important insights into the increasing role that capitalism and the state have in the control and distribution of care. This literature studies care mostly as a noun, as the practice of ‘taking care of’, or *cuidar* in Spanish. But there is another side of care: that of an emotional bond, care as a verb (Borneman 2001; Gilligan 1982; Kittay 2014); this form of care does not necessarily result in the practice of ‘taking care of’ but it is more closely related to the ‘caring about’ someone, *querer* in Spanish. This emotional bond, this ‘caring about’ someone also produces bonds that

shape decisions and affect other relations. These two forms of care (*querer* and *cuidar*) are connected through tensions that arise and modify socioeconomic conditions. The tensions between ‘taking care of’ and ‘caring about’ not only motivate decisions regarding migration and remittances but also prompt a reevaluation of the role that relatives have in general. For example, Roberto and Jimena’s struggles to return to the U.S. were informed by their desire to be in a position to be able to care about and take care of their two daughters, while at the same time establishing physical distance between them and Roberto’s family. In the same way, Felix’s decision to “return” to Mexico and settle in Zegache was motivated by his desire to distance himself from his hometown because he felt that the lack of caring (both as a noun and as a verb) from his Tlaxcalan family justified extricating himself from that familial structure.

Moreover, the histories of relatedness presented in this chapter exemplify the dynamic ways in which relationships of care and relationships of kinship merge and diverge, creating structures that overlap and diverge, creating notions of relatedness that have “an effect” (Faubion 2001:9). The idea of structure, as presented here, is not meant as a return to a “formal analysis” of kinship but, instead, as an invitation to think critically about the specific social, political, and cultural conditions where kinship and care responsibilities are created (Yanagisako and Collier 1987:40-43). Structure, in this sense, does not determine kinship and care relationships, but creates channels that facilitate some relations while they complicate others. Because such structural channels can only be maintained through the actual exercise of the relationships that they facilitate change can occur in a similar manner to Raymond Williams’ (1997) “structures of feeling”: individuals can deviate from such channels without necessarily causing structural change and, at the same time, structural change can occur because of socioeconomic changes and



individual decisions and practices within these larger contexts (see Zavella 2011 for a different use of “structures of feeling”).

In other words, it is structurally easier to establish relatedness with some people but not with others. Joel and Roberto’s relationship was structurally easier because they shared a living space, their relationships with other people were similar, and because they live in a society that recognizes the notion of “brotherhood” as a strong connection. The structures of care and kinship merged and facilitated Joel and Roberto’s relationship. The same cannot be said about Jimena’s relationship with Roberto’s family. Although Roberto and Jimena met through a cousin of Jimena who lived with Roberto and Joel in Oregon, the relationship between Jimena and Roberto created a divergent and conflicting situation for Roberto. The fact that Jimena was a single mother and that she migrated to Oregon as such, and not as part of an established couple, might have played a part in the complicated turn that shaped Roberto and Jimena’s relationship with Joel and Maura (Roberto and Joel’s mother).

In the same vein, Susana’s decision to incorporate Felix into her family and her hometown social networks was facilitated by their marriage and by the fact that they had children together. Susana also paved the way for Felix’s involvement in Zegache’s social networks when both of them visited her family in Oregon one winter. During that time, Felix did not have a job, and Susana’s male relatives invited him to work in the cutting and packing of Christmas trees. Although Felix tells me how hard and physically exhausting cutting Christmas trees was, this allowed him to position himself in gendered social networks that would later serve to approve his position as Susana’s partner. Felix’s incorporation into the structures of kinship and care in Zegache doesn’t mean that Zegacheños have changed their views on all the men who are not from Zegache and marry women from Zegache; however, it does signal that there are

different channels through which individuals can make unconventional decisions that do not transform Zegache's kinship and care structures.

The histories presented here highlight the complex situations of migration and relatedness in which individuals make choices about practices surrounding care and kinship. These histories, however, should not be understood as a set of processes and practices that occur between individuals as individuals, but between individuals who are part of diverse social groups. The distancing of Roberto from his mother and brother has to be seen not only from his perspective, or that of Jimena, but also from the perspective of his relatives, his neighbors, and other community members who were, and are, part of Roberto's kinship and care structures. In the same way, Felix's extreme distancing from his own Tlaxcalan family, and his subsequent incorporation in Zegache's social life was not merely predicated on Susana marrying him but on their constant efforts to make Zegache their home through different forms of relatedness. In order to understand relatedness it is important to provide a temporal framework that is not limited to what individuals in the specific relationships articulate because it includes practices and discourses that people around them use to describe their relationship as part of a complex system of relatedness in multiple locations.

### *Leaving and Entering Social Networks*

These relationships of kinship and care, and the importance of gender roles in how people perceive not only their own responsibilities but those of others are part of relatedness composites that connect different places, families and groups. Migration experiences, and the connections and disruptions that they produce have to be understood as particular experiences of

globalization. The concept of “transborder experience” (as opposed to transnational) (see Stephen 2007) can help explain how the borders that are being crossed are flexible and are materially, socially, and historically produced.

I first met Roberto and Jimena in the summer of 2011 in Zegache. Jimena’s cousin who lived in Oregon with Roberto had organized a governmental sponsored work event in which people were preparing a plot of land to plant trees to stop erosion of the María Sánchez hill, an important local landmark.

“You live in Oregon, right? I have some relatives there, and our daughter was born in Portland,” said Roberto just after he had struck the earth with a big metal digging stick. Jimena, who was just a few feet away, approached us: “We want to go back, we really liked it there, we have a lot of friends in Oregon, and our daughter, Noemi, is a U.S. citizen.” Jimena and Roberto enjoyed talking about Oregon, yet, as I have explained before, their experience in Oregon was just part of larger trajectories of migration that had shaped both Roberto’s and Jimena’s history of relatedness, and were also part of Zegache’s social and political history. These trajectories actively connect ideas about gender and kinship to international, national, regional, and local forces; and, in turn, influence the histories of relatedness and migration of all Zegacheños.

In this regard it is important to consider the histories of Roberto and Jimena as both representative of Zegache’s population, and as particular histories produced by the specific decisions that they have made. In very general terms, it can be said that migration patterns have followed clear gender distinctions: men have joined the Mexican military forces, and migrated to the U.S. both as single men and as part of a couple; women have migrated to Mexico City to become domestic employees and have also migrated to the U.S., principally as part of a couple. Internal and transnational migrations are linked through gender and kinship roles within the

household but, at the same time, migration experiences modify and create new perspectives on relatedness.

Roberto and Jimena's histories are common in Zegache because their decisions and actions were part of larger socio-economic patterns and, also, because of local structures of relatedness that include gender roles, and responsibilities of kinship and care. On the one hand, Roberto and Joel could fulfill their responsibilities as men and as sons through different forms of remittances for longer periods of time, especially as single men. On the other hand, single women who migrate to nearby cities or to Mexico City are expected to return to Zegache if their relatives are in need of care or *cuidado*. In many instances women can migrate to the U.S. but only with their spouses or male relatives, thus this relationship of *cuidado* associated with gender roles often persists. It is usually a woman's job to provide this kind of care. Jimena, however, became a single mother in Mexico City and although she migrated to Oregon as part of a kin-network (through her cousin), she engaged in a relationship of caring (*querer*) and, later on, *cuidado* with Roberto. In the same manner, Roberto was part of a "global household" (Safri and Graham 2010) that existed simultaneously in Mexico and Oregon. This household relied on Roberto's remittances but also on Roberto's fulfillment of his kinship and care responsibilities of being a son and a brother; Roberto's relationship of caring about and, then, taking care of Jimena complicated the fulfillment of such responsibilities.

On the other hand, the histories of Felix and Susana are not as common as those of Roberto and Jimena and yet they are also representative of larger socio-economic patterns and of local structures of relatedness.

I met Felix in October 2014 in the small cafeteria that he and Susana named "Michael," after their son. Because of Felix's cooking experience, he is in charge of the cooking and of most

of the chores; Susana helps out but she is often running errands outside the cafeteria and taking care of their two children. The cafeteria is small, decorated with worn out posters of Las Vegas, and with a Sabila plant (Aloe Vera) with red bows that hangs on the door: “to keep envious feelings out,” Felix tells me. Although in recent years Zegache has seen a rise of small cafeterias and food stands, mostly to accommodate out-of-town employees, and local teenagers looking for places to socialize. The majority of these businesses are operated by women, and there is intense competition among these small food businesses.

During our first conversation, Felix asked me about my work in Zegache, and told me that although he wasn't from Zegache he felt “like if I were from here.” I spoke briefly about the people from Zegache I had met in Oregon, and he quickly recognized the names of some his *compadres* and *compadres*, and of his wife's relatives. Susana joined the conversation later that day, and she told me about her relatives in Oregon and how she wanted to go back to Las Vegas someday. Although Susana's and Jimena's histories are similar in many respects, Susana migrated to the U.S. with her brothers without the pressure of being a single mother in Zegache like Jimena and other women from Zegache have done in the past (see Chapter 3), in part because her father had been a *bracero*.

