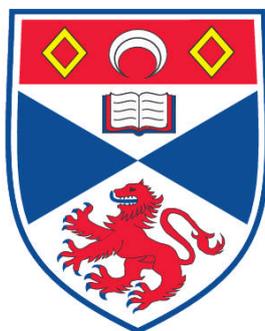


**BECOMING SIMILAR : KNOWLEDGE, SOCIALITY AND THE
AESTHETICS OF RELATEDNESS AMONGST THE NIVACLE OF
THE PARAGUAYAN CHACO**

Suzanne Grant

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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BECOMING SIMILAR

Knowledge, Sociality and the Aesthetics of Relatedness amongst the Nivacle of the Paraguayan Chaco

Suzanne M. Grant

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the University of St. Andrews**

March 2006



**To my mother, Irene Grant, and to the memory of my grandparents,
William and Mary Grant**

I, Suzanne Mary Grant, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately one hundred and ten thousand words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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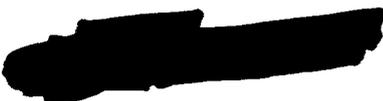
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of the concepts of knowledge, sociality and relatedness amongst the Nivacle indigenous people of the Paraguayan Chaco, concentrating particularly on the community of Jotoicha in the Mennonite Colonies of the Central Chaco region. A central issue in this thesis is the concept of “knowledge” as a relational capacity and the ways in which knowledgeable behaviour can be constitutive of aesthetically pleasing forms of sociality. Such practices can be generative of increased similarity between individuals over time.

The thesis begins with an exploration of Nivacle understandings of “knowledge” and shows it to be an eminently social concept that is created in an organ located in the stomach known as the *cachi*. “Knowledge” for the Nivacle is the basis for an individual’s social conscience, their productive and reproductive skills, as well as their inter-personal relationships. “Knowledge” is also a central aspect of Nivacle understandings of relatedness. Rather than being based on a static genealogical structure, relatedness is best understood within the context of lived relationships that are constantly evolving. These relationships are generated through the practices of feeding and caring for one’s “close” kin, with such practices also being generative of sociality itself. However, “close” relationships are neither static nor geographically bounded and are always open to the possibility of re-activation through visiting and gift giving.

The Nivacle have been inserted into the market economy for several decades. Wage labour is conceptualised alongside other “subsistence activities” and productive activities are generative both of gender relations and sociality itself. In the final chapter I discuss Nivacle notions of reciprocity within the context of team-based sporting events. I show that whilst such community-based divisions appear to be premised on relations of “sameness” and “difference,” they are best understood within the context of an overarching desire for people to generate similarity between different kinds of people in a variety of contexts.

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A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The orthography that I have used in this thesis is that which José Seelwische of the Catholic Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) developed in the Nivacle grammar that he published in 1975. Seelwische then went on to write two Nivacle dictionaries, with the first being written only in Nivacle in 1980, and the second being written in 1990 in Nivacle, Spanish and Guaraní. I referred to all three works extensively during the course of my fieldwork as well as throughout the writing of this thesis.

In the text I have deliberately hyphenated certain terms in order to highlight their composition, again following Seelwische's (1975; 1980; 1990) system of hyphenation *vis-à-vis* composite words. With the exception of names, all Nivacle and Spanish terms are italicised in the text. Stress usually falls on the last syllable.

Seelwische largely adopted the Spanish phonetic system, along with some elements of the German phonetic system. The letters of the Nivacle language that I have used in this thesis are pronounced as follows (note that four of the vowels have both open and semi-open variants):

Vowels

<i>a</i>	sounds like the A in “ <u>mat</u> ” and the A in “ <u>call</u> ”
<i>e</i>	sounds like the A in “ <u>pay</u> ” and the E in “ <u>pet</u> ”
<i>i</i>	sounds like the EE in “ <u>seek</u> ”
<i>o</i>	sounds like the O in “ <u>note</u> ” and the O in “ <u>pot</u> ”
<i>ô</i>	a guttural and closed variant of the above.
<i>u</i>	sounds like the OO in “ <u>food</u> ”

Consonants

<i>c</i>	like the C in “ <u>cup</u> ”	<i>ts</i>	like the TS in “ <u>parts</u> ”
<i>c'</i>	velar plosive	<i>ts'</i>	voiceless prepalatal plosive
<i>ch</i>	like the CH in “ <u>cheese</u> ”	<i>v</i>	like the W in “ <u>water</u> ”
<i>ch'</i>	palatal plosive	<i>y</i>	like the Y in “ <u>yes</u> ”
<i>cl</i>	like the GL in “ <u>glum</u> ”		
<i>f</i>	like the F in “ <u>fridge</u> ”	<i>‘</i>	indicates a glottal stop
<i>j</i>	like the J in the Spanish “ <u>José</u> ”		
<i>lh</i>	lateral fricative like the Welsh “ <u>Llewelyn</u> ”		
<i>m</i>	like the M in “ <u>Manx</u> ”		
<i>n</i>	like the N in “ <u>night</u> ”		
<i>p</i>	like the P in “ <u>pen</u> ”		
<i>p'</i>	labial plosive		
<i>qu</i>	uvular fricative		
<i>qu'</i>	uvular plosive		
<i>s</i>	like the S in “ <u>street</u> ”		
<i>sh</i>	like the SH in “ <u>shout</u> ”		
<i>t</i>	like the T in “ <u>tent</u> ”		
<i>t'</i>	alveolar plosive		

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Knowledge as Lived Practice

My approach in this thesis has been greatly influenced by Norwegian philosopher Jakob Meløe's work on perception, concept and practice (1983a; 1983b; 1988a; 1988b) as well as Tim Ingold's writings on the "dwelling perspective" and "skill" (2000:153ff). Both writers describe the world or the environment not as something that already exists pre-structured and waiting to be acted upon, but instead as something that unfolds and comes into being through the "practical enskilment" (Ingold 2000:5) of socially situated agents, so that both "self and world merge in the activity of dwelling" (Ingold 2000:169).¹ However, these are not innate capacities that are handed down the generations. Instead they are creative skills that are constantly developing as capacities within the situated active agent. Skill is therefore a socially embedded relational capacity that is "developed in the contexts of their engagement with other persons or person-like agencies in the environment" (2000:289) and which, in turn, is generative of the environment.² But it is more than this. The agent also becomes the environment into which their skill is invested.

Corsín-Jiménez has described "space" as something that is "no longer 'out there', but a condition or faculty – a capacity – of social relationships" (2003:140). Munn (1990:13) phrases this concept well when she writes,

¹ Heidegger describes agency as "worlding" (1962)[1927]. Both Meløe and Ingold have been strongly influenced by the phenomenological writings of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Of particular significance has been Heidegger's seminal work *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)* (1962)[1927] in which he explores the concept of "Being." His writings on *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (1971)[1954] were particularly influential to Ingold's work. Heidegger's argument is that one cannot "be" in an abstract sense without being *in* and *of* a particular place, context or situation. He has called this "Being-in-the-World," or "Being-There" (*Dasein*). This embodied understanding of perception formed an important part of Merleau-Ponty's work entitled *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), which was an attempt to counter Cartesian rationalism. There have since been many anthropological and sociological writings that have prioritised embodied practice and experience over static representation. For example, drawing on the writings of Husserl and Heidegger, Basso (1996) describes the way in which the Apache employ names and stories to create places in their landscape, describing his work as an, "ethnography of lived topographies" (Ibid.). Other writers who have published on the topic of embodied practice include Csordas (1990), de Certeau (1997), Fabian (1983), Jackson (1989), Turner & Bruner (1986) and Wagner (1986; 1991), amongst others.

² See Heidegger (1971)[1954].

We may say at any given moment, local and translocal dimensions mutually inform each other and are meshed together, and such syntheses are themselves the grounds and media of ongoing processes of synthesis...The cultural structure of this process involves specific ways in which pasts and futures are embedded in particular events or general types of event...in a given society. Thus 'cultural structure' does not consist here of a logic of received cultural categories, 'a priori concepts' that appropriate events...Rather, it refers to a society's varied ways of forming the spacetime of event relations in experience.

Munn (1990:12-13)

Meløe (op. cit.) adopts the term "Praxeology" as a way of describing how agents perceive the world. In his edited volume entitled *Praexology: An Anthology* (1983), Skirbekk describes his understanding of the term "praxeology" as being somewhat different from Kotarbinsky's (1965) description of it as a theory of "efficiency in purposive actions" (Ibid: 9). For Skirbekk, "Praxeology" is:

A conceptual analysis and reflective discussion of the way human activities are interwoven with their agents and with the things at which they are directed within our everyday world...all actions are not taken to be reducible to purposive performances; actions are of different – yet interrelated and overlapping – kinds.

Skirbekk (1983:9)

Meløe suggests that one cannot perceive a landscape properly without understanding it through practice and engagement. In his discussion of his experiences of learning about two Norwegian landscapes – that of the fishermen and that of the Saami reindeer herders – he describes his experience of drawing a fishing boat with a group of schoolchildren. Their drawings were all based on observations of the design of the boat without ever having worked on it. This, he concedes, is a task of limited potentiality: "the main contribution to the improvement of their observations, and so of their drawings, would come from the improvement of their *understanding* of the design of boats...The more you come to learn what it is to work on board a fishing boat, the more

intelligible that structure becomes” (1988b: 389, original emphasis). Meløe suggests that there is an interdependency between concept and practice:

One cannot understand a concept without experiencing a practice, with a concept essentially *belonging to* a practice. In learning the term for a particular concept, one has merely been *introduced* to the work. In order to *understand* the concept it is necessary to learn about it, how it is used in practice and through this the manifold forms of knowledge that are necessary to perceive it

Meløe (1983b: 70ff, original emphasis)

The performative nature of knowledge as lived practice is a common aspect of the way many lowland South American peoples³ conceive of the “skills for social action” (Passes 2000:97). Gow, for example, has written that amongst the Piro, “To be real a relationship must be enacted” (1991:194), whilst amongst the Bolivian Tsimanes, “Being in the world implies experiencing and creating flux and process. Social relationships...are never given states of affairs, predicated on assumed relationships of kinship or corporateness... They have to be continually reassessed and recreated.” (Ellis 1996:9). Overing describes Amazonian societies as “generative cultures” (2003:295), where “the emphasis in social life is more upon the informal and the intimate, than upon the rule and its obedience” (Ibid: 301).⁴ She explains:

People who stress the prescriptive (well known to the social sciences) are attached to social form and institutional rule, while those appreciative of the performative place priority over practice. With those attracted to the performative, it is *action* that declares identity and enmity, *the gift* that makes the friend, *the sharing* that creates the kinship. In other words, *the appropriate action creates the relation* and not the other way round (my emphasis)

³ Like Kidd (1999), I have decided to refer to the literature on the South American regions of Amazonia and the Chaco collectively as “lowland South America,” owing to the overriding number of similarities between the indigenous peoples of the two regions.

⁴ Ingold describes the “generative source of culture in human *practices*, situated in the relational context of people’s mutual involvement in a social world” (1994:329, original emphasis). This is similar to Sahlins’ concept of “performative structures” (1987:19), Butler’s notion of “performativity” (1990), as well as Ingold’s “communities of nurture” (1986:227).

Moving away from Durkheim's geographically bounded concept of landscape as constituting a "region," Overing (2004) adopts de Certeau's (1988) notion of landscape as "activated places" where everyday practice is about active agents inhabiting spaces.⁵ Overing and Passes (2000) have suggested that indeed culture might best be understood as a *verb* rather than a noun, and as the experiential practice of "culturing," than the static noun of "culture."⁶

Unlike our Western concepts of "personality" or "intelligence," "knowledge" for many lowland South American peoples is something that is external to the person and which is incorporated into the social being through interaction.⁷ As Guss has written with reference to the Yekuana, "Implicit in the growth of every individual as a useful member of society, therefore, is the development of his intellectual capacity" (1989:70). This is an "intellectual capacity" or "knowledge" that must be practiced in order for it to be efficacious, with all relationships having the potential for transformation.⁸ Relationships can be made (or unmade) through engaging (or disengaging) in the practices of nurturing, feeding, caring and behaving "knowledgeably" (or "without knowledge") towards others. Thus, no relationship is pre-given and all must be enacted in order to exist.

Sahlins (1987) writes that societies can be divided into two types: those that are "performative" and those that are "prescriptive." Whilst "performative" societies are in a perpetual state of (re)creation by their autonomous constitutive members, "prescriptive" societies possess pre-given social structures that are determined by rules, statuses, and associated obligations. Speaking of the role of "love" in Hawaiian society at the time of the arrival of Captain Cook, Sahlins explains why this society was, at the time, "performative":

⁵ See also Storrie (2003:419), who adopts a similar approach to the Hoti landscape as something that has been shaped by the activities of the many different kinds of beings who have traversed it.

⁶ See Overing (1998) and Ingold (1994: 330, original emphasis), who writes, "it might be more realistic...to say that people *live culturally* rather than they *live in cultures*."

⁷ See Overing (1997:4) and Belaunde (2000).

⁸ Overing writes that for the Piaroa, "the cognitive agent is always a performer in the world" (1997:3).

Hawaiian society was not a world of determinate kinship groups and prescribed relationships, of presupposed forms and norms, as in the good anthropological tradition of corporate lineages and prescribed marriage rules. Not simply that the system was, technically speaking, complex. It was performative: rather literally a 'state of affairs', created by the very acts that signified it. From family to state, the arrangements of society were in constant flux, a set of relationships constructed on the shifting sands of love.

Sahlins (1987:17)

The way in which I employ the concept of "knowledge" in this thesis is not as a static, pre-existing concept, but rather as embodied relational practice. Like Ingold, my interpretation of "knowledge" is not just as something that "is," but rather that it is, "a condition for effective action" (1994:336). It is knowledgeable practice that creates the basis for sociality through dialogical interaction (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995). Knowledgeable dialogic sociality should best be understood as a relational, creative and aesthetically pleasing process. Amongst lowland South American people, Overing (2003) has described the relational nature of "knowledge" as the "Art of Social Living." It is to the aesthetic preconditions of lowland South American sociality that I now turn.

1.2. The Aesthetics of Sociality

Overing and Passes have written, "The nature of indigenous sociality in Amazonia has always been resistant, rebellious even, to most anthropological categorizations" (2000:1). When attempting to understand the dynamics of relatedness in lowland South America, it has been shown time and again that the concept of "society" does not suffice in capturing the ongoing processual lived dynamics of everyday life.⁹ Attempts to define the concept of "society" have been as wide-ranging as its applications, with Ingold describing it as a "bounded totality or whole that is formed of the sum of its parts" (1996:57-8). Viveiros de Castro (1996a: 515), meanwhile, has suggested that it might also

⁹ See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Ellis (1996), Kidd (1999), Gow (1991), McCallum (1989; 2001) and Overing and Passes (2000) amongst others.

include notions such as, “territoriality; recruitment primarily by sexual reproduction of its members; an institutional organization that is relatively self-sufficient and capable of enduring beyond the life-span of an individual; and cultural distinctiveness.”¹⁰ However, the notion of “society” has been losing ground for many years, with anthropologists increasingly rejecting the concept of a normative order that can somehow transcend the agency of active, living, practicing individuals. Instead, it has been the concept of “sociality,” and its relationship to concepts such as “agency” and “personhood” that has gained increasing relevance in contemporary anthropology.

Strathern (1988:13) writes that “sociality” refers to “the creating and maintaining of relationships” or a “relational matrix which constitutes the life of persons” (1996:64).¹¹ In a debate over whether “The Concept of Society is Theoretically Obsolete,” both Strathern and Toren (1996:64) have argued for a notion of “sociality” that,

Would enable us to express the way in which particular persons both come into being through relationships and forge them anew, without relegating both personhood and relationship to a domain of reified abstraction – epitomised by the concept of society – which, in a certain strand of contemporary political rhetoric, is but a prelude to their dismissal as illusory.

Strathern and Toren (1996:64)

This is a concept of “sociality” that sees the individual moral agent as being entwined within the manifold entanglement of relationships that are generated through everyday life.

Within lowland South American ethnography, the concept of “sociality” has been used extensively by Joanna Overing (see, for example, 1985a; 1989a; 1989b; 1992; 1996; 1997) and her students.¹² It is a concept that stresses the generative nature of relatedness and the importance of mutuality, commensality and the everyday interplay or autonomous

¹⁰ See also Laidlaw’s (2002) discussion of Durkheim’s collectivist conception of society as “the moral good.”

¹¹ See Josephides (1991), who has described the particular view of Melanesian agency of writers such as Strathern (1988), Wagner (1986), Munn (1986) and Gell (1998) as the “new Melanesian ethnography.” These are writers who have incorporated notions such as “sociality,” “agency” and “personhood” into their discussions.

¹² See, for example, Gow (1991), McCallum (1989; 2001), Belaunde (1992) and Kidd (1999).

agents in the creation of community. In her work amongst the Piaroa of the Venezuelan Amazon, Overing writes: “The puzzle perhaps for us is that in the Piaroa view *personal autonomy is a social capacity, and also a cultural one*: the (human) conscious I is also the social and cultural I – else it would not be human!” (1996:14, original emphasis). Viveiros de Castro has termed this approach “the moral economy of intimacy” (1996b: 198),¹³ whilst Santos Granero has labelled these anthropologists the “doves” (2000:269).

A key aspect of Overing’s approach has been to unfold the processual nature of Amazonian sociality through the practice of embodied knowledge by autonomous individuals. In particular, Overing has been particularly concerned with broadening our understanding of the concept of “the aesthetic” as one where “beauty and practice [are] understood as an expression of moral and political value” (Overing and Passes 2000:18). Overing’s intention has been to counter a dominant strand of modern Western thought, strongly influenced by the Kantian (1911) notion of “aesthetic judgement,” with its assumptions that beauty can only be self-referential (1996:260). Overing explains, *contra* Kant, that the Piaroa conceptualise aesthetics in terms of knowledgeable practice and that everyday artefacts and tools are made with knowledgeable (and skilful) precision, in a manner that is aesthetically pleasing (1996:1).¹⁴ This is a beautifying process that creates objects that can be used by knowledgeable individuals in everyday life.¹⁵ A important impact of these detailed ethnographic accounts of “the aesthetic” has been to seriously question the imposition of universalist assumptions onto our accounts of other ways of knowing.

David Guss (1989:70) has written on the relationship between knowledge, beauty and everyday practice in relation to Yekuana artifacts, where the application of one’s “intellectual capacity” necessarily implies the creation of objects of beauty. Guss explains, “In a society that has no special category for a work of ‘art,’ there can be no object that is not one. Or, put another way, to become a true Yekuana is to become an

¹³ The other two approaches that he describes are “the political economy of control” of Rivière (1969; 1984) and Turner (1988) and “the symbolic economy of Alterity” associated with the writings of Viveiros de Castro (1992) and Vilaça (2002). Santos Granero’s counterpart to the “doves” are what he calls the “hawks,” who stress the significance of affinity at inter community level and its concomitant relationship to distinct forms of “otherness” at other levels. This is again characteristic of the approaches of Viveiros de Castro (1992) and Descola (1996).

¹⁴ See also Overing (1996) for a fuller discussion of the relationship between art and the everyday and Guss (1989) for an ethnographic description of the intricacies of the relationship between art, symbol and narrative amongst the Yekuana of Venezuela.

¹⁵ See especially Belaunde (1992), Guss (1989), Kidd (1999) and McCallum (1989).

artist” (Ibid.). In a similar vein, Witherspoon and Peterson explain that amongst the Navajo:

Art is viewed as a way of seeing the world and a way of being in the world. Art is an essential act of living and an essential act to living.

Witherspoon and Peterson (1995:3)

The authors explain that the Navajo term *hózhó*, which means “beauty,” is multifaceted through its expression of, “the intellectual notion of order, the emotional state of happiness, the physical state of health, the moral condition of good, and the aesthetic dimension of harmony” (1995:15). The Navajo do not find their world beautiful, but instead they make it so. Rather than being something static and preservable, Navajo art is something that is practiced. Quoting Witherspoon once more, “the [Navajo] aesthetic experience – the creation of beauty – is simultaneously intellectual, emotional, moral, aesthetic, and biological” (1977:154). In his description of “beauty” as practice, Gadamer (1986) cites the German idealist expression “*die schöne Sittlichkeit*,” meaning “beautiful ethical life”. He explains,

This phrase does not mean that their ethical customs were full of beauty in the sense of being filled with pomp and ostentatious splendour. It means that the ethical life of the people found expression in all forms of communal life, giving shape to the whole and so allowing men to recognize themselves in their own world.

Gadamer (1986:14)

Aesthetics has therefore increasingly been incorporated into anthropological understandings of everyday lived practice. Regarding the significance of the everyday, Overing writes,

We read in our texts that proper anthropological attention should be focused upon grand structures: our task is to discover the underlying logic of the mind, of kinship, or even of artistic

creations. With such an emphasis, the practices and expressions of everyday life are seen as relatively unimportant contingencies...In Amazonia the everyday business of feeding, tending and cleaning, by us so facilely assumed to be both boring and simple, is in fact not so very simple, nor is it boring...The stress the Piaroa put upon the everyday and its activities is not trivial, but rather the product of a powerful and highly egalitarian social philosophy.

Overing (2003:297-8)

Rather than art and the aesthetic being something static to reflect and ponder upon, it should instead have the potential to be incorporated into the much wider concept of morality and being-in-the-world. I shall now go on to discuss the ways in which the concepts of “kinship” and “relatedness” have been approached in the recent anthropological writings.

1.3. Explaining Relatedness

Knowledge as lived practice and the aesthetics of sociality are connected to a third central theme running through this thesis, which is the topic of “relatedness.” I have chosen the term “relatedness” over “kinship” in order to avoid the “biological” associations of the latter term and the “social” associations of the notion of affinity.¹⁶ Like Carsten *et al*, I have adopted this term, “in order to suspend a particular set of assumptions about what is entailed by the terms biological and social” (2000:4).¹⁷ The contributors to Carsten’s volume aimed to move away from the “domain of kinship already marked out” in anthropological history into a new one that “describe[s] relatedness in terms of indigenous statements and practices – some of which may seem

¹⁶ Notions of the biological and the social have received a great deal of attention in gender studies and feminist philosophical writings. See, for example, Butler (1993), Moore (1994) and Lambek and Strathern (1998).

¹⁷ See also Lepri (2005), who has applied the term “relatedness” in a similar way. Oliveira (2003:107) writes about the “semiotics of relatedness,” which he describes as “a process essentially similar to the creation of similarities among people living in close intimacy (‘actual kinship’).” Howell (2003:18) employs the terms “kinning” or “kinned relatedness” when discussing adoption in Norway, which takes into account “a perceived fusion between blood, flesh, land, place and people which has a strong temporal dimension.”

to fall quite outside what anthropologists have conventionally understood as kinship” (2000:3). This is a way of understanding relatedness that is at once contextual and comparative. It is contextual in that it enables one to approach the topic of “kinship” within the broader socio-cultural context, incorporating concepts such as commensality, co-residence, gender, knowledge, personhood and emotion talk. It is comparative in that it enables one to draw on regional material in order to compare similar concepts beyond that of “kinship.” While I am not convinced that the use of a different term necessarily removes any of the problems inherent in the application of the previous one, I believe that by using the term “relatedness” I am conveying my primary intention, which is to explain Nivacle expressions of relatedness contextually.

Feeding and caring for kin has been regarded by many authors as being constitutive of kinship relations amongst lowland South American peoples,¹⁸ with these works forming part of a wider series of writings on “The Anthropology of the Everyday” described above.¹⁹ These writings have shown that kinship amongst lowland South American peoples is conceptualised through relative degrees of similarity and difference, rather than through pre-established hierarchies of kin. They have also shown that kinship is based on the personal experiences of ego rather than on any pre-existing ancestral knowledge that is “passed down” to ego through ego’s clansmen. Writers including Overing (1996b; 2003), Ellis (1996:138ff), Belaunde (1992:201) and Gow (1991), have related commensality and co-residence to the creation of intimate, kin-like relationships. Food is said to be imbued with the agency of those who have produced it, and eating together is said to create “sameness” and hence “relatedness” between those who eat together on a daily basis.

Autonomous individuals who live, work, eat and sleep together have been described by Overing as “a community of similars” (2003:299).²⁰ She writes, “the social life of a ‘community of similars’ is something that is created daily through the specificity of the actions and affective life of each of its members” (1996b: 9). Agency therefore lies with

¹⁸ See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Ellis (1996), Kidd (1999), Overing and Passes (2000), Renshaw (1986; 2002) and Storrie (1999). Beyond lowland South America, Stafford (2000:37) has noted how the generative processes of care and nurturing form an important part of Chinese relatedness. He illustrates this through the cycles of *yang* (the parent-child relationship) and *laiwang* (relationships between friends, neighbours and acquaintances) where “the *production* of relatedness (often through rather everyday or domestic transactions) is clearly seen” (2000:38, original emphasis).

¹⁹ See, for example, Carsten (1997), Overing (1996b) and Overing and Passes (2000).

²⁰ See Overing (1993; 1996b), Henley (1982) and Gow (1991).

the individual rather than with the collectivity, with the latter being embodied in the Western image of the “powerful community.” It has been shown by many authors that amongst lowland South American peoples there are very few (if any) terms that embody our concepts of “social groups” or “social structure.” Rather, it is the mastery of powerful capabilities that are situated within each person. The Piaroa term for “co-resident” (*tūtāe itsotu*) translates as “a plurality of singular similarities to which I belong,” with those who live together becoming “of a kind” (1996b). “The collectivity” is therefore composed of autonomous individuals who carry out their daily lives in ways that are both knowledgeable and aesthetically pleasing, such that they become increasingly similar over time.

Questioning the usefulness of the concept of descent or a genealogical model of kinship based on ancestry and neo-Darwinian biology, Ingold (2000) suggests a more fruitful way of understanding kinship is through what he has termed the “relational approach” which is “more consonant with these people’s lived experience of inhabiting the land” (2000:133). Drawing heavily on his earlier work amongst the hunter-gatherer Skolt Saami of north eastern Finland, he writes:

Both cultural knowledge and bodily substance are seen to undergo continuous generation in the context of an ongoing engagement with the land and with the beings – human and non-human – that dwell therein.

Ingold (2000:133)

This is a relational approach of both knowledge and substance whereby knowledge is gained through shared lived experience. Ingold goes on to question the significance of the vertical line of a genealogical kinship diagram and the kinds of relationality which are assumed through such diagrammatical representations. The assumption is, he argues, that “the essential or substantive components of personhood are ‘handed on’, fully formed, as an endowment from predecessors” (2000:135) such that an individual’s present-day relationships are seen to be the result of a series of relationships that have already taken place in the distant past through the transmission of wealth and substance. This “genealogical” way of approaching kinship in Western thought can be represented through the idiom of the tree, with the ancestor representing the trunk and this trunk

extending upwards and outwards in its ever-increasing yet highly traceable diachronic complexity. Ingold explains:

For if the essential elements of personhood are given by virtue of genealogical connection, independently of the situational contexts of human activity, then a person's location on a genealogical chart – in which every line is a link in a chain of descent – says nothing about his or her actual placement *in the world*... Arrayed diachronically in linear sequence, reaching back to 'time immemorial', persons of the past are removed from their present descendants by a distance measured out in generations

Ingold (2000:135-7)

Such an approach parallels Bourdieu's (1977:37-8) distinction between "official" and "practical" kinship in which the former is an abstraction of the analyst whilst the latter is an expression of relationships that are "continuously practiced, kept up, cultivated." Whilst genealogies have been used for centuries in the West as a political and social tool of the ruling classes, when applied as an analytical tool we must avoid any temptation to apply our Western folk models onto others as they in fact say very little about how most people experience relatedness in the everyday world.

As a form of departure from this "genealogical" way of thinking about kinship, Ingold adopts Deleuze and Guattari's (1988) concept of the rhizome, which gets away from the static, decontextualising linearity of the genealogical model, and allows us to conceive of a world in movement, where every part unfolds in its manifold entanglement of interlacing threads. Ingold expresses it thus:

This is to be envisaged as a dense and tangled cluster of interlaced threads or filaments, any point in which can be connected to any other...It has the virtue of giving us a way of beginning to think about persons, relationships and land that gets away from the state, decontextualising linearity of the genealogical model, and allows us to conceive of a world in

movement, wherein every part or region enfolds, in its growth, its relations with all the others.

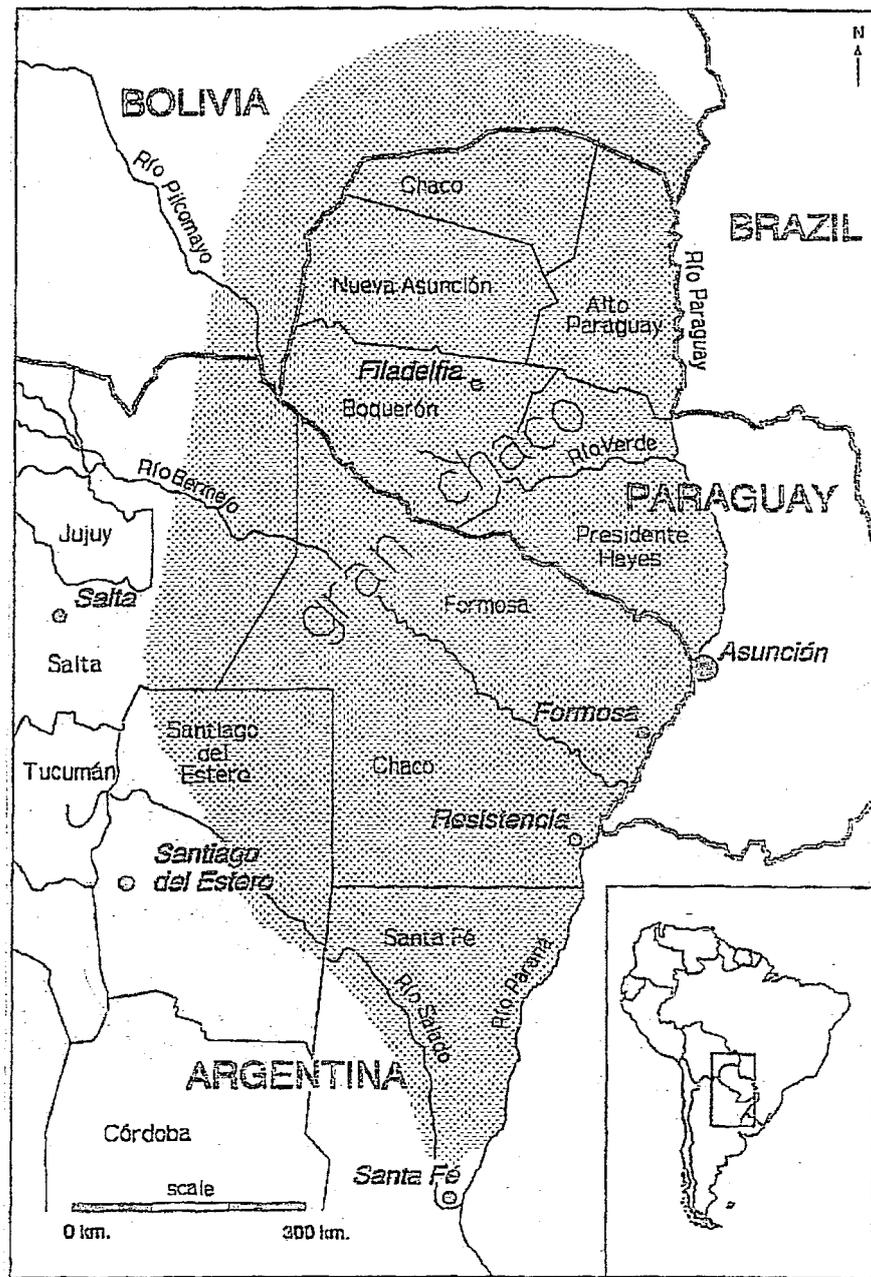
Ingold (2000:140)

While I would add that such an approach should also provide a good starting point for listening to others, Ingold's "relational model" closely resembles Nivacle understandings of relationality.²¹ Whilst it would be inaccurate to state that the Nivacle have no generational understanding of kinship and that the genealogical lines on kinship diagrams have no significance, I would argue that Nivacle relatedness is best understood as a lived process rather than as a static entity. It is the nature of these lines on a genealogical diagram that represent these relationships – both in their horizontal and vertical forms – and how they relate to Nivacle personhood that concerns me in this thesis.

1.4. The Historical and Contemporary Setting

The Gran Chaco is situated on the Tropic of Capricorn in the interior of lowland South America and extends from 19 to 29 degrees southern latitude and from 58 and 64 degrees eastern longitude. It is almost entirely flat and covers some 800,000 square kilometres of land in total, of which 400,000 square kilometres is Argentinean territory, 250,000 square kilometres is Paraguayan territory, and 150,000 square kilometres belongs to Bolivia (see Map 1.1.). Within the Paraguayan national borders, the Chaco constitutes the western half of the country. The region has a continental climate, with cool dry winters (between 15 degrees Celsius and 25 degrees Celsius) and extremely hot and humid summers (between 30 degrees Celsius and 50 degrees Celsius). Despite almost all precipitation occurring during the summer months, rainfall is highly unpredictable and droughts are not uncommon. The average annual precipitation is between 750 mm and 1,250 mm and the region becomes progressively drier as one moves from west to east. The vegetation also gradually changes as one moves from east to west, with the dense palm forests of the Lower Chaco floodplains gradually transforming into dense scrub forest and savannah grasslands.

²¹ See Storrie (2003) who likewise found the concept of the rhizome useful for unfolding Hoti notions of relatedness.



Map 1.1. The Gran Chaco (Source: Stunnenberg (1993:8))

Despite constituting 60% of Paraguayan national territory, less than 2% of the Paraguayan population inhabit the Chaco.²² There are currently at least seventeen indigenous peoples within the Paraguayan Chaco that are divided between five linguistic families.²³ These are: the Mataco-Mataguayo (including the Nivacle, the Wichí, the Choroti/Manjui and the Maká); the Maskoy (including the Enxet, the Sanapaná, the Toba-Maskoy and the Angaité); the Zamuco (including the Ayoreo and the Chamacoco); the Guaycurú (including the Toba, Pilagá and Mocoví); and the Guaraní (including the Guaraní-Ñandeva and the Chiriguano). See Map 1.2. for a depiction of the geographical distribution of the indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco. The territory of the pre-colonial Nivacle extended from the western border of the Pilcomayo River to the Mennonite Colonies of the Central Chaco.

The term Nivacle (or Nivaculé / Nivaklé) is a relatively recent auto-denomination, which translates as “man” or “person.” They have also been referred to in the literature as the Chunupí (Hunt 1915; Palavecino 1936[in Cardozo 1959]), the Chulupí (Vervoort 1932[in Cardozo 1959]), the Ashluslay (Métraux 1946), the Ashlushlai (Nordenskiöld 1912, 1919) and the Ashlushay (Palavecino 1928[in Cardozo 1959]).²⁴ In this thesis I have decided to use the term “Nivacle” as Seelwische (1989; 1990) employed it in his writings on the Nivacle language. I have refrained from using an accent on the final letter “e” as this is only necessary in Spanish transcriptions; in spoken Nivacle the emphasis usually always falls on the last syllable so such an accent is unnecessary. In the 2002 Paraguayan Indigenous Census it was estimated that the Nivacle population was 12,028.

Prior to the colonisation process, the indigenous peoples of the Chaco lived on hunting, gathering, fishing and small-scale horticulture and they moved extensively around their territories depending on the season (see Métraux 1946:250). Domestic animals including goats, sheep, horses and chickens were introduced to the region during the 17th century following contact with Hispanic conquerors (Stunnenberg 1993). Until around 1875, attempts to make contact with or proselytise the indigenous peoples of the Chaco had been of limited success. However, the period following this signalled the start of significant changes, with the colonisation process manifesting itself in different ways in different parts of the region. Part of the impetus for these changes was a growing

²² The CIA World Fact book estimates that the Paraguayan population was 6,347,884 in July 2005.

²³ See Maybury-Lewis and Howe (1980) and Chase-Sardi, Brun and Enciso (1990).

²⁴ These references were obtained from Fritz (1994:35).



Map 1.2. Location of the Indigenous Peoples of the Gran Chaco (Source: Miller 1999:2)

industrial sector and high levels of European immigration in Argentina. In Paraguay, the situation was quite different as it was a country still recovering from the devastating effects of the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870). In an effort to rebuild its national economy, the Paraguayan government began selling state owned land, which included most of the supposedly “uninhabited” Chaco region, to foreign investors. This was to drastically change the face of the Paraguayan Chaco and lead to rapid transformations in the internal economy of the indigenous that were people marked by seasonal employment and increased sedentarisation.

In the 1860s and 1870s, the exploitation of the Chaco forest reserves began in the eastern Paraguayan Chaco region. This resulted in the construction of a railway several hundred kilometres long by Carlos Casado S.A. from the forest reserves to the Paraguay River where the timber was to be exported. In 1872, Frenchman Emilio Poirier discovered that the *quebracho colorado chaqueño* (Bot. *Schinopsis balansea*) and *quebracho colorado santiagueño* (Bot. *Schinopsis lorentzii*) contained 31% and 15% of tannin respectively, both of which happened to be widespread in the eastern Chaco region (Stunnenberg 1993:37). The large-scale extraction of tannin that followed led to the employment of thousands of indigenous and non-indigenous labourers. Bünstorf (1982:12)[in Stunnenberg 1993:41] estimated that between 15,000 and 20,000 people were employed during the tannin industry’s peak in the 1930s and 1940s.

Sugar cane had been grown in northwest Argentina since the 16th century, although it was still a relatively small-scale industry at that stage (Stunnenberg 1993:52). With the construction of the railway line from Tucumán to Buenos Aires in 1876, this was all to change. Large-scale investment was made into the sugar-cane industries of Salta and Jujuy, with this expansion creating a demand for a large cheap labour force. Soon thousands of indigenous people began migrating to the mills to work during the harvest period known locally as *la zafra*. Miller (1999:15-6) reports that initial contact was made through acquaintances that local white people had with the neighbouring indigenous peoples. These managers, or “*mayordomos*,” were appointed to go deep into the Chaco forest in search of potential workers and negotiate their working conditions with the village leaders. Amongst the Nivacle, the leaders soon became known as the Captains (*Capitánes*) of worker-groups. When the time came each year for workers to make their way to the sugar mills it was the *Capitán* who would enthruse his team to go to work. The

main indigenous people who worked in the mills were the Nivacle, the Wichí, the Manjui, the Toba and the Chiriguano.²⁵ Over the course of time, the owners of the mills began to prefer to employ white workers and the Nivacle began their annual migration to the Mennonite Colonies of the Central Paraguayan Chaco in search of agricultural work (see below).

By the end of the 19th century, cattle ranching had accelerated in the Gran Chaco. While most livestock activities in Argentina had been based on small-scale traditional farming, the new ranches that were being created in the eastern Argentinean Chaco and in the Paraguayan Chaco were of a much larger scale. This was mainly due to the low price of land in the region. Ranching soon commenced in the areas of the eastern Chaco that had been cleared by the tannin industries as well as in the zones further south. Much larger ranches, or *estancias* as they are referred to locally, often measured between 10,000 and 20,000 hectares (Stunnenberg 1993:47) and were sold mainly to foreign investors from North America and Great Britain. The ranches created a major source of employment for the indigenous people.

An event that contributed in a significant way to the Paraguayan Chaco as it is today was the arrival of Mennonite settlers in the late 1920s. There are currently over 14,000 Mennonites living in the Paraguayan Chaco and they constitute one of the most prosperous sectors of the Paraguayan national economy. They are the largest employers of indigenous peoples in the Central Chaco and approximately 60% of the Paraguayan indigenous population currently inhabit their colonies (Miller 1999:17). The Mennonites are followers of a pacifist Anabaptist religion and claim spiritual and theological descent from the Dutch reformer Menno Simons who was martyred in the mid-sixteenth century. The main Mennonite consideration, which is to remain free from contamination from the outside world, has always led to uneasiness in their relation to temporal power. They initially migrated from one European nation-state to the other with many then migrating to Canada in the late 19th century. The more conservative Mennonites then eventually migrated to the Paraguayan Chaco from Canada and Russia in 1927-31 and 1946-7 in order to escape the increasing weight of Canadian and Russian law. Their main concern was to retain their pacific, simple, communitarian and unworldly “New Testament way of life” (Redekop 1980). They were attracted by the

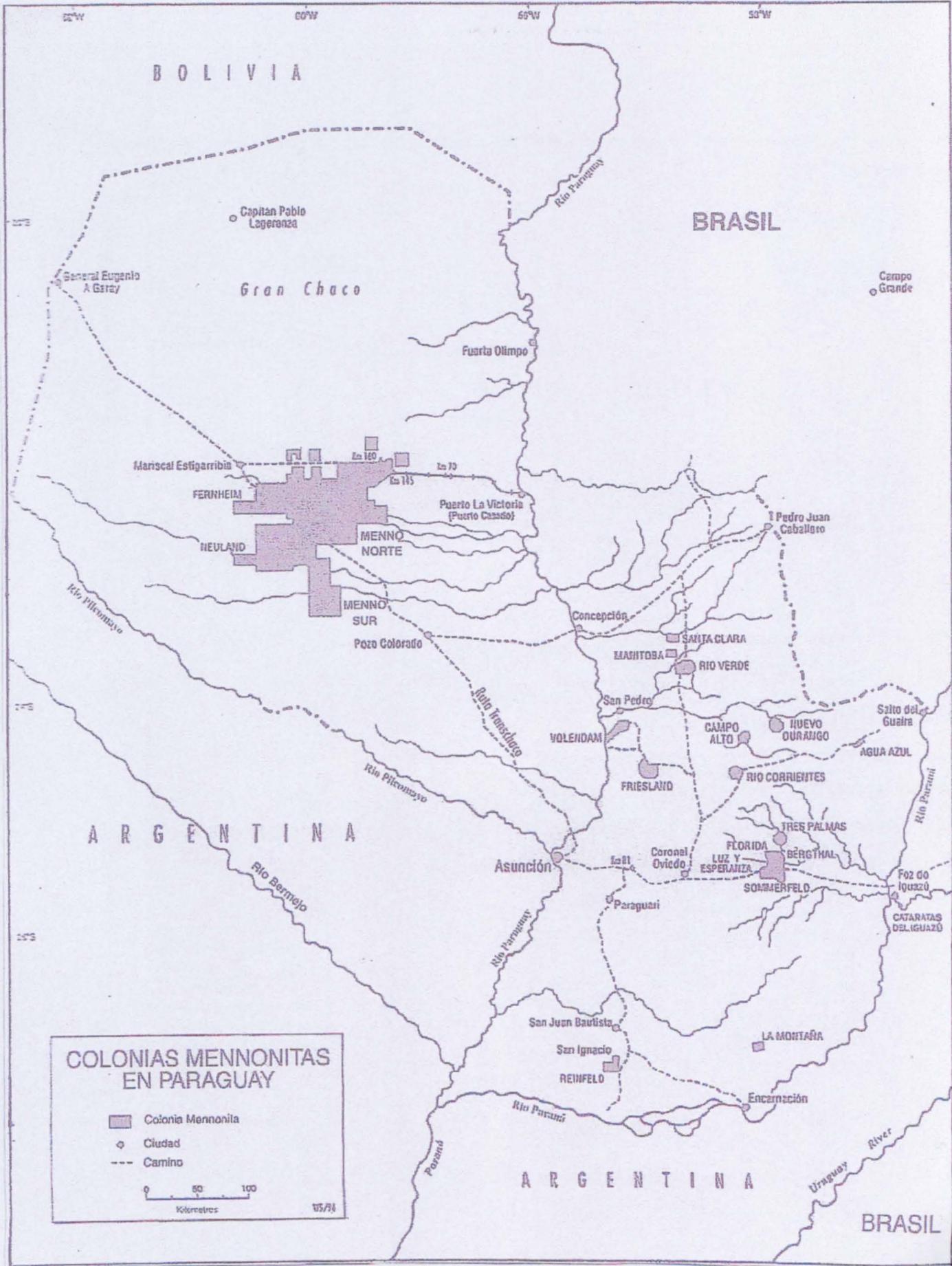
²⁵ For further information on the Argentinean sugar mills from the perspective of the Toba see the excellent ethnography of Gordillo (2004).

Paraguayan law 514 of 1921, which offered them a significant degree of political, economic, social, legal, and educational autonomy. When the Mennonites first settled in Paraguay, they purchased some 150,370 hectares of land from the aforementioned Carlos Casado S.A. in order to build their colonies and develop their economic base, which was heavily grounded in livestock-rearing and farming.

The Mennonites established three colonies in the Central Chaco called Menno (established in 1927), Fernheim (established in 1931) and Neuland (established in 1948). Map 1.3. is a map of Paraguay and Map 1.4. depicts the location of the Mennonite Colonies along with the three abovementioned colonies, which acted on an administrative level on behalf of the Paraguayan nation state. Working in symbiotic relationship with their religious authorities, the Mennonites were able to create a “Church-state within a state” (Redekop 1980:118-9). Impelled by their belief in the Protestant work ethic, the Mennonites have become one of the most powerful groups in Paraguay, owning more than 1,500,000 hectares of land. Further improvements to the infrastructure of the Paraguayan Chaco as well as a ready supply of cheap indigenous labour expanded the Mennonites’ initially small-scale farming endeavours in the Central Chaco into large-scale commercial ventures. Their current economy has diversified and is now based on cattle ranching, dairy farming, commercial agriculture and small-scale industry.

The Nivacle have been in contact with the Roman Catholic congregation known as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) since the Chaco War (1932-35). The Oblates were originally sent by the Bolivian Government to establish a series of missions along the Pilcomayo River near forts that the government had built in the area in anticipation of a territorial war against Paraguay. The Catholic mission was known as the *Vicariato Apostólico del Pilcomayo* and they worked almost exclusively with the Nivacle of the Pilcomayo River area. During the Chaco War, the missionaries protected many of the Nivacle who had found themselves in the firing line of Bolivian and Paraguayan troops.⁴⁶ The Oblates take a very liberal stance in their missionary work regarding indigenous language and culture and, since the Chaco War, have managed to maintain strong and highly amiable relations with the Nivacle of the Pilcomayo River area. They have also established a mission and church in the Central Chaco near the garrison town of

⁴⁶ See Fritz (1994b) for further details on the relationship between the Nivacle and the Catholic missionaries during this period.



Map 1.4. The Mennonite Colonies (Source: Stoesz and Stackley 2000:3)

Mariscal Estigarribia on the outskirts of the Mennonites Colonies. This church now serves both the indigenous and Paraguayan population of the area.

Nowadays, the Nivacle are principally settled along the Paraguayan side of the Pilcomayo River in mission settlements that were set up by the Oblates and in indigenous agricultural settlements and worker villages in the Mennonite Colonies. The majority of the indigenous agricultural settlements in the Central Chaco were established by the Mennonite Settlement Board, known as the *Asociación de los Servicios de Cooperación Indígena-Menonita* (ASCIM). The Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches have also established settlements in this region. As well as working as wage labourers on Paraguayan ranches, the western Nivacle of the Pilcomayo River area also engage in subsistence horticulture and stock raising, hunting and gathering. Those of the Mennonite Colonies work mainly on the Mennonite, Paraguayan and Brazilian ranches. Some also have trades, with the Nivacle being particularly renowned bricklayers. Most are also employed in seasonal wage labour, which is known locally as “*changas*.” This is in addition to any work on their own garden plots that those who have settled in indigenous agricultural settlements might choose to carry out. The establishment of the indigenous agricultural settlements shall be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. I shall now go on to discuss the existing literature on the Nivacle.

1.5. Existing Literature on the Nivacle

As Kidd (1999:31) has previously mentioned, there are very few anthropological studies to have been carried out amongst the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco that have been based on long-term fieldwork within a particular community. Kidd’s (1999) doctoral thesis on the social and economic morality of the Enxet people was based on long-term fieldwork amongst the southern Enxet peoples. Blaser (2003) has carried out ethnographic research on the Yshiro people of Paraguay and their relationship with the wider nation state. Kalisch and Unruh (1999) have also recently published several interesting works on the inability of the modernist project to incorporate the world-view of indigenous peoples.²⁷ Their writings have adopted a mainly linguistic perspective and have been focussed on the Maskoy linguistic family.

²⁷ See also Kalisch (2002).

There have been other works that have considered the situation of the indigenous people from the perspective of the Paraguayan Chaco region as a whole. Renshaw (1986; 1996; 2002) has carried out detailed work on the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco, where he has focussed on their economic and social morality. Regehr (1979) has written on the situation of the indigenous peoples of the Mennonite Colonies. Anthropologist Miguel Alberto Bartolomé (2000) has written on the sedentarisation process of the Ayoreo peoples of Paraguay. Maybury-Lewis and Howe (1980) have published a volume on the socio-economic situation of the indigenous peoples of Paraguay for Cultural Survival that sought to expose the poor working and living conditions of the peoples there. There have also been other writings of a more geographical nature including those of Leake (1999), Robins (1999) and Stunnenberg (1993). Leake (1999) carried out participatory research on the subsistence economy and land use of the Angaité and Sanapaná peoples of the Lower Chaco region. Australian Catholic missionary and anthropologist Wayne Robins (1999) carried out a study of the relationship between land, ethnicity and power in Paraguay. Dutch geographer Stunnenberg (1993) published a volume based on case studies of the spatial marginalisation of the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan and Argentinean Chacos. The late Paraguayan anthropologist and indigenous rights activist Miguel Chase-Sardi (1972c; 1990) also published several texts on the political and socio-economic situation of the indigenous peoples of Paraguay alongside his numerous other writings on the Nivacle (see below).

Within the context of the Mennonite Colonies, there have been a relatively large number of publications on the situation of the indigenous peoples living there and as well as the inter-ethnic relations in that region. Many of these publications are by Mennonite authors and include the following: Mennonite historian Peter Klassen (2002) on the Mennonite encounter with the indigenous peoples and the Paraguayans; Mennonite anthropologist Jakob Loewen (1966a; 1966b; 1967; 1969), who was employed by the Mennonites to assess the progress of their indigenous settlement programme; Mennonite anthropologist Calvin Redekop (1980), who was also employed for such purposes as well as to analyse the inter-ethnic relations within the Central Chaco between the Paraguayans, Mennonites and indigenous peoples; Hack (1979a; 1979b; 1980) who has written on the successes and failures of the Mennonite settlement programme; and

finally, Mennonite anthropologist Wilmar Stahl (1974; 1982; 1993) who has written several articles on the Mennonite development projects and the economic situation of the indigenous peoples.

The Nivacle were first mentioned by explorer Daniel Campos (1883) on an expedition that he made from the Andes to Asunción along the left bank of the Pilcomayo River. Fric (1980)[1906] also mentions the Nivacle, referring to them by the Toba-Pilagá term “Sotegariak.” The Nivacle were also mentioned by Anglican missionary Barbrooke Grubb (1904; 1914), who worked amongst the neighbouring Enxet. Grubb refers to the Nivacle using the Enxet term “Suhin” and it is likely that Grubb had encountered the north-western Nivacle. Swedish ethnologist and archaeologist Erland Nordenskiöld (1912; 1919) wrote extensively on the Nivacle (who he referred to as the Ashluslay or “the eaters of iguana”) as well as the Mataco and Manjui peoples. In the *Handbook of South American Indians* (1946), Alfred Métraux produced an impressive comparative work on the indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco covering a wide range of socio-cultural spheres including warfare, the life cycle, and economic and leisure activities. Perhaps one of the most significant writers in Paraguayan anthropology was the late Branislava Susnik (1978; 1981; 1982/3; 1983), who began working amongst the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco during the 1950s and who published extensively on topics such as ethno-history, socio-linguistics and material culture over a 45-year period. Susnik has also published on the Nivacle (Chulupí) language and its relationship to other Chaco languages (1959).

Since the 1970s there has been a marked increase in the volume of writings on the Nivacle, the most notable of which are the following: Catholic missionary and anthropologist Fritz (1994a) has considered the position of the Nivacle within the wider context of Paraguayan national society and has unfolded the delicate dynamics of the relationship between the Catholic missionaries and the Nivacle (1994b); Catholic missionary and Nivacle linguist José Seelwische has published a Nivacle grammar (1975), two Nivacle dictionaries (1980; 1990), teaching materials for Nivacle bilingual schools and catechism (1992), as well as several articles on the effects of the colonisation process on the Nivacle culture (1966; 1974); working in collaboration with Seelwische, Chase-Sardi (1970; 1972a; 1972b; 1972c; 1981; 1983) has published on Nivacle mythology and ontology, alongside his more political writings on the position of the Indian in

Paraguayan national society (see above); Argentinean anthropologist Alejandra Siffredi (1977; 1984; 1997; 2001) has published extensively on Nivacle cosmology, mythology, reciprocity, gender relations and their incorporation into Paraguayan national society, as well as publishing alongside Spadafora (2001) on the relationship between indigenous peoples and the environment; Argentinean anthropologist Alfredo Tomasini (1985; 1992; 1997) has written on shamanism amongst the Nivacle; Ana María Spadafora (1994) has written on the Nivacle uprising of 1962; Sterpin (1991; 1993) considered the significance of the traditional Nivacle practice of scalping; finally, Wilbert and Simoneau (1987) published a collection of Nivacle myths in English collating the writings of several of the aforementioned authors.

Within the wider context of the Argentinean and Bolivian Chacos there have been several in-depth studies of the indigenous peoples there, including the writings of the following authors: Alvarsson (1988) on the Bolivian Mataco/Wichí; Palmer (1997) on the Argentinean Wichí; Hirsch (1991) on the political organisation of the Bolivian Izoceno; Wright (1997) on the Argentinean Toba; Gordillo (2004) on the western Toba understandings of “place” and “memory;” Gordillo and Leguizamón (2002) on the relationship between indigenous peoples and public works in the Pilcomayo River area; Barua (2001) on the Argentinean Wichí; Califano (1999) on Wichí mythology; Dasso (1999) on Wichí shamanism; Carrasco and Briones (1996) on Wichí land rights; finally, Elmer Miller (1966; 1979) has written extensively on the Argentine Toba and has also published an edited volume (1999) on the relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco and their relationship with the Paraguayan, Argentinean and Bolivian national societies.

1.6. Situating My Fieldwork

My first visit to Paraguay to begin my fieldwork in March 2001 was also my first visit to South America. I had initially been drawn to Paraguay - and to the Chaco in particular - through the advice of my supervisor Joanna Overing, who suggested that I speak with anthropologist Stephen Kidd about the possibility of carrying out fieldwork there. Stephen had spent over 12 years living and working amongst the Enxet peoples of the Lower Chaco region and was in the process of completing his PhD, which was an ethnography of the Enxet. This was the first PhD to have been based on long-term

fieldwork in an indigenous community in the Paraguayan Chaco. The more I talked with Stephen the more fascinated I became by his descriptions of the situation of the indigenous peoples of the Chaco and I was further enthused by the fact that relatively little research had been carried out there.

My anthropological interests had also drawn me to the Chaco. Having just completed my undergraduate dissertation on the anthropology of sport where I had focussed on the body and the relationship between the individual and society in the high modern West, I was interested in a new challenge. I had been particularly interested in the globalisation and postcolonial literature at the time and the Mennonite-indigenous relationship seemed to suggest the possibility of innovative forms of cultural hybridity being created in the Central Chaco region. In the postcolonial literature, emphasis was often placed on the role of “location” in the construction of difference and identity and on marginality as a site of resistance, with these territorially-determined “states” being referred to as “Third Cultures” (Featherstone 1990) and “culture’s in-between” (Bhabha 1998). The Paraguayan Chaco seemed to be one of these “interstitial spaces” that writers had been talking about, and I felt that an anthropological exploration of the relations of apartheid between the transnational Chaco Mennonites and the Nivacle would provide a powerful insight into how such relationships were enacted on an everyday basis. It seemed that the transnational Mennonites presented a challenge to traditional conceptions of homogenous national cultures and normative centre-periphery models of development and progress.²⁸ In the Paraguayan Chaco, a transnational religious community (the Mennonites) had been able to gain economic and political success largely through the very absence of the Paraguayan Nation State, such that the “unhomely” (Bhabha 1994) migrant was not always in a subordinate position. I was interested in understanding how these relationships manifested themselves in different social milieus in the interstitial space of the Mennonite colonies. I was also interested in the fact that both the Mennonites and the Nivacle were two seemingly egalitarian societies who were both enacting their egalitarianism in very different ways and yet they seemed to live alongside each other in relative harmony. How did these different forms of egalitarianism manifest themselves and how did this relate to gender relations? These were the kinds of questions that interested me at the time and what I had initially set out to try and answer.

²⁸ See Bhabha (1994); de Certeau (1997); Fardon (1995); Said (1978); and Thomas (1994).

After securing funding from the ESRC, I went to Paraguay to begin my journey. My fieldwork in Paraguay confirmed some of my initial thoughts whilst challenging others, and the longer I spent there the more interested I became in other areas of anthropology (which pleases me greatly). My fieldwork amongst the Nivacle extended over a 27-month period from April 2001 to June 2003, which also incorporated three short trips back home. One of the key motivations behind my decision to spend such a (relatively) prolonged period of time in the field was my desire to gain a degree of competency in the Nivacle language. The Nivacle's second language is Spanish and so my aim was to learn Nivacle through Spanish, despite the fact that my Spanish was of a very basic level prior to my arrival in South America.

In order to prepare myself for learning an indigenous language like Nivacle, I decided to attend a month-long Language and Culture Acquisition Course that was being run by the British Summer Institute of Linguistics at their base in Wycliffe. Despite being the only student on the course who was not a missionary, I found the course itself very valuable as it taught me about the practicalities of language-learning whilst in the field. The course also provided training in applied phonetics and phonemics which I found invaluable whilst in Paraguay. Following an intensive series of pre-fieldwork vaccinations that delayed my schedule by several months, I left for South America in January 2001 in order to attend a 12-week Spanish language-learning course in Cusco. This prepared me well for my trip to Paraguay in April where I met Stephen Kidd, who happened to be in the Paraguayan capital of Asunción working with the indigenous land-rights NGO at the time. Stephen introduced me to Paraguayan anthropologist Rodrigo Villagra and the rest of the Tierraviva team, who provided me with invaluable advice and practical assistance. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to accompany the team on several of their visits to the Lower and Central Chaco regions in order to gain an initial glimpse of the region. Tierraviva's work is focused on reclaiming the ancestral territory of the Enxet people of the lower Chaco region that has been purchased by private investors. My experience with Tierraviva gave me a rich and important insight into the political, economic, and social situation of the indigenous people of the Chaco. It also gave me the opportunity to make contact with people who had been working with the Nivacle, as well as the chance to visit several of their communities. During one of our trips we visited the Nivacle agricultural Colony of Campo Loa and the community of

Jotoicha. The Tierraviva team had previously worked in Jotoicha and, after speaking to the leader, I was invited back to talk with the community about my intentions and to gauge whether it would be possible for me to live with them for a year or so.

I was initially drawn to Jotoicha by its beauty. As we drove through the community for the first time around the central plaza and past the church and the schoolhouse I remember thinking that it seemed like a paradise and that it would be a wonderful place to live. Its beauty was particularly striking in comparison with the cramped industrialised feel of the Nivacle worker villages of Filadelfia, where there was very few trees and a great deal of traffic and movement. Jotoicha seemed like an idyllic place to live. My decision to carry out my fieldwork there was also backed by the fact that I had the support of the Catholic missionary and anthropologist Miguel Fritz. The Catholic missionaries had been interested in the language and culture of the Nivacle for many years. However, this understanding had not remained at the theoretical level as they had also purchased the land for Campo Loa along with the Mennonite development organisation the ASCIM with the help and advice of the late anthropologist Walter Regehr.

I knew that this was the best community for me to be based in and so was determined to be as explicit as I could when explaining my aims to the community. The following week I travelled to Jotoicha alone in one of the pick-up truck taxis from Filadelfia. On my way there the Paraguayan taxi driver began telling me about how the indigenous people were all lazy and about how they never did anything with the land that they had been given. He also told me to take care myself as there was also a lot of disease in the communities. This was perhaps not the most positive of starts for me, and as we approached the community I became filled with fear as I saw what seemed like the whole community standing singing in the church. The classic anxieties that seem to run through every anthropologist's mind began to surface. Would they accept me? How will they respond to my suggestions? Will they *like* me? One of the leaders came over and asked me to wait by the schoolhouse. He told me that everyone would come across shortly to listen to what I had to say. The enchanting singing that was coming from the church only served to strengthen my resolve that this had to work. People gradually began making their way over to the schoolhouse from the church with their chairs and sat down around me. As I sat and explained to them why I was there, I found the

positive response of the leaders really encouraging. They told me that they would be very happy for me to stay in their community and that they wanted me to learn their language so that I could help teach the schoolchildren Spanish and act as a translator for the women. Neither of these had been my precise aims at the time, but I knew that if I tried to help with the schoolchildren and be a useful presence in the community then the initial stages would be much easier and I could develop closer relationships with the people over the course of time.

During the initial months of my stay in Jotoicha I slept on the schoolhouse floor on a foam roll-mat that I had purchased in Asunción. I was unsure as to what my cooking arrangements would be so had brought bread, tuna and biscuits from Asunción to eat. On my fifth evening there, a couple who I have named José and Teresa in this thesis, came over with a dish of sweet potato and egg and offered to cook for me during my stay in Jotoicha. I was delighted by their suggestion and every day I would walk across to their house to eat with them at midday and talk. As a form of reciprocity for their kindness, every time I paid a visit to Filadelfia or Asunción I would bring back provisions for Teresa and her kin including rice, pasta, cooking oil, meat, tea, sugar and salt as well as clothing for her and her children. I also gradually began bringing back gifts for other people in Jotoicha as I grew to know them and I eventually developed close relations with several households in the community.

I had a house built for me close to José and Teresa's house so that I could maintain close relations with them whilst at the same time having the option of inviting my own guests without them having to be mediated by my hosts. I was also able to visit whoever I wanted during the day and would return to write up my fieldnotes in the evening. I entered most of my fieldnotes into one diary that I used to record the day's events, any new words or phrases that I had learned, as well as my thoughts and feelings on that day. I also found emailing letters to my family and close friends back home a good way of summarising the significant events that had taken place over a series of months.

I feel that in many ways the writings of Jakob Meløe have also guided the way I approached my fieldwork. Meløe has written that there is a strong relationship between concept and practice and that a concept cannot be understood without being related to, and essentially *belonging to* a practice. In learning the term for a particular object, one has

merely been introduced to a word. In order to understand what the object is you must learn about the object, how it is used in practice and the practical knowledge that is necessary to perceive it. Meløe writes, “We see the world the way we do not because that is the way it is, but because we have these ways of seeing” (1983a: 140-1) and that as a result, “we are poor observers of whatever activities we are ourselves familiar with as agents” (1988a: 89). He goes on to say that there is a relationship between our activities in the world and what we are capable of *seeing* as a result of this. Taking Meløe’s argument into the field of anthropological fieldwork, I found that during the early stages of my fieldwork I had indeed been guilty of “Not seeing and not knowing that [I was] not seeing” (1988a: 95). Although I would probably not go so far as to say that this early stage was a “kind of non-existence” (Ibid.), I would say that the pedagogic experience of mastering the environment of the Chaco was part of the process of seeing it with increasing clarity. In the earlier stages of my fieldwork I had not mastered the full potentialities of movement required to carry out everyday tasks and this spilled over into an inability to move within different areas of Nivacle social life. Over time, as my practical and linguistic competencies developed, I was able to understand the complexities of everyday life more and more and know what to look for when I saw something.

As Fienup-Riordan (1994:87)[in Ingold (2000:145)] has stated, “the variety of persons and creatures that one might encounter in one’s path is immense.” Ingold states that “All of these beings may further one’s growth and development, not only through contributions of substance, but also by way of the experiences they afford” (Ibid.). This is an aspect of Ingold’s “relational approach” described above, which I believe pertains not only to relationships between “informants,” but also to the relationship between the anthropologist and the people whom he or she is working towards understanding. My approach to fieldwork amongst the Nivacle has also been influenced by the dialogical approaches of Bakhtin (1981) and later Tedlock (1983). The knowledge that I gained through living with the Nivacle is the “in-between space” between them and me.²⁹ My fieldnotes were therefore created through a dialogue between my notebook and I, and this thesis has been produced through further dialogue between my notebook, my memories, academic texts that I have read, and my interlocutors at home. Virginia Woolf has stated that, “Nothing has really happened until it has been recorded” and this,

²⁹ See also Bhabha (1994), who describes “culture” as residing in the in-between spaces.

in a sense, is how anthropology “happened” for me both in the field and after through a continual dialogue between these sources.

I spent a total of 21 months in Jotoicha. I spent most of that time living in the community as a co-resident and carrying out everyday tasks in cooperation with others as best I could. As Rosengren mentions regarding his fieldwork amongst the Matsigenka, the information that I present here has, in a sense, been driven by the separation of the genders (1987:78). Most of the young men worked for their Mennonite bosses during the week and so were absent from the community for significant periods of time. Most of my time was thus spent with the women, children and older men and certain parts of this thesis reflect this “bias” in my data. However, I make no apologies for these biases, as I cannot envisage having carried out my fieldwork in any other way. Instead I see this as an inherent aspect of being a concrete situated self in community and that another individual would have undoubtedly experienced other kinds of biases.

During my time in Jotoicha I became particularly close to the members of José and Teresa’s household and eventually ended up living there for the final weeks of my fieldwork following an extraordinary and traumatic event that took place in the Central Chaco that severely disrupted Jotoicha’s tranquillity, which is described in Chapter 2. As well as attending church services and intra- and inter-community meetings, I spent most of my days helping Teresa and her daughters in their gardens weeding, planting and harvesting crops. I also helped in their household washing dishes, washing clothes, looking for firewood, fetching water and playing volleyball. This provided an excellent context for learning the Nivacle language, as it was only the men who spoke Spanish. The majority of the women spoke only Nivacle, except for a few who had worked for Mennonites as domestic assistants. However, it was the children who ended up being my best teachers. As well as being fun companions and always encouraging me to join in their volleyball or football games and accompany them on walks, they also proved to be excellent informants. Often as people passed my house I would ask the children who were sitting with me who a particular person was and they would reply in Nivacle to whatever it was I had asked them. Spending time with the children was also helpful because they spoke only Nivacle so this left me with no choice but to practice. Some of my happiest memories of the Chaco were the times I spent playing with the children.

Everybody enjoyed having their photograph taken and this proved to be an excellent way of making acquaintances. However, the few times that I attempted to capture images of people carrying out everyday tasks were usually thwarted by people's desire to purposefully pose for every photo that I took. As soon as I took my camera out of its pouch, people would immediately stand bolt upright and smile directly at the camera, and children would often pick up any object that they could come across, for example a book or a radio, and stand there holding it. Despite not being able to capture many "natural" poses, I did find my camera to be a good way of building relations with people as well as a way of finding out people's names and their relationships with each other. People also enjoyed sending photographs that I had taken of them on to kin who lived in other communities that they had not seen for a while.

During the final six months of my fieldwork, I left Jotoicha to live in the Mennonite-administered agricultural colony of Comunidad Nivacle Unida. As I describe in later chapters, I had initially accompanied José and Teresa there on a visit in December 2003. I had enjoyed this visit very much and felt at the time that it would be useful to carry out a period of comparative research in a Mennonite-run colony in order to see whether there were any significant differences between Mennonite-run and Catholic-run colonies. I asked if it would be possible for me to stay with José's niece and her husband and four-year-old son in the administrative centre of the colony, to which they obliged. During my stay there I had the good fortune of meeting an older Nivacle man who had previously worked as a Bible translator and who was widely regarded as being one of the "Nivacle intellectuals" of the Central Chaco. I ended up spending most of this final six-month period with him working on the consolidation of specific concepts in the Nivacle language and listening to his explanations of specific aspects of Nivacle language and culture. This was a very important part of my fieldwork as it consolidated a lot of issues that, up until then, I had only had an observational account of. However, I would not have had the knowledge to carry out this latter phase without having resided in Jotoicha for 21 months beforehand.

Regarding my desire to compare the two colonies, I realise that I have ended up referring back to far more of my Jotoicha data than to my Comunidad Nivacle Unida data. I suspect that this is because I did not have the opportunity to develop the depth of experience and knowledge of people's relationships in the latter that I did in the former.

More importantly, I also came to realise that the distinction that I had initially made between the Catholic and Mennonite communities was a naïve one: the similarities inherent in the way people behaved and talked about sociality and relatedness far outweighed the fact that their colonies had been established by different settlement boards.

As many anthropologists have testified, my fieldwork experience was not without its difficulties and I had many moments, days, and at times weeks, when I genuinely felt as though my research was going nowhere. Whilst I never experienced any real hostility from people and my hosts always made me feel welcome in their homes, I often suffered the anxiety of feeling as though people were not telling me what they really felt or that whatever I was doing was not even scratching the surface of what was “really going on.” This was counterbalanced by other moments when I felt so completely at ease and part of the community that I wanted to live there forever. However, such euphoric moments were usually ephemeral and I would suddenly be reminded me of my “real” position as a visiting outsider. I do not think that these feelings ever really left me, but my trips to Asunción and Filadelfia always helped to revive my enthusiasm. My discussions with my supervisor also helped me to realise that what I was learning did make sense to others and that it also related to things that were being said by other lowland South Americanists.

Roy Wagner writes,

It is only through ‘invention’...that the abstract significance of culture (and of many other concepts) can be grasped, and only through the experienced contrast that his own culture becomes ‘visible.’ In the act of inventing another culture, the anthropologists invents his own, and in fact he reinvents the notion of culture itself”

Wagner (1981:4)

Wagner later describes this process of “invention” as “a phenomenon of cultural creativity” (1981:11). It is now over two and a half years since I left Paraguay and in some ways the experiences that I am writing about feel as though they took place a lifetime ago or as though it was not really me who had lived them at all. There are,

however, other experiences that I recall that could have happened just yesterday, they are so clear in my mind. It seems as though it is the intensity of the experience that makes fieldwork what it is: it is the constant need to remember and make sense of all the events that have taken place and that made so little sense at the time. It is the need to go through these events over and over again in our minds both during our fieldwork and then again as we write about them that makes ethnography such a unique experience. Writing ethnography is “a phenomenon of cultural creativity” in the sense that it is formed through continual dialogue between the past and presently situated “personae” of the anthropologist, through the ongoing daily practice of (re)writing one’s experiences into being on the page. What follows are my experiences remembered and rewritten.

1.7. Overview of Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters that are linked by the three central themes of knowledge as lived practice, the aesthetics of sociality and the nature of relatedness that I have described earlier. Chapter 2 introduces the Nivacle concept of “knowledge” as a social practice. The chapter begins with a description of the Nivacle multi-layered universe and goes on to describe the *vatsôc’ôchit* (“the life soul”) and its relationship to a second metaphysical organ known as the *cachi*. The *cachi* is an individual’s social conscience that develops throughout a person’s lifetime and this chapter traces its development. The chapter ends with a description of an extraordinary event that serves to highlight the centrality of “knowledgeable” behaviour in Nivacle discourse and how madness can manifest itself.

Chapter 3 builds on the discussion of “knowledge” in the previous chapter and explores it within the context of relationships. Nivacle understandings of relatedness are based on the ego-centred kindred that is conceptualised as a spectrum ranging from “close” kin to “other,” and which also incorporates notions of similarity and difference. This chapter describes how different kinds of relationships are created and maintained and what constitutes “knowledgeable” behaviour towards “close” kin, “distant” kin, affines and those who are “other.” Chapter 4 is an exploration of the spatial expression of these relationships within the context of modern indigenous agricultural settlements. This chapter considers it from the perspective of the ego-centred kindred and the motives

behind individuals' residence decisions. The chapter ends by questioning the existence of a direct relationship between the "closeness" of a relationship and spatial proximity.

Chapter 5 considers the basis of marriage choices, focussing on the husband and wife relationship. Whilst this relationship is based on love, it is a particular kind of practiced love or "love-in-action" that has its basis in the creation of "knowledgeable" people. This chapter explores the significance of productive knowledge within the context of marital relations and the importance of "speaking well," "listening well" and respect for an individual's personal autonomy. Chapter 6 is a more detailed reflection of these knowledgeable practices that considers the efficacy of work and the ways in which work is generative of desirable forms of sociality. Work is also significant in the construction of Nivacle gender relations and this chapter considers the applicability of gendered productive spheres within Nivacle social life.

Chapter 7 considers the topic of reciprocity from the perspective of games and team sports. Focussing specifically on the women's volleyball matches, this chapter explores the composition of teams at both intra- and inter-community levels and the different manifestations of "similarity" and "difference" on which such divisions are based. Finally, I consider the popular practice of gambling as carried out by the Nivacle women. Rather than being based on competition against the other team, I show that a more appropriate way of understanding gambling and team sports is as an opportunity for people to spend time together eating and enjoying themselves. Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter where I draw together the key points that I have made in this thesis with a final ethnographic example.

Chapter 2: Knowledge and the Creation of Relatedness

*To love and to be wise,
To rage with good advice,
Now thus, now than, so goes the game.
Uncertain is the dice.
There is no man, I say, that can
Both love and to be wise.
Alexander Scott (1547-1584)
A Rondel of Love*

In this chapter, my aim is to introduce Nivacle ideas of kinship and marriage through the concept of “knowledge.” “Knowledge” is encapsulated in the verb *tói*, which is the basis of an individual’s social conscience, their productive and reproductive skills, and their relationships. Someone who is “knowledgeable” could therefore be said to be equipped with the necessary skills for leading a productive life in community. In order to provide context to the place of the Nivacle in the universe, this chapter begins with an overview of the Nivacle multi-layered cosmos. I then go on to explain the living core of the body, which is the *vatsóc’óclit*. This is a soul of three parts that every person is born with and it is what gives a person life. I then go on to explain how “knowledge” (*tói*) is created within the second metaphysical organ, which is known as the *cachi*, or “centre.” The *cachi* is located in the stomach and is where a person’s “knowledge” and ability for reflection are situated.¹ I follow the development of the *cachi* from birth and stress the importance of nurture and appropriate communication in the creation of the proper Nivacle person. In order to illustrate the relationship between “knowledge” and the creation of relatedness and community, I have drawn on a series of events that took place during a drought in October 2002. The incidents involved two young Nivacle men that people called “*los enmascarados*” (“the masked men”), “*los chupasangres*” (“the bloodsuckers”), or the “*papi cóchejes*” (“the crazy men”). These were events that threatened to disrupt the conviviality of a number of different “kinds” of people who inhabit the Mennonite Colonies.

¹ See also Kidd (1999:47ff; 2000) who describes a similar organ amongst the Enxet that is known as the *wáxok*.

2.1. The Multi-Layered Universe

The Nivacle cosmos comprises three levels that are visible or invisible to people with particular kinds of knowledge at particular times.² The three levels are: the level below the earth; the earth (*na cootsjaat*), which is inhabited by the Nivacle amongst other beings; and the sky (*na vòòs*) that is above them.³ The level below the earth is inhabited by malignant beings that each inhabit their own villages (*lbanjoot*).⁴ The most significant beings that I was told about were the *tsich'es*, who inhabit the *tsich'es lbanjoot* (“the village of the *tsich'es*”). When expressed in the singular, people said that *pa tsich'e* was the devil (*el Diablo*). *Tsich'es* are the most malignant of spirits and could be sent by a shaman (*tòiyeej*)⁵ if he or she wished to attack a person. If a person were killed in this way then they too would go to the *tsich'es lbanjoot*, because the malevolent shaman would have stolen their soul and imprisoned it in an inaccessible place somewhere in the universe. A benevolent shaman who wanted to save a person from death would fight the attacking *tsich'es* using his or her auxiliary spirits (*tòijes*). A shaman’s curing songs are also his or her “knowledge” (*tòijes*). Whilst several shamans would be referred to as *napi tòijes*, with their auxiliary spirits being known as their *pava tòijes* because they exist but have never been seen (see below on the testimonial nature of the Nivacle language).

The “Water Women” (*yinòòt lhavequei*) also live below the earth. They were the original women who came up from deep under the water of the Pilcomayo River. Following the removal of their vaginal teeth by the Creator God in order to enable human reproduction, they proceeded to dance with the primordial men. The *p'albaa* are also said to live below the earth. They are mythical human prototypes who, when they died, went to live under the ground and often manifest themselves as ghosts.

On the earth (*na cootsjaat*) there are many different types of beings who inhabit the human world (*na nalhu*)⁶ that are invisible to the human eye. Amongst these are the *chivosis* and the *chivositas* (“like *chivosis*”) who were described to me as being short and squat with

² Rosengren (1996:8) describes the common form of the Amazonian universe as being a “layer cake model.”

³ C.f. Chase-Sardi (1972a).

⁴ This term differs from the term *tsaat*, which is used during everyday conversation to mean “village.”

⁵ *Tòiyeej* is derived from the verb *tói*, meaning “knowledge” or “ability.” The suffix *[-]ej* is added, which signals the state of the subject, i.e. that he or she is “knowledgeable” (Seelwische 1975:95). Gow (1991:238) writes that amongst the Piro, shamans are considered to be the “ones who know.” Kidd (1999:37) reports that amongst the Enxet a shaman’s auxiliary spirit is known as his “ability.”

⁶ *Nalhu* also means “day,” whilst “today” is *nòque nalhu*.

round stomachs. When describing them to me, one of my informants pointed to a little boy who was playing nearby told me that they looked just like that. Cartoon characters on the television were also called *chivosis*, as were any cartoon-like figures in newspapers or magazines. *Chivosis* are said to be the spirits of dead and aborted children that are rather mischievous in nature and enjoy frightening people. If, for example, a door suddenly slammed shut or a plate or cup fell to the ground, people will usually exclaim “*chivosis!*” Another malevolent being is a cannibalistic white woman called *samtôque*. *Samtôque* is described as a plump Mennonite woman who wears an apron and, bearing a meat-cleaver, would roast children at the spit and then eat them. There is also a black hairy cannibalistic ogre called a *ts’amtaj* that women were said to transform into if they ate meat or sweet things during menstruation or pregnancy.

The sky is called *na vôôs* and was where people who died well were said to go. Others told me that it was called *yincôôp*, which means “springtime” or “paradise” (*paraíso*). This is a place of eternal abundance and God was said to live there alongside the angels (*los ángeles*). Whilst the Mennonite Evangelicals referred to God using the Spanish term *Dios*, the Catholics would call him *Fitsôc’ôyich*.⁷ At the beginning of time, *Fitsôc’ôyich* created day and night through transforming the Sun and Moon, who were primordial brothers, into heavenly figures. Whilst Sun was violent and had a voracious appetite, Moon was much more controlled and would only eat small amounts of certain foods that were considered clean, such as fish, maize and watermelon. Sun and Moon became locked in a perpetual battle after Moon stole Sun’s son-in-law. They now travel the same path in the sky and are said to keep on eclipsing each other. *Fitsôc’ôyich* then reversed the position of the earth and sky and that is when a new generation of men began to live in the present-day earth. Four large tree trunks now support the sky.

As well as being the Nivacle creator god, *Fitsôc’ôyich* is a benevolent figure in Nivacle mythology who is attributed with teaching the Nivacle the necessary skills for living a social life on earth. As well as introducing the primeval men and women, he also introduced them to fire, weapons, planting, tobacco, manufactured goods and clothes. During his time on earth and prior to his return to the sky (*na vôôs*), he possessed the

⁷ In the literature his name is also spelled *Fitzökôjic*, *Fitsakajick* and *l’izã’kãyich* (Wilbert and Simoneau 1987:13). An alternative name is *Jitschittschamnee*, which was introduced by Catholic priest Alberto Vervoort (1932)[in Wilbert and Simoneau (1987:13)], which appears to be derived from the term *chishamnee*, meaning “above.”

ability to come back to life, cure those who had fallen ill, and generally provide the Nivacle with everything that they needed. The following myth, originally recorded by Alfredo Tomasini, describes the part *Fitsóc'óyich* played in the establishment of the current cosmological order:

In primeval times the world was darkness; one could not see stars, nothing. All was pure darkness. In those times the first men who inhabited the world could not see each other. It was darker than night. In that time, I do not know why, light appeared. When the light appeared, the first inhabitants had nothing to eat. There was a man then who wondered: "Where do we come from?" The others replied: "And what are we going to eat?" Since there was nothing, they had to eat just anything at all, for instance animal hides.

At that time when people ate hides, a man appeared who asked them why they ate that. It was *Fitsóc'óyich*, but at that time they did not know him. This man told them that they must not eat that any longer. He said that it is necessary to work in order to have something to eat. He gave them, for example, corn and squash. They accepted it immediately, and began to prepare the earth. But the people had nowhere to get seeds, so they asked *Fitsóc'óyich*, and he replied: "I have some. I will give you some." He gave them seeds, and then they prepared the soil for sowing them. The plants grew rapidly. The people had been about to starve, but the day after sowing the corn already bore fruit. So the people were very happy.

As soon as they had food, they began to celebrate with a dance.

Before leaving, the man who had come, the stranger, said to them: "I am leaving, but I will come back in the season of plenty, in springtime." Before he left he taught them how to make *chicha*, all that, to drink. He also told them that it was alright to dance. It was he who taught them everything, how to make

dances. This dance they danced every day; this one was the principal dance.

Wilbert and Simoneau (1987:178-9)

The term for Christians is *ni-cacujanjas-a*, meaning “they don’t doubt.” To believe in God and “to have faith” are both *ni-vat-cacujayash-a pa Dios* (“to not doubt God”). Conversely, non-Christians are “those who doubt” (*cacujanjas*). A prayer is said to be one’s “speech” or “discourse” (*tasinôî*) to God. Before prayer in the Mennonite church, the pastor would say *shicham na shatech* or “lower the head.” In one of the households that I lived, people would pray together before every meal. The father, Juan, would lead the prayer. Following the death of his only son on the Trans-Chaco Highway 10 years ago, he explained that he was still “too sad” (*taeshin-in*) to sing or play the accordion and that he needed to pray to *Dios* to thank him for the food and life that he had. In the Catholic communities of Jotoicha, people did not pray before meals, with people only praying during the weekly church services. During prayer, the Catholics would direct their prayers (*tasinôî*) to *Fitsôc’ôyich*, although they would usually also mention *Dios* as well as the angels. One Evangelical pastor explained to me that the reason that they did not call *Fitsôc’ôyich* God (*Dios*) was because he had sinned (*sasch’ê*), that he was a liar (*cuts’aj*) and that he tricked people, whilst *Dios* had no sin. That was why the two figures could never be synonymous. People described their current life as “the New Life” (“*pa nich’a manlha jayash*” or “*vat manlha jayash*”) that had replaced their “old life” (“*apis lb-manlha jayash*”).⁸ In the old life, the ancient people (*p’albaa*) had no sin, whereas now that the new people are Christians, there is sin. My interpretation of this comment is that with the coming of the missionaries, people became aware of the practices that constituted sin in their eyes. The ancient people had no knowledge of what constituted sin and so could be understood as being free from it.

When people die they are said to travel to “the sky” (*na voois*) where they live eternally with *Dios*, *Fitsôc’ôyich* and the angels. An aspect of people’s attitude to death that admittedly I found quite shocking was the way they would joke about the impending death of older people in the community. Older people were defined by their “white

⁸ The adjective (although it translates as a verb) *manlha* also means “to stay” and can be used to refer to the leftovers of a meal (*manlha-esb*).

heads” (*clim na shatech*).⁹ Just as I was about to leave Jotoicha, I was standing saying my goodbyes to everyone. I had just finished speaking to an elderly shaman who was in his eighties and who I had become good friends with during my stay. Just as he was walking back along the path towards his house, one of the leaders exclaimed, “Perhaps you won’t see him the next time you come back, he’ll probably be dead!” to which everyone began roaring with laughter.¹⁰ People were keen to bury the bodies of the dead as soon as possible as it was then that the *vatsóc’ochit* (life soul) was at its most dangerous and would attempt to pursue its kin. If a person’s death was believed to have been caused by sorcery, then the person would be buried with a red-hot stone that would guide the benevolent shaman in the direction of the cause of the sorcery.¹¹

Close female kin of the dead person would begin wailing and crying out laments on the day the person died, although such laments could also be instigated by subsequent events that triggered a grieving person’s memory.¹² For example, I once went on a trip with my “father” José to visit his widowed sister-in-law and his nieces. His elder brother had died over a year ago and he had not visited the house of his sister-in-law since then. On our way to their house, José said to me “We’re going to see lots of tears when we arrive. My brother died last year.” Unusually for him, José was wearing sunglasses, so I was not sure who exactly he meant was about to cry. As soon as we arrived at his sister-in-law’s house she immediately started crying out “*jam p’am*” and walking around the house of Ernesto’s deceased mother.¹³ José later explained to me that his arrival had triggered his sister-in-law’s memory of her late husband. While she cried everybody else sat in silence on their chairs staring down at the ground.¹⁴ There was no speaking and no crying. She continued to cry for ten minutes or so until one of her daughters offered to prepare us *tereré*.¹⁵ People then began asking about different kin and José’s wife Teresa kept on

⁹ An older man once told me that “before there were Mennonites” the Nivacle people’s hair never used to go “white.” He explained that the “white hair” was caused by “the new people” using shampoo to wash their hair, which gradually washed out the colour.

¹⁰ See Gow (1991:180ff) on Piro attitudes to death.

¹¹ See Chase-Sardi (1981).

¹² See Jamieson (2000:82ff).

¹³ I was unable to arrive at a satisfactory translation of this phrase, although it is possibly connected to the verb “*am*”, which means, “to arrive.” It could also be connected to the adverb “*am*”, which means, “to be without force” or can refer to various people not being present.

¹⁴ I was also told in another context that if someone suddenly starts crying, then the death of one of his or her “close kin” was imminent.

¹⁵ *Tereré* is a drink that is very popular in Paraguay and was consumed almost constantly by the Nivacle. It is made from the crushed leaves of an evergreen tree (*Ilex paraguariensis*). The crushed leaves, known as *yerba*, are poured into a gourd known as a *guampa*. The *yerba* is usually poured about half-way up the *guampa* and then a perforated metal straw known as a *bombilla* is inserted into the crushed leaves and water is

saying, “It’s the same for us,” referring to their sadness at the death of José’s brother and the fact that they were unable to see their kin as often as they would have liked.¹⁶

The evening following the death of a co-resident is a time when silence (*shan* “silence, finish, disappear”) reigns supreme in a community. It is during this period that the *vatsòc’òchit* (life soul) of the dead person will be most intent on trying to find its kin.¹⁷ The following morning young people would usually begin playing their much-loved *Cachava* music and begin the process of forgetting the dead. Following the death of a close kinsperson it was common for people to rearrange the walls and doors of their houses in order to confuse the dead, who they said would try to enter their house during the night along the paths and through the doors that they remembered in order to find their kin. I was told that before the arrival of the Mennonites, when they lived “in the countryside next to the lagoons,” it was common practice for people to burn their houses and then rebuild them.¹⁸ However, nowadays there is not the space for people to do this as there is nowhere for people move their houses to. Furthermore, houses are made of materials such as corrugated iron and brick that would be difficult to burn, and people spend a lot of money purchasing these materials to build their houses and so are reluctant to burn them.

Like the Enxet (Kidd 1999:35), the Nivacle also do not see animals as people. Whilst during mythical time animals were people, I was told that animals were not people and that they were nothing more than “wild animals” (*yaquisetes*). This suggests a departure from the work of many Amazonianists including Descola (1994) and Viveiros de Castro (1992). Indeed it may well be a trend that is common amongst Chaco peoples, although further research is required. Animals, fish and plants are all understood to have “fathers” (*tata*), who look after them and ensure that they are not exploited.¹⁹ Any mistreatment would generally provoke anger and punishment from the “fathers.”

added. The tea is sipped through the straw. *Tereré* is consumed cold, preferably with iced water. However, it can also be consumed hot and with sugar. This is known as *maté*. Both are highly sociable drinks that are rarely consumed alone.

¹⁶ See Chapter 4, where I discuss the re-establishment of kinship relations.

¹⁷ See Gow (1991:184) who reports a similar fear amongst the Piro. He writes, “The souls of the dead...depend on the contacts they build up during life in order to act after death” (1991:186).

¹⁸ Gow reports a similar “attachment of the dead to locality” (1991:179) amongst the Piro. He later writes (1991:184) of how the house should ideally be burned immediately following the death of someone. However, if this is not possible, then the house is taken apart and rebuilt at a new location nearby.

¹⁹ See Califano (2000:312).

Inhabiting the sky above the bird world are the villages of the star people and the thunderbirds (*fanjas*) that bring the rain. Above the level of the sky there are several further layers of the cosmos that cannot be seen by normal men (*Nivacles ateshas*). This is a world that is only seen by shamans as they travel on their spiritual horses (*cuvayuchas*) or aeroplanes (*tafaichas*), guided by torchlight known as *catistaj* (“like a star”).²⁰

2.2. *Pa Yi-Sôc’ôclit*: “The Life Soul”

The *vatsôc’ôclit* is the living core of the body. If it is removed from the body either through shamanic attack or by its own free will (for example through old age), then the person would cease to breathe and their heart would stop beating. When a person dreams it is their *vatsôc’ôclit* that travels to distant places. For this reason it is considered dangerous to rouse someone when they are sleeping. The *vatsôc’ôclit* always has a particular owner. This is expressed through the use of a possessive pronominal prefix, for example *pa yi-sôc’ôclit* (“my *sôc’ôclit*”).²¹ A person’s *vatsôc’ôclit* is said to be present from conception. The foetus is formed from semen, which gradually transforms into blood. This is called the *shaic’u* (or egg).²² Semen is *cles*, which is also the term for “children.”²³ Whilst some people told me that conception was the result of repeated sexual intercourse, others, particularly those of the younger generation, insisted that once was sufficient.²⁴ If a woman had an affair then the child was said to have weak blood and that it would become ill more easily because it was “not strong” (*nin-l’un-in*). I was told that

²⁰ See Gow (1991:238) on the connection between knowledge and vision in Piro shamanic practice.

²¹ See Kidd (1999:33). It should also be noted that the article *pa*, which translates as “that which one knows to exist, but which they have not seen”, always precedes it, for example, *pa yi-sôc’ôclit*. The *vatsôc’ôclit* can only be seen by shamans. This is an aspect of the Nivacle language that I return to later in the chapter.

²² See also Loewen (1967) and Palmer (1997), who note that amongst the Wichí the foetus is also said to be formed from semen. Viveiros de Castro likewise notes that amongst the Araweté it is the genitor who makes the child, whilst the mother “is a...receptacle of the semen, where its transformation...is processed” (1992:179). Karsten (1926) states that amongst South American Indians the child is often referred to as the “little father,” with anything affecting the father also affecting the child, hence the need for couvade. Rosengren (1987a: 112), however, reports that amongst the Matsigenka, blood is said to flow through the mother and because of this, it is the mother that is said to have a greater role in conception. Despite the father’s limited role, the care that he bestows upon his child, in co-operation with the mother, is considered to be extremely important. Finally, McCallum (1989:95) reports that amongst the Cashinahua, semen is considered to be male blood.

²³ The singular term for child is *taôclaj* (M) and (F).

²⁴ Lepri (2003:152) reports similar discourse on conception amongst the Ese Eja. C.f. McCallum (2001:15) who reports that repeated sexual intercourse is required in order for a Cashinahua woman to become pregnant. See also Palmer (1997:155) who reports a similar situation amongst the Wichí of the Argentine Chaco. See also Gow (1991:152).

this was how people knew if a woman had had an affair, as her child would constantly be sick. Such women were said to be like dogs, as they would sleep with anyone. This was a criticism that was also levied at people who were said to have married “too close.”²⁵ Children born to single mothers, however, were not considered to be weak as people still knew and were able to identify one man as the father, even although he would usually play no role in the upbringing of the child. People would acknowledge a physiological connection between both parents and the child,²⁶ however, whenever I pointed the physiological similarities between certain children and their parents, my comments were usually met with embarrassed laughter.²⁷

Rather than have two idioms of kinship running in parallel, “one predicated on physiological links and the other on ‘love’” (Kidd 1999:72), Nivacle discourse on relatedness seems decidedly unspecific when levelled against our Western Cartesian dualism of mind and body. This has also been noted amongst many lowland South American peoples.²⁸ Overing and Passes write,

It is also the case, from the evidence of Amerindian discourse, that they consider not only that *both* cognitive and affective capacities are embodied, but also that, for them, the capability to live a moral, social existence, *requires* that there be no split between thoughts and feelings, mind and body. The Amazonian vision of the social and its practices serves as an excellent antidote to Western grand narratives, for in it there can be no such absolute positioning of the emotions on the side of ‘nature’, with thinking and the intellect on the side of ‘culture’ and ‘society’.

Overing and Passes (2000:19)

The Nivacle made certain physiological connections between parents and children as well as between siblings, with blood (*vojyez*) often being used as an idiom of relatedness.

²⁵ See Chapter 3 for further details on Nivacle conceptions of relationality. Kidd (1999:70) has reported similar accusations amongst the neighbouring Enxet.

²⁶ See Gow (1991:152).

²⁷ I do not know the reason for this. Lepri (2003:152) writes that amongst the Ese Ejja, people would note physiological similarities with both the child’s mother and father. However, a child’s “blood” is transmitted only through the father and so a child born of a mixed marriage is said to bear the identity of the father.

²⁸ See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Guss (1989), Kidd (1999) and Lepri (2003).

People who were “close” kin²⁹ would describe themselves as *tatvelhavot*, which they translated into Spanish as *hermanos de sangre* (“blood brothers”). This term is constructed from *[-]velhavot*, meaning “kin,” with the addition of the prefix *tat[-]*. The prefix *tat[-]* appears to derive from the verb *tatai*, meaning “to cook,” which could imply commensality. The mother’s belly is like a cooking pot that siblings share and as they grow up they go on to share the same cooking pot at their mother’s hearth.³⁰ However, even with this example it is difficult to draw a definite line on the extent to which this explanation is physiological and the extent to which it is predicated on “care.” However, despite the existence of a “physiological” idiom of relatedness, I suggest that the dominant idiom was one of care. This incorporates the care that one receives during childhood through being fed and cared for by one’s parents and then in adulthood through the care that people bestow on their spouse, children, siblings, parents and other “close” kin.³¹ This shall be discussed in more detail below in my description of the development of the *cachi*.

The *vatsôc’ôclit* (life soul) exists from conception and the body has no life and cannot function without it. The Nivacle have two terms that refer to the physical form of the body. The first is *vu’vat*, which can mean either “body” or “tree trunk.” The second term is *sjaan*, which can mean “body,” “flesh” or “meat.”³² Despite the existence of both terms, I rarely heard either of them being used in everyday conversation, with people more likely to refer to specific parts of the body. These terms are always expressed relationally as parts of a specific body. The Nivacle language has an extremely wide range of terms that refer to particular internal organs and external parts of the body, for example, “my head” (*na yi-shatech*), “my chest/heart” (*na yi-t’oot*), “my muscle” (*na yi-côjôlsjan*), “my eyes” (*nava yi-tôsjer*) or “my vein/tendon/artery” (*ma yi-sôôt*) (Seelwische 1990:166).³³

²⁹ See Chapter 3.

³⁰ McCallum (2001:15) notes that amongst the Cashinahua the verb “to be born” can also be translated as “to be cooked.” Gow describes full siblings as “the realest of real kin” (1991:163).

³¹ For further details on Nivacle notions of relatedness, see Chapter 3.

³² C.f. Kidd (1999:45) and Overing (1996; 1997). Kidd states that whilst three terms for the body exist amongst the Enxet, they all fail to encapsulate “the materiality of bodiness” inherent in our Western notion of “the body.”

³³ See Witherspoon and Peterson (1995:11) on Navajo discourse on body parts and their relationship to the whole body. They write that “body parts do not generate themselves and are inconceivable and inviable apart from the body from which they came” (Ibid.). See also Kidd (1999:45), who describes a similar manner of expressing the body amongst the Enxet.

Illness is caused by the theft of a person's *vatsôc'ôclit* by a malevolent shaman. Whilst any part of the body is potentially open to shamanic attack, the hair is regarded as a place that is particularly vulnerable.³⁴ Following a death, the spouse and close kin of the deceased person would immediately cut their hair. This practice was particularly noticeable amongst women as would cut their long hair to just above shoulder length on the night of the death. I was told that this was when the soul (*vatsôc'ôclit*) of the dead was at its most persistent and that it would attempt to take their living kin with them by grabbing hold of their hair. The significance of the hair as a powerful seat of the soul can also be observed in the scalping practice that occurred in pre-colonial times. This was the speciality of the "big leader" (*yj caanvacle*), who would then be imbued with the power of the soul of the person he had scalped.³⁵

There is no single discourse on the precise composition of the *vatsôc'ôclit*. Whilst some people said that it comprised three parts,³⁶ others said that it had four or five parts to it.³⁷ What is clear, however, is that the *vatsôc'ôclit* is not understood as a single entity, but rather as a whole that comprises several parts. The largest part of the *vatsôc'ôclit* is the *vatsôc'ôclit lb-aos* ("son of the *vatsôc'ôclit*") or the *shaic'u*, a term that also means "egg." It is full of blood or marrow, which is transformed semen³⁸ and comprises a person's life and vitality: if the *shaic'u* is robbed by shamanic attack, then the victim would rapidly become unconscious and die. The translation "egg", gives an accurate visual depiction as to how the *shaic'u* is conceived as it is said to be the central part of the body and life of the person.³⁹ The *shaic'u* has a shell or skin called the *vatjech*, which encases it. Beyond the *shaic'u* and the *vatjech* is the shadow of the soul (*lhapecl*), which is the image or reflection of the person, much like the "body soul" (*yuxin*) of the Cashinahua.⁴⁰ The *lhapecl* is the double that each living being (human and non-human) and object possesses. People described the *lhapecl* as being like the image of a photo, or the shadow that is cast by the sun or moon or a person's reflection in the water. It progresses through a number of distinct levels from strong to faint; with the shadows becoming finer and less opaque the further they are from the central *shaic'u*. When a person becomes ill, the severity of their

³⁴ See Karsten (1926) on the Nivacle and Mataco.

³⁵ See Sterpin (1991; 1993).

³⁶ Chase-Sardi has written that "it is one and three at the same time" (1970:9ff), my translation).

³⁷ See Chase-Sardi (op. cit.).

³⁸ See Chase-Sardi (1970:14). Gow (1999:239) reports that the Piro consider both menstrual blood and semen to be "blood."

³⁹ See Tomasini (1997:30), who describes it as the "body soul" (*alma corporal*).

⁴⁰ Lagrou describes the Cashinahua body *yuxin* as, "A shadow, a person's reflection in water or in a mirror, or the image captured in a photograph of persons or things" (2000:158).

illness is determined by the part of the *vatsôc'ôclit* that has been removed or stolen. If a person is suffering from a slight headache or stomach pains then it is likely that only one of their soul's shadows had been removed. However, if they are drifting in and out of consciousness then it could be that their *shaïc'u* was about to be removed by a malevolent shaman and that death could be imminent.

2.3. *Na Yi-Cachi*: “The Knowledgeable Centre”

In this section I explore how “knowledge” (*tôi*) is created through the second metaphysical organ, which is the *cachi*. The noun *cachi* means “centre” and is said to be located in the stomach.⁴¹ Like the *vatsôc'ôclit*, the *cachi* is not a generalised concept and is always expressed as belonging to a particular person, for example *na yi-cachi* (“my *cachi*”) or *na a-cachi* (“your *cachi*”). Like the *vatsôc'ôclit*, the *cachi* is located within each individual; however, its purpose is not self-serving. The *cachi* is an eminently social organ that develops over time and which is used to explain a person's actions *vis-à-vis* other people. Unlike the Enxet concept of the *wáxok*,⁴² the Nivacle language does not possess such a vast array of expressions that describe the *cachi* as an organ that is physically manipulated in order to make the owner arrive at certain cognitive or emotional states.⁴³ There are several terms such as *cachiclôî* – “my *cachi* suffers;” *manlhet-e' yi-cachi* – “my *cachi* stays;” and *is-in yi-cachi* “my *cachi* is beautiful.” However, the majority of Nivacle emotion words incorporate the *cachi* only by implication.

An event that causes a person to feel pain, discomfort or joy is expressed through the use of the causative prefix combined with what Seelwische has termed the “verbs of passion” (*los verbos de pasión*) (1975:171). These verbs, he writes, “signify a state in which we are in, which does not depend on our own free will; a state that dominates us, even although we

⁴¹ *Cachi* also means “lake” (Seelwische 1990:44). It can also be used as a preposition to describe the position of something that is central (i.e. *lh-cachi'vat-shi* “it's in the middle/centre”). Alternative terms for the stomach are *lha-yi-vts'e'* and *lha-yi-cc'apo'*. The neighbouring Wichí concept of what Palmer (1997) terms “the social will” appears to be similar. He writes, “the social will...is connected with the centre (*chowej*) of the body, a space located in the lumbar region. Indeed, the two are synonymous: to say that a person “has a centre” (*lechowej ibi*) is the same as to say that he has goodwill (*lusek ibi*).

⁴² See Kidd (1999:48) and Loewen (1966) for further details.

⁴³ For example, “my *wáxok* is sweet”, “my *wáxok* really leans over”, or “my *wáxok* turns around and goes back to where it came from” (Kidd 1999:48). Similarly, the Cashinahua state that a person has “a sweet liver,” “a bitter liver,” or a liver that “knows a lot” (Kensingler 1994:3).

do not want it to” (Ibid. my translation). Such verbs quite clearly refer to the effect that the event or happening is having on the *cachi* of the individual in question, which might include hunger, tiredness, thirst, anger, happiness or remembering. The “verbs of passion” possess different prefixes to standard transitive and intransitive verbs. The prefixes of the latter are: *ja[-]* (“I”); *lb[-]/lba[-]* (“You” (singular)); *yi[-]* (“He/She/It”); *shta[-]* (“We”); and *ja van[-]* (“They”). The prefixes of the “verbs of passion”, meanwhile, are: *ts[-]/tsi[-]* (“I”); *na[-]* (“You”); *yi[-]* (“He/She/It”); and *shtan[-]* (“We”). These terms are constructed as follows: *ts’iyipcun* – “it makes me hungry;” *ts-ulboj* – “it makes me tired;” *ts’iyôj-jayu* – “it will make me drink” (i.e. “I’m thirsty”); *tsi-sham-in* “it makes me happy;” and *tsi-tôi-ch’e* – “it makes me know” (i.e. “I remember”). Such thought-feelings originate in one’s *cachi* and then manifest themselves on the surface of the body. Alternatively, the suffix *[-]clôi* can be added to the “verbs of passion” to indicate a person’s capacity to suffer the feelings that have been inflicted on them by a particular situation.

When a child is born it is said to “lack a centre.” It takes the “knowledgeable” teachings of its parents and those around it to enable it to develop a social and moral conscience. This is encapsulated in the verb *tôi*, which I have translated as “knowledge.”⁴⁴ The *cachi* and, according to some of my younger friends “the head” (*na shatech*) (or more specifically “the brain” (*ashilhôj*)),⁴⁵ was where “intelligence/thoughts” (*aichavalb*) and memory (*aichavalb-in/aichavalb-ch’e*) are located.⁴⁶ Like the eastern Wichí (Palmer 1997:164), there are distinct terms for the brain (*ashilhôj*) and bone marrow (*shaic’û*), with the latter constituting the central element of the *vatsôc’ôclit*.⁴⁷ Some of my younger friends insisted that feelings and emotions came from “the heart” (*el corazón*), which is where the Holy Spirit (*Espiritu Santo*) and happiness (*shamî*) were also situated. An older man explained to

⁴⁴ The Piaroa concept of *ta’kwakomená* appears to be similar to *tôi* (see Overing 1985c; 1989). Overing describes these as “the other-regarding virtues...that enable one to take responsibility for one’s actions towards others” (1989a: 92). In relation to Piro kinship, Gow (1999:241) makes a distinction between “memory” and “knowledge,” which he describes as temporally distinct. Whilst “knowledge” is acquired during the course of a person’s lifetime, manifesting itself through socially appropriate behaviour, “memory” requires the presence of the person that one remembers, and with this then influencing action.

⁴⁵ *Ashilhôj* appears to be derived from the noun *ashi*, which means “mouth” or “door.” The term might therefore imply that the brain is the “doorway” or “entrance” to one’s thoughts.

⁴⁶ *Aichavalb* (“thoughts”) appears to be connected to the term *aichishi*, which means “crotch.” I have been unable to understand the exact relevance of this linguistic connection or its significance, although Overing (personal communication) suggests that amongst the Piaroa bad thoughts come from the crotch, whilst good thoughts come from the heart and head. In deconstructing the Nivacle term further, it is tempting to suggest that its meaning might also be connected to the verb *ai*, which means “to smile,” with the addition of the suffix *[-]valb*, which means “large.”

⁴⁷ C.f. Palmer (1997:164) who reports that the Wichí distinguish between the “social will”, which is located in the stomach, and the centre of thought, which is located in the brain/bone marrow.

me, however, that in Nivacle society today there is a gender divide that relates to differing definitions of the location of emotions. He told me,

Men will say “*yi-sham-in pi sôc’ôchlî*” (“my life spirit is happy”), whereas before they would have said, “*yi-sham-in pi cachî*” (“my centre is happy”). The women especially still say this because they are more backwards (*atrasadas*) than the men. They don’t like the school as much as the men. The men participate more in the Bible Schools.

Whilst this was undoubtedly the case, most men also possessed “knowledge” of the *cachî* as most were able to provide good explanations of its role in the creation of “knowledge.” It seems to me that the key distinction that my friend was making was between the “knowledge” of “the old people” and that of “the new people” described above, which is both gendered and generational.

The intransitive verb *tôî*, means “to know” or “to be able” (*tô’y-ish*). It is one of the most commonly used terms in everyday Nivacle language, encapsulating far more than simply intellectual knowledge situated in the brain.⁴⁸ It is always expressed with the causative prefix and translates as, “it makes me know.” Like the Piaroa concept of *ta’kwâkomená*, *yi-tô-yesh-ch’e* refers to different kinds of capabilities, which, depending on context can refer to both individually acquired capabilities and skills as well as to moral values that are specific to the Nivacle people. The construction *[-]tô’y-ish* (“to have knowledge come to him/her”) is used to refer to an individual’s skills and capacities for carrying out tasks including using a digging stick, cycling, writing or playing the guitar.⁴⁹ When expressed in this way it can also refer to shamanic abilities. As mentioned above, a shaman is a *tôiyeej* (“he who knows”), whilst his auxiliary spirits as *pava tôijes* “knowings.” When an individual knows something it is expressed as *[-]tô’y-a* (“to have knowledge come to them”), whilst to remember something is *[-]tôî-ch’e* (“to know later”). *[-]tôî-in* (“to really

⁴⁸ Overing writes that *ta’kwâkomená* is “one of the very commonly used words in everyday Piaroa speech” (1985c: 250).

⁴⁹ With the addition of the causative prefix, the declension of the verb is: *tî-tô’y-ish* “I know;” *na-tô’y-ish* “you know;” *yi-tôî-in* “he/she/it knows;” and *shtan-tôî-in* “we know.”

know”) is an other-regarding form of “knowledge” or social conscience that is situated in a person’s *cachi*.⁵⁰

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, “knowledge” is a relational concept in that it is incorporated into the *cachi* through the teachings of others and then expressed through social interaction. The *cachi* is therefore the seat of a person’s emotional and cognitive capacities, although the two are not considered to be distinct: someone who “knows” (*yi-tó’yesh sha’ne*) is someone who is considerate, competent and to behave in a way that is “good/beautiful” (*is*).⁵¹ To draw any kind of distinction between thoughts and feelings would seriously misrepresent Nivacle understandings of the development of the *cachi* and its role in the lived dynamics of everyday life.⁵² “Beauty” is not an abstract concept that refers to something idealistic or “out there.”⁵³ Instead it can be employed to describe the beauty of a person’s behaviour, the cleanliness of a person’s house, the clarity of a photo or the beauty of a person’s bag.⁵⁴ Thus, a patio or path that is clean is said to be *is-ch’e* (“beautiful within”/“beautiful on”), whilst a beautiful voice is *is-ch’e*. When it is a beautiful day, people will comment “*is-in*” (“It’s really beautiful”), whilst people who were on good terms were said to be *isis vatjulb* (“beautiful the same”).⁵⁵ This is not a form of beauty that concerns merely the appearance, surface or shine of the person. Rather, it is a virtue-centered ethics that is central to Nivacle morality.⁵⁶ A person who is an “*is sha’ne*” is someone who is generous, considerate, patient, softly spoken and hard working. Conversely, someone who is greedy, aggressive, nasty or unhelpful would be described as a “*n-is-a’ sha’ne*” (“an ugly person”).⁵⁷

Recent writings on lowland South American peoples have illustrated the widespread belief that it is preferable to treat kin in aesthetically pleasing ways, which in turn creates

⁵⁰ “Social conscience” can also be expressed through the term *vac’ashamjayesh*. *Tsi-sham-in-esh* means “happiness.” See Palmer (1997:160ff) on the Wichí concept of the “social will.”

⁵¹ Like Oliveira (2003:195), I have decided to translate the Nivacle term *is* as “good/beautiful,” which is related to the Greek moral standpoint of *kalós kágarthos*, meaning “the beautiful and the good” (Dover 1974:41 [in Oliveira 2003:195]). From now on I shall also translate the term *is* as “good/beautiful.” See Kidd (1999:47ff) on the Enxet concept of the *wáxok* and Palmer (1997:160ff) on the Wichí concept of the *ihanthlusekej*.

⁵² See Goodman (1978) and Rapport and Overing (2000:281) on the existence of multiple knowledges.

⁵³ See Guss (1989) on the relationship between work and aesthetics amongst the Yekuana.

⁵⁴ Overing writes that the Piaroa concept of the moral good incorporates, “the clean, the beautiful, the restrained” (1985c: 254).

⁵⁵ *Isis* is the plural of *is*.

⁵⁶ See MacIntyre, A. (1980) and Overing (1989b) for further details on “virtue-centred” ethics.

⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that, like the Matsigenka (Rosengren 1996:5), whilst *n-is-a* (not good) is frequently used to refer to asocial behaviour, *ni-sui-ya* cannot be used to refer to the opposite condition in humans. It is a term that is only used to refer to domestic animals (see Chapter 6).

“beautiful” people who are considered to be “knowledgeable.”⁵⁸ Moral judgements are aesthetic judgements and “beautiful” behaviour is also good behaviour, whilst immoral behaviour is “ugly.” It should be stressed, however, that moral judgements are never absolute and they are always dependant on the perspective of the speaker. The conjoined nature of the cognitive and affective aspects of human social life is widespread amongst lowland South American peoples.⁵⁹ Overing and Passes explain,

The distinctive feature of Amazonian social talk is that it pertains to a language of affect and intimacy that *conjoins thinking and the sensual life*, where the concern is with the attributes of the everyday moral agent in ordinary interpersonal pursuits. In other words, their ‘emotion talk’ is also ‘social talk’ in that they consider the management of their affective life *vis-à-vis other people* to be constitutive of moral thought and practical reason. It is a language that speaks axiologically of the social benefits of the practice of the everyday virtues of love, care, compassion, generosity and the spirit of sharing.

Overing and Passes (2000:3, original emphasis)

It is the “knowledge” (*tôt*) that each individual develops within his or her *cachi* from childhood that determines their capacity to live “beautiful” (*is*) and “tranquil” (*cano*) lives within the community.⁶⁰ These individually acquired skills for social living are linked to the strong value that they place on personal autonomy, on the one hand, and a strong egalitarian social philosophy on the other.⁶¹ Goldman explains that amongst the Cubeo,

The development of individual character is always relevant to an understanding of social organization...By and large, Cubeo social organization must conform to the direct psychological dispositions of its members for the commanding reason that the people have a low tolerance for psychic discomfort...The

⁵⁸ See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Kidd (1999), Oliveira (2003) and Overing and Passes (2000).

⁵⁹ See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Ellis (1997), Kidd (1999), Lagrou (1998), Londoño Sulkin (2001), Overing (1985a; 1985b; 1997), Overing and Passes (2000), Palmer (1997) and Passes (1998).

⁶⁰ See Overing (1985c:248) and Overing and Passes (2000:21).

⁶¹ Rosengren describes Matsigenka society as “atomistic and outspokenly individualistic in nature” (1996:4). Also see Goldman (1963:165ff), Renshaw (2002:157-8) and Thomas (1982) for further discussion on the interrelationship between the concepts of personal autonomy and community.

community, therefore, is constantly being drained of its malcontents.

Goldman (1963:165)

A person who is socially capable and who expresses other-regarding thoughts and behaviour is what Overing describes as “an autonomous self” who “conjoins the conscious, intentional I with skills for both social and customary action” (1997:1). It is other-regarding autonomous selves with a prerogative “to live one’s life in one’s own way” (Overing 1997:10) that are responsible for the creation of community. This is not to be confused with Western understandings of individualism and selfhood where freedom from normalising forms of individuality consist of an exploration of “the limits of subjectivity” (Foucault 1988:56). Foucault has termed this an “ethics of the self” in which modern man “tries to invent himself” (Ibid.) through a process of “stylisation” in which the individual takes the Self as an object of complex and difficult elaboration, like a work of art. The relationship the individual has with himself or herself is understood as a kind of creative activity (Foucault 1988:67). The Nivacle express their conceptions of autonomy and individual creativity through the term *lb-junash*, which means “his/her character.” An integral aspect of being in community is an appreciation of, and a respect for, such difference or individualism. As I unfold in the following chapters, it is the process of becoming similar amongst those who live together that is important to the Nivacle.

The “community” amongst lowland South American peoples cannot be understood as a “group” or a “collective” unless one is clear from the start that this “collective” is a momentary collaboration of relational selves who are intertwined through what we might call a rhizomaic entanglement of “knowledgeable” practices of sociality.⁶² A person who is individualistic is criticised for being *vatvenchat*, which is the antithesis of how a proper kinsperson and co-resident should be.⁶³ As well as being a composite transitive verb derived from the adjective *[-]vena[-]* meaning “different,” “other” or “separate,” *vatvenchat* can also mean “to separate” or “to draw apart.” *Venchatshiy* is also the term for phlegm and is used to refer to the third cavity of the stomach of ruminants whilst *venlbaa ti*’ is a conjunction that means “unfortunately” or “disgracefully.” Ideally, the opposite process

⁶² See Chapter 1 where I describe Ingold’s (2000:132ff) description of the “rhizome” as a useful way of understanding relationality. Also see Overing (2003:306).

⁶³ See Chapter 3.

should occur as people strive to draw themselves closer to those with whom they live and thereby become increasingly “similar” (*lhaiyaashvatjulb*), as antithetical behaviour can be highly destructive to community life. Another term that is used to refer to someone who is behaving in a selfish and ungenerous manner is *nintachifai*, which means, “to not behave like a co-resident.”⁶⁴ A lack of willingness to share or to listen to the counsel of others was always a significant aspect of people’s criticisms of those who were deemed to be *nintachifai*.

People who draw themselves apart from others through being selfish and inconsiderate were said to be treating them with “hate” (*côntaiyash*), whilst a person who is hated by others is said to be *ni-chinancotsitayesh*. Hateful behaviour includes manifestations of anger (*vôôc*) or a desire to be angry (*vôôctsu*), aggression (*suiyiyān*) such as shouting (*tafshiy*) and physical aggression (*shan*). It also includes thoughtlessness, irritability (*coyactsitaj*), inconsiderate behaviour and a lack of kindness. Such a person would be described as *ojei*, which means “bad” or “useless,” with their behaviour disrupting the *cachi* of others and causing them to feel “anxious” (*chaiipa*). Like the Wichí figure of Little Uncle (Tokwaj) (Palmer 1997:166), in Nivacle mythology there is an equally antisocial figure called Cufalh. Cufalh is a lecherous shape shifter with a huge penis who embodies all that is asocial to a Nivacle person. He rapes women and animals and tricks people into eating undesirable substances, for example by convincing them to eat excrement through making them believe that it is honey (see Wilbert and Simoneau 1987:276ff). Cufalh’s behaviour is exemplified in the following myth entitled “The Rape of Other Women,” which was collected by Chase-Sardi (1983) and later included in the volume by Wilbert and Simoneau (1987):

On another accession Cufalh raped some women who were on their way to gather food. “Where are you going?” he asked. “Over there,” they replied. “Would you like me to do something to you?” “Not on your life!” At that moment Cufalh threw himself over the nearest woman. She shouted: “Oh!” “My poor younger sister!” said one. “My daughter!” cried another. Right then and there he entered her. The others shouted: “Push him with your hips!” “Yes, do that,” said Cufalh. “That way you’ll

⁶⁴ This term is constructed from the noun *chifa*, which means “co-resident.”

help me to push deeper in.” They hit him a lot. “Shove a stick into his eyes!” “Please do,” said Cufalh. “then I’ll see better. Don’t be in a hurry, for after this one it will be your turn.” Having finished with the first woman he attacked another, and then yet another. . . Finally he was finished with all of them. “Very good,” he said. “This is what you all like very much.” There was nothing to be done; he raped them all.

Wilbert and Simonau (1987:283-4)

The behaviour of Cufalh is reminiscent of the Piaroa creator and owner of culture, Kuemoi (Overing 1985c), who demonstrates the dangers of excessiveness. His wicked and odious character illustrates the complexity of indigenous understandings of morality, as it incorporates notions of both madness and buffoonery.

Overing and Passes have described the Amazonian concept of “anger” as, “an interactive, relational state” (2000:20).⁶⁵ According to the Nivacle, anger should be purposefully avoided at all times through the “knowledgeable” behaviour of those who have “love” (*lbencheyash*) for their kinsperson. The fission of a community is often said to be as a result of “anger.”⁶⁶ This stage is reached through a tension that is inherent, on the one hand, through the desire for kin to live together and, on the other hand, the fact that spending too much time together can generate emotions such as anger, jealousy and resentment that can eventually lead to dispersal.⁶⁷ As Storrie has put it amongst the Venezuelan Hoti, “the good life necessarily involves movement” (1999:63).⁶⁸ The Nivacle also consider movement and “seeing” (*van*) other places and people to be an integral aspect of the creation of knowledge.⁶⁹ Semantically speaking, “seeing” is synonymous with “knowing” and so movement is essential for the creation of knowledgeable people. Bringing together the tension between the creation of convivial social relations and knowledge that are conducive of sociality and its inherently destructive nature, Santos Granero writes:

⁶⁵ Also see Belaunde (2000).

⁶⁶ See Rivière (1984).

⁶⁷ See Rosengren (2000) on the “delicacy of community” amongst the Matsigenka.

⁶⁸ See also Henley (1982:124-5).

⁶⁹ Also see Ellis (1996:23ff) for a description of the relationship between “seeing” and “knowing” amongst the Bolivian Tsimanes.

Because Amerindian conviviality is so intense, its rupture generates equally intense but opposite emotions – negative feelings that prevent people from continuing to live together. Like Sisyphus, the Corinthian king condemned for eternity by Zeus to roll a stone to the top of a hill, only to see it always roll down again, Native Amazonians are engaged in constant pursuit of the ideal of perfect conviviality. It is a doomed struggle from the beginning, for conviviality begins to wear out as soon as it is achieved.

Santos Granero (2000:284)

Rosengren describes the Matsigenka sense of community as “a highly delicate state” (2000:233). For the Matsigenka, the dispersed nature of the community is not due to ecological factors, but rather because they have a preference for living in ways that reduce the likelihood of conflict (2000: 234). Rivière suggests that Amazonian people’s lack of tolerance for disharmony is coupled with their lack of desire to openly criticize others.⁷⁰ He writes:

Gossip is rife and one of the solutions is for those affected to go and live elsewhere...without giving priority to either, the fact that mobility allows for the dissipation of social tensions and intolerance for social tensions encourages mobility.

Rivière (2000:252)

It is the personal capacities for “knowledge” that an individual possesses within their *cachi* that determines their ability to behave appropriately with others. I shall now describe Nivacle childrearing practices and the processes involved in constructing the *cachi*.

⁷⁰ See also Goldman (1963), Kidd (1999), Overing (1989b) and Thomas (1981).

2.4. Creating Relationality: The Development of the *Cachi*

Whilst the life-giving *vatsôc'ô'clit* of a newborn baby exists in its entirety from conception, the *cachi* is an organ that exists but that needs to develop over the lifetime of the person.⁷¹ The verb for the creation of a child is *snat*, which means “to make, to create, to begin.”⁷² People say that a newborn child (*taôclay*) is not fully human and that it behaves like a *yaquisete* “wild animal” due to its constant crying, screaming and displays of uncontrolled anger and aggression (*tavôcôî* or *suiyiyân*).⁷³ People explain that this is because their *cachi* is not fully developed and that it does not have the “knowledge” (*tôî*) to realise (*yî-tôî-in* lit: it makes it know) that its behaviour is inappropriate. A child does not have a conscience, and is said to be lacking a *cachi*. It is through consuming its mother’s milk and the “knowledge” that it receives through hearing (*pe'ya*) the words (*tasinôî*) of others that its *cachi* begins to develop. Between the ages of two and three the child reaches the stage at which it realises that its behaviour has an effect on other people, and it is then that it is at the threshold of embarking on becoming an *is-sha'ne* (“good/beautiful person”).⁷⁴ It is only then that the child will be given a Nivacle name.⁷⁵ It is through the initially forced (*ta'nôqu'en* “to force oneself”) and unskilled (*ta'c'enesb*) practice of new activities that the child learns. “Knowledge” is incorporated into the body through the eyes, hands, skin, ears and mouth over a period of time and is executed through contextual practice.⁷⁶ Children are encouraged to imitate their same-sex parents from a young age when they are carrying out their everyday tasks so that they can see and “know” how to do them as well.⁷⁷ “Knowledge” is said to arrive at a person (*tsî-tôî-in*) through imitation and practice and so they will become increasingly skilful (*yî-yô'y-esb*) at a particular task.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Gow (1991:155) reports that amongst the Piro, the soul of the newborn child is considered to be a “free agent” quite distinct from the souls of its parents and capable of wandering away from the body of the child. It is the eating of “real food” that makes the child more human as it becomes a mixture of these fluids. This is what generates memory, which is considered to be the basis for Piro kin ties. As one’s memory develops, so does one’s ability to construct kin terms. See also Kidd (1999:47ff) and Palmer (1997:160ff).

⁷² See McCallum (2001:15) who notes a similar term for making children amongst the Cashinahua.

⁷³ See Kidd (1999:49) and Overing (1985c: 253).

⁷⁴ Palmer describes this as “the illumination of an inner revelation, [where the child] realizes that he is answerable to the community (rather than the reverse)” (1997:160-1).

⁷⁵ See Chapter 3.

⁷⁶ Amongst the Cashinahua, men and women’s skills are learned through the hands, the skin and, in the case of women weavers, through the eyes as well (Kensinger 1994:1ff).

⁷⁷ McCallum writes that Casinahua boys are taken on hunting expeditions with their fathers and that girls are expected to help their mothers and elder sisters. “This is the time when children cease to be mere consumers, and begin to become producers as well” (1989:142). It is during this period that adolescents are taught the productive skills associated with male and female gender.

⁷⁸ The verb *yôî* is multifaceted in its significance in that as well as meaning, “to be skilful,” it also means “to master a particular skill,” “to be used to something,” “to be invulnerable,” and “to love” (*ts'î-yô'y-a*).

Nivacle people regard the school as highly important in that it gives children the opportunity to learn Spanish (*samtó lb-chiish*) through looking at the words on the page in the textbooks and through listening to the words (*tasinôl*) being spoken by the teacher. Other capacities that were learnt through imitation and practice were activities such as singing and running. During the church services, whilst the men would all sit at the front of the church on seats with songbooks and sing in Spanish and Nivacle, the women would all sit at the back of the church on the ground neither singing nor participating in the preaching. When I asked José why this was, he laughed and said, “I suppose they don’t have knowledge of singing!” Whilst I initially took his comment at face value in the joking manner in which it was intended, I soon came to realise that José was in fact referring to a whole range of other embodied capabilities that had greatly developed the men in Jotoicha’s ability to sing. When they worked for their Mennonite bosses they would speak Spanish and sit on chairs. That is what they were used to doing. Women, on the other hand, would sit on the ground most of the time with their children feeding them, playing with them and washing their clothes. That is what they were used to doing. Sitting at the front of the church singing was not something that women did because they were not used to speaking Spanish and sitting on chairs. It is the practice of embodied capacities that creates “knowledge” and this differs for different kinds of people.

The case of adopted children makes it clear that the Nivacle do not make a conceptual link between the biological mother’s milk and the development of the child’s *cachi*. Whilst in some cases, a woman who has adopted a child might ask one of her close female kin to breast feed her child if they were already feeding one of their own, in most cases the child would be bottle-fed either water or sugared water. One young married couple that I lived with had an adopted son of five years old who demanded to be bottle-fed sugared water before he went to bed. Every evening he would shout “*Tôl!*”⁷⁹ whenever he was ready for bed and either his adoptive mother or father would wrap a blanket around him, cradle him in their arms and feed him sugared water (*clunf-ji* “sweet thing”). Many times during the day they would verbally scold him for his demanding behaviour, but they explained that it was their “love” (*lbencheyash*) for him that kept them

⁷⁹ Despite hearing him exclaim this every evening, I have been unable to decide on a satisfactory translation of what he was saying. The verb “to drink” is *yô*, and “I drink” is *e’a-yô* (lit: “I drink it”). *Tôl*, which is what he appeared to be saying is, as I have described above, the verb “to know.” He may have been reminding them of something they already knew what to do.

doing what they did for him. They told me on several occasions that sugared water was not what they would have preferred to feed him and his adoptive father would regularly walk over to the Mennonite hospital to ask one of the nurses or administrative staff for some powdered milk. Whilst the Mennonite nurses invariably said “no”, he told me that he kept on going over because of his “love” for his son.

Adopted children are referred to as *t’acuum-julb* or “that which I receive.” Depending on the suffix used, the verb *t’acuum* also translates as “to work,” “to use,” “to give a hand” or “to raise/hoist up.” This appears to raise similar problems to Kidd (1999:74) in his translation of the Enxet term [-]meykha where it also appeared to be derived from the verb “to use.” However, rather than interpret this term as being predicated on relations of hierarchy through notions of “use,” it seems that *t’acuum-julb* best translates as “that which I receive,” which is how Kidd (1999) also translates the Enxet term. I have also heard an adopted child being referred to as a “gift” (*tis-esb*). One young couple that I lived with named Juan and Lucía adopted Hugo, when he was only a month old. When their first son was killed on the Trans-Chaco Highway almost ten years ago Lucía’s MSD gave them her son Hugo as a “gift” (*tis-esb*) because she felt compassion (*tcavts’aclai*) for them.⁸⁰

Like the Piro (Gow 1991:158), people would make a point of telling me when a child had been adopted, with one man even explaining to me that adoptive parents “play” at being the child’s mother and father (*‘yu-e-sba ti lba mimi-esb/lb-tata-esb’*). However, whilst affinal terms for stepfather (*njayós’a*), stepmother (*njôtsôô*), stepson (*atsanach*) and stepdaughter (*atsanche*) exist, they were rarely used. Instead, adoptive parents were generally referred to by the affect-laden terms for “mother” (*mimi* or *mi*) and “father” (*tata* or *ta*), whilst the child would be called their son (*y-aôs*) or daughter (*y-ôse*). This suggests that greater emphasis is placed upon the way in which an adoptive parent behaves towards his or her adoptive child and the love (*en*), which they show towards them. Whilst an adopted child may initially be referred to as “that which I received,” given time the nature of the relationship will change along with the terms that are used. For Hugo mentioned above, it was his adoptive mother Lucía who was his “Mummy,” whilst his “real” mother Angelina was simply referred to as “Angelina.” Whilst people might say that adoptive parents are *tata-esb* and *mimi-esb* “behaving like [the child’s]

⁸⁰ *Tcavts’aclai* is derived from the intransitive verb *tts’aclai* meaning “to be poor, to be humble, to deserve compassion or to have died in (a specific location).”

father/mother,” this needs to be understood within the context of wider Nivacle ideas regarding the transformative nature of relatedness.

The use of kinship terms is not some scientific reflection of the “truth”; rather it is a reflection of the loving relationship that exists between two people during a particular period of time. This was also the case for orphans (*ofteec* (M)/*oftecle* (F)).⁸¹ I knew of only one child who was an orphan and had known the child and her adoptive parents for over a year before I found this out. Adoption illustrates well the privileging of repeated acts of care and nurture through feeding and caring for child over the singular act of giving birth. It is not that a discourse on “real” versus “adoptive” parents does not exist. As I have mentioned above, it does exist it is just that in most circumstances people choose to ignore it. A child is seen to become more and more like its adoptive parents kin every day through the love (*en*) that is being bestowed upon it. Adoption can also lead to an intensification of the relationship between parents. The example given above of Juan and Lucía and Hugo’s “real” mother Angelina is a case in point. Through Juan and Lucía’s adoption of Hugo, Angelina visited their house at least once a week in order to see Hugo. Angelina had a fridge-freezer in her house and so would bring Juan and Lucía ice-cubes that were difficult to acquire for their *tereré* and cakes and bread that she had baked in her gas oven along with some fruit and money for Hugo. I shall now describe the processes of developing the *cachi* through feeding and caring for the child.

Blood (*voiyei*)⁸² is associated with a person’s overall strength and vitality such that the two concepts would appear to be coterminous.⁸³ A person’s blood is said to become “strong” (*t’un-in*) or “weak” (*nin-t’un-in*) depending on the activities that one engages in and the physical exertion that they put into them. If someone carries out heavy physical work and eats what the Nivacle consider to be “real” food (*ôc*) (see below),⁸⁴ then they will become stronger (*t’un-in*).⁸⁵ Repeated physical exertion causes a person to sweat (*tsi-vcujan* “it makes me sweat”) and whilst this is initially draining of a person’s vitality, exercise and sweating will eventually strengthen the blood through processes of purification that rids it of unclean substances. One afternoon when I had returned to the

⁸¹ I was told that this term also referred to children who had just lost a parent.

⁸² Note that the term for blood, *voiyei*, is always expressed in the plural and never in the singular, i.e. *vooi*.

⁸³ C.f. Gow (1991:129&192) on the Piro and McCallum (2001:15) on the Cashinahua.

⁸⁴ Gow (1991) was the first to write about the efficacy of “real food” amongst the Piro. I have decided to employ this term as a way of translating *ôc* in order to emphasise its generative properties in relation to other types of food.

⁸⁵ Gow (1991:188) explains that the Piro define health in terms of being *fuerte* (“strong”).

community after cycling the 46km round-trip to the Mennonite cooperative to buy some provisions, my friend who accompanied me said, “When you go out cycling you must sweat. That is the only way you will get stronger. You must sweat, but it is good.” A person’s blood can also be strengthened by the agency of certain animals through a scarification practice known as *fôjôî*.⁸⁶ This is carried out following a girl’s (*lbutsja*) first menstruation (*vatviroyei*) when one of her maternal grandparents repeatedly strike the surface of the skin on her upper and lower arms with a sharp bone (usually that of a deer or wild boar). The bone is called a *fôjôjât*. This action is repeated until the blood begins to flow. When a middle-aged woman was explaining to me what happened when her father carried out *fôjôî* on her adolescent daughter, she clenched her fist and moved forearm up and down imitating the actions of her father and telling me that he kept on saying, “*t’un-in! t’un-in!*” (“Become strong! Become strong!”). Her father used the bones of deer (*tashinsha*) because they are strong, fast and alert. If there was a full moon adolescent men would regularly stab their own forearms, upper arms, thighs and calves with the bones of deer, in order to make them fast, strong and lucky (*suerte-esh*)⁸⁷ during the football match the following weekend.

Foods such as sweet potato (*pejaya*), beans (*quecleiche*), manioc (*nucsich*) and meat (*tsjaan*) were said to make a child strong (*t’un-in*), whilst store-bought foods such as flour and peanut oil were said to make them grow into adults who were weak and ill. Despite this apparent division between cultivated and store-bought foods, when store-bought foods were combined in particular ways, they were also described to me as being “real food.” For example, a dish of store-bought meat and rice was known as *ôc*, as was meat and pasta, beans and rice, pumpkins and pasta and rice and egg. It is the combination of foods that is significant: meat and vegetables, meat and carbohydrates and vegetables and carbohydrate are all good combinations, whilst carbohydrates on their own were said to be the equivalent of eating “sand” or “dust” (*cootsjaat*).⁸⁸ During the winter months when it was difficult to acquire either meat or vegetables and most people lived on rice, pasta and bread, women would often add a fried egg (*vôtôjôj shaic’u*) to their rice or, if there were no eggs then they would pour peanut oil (*lha-pe’* or *aceite de mani*) over the rice or pasta. Several people explained to me that the high volume of peanut oil that the Nivacle

⁸⁶ See Chase-Sardi (1972b) for further description of this process.