Like Roberto and Jimena, Susana and Felix spoke about Nevada with an air of nostalgia. For them, however, it was more about the city and the lifestyle. “Sometimes I think that we will never go back, but then I think about our lives there, and what we had... At least we had it [referring to modern home appliances, two cars, and other material comforts]... Nobody else here [in Zegache] has had that,” told me Susana as she was cleaning the grill. Despite their apparent air of satisfaction with life in Nevada, Felix and Susana felt compelled to return to Mexico and settle in Zegache because of emotions and obligations of care. Felix fell into a state

of depression after his mother passed away in Tlaxcala, and he wasn't able to see her. Susana remembers that period in their life: "I saw the state he was in after his mother died, and I thought about my own parents, about how much they wanted to meet their grandchildren, and about how I still wanted to enjoy them [*disfrutarlos*]. So I told him [Felix] that I would like to return, even if it was just for a little while."

Even if Felix had never been in Zegache, he was already part of a transnational community that was created not only around his relationship with Susana but, perhaps more importantly, through his fatherhood status of two young children perceived as Zegacheños. Michael and Gabriela had been baptized in the U.S. but their first communion took place in Zegache, and thus strengthened Felix and Susana's social relationships with the community. In this instance, the importance of de-centering the individual from studies of relatedness and kinship becomes apparent as Felix's position in Zegache was solidified through his children (through his status as their father, a "permanent" status), and to the fact that Felix had broken ties with his family in Tlaxcala (thus, resolving the conflicting demands of time, care, and money that multiple families pose). This is not to say that communities like Zegache cannot incorporate outside members to their social networks, but it shows that there are specific channels through which relatedness can be transformed from simply relations of care to kinship relationships.

In Zegache it is commonly acknowledged that migration often transforms people and their social relationships. Not only does migration (whether internal or transnational) puts people at risk of taking "bad choices," like different types of addictions, but it also poses a risk to local relationships that require work, time, and effort. The different trajectories and decisions that migrants take in relation to their established and new social relationships are continually being evaluated and negotiated not only by individuals but by larger social networks. In the two cases

analyzed here, the incorporation and the separation of specific people from specific social networks did not happen simply because of a personal decision but is connected to larger socio-historical contexts.

## FRIENDSHIP AND REKINDLING OF KINSHIP

In October 2013 I visited Jimena in Zegache. Roberto, who was already living in Oregon, told me that Jimena and their youngest daughter (Amelia) were living with Jimena's brother and not in their house because there had been "some problems." When I arrived at the house I saw Jimena nursing Amelia, then just a few months old, sitting next to her sister-in-law. After being detained at the border, Jimena went back to Zegache and attempted to stay in their home, next to Roberto's mother house, Maura. However, Maura locked her out of her own house and "since I was pregnant I decided not to fight back; I couldn't even get [inside the house and get] the car out [of the garage]," Jimena said. This type of confrontation was not unusual for Maura, Roberto, and Jimena, and in fact a few years earlier Jimena had prohibited Noemi to visit her grandmother.

Jimena was planning on leaving Amelia with someone in Zegache so that she could cross to the U.S. to be with Roberto and Noemi. However, a few weeks earlier her mother had died and this created a divergence in the structures of kinship and the structure of care that included gendered kinship and care relations. Although the grandmother is often seen as in a "particular structural relationship" and someone who can fill in the "care slot" left vacant by the mother and the father (Leinaweaver 2010; Yarris 2013), this was no longer an option for Jimena.

But Jimena decided to do something different. She traveled with Amelia to the border in Mexicali where she stayed with a person from Zegache. From there she managed to send Amelia to the Bay Area, with her sister. Jimena had not seen her sister in twelve years. But, as Roberto once told me, perhaps Amelia wouldn't become too unaccustomed (*desacostumbrarse*) to Jimena if she stayed with her maternal aunt. Jimena also thought that Amelia would be better off with a woman who was related to her biologically. This can be interpreted as a conscious, but constrained, divergence in the dynamic relationship between *querer* and *cuidar* that allowed Roberto and Jimena to be able to care about Amelia while someone they trusted took care of her.

Sending Amelia with Jimena's sister also rekindled the "sisterhood" relationship between Jimena and her sister. Although they used to talk regularly and they cared about each other, their relationship was marked by geographical distance and their own care responsibilities towards their spouses and children made it difficult for them to take care of one another. The arrival of Amelia at her maternal aunt's home in California can be interpreted within the framework of relatedness in different ways. For example, following Jessaca Leinaweaver's (2011:3) idea of "child circulation" described as "an active process leading to the formation and transformation of relatedness and sociality" we could think of Amelia's journey as a way to create connections. We could also interpret this action as part of the "sentiment and affective ties that undergird migrants' experiences of transnational belonging" through the practices of care giving and companionship (Castellanos 2009:164). I argue that in the case of Amelia, ideas of "child circulation" (Leinaweaver 2011) and of "communities of sentiment" (Castellanos 2009) overlap and diverge in creating gendered structures of relatedness.

Despite the fact that Jimena and her sister had not seen each other in more than a decade, their relationship, as sisters, facilitated the temporal arrangement for Amelia in California. Going



back to Faubion (2001), Jimena's relationship with her sister was not exclusively defined in terms of "doing" but it was anchored in the idea that they "are" more similar because they are kin and, thus, the eventual transition of Amelia back to Jimena would be smoother. Even if, at that time, Jimena and Maricela's relationship seemed to involve less tension between care as a noun and care as a verb, Jimena decided in favor of strengthening her relationship with her sister. In this case the connections between responsibilities of care and gender roles are clearly underlined because it was Jimena's sister, not her brothers, who had to take care of Amelia. When Jimena finally made it across the Mexico-U.S. border she spent a month in the Bay Area with her sister. When I saw her in Oregon for the first time, in May 2014, she told me that her sister had grown fond of Amelia, *se encariñó*<sup>38</sup>. She also mentioned that although she was happy to be in Oregon, "with her people," she might consider moving to California to be near her sister and her family.

While Jimena was attempting to cross the Mexico-U.S. border, Roberto took on a new role in Oregon as a single father. Although Roberto wanted to spend more time with Noemi, he worked long hours six days a week and, during a period of one month in November and December, he worked twelve-hour shifts seven days a week cutting and packing Christmas trees. Roberto was in a difficult position. The position of a single father was unusual in the structure of kinship of Zegache, and because of his work schedule the tensions between *querer* and *cuidar* became more apparent in his relationship with Noemi, in addition to his relationships with Jimena and Amelia.

Yet, Roberto's living arrangement had not been in vain. Roberto was living in the garage of José, a man he had met in his first trip to Oregon. José is married and has two children: a

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<sup>38</sup> From the verb *encariñar*, which could be literally translated as "in care" (similar in structure to the phrase "in love"). This verb is closely related to *querer*; the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language defines *querer* as "*Amar, tener cariño*", literally "to love, or to feel care" (Real Academia de la Lengua Española).

twelve-year old boy and a ten-year old girl. Roberto knew that José and his spouse would be able to take care of Noemi as she came and went from school, and that their daughter would also be able to provide emotional support that was age appropriate. Like Maricela, who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, José falls outside Roberto and Jimena's networks of family and common origin. They are, we could say, their "friends. Under the definition of relatedness that I propose here, friendship can be accounted for through the analysis of the structures of care. In fact, explaining "friendliness" and different "friendships" (see Paine 1999) by using relatedness can prove useful especially when considering that "friendships," such as that of Roberto and Jimena, and Felix and Susana, can also transition into structures of kinship. The definition of relatedness can be used to show that not all "friendships" are the same, especially when thinking about migration processes where people from different backgrounds come into contact in specific circumstances and situations such as those of Roberto and Jose, and Jimena and Maricela.

Friendship is an important social phenomenon that is ubiquitous, diverse, ambiguous, and practical (Firth 1999:xiii), and has been mostly "overlooked" by anthropologists who often compare it to kinship (Bell and Coleman 1999). This is especially true of studies of migrant communities that tend to emphasize common origin and family ties as the main, non-economic, driving factors that influence migration. However, as I show here, relationships of care outside of the hometown and the family also influence where, why, and for how long people relocate geographically. In fact, friendships occasionally reshape social networks in significant ways. The concept of relatedness, as used here, can help explain the tensions and overlaps of kinship and care and, thus, not only explain when relatedness is constructed and sought but, also, when relatedness poses dilemmas to the people involved.

The case of Felix and Susana serves as an example of how relationships that start out as friendships modify not only individual decisions but community networks. However, Felix and Susana are not the only relationship that has made Zegache a migration destination for people from other parts of Mexico, and the U.S. During fieldwork I encountered numerous people who have moved to Zegache to live with their partners—usually following Zegache’s patrilocal residence pattern. For example, Lourdes, a native of Querétaro in Central Mexico, moved to Zegache 15 years ago and now lives with her husband, her two sons, and her mother-in-law. Lourdes met Rogelio when he was working in Querétaro, after leaving the Mexican military; Lourdes was Rogelio’s supervisor in a manufacturing plant. Another example comes from Jesus and Mariana, who recently returned from Oregon to live in Jesus parents’ house (they were still living in Oregon at the time). Jesus crossed the Mexico-U.S. border without documents in 2004, when he was ten years old. Mariana, the daughter of Mexican migrants herself, was born in the U.S. and had never been to Mexico. Like Lourdes and Mariana, numerous women had relocated to Zegache with their spouses—this is especially true of women from Chiapas, Guerrero, and from other parts of Oaxaca that marry men from Zegache who were in the military. Although a few men, like Felix, also relocate to Zegache to be with their spouses this is far less common, and it shows the importance of patrilocality in shaping the transformation of “friendships” into “kinship,” and how ideas of femininity and masculinity are challenged and reproduced.