⁸⁷ *Suerte-esh* is one of several terms that I heard younger people using that was an amalgamation of both Spanish and Nivacle terms. In this case, it is the Spanish adjective *suerte*, meaning “lucky,” with the Nivacle suffix [-]esh. The term still means “lucky.”

⁸⁸ The cooked meal is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

consumed in winter was the root cause of the large number of people who had been admitted into hospital with kidney stones. Peanut oil was said to be “dirty” (*sas-in*), with this dirt gradually building up into a ball inside the stomach and causing acute spasms and pain in the back and groin. This was what was said to differentiate the “new” Nivacle people (*los nuevos*) from those of before (*los ancianos*): the *ancianos* never got ill as they always ate “real food” (*ôc*). *Los nuevos* still eat “real food” but this is different to that of the *los ancianos*, and that is why they are constantly getting ill. For example, one man told me that he had bitter manioc (*nucsich sui* “dangerous/bad manioc”) in his garden, but that neither he nor his wife would dare eat it because his wife “did not know” (*nin-tô’yesh-ch’è*) how to prepare it properly. It was only his grandparents (*los abuelos*) who really knew how to prepare it. His wife only knew how to prepare *tortillas* with flour *clim-shi* (white stuff) and how to buy things from the travelling salesmen (*los macateros*). The ability to control the dangerous productive forces required to grow bitter manioc were an aspect of the “knowledge” of *los ancianos* that “the new people” no longer knew (see Overing 1989b). Their “knowledge” is directed at other forces that I shall unfold in the remainder of this thesis.

The food that both parents consume directly affects their unborn child’s physical form. I was once told that if a pregnant woman ate deer then she would give birth to twins, and if she were to eat duck then her child would take the form of a duck. The auxiliary spirit, blood and faeces of the particular animal would take hold inside the mother and cause her child to take on an equally undesirable physical form. Some pregnant women told me that they avoided eating greasy, salty or spicy food with pepper or chilli⁸⁹ as these were bad for the child.⁹⁰ If they were to consume such foods, the child would be born with “weak blood” (*nin t’un-in*) or it would be deformed. Avoiding the consumption of such foods will give it more blood. Conversely, the consumption of bland foods such as sweet potato, calabash, rice, pasta, beans and bread were said to increase a woman’s “strength” (*unaj*)⁹¹ and through this the strength of her child.⁹² However, one of the younger women that I spoke to from the worker village in Filadelfia told me that young

⁸⁹ For example, *oyinche* (Bot. *Capiscum chacoense*).

⁹⁰ See Overing (2003:308-9), who writes, “When dealing with the very young or the vulnerable, an adult has to be exceedingly careful of what he or she eats.”

⁹¹ This noun is derived from the verb *t’un* (“to be strong”).

⁹² McCallum notes (2001:19) that amongst the Cashinahua these “mere staples” were associated with the female gender. Amongst the Nivacle, such a definite gendered association would be difficult to make, as many of these “bland staples” are the result of male work as well. The topic of male and female work is discussed in Chapter 6.

Nivacle women nowadays no longer adhere to the rules of the past and that they now ate any kind of food when pregnant, including chillies (*oyenchei*). In spite of her comment, in most cases that I witnessed the women did adhere to food prohibitions when pregnant.⁹³

Following the birth of her child, a woman must be careful not to consume meat, honey, greasy food, salt or spicy foods as this is said to ruin her milk, which, in turn, would affect the development of her child's *cachi*. The child's father should also avoid spending time with or near the child or its mother. He should also avoid hunting or any type work that involves the use of sharp or pointed objects as this was said to inhibit the proper development of the child.⁹⁴ In Jotoicha, men whose wives had recently given birth would usually take the opportunity to spend several weeks working for their Mennonite bosses, and if no such work were available then they would go to visit kin in another community for an extended period of time. Sexual intercourse between the parents would cause the child to become ill and die, whilst contact with a newborn child would cause a man's strength to diminish and he would become a poor hunter and worker.⁹⁵ This period of *couvade* would last until the child began eating solid foods such as rice, potato and calabash.

Whilst the *vatsôc'ôclit* (life soul) of the child is present at birth, the *cachi* (social centre) develops as "knowledge" infiltrates the brain (*ashilbôj*) through the eyes and ears. Whilst the *vatsôc'ôclit* provides the basis for a person to move their body, think and speak, it is the care that the child receives through its parents' adherence to post-partum prohibitions and then through feeding and talking to it that develops its *cachi*. When children were being socialized, adults were very careful not to raise their voices or smack their children when they misbehaved. Shouting is frowned upon as it is considered to be a manifestation of anger (*vôôc*).⁹⁶ An adult who displays such behaviour would produce children who also shouted and were aggressive.⁹⁷ If a child attempted to do something that it should not have done, people preferred to either to talk (*tasinôî*) to the child rather

⁹³ This appears to be in agreement with McCallum's observation that "dietary restrictions...are practiced, even if in modified form" (2001:18).

⁹⁴ Gow explains Piro post-partum prohibitions as being a situation in which "the newborn child stands in an inverted position to its parents' satisfaction of oral and sexual desire" (1991:154). I believe a similar situation is taking place amongst the Nivacle. Also see Crocker (1985) who writes that amongst the Bororo neither the father nor the mother of the child could work for several weeks.

⁹⁵ Gow describes marriage as something that is "based on personal desire and physical strength," whilst having children "place[s] a temporary stop on the marital activities of the parents" (1991:156).

⁹⁶ Lagrou writes that amongst the Cashinahua, "A leader who speaks loudly to his people is considered to be *sinata*, an "angry person," and criticised accordingly" (2000:154-5).

⁹⁷ See Overing (1989a: 92) on child-rearing practices amongst the Piaroa.

than scold it (*[-]ut[-]*), and comfort it when it cried. When talking to children who were misbehaving, the women would imitate them by adopting a whining tone when they were speaking to them and then raise and extend the last syllable of their sentence as if to heighten their exasperation, whilst men preferred to speed up the pace of their speech and raise the pitch of their voice.⁹⁸ An alternative tactic would be to scare the child with a threat. For example, I once saw a boy lift the cover off a drain outside the house and attempt to climb inside it. His mother immediately said *Yaaj na! Caaj pa tos!* “No! There’s a snake in there!” With that the boy looked over at his mother and proceeded to cover the drain up again. Most often the threat of some form of impending pain or injury was considered enough to put the child off doing whatever they were intending to do. As Regehr writes, “anger, violence and corporal punishment is considered an expression of brutality and of not knowing how to dominate oneself...The Nivacle say that all forms of violence can result in illness and even death” (1987:167, my translation). Children were very rarely told what to do, with their actions being phrased more in terms of what they wanted to do. For instance, if a child did not go to school people would often say, “Well, I suppose they just don’t want to go today.” It is the development of a strong sense of personal autonomy that is an integral aspect of the creation of “knowledgeable” Nivacle adults.

Children are expected to “listen/hear/understand” (*pe’ya*) the “knowledgeable discourse” of their elders, including their parents, other relatives, their schoolteacher and the pastor.⁹⁹ The Nivacle put a great deal of emphasis on listening well, such that it could be said to presuppose “knowledgeable” thought.¹⁰⁰ The school and the church were both regarded as important places for children to develop knowledge and children were not discouraged from “listening” to meetings that were taking place within the community. People told me that it was important for words to infiltrate the child’s *cachi* through its ears so that it grows up “knowing” what it sees. It was common for elder siblings and parents, particularly fathers, to carry young children and toddlers in their arms and explain to them what they were looking at. For example, often when outsiders visited the community, men could be seen holding their young children and explaining to them who

⁹⁸ Overing writes that amongst the Piaroa, children’s temper tantrums are diffused through mocking and teasing on the part of the parents (1989a: 93).

⁹⁹ Amongst the Piaroa these are known as “Lessons in Wizardry,” where the leader (*ruwang*) teaches children of 6 or 7 years old the skills for social living that are known as *ta’kwakomena* (consciousness, will, responsibility) (Overing 1989a: 92).

¹⁰⁰ See Kensinger (1994:2) on the Cashinahua distinction between “soft” and “hard” hearing.

the people were and what they were doing. Palmer (1997:163) writes that amongst the Wichí, the spoken word is regarded as the “will” of the person. Whilst words were never explicitly explained to me in this way, I suggest that this is a moral value that is also held amongst the Nivacle. Like the Wichí, any visitor to a Nivacle household would always be received in silence in order to give him or her the space and opportunity to express exactly what they had come to say. During a conversation, people would usually leave relatively prolonged gaps when they were taking turns at talking; to interrupt the expression of one’s *tasinói* (thoughts/discourse) would be highly “unknowledgeable” behaviour. Passes (1998:120-1) has written that amongst the Pa’ikwené, silence is just as much an aspect of sociality as verbal utterances. Instead of interpreting silences as “bad hearing,” he suggests that they are “heard-understood” as a part of dialogue. I would agree with Passes that the silence on a guest’s arrival and the long pauses that formed part of many conversations were not about communication breakdown but rather it is an inherent aspect of Nivacle sociality.

When talking, people generally avoided making eye contact, preferring instead to focus on people who were walking along the path, children playing in the patio or the plaza, or some distant object. It is almost as though to stare at the person is to force oneself on them and cause discomfort. Having the ability to listen to the words/discourse of others is a supreme act of “knowledge.” Elder men within the community would stand up during the weekly church service in order to read excerpts from the Bible¹⁰¹ and preach to the younger members of the community on the value of behaving “with knowledge.” Such teaching may well have taken over the role of myth telling in the past. During the course of the year I noticed that the main leader of the community never stood up to preach at the church sermons and when I asked one of the other leaders why that was, he replied “*jojeclai taóclaj*” (“he’s young, still” Lit: “he’s still a child”). Sermons are more for us older men.” The young leader’s ability instead lay in his “knowledge” of the Guaraní language as well Paraguayan national society.

Gow writes that amongst the Piro, “Younger children are seldom listened to when they express their opinions, nor are they paid much attention in gatherings of adults” (1991:130). During my fieldwork I was surprised to learn just how much Nivacle children were listened to, particularly regarding the reporting of events that had taken

¹⁰¹ The Bible is referred to as *Nava Dios Lhasinóc na Nivacle Lbeliish* “God’s Words/Discourse in the Nivacle Language.”

place within the community. Children were also the essential “eyes and ears” of their parents whenever governmental or non-governmental organisations arrived with goods to be distributed to the community. As soon as the lorries arrived the children would run or cycle as fast as they could up to the other end of the community to let their mothers know. Groups of women would soon be seen making their way towards the central plaza. I also frequently watched adults sit listening intently to children’s reports of people that they had seen entering and leaving the community.

Children were said to acquire the “knowledge” to eat particular kinds of food. Taste is transmitted through the tongue (*ch’aclech*) and into one’s *cachi* where the “knowledge” and ability to endure particularly strong flavours increases over time. Salads and chillies in particular were said to require “knowledge” to eat them. Salads (*aapcunjô*) were made from forest fruits including *ôp’etsej* (the fruits of the cactus), *nap’uc* (a plant which when toasted has a salty taste and had previously been used as salt), *pactsej* (a leafy plant), *avaiclai* (fruits of the cactus that are smaller than *ôp’etsej*), and *c’uwaitsi* (spicy chilli) and *oyinche* (hot chilli). These ingredients were placed in a large round bowl and hot water was added to this mixture. The verb “to eat salad” is *taapjun*. Women in particular were said to favour this type of food and I have only ever witnessed women eating salads. Those who were sharing the salad (*vancufanesh*) would each have a spoon and would take some of the leaves and a small quantity of the chilli-infused liquid. My first experience eating salad confirms my point that such spices require “knowledge.” I had been very keen to try a salad and one afternoon when a group of women had prepared one I asked if I could try it. One of the women then offered me her spoon to have a taste and I enthusiastically took the spoon from her and moved towards the bowl to have my first taste. Before I was about to eat the salad my “elder sister” Lucía said to one of the other women that I “did not have the knowledge” to eat salad and that it was spicy (*aotej-shi*. Lit: “it makes you hurt”). Having tasted the salad, I soon realised why she had said this, as the heat from the chilli-infused liquid was so intense that I immediately rushed to the water-bucket to drink as much water as I could. Appealing in every way to the Nivacle sense of humour, the other women thought that my “plight” was hilarious and began roaring with laughter, as did Lucía as we began recounting my experience to the others.

Parents should show “compassion” (*tcavts’aclai*) towards their children and be generous towards them (*ni-ts’op-esb*. Lit: “not just a drop”). Parents usually took any opportunity

they could to buy their children gifts if the opportunity arose and they could afford it, as it was believed that generous parents (*is-sha'nei*) would create adults who were also generous, whilst miserly parents would create adults who were also mean. It usually took very little to persuade a parent to offer their child biscuits or sweets that were on display to them. Parents need to be good producers of food in order to be able to look after their children properly.¹⁰² A mother who does not want to wash the clothes of either her husband or her children, cook them food or clean the patio would be said to be “lazy” (*nin-fitjót*). A lazy father (*suwclajtayech* lit: “like an ant eater”) is equally criticized. The children of such parents were said to be *c’ó’ó lh-cles* (“children of the *c’ó’ó*”).¹⁰³ An older man explained to me, “They called are *c’ó’ó lh-cles* because the *c’ó’ó* is a bird that doesn’t know how to do anything, it barely manages to sing. It just goes...aah...aah...aah.” The result is that their children would be weak (*nin t’un-in*), which is a great source of shame (*vapen-esh*) for parents. Parents also have a moral obligation to encourage their children to socialise from a young age and to actively discourage any inclination that they might show towards wanting to sit alone in their house. A child that is shy and timid around other children was described as being *vapen-esh* and I was told that it was “not pretty” (*n-is-a*). Such a child could be said to be “suffering/hurting” (*aotej-in*) (also see Gow 2000 on the Piro) through feeling lonely which could eventually culminate in antisocial behaviour such as anger.

The Nivacle language is highly testimonial with regard to the expression of one’s “knowledge.”¹⁰⁴ “Knowledge” is perceived in terms of that which is ocular and has been personally obtained and that which is auricular and is regarded as testimonial “knowledge” that has been obtained through the medium of a third party. The Nivacle term for “eye” is *tósej*, which also means “seed” or “bullet” (i.e. *clutsej tósej* “seed of the rifle”).¹⁰⁵ From the point of view of ego, “seeing” a person or thing establishes the person or object’s existence, and subsequently the truth of ego’s testimony. The grammatical construction of nouns reflect this epistemological hierarchy as the article prefix of the noun changes depending on the ocular knowledge of the subject at that particular point in time, and also whether the object, to the (ocular or auricular) knowledge of the speaker, still exists. Thus, a person or thing that the speaker has seen

¹⁰² *Ca n-t’un-in pa taóclej ti chi cunjan.*

¹⁰³ The *c’ó’ó* is the Barred Antshrike (*batará listada*, Zool: *Thamnophilus dolius radiatus* (Vieillot); *Fila Formicariidae*) (Seelwische 1990:67).

¹⁰⁴ See Seelwische (1975).

¹⁰⁵ See McCallum (2001:26), who notes that the Cashinahua term *bedu* also means both “eye” and “seed.”

and that is present during the conversation would be prefixed with the articles *na[-]* (M) or *lba[-]* (F), depending on its gender. A person or thing that existed and that the speaker had seen but was not present during the conversation would be referred to as *ja[-]* (M) or *lbja[-]* (M). A person or thing that the speaker had not seen but that to their knowledge still existed would be referred to as *pa[-]* (M) or *lbpa[-]* (F). Finally, a person, thing or place that the speaker may or may not have seen and that to their knowledge no longer existed would be referred to as *ca[-]* (M) or *lbca[-]* (F). If an individual only had auricular knowledge of a person, thing or event, then they would report it to others in the affirmative, using *na[-]* or *lba[-]*, but with the addition of the adverb *lbôn* at the end of their statement. Testimonial responsibility for the sighting would then be handed over to another person. However, such testimonies were usually considered to be highly doubtful and, depending on their moral emphasis, could even be branded “lies” (*cu'ts'ajî*), their truth being so questionable.

“Knowledge” is therefore particular to each autonomous individual, and in conversation each individual’s grammatical universe and the potentialities of one’s speech and knowledge are dependent both on one’s visual experience and the state of affairs in the world during that particular moment in time. As Gow has written for the Piro, “For native people knowledge is essentially personal experience” (1991:168). From this point of view, no two individuals’ experience and thus “knowledge” are identical. As I shall develop in the following chapter, visual experience is intimately linked to one’s conception of their own personal kindred such that no two people’s ego-focussed kindred is identical. Gow writes, “Personal experience...is also central to native people’s understand[ings] of kinship. Kinship is about relations between living people” (1991:151). Visual knowledge, as with all other kinds of knowledge acquisition, begins during childhood and accumulates in the *cachi* and in specific parts of a person’s body during the course of their lifetime. As Lagrou puts it, “Knowledge of how to bring about desirable effects in the world is embodied knowledge” (2000:157). Knowledge involves the practice of particular productive skills that must be internalised contextually through imitation and repetition and then performed through social interaction.

A “knowledgeable” person demonstrates “love” (*ts'i-yô'y-a/y-en*) and “kindness” (*vanquencheysb*) to others, and it is only with their interior in this state that a person can be capable of receiving love from others. A “good/beautiful” person is, by implication,

generous, helpful and sensitive to the needs and desires of others. Women in particular were considered “*is*” (“good/beautiful”) if they were willing to accompany other women in the gathering of firewood, fruits, or water. “To have the desire to accompany” is expressed through the verb *aip'alhit*, although the important point is that the individual must also have the desire to help. It cannot come about through coercion. Such a woman would also ask for permission to accompany another (*qu'eijat*) as imposing oneself on others is behaviour that is avoided.

2.5. Walking the Clean Straight Path of Conviviality

Palmer reports that amongst the Wichí “goodwill is right-mindedness (*tichunayaj ta is-athloho*: lit: Straight thought)” (1997:162). The Nivacle have a similar conception of “straight thought” that is encapsulated in the verb *tsôt'aj*, with someone who is straight or “correct” being referred to as *yi-tsôt'aj-esb* (“it makes them straight/correct”). When one of my friends was explaining the way a “straight” person should behave, he linked someone who was *tsôt'aj-esb* with someone who was *ijôt'aj-esb*. A person who is *ijôt'aj-esb* is someone who “has a lot of kin,” “is fat,” is “in a good state,” or is “strong (like a fence-post).” Someone who is “straight” is someone who is socially sensitive and careful not to impose him or herself on another’s personal autonomy or to cause offence. The leader of a community should be the archetypical bastion of “straight” behaviour. I suspect that my friend connected the two terms, because the latter presupposes the former: in order to have “straight thought,” one must be tranquil and content. Someone who is tranquil and content is also someone who eats well, is strong and has a lot of kin.

When speaking with kin or co-residents, one should speak in a “knowledgeable” way, and avoid shouting (*tôn* lit: to shout, to chew) and raising one’s voice. Parents would often scold their children if they marched around shouting to other children across the community in a loud voice. In order to avoid such behaviour, “knowledgeable” people had elaborate ways of communicating that they employed if they wanted to attract the attention of someone who is far away without having to resort to shouting. People would usually begin by shouting “psst!” (this was particularly common amongst women and children) or whistling as loudly as possible in the direction of the person whose

attention they sought to attract. If they were able to attract the person's attention in this way then they would raise their arm vertically so that it was high above their head and in line with their shoulder and would flap it down several times, whilst smiling at the person. The person would then start to make their way over towards them. If this method did not work then a child would usually be sent over on a bicycle to attract their attention. Men in particular employed this method.¹⁰⁶ Shouting, speaking in an aggressive manner or speaking quickly were all regarded as highly "unknowledgable" ways of communicating. Particularly loud or cackling laughter was also condemned. Often if Paraguayan development workers or politicians visited the community and they spoke in a brash way or laughed loudly, the children would whisper "*sui*" ("bad/dangerous").

The provocation of sadness or the danger of creating anger is actively avoided.¹⁰⁷ During the course of my fieldwork I was interested in gathering together the meaning of as many words and phrases that related to the emotions as I could. I had come across the word *cachivache* in the Nivacle/Spanish grammar that I had been using. Knowing that the *cachi* was the seat of the social consciousness, I thought that perhaps this term would be significant. The next time I was sitting with Teresa I asked her what *cachivache* meant. She paused briefly and I could sense that the answer was not obvious to her:

Teresa: It's in the middle, the *chachi*.

Me: Oh, yes?

Teresa: Yes, just like my house is here and then my mother's house is over there. It's in between them. Just the same as the plaza. It's in the middle of the community.

Me: So, does it mean in the middle? Is it the word for patio?

Teresa: (Pause) Yes. It's the centre, the *lb-cachivat'shi*.

Me: So is that the same as the *cachivache*?

Teresa: Yes.

I was still feeling puzzled as to the meaning of this term and by chance decided to look in my Spanish dictionary, where I discovered that I had made a mistake somewhere along

¹⁰⁶ A form of communicating that has the inverse effect is pointing with one's lips towards the person or thing that one is talking about (also see Gow 1991:170). The aim here is generally to not attract the subject's attention. Women especially employed this whenever they were gossiping about others.

¹⁰⁷ See most of the contributors to the volume by Overing and Passes (2000), especially Gow (2000), Belaunde (2000) and Overing (2000).

the line and that *cachivache* was actually a Spanish term meaning “junk.” Teresa had not wanted to upset me by saying that the term did not exist and so had been searching to find an equivalent term in Nivacle, determined to let me know that it existed. The term that she thought it might have been was *lb-cachivat’sbi*, which means “in the centre,” but the pronunciation is quite different to the way the Spanish *cachivache* is pronounced.

Whilst talking in Spanish, people would avoid using the imperative mood when making suggestions. Instead of saying “*¡Abre la puerta!*” (“Open the door!”) or “*¡Váyate a Filadelfia!*” (“Go to Filadelfia!”), they would give an indirect order by saying, “*Hay que abrir la puerta*” (“One must open the door”) or “*Hay que ir a Filadelfia*” (“One must go to Filadelfia”). When I initially heard this way of phrasing suggestions, I assumed that the speaker was simply making a grammatical error. However, as my fieldwork progressed I came to realise that everyone was using this phrase. I do not believe that everyone was simply making the same grammatical error. Rather, it seems to me that when forced to offer an opinion or suggest an order, people are acutely aware of the need to speak in soft tones in order not to disturb the other person’s *cachi*. Within the households that I lived, I also found the same to be true when people were speaking Nivacle in that they would use the third person singular or plural and direct the question at a third person, rather than direct an order or suggestion straight at the person. For example, most evenings before bed if Lucía was feeling tired she would ask her husband “*Tsulôj lba Susana?*” (Literally “I am tired, Susana?”).¹⁰⁸ On hearing this question, I would then reply “*Hech, tsulôj*” (“Yes, I am tired”). Rather than just get up and go to bed and leave me sitting on my own, or alternatively tell me to go to bed, Lucía’s indirect questioning was a soft, subtle (and highly effective) way of posing the question.

One morning Juan, Lucía, Hugo and I had been visiting the household of Hugo’s mother Angelina and her Mennonite husband Heinrich. Juan’s brother-in-law José was also visiting with his wife and children. Not long after we arrived, whilst Lucía, her sister and Angelina were outside in the patio eating watermelon and chatting, Juan and José went inside the house to watch the television as Heinrich and Angelina had satellite television. After sitting in the patio for a while I went into the sitting room to join Juan and José and drink some *tereré* (Paraguayan tea). A football match was on between the two English football teams Manchester United and Manchester City. I mentioned to Juan and José

¹⁰⁸ Amongst the Nivacle I was known by the Spanish name “Susana.”

that the match was being played near Scotland and that I recognised who one or two of the players were. Right away their speech became more animated as they started asking me how close the stadium was to my house and whether any of my kin were in the crowd. I said that I did not think so. Just then Lucía, Angelina and María came in and Juan enthusiastically started telling them that the football match was being played in “Susana’s village” (*Susana lba-vtsaat*) and that some of my kin (*velhavot*) were in the crowd. During the remainder of the match, Lucía kept on commenting that that was *Susana lba-vtsaat* and that I knew people there. After the football match was finished, we continued watching the television and José began flicking through the channels. He stopped at an American satellite channel that was airing an American sitcom. When I mentioned that the sitcom was in English, Lucía said that we should watch it. The sitcom was based on a teenage boy who lived in a haunted house was not really a programme I would have chosen to watch. However, Lucía was very enthusiastic for us all to watch it as it was in “Susana’s language” (*Susana lb-cliiish*). So, there we all were sitting watching the American sitcom for over half an hour. On a couple of occasions María’s elder daughter attempted to change the channel, but Lucía would say to her *Yaaj na! Susana lb-cliiich na programa!* (“No! The programme is in Susana’s language!”).

Lagrou writes that homesickness or “kinsickness” (2000:167) is viewed positively amongst the Cashinahua. She explains that homesickness is, “a feeling that is not to be neglected but healed through careful remembering” (2000:160). Every Cashinahua individual is constituted through his or her own particular history of relationships that have accumulated in order to create that person. To not think about or remember one’s kin is akin to a denial of one’s humanity. Amongst the Nivacle, to be far away (*tójez*) from one’s kin is said to initially cause illness and I was told that mothers in particular always become ill when their daughters travelled far away. During the latter stages of my fieldwork it was necessary for me to make an unexpected trip home to Scotland. On my return to the Chaco and to the household of the friends with whom I had been living, the first thing Juan told me was that his wife had been very ill during my absence. “She has been at the hospital to see the doctor and he told her that she had high blood pressure. Very ill she was, very ill. It was ever since you went away back to Scotland she has been ill. Now that you’re back she’s OK again.” It was almost as though his telling me that her being ill was an expression of her “love” (*lbencheyash*) for me, as her younger sister (*lb-ch’injô*).

Towards the end of my stay when I was preparing to return home José told me how this would affect them. He explained, “When you go we will be a bit sad (*tacshin-in*) and we will think of you (*vaatjumat* “to think about someone who is far away”), but then, after two or three weeks, we’ll forget our sadness.” On the day that I was leaving, just before the pick-up truck was arriving to take me to Filadelfia, I was alone in the house with Lucía and was busy telling her how much I had enjoyed my stay there, and how much I also was looking forward to seeing my family again. Lucía’s behaviour was not what I had expected in that instead of being her usual highly animated and jovial self, she was quiet and withdrawn and was not smiling. It was almost as though to do so was the absolute antithesis of what this parting of ways demanded. I was preparing to depart from them and we would not “see” each other and she would no longer be caring for me and feeding me as she had been. Why would this be reason to laugh and smile? Just as I was leaving she said to me *tsi-cloi* (“I’ll suffer/I’ll be sad” lit: It will make me suffer). On reflection, my jolly behaviour was, in her eyes, wholly inappropriate under the circumstances.

Whilst missing someone can initially cause illness, it is not the being far away *per se* that is problematic. It is not remembering one’s kin that makes the person non-human. When I was leaving the community, I was encouraged to remember those who looked after me and to maintain the close relationships that I had created during my time there. Just as I was leaving Juan had asked me how much I weighed. I replied that I was not sure. This was a rhetorical question as he then said that I was much fatter (*yj-ch’è*) than when I had arrived. As I have mentioned above, another term for fat is *ts-ijôt’aj* (“it makes me fat”), which also means, “to have a lot of kin.” When I first arrived in the Chaco I was a *shincheej*, someone without kin. A *shincheej* is also an auxiliary spirit without an owner, in other words a dangerous unknown entity. During my time there I established kin-like relationships with people there and these people took collective responsibility to feed me and build up my body so that I would embody the efficacy of the relationships that had created my physical form.¹⁰⁹ As Lagrou writes, “the size of someone’s body is the object of social comments and concern” (2000:161). However, I had also brought over with me the memories of the kin that I had left behind and being homesick and remembering

¹⁰⁹ See Lagrou (2000) writes of a similar sense of collective responsibility amongst the Cashinahua towards the creation of the body. She writes, “the Cashinahua wanted my body to be in a desirable state of health and beauty to be shown to my real kin, once back home” (2000:161).

them was a good thing, just as I was encouraged to remember the Nivacle who had looked after me when I left Paraguay.

During the course of my fieldwork, people would often explain relationships and people's "character" (*lb-junash*) in terms of spatial metaphors of the landscape, or "theoretical landscapes" (Salmond 1982). People would make great use of the physical forms of the landscape in order to reflect on their current situation as well as to explain to me the correct ways to behave as an individual in the community. One of my elder informants described their relationship with the Mennonites in terms of fences that stood in the way of their past culture. He told me,

At a meeting that I attended in Asunción I heard an Ava-Guaraní talk about how he would never lose his culture. I listened to him and then I asked him if he would allow me to reply to what he had just said. I said to him: 'I'm an *indígena* as well. I'm a Nivacle. As much as I understand what you're saying regarding not wanting to lose your culture, I would say: how can we not lose it? Gone are the parts that are no use any more ("*los que no sirven para nada*"). We were hunters and gatherers of fruits and honey. How can we go out hunting and looking for fruits and honey when all our hunting grounds are lined with fences? How can we? That's just dangerous, isn't it? Haven't you seen the fences out there in the Chaco? Before, there were no fences. None whatsoever. Now our culture, that which our elders knew is that which lies beyond those fences. Where the fences start marks the boundary of where our culture ends. We can't get in any more, only look over at parts of it. But we'll never really "see/know" (*van*) it again.

A distinctive aspect of the landscape of the Mennonite Colonies is the straightness of the streets and roads and the uniformity of the fences that border them. As one drives between the colonies, you gain the sense that you could be driving through any part of the Central Chaco, as everywhere appears the same. Whilst the trees that ornamentally lined the edges of the roads gave a sense of nearness, the road straight ahead presents a

seemingly never-ending openness that reaches straight up to the sky. The paths that ran between communities on Mennonite-owned land were cleared using tractors that were paid for out of Cooperative funds. On indigenous land, the paths had far more weeds and topographic imperfections.

One afternoon when I was walking back to Jotoicha after watching a volleyball match in San Miguel with one of the schoolteachers, we began discussing the forthcoming national presidential elections that were due to take place in the next week or so. The elections had brought to light divisions within the community that had been bubbling under the surface for many months. The majority of the community had decided to vote for the Encuentro Nacional (Lista 10) party, whose local candidate was Mennonite Herman Ratzlaf. However, a smaller faction of the community decided to go with the Colorado party and the financial temptations (according to some accounts) that came with voting for them. As we continued walking along the path towards Jotoicha, Alberto said, “There are some people who want to walk on that path” as he pointed over to a path that branched off the one that we were walking on, which was overgrown and covered in weeds. “These people,” he continued, “are the Colorados. The Colorados don’t want to walk on this path that we are walking on that is nice and clean. They want to be different and walk on a path that’s old and dirty (*sas-in*). One path (*ve’lba nôyish*) is what the whole community needs to walk on. One path.”

During this conversation Alberto was making very explicit use of the aesthetics of the landscape to reflect on how he perceived the community during that period of time. What I found particularly interesting about his discourse was his stress on the need for the community to walk together on “one path” (*ve’lba nôyish*) during events such as national elections. This was something that he stressed many times during the church services, that the community of Jotoicha should walk on the same path. It seems to me that the metaphor of one path is a way of reflecting on the way that everyone’s *cachi* should be tranquil and free from the anger, hate and resentment that create rifts. This is social knowledge that each individual has that should guide his or her behaviour towards others. On a separate occasion my “father” José described the state of certain people in the community as being like a broken chair. Whilst we were sitting in his patio, he pointed to one of their chairs that had broken arms and that almost collapsed every time anyone went to sit on it. Whilst in normal contexts, we would laugh any time it toppled

or someone fell off it (a reflection of the Nivacle love of slapstick humour),¹¹⁰ on this occasion he used it as a way of reflecting on the moral state of some of the “corrupt” leaders (*cu'ts'ajis* lit: the thieves) in the community. “They’re like that chair. No one wants to go near it because it it’s no use. Look at it! Its arms are broken and it’s all rusty because it helps no-one and so no-one cares for it. No one looks after it.” Here José seemed to be reflecting on the “lack” of *cachi* amongst certain members of the community. Far from being “straight”, their behaviour in his eyes was twisted and affected the overall tranquility of the community.

Differences in the “character” (*junash*) of different kinds of people can also extend beyond the community. One morning when I was sitting inside the schoolhouse, Alberto the schoolteacher began to explain to me how the current schoolhouse building came into existence. The Jotoicha schoolhouse (*vanqu'isja'vat*, lit: place in which to write”) is a two-roomed brick building with a partition wall running through the middle and a classroom on either side. He told me,

This side was built by the Paraguayans through Oñondivepa.¹¹¹ Look, the wire mesh on the windows is all ripped and needs to be stuck together with Selotape and the door is all swollen and squint and won’t shut any more. The shutters on the windows fell off last year. But look over at the other side. That side was built by the Mennonites. Strong, that’s what it is. It’s strong and has not broken, not even one bit. That’s like the Mennonites, you see. They’re hard. When they build something it’s built to last. The Paraguayans build things just so and no more. They spend all day talking and drinking *tereré* and then they go home. They don’t do things properly.

People would often refer to the Mennonites as “*los altos*” (“the tall ones”) and say that they were “stronger” and that they “knew more” than the Paraguayans, who they saw as being very seductive in the way they spoke, but also very cunning. One man explained that Paraguayan development workers would always come to the community and said to people, “Hi, how’s it going? Yes, that’s absolutely no problem whatsoever” (“¡Hola! ¿Qué

¹¹⁰ See Overing (2000) on Piaraa humour.

¹¹¹ Oñondivepa means “all together” in Guaraní and is the name of a Paraguayan NGO.

tal? Si, no hay problema”), but then they are never seen again. The teacher had used the quality of the two sides of the schoolhouse as a way of reflecting upon the different characters of Mennonites and Paraguayans.

It seems to me that what is common to all these statements is that they are very much grounded in specific social relations between specific types of people. They are not abstract musings but ways of talking about the world and describing people’s behaviour in aesthetic terms. The uneven path, the broken chair and the broken door and windows of the schoolhouse were all things that were “not clean” and “not pretty” as they had been neglected. They can be contrasted with other things that had been looked after. They reflect two aesthetic visions of the Nivacle that form the basis for the way they conceptualise the world around them and the relationship between different kinds of people. I shall now go on to describe a series of events that took place during my fieldwork that were highly disruptive to convivial social relations in the Central Chaco. The events highlight the fine line between these two ways of being and the work that is required to create beauty.

2.6. *Fanjas*, Firearms and Fury

Overing and Passes (2000:20) have written that Amazonian people focus as much on the negative emotions that are disruptive to community life, including anger and suffering, as they do on those that are conducive to it. Anger is always conceived of as a relational state in the sense that it always involves and affects other people. It is often understood as the last element in a chain of affective states commencing with grief, sadness and loneliness. Whilst the latter states are not considered in a negative light in and of themselves, it is seen as the responsibility of the individual to control the “monstrous force” (Overing and Passes 2000:22) of anger through endeavouring to return to a more convivial state in which they can work in relationship with others.¹¹² Amongst the Nivacle, Sterpin (1991; 1993) has described the Nivacle practice of scalping that occurred in pre-colonial times as being the result of great anger. Battles against neighbouring groups would involve different kinds of combat including unarmed battles between

¹¹² Londoño-Sulkin (2000), for example, notes that the Muinane deal with anger through work.

individuals and groups. During battles it was the leader (*caanvacle*) who would cut the heads off enemies who were killed in combat and return home with the scalp. The victim's agency was transferred from the killed to the killer through their scalp. This was said to make the leader a better warrior, with all the scalps that he acquired being hung on a stick outside his house as a form of trophy.

In order for fights and battles to take place, it was necessary to generate sufficient levels of anger. Sterpin (1991:161) describes the different "emotional states that are described in Spanish as "anger" and distinguishes between two distinct kinds of anger. The first is *nutsaat*, which is the kind of anger that might manifest itself during a drunken scuffle. Such a person is known as a *coyatsitaj*. The second term is *vôôc*, which is associated with the term *sui*, meaning "aggressive," "dangerous," or "bad." *Vôôc* is the state of anger that one arrives at during situations of warfare and is associated with killing. Terms associated with this verb include: *vôôcoi* "to be angry," *vôôconaj* "irritable person;" and *vôôcovo* "battle cry," "bellicose group." She writes that cannibalism is the result of highly concentrated anger (*vôôc*), much like the anger of the jaguar.

The former type of anger has been noted by Kidd (2000:62ff; 2000) in relation to the Enxet where he explains that whilst alcohol can be generative of sociality, it can also be highly destructive and cause many problems within communities. The Enxet say that alcohol is responsible for "killing/knocking out someone" and that it brings about a temporary reduction a person's "knowledge." Whilst alcohol can create greater intimacy, when consumed in excess it can result in anger and violence including fistfights and the drawing of knives. Karsten (1932) has also noted the effects of excessive alcohol consumption amongst Mataco men during pre-colonial times. He writes,

The only occasions when crimes may be committed...are during great drinking-feasts. When the Indians are intoxicated with algarroba beer they easily begin to quarrel with one another, and those quarrels in extreme cases may end in homicide. Now the Indians certainly regard a homicide committed in a state of inebriation rather as an accident than as a crime, for the algarroba beer is sacred...But the Indians are anxious to prevent such

accidents and this is above all the task of the women, who never themselves drink any intoxicating drinks.

Karsten (1932:96-7)

In the remainder of this section I intend to focus on a colony-level explosion of anger that took place in October 2002 that resulted in an internal state of anger and fear amongst the Nivacle of Campo Loa. The uprising involved a group of indigenous men who came to be known as “*los enmascarados*” or “the masked men.”¹¹³ The explosions of anger that were generated at the level of the Mennonite Colonies between individuals from different ethnic groups were also generated amongst the residents of Campo Loa, although theirs was against co-residents. The first series of events that I describe were drawn largely from cuttings that I had acquired from the national press and reflect the viewpoints that various individuals offered as explanations of the events that took place. The reason for my reliance on such sources is because I was living in Campo Loa during the entire period of the uprising and so experienced the events in a very different way. This section begins with a summary of the events as the Paraguayan national newspaper “ABC Color” presented them. I then go on to recount the events from the beginning, as I experienced them as a member of the community of Jotoicha.

On the 22nd and 23rd of October 2002 in the Nivacle community of Uj’e’ Lhavos, four meetings were held. Amongst those invited were the Governor of Boquerón Orlando Penner, the district attorney Nuria Isnardi, the civil rights judge Ricardo Medina, Catholic priest Father Miguel Fritz, the Vice-Minister of the Paraguayan interior Osvaldo Benítez, the chief of police of the Department of Presidente Hayes Roberto González Cuquejo, as well as a host of indigenous leaders. The meetings were arranged following a series of events that, according to the Paraguayan national press, had threatened to disrupt the peace amongst the indigenous people of the town of Filadelfia.¹¹⁴ During October 2002, four indigenous youths had been found dead in highly suspicious circumstances. Their killings were alleged to have been carried out by a group of 11 men who were involved in

¹¹³ This is not the first uprising to have taken place amongst the Nivacle of the Mennonite colonies. The first and most famous one took place in 1962 when they organised a march through the streets of Filadelfia in order to demand more land. For more information see, for example, Klassen (2002) and Spadafora (1994).

¹¹⁴ 25th October 2002, *Diario ABC Color*, Asunción, Paraguay.

satanic practices or “black magic” (*la mágica negra*). Of the four who were killed, three were Nivacle and one was Guaraní-Ñandéva. The meeting took place following accusations from the Nivacle and Guaraní-Ñandéva communities of serious inaction on the part of the police of the Department of Boquerón, which at the time had been under the leadership of Juan Ramón Meza. This perceived inaction had resulted in the Nivacle community of Uj’e’ Lhavos in Filadelfia and the Guaraní-Ñandéva community of Laguna Negra forming competing armed vigilante self-protection groups in order to protect the peace of their communities.

The Guaraní-Ñandéva youth who died was Cecilio Bizar Gómez from the community of Laguna Negra. The three Nivacle youths were Celestino Torres, Rufino Pinto and José María López from Uj’e’ Lhavos, with the latter two cases being recorded by the police as cases of suicide. However, there was widespread opinion amongst the Nivacle population that it was 11 indigenous men involved in black magic who had caused these sudden deaths. They were said to have been led by a Swiss man who was based in Asunción and who wanted to kill indigenous people for their blood in order to carry out satanic practices. He was said to have employed these indigenous men to carry out the killings, having trained them in Asunción earlier in the year. These men were said to go around in black clothing with their faces painted black. For this reason they were known as the *Enmascarados* (“masked men”) and then later the *chupasangres* (“blood suckers”).

Three young men accused of being *Enmascarados* were seized by a group of Nivacle men who called themselves “*El Brigade Nivacle de Autodefensa*” (“The Nivacle Brigade of Self Defence”) on Friday 25th and Saturday 26th October. The three men were Nicanor Murillo, an Enxet from Filadelfia, Menelio Ramírez, a Guaraní Ñandéva from Laguna Negra, and Pablino Juan, a Nivacle of 24 years of age from Yalve Sanga who was a friend of Murillo. All three men were initially kept at the Nivacle community of Uj’e’ Lhavos where they were held captive and then tortured.¹¹⁵ Following discussions they were then handed over to the Filadelfia Police Station, where they were detained on charges of homicide and disruption of the peace and then later transferred to Neuland due to security fears.

¹¹⁵ The press reports did not clarify exactly how these tortures took place and every Nivacle person that I later spoke to denied that anything like that had taken place.

Nivacle leader Erasmo Pinto had stated at the time that they knew who the *Enmascarados* were and that the police had been so slow to respond that his community had decided to take matters into their own hands. The Nivacle began driving up and down the streets of Filadelfia in open-backed lorries with rifles in their hands in an attempt to hunt down the *Enmascarados*. The “Nivacle Brigade of Self Defence” was also looking for a Mennonite and another indigenous person who were claimed to have been present during the killing of Gómez. The Nivacle group proceeded to hand in a document that listed the names of all those whom they suspected of taking part in the crimes. The document also included alleged declarations from Murillo that he was guilty of taking part in the killing of over 16 people in the last 4 years through his involvement with the group. One Nivacle father (*padre de familia*) was reported in one of the national newspapers as having said, “These people are very dangerous and they are armed. They are going to attack us at any moment.”¹¹⁶ However, at the same time, members of the district attorney were trying to convince the community that this was the responsibility of the justice system and not theirs.

The new chief of police in Boquerón, Carlos Zelaya Quiñónez, had said that he would reinforce the police force in the region with a new brigade that would be deployed especially to protect the indigenous communities. The legal authorities then signed an agreement along with the local government and indigenous leaders with the indigenous people agreeing to hand over responsibility for the security of their communities to the police. The Nivacle leaders stated that they would go along with this agreement, providing that the action from the police was, in their opinion, satisfactory. Nivacle leader Erasmo Pinto said, “We fear the law. We know who is suspicious, but the barrier is the law.”¹¹⁷ The new chief of police Zeyala was removed after only a week in his new post and the additional police officers were given vehicles including an extra pick-up truck and five motorcycles more that were provided by the Vice Minister of the interior, Osvaldo Benítez.

The national press and the Mennonite community proceeded to label the increasing fear that was being felt by the indigenous peoples of the Central Chaco as a “series of stories” (*una serie de historias*) that had developed into a sort of “collective psychosis” (*sicosis*)

¹¹⁶ 3rd November 2002, *Diario ABC Color*, Asunción, Paraguay.

¹¹⁷ 3rd November 2002, *Diario ABC Color*, Asunción, Paraguay.

colectiva.¹¹⁸ On Wednesday 2nd October 2002 the Paraguayan President Luis González Macchi had declared a “State of Emergency” (*Estado de Emergencia*) in the Central Chaco following severe drought conditions that had been affecting the region since 1999. Following a meeting with Paraguayan President Luis Gonzalez Macchi, the mayor of the department of Alto Paraguay, Nildo Penayo, in a CNN broadcast, declared:

The Executive is declaring a state of emergency in the departments of Boquerón, Alto Paraguay and Presidente Hayes. We understand that there are many people who have been affected by sickness and diarrhoea, which is already killing people within the department as well as many animals. I know of two Indians who have died.

The first light rains came on the 7th and 9th of October, although it was not until the 29th October that the first significant rains came after over 8 months of drought. During this period, the Mennonite community held a mass meeting in Filadelfia and came to the conclusion that the events were a direct result of the drought. The severe hunger and lack of clean drinking water had, in their opinion, caused the indigenous people to begin hallucinating. The initial fear and madness, they suggested, had caused a generalised state of panic that simply got out of hand. This view was shared by District Attorney Nuria Isnardi who stated, “This is categorical: *Los Enmascarados* do not exist and they have never existed.”¹¹⁹

The police eventually filed a report stating that two of the deaths had been homicide, whilst the other two (those of Pinto and López) were suicide. Erasmo Pinto rejected the investigation, arguing that in Nivacle society, suicide is unknown and is never considered to be the purpose or the cause of any death. The District Attorney did not accept Pinto’s rejection, replying that one must stand by the medical reports. She also rejected his claim that Nivacle people do not believe in suicide by stating that indigenous people nowadays have “a mixed culture” (*una cultura mezclada*) and that they are “living a confusion of cultures” (*viviendo una confusión de culturas*).¹²⁰ She stated,

¹¹⁸ 5th December 2002, *Diario ABC Color*, Asunción, Paraguay.

¹¹⁹ 5th December 2002, *Diario ABC Color*, Asunción, Paraguay.

¹²⁰ 6th December 2002, *Diario ABC Color*, Asunción, Paraguay.

They are more Paraguayan¹²¹ than indigenous. They have a lot of contact with the surrounding society; aside from the evangelisation, this helps them a lot, but also violates in many ways the indigenous culture.

6th December 2002, *Diario ABC Color*

Isnardi continued that the actions of the members of Uj'e' Lhavos of hunting, detaining, imprisoning and then torturing the youths Murillo and Ramírez would be investigated on the basis of them severely disrupting the public peace as well as overriding public legal functions. Pinto replied that he would continue his quest to find *Los Enmascarados* until such time as the police's findings were presented to him. Otherwise, he was prepared to run the risk of being charged with a breach of the public peace, to which Isnardi had replied, "From this moment on, everything ends." The case was then closed. I shall now describe how I experienced the events from the community of Jotoicha.

On the morning of October 3rd 2002, I was sitting in the schoolhouse of the community of San Pio X in Campo Loa drinking *tereré* (Paraguayan tea) with Miguel the schoolteacher. We had been working on a census of the community and had stopped for a break, as the heat was very intense. Miguel sent one of the schoolchildren over to the well to fetch some more fresh cool water for the tea and he also asked him to bring over an additional bucket of water so that he could throw it over the schoolhouse floor to try and reduce the temperature somewhat. "It seems as though the *fanjas* (thunderbirds) cannot get out to bring us the rain," he told me as he scooped up handfuls of water and threw it out across the floor. "That's what we Nivacle say when there is a drought like this, that the *tsamtas* (malevolent hairy ogres) are at all four sides – north, south, east and west – stopping them from bringing the rain." A drought (*clojoj-in*) occurs when the *fanjas* (thunderbirds) are unable to reach the zenith because of the rain-intercepting *tsamtas* and shaman who brings the rain (*joclomich*) cannot move them with their song. Every evening during the drought a shaman who lived in the house next door would chant in order to clear the paths for the *fanjas* (thunderbirds). The dry season, which is called *cloop*, should

¹²¹ The term that she used was "*paraguayizados*," which is a term that I heard being used a lot in the Central Chaco. It is an adjective constructed from the noun "Paraguay," such that *ser paraguayizados* would translate as "to be Paraguayan-like."

have ended in late July. It was October and there was still no sign of rain. Towards the end of my conversation with Miguel, as I was getting on my bicycle to cycle back to Jotoicha, he told me that he had a message that he wanted me to pass on to Alberto, the schoolteacher of Jotoicha:

You see that tree over there? I was sitting on the chair outside my house last night before going to sleep and in the shadow of the moonlight I saw a man running towards it. It seems that he was a Guarayo¹²² from Laguna Negra. He was dressed all in black even although it was hot last night. He didn't want anyone to see who he was. He saw that I had noticed him and so stayed hiding under the tree hoping that I couldn't see him. Then he ran over there along the path in the direction of San Ramón. That's where I think he is now, in the community where my elder brother Roberto is a teacher. Tell Alberto what I saw and get him to tell the other teachers.

I had never heard of this and at the time I could not understand why he was telling me this and what the significance of this event was. On my return to Jotoicha, I went across to Alberto's house to tell him what Miguel had told me. He explained to me that he had heard from Miguel, who is from Filadelfia and teaches in San Pio X, that he had seen *yacut sha'nei* (black men) entering the community a few days ago during the night. He told me that a Nivacle had been killed in Filadelfia and that people had been saying that it was some men from Laguna Negra who had done it. He told me that was all he knew.

Over the following few days the *yacut sha'nei* (black men) were being mentioned more and more by different individuals, including many of the children. Teresa told me that she had heard that a second Nivacle had been killed in Filadelfia and that it was the *yacut sha'nei* who had done it. The next day at lunchtime Erasmo Pinto made an announcement in Nivacle on the local Mennonite Radio Station ZP30 advising the communities that the *Enmascarados* had killed Nivacle youth (*nich'a sha'ne*. lit. "new person") Rufino Pinto. He continued that a Swiss man based in Asunción had employed them to do it. He was a satanic worshiper (*satánico*) who wanted to collect indigenous

¹²² This is a term for the Guaraní people who live in the Paraguayan Central Chaco (*los Guaraní occidentales*).

blood so that he could practice his black magic. That afternoon there was a community meeting in Jotoicha. A general fear (*ts'i-jovai*)¹²³ was expressed that what people were calling the *côcheijes* (crazy men) were planning on targeting Campo Loa. Some said that they had already seen them running in the forest, whilst others said that they had seen them hiding in their gardens and that their dogs kept on barking at them. They were all dressed in black so that no one could see them. One woman stood up and told everyone how they had entered her house one evening and had a drink of water and tried to eat some food that she had sitting on her table. They managed to clatter some plates, which startled her, and by the time she got round to the other side of the house to see who they were, they had ran away again. “I got a fright” (*tsi-lôyi-ei* “it made me know”), she said.

During the course of the meeting it was decided that several households would join together in the evening so that the women could “look after” (*clôvalh*) each other. It was also agreed that the community needed to be protected and that groups of men should guard both entrances to the community at either end of the path, whilst others would be based at the schoolhouse and patrol that area. That evening I went to sit with Alberto and the young men at the schoolhouse as they were preparing to wait up and guard all night. Several men had brought their .22 rifles with them and were travelling by bicycle with them strapped to their backs. We sat drinking *tereré* (tea) as the heat was suffocating. Whilst it was usual for people to use torches (*catistas* lit: “like stars”) when walking around their households and the community at night, people refrained from using them in case the *côcheijes* (crazy men) managed to catch sight of them. Every so often the silence would be interrupted by a dog barking, which several of the young men took as their cue to run to the edge of the forest to look for the *côcheijes*. Every so often the sound of a rifle shot could also be heard blasting from one end of the community and then the other as men in different households fired shots at the *côcheijes*.

The following day a meeting was held at the schoolhouse with the leaders of all the communities in Campo Loa. It was during this meeting that the identities of the two *côcheijes* were disclosed. Alberto later told me that it had been established that they were

¹²³ Whilst *ts'i-jovai* means, “it makes me afraid,” *ts'i-jovai-in* means, “it makes me joyful/happy.” “*in[-]*” is an adverbial suffix that increases the intensity of the action, which suggests that joy and fear are not necessarily indistinguishable. Instead, they might be understood as being different *degrees* of the same emotional effect. Insomnia was always expressed to me in terms of “fear.”

two young Nivacle men from San Pio X who had joined the group of satanic worshipers. “They’re taking drugs,” he told me.

They are getting the drugs from the Swiss man in Asunción and they are putting the drugs in cigarettes. Then, when everyone is asleep they come up to the windows and doors of people’s houses and blow the smoke in *wubbbbbb* (he imitates the action of inhaling a cigarette and then really blowing out the smoke and moving his head from side to side so that it disperses over a wide area). This makes the person crazy like them, so that they don’t know what is happening to them. The *cóchejes* then go up to them and stick a needle into their arm to take the blood out. They carry big 5-litre plastic cooking oil containers with them that they want to fill up with Nivacle blood. It is only Nivacle blood that they want. It is said that the Swiss man will pay them \$100 for every container that they manage to fill.

According to Alberto, these young Nivacle men were “crazy” because they were under the influence of drugs and it was because of this that they were able to behave in such a callous and hateful way. The drugs that the satanic worshipers had been giving them had caused them to behave “without knowledge.”

Daytime activities in Jotoicha remained relatively normal, however, with people out working in their gardens, playing volleyball and football and laughing and joking as usual. The main change was that people were reluctant to travel by foot between communities as the paths were said to be very dangerous. People were only slightly less reluctant to travel by bicycle, although many men had no choice, as they were required to work for their Mennonite bosses on the neighbouring ranches. On the Saturday morning the Paraguayan travelling salesman (*macatero*) known as *Santacruz lh-aos* (“Santacruz’s son”) arrived at approximately 10am as usual. He was one of the few Paraguayans in the Chaco that felt I could trust and every week he visited the community we would always chat about one thing or another. When he stopped outside my house and I went over to buy my weekly supply of bread and bananas. He immediately started joking about the degree

of fear that he had been observing in each of the communities that he had visited during the course of the last week. He told me,

I've had people telling me that they have seen men all painted in black running along the paths and hiding all over the place! They're saying that they want to kill them! As if an Indian would want to kill another Indian...it seems like a big joke to me. The Indians are really fearful (*son re miedosos ellos*). I can't help laughing about it.

Santacruz possessed what one of my Paraguayan friends in Asunción later reflected upon as being “*el sentido de humor paraguayo típico*” (“the typical Paraguayan sense of humour”), in that he enjoyed teasing people (*hinchándoles*). Later on in the day, he returned to the community towards the end of the football and volleyball matches to sell the last of his supplies. I had been sitting watching the women's volleyball match when suddenly everyone started getting up, collecting their belongings, and walking quickly back towards their houses. “Santacruz said that he saw some of the *côcheijes* at the entrance to the community,” Teresa told me. With that, we all hurried back to our houses.

The fear that I experienced the night before was almost unbearable. Convinced that I could hear the rustling of one of the plastic bags that the *côcheijes* had been using to fill up with blood, I found sleeping impossible, but was too scared to open my door to see if anyone was really there. My fear escalated every day until I felt that I had no choice but to move and sleep somewhere else. This situation was described as “not pretty” (“*n-is-d'*”) and José immediately invited me over to stay at their house where his wife and all their daughters were also sleeping, whilst he, his son and two son-in-laws joined the other men at the entrances of the community with their rifles. This continued for two nights until I heard that the *côcheijes* had been captured whilst they had been fleeing Campo Loa for the brick factory in Colonia 6, Filadelfia, where they worked. They had been captured by a group of men from Campo Loa and had been held hostage as “prisoners” (*cumtes*)¹²⁴ in the household of one of the leaders. People told me that even the men's own kin did not do anything to stop the actions of the leader as they were “crazy,” “aggressive” and “annoyed” (*vôôc*). Once the drugs were said to have left their bodies and they had “come

¹²⁴ The verb *l'acum-in* (to work) is derived from this noun.

to knowledge,” they were released. By this stage many of the events that had been taking place in Filadelfia over the past weeks had passed and the residents of Jotoicha began sleeping in their own houses and travelling between communities by foot once more.

There are several aspects of the events described above that appear to be significant. The first is the surprise that many non-indigenous individuals with whom I spoke had when I described how the events had unfolded in Campo Loa, and in particular how the enemy for the people of Campo Loa had been members of their own colony. The events that took place in Filadelfia involved people who all regarded themselves as “different” to each other. Contrasts could therefore be drawn between the perspectives of the Paraguayan police officers, the indigenous leaders, the politicians, and the religious leaders. At the same time, the battles were taking place at an inter-ethnic level between the Nivacle, the Guaraní-Ñandéva and the Enxet communities, with every group working towards defending the people who they considered to be “the same.” Overing (1989a: 79) writes that amongst the Piaroa, danger and violence belongs to the outside and, in particular, to the domain of foreign politics. The same could be said for the Nivacle who regard politicians with a great deal of mistrust, accusing them of being thieves (*cuts’ajis*) who trick people with promises (*pava vatfajatis* lit: announcements). During one political meeting that I attended in Filadelfia in April 2003 when Nivacle leader Erasmo Pinto was running for Governor of the Department of Boquerón,¹²⁵ a major aspect of his campaign was to bring to the fore the commonalities in the plight of the indigenous peoples of the Chaco and how the Mennonites and Paraguayans were in fact their “Other.” He illustrated this by describing how the Paraguayan politicians are all kin and how they will only ever seek to care for each other. Their interests have never been with the indigenous people and they never would be. In the end, however, it was the conceptions of “otherness” that were internal to the indigenous communities themselves that prevented Erasmo’s gaining enough votes, with many indigenous people deciding that Mennonite candidate David Sawatzky Funk was a less “corrupt” candidate. How was it, though, that during the uprising, rather than draw on an unknown outsider, the *cócheijes* of Campo Loa were people’s kin or affines from within the colony? The answer, it seems,

¹²⁵ Erasmo was leader of the first indigenous campaign for Governor to have taken place in the Chaco, under the political party called “Partido País Solidario.” This political party ended up winning 3.3% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies during the elections.

lies with the Nivacle conception of “knowledge,” “knowledgeable” behaviour and the outside forces that impinge on convivial community relations.

From the start, the residents of Jotoicha were clear that the perpetrators of these events were *côcheijes* (“crazy men”). These men were “crazy” because they had been taking drugs that their Swiss bosses had been giving them. One of the leaders explained to me that the *samtô* (White people) hide drugs everywhere and that the small packets of silica gel found in new trainers were also their drugs. To say that someone is “crazy” is to say that they are lacking in “knowledge.” People blamed these young men’s behaviour on the external force of the drugs, although it could be equally applied to the forces of alcohol.¹²⁶ The drugs had caused the two young men to lose their *cachi* and treat their kin with “hate/loathing” (*côntayash*). This “hate/loathing” made them become angry (*vôôc*) and what is known as *vôcônjas*, which are people who are bad-tempered and on-edge, itching to cause damage to others. Overing writes that amongst the Piaroa, “much of knowledge is poisoned by madness” (1985c: 255). Drugs themselves can create a state of madness that brings on the potentiality for evil in a person. This is a kind of “craziness” that differs from the natural mental and physical degeneration that one experiences with old age. People described these young men as being *yi-cachiclôî*, which means, “it makes their *cachi* suffer.” In other words, the drugs had forced their “centre” to react in non-human and violent ways towards their kinsfolk, rather like the way the primordial being Cufalh treated the Nivacle during mythical times.

Whilst some people had been quick to blame the drugs for the two young men’s behaviour, the very fact that they were male is also significant. Young men are generally considered to be more prone to smoke cigarettes and consume alcohol than young women and indeed any other gender or age-category. Their interior was said to be “weak” (*nin-t’un-in*) when it came to the temptations of such substances. This is evident in the accounts of some women who knew the young men’s kinsfolk better. The two men were first cousins as their fathers were brothers. The women told me that their father was an alcoholic and that he would frequently fight with his brother whenever he got drunk, and on one occasion he threatened to shoot him in the early hours of the morning. Such people were *ojei*¹²⁷ (bad, useless), as they did not behave with “knowledge,” so how could they expect their children to behave any differently? They

¹²⁶ C.f. Kidd (1999:62ff).

¹²⁷ This is a term that women would use more than men (see also Seelwische 1990:143).

had only imitated what they saw in their fathers' behaviour and because they were young men it was particularly difficult for them to resist.

What is significant about the events that took place during October 2002 is that in both cases the *Enmascarados* were people whom the victims knew the identity of. In the Filadelfia case, those of Uj'e' Lhavos captured three people that they knew had been responsible for the four attacks, and they also had knowledge of two of the others. In the case of Campo Loa, members of the colony also knew the two "crazy" men. An important aspect of both cases is that relationships, regardless of their nature during a particular point in time, are always specific, and never generalised. That is why this situation was in no way trivial. These were young men who were behaving like "wild animals" (*yacquisitis*). They stayed out in the forest seeking out the blood of other human beings and, through the use of drugs, had become asocial, dangerous (*sui*), and practically non-human. They were the antithesis of "knowledgeable" behaviour for human beings. Erasmo Pinto had refuted the police report that two of the cases were suicides. Whilst his point may well have been politically motivated from the perspective of the police, more importantly, it was prompted by the metaphysical impossibility of suicide amongst the Nivacle. Why would someone who seemed to their kinsfolk to be "with knowledge" decide to kill him or herself? Such deaths could only be caused by outside forces, the force in this case being the drugs.¹²⁸ The Nivacle of Campo Loa had transformed the fear of the *Enmascarados* that had been generated in Filadelfia and transformed it into a known form of fear that existed in their community through the two young men and their alcoholic fathers.

Finally, I would like to reflect on the reaction of the members of Jotoicha to the threat of violence. People described this period as "*sui-in*" ("evil times"). As soon as it was decided that the *Enmascarados* posed a real threat to the community, people started to live closer together and share dwellings. Close kin such as mothers and daughters who had been living in separate houses following their daughters' marriage were returning to be with their mothers, whilst the married men were either with their Mennonite bosses¹²⁹ or they were guarding the entrance to the community. To a certain extent, this reflected the gender roles within the community, as it was the men who were dealing directly with the

¹²⁸ See Overing (1989a: 80) who writes that amongst the Piaroa outsiders cause all deaths.

¹²⁹ The very few who had employment during the drought. Under normal circumstances, very few men would have been present in the community.

dangers of the outside, whilst the women stayed together with the children. It was almost as though the nightly threat of the *Enmascarados* had intensified these gender roles.

During the day people worked hard to maintain convivial normal forms of social relations through eating together, playing volleyball and football and playing music. This style of relating during adversity had become particularly noticeable during the latter stages of the drought in January 2003. There was very little work on offer from the Mennonites and there was no food in people's gardens. One evening I was sitting in José and Teresa's patio and we had all washed and had sat down for our evening meal. People would eat their main meals at midday and dinner that would usually consist of a smaller version of that which they had eaten for lunch or a small meal such as fried eggs with bread or potatoes that had been baked in the cinders of the fire. During this particular evening all there was to eat was a dry baked bread roll each, which the Nivacle call *t'un sha'nei* ("the hard things"). This is the least tasty kind of bread, which contrasts with the soft-baked rolls (*nin-t'un-a sha'nei* "not the hard things") that are also sold.¹³⁰ We were all seated in our chairs and, as usual, Teresa placed each bread roll on an individual plate and handed each person a plate with their bread roll on it. It was exactly the same etiquette that would have been used if we had each had delicious steaming platefuls of beef stew with sweet potato and manioc. Surprisingly, no one complained about or even mentioned the fact that we were only eating *t'un sha'nei*. Quite the opposite, in fact, in that they seemed to be making a conscious effort not to let the hunger (*yipcun*) that they were feeling become the situation. As we sat grinding our teeth into "the hard things," José's son's *Cachaca* music was playing loudly in the background. The conversation was characterised by the usual laughter and enthusiastic chatter. At one point Teresa mentioned the hunger (*yipcun*) of the Enxet (*yi'llhayis*) and how bad it must be for them and people laughed and joked as normal.

Overing (1985c) writes that the mad antics of Kuemoi are dealt with by the Piaroa through laughter, with the absurdity and excesses of evil being treated as though it were comedy. She writes, "Laughter has a two-fold effect: it gives the one who laughs the illusion of superiority, a feeling of heightened control" (Ibid: 259). In a similar vein, Fernando Pagés Larraya writes that, "Madness is the laughter of culture, the maximum

¹³⁰ I was told that the reason people bought "the hard things" was because the soft rolls were so delicious (*acoj-shi*) that they would be eaten too quickly. "The hard things" were "not delicious" (*n-avos-a*) and so they lasted longer.

expression of the tragic, the meaning of absolute absurdity” (in Tomasini 1985, my translation). Clastres (1977:122), meanwhile, has written that the Nivacle (or Chulupí as he calls them) “symbolically” counter danger with laughter, thus deeming it ridiculous. The absurdity of the situation was offset during daily life with laughter and heightened conviviality. Rather than complain about the drought or talk in detail about the “fear” that they were all feeling about the “crazy men,” people were constantly working towards creating situations that were congenial and enjoyable. Although the series of events that I have just described in many ways exaggerates the contrasting emotions of anger, fear and suffering on the one hand, and joy, happiness and congeniality on the other, I believe that it illustrates the delicate balance that the Nivacle must tread on a day-to-day basis in order to maintain the forms of sociality that they find desirable. Not only is the achievement of sociality a delicate process, but it is also hard work that must be practiced in order for it to exist. Whilst these events were extraordinary, they are reflective of the very ordinary processes of daily life and the achievement of desirable forms of sociality amongst the Nivacle.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed Nivacle understandings of “knowledge” and the bearing that it has on relationships and sociality. My discussion initially centred on Nivacle conceptions of their place within a multi-layered cosmos that is comprised of both malevolent and benevolent beings. These are worlds that are considered just as “real” as the everyday lived world and the activities of beings that inhabit them can often have a direct impact of the daily lives of Nivacle people. What is apparent is that there is no single discourse on how these worlds are comprised and there is a great deal of space for flexibility in individual interpretation. I then went on to discuss the *vatsóc’ôclit* or “life soul” and its relationship to Nivacle concepts of illness, life and death. This is a soul that is part of the body and is necessary for life. The second soul that I discussed, which is the *cachi* or “social centre” is necessary for a lived human life on earth. The *cachi* is the social conscience of the person and is responsible for the way they behave and treat others. Unlike the *vatsóc’ôclit* which exists from birth, the *cachi* needs to be developed through the “knowledgeable” words and actions of those around them. “Knowledge” is

expressed through the verb *tói* and is a highly social concept. Whilst it is developed within the *cachi* of each individual person, it is only meaningful when describing social actions. “Knowledge” is also linked to Nivacle aesthetics in that “knowledgeable” behaviour is also considered to be “beautiful” behaviour, whereas “unknowledgeable” behaviour is deemed “ugly.”

I ended this chapter with a description of a series of events that had a powerful effect on the conviviality of relations amongst the residents of Campo Loa and the wider Central Chaco. Whilst the Nivacle have a very strong sense of “the social,” it is a sociality that is extremely fragile and difficult to achieve. The (perceived) “unknowledgeable” actions of a small number of people caused a great deal of disruption, yet this was blamed on an external force. Despite this, people work hard on a daily basis to achieve aesthetically pleasing ways of living through thinking “good/beautiful” thoughts and behaving “with knowledge.” Having described the basis for “knowledgeable” behaviour. I shall now go on to explore Nivacle understandings of relatedness and how relationships are made and unmade within the context of the lived daily life.

Chapter 3: Understanding Relatedness

*Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or
face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than
the rest, some mood or passion or insight or
intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and
attractive to us – for that moment only.*

Virginia Woolf (1993)

The Crowded Dance of Modern Life

In the previous chapter I explored Nivacle understandings of “knowledge” as lived practice. “Knowledge” is an eminently social concept that is created in an organ located in the stomach known as the *cachi*. It is through the actions of feeding and caring that the *cachi* develops in the child and it begins to develop a social conscience and so transform from being animal-like into a “knowledgeable” human. In this chapter my aim is to explore the concept of “knowledge” as it pertains to Nivacle understandings of relatedness. I begin this chapter by considering Nivacle understandings of the kindred and how it relates to the concepts of “similarity” and “difference.” I then go on to consider Nivacle relationship terminology and the ways in which terms are applied in everyday conversation to emphasise either the “closeness” or the “distance” of particular relationships. I then consider how “similarity” and “difference” are expressed through the use of teknonyms and I show that whilst marriage initiates the use of affinal terms, feeding and caring for children develop what I describe as “kin-like” relations between co-resident affines. Finally, I describe the Nivacle worker-boss relationship through their use of the term *c’utsfa*, which means “commensal” or “companion in the action of eating.” Rather than perceive the worker-boss relationship under the rubric of hierarchy, I show how it is better conceived in terms of “friendship.”

The two “golden ages of kinship study,” as Godelier *et al* (1998:2) have phrased it, took place during two distinct periods. The first was during the early twentieth century through Lewis Henry Morgan’s evolutionary comparative work on the semantic patterning underlying kinship terminologies and the internal logic of kinship systems (1851, 1871, 1877) as well as through the works of Fustel de Coulanges (1980)[1864], Maine (1880)[1861] and Rivers (1913). The second heyday of British, French and American kinship studies took place in the 1960s, with notable publications of this era being the works of Fortes (1949) and Murdock (1949). The translation of Lévi-Strauss’s

The Elementary Structures of Kinship in 1969 generated a largely antagonistic reaction amongst British and American anthropologists. Notable exceptions to this trend, however, were the neo-Structuralist works of Needham (1971) and Leach (1970) in Britain, and Lounsbury (1964) and Goodenough (1964) in the United States. Many of the publications from this period focussed on “descent” versus “alliance” theory as well as differing attempts to formalise the study of kinship. In the early 1970s scepticism emerged in kinship studies. This scepticism was initiated by David Schneider (1965a; 1965b; 1968; 1972; 1984) and Rodney Needham (1971). Schneider adopted a relativistic approach and critiqued descent and alliance theories as well as the legitimacy of kinship studies as a whole. He also questioned the cross-cultural applicability of Euro-American assumptions regarding culture and biology that were an integral aspect of American folk models of kinship. He wrote: “kinship...is a non-subject since it does not correspond to any cultural category known to man” (1972:59). He also noted that,

Anthropology... is the study of particular cultures. The first task of anthropology, *prerequisite to all others* [original emphasis], is to understand and formulate the symbols and meanings and their configuration that a particular culture consists of.

Schneider (1984: 196)

Needham brought the epistemological groundings of kinship into question by claiming that, “there is no such thing as kinship and it follows that there can be no such thing as kinship theory” (1971: 5). Since the late 1980s and 1990s there has been a move away from analyses that aimed to understand kinship through static structures and models opposing the juro-political and domestic domains towards works that aimed to understand kinship contextually.

Whilst such critiques initially led to its demise, kinship studies later experienced a revival, with Schneider proclaiming that kinship in the 1990s had “risen from its ashes” (1995:193). Schweitzer (2000:1) called this epistemic shift a “rediscovery” of kinship studies. Since the 1990s, kinship studies had been incorporated into a wider post-modern movement that has sought to destabilize concepts such as ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ and incorporate into their analyses interpretations of personhood, gender, the body,

agency and aesthetics.¹ This move came in the wake of other epistemic shifts that were taking place in anthropology that had been driven, to a certain extent, by feminist critiques of anthropology,² ethics,³ theology,⁴ and psychoanalysis,⁵ as well as in the related disciplines of cultural studies and political science. Despite the fact that these works offered no united solution to “the problem of women,” with Jaggar’s Marxist feminist interpretation of female exploitation sitting rather uneasily alongside Irigaray’s stress on difference (*différence*) and the existence of a different female subjectivity, these critiques contributed towards a rethinking of the meaning and interpretation of kinship. Interest had shifted from a concern with the traditional discrete domains of economics, politics, kinship and religion towards a greater interest in lived practice, performance and discourse. As Schneider put it “the kinds of problems changed” (1995:193f). Social stability was no longer regarded as an issue. Later works emphasised the temporal nature of kinship and attempted to understand relatedness as a *lived process* rather than a rigid genealogical structure based on social stability.⁶ As Rapport and Overing (2000) have written,

Because kinship studies were the heartbeat of the discipline of anthropology, it is no wonder that ‘kinship’ can be dismantled as the emperor with no clothes, or rather the emperor fully clothed in grand-narrative imaginary dress

Rapport and Overing (2000:217)

In lowland South American studies the applicability of concepts widely used in kinship studies such as “descent” and “alliance” were first brought into question during the

¹ Carsten (2000:14) describes her work as “a post-Schneiderian comparative study of relatedness” and in her description talks about kinship as being about, “The lived experience of relatedness” (op. cit.: 1). Rosengren (1986:108) likewise explains that for the Matsigenka, relationship terminology system is more appropriate than kinship terminology system as the latter is too restrictive. Also see Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995), Godelier *et al* (1998), Gow (1991), Nuttall (1992), Overing (1989a; 1996), Schweitzer (2000) and Strathern (1992).

² See Moore (1988), Ortner (1996), Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) and Strathern (1988). Carsten (2000:18) writes that it was a stress on the performative rather than the biological bases of gender studies that reflect more recent publications in kinship studies.

³ Iris Marion Young (1990), for example, argues for a feminist appropriation of the phenomenological concept of the “lived body.” See also Gatens (1996) and Jaggar (1983).

⁴ See Bynum (1991) Daly (1973; 1984), Hampson (1990) and Hunt (1991) who, in different ways, critique the notion of a male gendered God and the patriarchal structures of the Christian faith.

⁵ See Butler (1990; 1993), Chodorow (1989) and Irigaray (1985a; 1985b), who sought to unfold the male biases inherent in Western psychoanalytic thought.

⁶ See, for example, Bodenhorn (2000a; 2000b), Carsten (1997; 2000), Ingold (1994), Nuttall (1992; 2000) and Overing (1998).

“Social Time and Social Space” symposium that was held in Paris in 1976.⁷ In the publication that emerged from the symposium, Goldman wrote how “an anthropological theory of descent must be rooted in its understanding of the native theory of descent, that is, of the generative process...Whatever is contained within the very broad dimensions of native theory must be taken account of, even in the service of our own necessarily reductive theories” (1977:182). Since then, there has been a gradual move towards understanding kinship not as a “given” but as something that is continually created and produced over time. Within lowland South American anthropology, those who had been influenced by the writings of Joanna Overing have emphasized the generative nature of kinship in this region and the fact that it is constantly being created through the everyday lived practices of feeding and caring.⁸ I shall now go on to describe Nivacle understandings of the kindred. Like Overing (2003) and Ingold (2000) (also see Chapter 1), my perspective is relational in the sense that my aim is to contextualise Nivacle kinship within the vast and tangled web of daily interaction.

3.1. *Napi Yi-Velhavot*: “Me and Others (Who Are Becoming) Like Me”

Nivacle understandings of relatedness are based on notions of similarity and difference that can be conceptualised as a sliding scale from “close kin” to “other.” Within this sliding scale, people differentiate between kin, affines, non-kin and others.⁹ Rivière (1984:71) and (1993:511) and Lepri (2003:145) have adopted the notion of “concentric dualisms” in order to express the way in which Amazonian relationships are conceptualised.¹⁰ Visually, these “concentric dualisms” take the form of a series of ever-decreasing circles.¹¹ The smallest circle in the middle indicates the closest relationship, which is that of “close” kin, whilst the largest outer circle denotes the most distant type of relationship, which is between people considered to be “other.” These circles operate as a reciprocal chain through which different forms of relatedness emerge. All the parts

⁷ See Overing Kaplan (ed) 1977.

⁸ See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Ellis (1996), Gow (1989; 1991), McCallum (1989; 2001), Kidd (1999) and Renshaw (1986; 2002).

⁹ Overing has written that amongst Amazonian peoples, “The recognition of [such] variation...in their emphasis upon social differentiation – or its suppression – takes one a long way in understanding variation in the social structures of the Amerindian groups under discussion” (1981:161).

¹⁰ See also Sahlins (1974).

¹¹ Rosengren (1996:4) describes the Matsigenka concept of relatedness as being built around concentric circles that “in principle...extend indefinitely outwards but the closer to the centre the stronger they are.”

are interlinked and people are able to move between spheres as relationships become closer or more distant. Similarity and difference are therefore not fixed or absolute categories, but should instead be understood as a sliding scale. The Nivacle personal kindred could also be expressed in this way, with different relationships constituting relatively unfixed positions on a sliding scale.¹² However, rather than conceptualise relationships in terms of definite ever-decreasing circles, I suggest that it may be more useful to think of Nivacle understandings of relatedness in terms of a spiral-shaped continuum where people approach and move away from different types of relationships rather than definitely move in and out of them.

The Nivacle concept of the kindred is encapsulated in the term *yi-velhavot*, which means “me and others like me” and encapsulates a sense of similarity between ego and those that he or she considers to be kin.¹³ On the other hand, the fact that it derives from the suffix *[-]elb*, meaning “the others” suggests an incorporation of “difference.”¹⁴ This is a sense of similarity whose intensity diminishes as one moves from “close” kin through to the category of “other.” I have included in the title of this section the notion that these others are “becoming like” ego. This is a central aspect of Nivacle understandings of relatedness in that these “others” are autonomous “others” who are becoming more like each other through mutual care. The kindred is therefore specific autonomous individuals who are in the process of becoming “similar” to each other yet not “the same.” This is a continual process that constantly creates and transforms relationships as old relationships die and new relationships begin to flourish.

The kindred is not conceived of as a corporate group.¹⁵ Instead, relatedness is reckoned bilaterally from the perspective of ego (*yivaatsha*). *Yi-velhavot* is an ego-centred noun that should be envisaged as a network of relationships that ego has created and nurtured over a period of time through behaving in “knowledgeable” ways that are “good/beautiful.” Nivacle relatedness is a matter of degree as it includes both “close” kin and “distant” kin.

¹² See also Gow, who writes that amongst the Piro “there is a sliding scale of kin from ‘real kin’ to ‘distant kin’ (*família lejana*)” (1991:164).

¹³ Another term for “kindred” is *fievot*, although this term is used infrequently. See Henley (1982) and Gow (1991) in the concept of “similarity” between autonomous individuals in Amazonia.

¹⁴ The Wichí (Palmer 1997:88) and the Enxet (Kidd 1999:78) also express a kinsperson as being “others” or “another.” Amongst the Araweté, relatives are described as being “others of the same kind” (Viveiros de Castro 1992:155). Alvarsson (1988:75f) writes that the Mataco term for kindred is *’o’i’yhaj tâ lhamén’hya* (“my-the others-closest”) and comprises ego’s consanguineal relatives.

¹⁵ See Overing (1975) and Rivière (1984:42) who both make a similar point for the Piaroa and Trio of the Guiana region. See also Rosengren (1996:4) who describes Matsigenka social organisation as “‘loose’ and flexible lacking permanent groups such as unilineal descent groups and moieties.”

Between these two variables there are “distant kin” (*velh*), “affines” (*ni-lha-velh-a*) and “non-kin” (*ni-lha-velh-a*). The term for a male kinsperson is *velh* and a female kinsperson is *velhche*.¹⁶ The term for “close kin” (*velh-a-elh-ch'e jô*) means “my kinsperson-the-others-it really is.” [-]jô is a suffix that is added to a noun or an adjective to create emphasis or intensity. For example, it can be added to the adjective “is” (“beautiful/pretty/clean”) to mean, “it really is beautiful/pretty/clean” (“is-jô”).¹⁷ It can be added to either kin or affinal terms to emphasise the intensity of the relationship. There is no special term for “affine.” Instead, affines and non-kin are referred to as *ni-lha-velh-a* (“non-kin”).¹⁸ There is also no term for “potential affine” due to the fact that there is no positive marriage rule,¹⁹ and non-kin, including spouses, are described as “those who are different” (*vena-lha*).²⁰ However, this is not a static relationship and once a married couple’s first child is born affines who are in day-to-day contact will begin to employ teknonyms, which is a reflection of the increasingly kin-like nature of their relationship.²¹

Those categorised as “Others” are humans that are not Nivacle. There is, however, no collective term for such people, with them instead being described in terms of ethnic group. An Enxet person is therefore known as a *yi'lbai* (M)/*yi'lbaiche* (F), a Mataco or Wichí is known as a *tinoi* (M)/*tinoiche* (F), a Choroti or Manjui is a *manuuc* (M)/*manche* (F) and a Mennonite, Paraguayan or any other indigenous person is a *samtô* (M)/*samtôque* (F). *Samtô* is a term that is used to refer to White people, including Mennonites, Paraguayans, Brazilians, Americans and Scottish people. Like the terms for other indigenous peoples, it is also coterminous with the dangerous other, with such people being characterized as stingy, greedy and asocial.²² However, like all other relationship categories, a *samtô* can also be transformed into a safe similar through the generative acts of feeding and caring that I shall describe below.

¹⁶ Your kinsman/woman is *a-velh/velhche*, his/her kinsman/kinswoman is *lha-velh/velhche*, our kinsman/kinswoman is *cas-velh/velhche* and their kinsman/kinswoman is *vat-velh/velhche*.

¹⁷ See Gow (1991:162ff) who describes how the Piro use the term “real kin” (*familia legitima*), where emphasis is placed on the “real” nature of the relationship between the linking relatives. Gow writes: “What is most important is that the linking kin are all real kin to each other, and the emphasis is on ties of parenthood and siblingship” (1991:163). See also Alvarsson (1988:75) who writes that the Mataco use the term “*o'i'ybhaj tá lhamén'hya*,” which means “my-the others-closest”, which is clearly similar to the abovementioned Nivacle term. See also Rivière (1984:31-2).

¹⁸ Rivière (1984:42) notes a similar absence of a collective term for “affines” in Guiana. Amongst the Nivacle, however, this is not an aspect of their conception of the community as a co-resident group of kin.

¹⁹ C.f. Renshaw (2002:210).

²⁰ This term appears similar to the Wichí term *we'nathlamej* that they use to refer to affines (Palmer 1997:116).

²¹ See the section below on teknonyms and Chapter 5 on marriage.

²² See Overing (1985c).

A person with a lot of kin is said to be *ijôt'aj-sham*. This term literally translates as “to be strong together.” The root *ijôt'aj* means, “to be strong” and can be used to refer to a post that is really strong or a person who is fat and healthy. A kinsperson is someone who is trustworthy and who shows their love by being kind, caring and nurturing “*is-sha'ne*” (“beautiful person”). An *is-sha'ne* is someone who is *ni ya'-tsop-a* (generous, lit: “he/she doesn’t just give a drop”), who never forgets their kin, and who is content and always wants to help them. Someone who behaves in a particularly warm and generous manner can be said to be *velhinajô* (M) or *velbchenja* (F) (“behaving like kin”). The opposite of being kin-like is someone who is *vatvenchat* (individualistic and uncooperative) or *nintachifai* (“not co-resident-like”). However, Nivacle kin terms are not absolute and whether a person is said to be one’s “close” kin or “distant” kin is a matter of opinion and can reflect the present state of the relationship as well as the way that one aspires the relationship to be. Generally speaking, “close” kin are those with whom one cooperates on a day-to-day basis, whilst a kinsperson who one rarely visits will be “distant kin.” Gow writes that amongst the Piro, “Distant kin, both as a category and in social practice, stand midway between real kin and strangers” (1991:171). However, it should also be borne in mind that “distant” kin, like all other relationships, always has the potential to be reactivated just as “close kin” can become “distant kin” over time. No relationship is static and if relationships are not practiced then they do not exist.

In everyday conversation, however, people very rarely use relationship terms, preferring instead to use personal names. People would generally only use relationship terms if they wanted to create a particular kind of emphasis, with terminological choices always being dependant on context. Rosengren (1987a: 166) writes that amongst the Matsigenka, it is not the terminology that creates the relationship, but rather it is the term that reflects the state of a particular relationship between two people at a particular point in time. He writes,

The relation upheld between particular individuals may over time undergo changes that warrant a redefinition of that relationship. Such changes can be accompanied by a change of the relationship term(s) used to address and refer to each other but it is not the terms that create the new relations.

Gow (1991) reports a similar situation amongst the Piro. Whilst full siblings are often reckoned to be the “realest of real kin,” people will sometimes extend their reckoning of “real kin” beyond this boundary. He writes, “people usually reckon far further out as the limits of real kin” (1991:163). Relationships are therefore being constantly negotiated and there is no fixed form to the kindred. People’s genealogical knowledge was also shallow due to the Nivacle stress on visual knowledge and this also placed limits on the lateral width of their kinship reckoning.²³ However, as Gow (1991:151) has stressed, this “shallow time frame” does not indicate a “lack” of something else. Rather, it stresses the importance of visual “knowledge” developed through personal lived experience and practice. He writes,

The shallow time frame of these societies is not a product of their failure to accumulate information in deep genealogies, but rather their stress on personal experience in epistemology.

Gow (1991:151)

Amongst the Nivacle, this can also be attributed to people’s unwillingness to mention the names of the dead and thus evoke memories of them. During my fieldwork people would often deny ever having met certain people through fear of mentioning their name. One day I had bought a book compiled by the Mennonites that was a photographic collection depicting the history of the Mennonite-Indian development board. In it was a photograph of the father of one of my older friends. His father had worked as a translator with one of the early Mennonite missionaries and I had bought the book for him in Filadelfia as a present. As we were flicking through the pages later on, I thought that he would be delighted to see the photograph of his late father sitting translating the Bible with the late missionary Jakob Franz. My enthusiasm, however, was met with silence and I assumed that perhaps he had already seen the photo many times before and so he was not interested in seeing it again. I later discovered, however, that people disliked looking at photos of dead people as it made them remember them (*yi-tôi-ch’è* “it made him/her know again”) and thus made them sad (*tacshin-in*). People would usually

²³ See Rosengren (1986:113), who refers to this as “genealogical amnesia.” See also Kidd (1999:80) and Gow (1991:151) who reports a similar significance of vision in determining genealogical knowledge for the Enxet and Piro respectively.

use a pen or other sharp object to scribble out the faces of any dead people who were in photographs. Thus, whilst I had thought that showing my friend the photo of his father would make him happy in that it would evoke fond memories, it actually had the opposite effect, as he could not look at it. Whilst living kin are people who should be looked at and remembered, dead people should neither be looked at nor their memory be evoked.

I was also told that further collective terms for kinspeople existed such as *cavtsuj*, which is a term used by women to refer to all their male kin.²⁴ I was told, “This term is especially for women. A man cannot use this term because he is a man as well.” I was told that the feminine version of this term was *carvejcloi*, which refers to all female kin and can only be used by a man.²⁵ The only place that I heard these collective terms being used was during the Nivacle evangelical church services when the pastor or preacher would address the congregation as “*napi yi-cajtsjoi shi napi velbche?*” (“My brothers and kinswomen”). People would tell me that during church services, the preacher was brother or sister to everyone. However, in everyday conversation I very seldom heard people talking about “groups” of kin. This reflects Nivacle understandings of kinship, which are always reckoned from the perspective of ego and so are conceived of in terms of personal relationships rather than as static, solid “groups.”

Mendoza (1999:87) reports that amongst the Argentine Toba, kinship is reckoned on the basis of band membership and that a person should not marry a member of his or her own band. I found, however, that in everyday conversation people very rarely spoke in terms of bands, clans or moieties and that marriage decisions were never said to have been made on the basis of any form of group affiliation. I am also unaware of any Nivacle term that would refer to groupings such as “clan” or “band.” Sifreddi (1997) has written that the *Jotoi Lhavos* (“the People of the Open Grasslands”) are divided into two patrilineal exogamous groups called the *Kustáx* and the *Nichaclavót*. During my fieldwork, I asked several of my friends about these groupings but nobody that I spoke to had heard of these two groupings. Instead, people would stress the fact that the Nivacle all lived together (*ve'lba sham*) in the Mennonite Colonies and that they were a

²⁴ This term translates literally as “my males” as it is derived from the term *yitsuuj*, which can refer to a male person or a male animal. The prefix *cav[-]* can be translated as “my.”

²⁵ This term translates literally as “my females” as it derives from the term *ôjjectojj*, which can refer to a female person or a female animal. The prefix *cav[-]* can be translated as “my.”

“mixed” people now. Despite this, they would also on occasions identify themselves according to earlier territorial groupings (for example, as *Jotoi Lhavos* (People of the Open Grasslands), *C’utjan Lhavos* (People of the Thorns) and *Shichamnee Lhavos* (Upriver People). However, it was also never suggested that these were corporate groups and individuals would usually only stress these divisions during intra-community conflicts when they wanted to separate themselves from other members of the community.²⁶

Rather like the use of relationship terminologies, people’s choice of territorial category would vary depending on the nature of the relationship they wanted to emphasise during that particular moment. In some instances people would laugh when I asked them whether they were *Jotoi Lhavos*, saying instead that they were *Campo Loa Lhavos* (“the people of Campo Loa”). In another instance when I asked a middle-aged man who the *Yitac Lhavos* (“the people of the forest”) were, he replied that the *Yitac Lhavos* no longer existed, as the *Nivacle* no longer lived in the forest. “It is the *Ayoreo* (*japi Matqu’iyônô*) who are the forest people. We have clothes now, we are not like them” he replied. I also found that people would laugh whenever I asked who the *C’utjan Lhavos* (the people of the thorns) were, as though it was not a very attractive name to have. In other instances, people would use these territorial categories to differentiate themselves from others. Despite having lived in the Mennonite Colonies alongside *Jotoi Lhavos* all his married life, José would continually describe himself as a *Tovoc Lhavo’* (person from the *Pilcomayo* River), and that he “didn’t know what it was with the people from here [meaning the *jotoi lhavos*]. They’re very closed. They’re not like us; we always shared everything and we always wanted to invite people over – have big festivals. Here, they don’t do anything.” This was a way for him to differentiate himself from the rest of the community whenever he was not in agreement with a decision that had taken place or the action of one of the leaders. Conversely, during other moments he would quite happily state that he was a *Campo Loa Lhavo’*.

Whilst there were large numbers of people in a community with the same Spanish or Mennonite German surname, no reference was ever made to them constituting an extended family or “clan” or that they were in any way similar. *Nivacle* people had adopted the conventional Paraguayan custom of using the father’s surname followed by the mother’s surname, with a married woman using her father’s surname followed by her

²⁶ See Chapter 7 for a discussion of community and inter-community divisions.

husband's father's surname. People were always anxious to provide me with the complete surname of a person as an expression of the specific connections between different types of people within the community. There was also no emphasis on people with the same surname living close to one another, as would usually be scattered throughout the community and the colony. Several people explained that the Nivacle got their surnames from their Mennonite bosses (*c'utsfas*). One man told me, "It's a disaster. For example, if the boss was called Martínez, then everyone has got the surname Martínez." Another man provided a slightly different version of the difference between German and Spanish surnames in the community by connecting them to the first Catholic Baptisms that took place during the 1960s. He explained that when the first Nivacle were Baptised at the mission station in Mariscal Estigarribia, they were all required to have Godparents (*padrinos*). These needed to be people who had already been baptised, so after they had been baptised people would just adopt the Spanish surnames of their Paraguayan *padrinos*. He explained:

We're all Catholic here. Everyone. Some people in San Miguel are *Evangelicos* (Mennonite Evangelicals) because they used to live in Colonia 22 where there were Mennonite missionaries. We were baptised when we became Christians. Since then people took the same surname as their Godfather. There were only Paraguayans over there in Mariscal. So, the first people to be baptised took the surname of their Paraguayan godfather. But, if someone wasn't baptised and their Mennonite boss was called Duerksen, they were also called Duerksen. If their boss was called Hildebrandt, then they were also called Hildebrandt.

The assigning of surnames to indigenous people was also the result of a movement made by the Asociación de Parcialidades Indígenas (API) in 1974/5 to record *nombres bautisados* (Baptismal names) to all indigenous people. Despite surnames being described to me as having been acquired in a fairly haphazard manner, people would sometimes use surnames as a basis for establishing whether two people were kin or not and therefore eligible to marry. Two people with the same surname were once described to me as being "companions" (*compañeros*), with the implication being that they were not considered marriageable. However, people also knew if two people with the same

surname were not kin and would describe them as *vena-lba* (“those who are different”) or *otra gente* (“other people”). In the following section I examine the Nivacle relationship terminology in greater detail and consider the ways in which “similarity” and “difference” are expressed through the idioms of kinship, affinity and otherness.

3.2. Nivacle Relationship Terminology

In this section I have chosen to use the term “relationship” rather than “kinship terminology” because, like Carsten *et al* (2000) and Rosengren (1987a: 108), my discussion centers not on how the Nivacle express their relationships in genealogical terms, but rather on how relatedness is expressed as a lived experiential form of knowing and feeling. Much of the literature on relationship terminologies for the peoples of the Gran Chaco has tended to categorize them as being either Hawaiian²⁷ or Dravidian and Hawaiian.²⁸ There are two writings to date that provide a detailed examination of Nivacle relationship terminologies. The first is the work of Wicke & Chase-Sardi (1969), who adopt Goodenough’s (1964; 1967) componential analysis of relationship terminologies. The second is the work of Renshaw (1986; 2002) who based his interpretation of Nivacle kinship terminologies on the data provided by Wicke & Chase-Sardi in the aforementioned articles. Amongst the neighbouring Mataco or Wichí there are the works of Alvarsson (1988) and Palmer (1997), whilst the best source amongst the neighbouring Enxet is the work of Kidd (1999). Kidd (1999:83) has argued that despite Enxet kinship terminology having the appearance of a Dravidian model, it would be incorrect to characterise it as such due to the fact that it is not a marriage classificatory system. In the literature on kinship terminology in Amazonian societies, Dumont’s model of Dravidian kinship (1953) as a marriage classificatory system has been widely applied to the kinship terminology of these peoples.²⁹ However, despite the widespread applicability of the two-line prescriptive Dumontian model to much of lowland South America, it is inapplicable to most Chaco peoples.³⁰

²⁷ See, for example, Alvarsson (1988:87), Miller (1966) and Renshaw (1986; 2002).

²⁸ See Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969).

²⁹ See, for example, Fausto (1995), Overing Kaplan (1975; 1984), Rivière (1969; 1984; 1993), Taylor (1998), and Viveiros de Castro (1998).

³⁰ The only exception is Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:187) who have argued that the Nivacle kinship terminology possesses both Dravidian and Hawaiian characteristics. Whilst I would agree that this

Overing (1987) has argued that structuralist approaches to the study of kinship terms have confused method with world-view and that we need to remain mindful of the ways in which kinship terms are used in practice rather than over-interpret them to fit a model. Returning once again to Ingold's critique of the genealogical approach to relatedness which is an "inert and timeless, two-dimensional substrate" (2000:149), relationship terms should be understood "as an immense tangle of interlaced trails – an all-encompassing rhizome – which is continually raveling here, and unraveling there, as the beginnings of which it is composed grow, or 'issue forth', along the lines of their relationship" (Ibid.). Whilst it might be tempting to apply relationship terminology models to the Nivacle case, it must be borne in mind that their applicability to everyday social life is often highly limited. For example, writings on the Eskimo terminology model stress the significance of the nuclear family and identify only the mother, father, brothers, sisters, and direct descendents. In Nivacle lived social life such distinctions were very rarely so clear-cut with emphasis often being focused on the nurturing role of parents, parents' siblings and ego's siblings.

The Nivacle kinship terminology consists of both kin and affinal terms, is bilateral and terms are used for both reference and address³¹. As mentioned above, kin are referred to as *yi-velb* (Pl. *yi-velbavot*) and affines as *ni-lba-velb-a* ("non-kin"). Although both male and female speakers can use most of the kin and affinal terms, there are certain terms (particularly those of ego's generation and the second descending generation (G-2)) that are specific to either male or female speakers. Tables 3.1. and 3.2. summarize Nivacle kin terms and their corresponding genealogical denotata (Goodenough 1967) according to male and female egos respectively. Nivacle relationship terms are what Seelwische (1975:51) calls relational nouns (*sustantivos relacionados*) and as such they require the use of possessive pronominal prefixes in order to indicate to whom they refer. The prefixes are: *yi[-]* meaning "my"; *a[-]* meaning "your"; *lb[-]* or *lba[-]*; and *cas[-]*, *cats[-]* or *catsi[-]* meaning "our."³² Whilst first names were used most regularly in everyday

generation displays Hawaiian traits, the fact that it is not a marriage classificatory system means that it cannot be Dravidian.

³¹ See Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:186) and Renshaw (2002:209) for Nivacle terminologies. For other areas of lowland South America see Overing Kaplan (1975), Rivière (1984) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:142). C.f. Rosengren (1987a:115) for the Matsigenka two-line prescriptive system where no such terminological distinction exists between "consanguines" and "affines."

³² See Witherspoon and Peterson (1995:11) who describe a similar use of possessive pronominal prefixes amongst the Navajo. They explain that "kinship by its very nature is relational, and kinspeople as well as

communication,³³ relationship terms were often employed as a way in which to express the current status of a particular relationship between specific individuals and as such that also have a moral weight. Seelwische (1975:50) translates the above Spanish term *relacionados* (relational) into the Nivacle term *tantsóôtjai*. This term is derived from the intransitive verb *tsót'aj*, which means “to have lots of kin” or “to be straight.” Nivacle relationships are always in the process of becoming *tsót'aj*, or “straight,” through the “knowledgeable” acts of autonomous individuals. For ease of presentation I have noted relationship terms without the pronominal prefixes in the singular. It should be stressed, however, that these nouns would never be expressed in such a way. I have restricted the generational limits of the Table to (G+2) and (G-2), as (G+3) and (G-3) and beyond are identical to (G+2) and (G-2).

At first glance, Nivacle kinship terminology appears to possess “Hawaiian” (or “generational”, which Geertz (1973:372) describes as “a layer-cake arrangement of relatives,” as well as certain “Eskimo” characteristics.³⁴ Ego’s generation as well as in the second ascending (G+2) and second descending (G-2) generations display Hawaiian characteristics as the only terminological differentiation that exists is between the sexes.³⁵ In the first ascending (G+1) and first descending (G-1) generations, Eskimo characteristics are evident, with a distinction being made between ego’s parents and parents’ siblings and ego’s children and sibling’s children, who are further distinguished according to gender. However, despite the congruencies between these two formal systems and Nivacle relationship terminology, it would be inaccurate to interpret the purely formal nature of Nivacle kin terms too literally.

A significant aspect of the use of kin terms as a form of address is the fact that only very specific terms are used in everyday life as a form of address, the most common ones being “mother” (“*mimí*”, which is often shortened to “*mí*”) and “father” (“*tata*”, which is usually shortened to “*ta*”). Other terms are used mainly as a form of reference and even

kin categories cannot be detached from those people and categories to which they are related.” (Ibid.). However, in contrast to the Navajo, the Nivacle language does not have a way of talking about groups in a hypothetical manner. Nivacle relationships can be discussed in the plural, but always in terms of a specific plurality. Also see Rosengren (1996:4) who writes that the Matsigenka perceive others from an ego-centred perspective and that their continuation depends upon ego’s ability to maintain them.

³³ See Viveiros de Castro (1992:143).

³⁴ Alvarsson notes that the Bolivian Mataco relationship terminology is “probably a variant of a ‘Hawaiian’ generational terminology” (1988:87).

³⁵ This point is agreed upon by Wicke & Chase-Sardi who describe “the complete bilaterality and symmetry of the consanguineal terms...and the rigid differentiation of the generations” (1969:185).

then people prefer using a person's personal name or nickname. The only situation where this differs is in the use of teknonyms, where affinity is underplayed and kinship and intimacy are stressed (see below). It should be noted that the tables below are not intended to be carbon copies of the way the Nivacle structure their social world as it is crucial to understand the affective dynamics behind the use of relationship terms and people's motives for employing the ones they do. This shall be discussed in the following section.

Table 3.1. Nivacle Kin Terminology for Male Ego

	TERM	DENOTATA
+2	<i>ct'eech</i> <i>ct'e</i>	FF, MF, FFB, MFB, FMB, MMB FM, MM, FMZ, MMZ, FFZ, MFZ
+1	<i>mimi</i> <i>tata</i> <i>tjo'oc</i> <i>t'oj</i>	M F FB, MB, FMZS, FFZS, MFBS, MMZS FZ, MZ, FMZD, FFZD, MFBD, MMZD, etc.
0	<i>checlaa</i> <i>chita'</i> <i>ch'inish</i> <i>ch'injô</i>	Be, FBSe, FZSe, MBSe, MZSe Ze, FBDe, FZDe, MBDe, MZDe By, FBSy, FZSy, MBSy, MZSy Zy, FBDy, MZDy, MBDy, MZDy
-1	<i>aôs</i> <i>ôse</i> <i>facl'a</i> <i>facchee</i>	S D BS, ZS, MZDS, MBDS, FZSS, FBDS BD, ZD, MZDD, MBDD, FZSD, FBDD, etc.
-2	<i>ntôcshich'a</i> <i>ntôclishchee</i>	SS, DS, BSS, BDS, ZSS, ZDS SD, DD, BSD, BDD, ZSD, ZDD

Key

F	Father
M	Mother
Be	Elder Brother
By	Younger Brother
Ze	Elder Sister
Zy	Younger Sister
S	Son
D	Daughter

Table 3.2. Nivacle Kin Terminology for Female Ego

	TERM	DENOTATA
+2	<i>ct'eech</i> <i>ct'e</i>	FF, MF, FFB, MFB, FMB, MMB FM, MM, FMZ, MMZ, FFZ, MFZ
+1	<i>mimi</i> <i>tata</i> <i>tjo'oc</i> <i>t'oj</i>	M F FB, MB, FMZS, FFZS, MFBS, MMZS FZ, MZ, FMZD, FFZD, MFBD, MMZD, etc.
0	<i>checlaa</i> <i>chita'</i> <i>ch'inish</i> <i>ch'injô</i>	Be, FBSe, FZSe, MBSe, MZSe Ze, FBDe, FZDe, MBDe, MZDe By, FBSy, FZSy, MBSy, MZSy Zy, FBDy, MZDy, MBDe, MZDy
-1	<i>aôs</i> <i>ôse</i> <i>facl'a</i> <i>facchee</i>	S D BS, ZS, MZDS, MBDS, FZSS, FBDS BD, ZD, MZDD, MBDD, FZSD, FBDD, etc.
-2	<i>nôôtsich'a</i> <i>nots'ôjquee</i>	SS, DS, BSS, BDS, ZSS, ZDS SD, DD, BSD, BDD, ZSD, ZDD

In the second ascending generation (G+2) the only differentiation that is made is in terms of gender, with grandfather and all his same generation siblings and cousins being referred to as *ct'eech*, whilst grandmother and all her same generation siblings and cousins are referred to as *ct'e*. These terms are also used to refer to grandparents' spouses as well as everyone of the third ascending generation (G+3). Kin and affines of this generation are therefore referred to using the same term, with the only distinction made being that of gender.³⁶ These terms are also used for the next ascending generation. Whilst it seems that this generation possesses Hawaiian characteristics, with the only differentiation being in terms of gender, there are also terms of endearment that are used by grandchildren towards their grandparents. Grandfathers are usually known affectionately by their grandchildren as *tsutsu*, *chuchu* or *chu*, whilst grandmothers are known as *yaya* or *ya*.

Kin of the first ascending generation (G+1) can also be referred to collectively as *nôvot* or as *flevot*. However, a distinction is made between ego's mother and father and ego's

³⁶ See also Métraux (1946:311) who writes, "the Mataco, the Tereno and the Pilagá...distinguish grandparents according to sex, and extend these terms to include all the grandparents' siblings and spouses." See also Rosengren (1987a: 113) who notes a similar merging of (G+2) and (G+3) terms amongst the Matsigenka.

parents' siblings.³⁷ Such a distinction could be said to be due, in part, to the high degree of intimacy in the parent-child relationship. However, this relationship is not so clear-cut as their grandparents or parents' siblings often brought up children, particularly if their mother already had a lot of young children in her household. Such female kin would be said to be "helping" (*efen*) their daughter or sister. These women will often be said to be "*mimi-esb*" ("behaving like a mother"), or "*yi-mimi*" ("my mother") rather than "*yi-l'oj*" ("my aunt"), if the relationship was particularly close. I have noted a similar situation with adopted children and in one case, whilst the adopted child referred to his adopted parents as *tata* and *mimi*, he called his "biological" mother by her first name whenever she came to visit him. Likewise, whilst affinal terms do exist for stepfather (*njayôs'a*) and stepmother (*njaotso'a*), adopted children would normally refer to their adoptive parent(s) as *mimi* and *tata*, particularly if they were adopted at a young age.³⁸ An orphan is known as a *shincheej*, a term that also refers to a soul without an owner that is particularly malevolent and seeks revenge. It was not, however, clear to me whether people made a direct connection between the situation of an orphan and the malevolency of the spirit. Although I did not know of any orphans, I was told that they would also use the terms for stepparents or parents depending on the closeness of the relationship.

The Nivacle term for "ego" is *yivaatsha*, which translates as "me." It can also be used to refer to personal property, where one can declare *yivaatsha!*, meaning "it's mine!" Kin terms in ego's generation are merged so that the only distinction between ego's siblings and cousins is in terms of relative age and gender.³⁹ The term *yi-checlaa* ("my elder brother") is used both for one's "real" elder brother as well as for the son of the siblings of one's father or mother who is older than ego. Similarly, the term *yi-ch'injô* ("my younger sister") can be used both for one's "real" younger sister as well as for the daughter of the siblings of one's father or mother who is relatively older than ego.⁴⁰ As I shall explain in Chapter 4, it is common for siblings in the latter stages of the

³⁷ See also Métraux (1946:311) who also recorded that Chaco peoples "have special terms for uncle and aunt, but do not distinguish between the siblings of either parent." Kidd (1999:84), however, reports that amongst the Enxet a distinction is made between ego's parents' spouses into FB, FZ, MB and MZ.

³⁸ This has also been noted by Renshaw (2002:212)

³⁹ See also Kidd (1999:86) and Renshaw (1986:257) who have both noted that age is relative to the speaker amongst other Chaco peoples. Also see Belaunde (1992:47) and Viveiros de Castro (1992:164) for a similar terminological distinction amongst the Airo-Pai and Araweté respectively. Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:187) and Renshaw (1986:353ff) note a similar differentiation according to sex for older and younger siblings.

⁴⁰ See Miller (1966:199) who notes that amongst the Toba, the distinction between elder and younger sibling seems to be disappearing with the passage of time.

“Development Cycle of the Household” to want to live near each other. The result is that cousins will often end up spending a great deal of time together with their relationship being just as close as that between “real” siblings.⁴¹ No distinction is made between cross cousins and parallel cousins. If someone wished to differentiate between siblings and cousins then they could use the suffix [-]jô to emphasise the intensity of the relationship, although this suffix can also be used to emphasise intimacy between “close” kin. The relationship between an elder sister and her younger brother and an elder brother and his younger sister was considered to be particularly close, and people would often employ specific terms of endearment. An elder sister would often refer to her younger brother as *yi-onaj*, whilst an elder brother would refer to his younger sister as *yi-sunja*. These have no reciprocal terms. I often heard these terms being used during my fieldwork, particularly when the speaker wished to emphasize the loving nature of the relationship that he or she shared with their younger sibling. On one occasion when I was carrying out my census, one woman that I had understood to be the elder sister of the leader of the community’s came over to me and explained that the leader was her *onaj*, and not simply her *ch’inish*, as she had been “like a mother” (*mimi-esb*) to him when he was a child. The love that an elder sister expresses towards her younger brother is therefore due, in part, to the care that they have bestowed on them when they were children helping their mothers.

As with the first ascending generation (G+1), a distinction is made at the first descending generation (G-1) between ego’s children and ego’s siblings’ children. Whilst one’s son and daughter are called *aôs* and *ôse* respectively, one’s siblings’ son and daughter are referred to as *fac’la* and *facbee*. This gendered distinction at (G+1) and (G-1) appears to be relatively common amongst Chaco peoples.⁴²

The terms used in the second descending generation are the only ones that differ according to whether the speaker is male or female. Whilst a grandfather would address

⁴¹ Miller observes a similar situation amongst the Argentine Toba. He writes,
 The merging of lineal and collateral kin in Ego’s generation is also consistent with the extended family structure. While siblings are separated from cousins in the households, intermingling occurs daily, and Ego’s association with and feelings toward a sibling are not essentially different from those toward a cousin. In fact, cousins of similar ages may actually associate more than siblings of variant ages (1966:198).

⁴² See, for example, Alvarsson 1988:81ff, Renshaw (1986:351ff) and Palmer (1997:88), although Kidd (1999:88) records its absence amongst the Enxet. As with the Mataco (Alvarsson op. cit.), no distinction is made between older and younger offspring in these generational levels.

and refer to his grandson as *ntôschib'a* and his granddaughter as *ntôclishbee*, a grandmother would use the terms *nôôtsich'a* and *nots'ôjquee*. Such terms are also extended to the third descending generation (G-3) and maintain their gendered distinction.

Table 3.3. Nivacle Affinal Terminology for Male Ego

	TERM	DENOTATA
+2	<i>ni lha-velh-a</i> <i>ni lha-velhche-a</i>	All male affines All female affines
+1	<i>cact'ech</i> <i>cact'e</i> <i>njayôs'a</i> <i>njôtsôô</i> <i>ni lha-velh-a</i> <i>ni lha-velhche-a</i>	WF WM Stepfather Stepmother All other male affines All other female affines
0	<i>ch'acfa</i> <i>ja'ya</i> <i>fac'u</i> <i>facis'a</i> <i>cavtjoc</i> <i>cavt'oj</i> <i>ni lha-velh-a</i> <i>ni lha-velhche-a</i>	W W ZeH, ZyH BeW, ByW WBe, WBy, WFBS, WMBS WZe, Wzy, WFBD, WMBD All other male affines All other female affines
-1	<i>tômit'a</i> <i>tômite'e</i> <i>atsanach</i> <i>atsanche</i> <i>ni lha-velh-a</i> <i>ni lha-velhche-a</i>	DH SW Stepson Stepdaughter All other male affines All other female affines
-2	<i>ni lha-velh-a</i> <i>ni lha-velhche-a</i>	All male affines All female affines

Key

F	Father
M	Mother
H	Husband
W	Wife
Be	Elder Brother
By	Younger Brother
Ze	Elder Sister
Zy	Younger Sister
S	Son
D	Daughter

Table 3.4. Nivacle Affinal Terminology for Female Ego

	TERM	DENOTATA
+2	<i>ni lba-velh-a</i> <i>ni lba-velhche-a</i>	All male affines All female affines
+1	<i>cact'ech</i> <i>cact'e</i> <i>njayôs'a</i> <i>njôtsôô</i> <i>ni lba-velh-a</i> <i>ni lba-velhche-a</i>	HF HM Stepfather Stepmother All other male affines All other female affines
0	<i>ch'acfa</i> <i>ja'ya</i> <i>fac'l'u</i> <i>fac'lis'a</i> <i>cavtjoc</i> <i>cavt'oj</i> <i>ni lba-velh-a</i> <i>ni lba-velhche-a</i>	H H ZeH, ZyH BeW, ByW HBe, HBy, HFBS, HMBS HZe, HZy, HFBD, HMBD All other male affines All other female affines
-1	<i>tômît'a</i> <i>tômîte'e</i> <i>atsanach</i> <i>atsanche</i> <i>ni lba-velh-a</i> <i>ni lba-velhche-a</i>	DH SW Stepson Stepdaughter All other male affines All other female affines
-2	<i>ni lba-velh-a</i> <i>ni lba-velhche-a</i>	All male affines All female affines

Nivacle affinal terminology also maintains a gendered distinction in each generation. People considered to be ego's affines are either the kin of ego's spouse (*covot'ojovot*) or the spouses of ego's kin and affinal terms are identical for both male and female ego. Regardless of their age or whether they reside virilocally, uxorilocally or neolocally, most people will usually live in the same community of a great many of their affines. In view of the negative marriage rule that one must not marry a kinsperson (see Chapter 5), it is perhaps unsurprising that the generic term for affine is *ni lba-velh-a* ("non-kin"), which applies both to the spouses of one's kin as well as the kin of one's spouse. A further aspect of the negative marriage rule is that, unlike the Dravidian model, the category of "potential affine" does not exist as there is no rule to govern who one should marry.⁴³

⁴³ C.f. Renshaw who describes Nivacle affines as "a residual category that includes real affines, potential affines, the affines of one's consanguineal kin, and anyone else with whom one is unable to trace ties of kinship" (2002:210).

Spouses are also *ni lba-velb-a* (“non kin”). The terms for spouse are used for reference but rarely as a form of address. They are identical for both men and women, with the only difference being the possessive pronominal prefix, which is gendered. A husband would therefore use the feminine prefix *lba[-]*, whilst his wife would use the masculine prefix *na[-]*. Two terms exist for spouse and the one that is employed will depend on whether the married couple have a child or not. Spouses without children refer to each other as *ja’ya*, a term that derives from the intransitive verb *ja’yai* “to be married.” A couple with children are also said to be *ja’yai*, although the term that they then use to refer to each other is *ch’acfa*. Whilst prefixes vary according to the person in question, the terms for spouses do not change. Thus “my husband/wife” is *yi-ja’ya/yi-ch’acfa*, “your husband/wife” is *a-ja’ya/a-ch’acfa* and “his wife/her husband” is *lba-ja’ya/lba-ch’acfa*.⁴⁴ People were very careful to use the appropriate term to refer to a couple. As I shall explain below, this is because the relationship between spouses and affines becomes more kin-like following the birth of children and is reflected through the use of teknonyms between co-resident affines.

As can be observed from Tables 3.3. and 3.4., the kin of one’s spouse, including WF, WM, WBe and WZy, are differentiated from the spouses of one’s close kin in ego’s generation (0) and the first descending generation (G-1) including ZeH, BeW, DH and SW, and all affines are also distinguished according to gender.⁴⁵ Whilst there is a prohibition on marrying one’s kin, there is no prohibition on marrying one’s BWZ or one’s ZHB. There were several marriages of this nature in Jotoicha, usually between two sisters and two brothers. It is this residential set-up that afford parents-in-law the chance to establish fairly close relationships through the mutual care of their grandchildren. It should be noted that there is a similarity between the term for brother-in-law (*fac’u*) and nephew (*fac’a*) and, to a lesser extent, between the terms for sister-in-law (*fac’is’a*) and niece (*fac’be*). The relationship between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law is ideally characterised by a great deal of informality and affection and this is also the case between aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews. In many cases aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews were of a similar age and would play together as children and spend a great deal of their time together as adults. In some cases there were also cross-generational marriages, although not between “close kin” such as one’s ZD, ZS, BD or BS as these

⁴⁴ Kidd (1999:89) notes that this point had not been clarified in the work of either Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:490) or Renshaw (1986, 2002).

⁴⁵ See also Renshaw (2002:268).

relationships would still be deemed too “close.” Marriage would ideally only take place between individuals for whom there were at least two degrees of collaterality, although there was no hard and fast rule on this.

A similar terminological transformation appears to take place with the terms for brother-in-law (*cavtjoc*) and sister-in-law (*cavtʃ*) and the kin terms for FB/MB (*tjoʻoc*) and FZ/MZ (*tʻoc*). The feature that distinguishes these two terms is the inclusion of the prefix *cav[-]* before the two affinal terms. This prefix does display certain similarities with the above infix *[-]ca[-]* and it could be possible to translate it as “my own.” Alvarsson explains that the relationship between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law is one of respect, just like that which is shown toward one’s parents-in-law. He also notes a similarity between the Mataco term for brother-in-law and sister-in-law and the term for “aunt” and suggests that “The same kind of respect as towards parents-in-law may thus be assumed to govern the relationship between ego and his/her sisters-in-law” (1988:85). I never observed any kind of reserve between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, although reservation levels would usually depend on the length of time one has spent living in a particular household. There is also a similarity between the terms for father-in-law (*cactʻech*) and mother-in-law (*cactʻe*) and the terms mentioned previously for grandfather (*ctʻech*) and grandmother (*ctʻe*). The only feature that distinguishes these terms is the inclusion of the infix *[-]ca[-]*. This appears to be a reasonably widespread feature of Chaco relationship terminologies, having been noted by Alvarsson (1988:85) and Palmer (1997:109) amongst the Wichí and Kidd (1999:90) amongst the Enxet. Alvarsson (op. cit.) reports that the Wichí term for mother-in-law could be translated literally as “she-who-is-like-my-own-grandmother” as affines become what he terms “pseudo-consanguineal” kin through marriage.⁴⁶ Whilst the Nivacle infix *[-]ca[-]* could likewise be translated as “my own,” with the prefix *cav[-]* being used before the term for “relative” (*cavtsuj*), like Kidd (op. cit.), I would be reluctant to make such a direct translation. However, in Chapter 6 I shall show how the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship can become particularly “close” through working together on a daily basis.

As I explain below, affines can become kin-like through the care and feeding of children, with this manifesting itself terminologically through the use of teknonyms or, in the cases shown above, through the manipulation of kin terms. This does not mean,

⁴⁶ Oliveira calls such relations “fac-similar” (2003:141).

however, that the Nivacle understand it to be a false “pseudo-term” or “not really a blood relation.” As Bloch (1971) [in Rosengren 1987a: 109] has written, relationship terms have both “moral and tactical meaning.” For the Nivacle, affines/non-kin (*ni-lha-velhavot-a*) become incorporated into one’s kindred through mutual care and the sharing of food, much like the “concentric spiral of relatedness” that I described earlier. It also seems that rather than perceive these relationships as being grounded on “respect” like Alvarsson does, a more fruitful approach would be to understand them in a generative light with people who live together becoming increasingly “kin-like.” Having said this, I do agree with Alvarsson in principle that there is an important relationship between these two terms and that, particularly in the case of virilocally married women, the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law can often be very close.

Terms for stepfather, stepmother and stepchildren also exist, although in practice if a child has become familiar enough with their stepparents and has been raised by them from a young age, they will tend to use the kin terms *tata* and *mimi*. All other affines are distinguished only by gender and are referred to as either *ni lha-velb-a* or *ni lha-velbche-a*.⁴⁷ Such terms would also be used if a person was unable to trace the exact nature of his or her relationship to a particular individual.⁴⁸ Part of the explanation for this may lie with the fact that in everyday conversation, people generally preferred to use personal names rather than relationship terms. As mentioned above, kinship is usually reckoned within two degrees of collaterality, although this will also be dependent on factors including co-residence and relative age. A male affine in (G+1) who was considered to be *ni lha-velb-a* could, for example, be ego’s HFB. However, ego would probably have minimal contact with this person and the merging of the terms for distant affines non-kin (both are termed *ni-lha-velhavot-a*) would reflect this lack of intimacy.

Affines are those who are considered “different” (*vena-lha*) to ego. Such difference is established for the purposes of marriage. When a spouse goes to live with the parents of their husband or wife, they will begin the process of becoming increasingly similar to the members of their spouse’s household through eating the same foods together and through co-operating in everyday tasks. When the couple have their first child, as well as

⁴⁷ Whilst all affines are considered “non-kin,” this does not then mean that all non-kin are “potential affines.” Instead people emphasised the fact that spouses should be “different” (*vena-lha*) and also that marriage choice is not prescriptive, but rather the choice of the couple themselves.

⁴⁸ See Renshaw (2002:210).

the terms for “spouse” changing, both they and their affines would begin to use teknonyms and a way express the increasing intimacy and kin-like nature of their relationship.

Relationship terms can also be used to indicate the relative size or age of a person or thing. For example, the term for “son” (*lb-aôs*) was used to refer to something that was relatively smaller than something else. For example, the children’s football pitch in Jotoicha was referred to as “*na cancha lb-aos*” (“the son of the football pitch”). Similarly, the terms for “father” (*tata*) and “mother” (*mimi*) were often used to refer to something that was relatively larger. For example, a larger volleyball could be called “*pelota lba-mimi*” (“mother of the volleyball”).

Other forms of reference and address include personal names, nicknames and relationship terms of a more generic nature including terms of friendship. By far the most common form of reference and address were personal names. Amongst the middle-aged and younger generations, names were usually Spanish, although some of the older men and women had names that were either German or Russian. When used as a form of address, names were often shortened to create a nickname. For example, Manuel was shortened to “Maní,” Delfina was shortened to “Del” and Florentino was shortened to “Flor.” Other nicknames were Nivacle nicknames that reflected of a particular physical characteristic of a person.

People also had Nivacle personal names that were often shared by several members of one’s kindred, although I never found any examples of parents and children sharing the same name, which seems to indicate the irrelevance of the concepts of “ancestry” or “descent” in Nivacle understandings of relatedness. Such names were also not necessarily restricted to residents of a particular community. For example, two women in Jotoicha and one woman in Filadelfia shared the name *Sôôntoque*. One was a young woman called Evelina and she shared the name with her mother’s co-resident elder sister Brigida. Her mother’s younger sister, who lived in Filadelfia, also shared the name. I found the same to be the case amongst men. Evelina’s father José’s name is *Josônôô* and his mother’s brother Zacarias, who lived in Yalve Sanga, also shared this name. Those who shared a name, whether in Nivacle, Spanish or German, were said to be *eifas*

(M)/*eifachei* (F) or “companions in the action of sharing a name.”⁴⁹ I was told that *eifas* had a special relationship and that “before” there would have been a special funerary rite when somebody’s *eifa* or *eifache* died, where the remaining namesake would paint their face black. From then on the person would be known as *tinqueifa*. Following the mourning period they could then change their name, thus finalising their grieving period.⁵⁰ Like Iñupiat names (Bodenhorn 2000b: 138), Nivacle personal names tell you very little about issues of descent or parentage. Instead, a name is the bond between two kin of the same gender. This seems to resemble Cashinahua “namesakes” (McCallum 2001:21), although amongst the Nivacle it does not work as a system of parallel transmission through alternating generations and between moieties. I also did not gain the impression that they were secret, for people were willing to tell me their own names and these of their close kin, although they never offered them to me voluntarily prior to my asking.⁵¹ Moreover, they often did not know the names of “distant kin” who perhaps lived in another community or those co-residents whom they knew less well. I shall now go on to discuss the Nivacle practice of teknonymy and how teknonyms are used within the context of daily life.

3.3. Teknonymy

The use of teknonyms amongst the Nivacle is a practice that has also been observed by Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:189) and Renshaw (2002:215ff). Teknonyms are suffixes that are created using the third person possessive adjective *lha[-]*, and are used only between actual affines. They are constructed with reference to a particular child, with the child’s name being used in its composition. Teknonyms are used to refer to a wide range of affines. For example, a woman may call her son-in-law “*Santa María lh-tata*” (“Santa María’s father”) rather than “*yi-tômit’á*” (“my son-in-law”), whilst a son-in-law may refer to his daughter’s grandmother as “*Santa María lha ct’é*” (“Santa María’s grandmother”) rather than “*yi-cact’é*” (“my mother-in-law”). The key relationships, from the perspective of the child, where teknonyms would be used are F, M, GF and GM and so no one

⁴⁹ This term is derived from the noun *[-]ei*, which means “name.” *[-]fa* means “companion in the action of.”

⁵⁰ See Chase-Sardi (1970:23).

⁵¹ Also see Rosengren (1987a: 108).

would say “*Santa María lh-t’oj*” (“Santa María’s aunt”). Instead they would employ the name of the child of Santa María’s mother or father’s sister, if she had any children.⁵² When a couple’s first child is born co-resident affines would usually start referring to each other with reference to the child.⁵³ I was told that over the course of time the child that is used as a point of reference would change and that people would often switch to one of the child’s younger siblings.⁵⁴ Individuals would often vary on which child they referred to based on their own experiences and preferences.⁵⁵ This should be seen as a reflection of the Nivacle stress on personal autonomy rather than a failure to adhere to any set of abstract “rules.” As a couple become grandparents they would often start being referred to by a linking grandchild rather than by one of their own children. The Enxet also employ teknonyms although, as Kidd (1999:91) reports, they do not use a particular child’s name and instead use a kin term followed by the term for “my child.”⁵⁶ For example, a woman’s husband’s sister could be called *hatté chátém* “the aunt of my child.” I never heard teknonyms being used between spouses, who generally used personal names as a form of reference and address.

Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:188) report that the use of teknonyms is not particularly widespread throughout South America.⁵⁷ This is a point echoed by Rivière (1984:48), who writes that teknonyms are not widely used in the Guianas, with the work of Overing Kaplan (1975) being a notable exception. However, Joanna Overing (personal communication) and Lepri (2005) have mentioned that the practice of teknonymy actually appears to be very common amongst Amazonian peoples, with my own review of recent ethnographies supporting this.⁵⁸ Clews Parsons (1914) and Geertz & Geertz (1964) argue that teknonymy is associated with societies that are highly flexible, that have no governing bodies and a limited hierarchy. In other words, they claim that teknonyms are a way of diverting attention away from ancestry and focussing attention instead on what is being continually created in the present. Geertz & Geertz have called this

⁵² See Renshaw (2002:217) who reports similar findings.

⁵³ Geertz (1973:376) reports a similar way in which teknonyms are created amongst the Balinese, as does Viveiros de Castro (1992:143) amongst the Araweté.

⁵⁴ See Renshaw (2002:215).

⁵⁵ See Chapter 2 on the importance of “visual knowledge.”

⁵⁶ The Piaroa also use relationship terms rather than a child’s name (Overing Kaplan 1975:170).

⁵⁷ Wicke and Chase-Sardi (1969:188) also explain that teknonyms are congruous with Nivacle bereavement terms, which are employed following the death of a child. While space does not allow for a detailed exploration of bereavement terms and their relationship to teknonyms, further research needs to be carried out on the relationship between the uses of these terms.

⁵⁸ Teknonymy has been observed by Kidd (1999:90ff) amongst the Enxet and Viveiros de Castro (1992:143f) amongst the Araweté, among others.

“genealogical amnesia” (1964:94). As many writers have shown (for example Gow (1991) and Kidd (1999)), the concept of “ancestry” is not relevant to lowland South American societies. Instead, teknonymy should be understood as a process of making dangerous affines safe.

Overing Kaplan (1975:169ff) writes that amongst the Piaroa, while affinal difference is stressed upon marriage through the terminological system, where they are considered to be non-kin and Other, upon the birth of their first child a couple stress similarity in order to conceive of themselves as co-resident kin. The household was initially comprised of unsafe affines and teknonymy begins the process of transforming the relationship into one between safe similars. Overing Kaplan writes: “In its application the teknonym system expresses these links and, thereby, emphasises the unity of the group as a cognatic kinship unit” (1975:170). In doing this, autonomous individuals who were initially “different” begin the process of redefining themselves as co-resident similars. Viveiros de Castro (1992:143f) describes the use of teknonyms amongst the Araweté as expressing underlying differences between male and female conjugal roles. Whilst for a man, getting married and moving in to his wife’s parents’ home defines his change in status and people’s description of him as the “husband of so-and-so,” for a woman there are no such changes until the birth of her first child. When her first child is born then she can commence her changing status through teknonymy.

Palmer and Braunstein suggest that there is a “complementary opposition...between teknonyms and child-bereavement terms inasmuch as they indicate, respectively, living and bereaved modes of parenthood” (1992:9). This point was inspired by the writings of Needham (1954:428) and (1959:74-78) and has also been suggested by Wick and Chase-Sardi (1969:486)[in Palmer and Braunstein (1992)], who describe bereavement terms as a “counterpoint to teknonymy.” Following the loss of a child, close kin of the bereaved will add the suffixes [-]claa*i* (M) or [-]claa*ia* (F) to the relationship terms of the bereaved, thus reflecting the bereaved person’s change in social status. It is only through the birth of a child that the bereaved person’s status will change once more as the potential for teknonymy is reintroduced. Palmer and Braunstein suggest that societies that use bereavement terms will also use teknonyms that “serve to erase bereavement terms...In these societies, bereavement is remedied by childbirth; the creation of life counteracts the destructiveness of death” (1992:10). Space unfortunately does not allow for a

detailed elaboration of Nivacle bereavement terms and their manifold uses. Suffice it to say here that I am in agreement with Palmer and Braunstein on this highly interesting point and I hope to have the opportunity to explore it in greater depth in future work.

An important aspect of Nivacle teknonymy is undoubtedly their desire to play down differences between affines. However, unlike the Piaroa (Overing Kaplan 1975), the Nivacle do not conceive of the community as being comprised of co-resident kin.

Whilst the vast majority of marriages in Campo Loa took place between co-residents, one cannot marry anyone classified as kin. As such, there is no desire at community level to conceive of everyone as co-resident kin. However, teknonyms are used by co-residents and beyond to reflect a specific type of relationship that exists and will develop following the birth of a couple's first child. Geertz (1973:376ff) writes that amongst the Balinese, stress is placed on the importance of having children:

Symbolically, the link between husband and wife is expressed in terms of their common relation to their children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren, not in terms of the wife's incorporation into her husband's "family"...tekonymy underscores both the importance of the marital pair in local society and the enormous value which is placed upon procreation.

Geertz (1973:376-7)

However, rather than just being about "symbolically" expressing a "link" between a husband and wife through their descendants, the Nivacle employment of teknonyms has more to do with the everyday lived practice of kinship and the gradual transformations that take place in relationships as people "get used to" (*faijan*) each other through mutual care, being companions in work (*côvenjafas/côvenjafachei*) and eating the same food together.⁵⁹ It is through working together in close cooperation that relationships undergo transformations. Renshaw (2002:215) is correct in stating that affines who share the same household or live in relatively close proximity and cooperate on an everyday basis generally use teknonyms. A young woman may help her mother-in-law to collect firewood, accompanied by her sisters-in-law and perhaps her mother-in-law's

⁵⁹ See also Overing Kaplan (1975:169ff) and Rivière (1984:69-70). Renshaw (2002:217) writes, "tekonyms are explicitly intended to transform close affines into kin by adopting the perspective of their children, for whom kin and affines of the previous generation are all kin."

mother and sisters. As these women develop greater familiarity through co-operating with tasks, so the relationship becomes less formal more kin-like.⁶⁰ Through these everyday processes affines (*ni-lha-velhavot-a*) go from being non-kin who are different (*vena-lha*), to becoming kin. When a couple first marry and begin living with either the husband or wife's parents there are adaptations that need to be made on both sides. One woman whose daughter-in-law was living in her household explained to me:

Different people do things differently. Even sweeping the floor, different women do it in different ways. The way a woman cooks. We have had to get used to the way my daughter-in-law cooked rice and manioc. We didn't like it at first as she used too much oil. Now we're used to her and she also watches how I cook.

However, it must also be borne in mind that the clear distinction made above between "kin" and "non-kin" is more a by-product of the analytical limitations of anthropological classifications than in the way Nivacle people explain their relationships. The Nivacle personal kindred is inherently fluid, unfixed and constantly open to different types of incorporation. People wish to have a lot of kin (*acloj-jam* "there really is a lot") and be *ijôt'aj* (straight).⁶¹ They constantly wish to incorporate differences such that people begin to become like them, autonomous similars who are not "the same" (*junash julh*). The use of teknonyms reflects the way in which relationships are perpetually in the process of becoming, with relationships constantly being negotiated along a sliding scale of similarity and difference.

3.4. The Commensality of the Boss

In Chapter 1 I described the trading relationship between the Nivacle and the Mennonite settlers that has existed since the 1950s. The key hinge on which the relationship between Nivacle people and Mennonite people hangs is work (*tacuum*), with the Mennonite as boss and the Nivacle as worker. There is no word in the Nivacle language

⁶⁰ See Chapter 6 where I discuss the co-operation between co-resident women in greater detail.

⁶¹ See Chapter 2.

that accurately translates into the English concept of “boss” or “employer.” When speaking Spanish, people would use the term *patrón*, which is the Spanish word for “boss.” The Mennonite boss, meanwhile, would use the terms *personal* or *empleado* (employee) to refer to their Nivacle workers. When speaking in Nivacle, people would refer to their Mennonite bosses as their *c’utsfa* (M)/*c’utsfache* (F). The term *c’utsfa* is a composite noun derived from the intransitive verb *tc’uut*, which means “to graze”, “to nibble” and “to eat the rest” and the formative suffix [-]fa which means “companion in the action (of something)” (Seelwische 1990:88 &187). This term can therefore literally be translated as “companion in the action of grazing.” As Fritz (1994:94) has noted, *c’utsfa*, as with all other relationship terminologies is a “relational noun” (*sustantivo relacionado*) and as such must always be preceded by a pronoun prefix, which indicates who the relationship is between. The relationship between *c’utsfas* and *empleados* is therefore specific (see above). Whilst Seelwische translates this composite noun as “friend” (*amigo*) (1990:69), the suffix [-]fa can also mean “commensal” (1990:88). I suggest that it is being “companions in the action of eating together” that is the key to understanding the Nivacle conceptualisation of the worker-boss relationship, with eating together signifying becoming “of a kind.”⁶² With this in mind, from this point on I shall use the Nivacle term *c’utsfa* in my discussion of this relationship rather than “boss,” as I feel that the latter distorts Nivacle concepts too much.

A key characteristic of the relationship between a Nivacle and his *c’utsfa* is debt. Whilst Mennonites are members of the Mennonite Cooperative (*Cooperativa*) of their particular colony⁶³ Nivacle people are not, and indeed cannot, become members of any Mennonite Cooperative. Whilst I was told by a Mennonite that in theory anyone was entitled to become a Cooperative member, in practice this is not possible for Nivacle people because to become a member, one must be an individual landowner and the Nivacle hold only communal titles to their agricultural colonies, if in fact they hold one at all. In Jotoicha it was only men who had *c’utsfas*. The women, I was told, used to also work for Mennonite women as domestic assistants and therefore had *c’utsfachei* (female bosses). However, when the Paraguayans started taking over the neighbouring ranches they only wanted to employ fellow Paraguayans. They didn’t want to employ *Chaqueños* (Chaco

⁶² See Oliveira (2003:197), who states that Mebengokré people should never deny food to “real relatives” or to “friends.” He continues, “to be a friend (*bikwa*) is to act towards a person in a way that, although not identical, is suitably similar to that which occurs between a group of people who live together in close contact, that is, what is usually called in anthropological theory the “domestic group.”