The different migratory movements described here show how local structures, practices and discourses surrounding relatedness influenced people’s actions. It also shows some of the ways in which structures of kinship and care develop within in specific socio-economic contexts, enabling the building of relatedness in some situations but constraining it in others. Jimena’s decision to send Amelia with her sister shows the importance of “sisterhood” as a particular

structural relation that is directly connected to ideas about women, motherhood, and appropriate care giving; as Jimena's sister went from caring about Amelia to taking care of her, Jimena's relationship with her sister was strengthened and had an effect in the way Jimena sees her future in the U.S., as she has now mentioned the possibility of moving to California. In addition, comparing the histories of Roberto and Jimena, and of Felix and Susana highlights the different channels through which migration can create new notions of relatedness through relationships that are often articulated as friendships. It also shows how gender roles and expectations have a direct impact on the ways in which people are incorporated into structures of relatedness. In this regard, migration also creates new possibilities of relating (including forms of becoming unrelated). For example, the relationships Roberto and his brother Joel, or the relationship between Felix and his Tlaxcalan family indicate that transnational movements also create spaces where distancing from relatives becomes more viable. Social relationships should not be seen as dyadic relationships but as a set of interconnected relationships between multiple people and multiple groups.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have demonstrated how analyzing histories of relatedness can provide insights into the ways in which gender, kinship, and care relationships mobilize people to act. This perspective is also helpful in understanding how, why, when and where social relationships are created, transformed, and challenged. Building on Janet Carsten's concept of relatedness, I include both kinship and care relations, and thinking about care as being composed of care as a noun (taking care of, *cuidar*) and care as a verb (caring about, *querer*), and focus on the tensions and negotiations that take place in the processes of elaborating social relations. The concept of

relatedness additionally permits us to see that it is not individuals as individuals who are making these decisions but that they are being constrained by changes in their social relationships and how other people interpret such relationships.

Thinking about care as composed of *querer* and *cuidar* can illuminate how care relations are multi-pronged and multidirectional (Castellanos 2009:158-159), and not individualized. This process goes two ways. Since Roberto returned to Oregon he hasn't seen Joel, and neither he nor Jimena seem interested in making this happen. However, Joel is not the "main" cause of their quarrel. Once, in Oaxaca, Jimena told me "we don't have a problem with Joel, *él es muy lindo*, he is very nice; the problem is with *the other people*;" by this, Jimena meant Maura, Roberto and Joel's mother. In the context of clinical care giving, João Biehl (2012: 261) proposes that we look at care as being "made through the contributions of many hands (rather than singular choices)" and that we think about disregard as "a shared (if inconsistent and contradictory) process". Although Biehl's idea is mostly about care as a noun, this can also apply to the tensions between *querer* and *cuidar*. Roberto and Joel had very similar histories of relatedness that were reinforced by the fact that both of them had similar occupations for several years. But when Roberto started caring for Jimena, this was seen by their mother, Maura, as an act that defied his kinship and care responsibilities towards her. Joel, then, was also put in a position where caring about Roberto could be interpreted as disregarding her mother. In this case, caring about someone can be interpreted as not being willing to take care of somebody else. The relationship between *querer* and *cuidar* is a dynamic one.

In the two family cases studied here, the concept of relatedness provides a framework in which to explain how different social relationships motivate migration in different ways and how other relationships are tied to specific moments and places. Thus, although Felix (like other men

in Zegache) were involved with women in the U.S., this does not always prompted migrations—as I analyze in the following chapter, infidelities and romantic relationships are evaluated differently depending on multiple factors including gender, ideas of motherhood and of fatherhood. Felix’s incorporation to Susana’s social networks of people from Zegache, his desire to distance himself from his Tlaxcalan social networks, and the fact that he was the father of two children considered Zegacheños, resulted in Felix’s “feeling like if he was from Zegache” even if he had never been there. On the other hand, although Jimena had strong ties with Maricela, tensions started disrupting their friendship when Roberto and Noemi moved in with Maricela. In contrast, Jimena’s relationship with her sister strengthen as both of them mobilized a discourse of sisterhood and kinship that facilitated taking care of a new family member. In both cases, we can also see how migration is also motivated by a desire to avoid relationships of kinship that are deemed as not satisfactory.

Reframing relatedness as a set of processes, practices, and discourses that occur between individuals who are part of social groups and not only as something that occurs between individuals solely as individuals can help us see how relationships of kinship and care can be interpreted differently by multiple people (see Sahlins 2013). Thinking about how this multiplicity of perspectives and actors creates, strengthens, and loosens relationships of kinship and the practices and discourses of *querer* and *cuidar* provides an explanatory framework from which to understand the historicity of why some relationships change in significance while others are rekindled in specific socio-economic contexts. The relationships between Jimena and her sister, and between Roberto and Joel, are not only relationships between two pairs of siblings but are part of a larger community that influences how they relate to each other. In the same way, the relationship between Susana and Felix is not that only that of a woman from Zegache and

outsider, but that of a family with two young children that are being raised by different people in the Zegache transnational community.

The tensions between structures of kinship and structures of care present “moral choices” (Biehl 2012) to the men and women of Zegache. As I analyze in the following chapter, some of these moral choices are evaluated and influenced by changing notions of masculinity, femininity, and emotional relationships in the context of Zegache’s transborder community.

## VI. CHANGING MASCULINITIES, CHANGING FEMININITIES

In Zegache everyone is a social theorist. Theories abound about the ways in which different men and women relate (or not) to their families and what kinds of relationships work best. In one instance, I listened to three women discuss the advantages of having an orphaned male companion: “They know how to make their own luck, *saben buscarse la vida*”—one of them said to the other two. In another instance, a young taxi driver complained about the lingering *machismo* in the community: “it doesn’t matter if more women get a college education these days; once they finish their studies they can’t use their school degrees... They just go back to their homes.” Throughout my ethnographic research I encountered diverse theories that explained attitudes about masculinity, femininity, and how such attitudes molded family relationships of kinship and care in Zegache.

Although these theories make reference to specific gender roles—about a man who can overcome adversity, or about a woman who studies but then returns to a subordinate position—they also point to the ways in which gender relations are changing, and, thus, to the ways in which family life is being continually transformed. As migration and socio-political changes take place, new concepts of masculinity and femininity surface transforming the ways in which men and women interact both within and outside the family and the community. Some scholars have articulated the relationship between masculinity and the family using the language of crisis: as more women have moved away from their domestic roles and entered the workforce, men have been displaced from their role as “breadwinners,” pushing the entire family structure into a crisis. Whether it is in Oaxaca, Mexico City, or the U.S., more women from Zegache have entered the workforce, and men are no longer able to assert their masculinity through the use of violence. While academics often describe these changes in gender roles as a crises in



masculinity, my research with the men and women of Zegache does not suggest that crisis is a central concept in the changing local masculinities, or in new ways to think about the family.

In fact, my research points to a different set of dynamics—one in which changes in concepts of masculinity and femininity are negotiated and contested not only along gender lines but also along intergenerational lines that are crisscrossed by migratory trajectories, by changes in “breadwinning” activities, and by the tense relationships within families. In the case of Zegache the talk about crisis of masculinity seems misleading as it suggests only the men of Zegache are interested in preserving special male privileges. In fact there are generational roles in femininity in which mothers-in-law are also pivotal in reinforcing their own and male control over women (see Chapter 3). Along these same lines, the language of crisis avoids the complex positions taken by men who—because of different life and transborder experiences—challenge the prevailing gender order, and sometimes re-interpret certain practices of masculinity. On the other hand, the case of Zegache demonstrates that the changes in female gender roles—e.g. from care taker to wage earner— are not smooth transitions, and are as critical as those that men experience and equally fraught with tensions.

In Zegache concepts of masculinity and femininity go hand in hand, as negotiations over gender roles often take place in social, economic, and political contexts that include the entire family and the entire community. As I show in the following pages, men from Zegache are continually redefining (expanding and restricting) concepts of masculinity based on narratives that emphasize their sacrifice and the risks involved in their occupations. Nevertheless, men from Zegache change their narratives about masculinity in a way that does not necessarily fit with the concept of “crisis of masculinity” as they incorporate new activities (such as cooking) into their repertoire of masculine activities because such activities are part of larger experiences of risk and

sacrifice through the transnational labor corridors (see Chapter 4). Narratives of masculinity change alongside norms of femininity. The changes in the latter often imply a transformation in the ways in which proper femininity is policed and are especially noticeable intergenerationally. An important aspect of these intergenerational changes is connected to emotional relationships that create spaces, sometimes of dialogue, sometimes of conflict, in which men and women of different generations interact and modify their own attitudes throughout their lifespans.