⁶³ That is, Fernheim Colony, Menno Colony or Neuland Colony.

people) any more. So, the residents of Jotoicha decided as a community that whilst the men would go out and work for their *c'utsfas*, the women would stay behind in the community to look after the children to ensure that they went to school. The men would generally carry out manual work for their *c'utsfas* including clearing weeds from their fields, helping with the harvest, clearing forest or digging natural lakes for their cattle's drinking water. In return the Nivacle were paid a weekly of approximately 30,000Gs (£3) that they received at the end of the week. Most of Jotoicha's *c'utsfas* lived in the neighbouring Mennonite villages of Ribera and Corrales, although several men were still employed by their old *c'utsfas* from Colonia 8.⁶⁴

The key aspect of the relationship between a Nivacle and his *c'utsfa* was the fact that his *c'utsfa* had been continually feeding him over the years. The etymology of the term goes a long way towards explaining the significance of this relationship from a Nivacle point of view. An integral aspect of the relationship is the *c'utsfa* feeding his workers and them eating together. I was told that when the Mennonites first arrived in the Chaco they employed Nivacle people from the beginning. In those days, the Mennonites were said to have had nothing, like the Nivacle. It was in those days that the Mennonite's wife would cook a meal for her husband and his workers and they would all eat together. Nowadays, this no longer takes place and the Mennonite would usually just supply his workers with a tent made of plastic sheets or a small house, and a box of store-bought foodstuffs (*viveres*) including rice (*arroz*), pasta (*fideo*), cooking oil (*lha-pe*), plain flour (*climsbi*) and hard bread rolls. The Mennonite no longer eats with his workers and instead eats separately with his own wife and children in his own house. The Nivacle workers cook and eat their own food, but the fact that the Mennonite has provided the food for them while they work is an act that sets him apart from other White people. A Nivacle will also feel that they can ask to borrow his *c'utsfa's* tractor to transport his kin to a football match in a neighbouring village that weekend or will ask if he can "help" him by giving him a bag of lemons or grapefruit from his orchard. It is the generosity of the *c'utsfa* and the fact that they can ask him for help that is stressed by the Nivacle not the "underlying" relationship of debt or socio-cultural separation.

As I have described above, mutual feeding is an integral aspect of creating kin and "similarity." Rezende explains that in non-Western societies, "Friendship was mainly

⁶⁴ See Chapter 4.

regarded as a residual category for people who were neither kin nor enemies...friendship is often perceived as an affective and voluntary relationship, in which sociability and equality between friends are stressed” (1996:246). It seems to me that the Nivacle translation of the term *c’utsfa* into “friend” (*amigo*) closely resembles the personal and highly egalitarian way in which the worker-boss relationship is understood. In most cases, an individual’s *c’utsfa* would have started out being a *Samtô*, the human category of “Other” *par excellence*. As I have described above, a *samtô* is a Mennonite, Paraguayan or any White foreigner. They are characterised as being very “stingy” (*cuyeej*), “aggressive/dangerous” (*sui*) and not very “good/beautiful/clean” (*n-is-a apee*). In the previous chapter I explained how this is a moral judgement that is essentially coterminous with “hate” (*cônta*). However, such moral judgements are always posited from the perspective of ego and so the transition that a particular Mennonite will make from being a *samtô* to a *c’utsfa* would always be within the context of a particular relationship and so is never generalisable. Other individuals who had a different *c’utsfa* would still regard his particular *c’utsfa* as a *samtô* and *vice-versa*. However, another way of would be to describe the Mennonite in relation to a known individual. For example, rather than José’s boss Vili being called a *samtô*, people would generally refer to him as *José lb-c’utsfa* (“José’s boss”). It is almost like another form of teknonymy that incorporates White people who are not kin, affines or non-kin into Nivacle sociality.

As with all forms of relatedness, the *c’utsfa-empleado* relationship is not fixed or static. People would often comment on changes in the behaviour of their *c’utsfa* and on the nature of their relationship in general. This relationship can be either short-term or long-term, but in any case the Mennonite will still be referred to as the Nivacle’s *c’utsfa* for as long as the relationship remains. One summer a Mennonite named Geraldo, who owned the neighbouring ranch, invited as many inhabitants as possible from Jotoicha to carry out some short-term employment (*changas*) in his peanut fields. His invitation was met with a great flurry of enthusiasm. Every morning at 6am, from the first Monday that there was work, Geraldo would drive his tractor along the central path of Jotoicha to alert people that he had arrived. He would then drive back along the path again and those who wanted to work for him that day would climb into the trailer that was attached to the back of his tractor. Men, women and children would go with him and every morning the tractor was always full as it trundled off to the field that was due to be harvested that day. This continued for several weeks and people would repeatedly tell

me how “generous” (*is sha’ne*) Geraldo was, and how good the pay was that they were receiving from him.

This soon changed, however, when one Friday José and his son Bernardo returned home from working in Gerardo’s fields. José declared that neither he nor any of the other people in the community wanted to return to work for Geraldo because he was “stingy” (*nyyeej*) and that he insulted the people by not paying them anything, almost as though they were sheep who just followed him into the field one by one without thinking about what they were doing. “We’re not sheep!” he declared. “Geraldo thinks he can insult us by not paying us what we asked, well, he can’t! We’re not going back on Monday. He can drive his tractor up and down that path as often as he wants but no-one will go with him!” Sure enough, Monday morning came and Geraldo came through the community as always and I saw only a handful of people go with him. I later heard that Geraldo had found willing workers in the next community of San Miguel. It is the ever-present availability of labour and the ever-present availability of workers during the summer months that sustains the friendship between the Nivacle and the Mennonites. However, unlike the Piro (Gow 1991:90), the nature of Nivacle dependence on the Mennonites is not only their insatiable thirst for consumer products as consumer products also form a significant part of what could be termed the Nivacle “subsistence economy.”⁶⁵

Nivacle people who work together for the same *c’utsfa* during a particular period of time said that they were *cavos* “friends,” and would refer to each other as *yi-cavo*. Fritz (1994:95) suggests that this term may have two origins, the first being based on his and Seelwische’s (1990:52) translation of the term as “companion, friend, employee.” His first suggestion is that it may have had a military origin and be a Nivacle use of the Spanish term *cabo*, which is pronounced locally more like *cavo*. *Cabo* would therefore translate as “individual of the class of trooper whose category is immediately superior of that of soldier”, which he suggests is from “an inferior rank.”⁶⁶ The second translation Fritz provides seems to be closer to the Nivacle understanding of the relationship between workers, which is not one based on hierarchy between boss and worker but rather one based on mutual relatedness. He translates *[-]vo* as “professional of” and *ca[-]* as a prefix that denotes a secondary relationship and means “his” or “her.” I never heard this term being used in relation to a Mennonite, only between Nivacle men. *Cavo*

⁶⁵ This is discussed in Chapter 6.

⁶⁶ Fritz (1994:95), my translation.

is also used frequently in everyday conversation to refer to people with whom one spends a great deal of one's time drinking *tereré*, playing football or chatting, but would never be used to refer to a Mennonite. Another term that is less commonly used is *yi-covenjafa* (literally "my companion in the action of repetitive work"), which is used specifically to refer to the relationship between those who work together. *Cavos* and *covenjafas* differ in a fundamental way to *c'utsfas* in that they can either be kin, affines or non-kin, whilst a *c'utsfa* belongs to the category of "Other," unless he is transformed into a more kin-like relationship through working and eating together.

The term *c'utsfa* is not reserved only for Mennonite bosses and can be used as a term of friendship to refer to any White person with whom one has a social relation. For example, Teresa would refer to a Paraguayan woman who lived on the neighbouring ranch "La Estrella" and who used to visit the community every weekend with her husband during the football matches to sell homemade cakes, cheese, yoghurt and fizzy drinks as her *c'utsfache*. One evening after the football and volleyball match as the Paraguayan woman was driving past Teresa's house and out of the community, Teresa told me "She's my friend" (*yi-c'utsfache lhavaatsha*). As I had never seen them converse, I was quite surprised to hear this. Teresa explained that she sometimes went over to the Paraguayan woman's house with her daughters and their young children to give her eggs and she gives them clothes for their young children. That is how they were friends.

The relationship of the *c'utsfa* is another way of creating safe relations with members of other communities. Like all other forms of relatedness, it is a relationship between two specific individuals that needs to be worked on on a daily basis. At first glance it appears to have all the characteristics of a relationship of dependency between a boss and worker insofar as the boss needs his workers to carry out all the heavy manual tasks on his ranch and the worker needs his boss to satisfy his "subsistence needs." Whilst on a certain level it could be considered to be of this nature, when considered from the egalitarian perspective of Nivacle social philosophy it becomes clear that it is a relationship like any other and so is based on moral values such as trust and care. It is part of a continual process of incorporating different human beings into "the social" and into the human that is important and the Mennonite boss becomes closer to the centre of the "spiral of intimacy" described earlier through participating in a social relationship. However, like

all relationships, it is temporal in nature and could become either increasingly intimate or distant depending on the aesthetics of the moral actions of the actors involved.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has been an exploration of some of the different expressions of Nivacle relatedness. The Nivacle understand relatedness a process and so it should be understood on a temporal level as something that can be both created and unmade. I have suggested that Nivacle kinship should be understood as a spiral rather than defined concentric circles where individuals slide between different types of relationship, from “otherness” to friendship, from non-kin to affine, and from affine to kin to “close” kin. As I have described in the previous chapter, whilst a “biological” rhetoric on relatedness does exist, this should not overshadow the predominantly relational qualities of kinship that they stress so much. As Ingold (2000) has suggested, relatedness is better understood as a living and growing rhizome with its roots constantly interlacing, intertwining and producing more and more shoots growing to and fro rather than as a genealogical tree representing stasis and solidity.

Overing (1985a: 12) and (1985b: 156) has described the indeterminacy that marks the ordering of social relationships amongst the Piaroa and the fact that outside the range of first cousins, people’s choice of terms can often be highly unpredictable. This reflects the high degree of personal autonomy that is afforded to lowland South American peoples regarding their choice of relationship terms. The highly egalitarian Nivacle social philosophy is underlined by their appreciation of the commensality of their Mennonite bosses. Eating together and feeding other people are fundamental aspects of Nivacle relatedness, and a denial to either share or offer food is, in effect, a denial of humanity. In the following chapter I move on to consider residence decisions amongst the Nivacle. I have called them residence decisions rather than residence patterns because residence is intimately related to Nivacle understandings of personal autonomy as well as to their notion of the ego-centred kindred. The following chapter is intended to be a spatial expression of Nivacle relatedness.

Chapter 4: Residence Decisions

Every person is his past, a continuous, experiential trajectory described by the temporal unfolding of a total system of social relations of which he is but a particular point of emergence.

T. Ingold (1986)

The Appropriation of Nature

In the previous chapter I discussed Nivacle concepts of relatedness and suggested that it should not be seen in a fixed, static way, but instead as an ego-centred entanglement of relationships that are in a constant process of becoming. In this chapter, my aim is to explore the spatial dynamics of relatedness through Nivacle residence decisions. “Patterns of Residence” has been a key chapter in many lowland South American ethnographies, having been variously referred to as “Settlement Patterns,” the “Village and Household Structure” (Basso 1973), the “The Settlement” (Jackson 1983) and “The Village” (Alvarsson 1988:69).¹ For Rivière (1969; 1984), the study of residence patterns is a way that can enable one to gain an understanding of indigenous social structure. This is because it provides the ethnographer with both census and genealogical data that can be used to compare one settlement with another. Rivière writes, “The closest one can get to identifying a social group that has any sort of corporate existence is the inhabitants of a single settlement” (1969:15). Barnard describes residence patterns as, “the means by which human beings place themselves and their dwellings in relation to the land, and the patterns of migration, aggregation and dispersal which give rise to their distribution on the land” (1996:504). This definition incorporates a temporal dimension to settlement, describing it as a constantly changing process. Rosengren, meanwhile, explains that residence is about different kinds of relationships whose intensity varies depending on spatial proximity. Relationships can be divided into “those I see” and those one “does not see or visit” (1987a: 131ff). He continues, “Closeness’ and ‘distance’ in regard to the relationship system is...largely a function of spatial proximity. However, since these relations are not broken, only left ‘resting,’ they may be resumed at any moment” (Rosengren (1987a: 132). Settlement is therefore inherently relational and open to negotiation. He continues,

¹ See also Ellis (1996), Forrest (1987), Kidd (1999), McCallum (1989), Overing Kaplan (1975), Renshaw (1986, 2002), Rivière (1969) and Rosengren (1987a; 1987b).

The settlement pattern concept...lay[s] stress not primarily on the way people relate themselves geographically to their physical environment, but to stress the way they relate themselves socially in physical space. Consequently, as used here, the concept addresses all levels of settlement organization from how people arrange themselves within the household to the level of the demographical distribution within the entire territory.

Rosengren (1987a: 139)

It has been widely argued in lowland South American anthropology that the community is the “safe inside” where, “All people want, or should want, to live with their parents and siblings” (Gow 1991:165), whilst beyond the community lies the “dangerous outside.”² Gow continues that when kin live apart, “there is always a tinge of reproach in their relationship...Visiting real kin are often told that they should stay and live in the community” (1991:165-6). The strong desire to live alongside all one’s kin, combined with the impossibility of such a situation is described by Gow as, “an existential problem of life itself” (1991:179) representing, perhaps, an unachievable ideal. The first aspect of this argument is that living in community is generative of increased sociality and kin-like relations. The other side of the coin, so to speak, of co-residence, is that living together can also create negative emotions such as jealousy, anger and hate, all of which are conducive of un-harmonious relationships which, in turn, generate movement. I shall now briefly discuss the literature on these two themes before going on to introduce residence from the perspective of the Nivacle.

Settlement size varies greatly amongst the indigenous peoples of lowland South America.³ Rivière suggests that whilst no “technical” or “ecological” factors act in determining the minimum size of an Amazonian community, “The question of maximum size is more problematic” (1984:26). He argues that this is due to the

² Gow (1991:183) describes the community as “The opposition between the living and the dead is used by native people to build up an image of the settlement which is simultaneously a domesticated place and a set of co-residents” (1991:183). Also see Alvarsson (1988:161), Ewart (2003:261ff) and Overing (1985c, 1989).

³ Gonçalves (2000:238), for example, writes that community size amongst the Paresi is 1,000 inhabitants, distributed between 30 villages. Storrie (1999:64) writes how the typically “mature” Hoti settlement is approximately 20 inhabitants consisting of “a three generation family with some in-marrying spouses.” Overing (1975:29) reports that amongst the Piaroa, each residence group has between 16 and 50 people. Henley (1982:17), meanwhile, reports that amongst the Panare there were 1,700 people distributed between 38 communities, with the largest community comprising some 226 people.

inevitable fissioning that takes place once a community reaches a certain size. Overing Kaplan (1975) explains that amongst the Piaroa, settlement size relates to the effectiveness of the leader (*ruwang*) to build up good morale within the community. Storrie (1999) explicitly compared the smaller, more dispersed settlements of the Hoti with those of the larger mission villages and suggests that living in larger settlements is preferable as it provides people with greater access to trade goods and also enables greater opportunities to visit kin and socialize.

Amongst the Bolivian Tsimanes, residence is an aspect of the creation of “appropriate and desirable forms of social living” (Ellis 1996:48). This is a form of social living that is not predicated on “rules” or “social structure,” but instead upon the appropriateness of mood and levels of affectivity within a community, which is forever changing.⁴ The topic of “conviviality” was the central focus of discussion in the publication edited by Overing and Passes (2000) entitled *The Anthropology of Love and Anger*. In this volume the contributors explored the manifold ways in which emotionally comfortable and tranquil forms of social living are achieved in Amazonian societies through the daily processes of feeding and caring for kin. This style of relating, they explain,

Is characteristic of so many Amazonian socialities, and not only in terms of an ideal way of living...it also manifests itself in a concrete and quotidian socio-political sense, with sociability (interlocution, friendliness, mutuality and joyfulness) and sociality being considered as one, and something to be constructed daily by, and in, each and every community co-resident and co-producer.

Overing and Passes (2000:xiv)

An integral aspect of co-residence is the responsibility on the part of every individual to behave in ways that are aesthetically pleasing through their moral appropriateness. Behaviour that is deemed “knowledgeable” is also considered to be “good/beautiful,” whilst that which is “unknowledgeable” is “bad/ugly.” Within the context of everyday life, each autonomous individual must ideally behave in “knowledgeable” ways towards

⁴ Many other writers have also noted this. See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Goldman (1963), Overing (2003), Overing and Passes (2000) and Rivière (1969).

those whom they “love.”⁵ Overing Kaplan (1975:181) and Lepri (2005:708) argue that co-residence creates similarity between individuals, whilst kin who move away from the community are distanced and become increasingly different.⁶ Oliveira (2003) adds an important dimension to this perspective in his description of the large agglomerated settlements of the Mebengokré. He explains that people have, “much in common with some of the others, something in common with many, and even little in common with others” (2003:89). There is therefore a “sliding scale” of relationality in larger settlements, where people treat different co-residents with varying degrees of “love” and “hate.”

Discussions on settlement size and people’s motivations for residing in a particular community have often incorporated the related notion of movement, which Rivière (1969:15) has described as residential “flux.”⁷ Rivière (Ibid.) explains that this “flux” is due to the high mobility of community members and the correspondingly short life span of indigenous communities. Pedersen and Wæhle describe residential “flux” amongst hunter-gatherer societies as occurring when “local bands are seen as constantly changing and as having no fixed memberships, even though the existence of the bands themselves may be more or less permanent” (1988:75). Turnbull (1965a; 1965b; 1968) describes the constant “flux” in village population amongst the Ik and Mbuti as being the result of individual political decisions to move, rather than by any ecological factors. He writes, “the composition of each camp is *ad hoc*, responding to the needs of the moment rather than any preconceived plan, or any notion derived from tradition” (1965a: 107). Woodburn presents a similar position and states that hunter-gatherers regularly move around because their economic system of “immediate return” enables them to do so. However, Ingold (1986:172) provides a counter-point to Woodburn’s statement by suggesting that sedentary peoples can move around just as frequently in daily life as so-called “nomads.” Ingold suggests that by labelling hunter-gatherers as “nomadic,” such societies are immediately characterised in terms of “flux” before steps are taken to understand the exact nature and extent of this movement and migration.⁸ Pedersen and

⁵ See especially Kidd (1999; 2000).

⁶ The Piro also associate real kin with co-residence and gradually disassociate themselves from any kin who might move away (Gow 1991:193-4).

⁷ “Flux” is a term that has been used by a number of ethnographers in their descriptions of Amazonian settlements. Rosengren, for example, writes, “The membership of the residence groups can thus never be definitively laid down because it is always in a state of flux.” (1987a: 141). Similarly, Henley has written “The Panare settlement group is always in a state of flux.” (1982:124).

⁸ See Ingold (1986) for further discussion on the difficulties inherent in defining “nomadic” peoples.

Wæhle (1988) critique both Turnbull and Woodburn by stating that flux must be understood in terms more far-reaching than simply the whims and fancies of individuals. Instead, we must also take into account the relationships of the people being studied as well as the opportunities and constraints that underpin their relationships with outsiders, such as neighbouring agricultural communities.

Recent authors have therefore started to move away from trying to explain the hunter-gatherer “community” as the entity that is in “flux” and instead look towards people’s motivations for moving. Ingold (1986) explains that “tenure” amongst hunter-gatherers is very different to the two-dimensional concept of “tenure” relevant to agricultural societies. He writes, “Tenure in hunting and gathering societies is not of surface area, but of sites and paths within a landscape” (1986:153) that “denote[s] a succession of synchronic states” (1986:136). Ellis’s work amongst the Tsimanes bears certain similarities to Ingold’s description, where she writes how they “serially” maintain kin relations “by moving and living between different groups of kin” (1996:68). Rosengren states that amongst the dispersed settlements of the Matsigenka, “sociability...is achieved only through intensive visiting where the assertion of mutual relations is of central importance” (1998:250). Thomas, meanwhile, reports that the most common expression amongst the Pemon is “where are you going?” (1982:35). He continues, “An accurate image of Pemon society would be a large scatter of dots, all connected by innumerable cross-cutting and overlapping lines, representing settlements and visits between them” (Ibid.). Woodburn writes, “For, every time individuals move from one camp to another, they are associating themselves publicly with certain kin and affines and disassociating themselves with others” (1972:205). Ingold likewise explains that hunter-gatherer people “change places *in order* to change company, having no other particular reason for not doing so!” (Ingold (1986:177), original emphasis). It is clear, then, that residence in lowland South America should not be understood in terms of a settlement that is in flux, but rather as a series of intertwined relationships between autonomous individuals that at certain moments achieve the delicate affective state necessary for convivial social relations.

Daily life, however, rarely fits the ideals described above, as there are many obstacles and tensions that can contribute to the creation of undesirable forms of sociality. Overing and Passes describe the Amazonian concept of “anger” as, “an interactive, relational

state” (2000:20). Anger should be purposefully avoided at all times through the “knowledgeable” behaviour of those who have “love” for their kin. The fission of a community is often said to be the result of “anger.”⁹ This stage is reached through a tension that is inherent in, on the one hand, the desire for kin to live together and, on the other hand, the fact that spending too much time together can also generate negative emotions such as anger, jealousy and resentment, which eventually lead individuals to make the decision to travel. As Storrie has put it, amongst the Venezuelan Hoti, “the good life necessarily involves movement” (1999:63).¹⁰ Movement is therefore not considered to be negative in and of itself, particularly if the end result is increased feelings of contentment and tranquillity between feuding individuals. Bringing together the tension between the joys of living together and the pain that comes with it, Santos Granero writes,

Because Amerindian conviviality is so intense, its rupture generates equally intense but opposite emotions – negative feelings that prevent people from continuing to live together. Like Sisyphus, the Corinthian king condemned for eternity by Zeus to roll a stone to the top of a hill, only to see it always roll down again, Native Amazonians are engaged in constant pursuit of the ideal of perfect conviviality. It is a doomed struggle from the beginning, for conviviality begins to wear out as soon as it is achieved.

Santos Granero (2000:284)

Rosengren describes the Amazonian sense community as “a highly delicate state” (2000:233). For the Matsigenka, the dispersed nature of the community is not due to ecological factors, but instead because people have a preference for emotionally comfortable ways of living, avoiding the potentially destructive gaze of “prying neighbours” (2000:234). Rivière suggests that Amazonian people’s lack of tolerance for disharmony is coupled with their lack of desire to openly criticize others:¹¹

⁹ See Rivière (1984).

¹⁰ See also Henley (1982:124-5).

¹¹ See also Goldman (1963), Kidd (1999), Overing (1989b) and Thomas (1981).

Gossip is rife and one of the solutions is for those affected to go and live elsewhere...without giving priority to either, the fact that mobility allows for the dissipation of social tensions and intolerance for social tensions encourages mobility.

Rivière (2000:252)

It therefore seems clear that in order to understand Amazonian co-residence, one must incorporate movement and in order to understand “flux,” one must appreciate the emotional prerequisites necessary for the creation of convivial social relations.

This chapter is an exploration of Nivacle residence decisions and how residence relates to kinship and marriage. Rather than understand the community as part of a continuum of sociality ranging from “safe inside” and “dangerous outside,”¹² Ellis has suggested that we should incorporate the spatial distribution of the ego-centred kindred into our analyses. She writes that the “inside” of the Tsimane community might more fruitfully be thought of as, “tendrils or pathways extending from the individual outwards in a series of criss-crossing routes both through an individual’s kindred network and through the intricate mesh of forest paths and waterways through the Tsimane territory” (1996:26). Like Ellis (1996), I have also decided to entitle this chapter “Residence Decisions” because I wish to stress the fact that it is the autonomous other-regarding relational self who makes residential choices and not the residence patterns of a bounded social “group” such as “the community,” “the household,” or “the clan.” With no post-marriage residence rule, residence decisions depend on individual choice, with a great deal of emphasis being placed on who is preferable and productive to live and work with at any one time.

This chapter is therefore an exploration of the manifold ways in which residence is lived, experienced and explained by the Nivacle. I begin with a description of the residents of Campo Loa’s experiences in settling into an agricultural colony and the migration patterns that have influenced its current composition. I shall then describe the layout of one of the communities in Campo Loa, paying particular attention to household composition and inter-household relations. I then go on to describe the Nivacle “Development Cycle of the Household” (Goody 1958). In order to explore the

¹² This perspective is best exemplified in the works of Descola (1994) and Rivière (1969; 1984). See also Chapter 3.

implications of this concept further, I go on to discuss the concept of the residential “cluster” as it has been applied to lowland South American settlement patterns. Here I shall argue that in adopting this concept, writers are implicitly favouring a static model of the group over the autonomous decisions of the individual. My division of this chapter into a synchronic understanding of Nivacle residence patterns and a diachronic analysis of “The Developmental Cycle of the Household” complements the layout of Kidd (1999) and Renshaw’s (1986; 2002) analyses of indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco. In doing this I hope that I will be able to draw direct comparisons between their material and my own. This chapter ends with a description of a visit that I went on with a household from Campo Loa to one of the other indigenous colonies in the Mennonite Colonies. In describing this visit, my aim is to explore some of the ways in which Nivacle people explain their residence decisions and how they unfold spatially.

4.1. *Proyecto Campo Loa: The Beginnings of an Agricultural Settlement Project*

The term for “community” is *yitsaat*, although the Spanish terms *comunidad* or *pueblo* were also used. An indigenous settlement is also known as a *yitsaat* or an *asentamiento indígena* or *colonia* in Spanish. Co-residents are known as *chifas*. Whilst this term was mainly used to refer to people who lived in the same community, it was also used to describe those who inhabited the same agricultural colony (for example, Campo Loa). The term *chifa* is always used with possessive prefix, for example, *yi-chifa* (*my* co-resident). When referring to a group of co-residents, people would never refer to them as *chifas*. Instead, people would describe a collectivity of co-residents by mentioning the community that they lived in followed by the term *lhavos*, which means “people of.” The members of Campo Loa were therefore referred to as the “*Campo Loa lhavos*” (“people of Campo Loa”), whilst those of Jotoicha were called the “*Jotoicha lhavos*” (“people of Jotoicha”). I shall now go on to describe the establishment and composition of the agricultural colony of Campo Loa in more detail.

Campo Loa is an agricultural settlement (*asentamiento indígena*) that is situated 110 km from the Mennonite city of Filadelfia on a parcel of land covering some 11,198 Hectares. It is one of some 24 *asentamientos indígenas* (agricultural settlements) situated in the

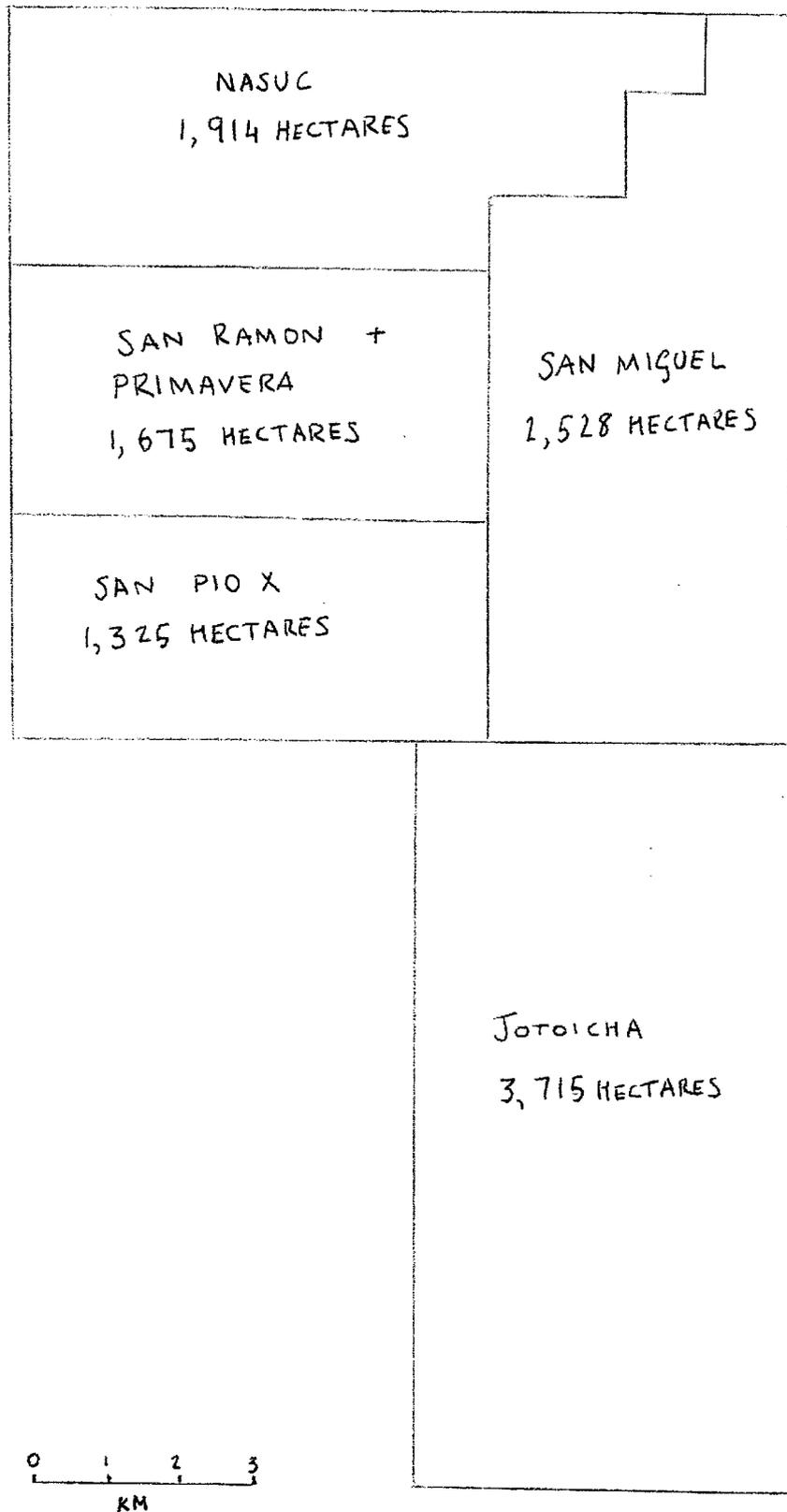
Mennonite colonies, and is comprised of both Nivacle and Manjui indigenous peoples.¹³ Campo Loa was named after a Mennonite ranch that had been located to the north of the colony, but which no longer exists under that name. During my fieldwork the total population of Campo Loa was some 1,106 residents, or 219 households.¹⁴ The population is divided between six communities (*yitsatis*) named Jotoicha, San Miguel (Tsivoijot), San Pio X (Vôjôlhanshiyiish), Nasuc, San Ramon (Shtavôjcat) and Primavera (Shnôvôp).¹⁵ Whilst most chose to name their communities after Catholic Saints or Popes, those of Shnôvôp adopted the Nivacle translation of the Spanish term “Primavera,” meaning “springtime.” The name “Jotoicha” means “unending open grasslands” and was chosen because of a natural lake that was situated near the community with the same name. Each community has its own parcel of land within the colony that was allocated when the land was first purchased. Map 4.1. shows how the parcels of land were divided between each of the five communities. Each parcel of land is the property of each respective community within the colony, although the land title was not officially handed over to the colony until 2003. In the year 2000, the community of San Ramon agreed to share the southern area of their plot with the remaining residents of Colonia 8, who formed the community of Primavera.

The wire fences that mark the boundaries between the indigenous communities and the neighbouring Mennonite ranches also mark the boundary of each community’s parcel of land. Despite the existence of maps demarcating these boundaries, there were a plethora of paths and gaps in the fences that people would use if they wanted to travel between the communities. These pathways reflect the Nivacle stress on the processual and rhizomaic nature of relatedness over any pre-given structure or form. Gow writes that amongst the Piro,

¹³ For further details on the history and geographical setting of the agricultural colonies in the Central Chaco see Chapter 1. The Manjui are also known as the “Manjuy,” the “Choroti”, and the “Iyo’wujwa”. The “Iyojwa’ja” Choroti reside only in Argentina, where there is estimated to be approximately 800. The Nivacle of Campo Loa refer to both groups of Choroti as “Manjui” or “Eclenjui.”

¹⁴ A “household” is defined here as simply a dwelling place, irrespective of the number of inhabitants. Amongst development organisations a “household” was usually referred to as a *familia* (family) and any development assistance or emergency aid was normally distributed to each *familia*.

¹⁵The names that I have noted first are those that were used with greatest frequency in everyday conversation, whilst those in brackets were used less often. In some cases, such as in the case of Primavera, it was the Spanish name that was used most frequently, whilst in others it was the Nivacle name. Such variations would often depend on an individual’s own preference, thus reflecting the Nivacle emphasis on personal autonomy



Map 4.1. Plan of Campo Lea

Paths were made in the landscape by known people at a known time, and hence define the community territory. They are there in the environment, the objectification of the act of demarcation of community land, and they are periodically cleared to emphasise their existence. The land title document is used by no one in Santa Clara as knowledge of the environment, but it is used as a physical reference point in the ongoing struggle between the people of Santa Clara and their immediate neighbours over land ownership.

Gow (1995:57)

In Campo Loa, pathways extended into the neighbouring ranches, but people did not use the land title as a form of knowledge of the landscape either. Instead, the importance of the land-title lay in the kinds of relationships that it could enable the community to establish with the outsiders, which were ideally one of generosity and helpful cooperation.

Campo Loa and its constituent communities were formed as a result of the fusion of residents from a number of geographically disparate worker villages. The four worker villages or work camps¹⁶ had names in Spanish, Nivacle and German and were known as: Colonia 6 (Casposojoyish or Friedensruh); Colonia 8 (Yo'nis Lhavjoot or Schoenbrunn); Colonia 10 (Pistaa Lhavjoot or Rosenort); and Colonia 22 (Shinvo' Lhavjoot or Neuwiese). The German names in brackets are names of communities that the Mennonite settlers had taken from the Steppe in Russia (Dueck 1998). The indigenous worker villages were located on the periphery of the main Mennonite villages within a 30km radius, on plots of approximately 20 hectares.

Jotoicha was the first community to be established in Campo Loa in 1983, when the first 20 families moved there from the worker village in Colonia 8. Residents from Colony 10 formed Nasuc the following year. San Miguel and San Ramon were both formed in 1987 by residents from colonies 22 and 8 respectively and the remaining residents from Colonia 8 formed Primavera in the year 2000. Table 4.1. is a summary of the population

¹⁶ Redekop (1980:151) and Renshaw (2002:140) refer to the indigenous communities that are located on the periphery of each of the three large Mennonite towns and that have no land titles (*titulos*) as "worker villages," whilst Kidd (1999) describes them as "work camps."

of the four work camps between 1972 and 2002 from the Census data that was gathered during each of these four decades.¹⁷ I should also note that I do not consider the population data for 1992 to be particularly accurate, as it appears disproportionately high in comparison with the other years.

Table 4.1. The Population of Colonies 6, 8, 10 and 22 and the Six Communities of Campo Loa between 1972 and 2002.

Community	1972	1982	1992	2002
Colonia 6	93	55	4	-
Colonia 8	215	344	120	-
Colonia 10	77	102	2	-
Colonia 22	67	132	180	107
Jotoicha	-	-	420	390
Nasuc	-	-	150	182
Primavera	-	-	-	112
San Miguel	-	-	240	240
San Pio X	-	-	120	55
San Ramon	-	-	210	128
Total	452	633	1446	1214

Sources: Paraguay Indian Settlement Program: 1975-1976: Indian Settlement Advising Committee, Filadelfia, October 1974; Melia, B. (1997) *Pueblos Indígenas en el Paraguay*, DGEEC, Asunción; Dirección General de Estadísticas, Encuestas y Censos (DGEC) (2002). *Censo Nacional de Población y Viviendas 2002*. Asunción: DGEC.

While the Nivacle worker villages no longer exist, several men had maintained relations with their Mennonite bosses there and so would return to work there on a weekly basis. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, all worker-boss relationships were between individuals and not groups or collectivities. If a person wanted to continue working for their old boss then it was considered to be their choice and no one else's.

When attempting to trace the migration of the Nivacle from Colonia 8 to Jotoicha, I came to realize the lack of importance that people attributed to a space or place that was no longer inhabited by people. This became clear one evening when I was sitting outside my house drinking *tereré*¹⁸ (Paraguayan tea) with Alberto, who was one of the Jotoicha schoolteachers. I was asking him about the possibility of us paying a visit to the

¹⁷ The first census data on the Mennonite colonies that I was able to obtain was a census that had been carried out in 1972 by the Mennonites and that I accessed via the Fernhem Colony archives in Filadelfia. The Census of 1982 was undertaken by the *Instituto Paraguayo del Indígena* (INDI), whilst the subsequent censuses of 1992 and 2002 were undertaken by the *Dirección General de Estadística, Encuestas y Censos* (DGEC). The latter two formed the indigenous section of the Paraguayan National Census and were named the *Censo Nacional Indígena de Población y Viviendas I & II*.

¹⁸ See Chapter 2 for a description of *tereré*.

previous site of the community in Colonia 8 and I explained that I was interested in gaining an idea of the conditions that they had lived in whilst they were there, where the houses had been situated and what he thought of his previous community. He seemed to be quite interested in the idea of accompanying me, particularly as I had also suggested that we pay a visit to the colony of Casuarina where his elder brother lived. After our discussion I was left feeling pleased that an integral piece of my settlement puzzle would soon be solved, as people did not speak about life in Colonia 8 very often. In my naivety I had assumed that this was because it was no longer visible, thus confirming my inclination to pay the colony a visit so that Alberto could point out where the houses were situated and so on.

The next day whilst I was having my midday meal with José and Teresa, I began enthusiastically describing my plans for my forthcoming trip with Alberto. My announcement was met with roars of laughter from José and Teresa, with José declaring, “So you’re both going to climb over the fences and go into the corral are you, is that what Alberto wants to do?” This suggestion soon made me laugh and I suddenly felt as though my idea to visit what was now a corral was simply ridiculous. However, attempting to maintain my position I replied “Yes, Alberto is going to show me where you all used to live before you came here.” José replied “But no-one lives there now. There’s no one there, they’re all here in Campo Loa. There are only cattle there now, with a fence and a style to climb over! Is that how you’re going to get in?”

For José and Teresa (and probably Alberto, too) the space that was Colonia 8 no longer existed: that space now exists in Campo Loa, as that was where the people now live. It was no longer inhabited by people and was only a place where the dead were buried and where cattle roamed. “Space” for the Nivacle is similar to de Certeau’s (1984) understanding of space as “activated places” and Corsín-Jiménez’s concept of “space as a capacity.”¹⁹ Both authors describe the agency of space and Corsín-Jiménez counters Durkheim’s (1915) notion of space as an enclosed “region.” He writes,

Space is envisaged as a necessary expression of, and corollary to, the production of value. Space is a showcase for practices that

¹⁹ See also Gow (1995); Ingold (2000) and Munn (1990).

seek recreation and entertainment, healthfulness and safety. It is therefore a dimension and a form of agency – a capacity.

Corsín-Jiménez (2003:138)

Space is intrinsically linked to Nivacle understandings of kinship and marriage and if there are no active agents living and working there, then it does not exist. I should also add, as a way of completing this anecdote, that Alberto likewise held no firm attachment to this space, with his real interest lying in the opportunity the trip afforded him to visit his brother in Casuarina.

Table 4.2. illustrates that despite the average population of each Campo Loa community being approximately 184 residents, the population distribution is not particularly even. Whilst Primavera had a population of 112, Jotoicha's population of 390 constituted almost one third of the total population of Campo Loa. Some of the residents of Jotoicha would explain to me that their community was so large in comparison with the others because it was located "in the center" (*el centro/na cachi*) of the colony. Whilst Jotoicha is very clearly not geographically in the center of Campo Loa and is also the most difficult community to reach by road, one of my friends explained, "Here we are in the center because that was where the first Nivacle who came to Campo Loa lived. That's why there's not so many people living in the other communities. Our leader Andres is also very tough with the politicians (*los políticos*) and the traveling salesmen (*macateros*) who try to sell beer and *caña*.²⁰ That is why there's lots of people ("*acloj napi Nivacles*")." "Hardness" with those from the outside is regarded as an essential aspect of the "knowledge" of a good leader. Roberto Martínez is praised for his ability to speak good Spanish and Guaraní and to speak up for the needs of the community. Roberto had managed to convince several development organizations that the Jotoicha is the most central community and that the colony radio station should be located there. He was also in negotiations with the Mennonite development organization ASCIM to have a small hospital and cooperative store built in the community. A good leader ensures that projects are brought into the community and transformed by its members into something that is ultimately beneficial. However, as I describe in Chapter 7, some leaders use their position to manipulate development organizations and acquire goods for themselves.

²⁰ Alcoholic beverage made from sugar cane.

Table 4.2. Population of Campo Loa by Community in 2002

Community	No. of Households	Total Population
Jotoicha	73	390
Nasuc	34	182
Primavera	17	112
San Miguel	51	240
San Pio X	17	55
San Ramon	27	128

During the course of the year a significant proportion of Campo Loa would be absent for periods of up to several months. These fluctuations were both short- and long-term and were due to people visiting kin in other communities or attending short-courses (*cursillos*) that had been organized by the Catholic missionaries or development organizations including PRODECHACO. However, the most significant factor determining the population fluctuations was the availability of *changas*, or temporary wage labour. *Changas* is, by definition, short-term employment that usually took place during the Mennonite working week from Monday to Friday or for longer periods if the job was further away. Individuals were normally paid on a piece-rate basis.²¹ It was usually men who undertook *changas*, but women would occasionally accompany their husbands and bring along one or two of their younger children if they were “fed up” with community life. The temporal rhythms of the Mennonite Colonies were determined by the Mennonite working week. In Filadelfia, a foghorn would sound four times daily, signaling workers to enter and leave their workplaces. In Campo Loa, the rhythm of life took on a much more subtle tone with volleyball, football and *cachaca* music signalling the weekend and a break from the working week.

The effect that these short and long-term migrations can have on the population of the community at any one time can be observed through a comparison of the population data that was gathered for the Indigenous National Census in August 2002 with the census data that I gathered during my fieldwork in Campo Loa. In June 2002 I recorded the total population of Jotoicha as being some 452 residents and the population of Primavera as being 98. This can be contrasted with the abovementioned 390 for Jotoicha and 112 for Primavera recorded in the national census. I then repeated my

²¹ See also Renshaw (2002:142).

survey at 4-monthly intervals and noted that the population of Jotoicha fluctuated between 173 residents during February 2002 when there was the greatest amount of wage labour available and 452 in June 2002 during the low season.

Prior to their settlement in Campo Loa, the Nivacle had been dispersed across a vast area to the south and west of Mariscal Estigarribia between Platanillo, Hernandarias and Campo Palmar.²² I was told that in those times people would live in very small groups of close kin nearby a natural lake. Once the lake dried up they would move on to the next one. It was only during the summer months, when a fruit known as *faai* or *algarrobo*²³ was plentiful, that people would congregate to drink *chicha*, dance and play games. Métraux (1946:269) reports that Nivacle settlements during the 1940s reached around 1,000 inhabitants, although this would probably have been during the summer months when the Nivacle of the Pilcomayo went to work in the Argentine Sugar Cane Mills. When the Nivacle began losing their land to ranchers and Mennonite settlers they started migrating to the Mennonite Colonies on a seasonal basis in search of work. They still maintained highly cordial relations with the Catholic Missionaries, the Oblates of María, who are based in Mariscal Estigarribia and who they have been in close contact with since the Chaco War (1932-5).

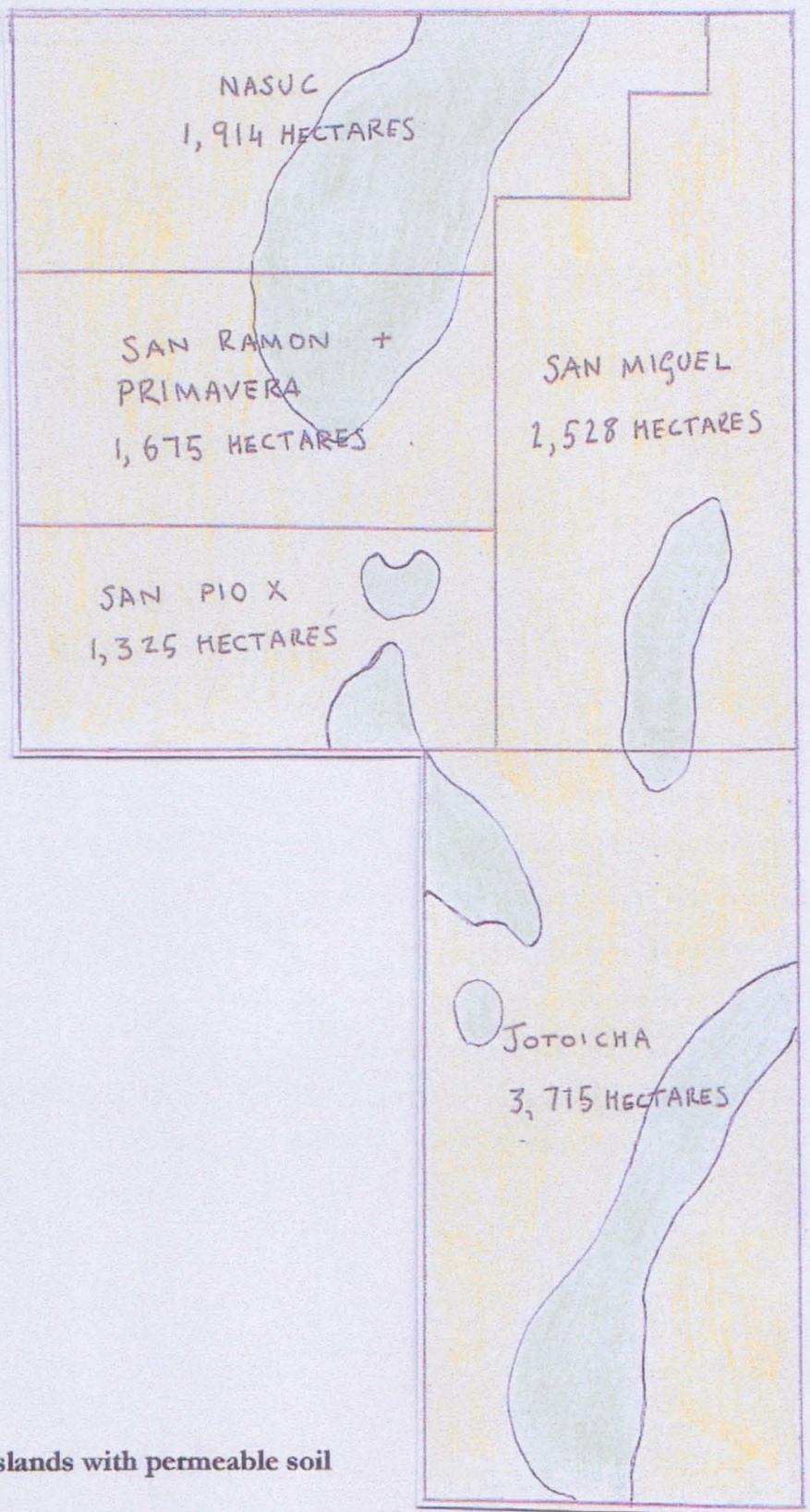
When the colony was first established, each of the communities were placed on a strip of open grassland on sandy, permeable ground known as *jotoi* (singular: *joot*) in Nivacle and *espartillares* in Spanish.²⁴ This land is highly fertile and is considered appropriate for agriculture. The remaining parts of the terrain are covered by forest (*monte alto*), which contains both permeable and semi permeable soils that are suitable for both agriculture and ranching. There are also smaller areas of scrubland (*monte bajo*), which, despite being unsuitable for agriculture or ranching, has small depressions that are suitable for the construction of man-made reservoirs. Map 4.2. illustrates the location of these grasslands within the colony.

The total area of land was 6 leagues squared which was purchased in 1981 as a “joint venture” between the Catholic development organization the Land Project for

²² See the document entitled “*Proyecto Campo Loa*.”

²³ In English it is known as St John’s Bread Tree (Bot. *Prosopis alba*).

²⁴ Jotoicha is the name of a Nivacle mythical place in which there are vast areas of open grasslands where an abundant, almost never-ending quantity of crops can be grown



Map 4.2. Plan of the Open Grasslands in Campo Loa

Indigenous Communities of the National Team of Missions,²⁵ (an organization of the Paraguayan Episcopal Conference (*Conferencia Episcopal Paraguaya*) (CEP)) in cooperation with the Oblates of María who are based in Mariscal Estigarribia and the Mennonite-Indigenous Settlement Board.²⁶ The Catholic development board (ENM) purchased four leagues and the Mennonite development board (ASCIM) purchased the remaining two leagues (Fritz 1994:70). Several years later the Catholics purchased the Mennonite share of the land.

This purchase of the land and the commencing of the four-year development project entitled “The Campo Loa Project” (*Proyecto Campo Loa*) coincided with an increasing national awareness of the situation of the indigenous people in Paraguay²⁷ and the introduction of a new law specifying indigenous people’s rights to land known as Law 904/81.²⁸ The Campo Loa Project therefore commenced during a period of immense national political activity regarding indigenous rights. The key operational philosophy behind the Campo Loa Project was the concept of “*autogestión*,” which means “self-determination” in Spanish.²⁹ A key element of this philosophy was that it would be open enough to allow for the Nivacle themselves to make decisions on the direction and design of the project.

The project’s original intention was “to settle 4 groups of Nivacle Indians with approximately 120 families or 630 people on their own land” (Proyecto Campo Loa: 1). These four groups, as I have already described, were from the worker villages of Colonias 6, 8, 10 and 22. The report stated that their history had left them in a situation of great dependency upon the Mennonites as there was only work for them during the

²⁵ *Proyecto Tierras para Comunidades Indígenas del Equipo Nacional de Misiones* (ENM).

²⁶ *Asociación de Servicios de Cooperación Indígena y Mennonita* (ASCIM).

²⁷ See Maybury-Lewis and Howe (1980).

²⁸ Law 904/81 the *Estatuto de las Comunidades Indígenas* of 1981 was created in order to provide land and land titles to Paraguayan indigenous communities in order that they could maintain their traditional ways of life (including hunting, gathering, fishing and subsistence agriculture) and so that they could run their everyday political affairs according to their traditional values. It also enabled a community to gain communal rights to their land and obtain legal personality (*personería jurídica*) of their community through the nomination of one or several of their leaders to act as legal representatives. Article 18 of the Law states that each family or household was entitled to a minimum of 100 hectares which includes land in which to practice subsistence horticulture, hunting and gathering (also see Kidd 1999:122ff).

²⁹ The project coordinators defined the concept of “*autogestión*” in a number of ways including: “Person, community or town that knows its situation and that moves itself on its own to achieve its objective, look for ways in its reach and carries out a realistic project”; “To leave a person, group or community to be the protagonist of their own history”; “To leave a people to follow their own history, that they can be conscious of their own situation. To accompany the community to discover their life and that they can be protagonists in their action.” (*Acta del Primer Encuentro de Misioneros de la Parroquia San Miguel* (1986), my translation).

wet season, constituting only five months of the year, and during the remaining seven months it was difficult for them to earn a living. The project's main objective was to enable the Nivacle to establish a new livelihood through subsistence agriculture and stock rearing (chiefly of goats and sheep) and supplementing their diet with hunting and gathering. The agricultural aspect of the project was budgeted for year one and the livestock rearing for year two. This process was supplemented by initial investment through the project. Amongst some of the items invested were: help in the construction of their houses; protective wire for their agricultural plots; the excavation of water holes and the construction of man-made reservoirs; help with setting up of the schools, medical centers; and specialist advice in smallholding. It was intended that this would enable the community "to create a sufficient subsistence base on their own land" (Proyecto Campo Loa 1981).

Table 4.3. summarizes the number of hectares of land per household in each of the communities of Campo Loa as it stood in April 2003. Despite the one hundred hectares per household that were stipulated in Law 904/81 as a minimum, this figure has not been achieved in any of the communities in Campo Loa. Whilst it seems that the community of San Pio X is relatively close to achieving this figure, I would question the accuracy of the data that were gathered by the national census because when the census was being carried out a high proportion of the community were working in Filadelfia in the brick factory, therefore making the figure look disproportionately high. The actual figure for this community is therefore likely to be much closer to the others. The figures for Campo Loa appear to be comparable with those reported in other regions of the Paraguayan Chaco (see Kidd 1999; Leake 1999). The figures for the Mennonite-run colony of Comunidad Nivacle Unida shows a much lower figure of 24.8 Hectares per household in 2002.³⁰ . Given these figures, I would agree with Leake's observation that "This figure has, however, tended to be applied as a maximum rather than minimum" (1999:82).³¹ During my fieldwork the residents of Comunidad Nivacle Unida were in the process of applying for the transfer of an additional 2,585 hectares, which one of the leaders told me was for a ranch that they were planning to build. I shall now go on to describe the layout of the communities in Campo Loa, and in particular the community of Jotoicha.

³⁰ According to the 2002 national census, the total population of Comunidad Nivacle Unida in 2002 was 1,541 Nivacle residents and the total area of land was some 7,278 hectares

³¹ See also Kidd (1992:3).

Table 4.3. Number of Hectares of Land Per Household in Campo Loa

Community	Number of Households	Total area of Land (hectares)	Hectares of Land Per Household
Jotoicha	73	3,714.88	50.9
Nasuc	34	1,913.56	56.3
San Ramon / Primavera	27 / 17	1,675.07	38.1
San Miguel	51	2,508.80	49.2
San Pio X	17	1,325.22	78

Source: *Censo Nacional de Poblacion y Viviendas 2002* (DGEC) and information on the distribution of land in Campo Loa provided by the *Vicariato Apostolico del Picomayo*.

4.2. Expanding Lengthways

A “community” with its houses and central plaza is known as a *vtfaat*.³² However, this term is not limited to indigenous settlements and could also refer to an agricultural colony (*colonia* or *asentamiento indígena*), a Mennonite town, a Mennonite agricultural village, and even a country such as Scotland. The term *vtfaat* is always expressed with a possessive prefix. For example *yi[-]* means “my” and *yi-tfaat* therefore translates as “my community.” Another residential term is the intransitive verb *tôôlb* which, when used with the suffix *[-]e*, refers to a person and translates as “to be a descendent from/to come from (a place).” In everyday speech, a person also used the verb *tôôlb* to talk about where they live now, with the question “*talb tôôlb-e?*” meaning, “which community do you come from?” This term also refers to the physical location of the community rather than to those who reside there. Another term that refers to co-residency is the noun *chifa*, which means “co-resident.” This can be used to refer to a co-resident of a household, a community, a colony or a town and was often used interchangeably with the term *velb*, meaning “kinsperson.” A derivative of this noun is the verb *nachifan* or *tachifan*, which means, “to be a co-resident of.” I was also told that the term *tachifa* signifies a close relationship between people who were co-residents, in much the same way as *tatvelb* means “blood relatives” or “close kin.” This was a highly emotive term, which would often be used during church services if the speaker wanted to emphasize

³² “Communities” have also been referred to in the lowland South American literature as “villages” (see Ewart (2003), Guss (1989), Harris (2000), Oliveira (2003), Viveiros de Castro (1992)) or “settlements” (see Henley (1982)).

the “closeness” of the community. In other situations, it might not be applied at all and *chifa* or even *ni lba-velb-a* (non-kin) would be used instead. *Ve'lba sham* is a term that is used by co-residents. *Ve'lba* means “one” and *sham* means “those who are.”³³ This term can be used to refer both to a household and a community and is conceptually linked to the Nivacle understanding of the community as being comprised of “similar.” This is a similarity that takes into account the individual autonomy of its members, yet at the same time reflects the generative effects of co-residence.³⁴

There is very little literature on the pre-colonial layout of Nivacle villages. Nordenskiöld (1926:34, 39) [in Alvarsson 1988: 76]] has written that the dwelling houses of the Indians living along the Pilcomayo River were arranged in groups. Métraux elaborates on this by explaining that they were built as a series of houses joined together and that these “longhouses” would often form a street or road. He writes,

As a rule, groups of related families reside in long communal houses which are merely a series of individual huts linked together end to end, without internal partitions. Each compartment has a separate exit. The *Pilaga* and *Ashluslay*³⁵ house often has an ellipsoidal ground plan with one slightly concave side. Long houses sometimes face each other across a wide street or plaza.

Métraux (1946:267)

Based on these descriptions alone, it is difficult to establish where the plaza might have been situated and whether it was circular or if the houses were in more of a straight line. The modern agricultural settlement of Campo Loa comprised what Rivière (1984:15) has termed “nucleated villages.” These, he argues, are less common in the Guianas than “dispersed houses”. On entering the community of Jotoicha, the difference in the quality of the road was very marked, with the Mennonite-owned road being very smooth and flat owing to the regular repair operations that were constantly being carried out on

³³ This seems to be similar to the Enxet term [-]hawoxama which Kidd writes “is a composite word combining [-]hawo, meaning “equal” or “the same,” and xama, meaning “one.” (1999:102).

³⁴ See Chapter 7 where I discuss the relationship between the concepts of co-residency and similarity in more detail.

³⁵ Both Nordenskiöld and Métraux refer to the Nivacle as the “Ashluslay.” The neighbouring Choroti were said to have given the Nivacle this name, which they say translates as “eaters of iguana.” None of my informants had heard of the term when I asked them about it during my fieldwork.

them, and the indigenous roads that were full of bumps and potholes. It was very common to see men and some young women on bicycles cycling from the Mennonite cooperative in Ribera with large white plastic sacks strapped to the rear of their bicycles. These sacks were full of their provisions that they had purchased in Ribera. The Mennonite pick-up trucks would speed past the Nivacle people on their bicycles, almost causing them to disappear in the thick cloud of dust that they left behind them. Driving into the community there was a bottle-green signpost with “Jotoicha” printed on it in bold white letters and a white arrow pointing the direction that one should travel to get there. It is initially quite difficult to see the individual houses as the grassland surrounding them was interspersed with trees. Indigenous people also preferred to grow thick hedgerows around the outer patio of their houses to act as windbreaks as well as provide them with some privacy. Driving along the slightly windy and almost undulating road past one of the wells where groups of women would congregate to fetch water, the houses would gradually appear closer together and nearer to the road. On arrival at the central plaza, the dimensions of the church with its large corrugated iron roof, white painted cross and thick wooden supporting legs are immediately striking. The road continued through the plaza past the football stadium and volleyball courts. The housing pattern on the other side of the community was exactly the same as the first side. The road continued through further fields of open grassland until it eventually reached one of the main roads, which was an artery of the Trans-Chaco Highway.

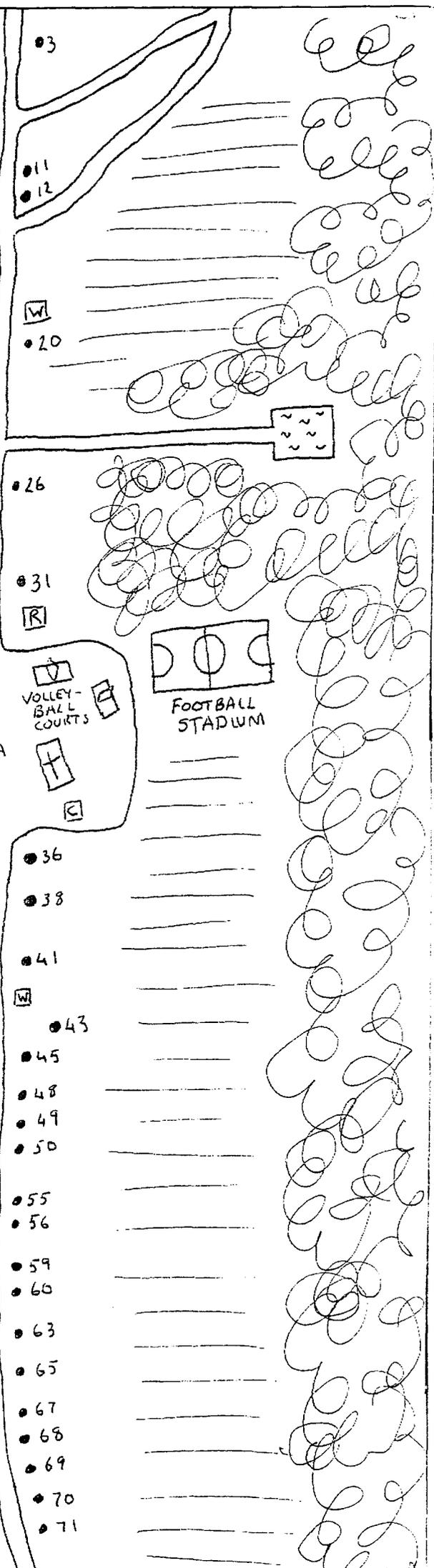
The first Nivacle people (*los Primeros*) to have founded Jotoicha built their houses in the center of the community on either side of the plaza. All of their children then followed them there and started building their houses along the road extending outwards in either direction. People explained to me that the community developed from the central core of the plaza outwards in both directions, with each “side” constituting “similars,” who were different to those of “the other side.” This was a theme that surfaced particularly during sporting events, a theme that I explore in Chapter 7.

Map 4.3. depicts the layout of Jotoicha and Appendix A shows the genealogy of the community in relation to household. Appendix B illustrates the household composition of Jotoicha and is intended to complement Map 4.3. and Appendix A. The houses are numbered on the map from the top to the bottom of the community. All six of the communities in Campo Loa had a very similar layout to Jotoicha. Each one was built

Map 4.3. Plan of Jotoicha

- = House
- ☐S = Schoolhouse
- ☐+ = Church
- ☐R = Radio Station
- ☐C = Communal Kitchen
- ☐W = Well
- ☐~ = Man-Made Reservoir
- ☐≡ = Garden Plots
- ☐X = Forest

- 1 ●
- 2 ●
- 4 ●
- 5 ●
- 6 ●
- 7 ●
- 8 ●
- 9 ●
- 10 ●
- 13 ●
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- 53 ●
- 54 ●
- 57 ●
- 58 ●
- 61 ●
- 62 ●
- 64 ●
- 66 ●

- 36
- 38
- 41
- ☐W
- 43
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- 71

along a relatively straight road (*nóyish*) approximately 3 meters wide running for almost 2km in length. The dwelling houses (*jpóijet*) were situated on either side of the road at regular intervals of between 5 and 15 metres. The plaza *clóija'vat* (“the place in which to play”)³⁶ was situated in the centre of the community where the schoolhouse (*vanqu'isjavat* “the place in which to read”), the church (*tishjanja'vat* “the place in which to sing”), the communal kitchen (*itó'vat* “place where there is fire”), the football stadium (*cancha*) and the volleyball courts (*cancha lb-ose* “daughter of the football pitch”) are also situated.

Figure 4.1. depicts the “linear grouping” (Stahl 1974:120) plan of the prototype indigenous agricultural community as developed by the Mennonite-Indigenous Development Board (ASCIM). This is the basic plan that all the indigenous agricultural colonies were modeled on. The idea was that the indigenous village would be based on the model of the Mennonite village and administrative system as it had been developed during their time in Russia (Klassen (1988) [in Regehr (1994)]), with the cooperative being the only part that was newly introduced. Prior to developing this settlement model, the Mennonites had built a settlement farm in the Yalve Sanga mission station in 1936 “in order to provide illustrations of how Mennonites farmed and made a living from the Chaco soil, which heretofore had been rather grudging in its provision of food for the Indians” (Redekop 1980:142). In describing the mission station Mennonite anthropologist Calvin Redekop writes,

This farm consisted of about seventy-five acres (thirty hectares) and had various fruit trees and vegetable gardens. The farm had around a hundred head of cattle. Most of the work was done by the Indians, under the direction of the missionary-farmer.

Redekop (1980:142)

Despite the fact that this initial settlement programme was unsuccessful with “the attempt to keep the Indians at work on the mission farm...well-nigh impossible” (Redekop 1980:143), the Mennonite missionaries agreed to undertake further settlement work following the baptism of seven Enxet men in 1946. The first settlement was composed of six families and each received 2 hectares. In 1950 the Mennonite mission board known as the “Light to the Indians” (*Licht den Indianern*) purchased five leagues of

³⁶ See Oliveira (2003), who states that the Mebengokré have a similar concept of the plaza as a place in which to play.

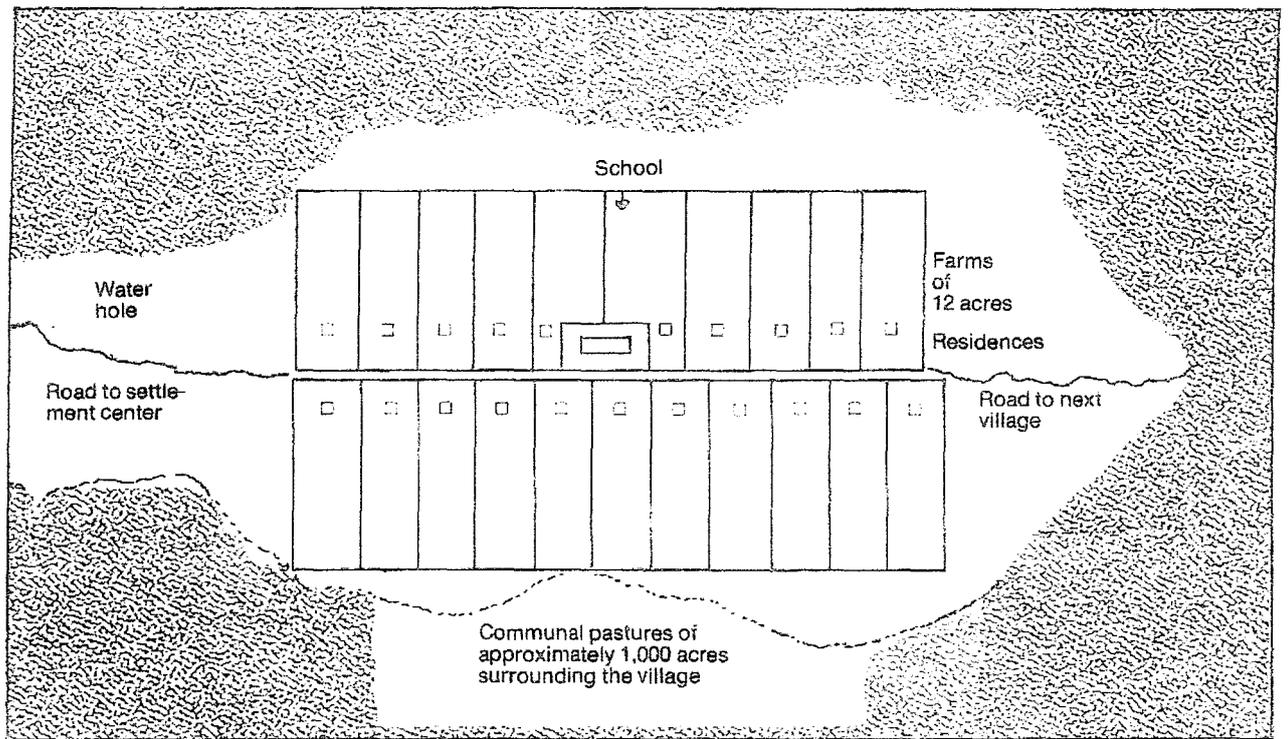


Figure 4.1. Diagram of the “Linear Grouping” of the Prototype Indigenous Agricultural Settlement (Source: Redekop (1980))

land. Redekop writes, “The settlements were laid out very much after the pattern of the Mennonite villages – a road with equal parcels of land running back to a designated line. These were twenty-five meters long” (Ibid.). However tensions arising from insufficient land forced the missionaries to resettle the Enxet on larger plots of land and so in 1955 the first settlement village was established with each family being assigned five hectares:

The Indian settlement program was to consist of establishing a family on a *chacra* [garden plot] of five hectares of tillable land and seventeen hectares of pasture, plus communal pasture, with provisions sufficient to enable the family to make a start in agricultural livelihood, with guidance and advice from the resident settlement leaders. Each family was to receive a team of horses, a wagon, a plow, a cultivator, a corn planter, wire for fences, and some hand-tools.

Redekop (1980:145)

The only major difference between Campo Loa and the ASCIM-led indigenous agricultural colonies was that Campo Loa did not have a central administrative center where the cooperative offices, shops, secondary schools and hospitals were based. There were also no communal pastures, as most attempts to establish them had failed due to development organizations misinterpreting Nivacle people’s concept of individual ownership and assuming that they practiced communal ownership.³⁷ With the Campo Loa Project no longer functioning, the leaders of each of the communities continued to establish contact with project workers (*proyectistas*) from different development projects, with most of the leaders establishing contact with workers on the EC-funded Sustainable Development Project known as PRODECHACO.³⁸

In late 2002, PRODECHACO began a project in Jotoicha to grow a communal vegetable garden for the schoolhouse that the schoolchildren would be able to grow their own vegetables. One of the leaders had offered, “to look after it.” However, the leader soon began to complain that no one would help him, whilst, at the same time, the

³⁷ For further discussion on Nivacle concepts of property, see Chapter 7.

³⁸ See *Report on the European Union’s Project for the Sustainable Development of the Paraguayan Chaco* for a critique of this project and in particular the Paraguayan government’s failure to purchase sufficient land for the indigenous communities as was agreed prior to the commencement of the project.

other members of the community were quite clearly assigning the work in the garden to José and were calling it “José’s plot.” In the end, the plot failed due to a lack of rain, with the sun scorching the lettuce, onions and carrots that he had endeavoured to grow. This was a process that I saw repeat itself over and over again whenever development projects were set up. I shall return to the issues of ownership and cash crop projects in Chapters 6 and 7 and will now go on to describe household composition in Campo Loa.

4.3. Household Composition

Holy (1996:53) argues that whilst the concept of “the family” has been based on affinal and consanguineal relationships, “the household” has been understood more in spatial terms as a residential unit. Sanjek (1996:285) has pointed to both “kinship” and “marriage” as the key forces linking household members together and states that households are “the next bigger thing on the social map after an individual.” Whilst I agree with Yanagisako’s (1979:164) critique of the concept of the “household”, I have chosen to use the term, first, because of its widespread adoption by writers working in lowland South American societies and so it is a useful comparative concept.³⁹ Second, I feel that the term “family” is too loaded with Western notions of “the nuclear family” (see Schneider 1968) for it to be analytically useful and that it would misrepresent Nivacle concepts too much. As I hope to illustrate, while I use the term “household” I am not suggesting that there is a direct correlation between “the household” and “the domestic domain of women.” My aim in this section is to avoid such “ethnocentric assumptions” (Holy 1996:69) and explore what the domain of the household means to the Nivacle of Campo Loa, the activities that they engage in, the types of relationships that bring people together and, in Chapter 6, the ways in which they challenge the public/private dichotomy.

Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) point out that within lowland South American ethnography, relational categories relating to kinship and alliance have tended to gain precedence over the house as a category in its own right. As a result, the house has received relatively little ethnographic attention. However, they also point to a concurrent trend that has its origins in the work of Lévi-Strauss on the topics of dual

³⁹ For example Belaunde (1992), Ellis (1996), Kidd (1999) and McCallum (1989).

organization and the Bororo village, which have been used in anthropological writings on architecture and spatial organization.⁴⁰ Recent works in lowland South America have shown there to be significant differences within the region regarding the concept of the house and its relationship to the wider society. At one extreme are the egalitarian, cognatic Guianese Caribs, whose houses are often equivalent to a community. Such communities are based on alliance-based bilateral kindreds that last for only a short period of time much like the house itself (Riviere 1995). At the other extreme, are the spatially significant and highly ordered houses of the Gê-speaking Mebengokré, whose villages are organized in a circular fashion (Lea 1995). Finally, the sophisticated architecture of the Northwest Amazonian Tukanoans present something in between the two where the house has cosmological significance in the mythological foundations of social structure, in Tukanoan explanations of genealogy, and in the collective groupings that are representative of patrilineal groupings.

Inspired by Schneider's (1968, 1984) recommendation for the need to adopt a more relativistic approach that takes into account indigenous understandings of kinship and relatedness, Carsten and Hugh-Jones *et al* (1995) aimed toward an interpretation of the house and household that went beyond a straightforward consideration of its physical structure and spatial formation. Building on Bourdieu's (1977) classic ethnography of the Kabyle House where he develops a theory on the dialectical relationship between house and body, they state,

The house is an extension of the person; like an extra skin, carapace or second layer of clothes, it serves as much to reveal and display as it does to hide and protect. House, body and mind are in continuous interaction, the physical structure, furnishing, social conventions and mental images of the house at once enabling, moulding, informing and constraining the activities and ideas which unfold within its bounds

Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995:3)

The idea that houses are people is, they argue, "one of the universals of architecture" and that "The space that surrounds a house is also an extension of the personal space of

⁴⁰ See, for example, C. Hugh-Jones's (1979) work on the relationship between the space within the communal house and the relationship between the house and the body amongst the Barasana.

its occupants” (1995:3). Thus, houses are, “Places in which the to and fro of life unfolds, built, modified, moved or abandoned in accord with the changing circumstances of their inhabitants, houses have dynamic, processual characteristics encapsulated in the word ‘dwelling’” (1995:1). They are therefore emphasizing the temporal nature of relatedness with the house being seen as a process. It is through the practice of living together that both the structure and form of the house gradually changes alongside the nature of the relationships within it. This perspective is reminiscent of Ingold’s distinction between the genealogical and relational models of kinship (see Chapter 1) and is echoed by Gillespie, who suggests that people enact “kin or ‘kin-like’ relationships as a group by virtue of their joint localization to a ‘house’” (2000:1). I intend to adopt a processual understanding of the development of the Nivacle household and through this unfold how kinship and marriage are created and sustained over time.

The term for dwelling house is *jpôyich*. It also refers to the Pleiades, although people did not develop on the semantic connection between the “house” and the Pleiades.⁴¹ There is, however, no term that accurately translates into our concept of “the household.”⁴² This point is significant and relates once again to a point I made earlier about the lack of terms for “groups” and “collectivities” of people. “The household” is not understood as a static “group,” but rather as individuals who have chosen to live together and to engage in relationships of mutual care. As Rosengren writes for the Matsigenka, “the constitution of actual groups depends on the ego’s set of relations, with the result that the individually conceived groups are usually overlapping. Moreover, a group only exists as such in the moment of interaction” (2000:223). The Nivacle term *ve’lha sham* (“one together”) can be used at different spatial levels to refer to co-residents of a single community as well as co-residents of a single agricultural colony.⁴³ As I shall discuss in more detail in Chapter 7, this emphasizes their stress on the creation of similarity through autonomous co-resident individuals rather than through the existence of a “group” of people who are “the same.” It could therefore be said that whilst the Cubeo believe that “one roof unites a community while several roofs divide it” (Goldman

⁴¹ Overing (1975:29) reports that the Piaroa term *Iso’de* refers both to the physical structure of the house as well as to the household as a social unit. Guss, meanwhile, writes that amongst the Yekuana “Each village is referred to as a “house” or *atta* and is not only conceived of as a self-contained universe but is actually constructed as a replica of the cosmos” (1989:21).

⁴² C.f. Forrest (1987:33) and Kidd (1999:104).

⁴³ Goldman (1963: 39) writes that whatever the genealogical relationships of its residents, members of a household are equivalent to a joint family.

1963:36), for the Nivacle, “several roofs unite a community whilst one roof would reflect its divisions.”

Nordenskiöld reports that in pre-colonial times, the Nivacle lived in individual houses that were positioned relatively close together and that in some communities they were “joined together to form an irregular building which served as a meeting place for the men, and was also used as a guest-house” (1919:25). Métraux provides the following description of the Nivacle house in 1946:

The Indians of the Pilcomayo and Bermejo Rivers live in crude and primitive houses which contrast sharply with their achievements in other arts and crafts. House construction is the women’s task. With digging sticks they make an oval or sometimes circular set of holes into which they plant small tree trunks or stout limbs, with the thick ends down, and the lateral branches uncut to add to the solidity of the structure. The slender tips, bent inward, interlace to form a vaulted frame on which are thrown loose palm leaves or grass or both. Such roofs afford some protection against the sun but not against the rain, which drenches those who do not take shelter under skins or reed mats. These dwellings are never high enough for one to stand upright. They are entered through one or more low openings, on one side of which a rudimentary screen projects slightly so as to form in certain cases a short porch or vestibule of branches or leaves.

Métraux (1946:267)

The average size of a Nivacle dwelling house nowadays is 16 meters squared, although dimensions varied from as small as 9 meters squared to as large as 24 meters squared. In 1999, the local government of Boquerón initiated a development programme in Campo Loa where every household received a new corrugated iron roof and latrine. Prior to this, the majority of the houses had been built with slate roofs. Some of these older houses still remained, but these were usually adjacent to the newer main house on the plot. Whilst the local government provided the corrugated iron and timber to construct

the roof, individual household members were responsible for constructing the other parts. People used large posts of *palo santo*,⁴⁴ a wood known as *jooc* in Nivacle, to provide supports for the roof. These posts were called *jpôychiyte*, a term that also refers to the back, with there usually being six posts per house. Most people built up the walls of their houses with a mixture of adobe (*cootsjatis* lit: earth) and grass. Sections of adobe that fell off over the course of time were often replaced with large sheets of black or coloured tarpaulin (*carpa* lit: tent) that was also used to build temporary shelters. These were purchased from the Mennonite stores.⁴⁵

The floors of the houses were made of cleared hardened earth (*cootsjaat*) that extended from the house into the patio (*clayôich'è*). Cleanliness is an important aspect of Nivacle aesthetics, and having a “bad house” (*jpôyiche'mat*) is synonymous with having a patio that is covered with weeds and litter, whilst a “beautiful” house (*jpôyichematsej*) is one that has a swept, clean patio. People did not pay that much attention to the physical structure or order of their houses, with many having large sheets of tarpaulin that flapped around in the wind and adobe walls that had large gaps in them. What seemed to be of overriding importance was the care that was invested in keeping the area round the house clear and cared for, just like the care that was invested in those living in it. One man explained to me that it was the *cootsjaat* (earth) floor that distinguished Nivacle people from *Samtô*. “We just have *cootsjaat*, that’s all. That’s what us Indians have. No wooden floorboards or rugs. Just *cootsjaat*.”

Most houses in Campo Loa were situated on plots of land that extend from the road (*na noyish* or *caôvju*) out towards the forest (*na ita*). People would often refer to their plot as their *lugar* (place). The average size of a plot was approximately two hectares (i.e. one hundred meters wide and two hundred meters in length). There was usually only one house situated on every plot, although in some cases there would be two if, for example, the household is an uxorilocally or virilocally extended household with an elderly parent or a recently married child and their spouse inhabiting the adjacent house. The house itself does not represent any form of gendered hierarchy either in terms of its structure

⁴⁴ Bot. Balnesia sarmiento (Seelwische 1990:104). *Jooc* is also the generic term for a stick or a plank of wood.

⁴⁵ The Nivacle house appears to reflect the relative structural simplicity of the Guianese house reported by Rivière (1995), although Overing has stated that the Piaroa are an exception to this (personal communication).

or spatial layout.⁴⁶ Figure 4.2. is a plan of one of the houses in Jotoicha illustrating the house, the patio and the garden plot. The door to the house is known as the *lb-asbi*, a term that also means “mouth,” and the windows are called *vatovalhjates* (“places from which I observe”). Houses usually had very small windows so that people could look out, but others could not look in. In Jotoicha people would usually ensure that their windows were positioned in such a way as to enable them to look out onto the main path to see who was passing by. The inside of the house was known as *na tóvash*, a noun that also refers to the abdominal cavity or the pelvis. However, people generally spent very little time inside their houses and preferred to have most of their chairs and their table outside in the patio.⁴⁷ This is where people received guests and indeed it could be described as the social center of the house.⁴⁸ People therefore tended to refer to the house and patio together as *na yi-jpôyich* (“my house”).⁴⁹ People also cooked their food and ate their meals in the patio. Some households would have a separate smaller building where they would cook, known as an *itô’vat* (“place in which there is fire”).⁵⁰ The average patio was approximately 100 square meters in size. It would usually extend towards the rear of the house in order to give people some level of privacy from neighbouring houses as well as from people walking along the central path. People would usually plant several trees in their patio for shade, the most popular of which being the *algarrobo* tree. They would also plant bright colourful flowers (*nava lb-avós*) and bushes that their Mennonite bosses had given them. Many households also had lemon, lime or grapefruit trees, which they explained they had planted for the children. “They are almost like sweets,” one woman told me. Round the edge of the patio, people would usually plant thick bushy trees that they had been given by the Mennonites as a type of windbreak. People usually left the area beyond the hedges for weeds and grasses to grow and would also dig a large pit there to dispose of all their litter and rubbish.

⁴⁶ Joanna Overing (personal communication) suggests that it is interesting that those Amazonianists who have paid attention to the “structure” of the house have, on the whole, also been those who have also stressed the hierarchy of the genders. This is evident, for example, in works carried out amongst the Achuar (Descola 1994) as well as those carried out in the North West Amazon (see, for example, Hugh-Jones 1985). Key exceptions are the works of Ewart (2003) and Guss (1989).

⁴⁷ C.f. Goldman (1939), who reports that the Cubeo are largely indoor people.

⁴⁸ See Goldman, who describes the house as a “vital social centre” (1963:38).

⁴⁹ Rapoport points out that activities take place not only within buildings, “but also in outdoor areas, settlements and beyond – in the whole cultural landscape...One cannot, as is so often done, compare buildings as dwellings merely because – in form and structure – they appear to us as such. In the study of dwellings the proper units of comparison are the systems of settings, which have first to be discovered before they can be compared” (1994:463).

⁵⁰ Nordenskiöld writes, “cooking-sheds of the type seen in the Chaco, I have not come across among any other Indian tribe visited by me” (1919:25).

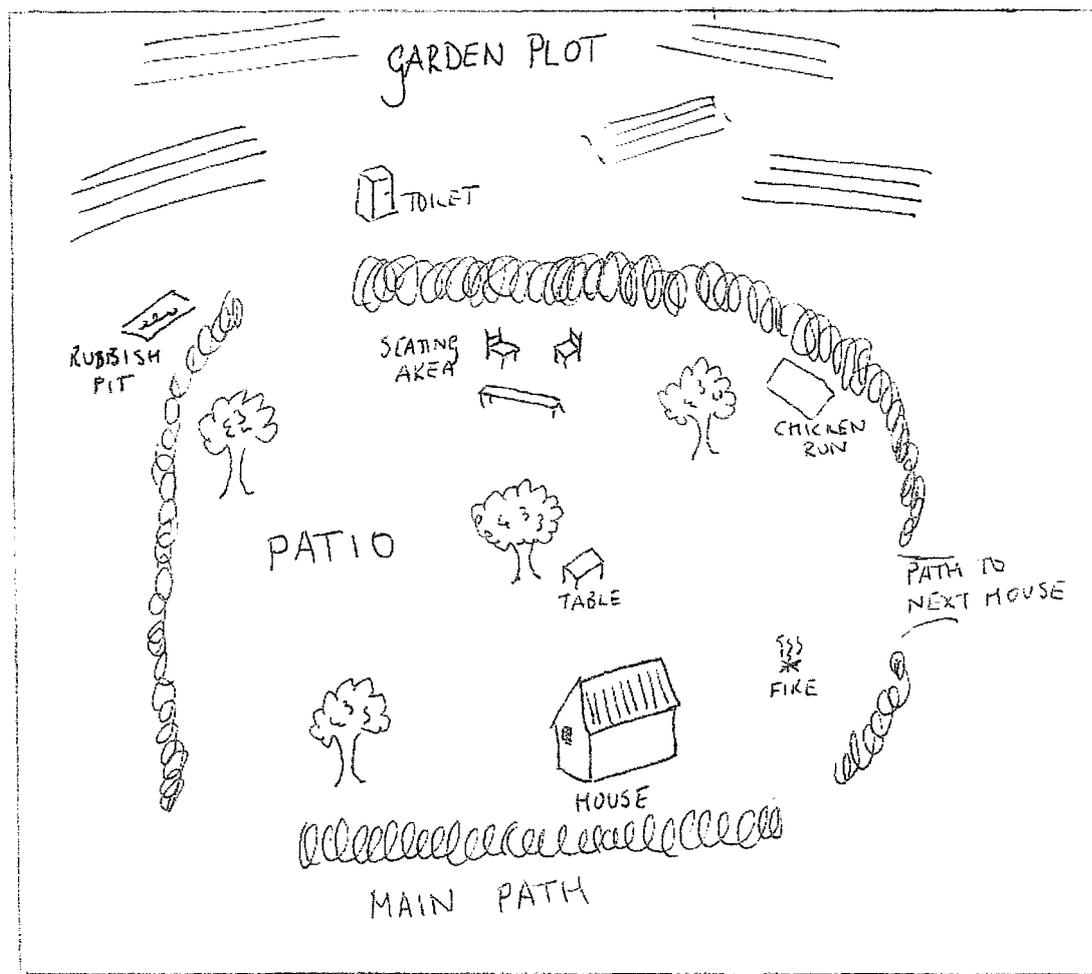


Figure 4.2. Plan of a House, Patio and Garden in Jotoicha

Any time I asked an individual about the materials that they had used to build their house, they would invariably make a connection between specific parts of the house and the people who had given them it. For example, José's house was made mainly of corrugated iron sheets, large thick flat sheets of metal and wooden palates. Once he told me that he had built most of his house from metal that his Mennonite boss (*c'utsfa*) had given him. José sat and pointed to every section of his house and told me in the minutest detail exactly who had given him it and when. He pointed to one sheet of metal in particular that had a large red circular kerosene stamp design on it and told me that one day his boss was moving house and he had told him that he could take whatever he wanted from the bottom of the yard. José's focus when he was telling me about it was undoubtedly on his relationship with his boss. It was not so much that the piece of corrugated iron constituted or represented the relationship, but rather that it was, for him, indicative of the sociality that they had built up over the many years that they had worked together. He then went round the house and showed me the door that he had made with corrugated iron and the special catch that he had designed from a piece of wire. He explained that he had been able to build his house in this way because he "thought" (*j-aichavallb*) and that "he who doesn't think has to pay (with money)." A house is therefore the product of a series of relationships between "knowledgeable" people. These relationships are generative of the materials and it is the "knowledge" of an adult male that transforms these "things" (*matas*) into a dwelling house.⁵¹

Members of the same household usually contributed to the pooling of food, they shared the same hearth and they would eat their meals together.⁵² The Nivacle household is therefore synonymous with the hearth group.⁵³ Henley has described the household as "the basic unit of production" (1982:63), whilst Forrest called it "the fundamental residential and economic unit" (1987:32) and "the primary unit of residence in Kalinya society" because they share a hearth (1987:33). Renshaw, meanwhile, has written that amongst indigenous peoples of the Chaco, "the household functions as a single unit of production, consumption, and distribution" (2002:190). The husband and wife partnership is the core of the Nivacle household. During certain stages the Nivacle

⁵¹ Overing writes that amongst the Piara, artefacts are referred to as "my thoughts standing up" (1997:11). Although the Nivacle do not express "knowledge" in this way, this seems to me to be highly illustrative of how they explained the creation of the dwelling house.

⁵² Kidd (1999:103) also describes congruence between the household and the hearth group amongst the neighbouring Enxet. See also Chapter 7 for further details of the "pooling" of food within a household.

⁵³ See Carsten (1997) on the concept of the "hearth group." See, also, Belaunde (1992), Ellis (1996), Forrest (1987) and McCallum (1989) on "the hearth group" in the lowland South American context.

household can also include married sons and daughters, their spouses, their children, as well as an elderly parent of either spouse.⁵⁴ Whilst husband/wife and mother/daughter relationships were of crucial importance, the household was not the basic unit of production in Nivacle society. Whilst members of the same household would often partake of certain activities together, such as working on their garden plot, fetching water, collecting firewood, and hunting, these tasks were more often carried out by individuals from different households.⁵⁵ This in part explains the importance of clean, cleared pathways interlinking houses over the significance of the structure or design of the house, which Nordenskiöld has labeled “a poverty-stricken show” (1919:23). It is the pathways between households and communities that open up the possibility for relatedness and sociality to unfold.

Table 4.4. below provides an overview of the household composition of the four communities of Jotoicha, Primavera, San Pio X and San Ramon during June 2002. Perhaps one of the most prominent first impressions that one gains is the range of household types in the four communities that indicates the high degree of flexibility that Nivacle people have regarding residence choice. During my fieldwork, 76% of households in Campo Loa were neolocal. Neolocal households are comprised of a husband and wife and at least one unmarried child.⁵⁶ This overall trend was the same across each of the individual communities, with 77% of Jotoicha, 77% of Primavera, 67% of San Pio X and 77% of San Ramon comprising nuclear families. Renshaw’s (1986, 2002) data presents a similar pattern. He writes: “Nuclear families, defined strictly in terms of co residence in the same dwelling, predominate...throughout the Chaco.” (2002:186), and goes on to show that nuclear families represented 61%, 69% and 71% of the three communities that he studied. Kidd (1999:105), meanwhile, has shown that whilst such a trend also exists amongst the Enxet, it was not as marked, with neolocal households comprising only 36% of the total number of households in his study.

⁵⁴ See also Belaunde (1992:121ff), Ellis (1996:69ff) and Gow (1991:122ff).

⁵⁵ Fock (1963:195) reports that amongst the Waiwai of British Guiana, whilst people sleep in the communal roundhouse that is divided into single-family sections, everyday work is a collaborative effort *between* sections. Also see Chapter 6.

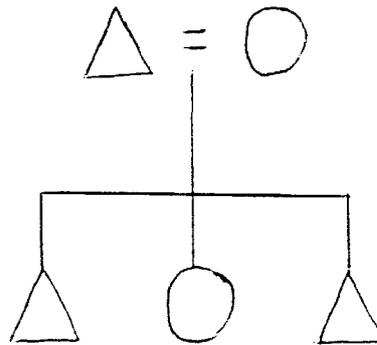
⁵⁶ Renshaw refers to this as a “nuclear family” (2002:185).

Table 4.4. Household Composition of Four Communities in Campo Loa

Household Composition	JOTOICHA	PRIMAVERA	SAN PIO X	SAN RAMON	TOTAL	%
Neolocal	56	13	12	24	105	76%
Uxorilocal	5	2	2	-	9	7%
Virilocal	3	-	2	-	5	4%
Other	9	2	2	7	20	13%
TOTAL	73	17	18	31	139	100%

The vast majority of neolocal households in Jotoicha were situated towards either end of the community. This was because the community had developed from the central plaza outwards and so the plots available for new households were situated at either end of the path. It was, by and large, newly married couples who were wanting to build new houses and this explains the prevalence of neolocal households at either end of the community, whilst multiple households tended to be closer to the centre. Figure 4.3. illustrates a neolocal household in Jotoicha (House 31, see Map 4.3. and Appendix A) comprising a husband and wife and their three unmarried children. This particular household is rather atypical in the sense that it was located next to the central plaza of the community when the majority of the neolocal households are situated towards the peripheries. This is because five years prior to my fieldwork the married couple Jorge and Marciana received a plot of land to build their house on and plant their garden plot but Marciana complained that it was too far from her mother's house, which made her unhappy. They also used to spend a great deal of time away from the community at the mission station in Mariscal Estigarribia where Jorge was training to be a schoolteacher. They had no "close kin" living nearby their plot to "observe/care for" (*ovalb*) their plants and so people had been stealing watermelons and sweet potatoes during the night. Their move to their current location meant that they had sacrificed having their own plot, but Marciana's mother's house was on the other side of the path so she planted a few rows of sweet potato, manioc and watermelon there. Since no one used the whole of their plot it was very easy to share it with close kin if they asked.

Figure 4.3. Neolocal Household 31



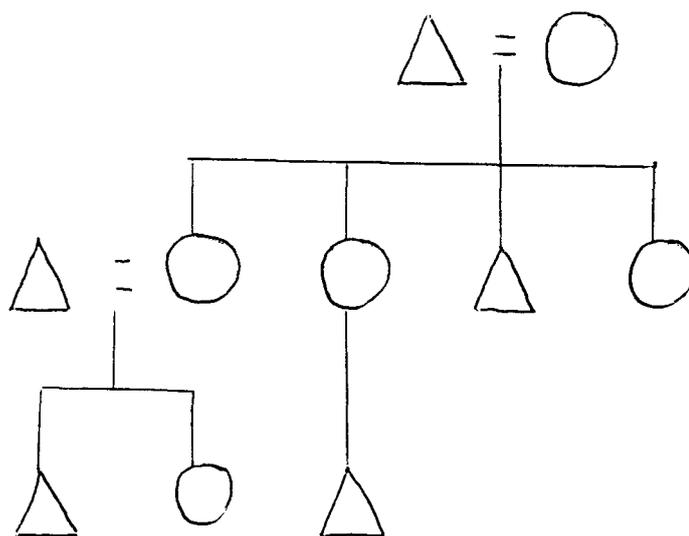
Uxorilocal households are the next most common type of household in Campo Loa, comprising 7% of the total number of houses. Many writers have noted that in lowland South America, uxoriocal households are more common than virilocal ones.⁵⁷ Writers have usually stressed the importance of the mother/daughter relationship, the female sibling relationship or the father-in-law/son-in-law relationship. Gow writes that despite the prevalence of each of these relationships amongst the Piro, he would be reluctant to stress the importance of any one of these relationships as he “suspect[s] that all are linked together under the overarching injunction to live with all one’s kin” (1991:142). Renshaw (1986; 2002) divides his data on uxoriocal residence into the earlier and later stages of the development cycle of the household. He explains that the households that represented the earlier stages of the “Developmental Cycle of the Domestic Group” (Goody 1958), where a married man resides with his wife’s parents, constituted between 4 and 6% of those he studied. Meanwhile, those representing the latter stages where the wife’s parents reside with their daughter and her husband were more common, constituted between 9% and 17% of those he studied. Reflecting a similar tendency towards uxoriocality, Kidd (1999:105) found that 20% of Enxet households in El Estribo were uxoriocal and 9% virilocal. Figure 4.4. shows the relationship between the

⁵⁷ See, for example, Alvarsson (1988:104), Gow (1991:135), Kidd (1999:107), McCallum (1989:189), Overing Kaplan (1975:73), Palmer (1997:83), Renshaw (2002:193), Riviere (1984) and Siffredi (1977:63).

members of House 30, an uxorilocal household in Jotoicha that was in its earlier stages. The husband and wife's three eldest daughters were married and had moved out of the household. One lived in House 31 across the path from them and the other lived further along the path at the opposite end of the community next to her husband's mother's house. Their third daughter lived in the worker village in Filadelfia. Their next eldest daughter's husband was originally from the community of Primavera and he has been living in their household for a year and a half with their two-year-old son and newly born daughter.

Another person who lived in this household was the couple's second youngest daughter Ricarda who was married briefly to a young man in Jotoicha. During this period she got pregnant but split up from her husband before the child was born. Ricarda continued to live in her mother and father's household with her newborn son. She was one of what the schoolteacher described as "the increasing numbers of *madre solteras* (single mothers) amongst the Nivacle nowadays." There is no term for a "single mother" in the Nivacle language because, despite having a child, the woman has no husband and so would not be able to establish her own household until such time as she did.

Figure 4.4. Uxorilocal Household 30



There were also several houses that comprised a married couple, perhaps in their thirties, their children, some of whom may be married, and the wife's elderly mother or father. House 33 in Jotoicha is an example of an uxorilocally extended household. A large number of the households that have been labelled in Table 4.4. as "Other" were, in fact, comprised of husband and wife couples whose children were all married (for example, there were six such households in Jotoicha). Such couples were still able to run their own households and would often be given one of their grandchildren "to look after/watch over" (*clôvalh*). Very often children would choose to sleep at their grandparents' houses, saying they "wanted to" (*vanquen*).

A common practice amongst children, particularly those who were amongst the eldest of several siblings, was to select the people with whom they wanted to eat and sleep. Typical choices would be their grandparents or one of their parents' siblings. Nivacle children were treated with a high degree of personal autonomy, with adults simply telling me that the child "wanted to" ("*yi-t'esh*") stay at a particular household, seeing no need for any further comment or justification.⁵⁸ Children would usually stay with kin who had very few children themselves, a situation that was said to be "*nin-tajulhei*" ("not alright/fine").⁵⁹ Children would very often describe such kin as being *mimi-esh* ("like a Mummy") or *tata-esh* ("like a Daddy"), however I very rarely heard children actually refer to such kin as being their parents. During a typical day when children were playing they would move between households, playing in the patios as well as entering the houses of different people. Children were the only people who were free to wander round helping themselves to the drinking water of other households without asking or to any fruit or peanuts that were lying around.

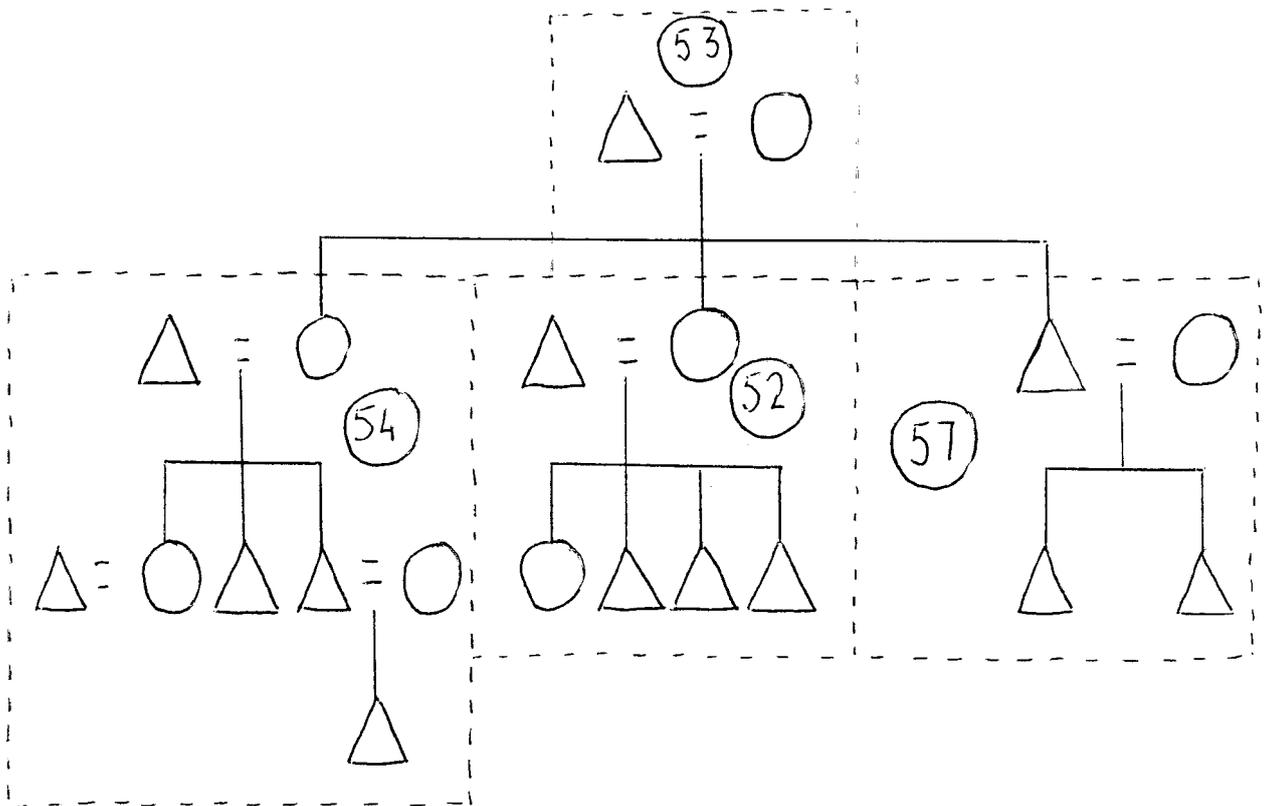
It would usually get dark at around 6pm. Just before sunset the last of the women would collect water from the well for bathing and cooking supper and the children would start make their way from the central plaza, the main path, the houses or the many other corners that they enjoyed playing, back to their parents' houses. Squeals and shouting could usually be heard as they chased and teased each other on the way home. Whilst for many this would be the home of their "real" parents, in the case of Sofia (14) and Esteban (12), this was the household of their paternal grandparents. Every evening they

⁵⁸ Bodenhorn describes this in terms of the child's "individual autonomy" (2000b: 128).

⁵⁹ This is formed from the intransitive verb *tajulh* which means, "to be partners", "to be neighbours", "to fit (clothing, etc.) or "to be beside".

would go to their grandparents' house where they would wash, have their evening meal and sleep over. Their four younger brothers and sisters would sleep at their "real" parents' house. As their grandparents had no children living with them, except for their 20-year-old son, who worked in Yalve Sanga most of the time, Sofia and Esteban provided company for their grandparents and also helped take some of the workload off their mother and father. A further example was House 53, whose residents shared a patio with House 54. The married couple in House 53 were the mother and father of the wife of house 54 and also of the wife of House 52 and the husband of House 57 (see Figure 4.5.). On an everyday level, this relatively elderly couple, whilst not residing in the same household as any of their daughters or their son, say that they like to "care for" their daughter from House 54's youngest son, particularly when she used to work for the Mennonites during the summer months.

Figure 4.5. Relationship between Houses 52, 53, 54 and 57 in Jotoicha



In her paper entitled "Eating with Your Favourite Mother," Viegas (2003) focuses on the parent-child relationship and highlights the importance of raising a child through feeding and caring for it. Viegas states that with this approach, "children are seen as part of the intersubjective relationships that constitute the making of kinship through

history” (2003:21). In her description of the parent-child relationship amongst the Caboclo-Indians of Brazil, she emphasizes the processual nature of relatedness and the fact that just as kin ties can be generated through morally appropriate actions, so too can they be unmade. She writes, “people are deeply aware of the fact that, if they stop performing these acts, the link between parents and children is weakened, and may be severed altogether” (2003:22). Gow similarly explains how on the Bajo Urubamba, “being born is not a sufficient cause of being a person, for one must be grown through acts of feeding. Equally, sex is not a sufficient cause of procreation, for sex is predicated on the work of feeding another person, just as procreation is predicated on the work of repeated sexual intercourse.” (1995:47-8). Amongst the Piro, Gow (1991; 1995) shows how kinship is created through the memory of care that is given to a person as a child, through the repeated acts of being fed “real food” (*comida legítima*) as a child. Married, productive adults who feed and care for their own children repeat these acts and this is based on their memories of the care they received as children. Like the Piro, the Nivacle also had a conception of “real food,” but rather than this “real food” only being that which is free of charge and “produced locally, through human interaction with the land” (1995:48), Nivacle “real food” (*ôc*) was that which had been bought through relations of debt with Mennonite bosses. Such meals typically comprised store-bought rice or pasta with meat, beans or pumpkin. Bodenhorn (2000b) describes Iñupiat kinship as “infinitely negotiable” (2000b: 128), and questions the feasibility of any notion of the parent-child relationship amongst the Iñupiat as a “biological given.” Instead she points to the significance of the work or “labour” involved in the creation of kinship and writes, “Whereas both ‘biology’ and ‘acting’ are categories Iñupiat use when talking about kin, it is the latter category that renders kinship ‘real.’ In curious ways, then, ‘labour’ does for Iñupiat kinship what ‘biology’ does for many other systems” (Ibid.).

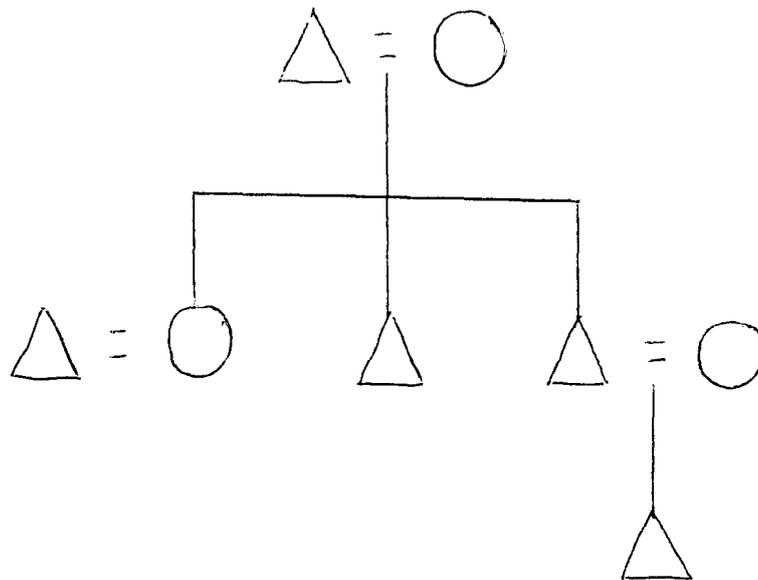
Virilocal households constituted 4% of the households in Campo Loa. Whilst the percentage was slightly less than for uxori-local households, these were often between members of the same community. Amongst the Enxet, Kidd reports that there were very few instances of what he calls “true virilocality” (1999:107) because in many cases the wife’s parents were also resident in the same community as that of her parents-in-law. In Campo Loa, uxori-locality was also very rarely “true” as intra-community marriage was very common (constituting some 87% of marriages between 1985 and 2002). The marriages that were inter-community were, in the majority of cases, between people who were both residents of Campo Loa. The most common inter-community

marriage for residents of Jotoicha was with people from the communities of Primavera and San Ramon (both of whom had previously constituted Colonia 8 alongside Jotoicha). There was therefore ample opportunity for young spouses from each of these communities to spend time with their parents as people would spend most weekends socialising and playing volleyball and football matches with different communities. The distances between communities were also not that great and so often people would walk or cycle to another community if they felt like it, or else they would travel by tractor if one were available.

Campo Loa seems to provide an alternative solution to what Ellis (1996:57) has described as the “uxorilocal dilemma” where, amongst the Tsimanes, both spouses wishing to live near their respective parents would end up living with one and then the other over a period of time. Amongst the Enxet (Kidd 1999), this dilemma was resolved through residing with one spouse’s parents and then visiting the others’ parents for relatively long periods of approximately a month. In Campo Loa, young women who were residing virilocally would usually spend a large part of their week in the company of their co-resident mothers and sisters. Young men would usually have many opportunities to visit their own parents, although the fact that they mainly worked away from home made the situation less significant for them.

There were many households in Campo Loa, however, that did not fit neatly into any of the abovementioned categories. This is because residence is a constantly evolving process and any interpretation must take this into consideration. For example, House 54 combined both uxorilocal and virilocal post-marital residence, with a recently married son and daughter, their parents and their respective husband and wife living together with the son’s newly born son (see Figure 4.6.). In this case, it cannot be neatly placed into either category, although on closer inspection it becomes clear that whilst the son had been married for several years and was in the process of building his own neolocal household, his sister had recently married. Therefore, if one were to carry out a similar study in six months’ time, they would inevitably arrive at a different kind of household composition. In order to consider the temporal aspect of residence decisions in more detail, I now turn to the process known as “The Development Cycle of the Domestic Group” that was first popularised by Goody *et al* (1958).

Figure 4.6. House 54 Combining Uxorilocal and Virilocal Post Marriage Residence



4.4. The Developmental Cycle of the Nivacle Household

Described synchronically, household composition is only capable of explaining a moment or a snapshot of the lived experience of a Nivacle person in the context of their household and community. In order to provide a temporal element to my discussion, I shall now go on to explain the Nivacle “Developmental Cycle of the Household” as described by the contributors to the edited volume by Goody (1958). In the Introduction to his edited volume, Fortes explains that synchronic representations of residence patterns “are the crystallisation, at a given time, of the development process” (1958:3) and that this “necessarily implies extension through a stretch of time. A social system, by definition, has life” (1958:1). It is therefore important to incorporate a temporal component and through this explain how residence and village composition change over the life course of a person. Fortes continues,

This is a cyclical process. The domestic group goes through a cycle of development analogous to the growth cycle of a living

organism. The group as a unit changes form, but its members, and the activities which unite them, go through a regular sequence of changes during the cycle which culminates in the dissolution of the original unit and its replacement by one or more units of the same kind.

Fortes (1958:2)

The first stage in the development cycle of the Nivacle household is when a young recently married couple live with the parents of either the husband or wife. A recently married couple without children are known as *tja'yaa'i* and refer to each other as *ja'ya*. Prior to being married the husband is known as a *nich'a sha'ne* (young man, literally “new person”) and his wife a *lhutsja* (young woman). They are said to not yet have the necessary skills or “knowledge” (*tô'i*) to live alone.⁶⁰ When a married couple go on to have children they will then refer to each other as *yi-ch'acfa*, with this stage being known as *tch'acfa'i*. Post-marriage residence is not prescriptive and young couples are free to negotiate and decide between themselves where they want to reside. Wherever they agree to reside, the daughter or daughter-in-law will learn how to work on the garden plot alongside her mother or mother-in-law until she gains sufficient “knowledge” to be able to have her own garden plot, although she will also have been helping her mother from a relatively young age.

As mentioned above, 87% of the marriages in Campo Loa were intra-community and so the fact that a woman chooses to reside virilocally was not, in fact, such a dramatic step. A significant factor that a couple take into consideration is the fact that a young married man will, almost without exception, work for a Mennonite boss (*c'utsfa*) in the neighbouring Mennonite villages of Ribera and Corrales or in the town of Filadelfia.⁶¹ Very few women had Mennonite bosses and if they did it was only for relatively short periods of time. As a result, it was the women who spent most of the time in the community with the children and elderly people. The young women therefore had greater interest in living somewhere that she finds pleasant (*is* or *c'uus-in*) than did young men. This happened with Rosa Chavez when she married Javier from Primavera. They had been living with Rosa's parents José and Teresa for just over 2 years before they

⁶⁰ See Chapter 5. Also see Belaunde (1992) and Rosengren (1987a) amongst others.

⁶¹ As a boy grows up he will usually work for the same *c'utsfa* (boss) as his father and will sometimes then go on to work for the same *c'utsfa* as his father-in-law, but this is not always the case.

built their own house in José and Teresa's patio. Javier had a Mennonite boss in Corrales and would cycle there every Monday with his co-workers (*cavos*) from Jotoicha. Rosa's father José and her only brother Bernardo worked together for another Mennonite and would travel to work together in their boss's pick-up truck (*camión*). When Javier was at work, Rosa had the company of her younger sisters Ricarda and Santa as well as her neighbouring elder sister Marciana and her other co-resident sister Lucia who lived at the other side of the community. Map 4.4. illustrates the households with whom Rosa has either a parent-child or a sibling relationship. As the map shows, most of her siblings live in her parents' house, except for her elder sisters Marciana who lives in House 31 and Juana who lives in House 55.

The relationship between women who decide to live virilocally is slightly different from those who live uxorilocally. Whilst the young wives usually lived close to their parents and siblings, their relationship with their spouse's develops over time as they work together and get used to each other. Usually young wives will know her spouse's siblings because they will have gone to school with them and played with them throughout their childhood. Pepe married Susana Pérez in 2001 and continued to live in House 54 alongside his parents Ever and Griselda. Susana's parents lived in House 40 with her six younger brothers and sisters. Susana explained that the reason she had moved to live with her husband's parents was because she was "used to them" as they had all lived and worked in the Mennonite village of Corrales together. As she got older and they moved to Jotoicha she had played volleyball with her husband's younger sisters and then with Pepe's mother, his mother's sister and his mother's mother. She now helps Pepe's mother with tasks such as gathering firewood, washing clothes and cooking and she also plays volleyball with her and her mother-in-law's sisters. However, she continued to visit her mother regularly. In Map 4.5. shows where Susana's parents and siblings live. As can be seen from the map, Susana's elder brother was also married but was at the next stage in the developmental cycle. He lived in House 64 further along the path.

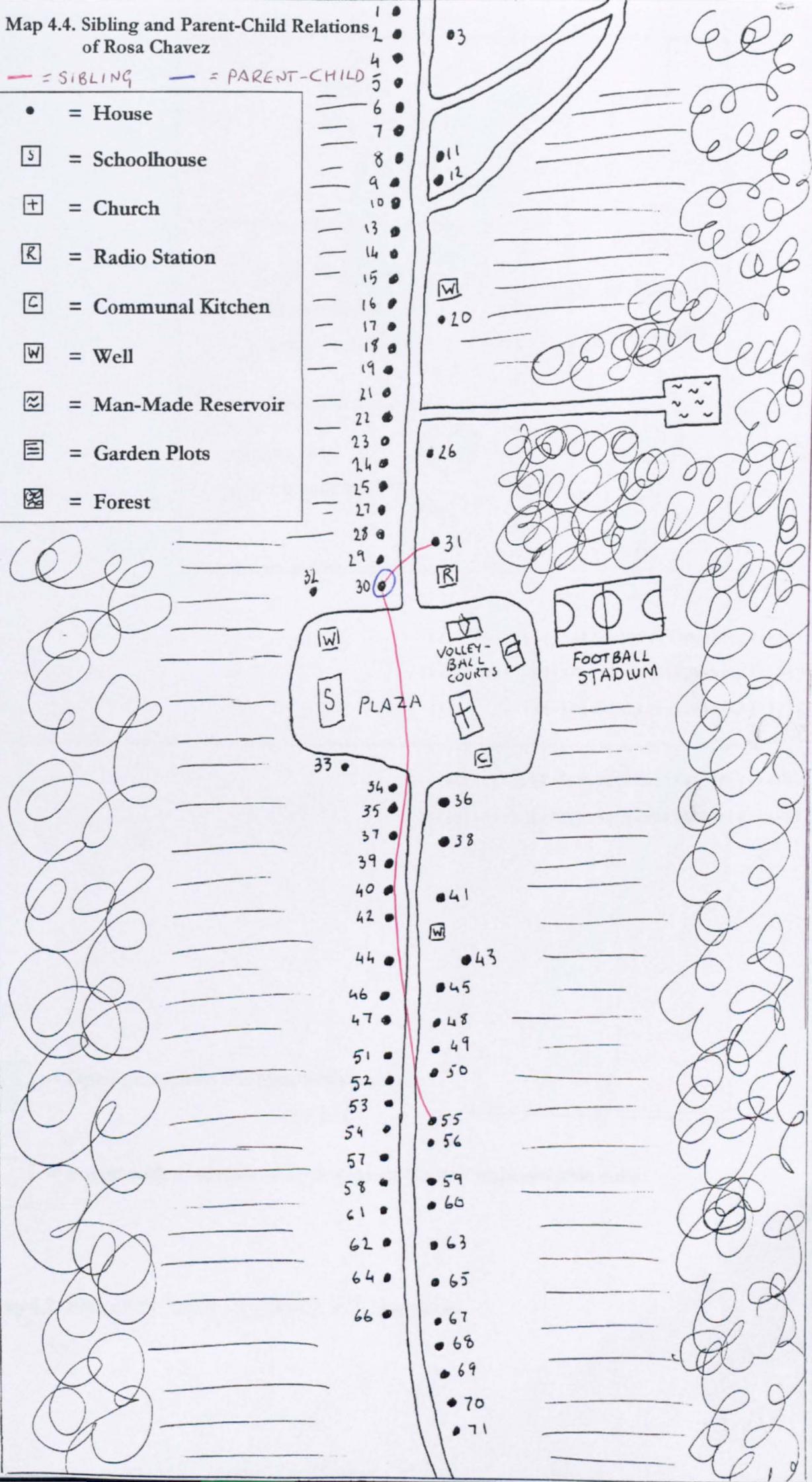
Stage two of the developmental cycle is when the young couple decide to move out of the parents' household and into their own dwelling house. This stage and those that follow reflect, "A couple's increasing independence [that are] marked by physical moves" (Forrest 1987:35). Renshaw (2002) explains that people prefer to live in nuclear families and that extended households are more prevalent in communities where there is a

Map 4.4. Sibling and Parent-Child Relations of Rosa Chavez

— = SIBLING — = PARENT-CHILD

- = House
- S = Schoolhouse
- + = Church
- R = Radio Station
- C = Communal Kitchen
- W = Well
- ≈ = Man-Made Reservoir
- ≡ = Garden Plots
- ⊠ = Forest

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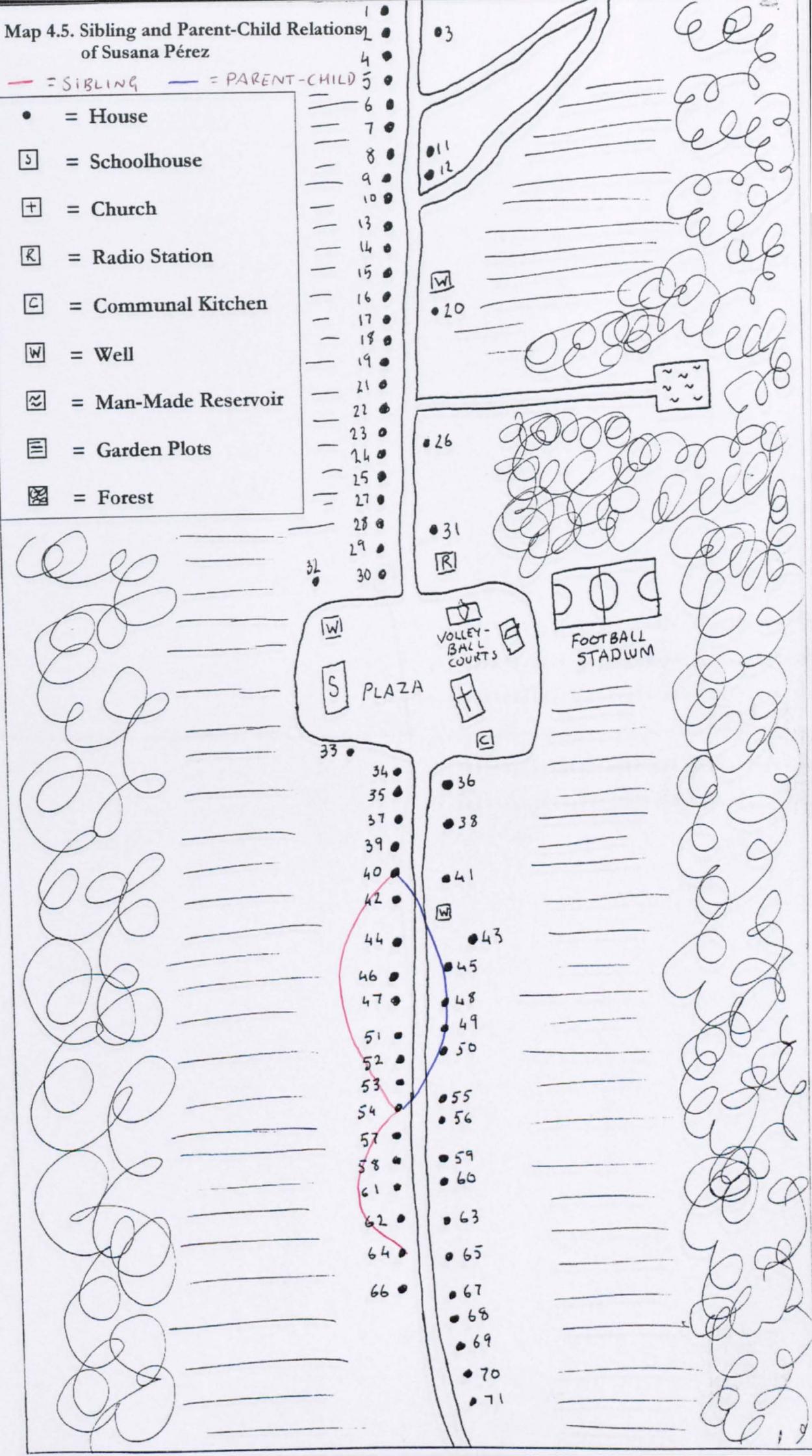


Map 4.5. Sibling and Parent-Child Relations of Susana Pérez

— = SIBLING — = PARENT-CHILD

- = House
- [S] = Schoolhouse
- [+] = Church
- [R] = Radio Station
- [C] = Communal Kitchen
- [W] = Well
- [~] = Man-Made Reservoir
- [≡] = Garden Plots
- [X] = Forest

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shortage of housing or where other external factors limit residence in nuclear households. Amongst the Nivacle, this was partly true as the construction of houses for recently married couples depended on the effectiveness of the leader of the community in requesting sheets of corrugated iron to build the roofs of the new houses. However, I would not go so far as to say that people actively preferred living in nuclear households, but rather that residence choices usually depended on the stage they were at in the development cycle of the household as well as their own personal preferences.

When a married couple decided to move out of one of their parents' houses, the length of time that they needed to wait before being able to build their new dwelling house was not dependant on the availability of plots of land, like Renshaw has noted for other parts of the Chaco (2002:189), but rather on the willingness of the local government to provide them with corrugated iron roofing materials (*chapas*) so that they could begin building their house. During this stage, the couple usually still wanted to live close to one or other of their parents, though not necessarily near those with whom they had previously resided. Javier and Rosa, who had been living with Rosa's parents, had, during the course of my fieldwork, moved on to the second stage of the development cycle of the household as they had received notification from the local government that they were to receive metal roofing sheets and that they would be able to build their own house. The plot that they were originally allocated was, in Teresa and Rosa's terms, "tojei" (far away) at "the other side' of the community." As Javier was away working for his Mennonite boss during the week, Rosa was left *ve'lha* (alone) in her new house as she had no "close" kin (*velha-elb-ch'e-jô*) nearby and therefore no one to "accompany" (*ôôiche* "to worry for," "to care for") her whilst she carried out her daily work. This was said to be "not good" (*nin-tajulb-ie*). To begin with, Rosa would walk to her mother and father's house every morning with her two young children to spend the day working and chatting with them. She eventually decided that she wanted to build her house closer to that of her parents, so in early winter 2002, José and his co-workers (*cavos*)⁶² transported the metal sheets from their original location and built Rosa and her husband a new house on the patio of their plot, between their house and the house of Teresa's mother Anojach'e, Rosa's *yaya* (Grandmother).

⁶² These are the men that he works with for his Mennonite boss in Ribera.

A young woman named Frida lived with her husband Amado in House 35 alongside her husband's parents Juan Bautista and Marta, who lived in House 34. Amado worked during the week for his Mennonite boss in Ribera along with his father Juan Bautista. Frida and Amado had two sons aged four and two. Both houses had their own hearth, although they would usually eat together in the shared patio outside or, during the winter months, in Juan Bautista and Marta's porch. Like Susana, Frida also carried out most of her daily tasks with her mother-in-law Marta and her mother-in-law's sister María who lived across the path, and they would also spend a lot of their spare time together sitting drinking tea in each other's patio. Marta would also spend a lot of time cooking and caring for Frida and Amado's eldest son Pedro, thus enabling Frida to spend more time caring for her new-born son. Frida's parents Agustín and Hilda lived at the other end of the community and she would walk over there to visit them on an almost daily basis as she had four sisters who also had houses very close to that of their parents. Map 4.6. shows where Frida lived in relation to her parents, her four sisters and her unmarried brother. Over the years Frida had built up a great deal of trust with her mother-in-law as was common amongst women who were residing virilocally. In Chapter 6 I go on to show that the Nivacle ideally interpret the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship to be a potentially "close" one due to the fact that they work together on an everyday basis.

Stage three is when middle-aged married siblings start living closer together again. At this stage, households may still be nuclear families, although some of the elder children may begin marrying and residing uxorilocally or virilocally. When Campo Loa was first established in the early 1980s, the move presented many siblings with the opportunity to build houses next to each other.⁶³ A relatively common occurrence was for two same-sex siblings to marry two other same-sex siblings and live alongside each other along with one of both of the pairs of siblings' parents. This took place in Jotoicha in the case of Houses 52, 53, 54, 56 and 57. When married couple Delfina and José first moved to Jotoicha in 1992, they built their house (House 54) on a plot next to Delfina's sister Linda and José's brother Cañete's house. Delfina and Linda's younger brother Pelagio also took the opportunity to build his house next to his two sisters. Two years later their mother and father Luciano and Josefina moved to Jotoicha and built their house on the same plot as Delfina and José and they also shared the same garden plot. Then Cañete

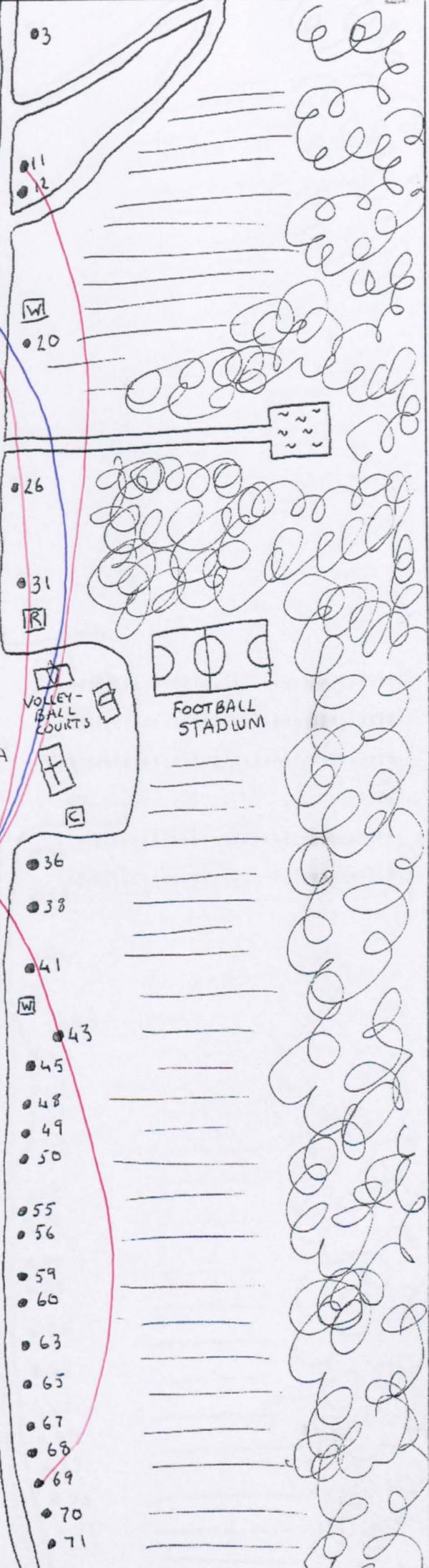
⁶³ Kidd (1999:118) mentions how a similar trend took place amongst the Enxet when they moved from Makhlawaiya to their new settlement in El Estribo.

Map 4.6. Sibling and Parent-Child Relations of Frida Martínez

— = SIBLING — = PARENT-CHILD

- = House
- [S] = Schoolhouse
- [+] = Church
- [R] = Radio Station
- [C] = Communal Kitchen
- [W] = Well
- [~] = Man-Made Reservoir
- [≡] = Garden Plots
- [X] = Forest

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and José's mother Sefarina Pérez and their stepfather Guillermo Alonso built their house on the other side of the path in House 56.

During the initial stages of my fieldwork when I began collecting census data on Jotoicha I was aware that there were a great deal of adult siblings residing near the central plaza of the community, spreading out towards either end of the community. The Hawaiian nature of Nivacle kin terminology at ego's generation (0) means that the terms for siblings and cousins are the same, with the only variation being in terms of gender and the relative age to ego. During this early period of my research, what really mattered to me was trying to organise my data into those siblings who, in my naïve estimation, were "real" and those who were "categorical" through carefully questioning people on the nature of their relationships with their kin of the first ascending generation (G+1). This, I thought, would enable me to understand who really were kin and where real and fictive relations were being disguised through the highly inconvenient (from my perspective at least) fusion of terms in ego's generation. It was only later on in my fieldwork, when I gained a more detailed understanding of daily interactions and the terms that people used to refer to each other, that I began to realise that my earlier concerns were unfounded or, at best, meaningless, to the Nivacle. Furthermore, it was only much later on that I finally learnt the "biological truth" of these relationships and therefore just how meaningless my initial endeavours had been.

I shall take one of these groups of siblings as an example. My Nivacle "mother" Teresa had moved to Jotoicha in the early 1980s with her mother, father, brothers and sisters and had built her house between the house of her mother and now deceased father and her unmarried younger brother Carlito, and the house of her younger sister Ana (*yi-ch'injō*). Her elder sister Rita Juana built her house at the other side of her mother and father's house. Towards the other side of the central plaza lived her elder sister Sofía (*yi-chita*), her elder brother Juan Bautista (*yi-checla*) and her younger brother Esteban (*yi-chinish*). These were the individuals that Teresa had explained to me were her siblings and were also the people with whom she would spend a great deal of her time drinking *tereré*, playing volleyball and "looking for" (*vooi*) firewood or forest fruits. Following my persistent questioning at the beginning of my fieldwork and my obsession with finding out who was really who, I discovered that only Teresa, Carlito and Esteban shared the same mother and father. Rita Juana, Juan Bautista and Teresa were all Teresa's FB

children, as were Juan Bautista, and Everista. Alberto was her half-brother as they shared the same father but he had been brought up by his mother and had spent most of his childhood in Colonia 6. Teresa had been on quite bad terms with several of her other full brothers and sisters during my fieldwork and as she had failed to mention them and never spent any time with them it took me quite a while to discover that many of the relationships actually existed. Map 4.7. illustrates the residence pattern of Teresa's siblings and cousins in relation to her dwelling place, which was in House 30. As can be seen from the map, most of her siblings chose to live relatively close to each other, with this pattern reflecting the state of their relationships at the time.

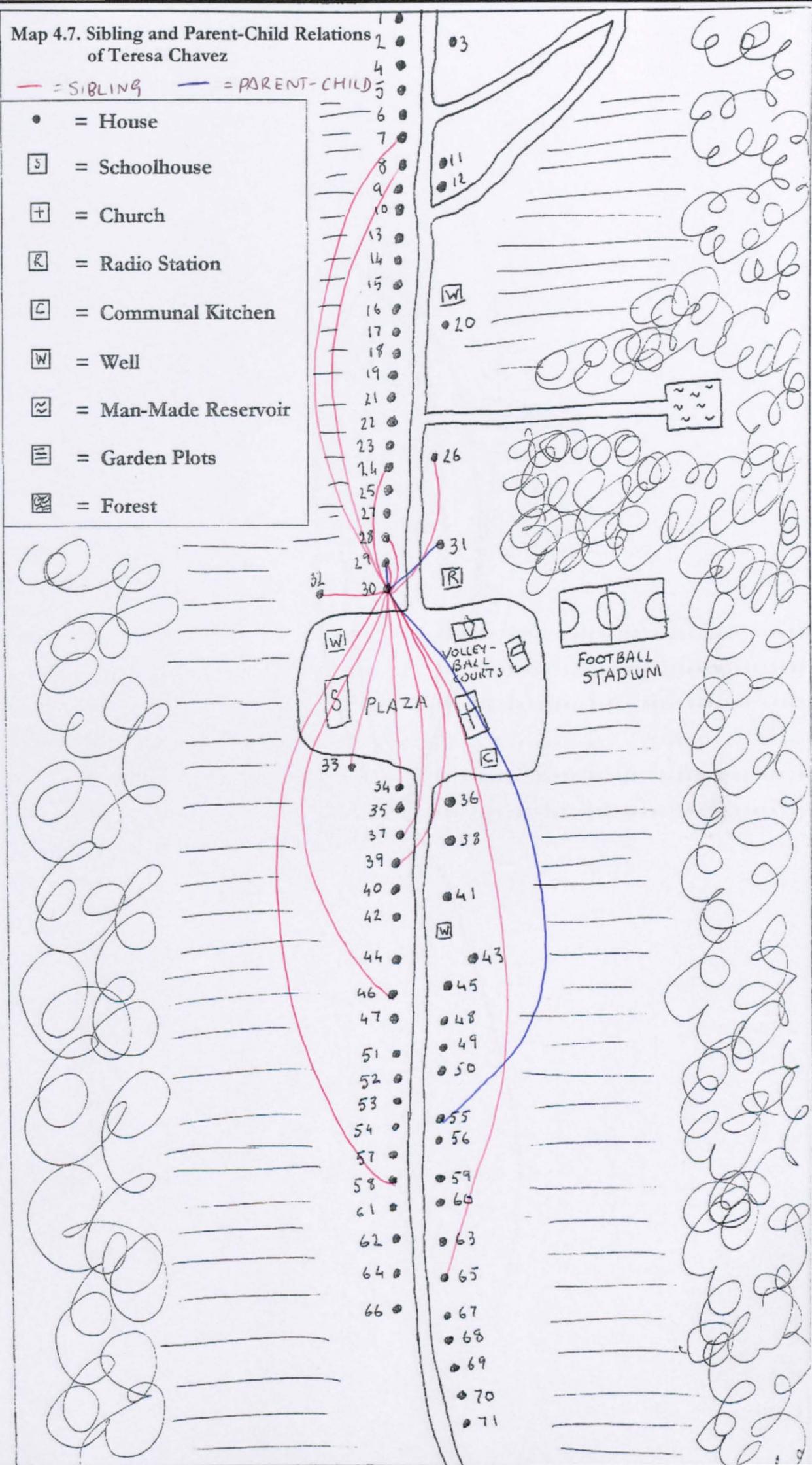
Gow (1991:159) writes that it is the memory of love that one receives during childhood that organises one's adult's life. In the case of Teresa and her siblings, this has most certainly been the case, although over the course of time certain relationships have been strengthened, whilst others have been conveniently forgotten. If I had decided to focus on those who were "really" her brothers and sisters I would have gained a highly distorted version of how Nivacle kinship is actually understood, explained and practiced by Nivacle people. In his work amongst the Inuit of northwest Greenland, Nuttall (2000:33) shows how personal choice in the construction of kinship allows for the continued development of a variety of possible relationships. People can choose to become related to one another by ceasing to use their personal names and by addressing each other with a kin term instead. Similarly, the reverse can take place where relationships that have eroded with the passage of time can be "forgotten about" through the use of personal names rather than a kin term as a form of reference or address. However, this should not be mistaken for "formlessness" or infinite flexibility. As Nuttall explains, "once people choose their kin there are definite prescriptions about how they should relate to one another. In other words, you can choose your kin, but you cannot choose how to behave towards them" (2000:39). Like the Inuit, Nivacle relatedness is processual and is always reckoned from the perspective of ego, so that as an individual goes through the processes of their life, their relationships will also change. Just as new relationships are created, so others gradually fade, although always with the potential for re-activation.