This chapter is divided in two sections. In the first section, I argue that the flexibility of masculinity, based on the ideas of sacrifice and risk (as presented in chapter 4), creates a space that allows men to reclaim some forms of cooking as masculine. However, masculinity is also shaped by, and through, women's changing positions in the different locations and social networks they inhabit. Thus, I address femininity in relation to the ideas of suffering and caring that directly connect being a woman to motherly practices. As I mentioned before, as more women enter the workforce, attend college, and migrate (internally and transnationally), the ways of being a woman in Zegache (and elsewhere) have changed considerably. I argue, this is in part connected to changing positions in the peripheral visions women enact (Zavella 2011) which are an important element of the female policing of "proper" femininity. In the second section of this chapter I analyze the ways in which changing concepts of masculinities and femininities, articulated intergenerationally, are transforming Zegache's local gender order. To do this, I focus on the role of emotions and emotional relationships that change throughout a person's life and that create spaces of dialogue and conflict where different ideas of gender roles are enacted, negotiated, and re-signified.

Although much of the literature that addresses masculinity and changes in gender structure focuses on the heterosexual couple (usually husband and wife) as the unit of analysis,

this limits the scope and possible insights of such analysis (e.g. Chant 2000; Perry 2005).

Therefore, throughout this chapter I propose that we shift our lenses from the heterosexual male-female couple to a broader scope that takes into account intergenerational negotiations of masculinity and femininity between men and women, between men and men and between women and women.

## MASCULINE AND FEMININE NEGOTIATIONS

### *The Masculine Familiarity of Work*

The term masculine familiarity of work is used to convey three interrelated meanings of the word “familiarity.” First, by using this term I seek to emphasize how masculinity is constructed and formed within specific families. That is, contrary to other studies of masculinity that emphasize the construction of masculinity *vis-a-vis* the state (or capitalism) (e.g. Boehm 2012), I argue that the construction of masculinity takes place within the home and in relation to other men and women who are part of a family. This is also related to the occupations that men (as sons and husbands, especially) might take up. These occupations are taken up, in many cases, not only because of pressures to become the “breadwinner” but also because it grants men social legitimation which is expressed in their ability to discuss matters such as agriculture, life in the military, or transnational migration. Although the concept of “breadwinning” remains present, it is but one of the moving parts that shape masculinity.

Moreover, long traditions of men from the same family that have similar occupations also grant men certain familiarity with work, familiarity in this sense is defined as a “thorough knowledge or mastery of a thing” that, again, grants men social legitimation both within their

families and within their communities. Such “knowledge or mastery” can also become a point of contention between different forms of masculinity; nevertheless, both senses of familiarity described here work in tandem and redefine what it means to be a man.

The third sense in which I employ the concept of masculine familiarity of work follows philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “family resemblance” analogy. While femininity centers on the ideas of suffering and “being present,” masculinity is often constructed around the idea of risk and sacrifice associated with work. The meaning of work, however, has changed greatly for the men of Zegache in the last century, yet despite of the significant changes of what work actually means for different men in Zegache the relationship between masculinity and work remains strong. Thus I contend that men in Zegache construct the relationship between masculinity and work along the lines of a “family resemblance” (Wittgenstein 1973). Instead of looking for definitions that are based on sufficient and necessary conditions, or on an essential core that connects all of the uses of a particular word, Wittgenstein proposes that we “travel with the word’s use through ‘a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing’” (Biletzki and Matar 2014; Wittgenstein 1973). Establishing connections between different occupations, as diverse as being a soldier and preparing pizzas, and masculinity through family resemblance, men in Zegache are not only able to redefine their masculinity to include positions of subordination and jobs that include activities that are traditionally seen as “feminine” but are also able to retain their sense of masculinity as more women move into the workforce in Mexico and in the U.S. In a way, by decentering the idea of “breadwinner” in the construction of masculinity men are able to maintain their masculinity while, at the same time, limiting the role of women through the creation of flexible masculinities (see also Bridges and Pascoe 2014 for the concept of “hybrid masculinity”).

### *Flexible Masculinities*

Miguel learned how to cook while he was enlisted in the Mexican Army but he hasn't cooked since he returned to Zegache in 2014. Before joining the military, Miguel lived in California for three years with his maternal uncle. When Miguel arrived in California he noticed that his uncle was not himself. Miguel explains: "my uncle was suffering from depression and I quickly understood the reason: we weren't eating in a very healthy way. We would just heat things up in the microwave and eat them. No wonder he was depressed! We quickly found a solution. My mom, who was living in a different part of California, would come over on the weekends and she'd prepare us meals for an entire week." However, Miguel and his uncle would often finish the food before the week ended. Instead of learning to cook, Miguel and his uncle decided to ask Miguel's mom (and his uncle's sister) to move in with them.

Although cooking is an activity that is "feminized" in Zegache, migration and military training have allowed men to appropriate some forms of cooking, and to inscribe cooking as part of their own masculine identities. But as the example of Miguel and his mother show, gender differences and gendered experiences still shape how and why men and women learn to cook. Thus, Miguel did not learn to cook through his mother even though he had the opportunity, but through the military. In this sense, cooking is incorporated into men's repertoires of knowledge not through women teaching men how to cook but through the experience of men in the military. Moreover, as the example of Miguel and his mother show, gender differences in relation to cooking and putting food on the table persist even when men know how to cook has created flexible masculinities that incorporate cooking in gender specific ways.

Miguel is not the only man from the community that has received training as a cook as part of his military service. In fact, I met several men who were used to cooking for large

crowds. Some, like Miguel, cooked for fellow soldiers while walking for several days across mountains looking for marijuana and opium plantations. Others, however, cooked in large kitchens for hundreds of soldiers, sometimes cooking all three daily meals.

As with driving (see Chapter 4), learning to cook changes the outlook that men have in relation to their own familiarity of work, although this varies from person to person. For example, when I asked Arnulfo if he finds his job preparing hamburgers difficult he told me, as he flipped a hamburger in a restaurant in a suburb of Seattle, Washington: “I used to cook food for 200, 300 people. Can you imagine? So, no, this isn’t too hard.” Arnulfo and Miguel’s connection to cooking is not through the construction of home and its respective gender roles but through the construction of masculinity and cooking as a job that requires special knowledge and that is associated with military training and international migration. In this sense, cooking in the military and in the U.S. conforms new concepts of masculinity that, like piece-rate masculinity described earlier (Chapter 4), rewards efficiency, fast movements, and endurance. In other words, industrial/non-domestic cooking is considered as a masculine activity precisely because it’s directly linked to masculine experiences of sacrifice and risk.

As Miguel’s example suggests, however, knowing how to cook does not necessarily mean cooking; the expansion of the masculine repertoire of knowledge does not mean acting on it but reclassifying and reframing “feminine” activities as masculine. Thus, men’s participation in jobs that involve cooking is not necessarily connected to the activity of cooking for the intimate relationships that compose the home. In other words, although men in Zegache can definitely cook, cooking “traditional” dishes in Zegache is still an arena dominated by women, with the exception of *barbacoa* and *carne de adobada* which are prepared by male specialists in festive occasions. This can be analyzed from two interrelated angles.

First, men's cooking skills are acquired to satisfy a different public. Felix has a small cafeteria in Zegache, he sells sandwiches and other dishes that are not specific to Oaxaca but that are popular throughout Mexico (e.g. burritos, stuffed peppers). Felix is not from Oaxaca but he has lived in Zegache since 2011, and he is married to a woman from Zegache he met in Nevada (see Chapter 5). When I asked him if he ever cooks Oaxacan food he told me: "People here are *muy exigente*, they're too demanding, with Oaxacan dishes. Besides, women jealously guard their recipes." Thus, even if Felix has professional and international experience cooking Mexican and Italian food, his cooking abilities are not considered as culturally appropriate when it comes to preparing Oaxacan food. His small cafeteria is celebrated by people from Zegache when they want to taste "something different," meaning not Oaxacan food.

Second, it can also be the case that preparing Oaxacan "traditional" dishes has been protected by women not so much to guard their recipes but to guard the social positions related to cooking, to help out other women, and to have access to social interactions that are considered women's domain (Stephen 2005:260-262). This division becomes obvious during special occasions where men are responsible for killing and "cleaning" (removing the feathers) of the chickens and turkeys that are part of the feast, while women prepare the *mole* and the *tortillas*. In one of these celebrations a man told me "we better do a good job in cleaning these turkeys or the women might get upset." This example, and the case of Felix explained earlier, show that women are also active agents in constructing the boundaries between what men can and can't do with regards to cooking and, thus, have an important role in constructing the relationship between masculinity, femininity, and cooking in Zegache.

Nevertheless, the gendering of cooking is changing in the community. In recent decades more men from Zegache have learned to cook. This hasn't necessarily changed gender dynamics

about who cooks at home since men seldom do; thus, men who cook can still reclaim a connection between cooking and their masculine identities because cooking is reframed as a masculine experience learned and practice in contexts of risk and sacrifice, and not solely related to practices of care. As a woman in Zegache told me: “sure, they learn how to cook *cuando salen*, when they leave [Zegache], but once they come back here they seem to forget everything.” The woman who said this to me works full-time in a pharmacy yet she still needs to provide food for her husband and children. This highlights the fact that even if more men know how to cook and more women work outside of their homes it is still the responsibility of women to cook or to go out to buy food when they decide not to cook. In the same way, and despite the intimate and intricate relationship between men and animals—expressed in the oxen powered plough (see Chapter 4), in the preparation of *barbacoa* and *carne de adobada*, and in their role killing animals for special occasions—it is still mostly women who provide the fodder and feed these animals. In fact, the phenomenon of men cooking is part of a flexibilization of masculinity that incorporates certain elements typically associated with women in Zegache without necessarily challenging gendered relations.

In the same way, food and masculinity are also used to exclude certain people. For example, the relationship between alcohol, identity, and masculinity appears more clearly when Catholic men talk about people from other faiths who do not consume alcoholic beverages. Numerous scholars (e.g. Greenberg 1981; Perez 2000; Stephen 2005) have documented the connection between alcohol distribution and consumption, and indigenous religious celebrations. This analysis is applicable in the case of Zegache, looking at alcohol consumption as another vector through which masculinity is constructed can shed light on how alternative masculinities are also being informed by religious practices.



The changing dynamics of masculinity, religion, and alcohol consumption were clear during certain parts of my ethnographic research (2014-2015) when one of the individuals in one of the main posts in the municipal office (whom I will call Baltazar) was rumored to be a gay man and, in addition, professed a non-Catholic Christian religion. Baltazar was born in Zegache to a Zapotec mother from the Isthmus region of Oaxaca, and a Zapotec father from Zegache. Unlike other people in his administration, and in previous ones as well, Baltazar was fluent in Zapotec and well-versed in local customs. During a Day of the Dead altar contest, Baltazar showcased not only his knowledge of Zegache's history and traditions, but also demonstrated extensive knowledge about regional cultural differences by discussing specific details about the altars that were competing. That day, and in numerous other occasions, Baltazar also exhibited his college education in Foreign Languages by speaking to me in English. Since Zegache switched from the *usos y costumbres* regime to the ballot election party-based regime (see Chapter 2), people usually criticize how local government officials know little about local traditions and customs, and are elected because "they have education, and they know how to speak." Baltazar, however, seemed to have it all.

And, yet, the rumors about Baltazar not "being a man" were wide-spread. These rumors were based on the reading of Baltazar's body language as "feminized" and on the fact that he wasn't married or coupled—as one acquaintance put it: "he doesn't know the body of a woman." They were also based on the fact that Baltazar does not drink, thus he "doesn't smell like a man (*no huele a hombre*)," you only smell like a man after a shot of mezcal or a beer. Under such expectations, men who don't drink cannot smell like men.

Although flexible masculinities in Zegache can incorporate elements previously associated with femininity such as cooking, this does not necessarily mean that men are

concerned with issues of gender equality, nor that they are more inclusive of alternative masculinities. While masculine gender roles have expanded and demonstrated more flexibility than in the past, they continue to be exclusionary identities based on concepts of sacrifice, risk, and men's familiarity with work. However, more flexible masculinities are part of a larger context of changing identities and are transformed alongside concepts of femininity.

### *Feminine Suffering and Changing Peripheral Vision*

While the masculine familiarity of work is able to expand beyond specific locations and include new occupations and technologies redefining what counts as masculine, local discourses on femininity appear much more stable and grounded. This is because prevalent concepts of femininity are anchored in specific practices of kinship and care, and in the specific ways that gendered social relationships are policed. As with local concepts of masculinity, femininity has always been in flux in Zegache. In Chapter 3, I explore how some women migrate internally to Mexico City and engage in social relationships of care and caring that occasionally result in them becoming single mothers and returning to Zegache by themselves. In many cases, women who return as single mothers, and female migrants who don't return, are construed as "negative social remittances" (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011:19), and are used to reinforce preexisting ideas about proper femininity by setting an example for young women who are thinking about leaving Zegache.

Concepts of femininity in Zegache are continually being redefined, and the role of women (especially women who are internal migrants) has contributed to this redefinition. However, the relationship between changing concepts of femininity and migration is not as a

straightforward process and it's also influenced by other factors. In this section I analyze concepts of female suffering, and suggest how they are constructed differently from ideas about male sacrifice. I also build on the term "peripheral vision" (Zavella 2011; Castañeda and Zavella 2003) to discuss the role of surveillance and changes in the concepts of femininity.

Although both men and women from Zegache are subjected to gender expectations in multiple locations simultaneously, the ways in which these expectations change are different for men and women. This difference, I argue, is based on the contrast between male sacrifice and female suffering; such difference originates in the ways in which care obligations and activities are oriented. Thus, while women's activities of care and caring are seen as having to be directed almost exclusively towards the family, men's activities of care and caring are constructed as broader efforts that go beyond the family and directly benefit the community at large.

Suffering, "the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship," appears as an individual act that doesn't establish links between the act of suffering and a larger community. On the other hand, the definition of sacrifice immediately points to a larger picture: "an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy." In Zegache, the distinction between female suffering and male sacrifice appears in quotidian discourses about family life, community affairs, and migration. For example, women who live in Zegache often claim that they experience suffering when their sons or spouses migrate: "We have to stay here, and we suffer thinking about what they are going through," said a woman whose husband and son are in the U.S. Yet, their suffering is not seen as productive or conducive to any benefit to their economic situation. In contrast, the hardships that men undergo as migrants are constructed as acts of sacrifice that moves their families forward. Even in cases of domestic violence, women have to "cope," *aguantarse*, with physical abuse for the sake of their

children and their family (as I explored in chapter 3, some migrant women left Zegache precisely because they no longer wanted to “cope” in this way).

In a similar vein, Leslie Gill (1997) discusses the different experiences of Aymara women, who worked as domestic employees in Bolivian cities, and Aymara men, who joined the Bolivian military: while “suffering” empowers men and turns Aymara soldiers into “new citizens” upon their return, the “suffering” of Aymara women as domestic employees is not seen in the same light as it is not “linked” to the Bolivian state. In the case of Zegache, male hardships are construed as sacrifice precisely because they are linked to a broader community and not only to the family, like female suffering. The significance of suffering in the construction of Zegache’s femininity also points to the ways in which women experience a double bind. Thus, when a man migrates and leaves Zegache, women are supposed to suffer as a way to show that they remain committed to that particular relationship and to show that are still caring about that particular person whether their husband or their son, and yet suffering is largely considered unproductive and unnecessary.

Yet, as I argue throughout this dissertation, we need to understand changing concepts of femininity and women’s suffering not only through individual experiences but also through a broad set of social interactions that both enable, constrain, and challenge such concepts. In this sense it is useful to think about Patricia Zavella’s (2011:8-10) concept of “peripheral vision” in relation to the construction, and transformation of femininity in Zegache. Patricia Zavella discusses “peripheral vision” as becoming “aware of when we see something in the corner of our eye,” because we maintain a wide field of awareness “peripheral vision occurs when an event triggers our awareness [e.g. “in the corner of our eye”] and we gain a new perspective about

possible options or meanings.” Peripheral vision also “reflects the experience of feeling at home in more than one geographic location.”

Building on the notion of peripheral vision, I propose that instead of focusing on the subject that’s the origin of the vision we look at how subjects are supervised through the peripheral vision of others. Using this metaphor, we can also stipulate that those who are watching others are also being watched; peripheral vision permits subjects to become aware of who’s supervising them and who’s evaluating their actions in relation to specific social and gender expectations. In other words, women from Zegache, whether they are migrants or not, become aware through their peripheral vision that their behavior is subjected to gender expectations, and that they are constantly surveilled.

Gender expectations and the constant surveillance of women takes place in social gatherings, in the streets, and in the taxis and buses that men drive and that women ride to Oaxaca City. Women, for example, are criticized if they take jobs and are not able to take care of their children, or they can also be criticized if they don’t work and their husbands have to “work too much.” Women are also surveilled through their children’s behaviors, and if a child is not behaving in school or involved in gang-like groups (although I didn’t hear reports of major gang activity) the mother is usually to blame.

Although it is true that surveillance through peripheral vision affects everyone who is part of the Zegache multi-sited community, there is a special gender component that influences the lives of women disproportionately because their activities are seen as anchored in the reproduction of family life, and because existing concepts of femininity are not as flexible as concepts of masculinity. Thus, even though women who migrate to the U.S. learn how to drive and engage in work outside of their homes, acquiring “more freedom of movement” (Castañeda

and Zavella 2003:137), their activities are still centered on their children and spouses. Most of the women from Zegache who live in the U.S. use their driving skills to drive their children to school, get groceries, and occasionally act as designated drivers after social events (see Chapter 3).

Peripheral vision can produce changes and inform negotiations about femininity and gender roles. Staying with the metaphor of peripheral vision, I would like to call attention to the subject that is at the center of the field of vision. This subject will often move as they “reflect on or act [...] in concert with others” who are part of her peripheral vision. Such movements, as with other transborder experiences, will also displace the field of vision, and will change subject’s perspectives about what their possible life options (Stephen 2007). Thus, for example, a woman who migrates to Mexico City changes her position and her field of view; and although her actions might directly come into conflict with gender expectations this does not necessarily mean structural changes in gender roles but it does open a space for gender roles to be questioned more broadly. For example, women who migrate to Mexico City are more vocal about their views on women working outside of the home, and are more critical about big expenses in “traditional weddings.”