Stage four is when one spouse dies and the widow or widower returns to live with one of their sons or daughters. Forrest (1987) writes that amongst the Kalinya it is more

Map 4.7. Sibling and Parent-Child Relations of Teresa Chavez

— = SIBLING — = PARENT-CHILD

- = House
- [S] = Schoolhouse
- [+] = Church
- [R] = Radio Station
- [C] = Communal Kitchen
- [W] = Well
- [~] = Man-Made Reservoir
- [≡] = Garden Plots
- [X] = Forest



common for ageing parents to reside with a married daughter than a son, although the latter can also occur. Amongst the Nivacle this was also the case, although if a son did not marry then he would often live together with his mother. This was the case with House 29 in Jotoicha, where widow María Magdalena lived with her son Carlito. María Magdalena had been widowed for several years and continued to live with her son Carlito. Both María Magdalena and Carlito carried out their everyday tasks just as a married couple would. I also knew of several cases of unmarried men going to live with their married sisters, but this was less common.

Living with one's children could take place at any stage in an individual's lifecycle and in the case of Jotoicha leader Roberto Martínez's elder sister Soledad, this took place following Soledad's separation from her husband. Roberto had lived in Jotoicha for over ten years, having moved there from the mission station of Santa Teresita. Eight years later Soledad, who told me that she referred to Roberto as "*yi-onaj*," a term of endearment that an elder sister uses to refer to and address her younger brother, had wanted to live in Jotoicha to be near to Roberto, but she had abandoned her husband and did not want to live alone (*ve'lhach'e*). She therefore moved in to the household of her son, where she has lived across the path from her brother ever since.

The majority of affinal relationships in a Nivacle household were of two types depending on the stage of the developmental cycle of the household. It was either the relationship between the husband or wife's parents and the DH or SW or between the WZ/SH, HZ/ZH, WB/SH, and HB/BW. Such relationships could, of course, be further complicated if the brothers or sisters of the married sibling were also married. Such married siblings may be younger or older and such a situation would usually not last long. I shall now go on to discuss inter-household settlement patterns at both community and inter-community levels in order to illustrate how an over-emphasis on sibling and parent-child relationships can serve to distort the lived dynamism and complexity of inter-household relations.

4.5. Situating Relatedness

In this section my aim is to reflect on the factors that might influence the residence decisions of a Nivacle person. The types of questions that this might raise are the following: should co-residence be understood as a personal decision or is it a group one? What is the relationship between relatedness and co-residence? What are the practices that maintain relatedness over time and space? In order to address some of these questions, this section begins with a brief overview of a salient aspect of much of the lowland South American literature, which is the concept of the “residential group.”⁶⁴ This term has been used to refer to a set of households within an agglomerated indigenous settlement that are centred around a group of women who are connected by either sibling or parent-child relations and includes these women’s husbands and their kin’s husbands. I then go on to critique this concept and suggest that in order to understand the relationship between Nivacle co-residence and relatedness, one also needs to incorporate an understanding of their conception of the personal kindred. Whilst a great many of ego’s kin will also be his or her co-residents, a significant proportion will not be. This therefore raises some questions as to the applicability of the concept of the “residence group” to the situation that I was presented with in the Mennonite Colonies. I then go on to consider the significance of visiting in maintaining relatedness at both intra- and inter-community levels. This section ends with a reflection on a visit that I made with a Jotoicha household in December 2002 to visit kin in neighbouring colony and its relevance to the points that I have made above.

Harris writes that amongst the Caboclos of the Brazilian Amazon, a “cluster” is, “a dense network of multi-family houses, organised around a parental couple” (2000:85) and that they are “a physical and social reality, [which] relate to social reproduction, and are therefore at the heart of people’s sociality and identity” (Ibid: 84). Renshaw suggests that amongst the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco, “residential clusters” have developed within larger nucleated settlements. They comprise small clusters of uxorilocally extended families where, “a mature couple live with their unmarried children in one of the houses, and their married daughters, sons-in-law, and grandchildren live in

⁶⁴ See Palmer (1997:63) and Renshaw (2002:184). It has also been referred to as the “cluster” or “household cluster” (see Renshaw (2002:189), Forrest (1987:32), Harris (2000:84), Lima (1992 [in Harris]), Lorrain (1994:130ff) and Ellis (1996:91)), the “residential section” (see Viveiros de Castro (1992:100f)) and the “residence group” (see Rosengren (1987a: 148)).

the others” (2002:189). Rosengren, meanwhile, explains that a “residence group” amongst the Matsigenka consists of “the households of a core of matrilocally related women together with other households attached to them” (1987a: 140). He suggests that these “residence groups” are “uxorivincinal” because “residence is taken up in the vicinity of the wife’s parents’ household and [that] the two households are connected by intense social interaction” (1987a: 149). Forrest refers to “physical groupings of households or local residence groups of which matri-related women form the kinship and economic nucleus” (1987:32) as a “household cluster.” She explains that Kalinya households were traditionally arranged into clusters that constituted local settlement groups and that nowadays these clusters are still visible, but in a more condensed form along the side of a road (Forrest 1987:33).

These descriptions appear to possess certain commonalities. The first is that most authors link “residential groups” to larger agglomerated settlements that have developed as a result of the colonisation process. The implication is that in pre-colonial times, what now constitutes a “residential group” was previously a village. The range of people with whom one relates on a daily basis has therefore not changed, but settlement proximity has been reduced through forced agglomeration. The second commonality is that “residence groups” are generally based around one middle-aged married couple. The other households that constitute the “cluster” will generally be linked through the female kin of the wife of this central couple and might include some of her sisters, her mother or MZ and her daughters. The central aspect to this arrangement is that there is a group of co-resident women who are in daily interaction and who are able to co-operate in the daily work of women. A further aspect to the concept of the “cluster” is that it implicitly incorporates an understanding of the lowland South American community as being based on the “safe inside” and the “dangerous outside.” Lorrain, for example, has written that amongst the Kulina, people tended to avoid visiting other clusters “for fear of shamanic attacks or even armed confrontations” (1994:131). Rosengren and Renshaw, meanwhile, suggest that “residential groups” are prone to frequent cycles of dispersal and flux, giving them a highly fluid nature. Whilst the “composition and membership of residence groups are...in a continual state of flux” (Rosengren 1987b: 150). Renshaw writes,

The social organisation of the Chaco societies is characterized by a high degree of flexibility. The composition of residential group and individual households can change from day to day – often for little apparent reason.

Renshaw (2002:183)

Writers have explained these fluctuations in a number of ways. Amongst the Panare, Henley (1982:124) distinguishes between “short-term fluctuations” that take place over the course of the year and “long-term fluctuations” that take place over the course of several years. Such fluctuations can also be said to take place in Nivacle communities. During pre-colonial times, long-term fluctuations would take place during the wet season when people would congregate during the festival months. As I have already mentioned, this was when the *algarrobo*⁶⁵ trees were bearing fruit and when people would have a surplus of food in their gardens that they could share. In the early 19th century the Nivacle began to work in sugar cane plantations in northern Argentina and this became a gathering place. Later, they would migrate seasonally to the Mennonite colonies from the Pilcomayo River area in search of work and feasting and dancing would take place.

People tended to reside in the same community or colony for a number of years.⁶⁶ Those who did leave the community for extended periods of time were nearly always men who left to work for the Mennonites. Only very rarely did entire households leave the community to work for the Mennonites and if they did it was usually as a result of a conflict that had taken place. This seems similar to Henley’s (1982) description of the Panare, where he writes how individual conjugal families would often leave the community for several days in order to work in their gardens. The men would build huts alongside their gardens where they lived before returning to their settlement. However, he writes that “it is rarely from economic necessity pure and simple that they do so: frequently just as important a consideration is a desire to get away from the somewhat enclosed social environment of the settlement.” (1982:124). People nowadays would often leave the community for long periods of time if they were visiting kin in another colony. In such cases they effectively become another member of their kin’s household during this period.

⁶⁵ St John’s Bread Tree (Bot. *Prosopis Alba*).

⁶⁶ For example, there were many houses in Yalve Sanga made of adobe with tile roofs that were built when the colony was first established in the early 1960s and that were still inhabited.

Short-term fluctuations also took place, most commonly through visiting. Sporting competitions that took place between communities at weekends offered good opportunities for kin to visit each other and women would often walk to neighbouring communities on an *ad hoc* basis to arrange and play a volleyball match, taking their children along with them. National political events such as elections and indigenous rights meetings also offered the men good opportunities to visit and some of the women attended the annual short-courses (*cursillos*) that were held by the Catholic missionaries, such as the annual “midwives’ course” (*cursillo de parteras*), as an opportunity to socialise. Men would also leave the community for short periods of time if they decided to go hunting just as women would do if they decided to collect firewood or forest fruits.

Storrie (1999) experienced problems when it came to delineating residential “clusters” amongst the Hoti. In describing the relationship between previously dispersed villages that have been drawn together into one agglomerated mission village he explains that divisions within agglomerated settlements only arose during “moments of tension.” However, he found it very difficult to delineate intra-community similarities and differences in spatial terms. He writes:

It is not possible... to clearly draw a map of the missions showing these groups, as they are physically intermingled ... Given the idiosyncratic and individual kindred formation these groups are further obscured and inter-linked by many overlapping relationships.

Storrie (1999:66)

Kidd (1999) also questions the extent to which the concept of the “cluster” can be applied to the Paraguayan Enxet. He argues that attention should be paid to the multiple relationships that an individual creates and their ever-changing complexity from the perspective of the individual, rather than to a static representation of relatedness through “residential groups” (Kidd 1999:208).⁶⁷ An individual’s kindred therefore incorporates co-residents as well as individuals who live further afield in other communities. Rather

⁶⁷ I would suggest that the analysis of settlement fluctuation, or “flux,” is another aspect of this static form of representation

than sociality being based on daily interaction within the community,⁶⁸ Kidd suggests that Enxet sociality might be better understood as being premised on opportunity and “actively investing effort in maintaining a relationship by visiting and, in turn, providing hospitality” (1999:240). He suggests that such a situation might well be typical of lowland South America (Ibid.239), and my experiences amongst the Nivacle certainly support his proposition.

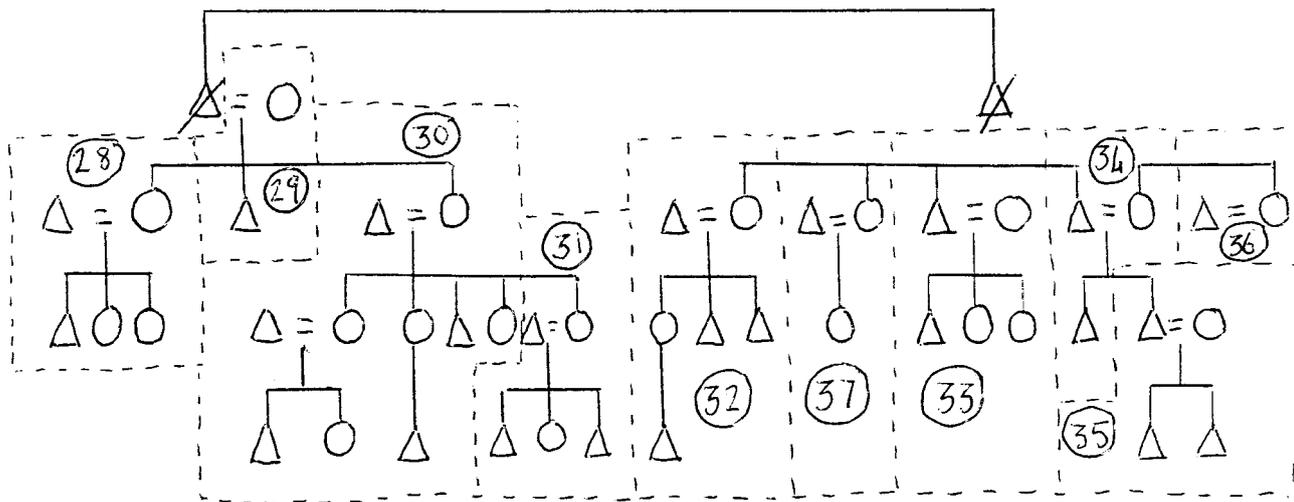
In Chapter 2, I explained that Nivacle relatedness should be understood processually through the actions of autonomous other-regarding individuals that are ideally driven by the practice of “knowledgeable” behaviour towards kin. Each autonomous individual develops their own unique social field of relationships that, during different periods of their life course, will intersect and overlap with those of other individuals, rather like Ingold’s depiction of the rhizomaic nature of relatedness (Ingold 2000). The diachronic variations that take place in settlements as individuals visit kin, go hunting or gathering, go to work for their Mennonite boss, marry, have children, divorce or become old, occur because relationships are constantly emerging and evolving. The composition of a particular household will thus change over time depending on the stage of different individuals’ lifecycles. To attempt to depict these complex dynamics in terms of a set of “residential groups” is to essentially freeze a set of relationships in time and, in the process, prioritise particular relationships between certain members of the household over others as being less important, or less relevant. Whilst members of the same household would usually behave towards each other in kin-like ways, at the inter-household level and beyond I found it very difficult to generalise relationships into distinct “groupings” or “clusters.”

Returning to the example of the uxori-locally extended household above, it may be possible to conceptualise Houses 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37 as a “cluster.” Figure 4.7. illustrates the kin and affinal relations between these households. As can be seen from the diagram, there are ten siblings and cousins living next to each other and there are two cases of two sets of sibling intermarriage. There are also two examples of parent-child relations between households, one where the wife resides virilocally (House 35) and the other where wife lives close to the her parents’ house (House 31). It would therefore be possible to classify this as a cluster of households, but such an approach

⁶⁸ As exemplified, for example, in the works of Overing (1989b; 2003).

would overlook ties that also exist between other members of these households and their own respective spheres of relatedness, most of whose kin did not, in fact, live near by. In constructing such a cluster, would it therefore be necessary to overlook the fact that the husband of House 31, who is living next door to his wife's parents, has two sisters live in Houses 12 and 25, as well as his father, who lives further along the community in House 51? Similarly, would it be necessary to overlook the fact that the parents of the wife who was residing virilocally in House 35's parents lived in House 14 and that her four married sisters lived in Houses 11, 12, 15 and 16? Such is the complexity of each person's individual sphere of relationships that defining certain types of residential arrangements as "residential groups" could only ever work up to a very limited point. How, then, should one account for such movement and complexity and should one prioritise proximity over distance in an attempt to understand the relationship between relatedness and co-residence?

Figure 4.7. Relations Between Houses 28 - 37



Alongside people's engagement in activities such as hunting, gathering and working, visiting was undoubtedly one of the most significant motivations for movement and was

an activity that was carried out by almost everyone. Visiting is known as *jôchi-ei*, a verb that is always preceded by the adverbial suffix *[-]ei*, meaning “to, towards, of” and essentially refers to place. *Jôchi* means, “to go to see, to go for a wander, to observe” and denotes the very casual and informal nature of visiting amongst the Nivacle. In Chapter 2 I explained how “knowledge” (*tôz*) was created through the senses, particularly the testimonial value of sight. The Nivacle also consider movement and “seeing” (*van*) other places and people to be an integral aspect of the creation of “knowledge.” Semantically speaking, “seeing” is synonymous with “knowing” and so movement is essential for the creation of knowledgeable people.⁶⁹ This definition of “visiting” therefore incorporates the highly visual nature of knowledge acquisition in that seeing a person or people is also “knowing” about them.

Paradoxically, visiting is also a way to “not see” others, particularly if a relationship has become fraught. If a dispute or disagreement became so difficult that the tension was unbearable, then often the only solution would be to leave that particular community and visit “close” kin in another community until the situation died down. If a situation became particularly difficult, whole households would often change community. This happened to the residents of House 15 when, in the early 1990s, they had been living in the colony of Nich’a Tôyish to the south of the Mennonite Colonies (see Map 1.2.). Carlos had been the administrator of the Cooperative there and become the victim of a series of accusations from other members of the colony that he had been stealing money from the Cooperative. Carlos eventually found the situation so disruptive that he decided to leave Nich’a Tôyish with his wife and young children and build a house near his brother-in-law in Jotoicha. Leaders were constantly facing accusations of theft and bribery by other community members. During the national elections there was widespread belief that one of the leaders of Jotoicha had been receiving bribes from one of the politicians. During a conversation that I had with one of the other leaders of the community he exclaimed, “Well, if he wants to get all that money from these politicians, then he had better use it to build himself a new colony! But he had better do it far, far away from all of us. Away over there in the forest would be best. Then he could build himself a hospital and a shop for him and his family. Just for them. But he had better do it far away from us!” Distance and separation are therefore often regarded as being

⁶⁹ Vision is also an integral aspect of the Tsimane conceptualisation of “knowledge” (Ellis 1996).

the key means by which to resolve conflicts and make a fresh start with the “close” kin one “loves.”

A great deal of visiting took place within the colony of Campo Loa. Whilst men, young women and children preferred to cycle, older women would walk with their younger children when visiting. Most of the residents of Jotoicha had “close kin” in the communities of San Miguel, San Pio X and Primavera and so would visit these communities most frequently. The most popular period for visiting was during the weekends when intra-community football and volleyball matches took place. During the summer months when the men were working for their Mennonite bosses, the women would organise almost daily volleyball matches either in Jotoicha or in one of the other communities in the colony, particularly in San Miguel. On days that they were planning on playing, they would leave the community at around 8am and not return until late afternoon. At lunchtime the women would all visit the household of their “close kin” and eat their midday meal there. This would be reciprocated on the days when their “close kin” would pay a visit to Jotoicha. I shall now describe a visit that I went on to Comunidad Nivacle Unida during December 2002 and January 2003 with José and Teresa. This trip illustrates the potentiality that always exists for the re-activation of relationships through visiting and how expressions of relatedness can change both during and after the visit.⁷⁰

It was Friday 27th December 2002 and I was preparing to go on a visit to the community of Betania in Comunidad Nivacle Unida with José, Teresa, their daughters Ricarda (16) and Flavia (9), their son Bernardo (14) and their granddaughter Floriana (13). We were going to stay with José’s nieces Lucía and Carmen and his widowed sister-in-law Adriana. José would refer to Adriana as “the mother of Lucía and Carmen” rather than “my sister-in-law” (*yi-faclis’á*) because he told me that he had spent many years living alongside her in Betania and that Lucía and Carmen were “like his daughters” (*y-ósei-esh*). José’s brother Reinaldo had died of a heart attack in March at 48 years of age and this was José’s first visit to the community since his brother’s death. Teresa told me that his

⁷⁰ See Kidd (1999:235) on the reactivation of relationships amongst the Enxet.

death had been caused by the amount of oil he used to eat. She told me that it was “too strong” for his body and that it had caused him to have difficulty breathing.

Apart from his children and grandchildren, José had no other kin in Jotoicha. He explained that he had arrived there “alone” and had gone on to live with Teresa’s kin. Most of his “close” kin lived either in Comunidad Nivacle Unida or in the worker village of Uj’e’ Lhavos in Filadelfia. He also had some kin living in Casuarina, Nich’a Tôyish and Campo Alegre (see Map 1.2.), and others who lived in Fischat further south near the Pilcomayo River (see Map 1.1.). For Teresa, on the other hand, most of her “close” kin (almost 65% of them) lived in Jotoicha and a further 15% of them lived in the other communities in Campo Loa. For example, her elder brother and mother’s brother lived in San Miguel. The rest were divided between the communities of Uj’e’ Lhavos in Filadelfia, Santa Teresita, Comunidad Nivacle Unida and Campo Alegre. Whilst it is perhaps unsurprising that most of Teresa’s “close” kin live in Campo Loa, what is also interesting is that both spouses had kin scattered over a relatively wide range of communities.

Betania is some 100km from Jotoicha José’s BDH Juan was due to take us there at approximately 5pm. José referred to Juan as his son-in-law (*yi-tômit’a*) despite the fact that the “correct” affinal term should have been *ni lha-velh-a* (non-kin), as he was his niece’s husband. However, he told me that his close relationship with Lucía meant that he saw Juan as being more like a son-in-law. When Juan arrived, a crowd gathered around his truck and some of his “close” and “distant” kin came over to greet him. He shook hands with them all, as was customary, and spoke with them for a while. José then suggested that he come over to his patio to drink some tea and rest before the journey home, to which he obliged. We sat in José’s patio for half an hour or so, and Juan began talking about how he had no chickens and how his wife would really like some. José had just received ten chickens from PRODECHACO and offered him one to take home. As it was due to become dark soon, we decided to leave and so we climbed into the back of the pick-up truck. Just as we were about to leave, a young man called Diego came cycling over and asked Juan if it was fine for him to come along with us as he would like to visit his FBy, who also lived in Betania. Diego was a young man in his mid-twenties. He was Teresa’s BWB and also her BWZS. He was unmarried and lived two houses away from her with his mother, father and younger brothers and

sisters. He and Teresa were not particularly close and she would often criticize him for his laziness and lack of willingness to get married. “All he does is sit on a chair in his patio in a nice shady area drinking tea and listening to the radio,” she would tell me. However, to have refused to give him a lift to visit his aunt, uncle and cousins would have been very “ugly/stingy” (*n-is-a*) of Teresa, particularly as he was a co-resident (*chifa*) and he had visited me quite regularly to help me learn Nivacle. José and Teresa acquiesced, although they later criticised his forcefulness.

During our visit to Betania, we stayed with José’s BD Carmen. Carmen lived with her husband, her 14 year-old daughter Betty, her 6 year-old son Enrique and her 2 year-old daughter Mila. Her mother Adriana lived in the adjacent house that had previously belonged to José’s mother. Carmen’s house was a very different style to the houses in Jotoicha and it reminded me of the old-style Mennonite houses that could still be seen in some of the Mennonite villages. Their house comprised two rooms that were divided by a piece of lace net curtain. There was a larger room that had a single bed, a double bed, an electric cooker and a set of shelves, and there was a smaller bedroom that had a single bed and a wardrobe. The shelves in the main room were painted green and there was also a set of drawers with intricately carved woodwork. Betania was the only community in the colony that had electricity⁷¹ because it was closest to the Trans-Chaco Highway. This had caused a great deal of tension with the other communities, who considered it unfair that they should have it whilst others did not. The walls of the house were made of adobe but it was much thicker than those of the houses in Campo Loa. Inside, the walls had large crucifixes painted on them and the windows were quite large with curtains and protective wire mesh over them. I slept in Carmen’s house with Bernardo, Ricarda, Betty, Carmen, her husband and their children, and José and Teresa slept in Adriana’s house with Flavia and Floriana. We spent most of the time sitting on the chairs outside the house chatting and receiving the many visitors who had come to see José. The conversation was very animated and it felt like a very intense socialising experience with lots of laughter and discussion.

The seven communities of Comunidad Nivacle Unida were all within easy walking distance of each other, and some days we would visit Teresa’s kin who lived in the neighbouring communities. She had a cousin (*yi-checla*) called Cirilo who lived in Jerico

⁷¹ Electricity is known as *nitsilhataj* (like an electric eel). I was also told that it was “like spicy food or pins and needles, when you touch it stings your body.”

and another cousin called María who lived in Samaria. She also had a half-sister called Brigida who lived in Betania. We all went together to visit them, with the visits usually following the same pattern. When arriving at each other's houses, people would shake hands and say "*ja nam*" ("I've arrived"), with the host's reply being "*uj ti tajulbei*" ("That's really good"). Such a greeting is constitutive of "looking at" the person. Children were also encouraged to shake visitors' hands from a young age. Whilst most of the people that I met during this visit would also shake my hands and offer me this greeting, particularly if José introduced me, others would perform what could be considered an act of code switching in that instead of greeting me in Nivacle they would greet me in Spanish. I suspect that this was because I was a "white woman" (*samtôque*). Some women even commented "*Samtôque jô!*" ("She's really a White woman!"), which would be followed by, "*Hola*" ("Hi") or "*buen día*" ("Good morning"). One old man even began talking to me in Low German when he first met me and then went on to shift between talking in Nivacle, Low German and High German, which was sporadically interspersed with, "*ja, ja, ja*" ("yes, yes, yes"). After José had introduced me to some people, particularly the women, would say things like, "*Nivacche-esh jum*" ("she's really like a Nivacche") and "*Nivacche jaym*" ("she will be a Nivacche"). This was regarded as an aspect of my becoming similar to them through living alongside them, learning their language and knowing the appropriate ways in which to carry myself. It is an aspect of "knowledge" that is developed through imitation that is generated socially through interaction.⁷²

During my stay in Jotoicha, I would usually sit on chairs like everybody else when eating meals or chatting. However, I had also become used to sitting on the ground with the other women whilst watching volleyball matches. During my stay in Betania, I particularly recall the first volleyball match that I attended when I had been sitting with Teresa, her daughters, and José's nieces. After the match on the way home Teresa told me that "Some of the women did not like it that you were sitting on the ground with the women. They said that Mennonites sit on chairs." To Teresa and those of Jotoicha, the fact that I sat on the ground was entirely unproblematic, as I had developed this "knowledge" during the time that I had been living there and they were used to me. In Betania, there were no Mennonite women with this "knowledge" or any desire to become "Nivacle-like" and so my sitting there was almost akin to the "sly civility"

⁷² See Chapter 2.

(Bhabha 1994:93ff) of the female fox in Nivacle mythology, who imitates different individuals' behaviour, but with treacherous intentions. For these women, my behaviour was something to be feared

An important aspect of receiving guests was to offer them food or drink. This would normally take place through offering them a drink of *tereré*, although if it were near a mealtime, people would offer whatever food they were cooking for themselves. Every household we visited offered us copious quantities of *tereré* and we would occasionally be offered watermelon, grapefruit or freshly cooked *tortillas*.⁷³ José and Teresa were also given copious amounts of gifts (*tis-esh*) such as clothes, food, toys and photographs by the “close” kin they visited.⁷⁴ By the end of every visit, José and Teresa's arms were always laden with gifts. During one visit when we went to visit Teresa's cousin (*yi-ch'injô*) in Jerico he mentioned that he also had a gift of a bag of clothes for Teresa's younger brother (*lh-ch'inish*) Esteban, because he “remembered” his visit two months ago. Such gifts were a way in which relatedness was being re-activated over long distances. During visits, women would also swap around clothing and string bags and enthusiastically engage in the gambling of clothes, a practice that I shall discuss in detail in Chapter 7. It is the mutuality of offering and accepting gifts during visits that generates desirable forms of sociality and creates the basis for future contact and visits.

A popular way of keeping in contact with people was via the local radio stations. There were two radio stations in the Central Chaco: the local Catholic radio station “Radio Pa'i Puku” and the local Mennonite radio station “Radio ZP30.” The sustainable development project PRODECHACO had built a radio transmitter in Jotoicha and every morning one of the younger men in the community would broadcast announcements in Nivacle to the rest of the communities in the Central Chaco via a special announcement programme that aired on “Radio Pa'i Puku” at 7:30am every day. Similar broadcasts were also made to other communities via “Radio ZP30” between the Mennonite-run communities. People would also write each other letters and ask an intermediary who was planning to visit a particular community to deliver it for them. Another popular way of maintaining contact was through the use of photographs. Nobody in Jotoicha owned a camera and so people would often ask me to take their photograph so that it could be sent on to their kin in another community. José and

⁷³ *Tortillas* are made from a batter of flour, water and salt that is then shallow-fried in vegetable oil.

⁷⁴ See also Kidd (1999:231).

Teresa were also very keen to acquire as many photographs of my family members in Scotland as they could so that others who visited them when I left could “see” what my kin and I looked like. Most people that I knew well were very keen to show me their photo collections and I found them to be a good way of learning about different individuals’ kindreds.

During our stay in Betania I found Teresa’s relations with José’s sister-in-law and nieces to be far more strained than José’s relations with them, with she and her daughters being far quieter and more reserved than usual. One evening Teresa complained to me about the stingy behaviour of Adriana, Carmen and Lucía. That afternoon the Red Cross Emergency Relief team had arrived in Betania with parcels of food that were to be distributed to every household in the community following the drought. The parcels contained basic food staples including cooking oil, flour, rice, sugar, *tereré*, beans and pasta. That evening Adriana, Carmen and Lucía decided to cook tortillas for supper using the cooking oil and flour that they had received from the Red Cross. It was usually only women that knew each other well who would cook together and because of this, Teresa was not involved in helping them cook the tortillas. The women began distributing the tortillas as they cooked them to everyone who was seated so that each person received one. It was not long before they came over, and sat down and I realised that they had finished cooking for the evening. Whilst they had been cooking, Teresa had been bathing and helping her daughter Flavia to wash. When she came across to sit with us, I noticed that no one had offered her any tortillas. A few moments Teresa got up from her chair and walked across to the house. She came out with a large see-through bag of crushed *faai*⁷⁵ and started soaking it in water and chewing it. *Faai* eaten in this way is known as *faai lha-môôc* or the “flour of *faai*.” Eating it is a necessarily noisy affair as one must scoop up the dried fruits that are in the bowl with one’s hand and slurp and suck the remaining sweet flour and its juices from the large pods. It was only later that I discovered why she had been eating this fruit. “The women, they ate everything. They never even gave me one tortilla, not even one” she complained. “It’s best for me just to eat *faai lha-môôc*.” Eating this noisy food was a vocalisation of her disdain.

⁷⁵ Known as *algarrobo* in Spanish and St John’s Bread in English.

José, meanwhile, had been becoming more and more enthusiastic during his stay about the prospect of perhaps moving back to Betania with Teresa and his children. His idea was to build a house towards the end of the community and breed goats and sheep in a small corral. During one of our visits to Juan and Lucía's house, he began enthusiastically discussing the exact location of his prospective plot and where he would keep his animals. I found it quite misplaced that he should be discussing moving there, particularly as he had never complained about living in Jotoicha before. However, he continued to tell me his plans and just how "good/beautiful" it would be to live there with his wife and all his daughters. During one of our visits to Teresa's cousin's house in the community of Jerico he had even asked to borrow his brick-making tool. This is a wooden instrument that was used to make adobe bricks in the Mennonite style of those seen in the houses of Comunidad Nivacle Unida. "I'm going to take this tool back to Jotoicha so that I can practice making bricks for my new house here," he said. Teresa, meanwhile, seemed less convinced. "There's nothing here. Nothing except hunger. They only eat lots of bread here. Not the manioc, sweet potato, calabash and beans that we eat in Jotoicha. It's really not "good/beautiful" (*n-is-a' jum*) here." José's burst of enthusiasm, however, appeared to be rather short-lived. Several weeks following our return to Jotoicha I asked him when he was planning on starting his move to Betania. "There's nothing there," he replied. "Nothing at all. I have everything I need here. Look! I've got a beautiful garden that is full of watermelon, potato and manioc. Not like there. There's nothing at all there." That was the final conversation I ever had with him on the matter and it was never raised again.

What, then, might be the significance of some of the events that took place during this visit in relation to my original question on the relationship between co-residence and relatedness? Before attempting to answer this question I would like to return to an incident that took place on the first day of our visit to Betania. The first to arrive was a man called Juan López, who was José's MBS. During their conversation José sat back and explained to me,

This man is just the same as me. I went to Jotoicha alone. Completely alone. Just the same as him. He's here alone as well. One single man, that's all. You see my mother, she was just the same. One single woman who came up here with my father from

the Pilcomayo River. One single woman. Now look around you. Look at all the children there are. All these children come from one single woman. Just like her (Teresa's) father and his brother in Jotoicha. They came from the Colonia in Filadelfia. They came together to build a new colony. Just two brothers.

He then picked up a stick and scored a series of connecting dots in the ground. He started with a dot that he said was his "father" and connected it to his "mother." He then drew a single line down from his mother and a series of little dots that were connected to each other that he said were his brother and sisters. "All of these children are from one single mother," he continued. "Me and Juan, we are men living on our own in a community, but we are both from one single mother." I am referring back to this incident because I believe that it ties in with my earlier discussion on the relationship between co-residence and relatedness. José's depiction of siblings as being like a series of connected dots joined together by "lines" of relatedness reflects my earlier description of the ways in which "close" kin are connected over space. Marriage and procreation create multiplicity through the children that are produced. These children may become dispersed over time through their own marriages and changing life courses, often ending up "alone" in a community, much like José and Juan. However, their memories of childhood and living together with their "close" kin remain with them and always have the potential to be re-activated through writing letters, sending radio messages and sending photographs. "Close" kinship can also be re-activated through visiting with mutuality being an integral aspect of the visit. Relatedness can also be maintained with other "close" kin through asking a visitor to pass on a gift on one's behalf.

Visits can be emotionally intense experiences and José acted on the strong feelings that he had for his nieces who were "like his daughters" and his beloved son-in-law by telling them that he wanted to build a house there and live alongside them. His borrowing the brick-making tool from his wife's cousin was symbolic of his intentions. Teresa, however, was decidedly less enthusiastic about his plans. Her statement of there being "nothing there" in Betania was not, it seems to me, only about there being very few vegetables in the garden plots. Rather, it seem that she was referring to the fact that there was "no-one there" that she really "loved." Her mothers, sisters and daughters all lived in Jotoicha. They visited each other on a daily basis, played volleyball and ate

together. The women in Betania were stingy towards her and were effectively denying any form of relatedness with her. This was not a desirable place for her to live and José also realised this once the excitement of the trip was over and he returned to his own multiplicity of dearly beloved daughters in Jotoicha.

4.6. Conclusion

Peter Rivière has written, “ephemeral as settlements are, to focus on them is an approach that allows an initial glimpse of fleeting stability in a fluid and relative world. It is in the formation, composition, and dispersion of settlements, apparently so chaotic, that it is possible to observe the range of choices that the social structure makes available to the individual, and beyond them to the very principles by which the social structure itself is articulated” (1984:15). In this chapter my aim has been to gain an “initial glimpse” of the motivations behind Nivacle residence decisions and how residence relates to notions of relatedness. This chapter commenced with an overview of the Mennonite settlement programme and their motivations for “causing the Indians to settle.” I then went on to consider the layout of the community of Jotoicha in Campo Loa and showed that whilst a high proportion of the households were neolocal, a considerable proportion were also uxorilocal, virilocal or “other,” and that this was reflective of the high value the Nivacle place on personal autonomy in residence decisions. I then went on to show that whilst it is interesting to consider residence in terms of relative proportions of household “types,” this kind of discussion does very little to help us gain an understanding of how household composition changes with the passage of time. Through Goody’s (1958) “Developmental Cycle of the Household” I worked through the typical stages that a Nivacle household goes through and showed that the Nivacle stress the importance of kin and affinal links during different periods of their lives. Finally, I went on to critique the commonly used notion of the “residence group” or the “cluster” and showed that whilst it is a notion that has been applied to many lowland South American societies, it is very difficult to apply to the Nivacle. This is primarily due to their understandings of the kindred, which is not conceived of as a “group” or “collectivity” that is spatially determined by another prevailing Amazonian notion of the “safe inside” and the “dangerous outside” (see, for example, Gow 1991; Overing 1989a). Instead, I argue that the kindred is not confined to a particular community or colony and that it is dispersed

over a wide geographical area. I suggest that what is important are the pathways and displays of mutuality that continually re-activate relationships over time. Through the example of my visit to Comunidad Nivacle Unida I showed that dormant relationships always have the potential to be reactivated and that individuals can do that in a number of ways either through visiting, writing letters or through sending messages over the local radio.

In the following chapter I consider marriage amongst the Nivacle and show that instead of attempting to understand it as an “exchange” between two groups of kin, a more fruitful approach is to interpret it relationally and focus on the relationship between the husband and wife.

Chapter 5: Marriage

The study of marriage and marriage alliance is an area of anthropological enquiry born out of earlier studies of “the family”, classically exemplified through the writings of Morgan (1871). Investigations into the complexities of the marriage alliance increased markedly following Lévi-Strauss’s (1969)[1949] work entitled *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. In this work he offered an alternative perspective on the formation, structure and dynamics of social groups that has been an integral aspect of Structural Functionalist “Descent Theory.” Placing marriage at the centre of kinship, Lévi-Strauss described it as a structure of exchange that comes about through the incest prohibition. As the positive counterpart to the incest prohibition, exogamy had its own counterpart in endogamy, which sets limits as to who is marriageable. Lévi-Strauss’s study of marriage focused not on the relationship between husband and wife, but rather on the relationship between social groups that exchanged women.¹ These groups are comprised of brother and sister and male affines that are identified as the “givers” and the “takers” respectively. Women were said to be circulated between these two groups and were considered a priceless commodity that delivered a special seal on political alliances or economic relations.

Recent writers working in lowland South America have criticized Lévi-Strauss’s (1969) approach, arguing that he places too much focus on the alliance between the two groups of “givers” and “takers” instead of considering the lived dynamics of the relationship between the husband and wife.² Rather than focus on sets of exchanges between men, these writers insist that the most important relationship for lowland South American people is that of the husband and wife partnership and that the most important aspect of this relationship is the love, friendship or companionship that enables both production and reproduction.³ Just as kinship is a constant process of creating “kin-like” relations through feeding and mutual care, so too is marriage about the creation of favoured states of social living through the practices of care and friendship. These practices create the various spatial contexts of the household, the garden, the central plaza of the community as well as the spaces and pathways of the forest.⁴ McCallum describes Cashinahua

¹ See Oliveira (2003:140).

² See Belaunde (1992), Ellis (1996), Gow (1991), Kidd (1999), McCallum (1989; 2001), Overing and Passes (2000), Rosengren (1987a) and Storrie (1999).

³ See, for example, Overing (1988; 1989b).

⁴ See Corsín-Jiménez (2003), Gow (1995) and Meløe (1983a; 1983b; 1988a; 1988b) on the concept of “space” as a productive capacity created out of social relationships.

marriage as “the only relationship that allows men and women to be complete persons” (1989:159). It is only through marriage that men and women can fully cooperate in the gender-specific tasks of production and reproduction. Many writers have also argued that in lowland South America, gender relations are created through marriage.⁵ Rapport and Overing have written, “to understand what marriage *is* for any given people the question of the cultural construction of gender relationships must be understood, rather than the jural relationships between groups of men that entail their exchange of women” (2000:222). Rivière (1971:70), likewise, has questioned the analytic concept of marriage arguing that rather than consider jural roles, what is most relevant is the insight that it gives us into the gender relations of a particular people.

Basso (1973) has written that Kalapalo marriage is not about exchanges between men and neither is it about enduring elements of affinity through cycles of exchange in the Dumontian sense. Instead she describes it as a relationship that is practiced in the here and now and not something that is based on an emulation of the genealogical past. Whilst she accepts that in some cases individuals may prefer to marry those with whom previous kin or affinal ties already exist, she continues that when people actually talk about such relations, temporal continuity is not what is emphasised. Overing Kaplan (1975:198) similarly stresses the creation of multiple affinal links amongst the Piaroa. Through their preference for endogamous marriage, the repetition of marriage ties created in the previous generation strengthens these affinal ties. Like the Kalapalo, the Piaroa also emphasise the multiplicity of affinal ties established during one particular period of time, rather than on any desire to establish a sense of continuity. This bears certain similarities to Ingold’s “Relational Perspective” outlined in Chapter 1, with the manifold entanglements of relationships as they are lived in the present taking precedence over testimonies of relationships in previous generations. It is the quality of relationships as they are lived in the present that matter most to lowland South American peoples, not how they are linked to people they never knew in the past. As Ellis puts it, “Although each individual is born into and is rapidly acquainted with a prescriptive marriage terminology, marriage choices are very much about individual choices today, and not about an abstract notion of group cohesion or continuity” (1996:78).

⁵ See, for example, Belaunde (1992) and Gow (1991).

5.1. Marriage Choices

In his earlier writings on the peoples of the Gran Chaco, Métraux (1946:324) noted that it was the wife's mother who would make the final decision as to whether a marriage would go ahead or not. He continued that amongst the Mataco of the Bolivian and Argentine Chacos, parents would often arrange marriages for their children. This, he suggests, provided a suitable excuse for the couple if they were to later divorce, as it would have been considered their parents' choice and not theirs. During my fieldwork I was unable to ascertain whether such practices were commonplace amongst the Nivacle or not, as people would constantly insist that it was the young couple's decision and not anyone else's.⁶ Whilst parents may attempt to influence a young person's marriage choice through gentle persuasion, Nivacle marriage is not prescriptive and the decision on who to marry ultimately rests with the individual.⁷ The only marriage rule is the negative one that one cannot marry anyone considered to be "kin" (*yi-velh*).⁸ Like the Matsigenka (Rosengren 1987a: 117), this is the only rule that is strictly followed and young people would usually seek the advice of both their maternal and paternal grandparents for counsel on whether an individual might be suitable for marriage or not.⁹ Marrying someone who is considered to be "the same" (*junash-julb*) as ego is looked upon with disapproval, with people saying that it is "not pretty" (*n-is'a*) or "not OK" (*nin-tajulbei*). Someone who is "the same" is ego's kin, whilst someone who is "different" (*vena-lha*) is ego's non-kin (*ni-lha-velhavot-a*).¹⁰ However, someone who is considered "different", particularly in the larger communities such as Jotoicha, will often be ego's co-resident and therefore someone that he or she has grown up with.¹¹ As a result, a person would usually have known their affines well before marriage, although

⁶ Gow writes that amongst the Piro "It is a person's own desires which matter, and marriage partners are not selected by anyone but the man and woman involved nor, with the exception of incest, is much emphasis placed on relationship to other people" (1991:142).

⁷ See Gow (1991:148) who makes a similar point amongst the Piro.

⁸ Renshaw (2002:205) makes a similar point amongst the Nivacle. C.f. Århem (1987:132), who describes the existence of a prescriptive marriage rule amongst the Makuna, where "Bilateral cross-cousin marriage and direct sister exchange are (ideal) genealogical expressions of this conceptual model."

⁹ Alvarsson (1988:90) notes the existence of a similar negative marriage rule amongst the Mataco, where one cannot marry within one's kindred. Braunstein (1976:140) likewise reports that amongst the Toba, one cannot marry one's own kin. Alvarsson (1988:91) also reports Nordenskiöld as having stated that one cannot marry one's "siblings and cousins" (1926:71), with the support for this being the convergence of term for siblings and cousins in ego's generation.

¹⁰ In this respect, Nivacle marriage practices differ from many parts of lowland South America where there is an explicit endogamous prescription for people to marry those who are considered to be "close" (see, for example, Overing Kaplan (1975:186)). The dynamics of Nivacle understandings of "sameness" and "otherness" in relation to reciprocity are explored in Chapter 7.

¹¹ Lepri refers to such people as "internal others" (2005:16). See also Lorrain (1994:149) and Renshaw (2002:205).

they would never be considered ego's close kin. However, as I have explained in Chapter 3, Nivacle relationship terminology use was a highly subjective matter, which people would often manipulate to suit a particular context. On marriage, a husband would invariably be older than his wife. A survey I carried out revealed that women generally married between the ages of 15 and 19, whilst men married between the ages of 18 and 25.¹²

Lorrain has observed that amongst the Kulina, it is the “horizontal kinship networks [that] are much more important than descent” (1994:139).¹³ Whilst this is also the case amongst the Nivacle, Renshaw's statement that people's knowledge of their kindred “is rarely traced beyond two degrees of collaterality” (2002:205) is, I feel, rather too exact as such knowledge varied remarkably from person to person. Like Barúa (2001), who worked amongst the Argentine Wichí, I found that it was the women who expressed a far more detailed knowledge of their own kindred and of the intricacies of how people were interconnected both within and between communities than the men did. This seems to reflect a preference for uxorilocal post-marital residence, although this is not considered to be the rule.¹⁴ Whilst carrying out my initial census work on household composition in Jotoicha, I calculated that one young married couple, who had two small children, were, in fact, first cousins. As it was a couple that I did not know particularly well, I went to the house of José and Teresa, whom I knew very well, and asked them if my estimations were correct. They immediately put on expressions of utter disdain. José sighed, shaking his head, “Yes, they're brother and sister. Imagine wanting to marry your brother. They're no worse than dogs; they'll sleep with anyone. They're another type of people to us.” Despite this, I found that that the majority of marriages in Jotoicha took place between people who were “distant” kin. Upon marriage, affinal terms would then be used to transform those particular individuals from “non-kin” or “distant” kin to affines.¹⁵ Whether an individual's kindred has a matrilineal or a patrilineal emphasis (see Renshaw (2002:206)) would depend primarily on the community that their parents had chosen to reside in. However, to reach such a conclusion would, I think, be based more on the biases of the analyst's eye than on the

¹² See Rivière (1984:49).

¹³ This is a point that has been made by many others including Overing Kaplan (1975; 1984), Belaunde (1992), Gow (1991), Kidd (1999), McCallum (1989), Ellis (1996) and Rivière (1969).

¹⁴ See Chapter 4 where I describe the variation in residential composition in Jotoicha.

¹⁵ See Belaunde (1992:49), Gow (1991:172) and Renshaw (2002:206).

way a Nivacle person would understand their kindred, and for this reason I have avoided this approach in my discussion.

Alvarsson (1988:92f) was able to gain a more nuanced view of the Mataco negative marriage rule through a survey he carried out on kindred exogamy where he discovered that most marriages took place between people from different “*wikyí*’ affiliations” (i.e. territorially-based kindreds) as well as between people from different villages. There are two main reasons why I would have found it impossible to yield fruitful results from conducting such a survey amongst the Nivacle. The first reason is because the Nivacle do not associate themselves with territorially based kindreds. For them, the kindred is ego-centred and is not restricted to a particular spatial location (see Chapter 4). Second, the majority of marriages were endogamous as people did not classify themselves in terms of kin-groups at intra-community level. I also have no information as to whether, like the Matsigenka (Rosengren (1987a: 120-1)), Nivacle people considered inter-generational marriage alongside cases of incest. Such an explanation was never suggested when describing a marriage choice to me and I therefore did not have the opportunity to gauge anyone’s opinion on it. However, I suspect that people would not express a marital relationship as being “inter-generational” and would instead justify it in terms of being between “non-kin,” or criticize it in terms of being between “kin.” I also found no examples of significant age-gaps between marriage partners

Both men and women would usually have two or three sexual partners before finally deciding to live with someone. Typical places to meet partners were at the weekly football and volleyball matches as well as at the intra- and inter-community festivals that took place at Easter (*Pascua*) and Christmas (*Navidad*). Other contexts would be at dances that were held at people’s houses in the evening, where the popular *Cachaca* music would be played. Like young Piro men (Gow 1991:131), young Nivacle men experienced greater difficulty than young women (*napi lhutsjas*) in finding partners. This was mainly due to the fact that it was the women who usually took the initiative when it came to establishing partnerships. It was common for young men to decide to work in the Mennonite colonies for a period of time or visit kin in another community in order to increase their chances of meeting a marriage partner. José, a man of approximately 40 years of age and one of the leaders of Jotoicha explained the situation to me as follows: “A man is always alone, but a woman is never alone. When a man is out hunting in the

forest, he's alone. When he goes to work for his boss (*c'utsfa*), he is alone. When he looks for a wife, he is alone. But a woman, she is never alone. Her kin are always near her in everything she does. Everything." José's own experience is a case in point. He referred to himself as a "Tovoc Lhavo" as he was born in a community near the Catholic mission of Esteros, near the Pilcomayo River. He vividly remembers having worked at the sugar plantations in Salta as a young boy and then when he, his mother and father and siblings began migrating annually to Filadelfia in order to work for the Mennonites. In the late 1960s, they decided to settle in the community of Betania in Yalve Sanga. José began working as a labourer in Filadelfia and he told me how he used to cycle there on a weekly basis. It was there that he met his wife Teresa and he went to live with her and her kin in the worker village of Colonia 8. José is the only 'Tovoc Lhavo' in Jotoicha, although he considers the fact that he and Teresa lived together in Filadelfia for many years as being a bond that they have in common.

If a man fails to meet a partner, it can often be more difficult for him to find one the older he becomes. For example, I knew a young man called Diego, who, at the time of my fieldwork, was approximately 28 years of age. He still lived with his parents, his mother's father and his younger siblings, who were all significantly younger than him. Both his elder sisters had been married for several years and they both had children. He worked as a health worker (*Promotor de Salud*) in Jotoicha alongside Reneo, the brother of Teresa. Unlike Reneo, Diego was not particularly interested in working and so would spend most of his days at his parents' house sitting in the patio outside the house on a chair listening to the radio and drinking *tereré*. Despite his increasing years, he lived very much as a teenage boy would and spent most of his free time at weekends playing football and volleyball with the younger boys. Teresa, in particular, would criticize him and tell me that he was a "stays at home boy"¹⁶ and that he was too lazy to go and find himself a wife, unlike Reneo, who was married and a hard worker.

Although not particularly common, Nivacle people occasionally married Mennonites and Paraguayans (*napi Samtó*).¹⁷ Whilst I know of several cases of Nivacle and Mennonite marriages, I know of only one example of a Nivacle marrying a Paraguayan. This was a

¹⁶ Unfortunately, I was unable to transcribe the exact spelling of the term and only remember how it was translated to me in Spanish.

¹⁷ See Lepri (2003:160) and Gow (1991:142ff) on "inter-ethnic" marriages on the Bajo Urubamba. C.f. McCallum (1990:412) who reports that amongst the Cashinahua white people and indigenous people cannot marry and that their social lives must remain separate.

marriage between a Nivacle woman named Clara, whose father was half-Argentine (*samtô*), and a Paraguayan indigenous rights activist (*samtô*) called Pablo. Whilst Clara may “officially” be considered one-quarter White (*samtôque*), people did not speak about her in those terms. Clara had lived in a Nivacle community all her life and because of this she was considered very much a Nivacle. When she was working as a teacher in Asunción she fell pregnant to a Paraguayan man but he soon abandoned both her and her newborn child. When she moved back to the Chaco to be with her parents, her job as a teacher soon brought her into contact with Pablo, who was working as an indigenous rights activist in Filadelfia. They now have a child together and live in Filadelfia. As an aside, I do not think that this relationship refutes any of what I have said so far regarding the Nivacle’s “relational perspective” on the social universe. In other words, I do not think that Clara was more likely to have married the Paraguayan man than other Nivacle women on the strength of her White (*samtôque*) “ancestry” or “heritage.” Rather, within the context of her own “life world” (see Heidegger (1962)[1927]; (1971)[1954]), she had become “used to” White people; she spoke good Spanish and she was accustomed to the “culture” (*qu-ei* “the name given to you by another”) of the Paraguayans.

Relationships between Nivacle women and Paraguayan men were typically fairly brief affairs that took place whilst women were working as an assistant at one of the ranches. In all the cases of marriage that I knew between a Nivacle and a White person, it was always between a Nivacle woman and a White man, and never between a Nivacle man and a White woman. The Nivacle woman would always speak good Spanish and in the case of Nivacle women who married a Mennonite man, the Mennonite would also speak Spanish. Lepri notes how “language, residence and consubstantiality...are the strongest markers of sameness” (2003:163). Amongst the Ese Ejja, speaking the same language is tantamount to becoming increasingly kin-like and this, Lepri suggests, marks an increasing trend away from group endogamy “towards a more generalised exogamy” (2003:144). The same pertains for people who are learning to speak, or who are already speakers of, the Nivacle language (*Nivacle lh-clish*). A married couple I knew comprised a Mennonite husband who had a Nivacle wife called Angelina and a three-year-old son called Helmut. One afternoon whilst I was sitting with them in their patio, Angelina proudly told me that little Helmut could speak Platt-Deutsch, Spanish and Nivacle. “He knows them all”, she told me. Working in a similar way to teknonymy, the linguistic

knowledge of the child can act as a way of reducing difference between spouses: the child grows linguistically into a body that carries the knowledge of both parents and it is this process that makes both husband and wife increasingly similar. Another example is that of Pablo and María and their five-year-old adopted son Francisco. Francisco used to refer to Pablo with the Spanish term “*papá*” and María with the Nivacle term “*mimi*” and addresses his “biological” mother Angelina by her first name. When I asked Pablo why it was that Francisco addressed him as *papá*, he explained that Francisco had spent most of his childhood in Asunción as Pablo had worked there for an indigenous rights organisation for two years. Francisco, he explained, must have “got used to” hearing the Spanish version and so that was why he used it.

Gow reports that on the Bajo Urubamba marriage between people of different “races” (1991:143) was a common theme of local discourse. Whilst I do not think that the same could be said for the Central Chaco in that “inter-ethnic” marriages were not particularly common, it strikes me that Gow’s observation that marriage for the Piro is a relationship between “different kinds of people” bears strong resonance with the way Nivacle people talked about marriage.¹⁸ People preferred to marry those who were similar, but who were not “the same” (*junash julh*) through being kin. When marriage choices are made, people should marry someone who is non-kin. This person and their kin are then transformed into “Other” through the use of affinal terms. It is through co-residence, commensality, having children and generally caring for one’s husband or wife that spouses then begin the process of becoming similar once again. It is the process of becoming increasingly similar through living, working and eating together that forms the basis of this ideal relationship to which I shall now turn.

5.2. The Married Couple: “Companions in the Action of Producing Relationality”

The marriage relationship has frequently been used by authors to illustrate the inherently hierarchical nature of the gender relations within a particular society.¹⁹ Meillassoux, for example, in his now well-cited book *Maidens, Meal and Money* (1981), explores the

¹⁸ I am using “inter-ethnic” here in the way that it was used in the Central Chaco as being the distinction between Mennonites (*Menonitas*), Paraguayans (*Paraguayos*), Brazilians (*Brasileños*), Americans (*Americanos/Yanquis*) and Indians (*los Indígenas*).

¹⁹ See, for example, Rivière (1987).

connections between the modes of production in capitalist society with the modes of reproduction in the domestic sphere and reaches the conclusion that there are certain similarities between the two. His Marxist perspective leads him towards the conclusion that, much like the worker-boss relationship, marriage is inherently hierarchical. This, he argues, manifests itself in egalitarian societies through women being given “the least rewarding, the most tedious and, above all, the least gratifying tasks such as agriculture or cooking” (1981:29). Rivière (1984; 1987) adopts a similar perspective when he suggests that the daily preparation of fresh manioc bread, which is the work of the Tukanoan woman, is far more time-consuming than the work of the Tukanoan man, and also of the work Carib women, who do not bake bread on a daily basis. He writes: “However, the price the Tukanoans, or at least their women, have to pay for their *haute cuisine* is that manioc processing becomes a daily chore and thus occupies a very large amount of an adult woman’s time. This cannot fail to have implications for the social organization” (1987:187). He describes this as a process of “routinization, which, through the division of labour, a particular segment of the population finds itself consigned to tasks that are considered essential but are at the same time routine” (Ibid: 189). It is through their immobility (or the “gynostatic” nature of their work, in the terms of Meillassoux (1981)), that Tukanoan men dominate women (Rivière 1987).²⁰

Overing (1986b) has levelled a critique of the above authors’ claims of male dominance over women by suggesting that the basis of their analyses was something of a “Catch 22” in that, regardless of the productive, reproductive or ritual tasks being performed, the biases inherent in the approach of the researcher ensured that traits of dominance and hierarchy were always unveiled. She writes: “It is clear that in the West our understanding of gender is tied to notions not just about the relations between the sexes, but to more general ideas about how culture is different from and superior to nature” (1986b: 137).²¹ Overing’s critique sparked a number of subsequent works that examined the relationship between husband and wife in a more contextual and relational way. Amongst the Cashinahua, McCallum (1989; 2002) reports that the gendered division of tasks is based upon notions of male and female complementarity, which is circumscribed

²⁰ These are not the only authors to have suggested a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife. Authors including Descola (1994), S. Hugh-Jones (1979), Lizot (1985), Mentore (1987) and Rosengren (1987a) have, in different ways, illustrated that hierarchy exists in other areas of Amazonia between husband and wife.

²¹ The nature/culture dichotomy and its link to the power relationships between men and women was an integral aspect of the argument of Sherry Ortner (1974). This shall be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

by a particularly strong set of moral values including love, trust and cooperation. Gow (1991) writes that amongst the Piro, marriage is based on relations of mutual demand (the only relationship of this kind) where men satisfy women's need for game, whilst women satisfy men's need for sex.²² Belaunde (1992) presents something of a compromise between these two perspectives where, amongst the Airo-Pai, marriage is based on both "relations of demand" and "relations of caring" (1992:126). She writes: "marital and kin ties have both a 'demanding' and a 'caring' side, but one may demand something in as much as this is understood to be conducive of the bestowal of care" (Ibid.). Belaunde points out that the everyday practices of spouses should mirror the way in which kin should ideally behave towards each other, and the Airo-Pai go so far as to explain that the wife is encouraged to see a father in her husband, whilst a husband is encouraged to see a mother in his wife. This reflects what Overing (2003) has termed "the performative" aspects of kinship where people who live together are considered to become increasingly similar over time.

Whilst the term for spouse (*yi-ch'acfa*) is used both for reference and address, people generally preferred to use their spouse's first name.²³ The suffix *[-]fa* means "companion in the action of (something)" and denotes a relationship of togetherness and love.²⁴ Nivacle marriages are monogamous. Métraux notes that "cases of polygyny are not rare" (1946:326), particularly amongst leaders, where sororal polygyny was observed by Pelleschi (1886:85 [1881]) [in Métraux (Ibid.)] amongst the Matabo. I knew of no cases of polygyny during my fieldwork.²⁵ Nivacle women tended to have their first child at approximately 16 years of age, and it was only then that the marriage was considered concrete. Upon marriage, people would change from referring to a young woman as a *lhutsja* ("adolescent girl") to calling her a *Nivacche* ("woman"). This change in terminological use also reflects the change in the term used from spouse from "*ja'ya*," when a couple is childless, to "*ch'acfa*" when the couple have children. It also emphasises

²² It should be noted that Gow's position differs from that of Siskind's (1973a; 1973b) exploration of the politics of gender amongst the Sharanahua, as it is not a direct exchange of meat for sex. Rather, Gow argues that a key expression of Piro affinal relationships is the exchange of meat for manioc beer. In particular he describes the co-dependence and gender complementarity of Piro men and women as the manioc beer that is produced by women in turn nurtures and sustains the men so that they are in turn able to carry out their tasks.

²³ C.f. Rosengren (1987a: 114).

²⁴ See Kidd (1999:168) for a similar construction of the term for "spouse" amongst the neighbouring Enxet.

²⁵ See Rosengren (1987a: 129ff) who describes polygamous marriage practices amongst the Matsigenka.

the importance that the Nivacle attribute to childrearing within the context of the marital relationship.²⁶

Whether a couple had a marriage ceremony in a church or not varied from community to community.²⁷ In the Catholic community of Jotoicha, people would get married in church when the priest came to visit with the expressed intention of carrying out a variety of ceremonies including weddings and baptisms. I never witnessed any parties taking place in this community following any of the marriage ceremonies in Jotoicha. In the Evangelical communities, the weddings that I attended were quite different. A Nivacle Evangelical pastor explained Nivacle evangelical (Mennonite) weddings and the procedures of a typical wedding day as follows:

Weddings (*casamientos*) are for “believers” (“those who do not doubt”).²⁸ The rule that comes from the Bible is that only believers can marry in front of the church. The non-believers will have their wedding in their house. Amongst the believers the prospective spouse will meet up with the Pastor of his community beforehand in order to set the date for the ceremony. The pastor tells the young man how the wedding will be and they begin asking the invitees (*chi t'albei* “those who are asked”) if they would like to come to the wedding. The people who have been invited begin preparing their presents for the wedding. Both sets of relatives are invited, sometimes two pick-up trucks (*camiones*) full. They buy whatever they want to give, for example, a cooking pot, a plate, a knife, a spoon, or clothes, but no food. If the groom has lots of blessings then he will receive lots of gifts and if he doesn't, then he'll only get a few. The guests are also taking advantage of the chance to visit with their relatives who live in that community. The singers and choral groups are also invited to the wedding. Both sets of parents collaborate to buy the food for the invited guests.

²⁶ Métraux notes “Marriages are always strengthened by the birth of a child, even if the child later dies” (1946:327).

²⁷ See Renshaw (2002:189-90). The presence or absence of marriage ceremonies seems to vary among lowland South American peoples. See, for example, Lepri (2005:13).

²⁸ See Chapter 2.

These days there is a special Pastor who is able to carry out the work for weddings. Ceremonies usually take place on Saturdays or Sundays when the men have returned from working for their bosses. The day will usually begin with the choir singing a song, with the couple sitting to the side of the pulpit. Then someone who is in charge of the programme for the day's events will say, "Today we have a very special day" (*nôque nalbu, uj ti tajulbei*). Then the Pastor will come and read a passage from the Old Testament. Everyone will then sing. Then the Pastor will give a sermon and ask the congregation for a prayer²⁹ and then a Benediction³⁰ for the marriage. After the service, people will go outside to wait for the food. There is a lot of food for the people who have been invited. Sometimes people will buy a cow or just half a cow and they cook it with rice and pasta and lots of potatoes from their gardens. It is the women who prepare the food. There are cooks especially for this job called the *vatatesh lhavoque* ("those women who cook"). The Enxet (*japi Yi'lbais*) are especially good at organising this type of feast – it's very beautiful – the people who have been invited have special food, a barbeque with salad and fizzy drinks. Before there was knowledge of the culture of the Whites, women would collaborate with the preparation of food (*yamjatvatshamjop pa vatôc*). After the food the youngsters go to the football pitches and volleyball courts and the adults go to the houses of their kin.

The day of the marriage ceremony was the first time that a married couple's kin and affines would have eaten together. As Vilaça (2002), Oliveira (2003:119) and Overing (1996) have shown, people who eat together and who behave towards each other in socially appropriate ways gradually become more kin-like (also see Chapter 3). Oliveira (2003:140) suggests that the commensality that takes place between co-residents at Mebengokré ceremonies can be considered a fractal of commensality that takes place at

²⁹ The term used for prayer is *tasinôï*, which can mean "discourse" or "speech." I also heard it being used to refer to the volume of the television set.

³⁰ The term used for Benediction is *chi-t'aalb (ame) pa is calh junash*. *T'aalb* means "to ask for", *is* means "beautiful", *calh* means, "to send your auxiliary spirit" and *junash* means "character." The term could therefore be translated as "To ask for an auxiliary spirit of beautiful character."

the intimate level of the household. During the wedding day meal, the couples' kin, begin the process of becoming increasingly similar through cooking for each other and eating together. At one of the Evangelical wedding parties that I attended, the invitees were treated very generously by their hosts, who offered them large quantities of barbequed meat, sweet potato, calabash, homemade sausage rolls, bread and cakes. There was so much food that guests were also able to take large quantities of food home with them (*chi-chaaj-ch'e* "that which I take") to share with other household members. Such parties are great fun with loud music, dancing and games taking place after the food. Towards the end of one Evangelical wedding I attended, I noticed several middle-aged women and an older man who had not been invited join the group. Despite their lack of invite, they were also offered food as to do otherwise would have been considered stingy (*cyveej*). People commented afterwards that these individuals had only come "for the food" (*chi-tuj*), but that it would "hurt them too much" (*oytej yi cachi*) to turn their co-residents (*chifas*) away.

In his writings on the house, Lévi-Strauss (1982) suggests that "house societies" are located between elementary and complex social systems that combine opposing principles such as descent/alliance, filiation/residence, and matri-/patrilineal descent. He goes on to describe the house as a "moral person" that perpetuates itself over time. This "moral person," he suggests, is expressed through the "language of kinship or affinity" (Ibid: 174). In a later work he carried out a comparative analysis of house societies across several continents, including Africa, Melanesia, the Pacific and Indonesia and argued that the house acts to "solidify" or "transfix" the tension brought about through the "unstable relation of alliance" (1987:155ff). This, he states, is a form of "objectification" of the various oppositions characteristic of house societies, particularly the competing nature of descent and alliance. The house therefore gives the appearance of unity between two opposing social principles where in fact none exists. Politics and economics are discussed under the "language of kinship" (1982:186-7), which he calls the "duality of 'blood" and "land"(1987:181-2).

Rather than interpret marriage and the creation of the household in this manner, I suggest that Nivacle marriage should be understood as a process that has the potential to transform the quality of relationships over time towards increasing intimacy and trust. I do not consider it to be something that immediately "solidifies" two inherently static and

dissimilar concepts through the act of establishing the household.³¹ When a young Nivacle couple first marries, both consider their respective affines to be “non-kin” (*ni-lha-velhavot-a*) or “Other” (*Samtô*).³² Viveiros de Castro (1993:167 [in Lepri (2003:164)]) suggests “The contradiction between potential affines, who are outsiders and enemies, and effective affines, who are consanguinised through shared life and teknonymy [is] a quasi-universal phenomena in Amazonia” (Lepri Ibid.). Whilst the concept of “potential affine” does not exist in Nivacle understandings of relationality, people who are initially addressed and referred to by an affinal term can be potentially transformed into kin through living together and caring for one another. Such a transformation in the nature of the relationship is reflected through the use of teknonyms following the birth of a couple’s first child.³³

In everyday relations, McCallum (2001) notes amongst the Cashinahua, men and women usually work with people of the same sex. This is also true amongst the Nivacle, although spouses would often work together in their garden, cleaning the patio together or “looking for” (*vooi*) firewood or water together. They would also spend time together at mealtimes as they sat by the fire drinking *mate* or *tereré* and talking. The marital relationship was regarded as being between two people with two distinct backgrounds who, though living together, eating the same food and caring for each other, gradually become similar (*lhaiyaashvatjultb* “of the same behaviour”) and showing similarity (*lhjunashch’evatjultb*) over time. People explained to me that whilst it was good to marry someone different (*vena-lha*), there was no need for them to be too different.