However, changes in gender roles and gender expectations can be produced through shifts in peripheral vision. If we think about the social supervision that reinforces gender roles as a combination of peripheral visions that originate from similar positions and that undergo similar socio-historic experiences then we can also conceptualize how shifts in multiple peripheral visions allow for new social relationships. In Chapter 3 I discussed how internal migrants were more effectively challenging gender roles by establishing social legitimation over the migration experience otherwise monopolized by men. In the next section I discuss how both men and

women use emotional and practical discourses to make new options available for men and women that also redefine women's gender roles by redefining masculinity.

## EMOTIONS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE GEN(D)ERATION ORDER

Gender identities are not only historically fluid but are undergoing continuous transformation and multiple negotiations during a person's lifespan. Becoming a mother, a father, and a grandparent creates new conditions through which to think broadly, not just individually, about gender identities. The establishment and creation of new kinship relationships not only changes material reality—that is, the way in which resources are distributed within the family and between the family and the community—but also changes the emotional bonds that inform concepts of femininity and masculinity.

In this section I discuss two examples of how gender and generation intersect in the negotiation of local concepts of masculinity and femininity. I focus on the way in which emotions are mobilized through kinship and care to motivate changes in what is perceived as proper femininity and proper masculinity. Emotions, in this sense, are defined as “sociocultural products” that are both collective and individual and that are “part of knowledge production” (Harding and Pribram 2006:864). In both of the examples presented here I analyze how the emotional relationship between parents and children informs changes in femininity and masculinity.

My first example is related to migrant fathers' relationships with their children, especially with their daughters. In particular, I address how migrant fathers solve an apparent contradiction in their masculine identities as they are forced to decide between remaining absent as migrant

fathers and conforming to new fatherhood expectations, pushed on them by their children, which require their presence. The relationship between migration and absent fathers has been documented in numerous instances in Mexico and in other parts of the world. In the case of Mexico, studies have emphasized how paternal absence influences gender roles (Taylor and Behnke 2005), how it differently affects male and female teenagers (Aguilera-Guzmán et al 2004), its relation to child illness (Schmeer 2009), and how its effects differ from divorced parents (Nobles 2011). However, as I show in the instances below, young and teenage children are also agents of change in how their own fathers construct gender roles and gender expectations.

Fathers who migrated to the U.S. by themselves often narrated how, when in the U.S., they would often get asked: “When are you coming back, dad?” Unable to provide an answer, most men would feel sad; they would also question whether the migration enterprise was worth it. Yet, this feeling of sadness and doubt did not arise with all of their children. Migrant fathers expressed an additional worry when their youngest children asked this question. On numerous occasions return migrants mentioned that although they were doing “alright” and had “good jobs” in the U.S., there were moments when they had to make difficult decisions and sacrifice their income and status in the U.S. and return to Mexico in order to be with their children.

In addition to the role that children play when their fathers are absent, children also influence their fathers’ plans to return to the U.S. in creative ways. This is exemplified in Fidel’s own account of why he decided to stay in Zegache, even after he had already planned to leave:

Our plan [Fidel and his wife’s, Sara] was that I would go to the U.S. to work and get some money to host the *mayordomía* for the patron saint, then I would return for the celebration, and then leave again so that we had enough savings to start a



small business or something. When I was in the U.S. my daughter would ask me “when are you coming back? When are you coming back?” and I would always answer “when the *fiesta* arrives.” So I did return for the *fiesta* and everybody kept asking me “when are you going back [to the U.S.]?” “In one, two, three weeks, I’m leaving,” I would say. And my kids would listen. So one day I was half-sleep, laying on my bed when my son [4] and daughter [5] entered the room, and my son asks my daughter: “How many weeks since the *fiesta*? Two, three? My dad will leave soon.” So my daughter said: “What if you pretend to get sick, then when you get better, I’ll pretend to get sick; he won’t leave if he sees we’re sick.” I don’t know how to explain it, but to think that they would do this just to make me stay made me feel sad, nostalgic. So I told my wife, that I would stay.”

Migrant men, especially those who leave their families behind, are constantly receiving pleas for their return from their mothers, their fathers, and their spouses; so why is the plea from their children any different? I argue that the difference response of father migrants is related to the formation of different emotional relationships within the family that are directly linked to the ways in which men and women change perspectives throughout their own lifespans. Although such changes would seem to be individual emotional responses, emotions are “always experienced, understood and named via social and cultural processes” (Lupton in Harding and Pribram 2006:866).

In evaluating the historical changes in the relationships between fathers and children in Zegache, it is important to consider the broader context of migration in the community. Before male transnational migration became a common practice, local concepts of fatherhood were articulated through a disciplined sense of masculinity that emphasized sacrifice and risk in

agricultural work. When male transnational migration started having an impact on the community, many migrants articulated their journeys across the border in terms of family sacrifice, which is, as I have stated, a central element of Zegache masculinities. They would speak of the sacrifice they made by leaving the community and their families behind to improve the material conditions of their children; describing these northbound trips, the men talked about missing their children and longing to be back. Nevertheless, as the number of absent fathers increased in the community so did the rumors of infidelity and the criticism of men's commitment to their families. This criticism was especially raised by women who wondered if men could still frame their migration (and their long periods of absence) in terms of family sacrifice when, in many cases, they hadn't even met their youngest children. This challenge was important because sacrifice is a central element to many Zegacheños' masculine identities.<sup>39</sup>

The men who returned to Zegache "to be with their children" build on the narrative of "staying" in Zegache as a risky enterprise (discussed in Chapter 4) by emphasizing how they sacrificed good paying jobs in order to be with their families. The changing concepts of masculinity are not exclusively discursive, and they are also reflected in how men relate to their children and to their grandchildren. This can be seen in the case of Raúl who returned home after his daughter warned him that if he didn't make an appearance at her *quinceañera* she wouldn't recognize him as her father any more.

When Raúl returned from the U.S. in 2011, after living in Oregon for 10 years, three of his four children were adults, and his relationship with them was strained but his relationship with Alisa, the youngest daughter, was salvaged because he had returned for her *quinceañera*.

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<sup>39</sup> In a sense the same dilemma between migration and family sacrifice appears for migrant mothers in Nicaragua (Yarris Forthcoming) but in the case of Zegache, I link sacrifice as a flexible narrative that is directly connected to concepts of masculinity.

During the next few years, I witnessed how not only Alisa and Raúl became close, but also how their relationship also transformed Raúl's views on parenting and care in general. In many ways, however, it was too late for Raúl to reconnect with his other children: his two older daughters saw as unfair his return to participate in Alisa's *quinceañera*. Raúl was not particularly supportive of his son, who had decided to earn a living by renting a sound system for parties—thus, not engaging in agriculture, military life, or in transnational migration.

During his absence two of his daughters had found jobs outside of Zegache; one of them commuted to Oaxaca City on a daily basis, and the other one lived and worked in the nearby city of Ocotlán, his son remained in Zegache. Lorena, Raúl's wife, had supported their two daughters when they wanted to find a job outside of Zegache when Raúl was absent. Although Lorena never migrated, three of her sisters lived in the U.S. In an interview, Lorena also expressed doubts about the real benefits of Raúl's absence by emphasizing how he didn't return with a significant amount of money, and had barely seen their children grown: "I don't know what he did there, he came back without any savings, so I don't know what he did there." Lorena's initial estrangement with Raúl on his return was shared by their three oldest children; during my first visits to their home in 2011 and 2012, I was able to witness how, when Raúl was present, he would only call Alisa so that she could be included in the conversation even if his other children were there too, but when Raúl was absent Lorena and their other children would chat with me.

In 2012, when Alisa was 17 years old, Raúl told me that she wanted to enroll in the Mexican military. Raúl had been a soldier before migrating to the U.S., and although being a soldier is still seen as a male occupation, Raúl and Lorena wanted to support their daughter and paid for swimming lessons, so that Alisa could learn how to swim which would facilitate her enlisting in the military. The support given to Alisa to enlist in the military was questioned from

the very beginning by her two sisters, who continued to think that Raúl was being unfair in providing Alisa with his support. When I returned to Zegache, in 2014, I asked him about Alisa's interest in the military, he told me she had decided to not enroll and that he suspected it had to do with her boyfriend. Alisa had also moved out of Zegache, and was now living in Ocotlán. Raúl also expressed his support to his youngest daughter: "See, I don't know what Alisa and that other guy [referring to her boyfriend] have agreed, but we will support her. And if she decides to enroll in the military, well, one of her uncles is still in the military but we're not going to force her into anything."

However, Raúl's attitudes towards Alisa were also reflected in the care he provided for his first granddaughter. In that same year, 2014, Raúl and Lorena had become grandparents (Alisa was not the mother, but one of the older daughters), and in fact Raúl was the primary caregiver for their granddaughter, as Lorena had to take care of the corner shop—Raúl had never assumed a role as a caretaker before, but he seemed to be doing fine. Raúl and Lorena's granddaughter lived with them as the father was not in the picture; this didn't seem to trouble Raúl too much: "Of course we will take care of her [their granddaughter], if we can; we only ask her [their daughter] to continue working [in Oaxaca City] to help us financially." Thus, Raúl's attitudes towards ideas of femininity had changed through a multi-level negotiation that had started with Alisa's ultimatum. Although Alisa had been the main beneficiary of his father's return, Alisa's sisters and Alisa's niece also benefited from Raúl's attitudes towards her.

Raúl's attitudes towards his youngest daughter are not uncommon for Zegache's fathers, as new generations of Zegacheños and Zegacheñas negotiate conceptions of masculinity and femininity both through everyday practices and by using emotional relationships that develop in particular historical contexts that have been produced by migrations. And, although, internal and

transnational migrant fathers, as well as non-migrant fathers, have changed their positions with regards to masculinity and femininity I argue that migration has had a central role in these developments. In their study of gender roles and migration, Taylor and Behnke (2005:107) discuss two attitudes of fathers concerning gender: those who embrace gender essentialism and have clear-cut models for boys and girls, and those who are seen as gender progressive and embrace changes in gender roles. This latter type, the authors say, is associated with fathers that are “more educated.” However, in Zegache such changes in attitudes seem to be produced in complex family situations that arise in the context of widespread internal and transnational migration. In these situations, sons, but especially daughters, are able to participate in family and community dialogues in which they are able to relate emotionally to their parents and relatives.

Through these emotional relationships, fathers (and men in general) are “gently” pushed by their daughters to change their own field of peripheral vision as they reconsider concepts of masculinity and femininity. However, other emotional relationships require more negotiation and are more ridden with conflict. For example, the relationship between son, mother, and daughter-in-law in the context of migration and women increasingly entering the workforce also presents important opportunities where men and women from different generations negotiate gender roles, and concepts of femininity and masculinity.

As in the case of the relationship between fathers and children, the changing relationships between sons, mothers, and daughters-in-law is related to socio-historical contexts that, in Zegache signify internal and international migrations, transportation infrastructure, and an increasing number of women entering the workforce. Because of the prevalent patrilocal residence patterns, the tutelage of the mothers-in-law continues to reinforce gender roles by policing the femininity of younger women as daughters-in-law. Different forms of migration

challenge and reinforce patriarchal definitions of femininity and masculinity. Although I have argued that women who are internal migrants, particularly those who migrate to Mexico City by themselves and through female social networks, pose the most significant challenges to Zegache's gender role, it is also important to consider how other forms of migration have changed the peripheral vision with regards to femininity, and how economic and emotional changes occasionally transform the effectiveness of the tutelage of the mothers-in-law.

Since most men work outside of Zegache (in Oaxaca City, in the military, or in the U.S.) married and coupled women often spend more time with their mothers-in-law than with their husbands. Numerous women complained about how their mothers-in-law would "report" to their husbands their activities and whereabouts. But as more women are able to enter the formal and informal labor force Zegache families are now in a predicament. On the one hand, not complying with proper femininity can have negative consequences such as harsh judgments of single women who are internal migrants and spent large amounts of time outside their community, or daughters-in-law who spent their husband's remittances on themselves instead of on house construction. Such occurrences serve to reinforce patriarchal gender roles and to preserve the tutelage of mothers-in-law. On the other hand, however, financial necessities and job opportunities have motivated young women (married and unmarried) to become economic contributors to the household and to push for a stronger decision-making role in how household resources are allocated. Even if daily commuting to Oaxaca City to work or study does not break the social surveillance that women experience, it does present an opportunity in which emotional relationships can shift the fields of vision of women and men.

Aurora is part of a local women's baking cooperative, her husband lives in the U.S., and she lives with her mother-in-law. As a member of the cooperative she often has to run errands in

the nearby regional markets of Oaxaca City and Ocotlán to acquire flour and other ingredients needed in the shop. She usually uses the morning (when her two sons are at school) to buy supplies. She tells me: “At the beginning I wasn’t too sure I wanted to participate, but some friends told me to attend the co-op’s meetings to see if I liked it. I did like it, so I spoke with my husband [who lives in California], and he told me: “look, if you really want to do it, go for it.” So I did!” Aurora told me that her husband has spoken to her about his mother’s calls: “He tells me that his mom calls him saying that I was out, or that I returned late, stuff like that but he replies: “did she prepare food? Did the kids do their homework? What’s the problem?” And then he just changes the subject.” Even though femininity is still tied to activities of care and caring centered around the house, Aurora’s mother-in-law has modified her own reporting activities because of her own son’s differing views on how Aurora should behave.

Nevertheless, the quarrels between sons, daughters-in-law, and mothers sometimes involves more violent confrontations that also modify concepts of femininity by creating spaces out of conflicting positions. Such is the case of Jimena, and her mother-in-law, Maura, and other members of the household. Prior to migrating to the U.S. Jimena had been a domestic employee and a nanny in Mexico City, and had returned to Zegache as a single mother. Jimena and Roberto met in Oregon, and they had a daughter in Portland, Oregon named Noemi (see chapter 5). Jimena and Noemi returned to Zegache before Roberto. They lived in a house that’s next door to Maura’s (Roberto’s mother’s) house, and Maura would often be aware of the comings and goings of Jimena. Maura did not live alone; she shared her house with Roberto’s brother, Fabian, and his wife, Lourdes. Lourdes is not from Zegache but from Querétro, in Central Mexico, and she wasn’t accustomed to the daughter-in-law/mother-in-law relationship, while Jimena as already critical of such relationship after her own transborder experiences in Mexico City and in

the U.S. Not long after Jimena and Maura had a strong disagreement that shaped the entire family's relationships. What happened is still up for debate.

According to Maura it was the lack of caregiving from Jimena to Noemi that triggered the conflict:

“When Jimena returned [she returned before Roberto] she would leave the house for long periods of time, and Noemi would cry and cry, and I didn't even know where Jimena was. So I would ask her about it, and she would get upset and ignore me. Around that time she realized that she had a leak on her roof so I told her that she could move in with us but she replied: No, I won't be anybody's maid. Which I thought it was odd since I had another daughter-in-law and we each took care of our respective family.”

Jimena agrees with Maura in some points but with a different narrative: “They weren't very nice to me, and they were always trying to control me. I have never liked that, and I didn't want to spend all day at the house. They've just never liked me, and they even locked me out of my own house when I returned by myself to Zegache [when Jimena was detained trying to cross the Mexico-U.S. border in 2013].”

Without addressing the question of who is “right” and who is “wrong,” it is safe to say that Jimena openly defied the tutelage of the mother-in-law, which eventually made Roberto distance himself from his mother and his brother. This, however, also set a precedent for Maura's relationship with her other daughter-in-law, Lourdes. Lourdes, who moved to Zegache from Querétaro and who had never been to Oaxaca before she moved there, used to work in a factory in her hometown. Lourdes sided with Maura in the conflict—perhaps because of her lack of



other social relationships in Zegache as her family is from Querétaro—by criticizing Jimena’s motherly caregiving. Lourdes said:

“I remember how Jimena cared more for her two daughters [and not for her son, who was born when she was single, and Jimena had another daughter in 2013]; she has three children but only cares about two? I don’t think this sets a good example. She often mistreated her son, she even made him carry a water jug [of 20 liters] when he was 10 years old. Can you imagine? I would never do that do a 10 year old boy. And then, when she left to the U.S. she didn’t take him.”

Although this conflict did not come to a concrete resolution, as Roberto and Jimena left Zegache in 2014 without telling Roberto’s family, I believe it shows how conflicts about femininity, even when unresolved, open spaces where gender roles are challenged in emotionally charged relationships. The quarrel between Maura and Jimena had wider implications as it also modified how other women and men in the family thought about gender roles.

It is true that Lourdes sided with Maura, and reinforced the close relationship between motherhood and femininity that situates women near their children, but Lourdes herself also experienced more freedom from Maura as she continually attended different town meetings (usually associated with political parties). Lourdes’ mobility, however, is also linked to Fabian (Lourdes’ husband), and to their relationship. Lourdes and Fabian met in Querétaro, where Lourdes was Fabian’s supervisor, so in part Lourdes’ mobility can also be explained by different experiences of gender roles outside of Zegache. Moreover, Fabian’s salary working in a nearby logging company also situates him and Lourdes in a better position, as they share the same house and some of the same expenses as Maura. Lourdes’ relative freedom, then, is produced in the

context of gender relationships and gender experiences of both women and men that are also simultaneously strategic and emotional.

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter I present an analysis of the ways in which gender identities are in continuous transformation. I question the language of “masculinity crisis,” in an attempt to problematize how historical and temporary changes in gender identities take place. While the language of “crisis” is suggestive, I argue that it does not apply in the case studied here because men from Zegache have always struggle to live up to “the idealized role of breadwinner.” In fact, and throughout this dissertation, I propose that we decenter “breadwinning” in concepts of masculinity. It could be argued that the reason that a traditionally feminine activity such as cooking has been appropriated by men and incorporated into a more flexible masculinity” is connected to the fact men provide for their family through cooking. This view, however, would miss the point that cooking in Zegache is directly linked to internal and transnational migration experiences that involve risk and sacrifice. It would also signal that women who earn an income take on a “masculine” identity, which is not the case; and it would also imply that men become masculine just by providing for their family when, in fact, men disregard certain occupations as less masculine if they aren’t linked to trajectories associated with risk and sacrifice. For example, men with desk jobs are often required to provide additional support for their “masculinity,” either by emphasizing other aspects of their lives that involve risk and sacrifice, or by framing their own desk jobs in terms of confrontation and sacrifice (see Bourgois 2008).

In addition, moving away from the language of “crisis” also enables us to see how women’s actions and changes in femininity also push men to reconsider their own male identities and in turn can help to redefine masculinity. Concepts of femininity are rooted in specific practices of care that require female suffering and “being there,” that are often policed by female and male members of the community. Even if, as I suggested earlier, women who commute to work or to study to Oaxaca City, or who migrate to the U.S. with their husbands do so under a “patriarchal accommodation,” changing socio-historic and geographical contexts shifts the positions from which women are surveilled and policed. In this sense, emotional relationships, such as that between fathers and their children, or between a son, a mother, and a daughter-in-law, create spaces, sometimes of dialogue, sometimes of conflict, where different concepts of masculinity and femininity come together, and have an effect in how gender roles are constructed, policed, and negotiated.

## VII. CONCLUSION

In Zegache the phrase “I am not a migrant” does not necessarily mean that people have not been “mobile.” In fact, the phrase is often followed by personal narratives that retell the migration histories of men and women who have lived and worked all throughout Mexico. Although these men and women have never crossed an international, political border, they have traversed ethnic, regional, and class borders gaining transborder experiences that have modified how they see themselves and their communities. In this dissertation I have sought to problematize what counts as migration, especially considering how some forms of mobility might be disregarded as “not migration,” leaving out important perspectives on the ways in which people experience and discuss different types of mobilities. The experiences and the knowledge that these internal migrants bring to their communities and to their families are often overlooked, particularly because internal migration is difficult to classify and because recent scholarship has focused on the experience of transnational migrants.

However, internal and transnational migrations are intimately connected. Not only do the experiences of internal migrants diverge and overlap on multiple levels with those Zegacheños who identify as migrants, and who have cross the Mexico-U.S. border, but most households and families simultaneously have internal and transnational migrants. The connections between internal and transnational migrants are reflected in the ways in which gendered kinship and care relationships configure local ideas of femininity and masculinity that, in turn, shape who gets to go where, for what, and for how long. Relatedness, masculinity, and femininity are continually being reinterpreted as people become mobile and cross different types of borders.

In this sense, it is important to reconsider the history of Zegache as intertwined with regional, national, and international histories that have produced, over the last century, forced displacements along with migrations. The violence that Zegache experienced in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921) and the agrarian reform that followed created an environment where men were killed and women were targets of sexual abuse. Many families left Zegache for Oaxaca City or for Mexico City, some of these families continue to return to Zegache but others have abandoned their properties. This violent phase known in the community as the *época de los valientes*, influenced migration trajectories that were also affected by the increase in Zegache's roads and public transportation, as well as by the increased transnational migration of some of the neighboring communities.

The construction of roads and the increasing ease of travel that now connects Zegache to Oaxaca City, nevertheless, has produced ambiguous results in relation to gender and migration. Women started migrating to Mexico City at least since the 1950s relying on other women and on female social networks to find jobs, housing, and to navigate the city. Female social networks in Mexico City allowed women to engage in occupations and activities without male supervision and without male approval. Thus, I argue, women internal migrants who were part of these social networks are more critical of gender roles in Zegache while women transnational migrants, who generally travel with men who have to "protect" them, gain some freedoms (because of the weakening of the mother-in-law tutelage) but do not necessarily question gender roles. For those women who commute on a daily basis between Zegache and Oaxaca City to work, gender roles are still entrenched as their comings and goings are heavily supervised by both women and men who police proper femininity.

Even as more women from Zegache have entered the workforce (in Oaxaca, in Mexico City, and in the U.S.) men have not entered into a “crisis.” Moreover, I argue that the language of crisis in relation to masculinity and breadwinning does not accurately describe ideas of masculinity in Zegache. Men in Zegache have always struggle to be breadwinners. After the Mexican Revolution, being a peasant in Zegache was a risky activity associated with sacrifice, as men would often have to defend themselves, their land, and their families in order to harvest their corn. Ideas of risk and sacrifice that inform Zegache’s peasant masculine identity are reframed and reinterpreted when men join the military, as men often have to conduct arduous tasks, and when men become transnational migrants, as they engage in the dangerous crossing of the Mexico-U.S. border.

The analysis presented here emphasized the social effects of women who cross and those who do not cross different types of borders, especially in relation to ideas of femininity that centers on “being there” and providing care and caring. However, in the case of men, their mobility is directly related to their masculine identities in relation to work, risk and sacrifice. For the men of Zegache, masculine identities facilitate border crossings, especially as they move through labor corridors that have been produced at the regional, national, and global level. As men move from peasants, to soldiers, to migrants, they also redefine local ideas of masculinity in relation to their acquisition of special skills, especially driving. For these reasons, driving has been gendered as masculine by younger men who are no longer risking their lives in the agricultural fields like their fathers and grandfathers.

The linkages between internal and transnational migrations shape ideas of masculinity and femininity that are intertwined with kinship and care relationships and responsibilities. Different forms of migrations, in turn, redefine how people relate to each other not only in

present relationships but also in what becomes available in terms of kinship and care. Internal and transnational migrations reify and challenge relationships between relatives and between friends. For many Zegacheños, transnational migration has signified the estrangement from their closest kin. As in the cases analyzed in Chapter 5, transnational migration sometimes severs relationships between mothers and sons as sons start relationships with women who aren't seen as adequate romantic partners. Like in the case of Roberto and Jimena, this estrangement between mothers and sons extends beyond their relationship and engulfs other members of the community such as other sons and relatives. However, in the context of migration, Zegacheños and Zegacheñas also create new relationships with people who are not from Zegache. These “friendships” start through work or to shared housing, where people forge diverse relationships of care and caring. Most of these relationships develop through place-specific dynamics and die out as people move once again or develop other connections. Nevertheless, some of these “friendships” turn into kinship relationships. In the second case analyzed in Chapter 5, Felix, who had never been in Oaxaca, now identifies as a Zegacheño because his wife, Susana, and their two children have allowed him to become incorporated into the social and religious community of Zegache.

The incorporation of outsiders to Zegache in the context of migration, as well as the intentional distancing from one's family by migration have broader effects in the ways in which ideas of masculinity and femininity are negotiated. In chapter 6 I analyze how the accumulation of diverse migration experiences impacts current relationships in the community. As men continue to make masculinity flexible and, in the face of an increasing participating of women in the workforce, men have reframed certain forms of cooking as masculine. Soldiers and transnational migrants often have experience cooking in the military barracks or in commercial

kitchens in the U.S. However, acquiring the skill of cooking doesn't mean that men actually cook within their homes or even in their community. Despite of the flexibilization of masculinity, continue to use heterosexual and catholic masculine ideas to exclude other masculinities that do not seem to fit within this model.

Femininity and masculinity are also transformed by ongoing dialogues and negotiations that take place through emotionally charged relationships, like those between fathers and daughters, and between mothers and sons. Thus, to better understand masculinity and femininity I propose that we look at the intergenerational dialogues and negotiations that open up as men and women migrate and are exposed to different migratory experiences. This is particularly reflected in the changes in which proper femininity is policed by both men and women. As women explore ideas of femininity that do not necessarily emphasize "being there," but that look for more freedom outside of the home and of the community they participate in ongoing negotiations with male and female relatives. Sometimes mothers-in-law will find their efforts to police their daughters-in-law and their own daughters' femininity curtailed as spaces of discussion and conflict are created in the context of migration. These spaces especially open when migrant fathers engage in dialogue with their daughters (especially younger daughters) who rely on the emotionally charged relationship between father and daughter. These dialogues, although related to transnational migration, need also to account for the transborder experiences of internal women migrants who have a long history of questioning and challenging local gender roles with their actions.

In Zegache, women internal migrants and men who join the military are important sources of income, of transborder experiences, and of social transformations that this multi-sited community experiences and yet their experiences are often relegated in the ways in which



“migration” is defined locally, and also in the ways in which academics discuss migration. Internal and transnational migrations are intimately connected through gender, kinship, and care relationships, and through ideas of masculinity and femininity that are in continuous negotiations. To better understand how gender roles and identities change we must look at how the experiences of internal and transnational migrations, are interpreted and mobilized by those who stay and those who plan to become migrants (even if they never actually migrate, “planning” to migrate becomes a social commentary that needs to be addressed by the family and the community) in relation to their kinship and care relationships.

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that in order to better understand migrant communities we need to question narratives about migration, and about how some forms of mobility get classified as migration while others are not. Expanding what counts as migration implies a critical dialogue “in the field,” disentangling local narratives of “migrants” and “non-migrants,” and also in theoretical discussions of how migration gets defined. This does not mean that all forms of mobility have to be analyzed *as migration*, rather it means that by expanding the scope of what can be classified as migration it is possible to include different forms of mobility. This allows an analysis of how different forms of mobility articulate, and such articulations transform how people related to each other, and how femininity and masculinity are redefined through different forms of mobility and immobility.

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