Marriage is a relationship that is premised on care, friendship and the ability to communicate well with each other.³⁴ Through the mixing of male and female blood, children are produced and the relationship is sustained through the gender-specific tasks of the husband and wife.³⁵ Alongside the terminological transformations that take place between spouses following the birth of their first child (i.e. from *yi-ja’ya* to *yi-ch’acfa*), terminological changes also take place for the close kin of both spouses following the

³¹ Lepri writes, “Marriage is one of the means by which the contradiction between the desire for sameness and the necessity of difference may be temporarily and partially overcome” (2003:160). She later incorporates a processual dimension to the relationship between kinship and affinity, which reflects my approach amongst the Nivacle.

³² See Lepri (2003:164) and Viveiros de Castro (1993:167 [in Lepri]).

³³ See Chapter 3.

³⁴ See Belaunde (1992:48).

³⁵ See McCallum (2001:63).

birth of the couple's first child through the employment of teknonyms.³⁶ The use of teknonyms did not appear to be an attempt to overcome any contradictions between kinship and affinity within the household, but rather it was about the incorporation of "otherness" through the practice of "love" (*lhenjayash*).

I was told that a good spouse should be "strong" (*t'un*), "have knowledge" (*yi-tô'yesh sha'ne*), "be respectful" (*yi-v'vatanjullb*) and "want to help their spouse" (*tanefenesb*). "Knowledge" (*tôî*) is expressed through the skills an individual possess to carry out gender-specific work. I was told that a spouse should be *fitjôî*, which my friend translated into the Spanish for "worker" (*trabajador*). Seelwische (1990:93) translates "*fitjôî*" as meaning "it makes him/her consistent," so perhaps my friend was implying that work should be carried out on a daily basis and that it was something that a spouse should want to do. Another term I was told referred to a woman who was a hard worker is "*lhavcumjôcloque*" ("she works a lot, she really does"). I was told, "From first light she goes off to look for *faai* or *cumaclu* if they are in season. She also goes off looking for firewood, water, then she cleans her patio, tends to her plot, sweeps her house, washes the clothes, cooks and sews bags. Whatever task is needing done, she will do it." This comment would certainly fit well with Gow's observation that amongst the Piro the woman does not usually initiate the marriage as "she objects to the hard work of adulthood" (1991:134).³⁷ Whilst I never heard this term being used, I believe that the key point is that both a husband and wife should be prepared to work and both should want to carry out their daily tasks and "help" each other without needing to be asked.

An older man once told me that, "Young women are only interested in men with lots of money (*uj ti peso* "big the money").³⁸ He complained that neither a young man's looks nor his ability to work hard mattered any more, only whether he was in a position to buy lots of consumer goods for his wife. His comment bears a striking similarity to Gow's comment that amongst the Piro, "Women themselves say that they prefer men with money" and that "This is especially true of younger women" (1991:144). In the Bajo Urubamba, the distinction between men who have money and those who do not is linked to the experience of different races (*razas*) such that women prefer men of one

³⁶ See Chapter 3.

³⁷ Here Gow makes it clear that he is not in any way describing practices in which women are "dominated" by men, which he describes as not being "the harsh lot reserved for dominated women" (1991:134).

³⁸ The *peso* is the Argentine unit of currency, which may have been adopted into the Nivacle vocabulary during the early 1900s when they worked there in the sugar mills.

raza over another, with this preference being based on the amount of money they can earn. There is possibly a connection between this and my earlier point that it is always Nivacle women who marry Mennonite men (the higher earners), although such relationships were never explained to me in those terms.

Ideally spouses should respect each other's personal autonomy. A person should never order their spouse to go hunting, go to work for the Mennonites, cook a meal or sweep the patio.³⁹ Instead, a spouse should want to be *fitjoi* every day in order to care for their spouse. However, an older man told me, "Respect is from the previous culture. My Grandfather and my Grandmother taught me, when you marry you shouldn't even go near the subject of work with your wife. Not even once should you tell her that she has to do her work. She knows her work. But they help each other, they cooperate (*y-efen-esh pa lb-ch'acfa*)."³⁹ It is during mealtimes that a couple discuss what they have done and what their plans are for the day as it is only as husband and wife that a man and woman will eat alone together. This is a time for bonding and is a crucial part of the process of making two people who were "different" become increasingly "similar." They should also demonstrate their love for each other through the giving of gifts. However, this was expected more on the part of the husband as he had greater access to money. A generous husband (*is sha'ne*) would remember his wife when he was working for his Mennonite boss and ask for a sack-full of grapefruits or lemons to take back to her, or he would "think" of his wife when the travelling salesman drives by their house and go out and buy her one of the cakes or pastries that she likes. This is not to deny the fact that very often husbands feel pressurised by their wives to buy them certain items that they liked. However, the key point here is that ideally, a husband and wife should both "think" (*aichvalb*) for themselves and do things for their spouse. This seems to differ in certain respects to the situation of the Matsigenka husband and wife relationship where marriage does not seem to offer each spouse the same level of autonomy (Rosengren 1987a: 122). Rosengren (Ibid.) explains that whilst a man gains greater freedom and independence through being married, a woman will be less so, largely because of her position of being "more ritually polluted" than men.

³⁹ Gow (1991:128) writes that amongst the Piro it is the personal autonomy of both partners that provides each one with the option of abandoning their partner should their demands not be satisfied. See also Overing (1986b).

A husband or wife whose mother is said to “really love them” by doing all the household chores for them instead of teaching them how to work, was said to give their child “bad habits” as they “do not want to work” (*nincumjat pa lbaôs/lhôse*). This was said to be particularly damaging for young women. I was told that a wife should “already know her work” (*apis ti t’ôya lb-cumjayash lhpa Nivacbe*). Young girls (*na’nevai*) and boys (*necjôquis*) between the ages of 7 and 10 would usually be asked to assist their mothers in the completion of certain tasks including the fetching of water, cleaning the weeds from the patio and carrying provisions purchased from the travelling salesman back to the house. However, they are never expected to carry out any of these tasks independently or with any level of skill. One woman explained to me that her 9-year-old daughter “only knows (*yi-tô’yesh-ch’e* “has knowledge of”) how to play” and so for this reason she only does a little work. Calling this “The Nivacle Tactic” (*la Tática Nivacle*), an older man explained, “From when they are small (*tic’in*), parents send their children off to fetch water or help clean the patio. Soon they get used to working themselves. The Nivacle character is such that we never hit our children with sticks. When the children want to hit their brothers and sisters I tell them off, that’s all, with my voice.” The knowledge that one acquires in order to work is developed from childhood. It is considered the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their child has the knowledge and desire to work with their spouse.

As girls move into adolescence they are expected to help their mothers to carry out certain tasks in a more competent and independent manner through the “knowledge” that they have developed during the course of their childhood. They should already “know” how to fetch water, wash the dishes or fetch firewood, although usually in the company of their mother and other female kin. However, I never witnessed a teenage girl cook a meal on her own, with her role usually being to assist her mother and elder sisters in tasks that required lesser skill. Adolescent boys (*nich’ac sha’nei* “the new people”) helped with fewer tasks than anyone else in the household. Unlike the girls, teenage boys were usually quite content to while away the hours sitting in either their parents’ or friends’ patios sipping *tereré*, listening to the radio and *Cachava* cassettes, and playing football. The only times that I saw adolescent boys being asked to help was when they were still at school and the teacher would sometimes ask them to work together to build a new latrine or sweep out the schoolhouse. However, this was only in

the case of boys up to around 14 years of age, and after that they were very much left to their own devices to relax and play football as they wished.⁴⁰

As I have already explained in previous chapters, most of the young to middle-aged men in Jotoicha had a Mennonite boss (*c'utsfa*) from one of the neighbouring Mennonite villages. Men were usually absent from their communities from Monday morning through to Friday evening or Saturday morning, when their Mennonite bosses would usually drop them off. An old man once explained to me: “Here the wife works at home and the husband works away from home. When he comes home from work, he doesn’t feel like working. But the man cannot send his wife off to fetch water, firewood or cook. She herself has got to think, “What do I need? What have I got to do?” (*y-aichvalh lhavaatsha pa ti l’acum’e* lit: “she herself thinks about the work she needs to do”). Whilst being a good worker was not necessarily commented upon as it was expected of adult men and women, laziness was very strongly condemned. People’s respect for an individual’s personal autonomy meant that people often found it difficult to tell their spouse to carry out their tasks. A lack of willingness to work was often cited as being the main reason for a break-up.⁴¹ If a husband or wife did not listen to their spouse (*ampa nava yi-tacfiis* “they don’t have ears”) or (*nin vo’mesh pa lh-junash* “they don’t have enough character”), then there was often no alternative but for them to separate (*vat voom ja’ne* “they disappear from each other”). Whilst divorce was quite common, particularly in the earlier stages of marriage, violence between couples was very uncommon. Métraux attributes this to the relative status of women in the Chaco, which he states is “high” (1946:327). However, this is a two-way process, as both husband and wife must show respect for each other. A lack of respect and care, whilst it can sometimes manifest itself through violence, is more likely to show itself through laziness and a failure to “remember” one’s spouse.

⁴⁰ See Gow (1991:130). Overing observed similar behaviour amongst Piaroa adolescent boys (personal communication).

⁴¹ Métraux notes “Laziness or bad temper is often given as the justification of divorce” (1946:327). I found that alcohol was often attributed to the cause of many marriage break-ups, with people stating that it stopped them from thinking “good thoughts” and “caused them” to fight and shout. Descola similarly reports that amongst the Achuar, “When one is saddled with a spouse, husband or wife, publicly recognized as lazy, it is perfectly acceptable to abandon him or her, since it is judged that he or she has not fulfilled the normal role in the necessary complementarity of productive tasks (1994:298).

5.3. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored Nivacle marriage decisions and the qualities that make a good spouse. This chapter began with a critique of earlier Structuralist analysis that saw marriage as an exchange between groups of men. Instead, I argued that Nivacle marriage should be understood in terms of the relationship between the husband and wife. Like many other lowland South American peoples (see, for example, Belaunde (1992) and Gow (1989; 1991), the marital relationship is the basic productive unit that forms the basis of the household. The love, trust and friendship that a married couple share is a gradual process that develops over time. Through cooperating in feeding and caring for their children and each other the relationship gradually becomes stronger. I have argued that Nivacle gender relations are enacted through marriage and in particular through the gendered skills that each adult individually acquires. This “knowledge” is initially acquired during childhood through observing and imitating their gender-specific parents. These skills are further developed during adulthood through marriage and gender-specific work that goes into building and sustaining a household. That is a particularly important aspect of Nivacle understandings of knowledge and sociality and in the following chapter I shall explore the concept of “work” and relations of production in greater detail, focussing particularly on its generative aspects.

Chapter 6: Producing Knowledgeable People

I begin this chapter with an excerpt from my field notes from March 2003:

It was midmorning on a hot summer's day and Lucía, her mother María and I were sitting in Lucía's kitchen drinking *tereré* (tea).¹ We had been sitting there for quite a while with the front door slightly ajar so as to let the cool breeze flow through the house. The radio was on and we were listening to the Mennonite station *Radio 30*. We had a reasonably good view of the road from where we were sitting and over in the distance I could see an elderly woman walking towards the house. She had a slight limp and seemed to be holding a plastic carrier bag in her hand. As she approached, Lucía said to her mother, "Josefina?" to which María replied, "*Hech, lha Josefina*" ("Yes, it is Josefina"). Lucía turned to me and told me that the woman was María's sister-in-law (*fachis'a*) and that she hadn't seen her for many years. Josefina proceeded to walk towards the house and, as is customary amongst Nivacle who are visiting, she stood outside and waited, without proclaiming her presence. María approached the door and shook hands with her before asking her to sit down. Josefina handed María the plastic bag that she had been carrying. The bag contained several sweet potatoes that she had gathered from her garden plot. María then offered her some *tereré*, which she accepted. We sat for a while and Josefina and María began chatting. The conversation continued and it was soon approaching 11:30am, when Lucía's husband Juan would be returning home for lunch. Lucía began frying eggs and she offered one to Josefina, who accepted. A while later, Josefina turned to me and said, "You see what Lucía is doing? That is work (*f'acuum*). If a Nivacle woman ever wants to marry, she needs to know how to work. If you want visitors, you need to

¹ For a description of *tereré*, see Chapter 2.

work. A Nivacle woman needs to get up right away and make *tereré*, pasta, whatever for her guests. That's what she needs to do."

This was one of the few occasions when somebody actually spelled out to me what "work" was for a Nivacle person. An interesting aspect of Josefina's comment is that "work" seems to encompass more than just "economic/productive" activities that one would normally have associated with "work." "Work" for her was also about caring for visitors, creating congenial social contexts and providing a suitable basis for kind words and "thoughts" to be expressed. It was also about spontaneous acts of kindness. This chapter is an exploration of the multifaceted nature of the Nivacle conception of "work" and its relationship to "knowledge."²

Within economic anthropology, there had been a longstanding debate between what were termed the "formalists"³ and the "substantivists"⁴ regarding how to approach a cross-cultural analysis of different economic systems. Whilst the "formalists" argued that economic systems only varied by degree and that similar models could be applied to all economies, the "substantivists" argued the opposite. They argued that there was no obvious overlap between different economies and that an economic system was culturally embedded and therefore not open to comparison. This debate died down in the 1970s with the rise of Marxist anthropology. Marxist anthropologist Maurice Godelier (1972 [1966]; 1977), for example, argued that the economic base was a universal and that the ways in which people talked about them and related them to other aspects of social life was nothing more than "phantasmic representations."

My interpretation of "work" has been influenced by the Dilley's (1992) edited volume entitled *Contesting Markets*, which aimed to show how "culturally constructed discourse articulates with other available social discourses" (1992:2). One of the chapters in this volume is the work of Joanna Overing (1992) and her description of Piaroa conceptualisations of the marketplace and how it relates to other aspects of the Piaroa "subsistence economy." Recent writings on the social value of production and the

² In this chapter, I use the term "work" to refer specifically to the productive activities that the Nivacle themselves described as "work." In the following chapter I describe Nivacle understandings of the product, property, and the processes of distribution and consumption.

³ Whose proponents include Firth (1929) and Herskovits (1952).

⁴ They included writers such as Polanyi (1968) and Dalton (1968).

complementarity of Amazonian gender relations have been termed the “moral economy of intimacy” by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (1996:189).⁵ As I have discussed in Chapter 1, although this labelling is not entirely satisfactory, it has served as an umbrella to categorise subsequent writings that have also been influenced by the writings of Joanna Overing.⁶ These works have also influenced my approach in the present chapter, in particular the writings of (1989; 1991:119ff), who questions the assumption made by ethnographers that kinship relations, and through this gender relations, somehow presuppose “economic” relations or relations of “exchange.”⁷ Rather than assume that gender or kinship somehow presuppose indigenous “subsistence” activities, Gow argues it is important to take into consideration the intimate relationship between food production and care.⁸ Gendered identity is linked to the production and consumption of particular kinds of food as well as the specific productive capacities and desires of men and women. Gow explains that the indigenous “subsistence economy” is not about labouring to satisfy one’s basic needs, but rather it concerns “the creation of culturally specific social relations through the production, circulation and consumption of culturally specific items from the environment” (1989:581).

This chapter begins with a description of the Nivacle concept of “work,” the semantic and conceptual distinction that is made between “work” and “wandering around looking for things,” and the relationship between “work” and “knowledge.” I then go on to discuss the feminist literature on the basis of gendered “difference” and the allocation of specific gendered domains for men and women. I then relate this literature to Nivacle understandings of gendered skills and the different ways in which men and women work, either individually, in gender-specific groups, or in mixed partnerships. I then move on to explore the key types of work that Nivacle people engage in, including hunting, gathering wild fruits, collecting honey, horticulture, wage labour and the care of domestic animals. In my discussion, I address the concept of hierarchy and question its relevance within Nivacle relationships. In the final section, I turn to the relationship between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law and show how, rather than being a relationship

⁵ Including, for example, the writings of Kidd (1999), Belaunde (1992), Gow (1991), McCallum (1989; 2001) and Overing (1989b; 1993b; 1996b; 2003).

⁶ For example: Belaunde (1992; 2000); Echeverri (2000); Heckler (2004); Londoño-Sulkin (2000); McCallum (1989; 2001); and Passes (1998; 2000).

⁷ For instance, Mendoza has written that amongst the Argentine Toba “Kinship bonds and common residence presupposed economic cooperation and food sharing” (1999:87).

⁸ See also Belaunde (1992), McCallum (1989), Kidd (1999) and Overing (1989b).

of hierarchy, avoidance and domination, young Nivacle women gradually work towards seeing life with their mother-in-law as being akin to living with one's Grandma.

6.1. The Nivacle Concept of "Work"

The Nivacle distinguish between two types of activities that form what might be termed their "subsistence economy."⁹ The first is the verb *t'acum-in*, which means, "to work."¹⁰ It can also mean, "to grab," "to receive," "to use" and "to raise" (see Seelwische 1990:200). *T'acum-in* refers to activities that are repetitive and that require a prior "knowledge" or skill (*[-]tô'y-ish*) that has been built up in a person's *cachi* (interior) over a period of time.¹¹ It will usually also involve the use of some type of tool.¹² The English term "work" is commonly expressed as a noun in the possessive (i.e. "my work"). Such an expression would, however, make little sense to a Nivacle person, as they have no conceptualisation of *t'acum-in* as a noun (i.e. *na yî-t'acuum* "my work"). "Work", for the Nivacle, is skilful action that is carried out by a particular person either alone or in concert with others; it is not an abstract concept that exists in a vacuum waiting to be appropriated.¹³ Activities that are considered "work" include gardening, looking after domestic animals, cooking, wage labour, childcare, hosting visitors, house building, and path clearing.¹⁴ Whilst the suffix *[-]in* is always added, which signifies intensity or duration, Nivacle people do not connect "work" with drudgery and misery *a la* Sahlins (1974:1ff). Whilst they do make a terminological distinction between wage labour (encapsulated in *t'acum-in*) and hunting and gathering (*naash*) or (*vôôî*), neither are associated with the negative connotations of the "Western" concept of "work."¹⁵

⁹ See Gow (1989; 1991) for a critique of this term.

¹⁰ See Seelwische (1990:20), who translates it into the Spanish verb *trabajar*, which means "to work."

¹¹ Gow writes that amongst the Piro, "work" involves the physical production of something which does not exist beforehand" (1991:101). I would agree that this is also the case for the Nivacle.

¹² See Descola (1994:297).

¹³ See also Passes, who, writing about "work" amongst the Pa'ikwené, states, "though it notionally exists as a substantive noun, work for the Pa'ikwené tends to be more a matter of practice and thus a verb: one works...rather than 'having', 'owning' or 'giving' work" (1998:152-3). See also Illich (1973:89ff).

¹⁴ C.f. Descola (1994:297), who notes that the Achuar distinguish between wage labour (where they use the Spanish *trabajar*) and all other kinds of work. He comments that they have created "two contrasting representations of the same type of technical activity.

¹⁵ Cf. Gow (1991:101ff), who explains that amongst the Piro, whilst both wage labour and hunting and gathering are both described as "looking for" (*buscando*) something, the latter are not understood as being "work." This is similar to the Nivacle distinction.

Like the Piro (Gow 1991) and the Pa'ikwené (Passes 1998), the Nivacle also engage in wage labour, thus reflecting their “insertion” into the market economy. Both Gow (1991:90ff) and Passes (1998:153f) have observed that the indigenous subsistence economy does not run in parallel with- or counter to- the market economy, but instead they are seen as working in parallel and are understood under the much broader heading of “work.” I suggest a similar conceptualisation of “work” amongst the Nivacle in that wage labour is but another form of repetitive skilled “work.” It is not given a separate name and I do not believe that it runs counter to any other form of “work” that Nivacle people engage in. Rather, like every other kind of “work,” wage labour should make a person sweat, with sweating being regarded in a positive light as something that is inherently strengthening and cleansing. Moreover, this is hard work that must be understood in context: Nivacle “work” is a highly social activity that is also generative of sociality. I discuss this below.

Skill is an important aspect of Nivacle productive knowledge. As described in Chapter 2, the verb *tôî* means, “to know” and *yi-tô'y-îsh* translates literally as “to have knowledge come to him/her.” A person’s ability is said to be “*nôyôj'e pa lh-tôicheyasb*” (“it continues their knowledge”), which implies that something is being projected onto something else. Through practicing their “ability,” a person is able to work. This is also expressed through the verb *fajulb*. This refers to the practice of any kind of skill, including using a digging stick, kneading dough, sweeping a path, writing, washing clothes, playing a guitar, bathing a child, building a house or sharpening an axe. There are verbs for specific types of tasks such as “to cook” (*tatai-in*), “to plant” (*côjîyan*) and “to clean” (*îsinat* lit: “to make beautiful”), and these are conceptualised as productive activities that require “knowledge.” Wage labour and searching for foodstuffs in one’s garden plot are also conceptualised as *t'acum-in*.¹⁶ Skilful “knowledge” clearly covers a wide range of activities and I was told that someone who was particularly gifted at learning was said to be *tôôitsej*. My friend explained,

It’s a general term that is used for anyone who learns quickly. For example, how to make string bags, writing or working. As soon as that person hears their teacher, he or she already knows how to solve the problem. There are children in the school who

¹⁶ C.f. Gow (1991:103).

understand what is being said to them after only one explanation, even although the others need two or three explanations. When I was younger and I went out looking for honey with my father, we would enter the forest by one little path and then walk along the path to another point. Then, after we had finished, he had the ability to find our way back from that point.

Children were encouraged by those around them to acquire “knowledge” through watching, listening and imitation.¹⁷ Whilst a child’s movements would be initially clumsy, over time they become increasingly adept. *T’acum-in* therefore encompasses the notion of carrying out a skilful action repeatedly. The Nivacle worker is an autonomous worker and work is seen as the application of “knowledge” that has already been acquired in the *cachi* and practiced through the eyes, hands, legs and torso: it is embodied “knowledge” enacted through effort. No one can order anyone to work, as the desire to work needs to come from that person’s *cachi*. A person needs to be tranquil and think “good/beautiful” thoughts in order to work and be able to create “beautiful” products. Activities that require patience, like weaving, are also *t’acum-in*, and in this sense “knowledge” also encompasses the aesthetic ideals of stillness and patience, which are both integral aspects of being a “knowledgeable” human being. Whilst I agree with Gow (1991:103) that this kind of “knowledge” is a general knowledge that all men and women possess, I would also add that like relatedness, is also a matter of degree as it is “knowledge” that develops over time.

The second verb is *naash*, which means hunting, gathering, collecting honey or fishing whilst out wandering.¹⁸ It was usually employed in conjunction with the verb *vooi*, which means, “to look for,” “to choose” or “to select” and refers to hunting, gathering and fetching activities (excluding fetching water, which is known as *t’acju*). Thus, a man who is hunting deer is said to be “*yi-vooi pa tashinsha*” (“he is looking for deer”), whilst a woman who is out gathering *algarrobo*¹⁹ is “*yi-vooi pa faa*” (“she is looking for algarrobo”).²⁰ Such activities entail a general wandering around, and do not refer to the

¹⁷ See Chapter 2.

¹⁸ *Naash* is also the term for “nose.” I was told that the term *naashasham* can mean moving below the ground like a snake does as well as moving within a building.

¹⁹ See Chapter 2.

²⁰ See Gow (1991:102), who explains that such activities are understood as *buscando comida* (looking for food) amongst the Piro.

repeated use of “knowledge” that has been already acquired.²¹ “Looking for” something is “knowing the character” (*tʃi-tô-i-in lh-junash*) of something that is already there (usually in the forest (*na ita*)).²² It is “knowledge” of the “father” (*lh-tata*) of a particular species that is important.²³ To *naash* is categorically not understood as carrying out “work,” as it requires neither patience nor repeated effort. Instead it is considered an enjoyable event that people do to gain pleasure.²⁴

When a person or group of people were carrying out a particular task that is considered *l'acum-in* (work), they would often be referred to as a “[*-*]lhavo” (“specialist” or “person”) of that particular task. For example, a group of women who are cooking can be said to be *tatai-in lhavoquei* (“cooking specialists”), a bricklayer is a *jpôyich lhavo'* (“house specialist”), a carpenter is a *yrelô'i lhavo'* (“wood specialist”) a group of men collectively clearing a path are *nôyish lhavos* (“path specialists”). Each of these tasks requires a different kind of “knowledge” (*tô'y-ish*), which is acquired first through watching and imitating others and then through repeatedly practicing the task. To say that someone is a “specialist” is not to say that their “knowledge” is necessarily unique, but rather that they “have knowledge” of a particular way of carrying out a task and, more to the point, that they are applying that “knowledge” during that particular moment in time. It is a social “knowledge” about appropriately “Nivacle” ways of doing things, a point which I believe can be backed up by the fact that different ethnic groups are also referred to as *lhavos* (for example the *Jotoicha lhavos* (people of Jotoicha)). One could not say that they were “Jotoicha specialists,” but rather that they shared “knowledge” of a way of doing things that made them “Jotoicha people.”²⁵ “Work” is therefore about a specifically Nivacle way of acquiring and practicing “knowledge” and is an integral aspect of Nivacle

²¹ See also Overing (1992:183), who writes that amongst the Piaroa, those who hunt, fish, gather or shop are known as “takers” of goods that “one had not created through one’s own skills.”

²² Gow describes the Piro concept of *buscando* (looking for something) as that which “involves skill in locating something which already exists” (1991:101). The Piaroa, meanwhile, will announce plans to go hunting, gathering or fishing by saying, “I am going wandering” (Overing 1992:182). Descola reports that amongst the Achuar, hunting is regarded as separate from other forms of work, with people using expressions such as “to go into the forest,” to go looking,” or “to go for a walk” (1994:300).

²³ See also Gow (1991:102). C.f. Overing (1992:183) who writes that “it was the Piaroa view that neither the animals of the forest nor the fish of the rivers could engage in social action: because their capabilities for intentionality and reason had been taken from them at the end of mythic time, they thereafter lacked for eternity the capacity for forming personal relationships.”

²⁴ See also Oliveira (2003:194).

²⁵ See Chapter 7, where I discuss the creation of similarity amongst co-residents in greater detail.

personhood.²⁶ I did not gain the impression, however, that there was a hierarchy between different types of work, as those who were teachers and had “knowledge of writing” (*yi-tô’y-esb-ch’e na vanqu’isjayash*) were never said to be any “better” than those who had “knowledge of painting” (*yi-tô’y-esb-ch’e na pintura*).²⁷ All forms of “knowledge” were considered equally, as it was the aesthetics of its practice, and the beauty of its product that were important, whether that be that a house, a stew, a garden plot, a song or a child. I shall now go on to consider the topic of “work” in greater detail through the lens of gender-specific “knowledge.”

6.2. The Work of Men and Women

Edwin Ardener (1975) has described the absence of women in ethnographic literature as them having been “muted” by the male-centered voice of anthropological enquiry. As Moore (1988:1) points out, it is not so much that women were absent from ethnographies, for they have indeed been ever-present in countless studies on the topics of kinship and marriage. Rather, the problem was that they have been present and no more: voiceless beings who lingered around in the background cooking men meals, bearing their children and being exchanged. “Mutedness” was not something that Ardener saw as being only applicable to women. Indeed, it could be applied to any group that was in an asymmetrical relationship with another, and could include all-male groups such as African-Americans (as opposed to Whites), the working class (as opposed to the middle class) or children (as opposed to adults). It is a term that describes the way in which a dominant group engulfs a subordinate group and “blocks the power of actualisation of the other” (1975:25). According to Shirley Ardener (1975), women have been effectively inarticulate because the language and social norms that they used have been created and developed by men in the public sphere.²⁸ An important aspect of the Ardeners’ (1975) argument was that men and women fundamentally see, experience and talk about the world in different ways as they are attached to two distinct social domains that are brought about through the division of labour. Women are therefore always

²⁶ See also Passes (1998:153), who notes that amongst the Pa’ikwené, a similar conceptual link is made between skills and personhood. Renshaw (2002:63) writes that the subsistence economy of the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco is also a “moral economy.”

²⁷ See also Passes (1998:152).

²⁸ See also Kramarae (2003:19ff).

required to adapt their forms of expression so that they end up explaining the world in male ways.²⁹

Holy (1996:51) explains that until the middle of the twentieth century, kinship studies had been largely concerned with attempting to unfold the nature of unilineal descent groups and the juro-political aspects of kinship, as exemplified in the works of Evans-Pritchard (1940), Fortes (1953) and Radcliffe-Brown (1935). This focus, he argues, had a tendency to skew subsequent analyses into focusing on the socio-political topics of “Unilineal Descent Groups” and “Exogamy and Direct Exchange,” rather than the lived dynamics of the domestic sphere or the household. Here, the political sphere of public relations was given analytical privilege over the mundane sphere of the domestic. Whilst there had been an increasing volume of work that has gone into clarifying the conceptual elements of the public domain, the same could not be said for the private sphere of social life, where there was not as yet a great deal of consensus on how concepts such as “the family”, “the household” and “the domestic” might be interpreted.³⁰ An unfortunate by-product of this focus on the public spheres of indigenous social life has been that in avoiding the domestic sphere, ethnographers were also implicitly ignoring women.³¹

During the 1970s, feminist anthropologists began responding to several key biases by writing on the situation of women.³² These were male biases that had influenced the

²⁹ This argument reflects a later alternative branch of feminist theory that is the work of the so-called French feminists, whose writers include, Irigaray (1985a; 1985b), Le Doeuff (1991), Kristeva (1984) and Cixous (1975, 1990). The different experiences of men and women is something that Hélène Cixous (1975) argues needs to be created anew through the creative process that she has called *écriture féminine* or “feminine writing/writing the feminine” (Cixous 1975). Her article entitled “The Laugh of the Medusa” (1975) was a manifesto for women to write out of their libidinal economy and therefore write *out of their bodies*. She writes, “Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies” (1975:309). She exclaims, “Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it” (Ibid.). Denying any biological essentialism, she argues that we understand our bodies through culture and that as such, the body is *tabula rasa* on which culture can be written. Men have created a “false woman” on which to hang their own ideas of what woman should be that effectively prevents her real body from breathing. Luce Irigaray (1985a; 1985b) focused on the absence of the feminine subject in the definition of dominant cultural values. Rather than attempt to overthrow or deconstruct the “phalocentric” view of human subjectivity with a “gynocentric” alternative, she believes that it is necessary for women to define new values directly or indirectly suitable to feminine subjectivity and feminine identity.

³⁰ See, for example, Fox (1967) and Keesing (1975).

³¹ See, for example, Rapport and Overing (2000:152) who write that in Amazonia, the everyday processes of the “domestic” domain are more important than any external political domains of power. The Western public/private dichotomy would, in fact, mean very little to these people.

³² See, for example, Collier (1974), Lamphere (1974) Rubin (1975) and Yanagisako (1979).

approach of the anthropologist during fieldwork, eventually leading to the societies that were being studied being misinterpreted. Di Leonardo explains that there were two important drivers for this move,

American anthropology's edificatory tradition and second-wave feminism's penchant for fresh questioning led feminist anthropologists to problematize sexual relations to degrees unknown since the turn of the century.

Di Leonardo (1991:7)

Two of the most important feminist volumes, which di Leonardo (1991:7) describes as "the 'bibles' of feminist anthropology for the ensuing decade" (1991:7), were Rosaldo and Lamphere's *Women, Culture and Society* (1974) and Rapp Reiter's *Toward and Anthropology of Women* (1975). For the contributors of *Woman, Culture and Society* (1974), their common aim was to uncover the manifestations of male domination in different societies as well as the male biases in anthropological enquiry. For them, the male/female dichotomy implicitly incorporated hierarchical relations. In her now classic article, "Is Male to Female as Nature is to Culture?" Sherry Ortner (1974), through an analysis of gender symbolism, claimed that female subordination was caused by the biological fact that women were universally devalued in every society through their links with the cyclical processes of reproduction. Women were thus relegated to the domestic sphere of social life because of their association with nature. Strongly influenced by the writings of Lévi-Strauss, Ortner argued that the dichotomies of male:female::public:private were cultural universals.³³

Ortner's conceptualisation of transcendence and immanence were also influenced by the writings of Simone de Beauvoir, who herself was greatly influenced by Hegel's (1977)[1807] work on the master/slave dialectic. As Beauvoir observes in her classic work entitled *The Second Sex* (1988)[1952], it is women, not the proletariat, who are the original "Other" against which male subjects, whether capitalist, feudal, or socialist, assert themselves (see Nye (1988:95). *The Second Sex* was not a demand for rights so much as an exploration of the question: "Why is woman always the Other?" Much like

³³ Other writers to have adopted this dichotomous approach include Rosaldo (1974) with her "public/domestic" dichotomy and Edholm *et al.*'s (1977) "production/reproduction" dichotomy.

Lévi-Strauss, Beauvoir considered “Otherness” to be a fundamental category of human thought. She writes,

Things become clear...if, following Hegel, we find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility toward every other consciousness; the subject can be posed only in being opposed – he sets himself up as the essential as opposed to the Other, the inessential, the object.

Beauvoir (1988[1952]: xvii)

Beauvoir grounds her work in the existential description of consciousness provided by Sartre (1969) in *Being and Nothingness*. Here, Sartre claims to have started at the philosophical beginning where the important issue is not about survival, but rather it is about what it is “to be.” Like Hegel, Sartre saw the self as existing in two dimensions: the *pour-soi* (“being-for-itself”), which transcends basic survival and is the feature that makes us most fully human, and the *en-soi* (“being-in-itself”), which is the ultimately inauthentic contingent object (Donovan 1985:119). Like Hegel, Sartre saw *en-soi* as the level of “being” and *pou-soi* as the level of “nothingness”: *pour-soi* is reflective consciousness, capable of transcending the everyday level of imminence. To be *en-soi* to live inauthentically as an object with no productivity or growth. Sartre saw the *pour-soi* and the *en-soi* as being locked in a perpetual dialectic: *pour-soi* remains dependent on *en-soi* as a particularised consciousness of something; *pour-soi* remains contingent upon that which it is conscious of. However, at the same time, it is in a continual process of non-being and nothingness; in a refusal to live inauthentically as *en-soi*, or as being (Donovan 1985:120). This is a process of potential self-realisation that will never ultimately be realised (otherwise it would “be” as well), but rather it is this continual process of self-creation that allows the human being to be free.

For Beauvoir, woman, through her reproductive capacities was an *en-soi*, resigned to the domestic domain of household chores and imminence. Man, on the other hand, was not in that position and so could transcend this state of “nothingness” and strive for the more worthy goals of creativity and intellectuality. As I shall show in the discussion that follows, such an interpretation of the roles of men and women and their relationship to the domestic and public spheres of social life would be incomprehensible to Nivacle

people. The social life for the Nivacle is the realm of the “mundane.” However, far from being a level of “nothingness,” this is a state that people strive for. Rather than being separate individuals inhabiting two planes of social life, Nivacle men and women inhabit the world in a relational state, with this being the way in which social life is practiced.

Overing (1986b) has questioned the validity of Rosaldo and Lamphere’s (1974) work by asking whether the dichotomies that they had set up were, in fact, so universal. Overing describes women as having been put in something of a “Catch 22” position whereby whatever they did was interpreted as reflecting their subordinate position in society. She writes: “if women do it, it is a reflection of their subordinate place in society; if it is about women, then the message is that women are being debased” (1986b: 142). Thus, even in societies that were egalitarian, their assumption that asymmetry equalled inequality and hierarchy always prevailed in their analyses. The volume edited by MacCormack and Strathern (1980) levelled a critique on the universality of female subordination and the “domestic” versus “public” model that earlier works had generated.³⁴ It was during this period that the concept of “women” was replaced with that of “gender” and led on to subsequent works exploring anthropology’s own prejudices in greater detail.³⁵ The use of “gender” allowed the writer to discuss men and women, but without the hierarchical assumptions inherent in the term “women.”

Such an approach has been an unfortunate product of the skewed nature of our own analytical prejudices. Rapport and Overing (2000:141ff) have stressed the importance of context in the application of Western feminist approaches to non-Western setting. They write, “we have learned in the process of our mistake a good deal about Western images and evaluations of gender, its moral judgements about it, while the ethnographic evidence supports the view that this particular package of values is hardly a universal” (2000:146). They argue that in our analyses, we need to pay close attention to the “*interplay* of men and women” (2000:152, original emphasis) that will enable us to gain a closer understanding of the dynamics of gender relations. It is only through this

³⁴ Moore (1988:21) notes that despite these subsequent critiques, anthropologists still find the public/domestic dichotomy a convenient way of ordering and presenting their data.

³⁵ Eleanor Leacock (1978; 1981), for example, used ethno-historical evidence to show that female subordination was not a universal because “household management’ in pre-state egalitarian societies was itself a management of the “public” economy” (1978:255). See also Moore (1988), Sacks (1976), Strathern (1984; 1988) and Yanagisako (1979).

approach that we can begin to understand the intricacies of the economic relations of a particular people and through that its moral expressions.

Recent writings in lowland South America have adopted this multi-perspectival approach.³⁶ Overing (1986b: 139-141), for example, has shown that Amazonian people do not make a conceptual distinction between the “public” and the “private” spheres, that “the political” is not the most valued social sphere, and that difference does not necessarily entail power asymmetry. Whilst there is a strong emphasis on the creation of intimacy and trust in social relationships, this is not equivalent to our Western definition of “the domestic” as it does not form part of a binary dualism with “the public” and it does not only pertain to women. Whilst a male/female dichotomy does exist, it does not follow that it is necessarily of a hierarchical nature. Both Overing (1986b: 142) and McCallum (1989) comment that too much stress has been placed on focussing on the differences between men and women and not enough attention has gone into interpreting their shared humanity, which is how gender is understood from their perspective. These are peoples who emphasise the human agency of both men and women, with male and female agency being integral and complementary aspects of this shared humanity. The significance of gender therefore lies in the underlying human nature of both men and women in the acquisition of gendered knowledge. The relational and embodied nature of gender-specific knowledge is stressed, with gendered agency being intimately related to gender-specific productive processes. This is a situated, contextual and embodied knowledge that is acquired during childhood through listening, observing and imitating.³⁷ Gender is not pre-given. It is knowledge that is possessed by every autonomous individual and enacted in everyday life. As Rosengren has put it, “socialization is a successive process that step by step makes men out of boys and women out of girls” (1987a: 101).

³⁶ See, for example, Belaunde (1992); Ellis (1996); Gow (1989; 1991); Kidd (1999); McCallum (1989; 2001); Overing (1986b); Overing and Passes (2000); Santos Granero (1991) and Thomas (1982). There have, of course, been works that have countered this approach. For example, both Descola (2001) and Seymour-Smith (1991) have argued that the appearance of egalitarianism actually masks an underlying hierarchical relationship between lowland South American men and women. Lorrain (1994:175) has argued that amongst the Kulina, the sexual division of labour is such that men control both the conditions of female production and its products.

³⁷ See especially McCallum (2001:48ff), who writes that amongst the Cashinahua, knowledge is acquired through the “eye soul” and the “body soul” (2001:49).

The Nivacle gendered division of labour was not all that marked as most tasks could be carried out by either a man or a woman and were therefore “un-gendered.”³⁸ However, men and women had very distinct ways of carrying out these tasks that were specific to their gender. Tasks that were specifically male included clearing and burning the forest in the preparation of a garden plot, building a house, working with machinery such as tractors or bulldozers, teaching, operating the community radio, being a leader, making tools, repairing machinery, making wood carvings, being a pastor, administrative work and working in shops. While I would be tempted to include hunting in this list, I was told that some older women in the community of Nasuc went hunting. Whilst most women that I spoke to laughed at the suggestion of a woman using a rifle (one even said that such a woman would be deemed “crazy” (*côcbeiche*)), several people told me that certain older women liked to go hunting and often brought a good catch back with them. The only specifically female tasks that I could identify were gathering forest fruits, weaving and knitting.

It was therefore possible for both genders to carry out most tasks.³⁹ These tasks included: working in the garden plot (including planting, weeding and harvesting); shamanic healing; cooking; collecting water; looking for firewood; chopping up firewood; sweeping the patio; washing clothes; childcare; and wage labour. As can be seen by this and the above lists, men and women’s work crosscut both the “public” and “private” spheres of social life. Tasks such as childcare, shamanism and the slaughtering of animals were completely un-gendered. Whilst there were more male shamans than female shamans, it was never described as being specifically male work, and it was often added that female shamans were usually more powerful than their male counterparts. Nivacle men carried out a great deal of what could be termed “domestic” tasks, including fetching water and firewood. Whilst on an everyday level in the community it was the women who cooked, swept the patio and washed the clothes, when men went off to work for their Mennonite bosses it was the men who were provided with the sack of rations to prepare and cook their meal and they would also have to wash their own clothes. Similarly, many Nivacle women were involved in wage labour including working as domestic assistants for Mennonite women and working in the factories of Filadelfia.

³⁸ C.f. Lorrain (1994:155), who points out that amongst the Kulina, whilst most men can do most women’s work, women cannot do most men’s work.

³⁹ C.f. Guss (1989:27), who observes amongst the Yekuana that, “all economic activities are strictly divided along sexual lines.”

The rather simplistic early feminist contention that men engage in the “public” sphere of work whilst women are resigned to the “private” sphere of household chores is clearly inapplicable in the Nivacle context.⁴⁰ Nivacle women were not confined to the “domestic” domain as many of their tasks were shared with men. Furthermore, both men and women cooperated equally in their garden plots as well as in the forest and the domains beyond the community. As I mention above, either men or women could carry out certain tasks, but it was the way in which the task was carried out that differed. When collecting firewood, women would always carry an axe with them in order to ensure that they were able to chop the wood in to small enough pieces. The pieces would usually be between 30cm and 1 metre and the women would tie them up into a bundle and carry it using a strap that they placed over their foreheads. In contrast, men would carry much larger logs under their arms.⁴¹ In a similar vein, when fetching water, women would fill up the 20-litre plastic containers and carry them home on their heads, usually with one arm up-stretched to provide better balance. Men, on the other hand, would always bring a bicycle with them and hang the water that they had collected from the handlebars of the bicycle. However, it is interesting to note that in another community I visited, none of the women carried water on their heads and they all used bicycles. I noticed a similar phenomenon in Jotoicha, where young women used bicycles to carry water, rather than their heads. Finally, men and women had different ways of cooking. While I had no first-hand experience of watching a man cook in the household, José told me that he learned how to cook whilst working as a ranch-hand on a nearby Mennonite ranch. One afternoon we were sitting in his patio and his wife was preparing tortillas. He commented on the way that she was dividing the dough up into small balls and then kneading them with her fingers until they were pancake-shaped. He told me,

You see the way she’s making tortillas?” That’s the way she does it. Me, I learned how to cook a long time ago when I worked with the horses on Estancia Ñandú. I had to cook for me. Just one man on his own. If I wanted to eat tortillas I used this [*he walks over and picks up a rolling pin that is lying on the table in the kitchen. Teresa and their daughters start laughing when he brings it over*]. I

⁴⁰ See also Moore (1988).

⁴¹ C.f. McCallum (1989:192) comments that amongst the Cashinahua it is the men who collect firewood.

make my dough (*clim-shi* lit: white stuff) and then I roll it out with this [*the rolling pin*]. Then I get my knife (*clesa*) and I start to cut it up into pieces, a bit like this, a bit like that.

How might we interpret these differences? Western feminists have posited a variety of reasons for differences in practices that are based along gendered lines, with two of the most prominent being the works of feminist philosophers Iris Marion Young (1990) and Judith Butler (1985). In her essay entitled, “Throwing Like A Girl” (1990), Young writes about the different ways that men and women use their bodies. She discusses the ways in which men and women perform tasks and looks specifically at the difference between masculine and feminine ways of throwing a ball. She observes that while the masculine body moves fluidly and confidently, the feminine body uses limited movements and that women fail to make full use of a body’s “spatial and lateral potentialities” (1990:55). She suggests that women are unable to make full use of their body because they are trapped in an immanence where they continually self-objectify their bodily experience and so observe their movements from a third person perspective. In order to transcend this immanence, they need to experience their bodies and move through them. Butler, on the other hand, sees “femininity” as, “a mode of enacting and re-enacting received gender norms which surface in so many styles of the flesh” (1985:11). For both philosophers, masculinity and femininity are kinds of performative agency that are enacted by the body through cultural norms, manifesting themselves in gender-specific forms of appearance and movement.

Whilst I would agree that amongst the Nivacle gender is also performative and is learned over time in gender-specific ways, I do not believe that either Young or Butler manage to capture the production of gendered agency amongst the Nivacle. Regarding Young’s claim that femininity is attained through feelings of “being observed,” it seems to me that Nivacle gendered difference is not established through hierarchical notions of immanency and transcendence. Whilst gender is based on male and female difference, both are created socially and through practice. As an example, I was once at a political meeting in Filadelfia with José and a Nivacle man came on to the stage to speak. His speech and actions were highly effeminate and to me he stood out because of this, as I had never come across anyone like that before. After the meeting, we were discussing the speeches, and, commenting on the effeminate man José said, “I don’t know why he

is like that. It seems that he must spend all his time sitting talking with women instead of with men.” José did not see him as having been born like that, but rather that he had developed female agency through being with women instead of men.⁴² However, as I have shown above, not all “knowledge” is gender-specific as men and women shared many tasks. In her work on gendered difference amongst the Cashinahua, McCallum writes,

Male and female agency are clearly differentiated in this system. Whatever a person does is done in a genderized style, serving to reinforce the symbolically elaborated separation of the sexes. However there is no absolute dichotomy between male and female, since both are forms of human agency. For this reason, this (*sic*) is no total prohibition on men performing female work, and vice versa.

McCallum (1989:196)

Regarding Butler’s assertion that “femininity” is created through the enactment of gender norms, the Nivacle would probably agree with this, but to say that it surfaces in “styles of the flesh” would be highly questionable to them. Whilst it is true that only men wear trousers and only women wear skirts, it is more than simply manifestations of “style” that surface on the skin through the clothing and adornments that one chooses to wear. Masculinity and femininity are forms of gender-specific “knowledge” that are created in the *cachi* and manifest themselves through different parts of the body. However, this distinction should not be over-stressed as there is a great deal of overlap in the tasks carried out by men and women. Gendered agency is productive agency that is practiced through “work.” Gow (1991) suggests that amongst the Piro, kinship is an integral aspect of the Piro subsistence economy and that gender relations are created through marriage. As I explained in Chapter 5, this is also the case amongst the Nivacle through the daily enactment of male and female agency. I shall now go on to describe the five key productive activities of hunting, the gathering of wild fruits, honey collecting, horticulture and wage labour in more detail.

⁴² See McCallum, who notes that amongst the Cashinahua, “Men are ‘like women’ if they are seen to stay at home too much” (1989:191).

6.3. Productive Practices

Alvarsson (1988:167) explains that the Mataco conceptualise their “subsistence activities” in terms of zones. “Work,” known as *kyumlbi*, is carried out in what he calls the “cultural zones” of the village and the mountains, whilst activities known as *kyowalhan* are carried out in the forest; including hunting, gathering and honey collecting. Finally, any work connected with the river is known as *t’iwogoy*.⁴³ While it could be said that the Nivacle make similar “zonal” distinctions with activities carried out in the community and in the Mennonite Colonies being termed “*t’acum-in*” (“work”), whilst anything carried out in the forest involving wandering around “looking for” something is known as “*naash*,” I prefer not to make such a spatial distinction. The reason for this is because whilst activities appear to be divided spatially, the Nivacle in fact distinguish between different types of “work” in terms of the different kinds of “knowledge” that they require. Furthermore, I suggest that “work” is also related to other aspects of Nivacle sociality. Gow (1995) has taken a slightly different approach to Alvarsson and writes that for the Piro, land is an aspect of kinship and that kinship is created out of “human landscape agency” (1995:56). Kinship could therefore be seen to be generative of spatiality, rather than it being the other way round. The different kinds of activities that the Nivacle carry out in the forest, the community, the Mennonite ranches and their garden plots all required different kinds of “knowledge,” which is acquired relationally. As I have described in Chapter 1, people create different kinds of space through their movements in the forest, through clearing land for their gardens as well as through sweeping their patios. All of these practices are constitutive of the wider processes of Nivacle relatedness. I shall now go on to describe the productive practices of hunting, gathering wild fruits, collecting honey, horticulture, caring for domestic animals and wage labour.

⁴³ See also Rosengren (1987a: 87) who describes a similar spatial division of productive activities such that “women are bound to the house or its immediate vicinity while men have much of their activities located outside this sphere, that is, in the forest and on the river.”

6.3.1. Hunting

“Hunting” is known as *naash*.⁴⁴ This is a term that covers all activities that are practiced whilst wandering around.⁴⁵ A hunter is known as an *ôtaijanaj* and someone who has the ability to bring back a large number of animals is known as a *lhavchenaj*. As mentioned above, hunting is by-and-large a male activity that can be carried out throughout the year either individually or in groups.⁴⁶ When a man goes out hunting, he will usually say that he is “looking for” (*vôôî*) a particular animal, although he will also hope to encounter other species along the way.⁴⁷ Individual hunts would usually take place in areas close to the hunter’s community over a period of several hours. Men would usually also take the opportunity to go hunting whilst they were working on a Mennonite ranch, as the chances of catching a wider range of animals were greater. It was also not uncommon for men to hunt in neighbouring Mennonite ranches, despite the fact that it was officially privately owned land.⁴⁸ Longer hunts were usually carried out in groups, with such hunting being known as *cônshivan*.⁴⁹ The longer hunting trips would take place either over the course of a day, or could be a longer expedition lasting several days. A group of hunters or honey collectors who are absent from their community for several days would be known as “*yimô’ja’neî*” (“those who sleep”).

The animals most commonly hunted in Campo Loa were deer (*tashinsba*), iguana (*albu*), three-banded armadillo (*c’acjô*), large armadillo (*pôlbenjataj*), wild boar (*vôjô*), peccary (*jocônôjô*) and anteater (*svuclaj*). Certain species of birds were also hunted, the most common of which being rhea (*vônjôlhôj*) and pigeon (*ofô*). A popular activity during the summer months was for groups of men to cycle to the neighbouring Mennonite fields with their catapults (*tsoc*) where hundreds of pigeons would be feeding off the crops. There they would try to shoot as many as they could.⁵⁰ After these trips, most men would return home laden with pigeons. This was a food that was particularly appreciated, especially when served with rice. During my stay in Jotoicha, young men would also

⁴⁴ C.f. Descola (1994:300), who notes that the Achuar possess no term for hunting.

⁴⁵ Alvarsson writes, “Hunting may be seen as a mere extension of gathering” (1988:177).

⁴⁶ See Renshaw (2002:65) who reports a similar situation for other peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco and Rosengren (1987a: 61) on the Matsigenka.

⁴⁷ See Renshaw, who writes, “Hunters tend to set off in search of a particular kind of game” (2002:72).

⁴⁸ See Renshaw (2002:66).

⁴⁹ *Cônshi* is also the term for testicle.

⁵⁰ These were small metal catapults that were purchased from the Mennonite stores. Men would make pellets by rolling clay from the reservoir into small balls and allowing them to dry in the sun. A favoured hobby of young boys between the ages of 7 and 11 was shooting small birds with these catapults. See also Renshaw (2002:68).

capture parrots (*eclis*; *Amazona aestiva xanthopterys*) and then sell them on to the travelling salesmen for around 15,000Gs each.⁵¹ Until recently, the Nivacle hunted a much a wider range of species, but the colonisation process has meant that communities have been forced onto much smaller parcels of land and species have rapidly become depleted.⁵² Renshaw (2002:67) also attributes this depletion to an over-exploitation of certain species by Paraguayans and indigenous people including the jaguar, the puma, the fox and the iguana.

On a day that a man decided to go hunting, he would usually leave his house just before sunrise. Sometimes men would go hunting on their bicycles, whilst other times they would walk. They would usually take their .22 calibre rifle or shotgun as well as a machete. Spears and clubs would also be used to capture smaller animals such as armadillos and iguanas, which some men would bring along as well. Most men would also take animal skins for transporting honey. Dogs (*nuus*) were a treasured part of a man's hunting equipment. Despite the high number of dogs that roamed around the community, very few were considered to be good hunting dogs. These dogs would accompany the hunter, sounding the alarm if they sensed an animal nearby.

I was told that several years ago, men would trap wild animals such as the spotted cat (*Felix tigrina*) and sell their skins to the Paraguayans. However, this was no longer practiced in Jotoicha, probably because of Paraguayan governmental legislation on the trading of endangered species and a decreasing demand for such products.

6.3.2. Gathering Wild Fruits and Collecting Honey

Like hunting, the gathering of forest fruits and honey are also known as *naash*, a term that also refers to the action of picking something up whilst walking. Like hunting, people would say that they were “looking for” (*vóóti*) a particular fruit, plant or type of honey.⁵³ Whilst both men and women gathered wild fruits,⁵⁴ women practiced it more than men. Collecting wild honey was a solely male activity. Someone who was a

⁵¹ Approximately £1.50. See also Alvarsson (1988:179) who reports a similar trading of parrots amongst the Mataco.

⁵² See also Alvarsson (1988:177).

⁵³ Descola (1994:300) notes a similar lack of term for “gathering” amongst the Achuar.

⁵⁴ See also Rosengren (1987a: 71).

“knowledgeable” gatherer was known as a *lhavchenaj* (M)/*lhavchenja* (F) as they always managed to bring something back. I shall begin by describing the gathering of wild fruits before going on to discuss honey collecting.

The activity of gathering wild fruits is known as *t’acjôn-ch’e*. Like hunting, I was told that the range of fruit, plants, roots and tubers that the Nivacle “looked for” had diminished significantly since the arrival of the Mennonites and the subsequent creation of indigenous agricultural settlements. During my fieldwork, it was only the fruits that people enjoyed most and that were most available that were particularly sought after.⁵⁵ Most fruits ripened during the season known as *yincôôp* (between October and December), with the most popular fruits being *faai* (*Prosopis alba*; November to January),⁵⁶ *ajôyej* (*Zizyphus mistol*; November to January); and *cumôclu* (*Geoffroea decorticans*; October to November).⁵⁷ Most fruits were consumed raw. *Faai* was sometimes ground down to flour and used to make bread (although this occurred very rarely), and the pulp was often soaked in water and the remaining flour was sucked out. This was known as *faai lha-môôc*.⁵⁸ Most households had *faai* trees in their patios as they provided good shade, and many also had lemon and grapefruit trees. Women would use a long pole with a metal hook on the end to shake the trees so that the fruits would fall to the ground.⁵⁹ Such women were said to be *navan faai t’juya* (“those who shake the *algarrobo* trees”). The most common fruits and plants to be gathered from the forest were the three fruits named above, plus: *vaitsej* (*Prosopis nigra*; November and December); *pactsej* (*Morrenia adorata*; available all year round); *ap’etssej* (fruit of the cactus); *nap’uc* (used as a salt condiment; available all year round); *ônjayej* (*Capparis retusa*; November to February); *sôt’ô* (*Opuntia elata*; November to January); and *avayicla* (*Opuntia brasiliensis*; available all year round). Certain species of chillies were also very popular as condiments, including *c’uvaitsi* and *oyinche* (December and January). As soon as the chillies came into season, women would immediately go out to “look for” as many as they could find, with supplies very rapidly becoming depleted.

⁵⁵ See also Alvarsson (1988:168).

⁵⁶ I was told that this had previously been used to make stews.

⁵⁷ In pre-colonial times the harvesting of *faai* was a time of great feasting. See also Métraux (1946:246).

⁵⁸ As Alvarsson (1988:171) notes, the practice of preserving wild fruits has declined with increasing access to store-bought foods including rice, flour and pasta.

⁵⁹ See Nordenskiöld (1919:33) and Métraux (1946:248), both of whom have noted the use of this implement amongst the Nivacle and Choroti.

Gathering was always a communal task for women. When a particular fruit was in season, small groups of anything between three and eight women would go out “looking for” that particular fruit. Alvarsson (1988:170) mentions that these women were usually from the same “house cluster.” It was usually women who considered themselves to be “close” who would go out gathering fruit together, whether they be kin⁶⁰ or affines.⁶¹ Women preferred to leave for such trips in the morning and they would usually be gone for several hours, although rarely any longer than half a day. They would usually gather some firewood and fruits from a variety of locations on their journey and plan to follow a specific route to parts of the forest where they knew certain species could be found. The only tool that they would bring with them was an axe for chopping firewood. Prior to the arrival of the Mennonites, wild fruits seem to have constituted a significant part of the Nivacle diet.⁶² However, an increasing reliance on wage labour and manufactured foods coupled with increasing pressure on resources has meant that forest fruits are nowadays no more than a supplement to the Nivacle diet.

The collection of honey is known as *vaju*, or “looking for honey” (*vooi pa shinvo*). It was a solely male activity, with men looking for honey either alone or in small groups.⁶³ Like hunting, if a man decided to go looking for honey for several days, then he would be said to be “*hamoôj*” (“sleeping over”). However, in reality, a man would usually try to combine hunting with honey collecting. A man who felt like looking for honey would say “*tsi-vajujatsi*” (“It makes me want to look for honey”). The general term for honey is *acôyech* or *shinvo*, which is also used to refer to a swarm of bees or wasps. There were a wide variety of honey-making insects in the Chaco, whose honey the Nivacle collected and consumed. The most common kinds of bee in Jotoicha were the *shnacuwaj* (*Trigona bipunctata*), the *voiti* and the *tsimaja*. Whilst the former two are wild bees, the latter is a domestic bee that was introduced to the Chaco during the arrival of the Mennonites. I was told that this breed had left the Mennonite’s hives and subsequently introduced themselves into the surrounding forest. These bees began building their hives in the hollows of tree trunks and are now extremely common all over the Central Chaco. An older man explained, “Sometimes the *tsimajas* don’t want to eat at home [in the houses of the Mennonites]. So they look for a big tree and then they stay there. They are the same

⁶⁰ That is, mother and daughter or sisters.

⁶¹ That is, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. See below for more details of this relationship.

⁶² See also Alvarsson (1988:167).

⁶³ See Renshaw (2002:74).

as sheep and goats; they have lots and lots of sons (offspring). My boss had 6 boxes of them at his ranch, now he only has 2. They just don't want to stay at home any more."⁶⁴ Whilst Kidd (1999:132-3) and Leake (1999:164ff) both report the production of honey from beehives amongst the Enxet and Angaite respectively, such development projects had not yet been introduced to Campo Loa during my fieldwork.

The method used to collect the honey depended on the type of hive, but men would usually bring an axe and a bag made from rabbit skin (*clisa*) to carry the honey in. Hives that were suspended from trees were usually knocked down by throwing a short stick at them (a technique especially favoured by children) or by using a hook; and those that were built into a tree trunk were hacked out with an axe. Those that were underground were blocked off and then dug out. The key period for honey collecting was between November and March, although some honey could also be gathered in October, April and May. Men who were hunting often consumed honey to keep their energy levels up. Honey was a highly prized delicacy, such that a most desirable state to be in was "*yamqu'e pa lb-sup'atej*" meaning, "to be full of honey," and having it all over one's face, hands and clothes.⁶⁵

6.3.3. Horticulture

A key aspect of the settlement project in Campo Loa was the allocation of a garden plot for each household so that residents could engage in subsistence horticulture. The aim was to provide the Nivacle with a subsistence base on their own land so that they would be less dependent on wage labour. As I described in Chapter 4, the Mennonites associated agriculture with *Sesshaftmachung* ("causing [the Indians] to settle") (Klassen 2002:173). Introducing the indigenous people to agriculture was part of the wider aims of their missionisation goals, although the missionisation aspect of their work has become less explicit as the years have progressed. It seems clear from the literature, however, that the Nivacle were involved in agricultural practices prior to the Mennonite

⁶⁴ Leake (1999:167) mentions that amongst the Angaite, certain species of bee were in decline as a result of competition from a species known as *Apis mellifica*, which he says "is not an autochthonous species of the Chaco." Alvarsson (1988:176) has also noted the presence of this species in the Bolivian Chaco, stating that it is "the European honey bee...that has been introduced to South America." This has also been noted by Renshaw (2002:75). This appears to be what the Nivacle called *tsimaja*.

⁶⁵ See Seelwische (1990:167).

settlement programmes, as this statement from Belaieff⁶⁶ suggests: “Today the majority of the Indians are fully aware of the necessity of readjusting their lives. Some of the *Lengua*, *Angaité*, and *Ashluslay* [Nivacle] are already accustomed to farming, which they learned long ago in the missions” (1946:272). The Mennonites would also refer to indigenous settlements as “Indigenous Agricultural Colonies” (*Colonias Agrícolas Indígenas*) and to indigenous people as *Campesinos Indígenas* (“Indigenous peasant farmers”) (ASCIM 1993:7) as a way of associating them with their new way of life.⁶⁷ The use of these terms also reflects the more general aims of the Paraguayan government, which was to encourage the indigenous peoples to emulate the success of the Mennonites in their agricultural successes in the Chaco. This was embraced by General Belaieff over half a century ago when he wrote: “Every Indian cowboy knows perfectly the methods used on the ranches and tries out on a small scale every new development in planting and working. The tribes are eager to participate in the progress of the country.” (Belaieff 1944:374).

The Mennonite development board aimed to allocate 3-5 hectares of farming land per household (called a *chacra* or a *parcela*), as well as a fraction of the 30-90 hectares of forest that had been assigned for stock rearing. It was anticipated that different communities would organise their agricultural work in different ways, whether that be on an individual or community basis. The aim was that whilst certain foodstuffs such as sweet potato, pumpkin, watermelon, manioc and beans would be for household consumption, commercial products such as cotton (*vôcjôcli*), sesame seeds (*sesamo*), spurge (*yantacu*), beans (*quecleiche*) and peanuts (*smitcai*) could be sold as cash crops to the colony Cooperative.

The Nivacle do not have a single term to describe horticulture, and instead have separate terms to describe the different parts of the process.⁶⁸ Ploughing is *tclajan*,⁶⁹ sowing is *côjijyan*,⁷⁰ *j-u'qu-e* or *vancan*,⁷¹ weeding is *tclajan*, *tclôtsjan* or *clôôs*, and harvesting is *vôôi* “looking for” a certain crop in their garden. All agricultural activities are considered

⁶⁶ Russian General Juan Belaieff facilitated the resettlement of the Mak'a people on the west bank of the Paraguay River following the assistance that he had received from them during the Chaco War (1932-35).

⁶⁷ See, for example, ASCIM (1993), Stahl (1974).

⁶⁸ See Kidd (1999:130), who notes a similar form of expressing agriculture amongst the neighbouring Enxet.

⁶⁹ The verb *tclajaa* means “to recline” or “to steady oneself.”

⁷⁰ A plant is known as a *côjijanach*.

⁷¹ *Vancan* also means, “to put,” “to place,” “to mount,” or “to allow to take a seat.”

“work” (*l’acum-in*). Like the Matsigenka (Rosengren 1987a: 55), there were no people who were considered to be agricultural specialists. Both men and women were considered equally capable of carrying out all garden tasks, except for the initial ploughing of the plot, which I describe below. Most of the households in Jotoicha had their own plot located to the rear of their houses of approximately 2 hectares (see Map 4.3.). However, no one used the whole area for cultivation. The average area that was used for the cultivation of crops for household consumption was between 0.3 hectares and one hectare.⁷² If there were any projects operating where people would be paid for growing cash crops then they would usually allocate a proportion of their garden to this. A strong factor determining the size of a household’s garden plot was the availability of one of the tractors from the neighbouring Mennonite village of Ribera. The boss of one of the men in the community would lend them his tractor for a day or several days and the Nivacle would spend the whole day ploughing the plots of every household in Jotoicha according to the size the owner wanted it to be for that year. This would take place following the first significant rainfall between September and October.

Once the plots had been ploughed, people would begin sowing the crops that they wanted to harvest. Gardens were prepared using a plough, so crops would usually be planted in neat rows or drills. Each drill usually contained a variety of different plants and people would usually devote certain areas of their garden to certain crops.⁷³ The most popular crops that Jotoicha people planted were beans (*quecleiche*), pumpkin (*c’asus*), sweet potato (*pejaya*), watermelon (*soniyô*) and manioc (*nucsich*). People would rotate the positioning of certain crops every year and leave certain areas fallow every two of three years. Most households also attempted to grow lettuce, onions, tomatoes and parsley that PRODECHACO introduced as part of its “family allotment” (*huerta familiar*) scheme. Unfortunately, none of the households that I visited had any success in growing these plants, mainly due to problems with the heat, lack of rain and the pests.

Providing there was no drought and the rains fell early enough, garden produce was consumed between January and April, with the watermelons usually being the first to ripen in January. Manioc took slightly longer to ripen, and was usually planted earlier after the first rains in September and then harvested in April or May. After each

⁷² C.f. Alvarsson (1988:192).

⁷³ See Leake, who describes the gardens of the Angaité as being “a patchwork of different crops” (1999:146).

successive rainfall, people would continue to replant crops over a two or three-month period until January or the last major rainfall. People would usually replant the stems of sweet potato that they had harvested in April in order to provide them with a supply for part of the winter months (*cloop*). A serious hindrance to a household's yield was the presence of ants (*tucus*), who could demolish crops overnight, shredding the leaves and taking them underground. One man said to me jokingly that the ants had been really busy the previous night, "It seems that they must be making lots of *tereré* down there!"⁷⁴ He then went on to explain that the Mennonite technician never gave them enough poison to kill the ants, and that which he did give him never worked. Whilst "productivity" *per se* was never the goal, people were always keen to ensure that they had as plentiful supply as possible because, like meat, vegetables were also generative of sociality during daily meals and whilst visiting.

The main tool that was used in Nivacle horticulture was the hoe, which was known as a *joquitaj* ("like a stick"). Once an area had been ploughed, people would only dig in the immediate area surrounding the plants and not beyond it as this reduced the soil's exposure to the strong winds and intense heat of the Chaco. People liked to ensure that their plots were tidy and well maintained and would weed their gardens regularly. This practice has also been described by both Overing (1989b) and Heckler (2004) amongst the Piaroa, and reflects wider Nivacle ideas concerning the relationship between cleanliness and high morale. A husband and wife would usually cooperate when planting crops in their garden plot and there was no gendered division as to which crops men and women could plant; both genders could plant all crops.⁷⁵ One husband and wife that I accompanied were planting 12 rows of beans with seeds that they had been given by the Mennonite technician from Ribera. Both carried out a separate task. Whilst the husband went on ahead with his hoe digging (*yi-tish-c'oya* "to dig out in front of oneself") small holes, his wife followed behind with the seeds in a small bag that she tied in front of her. She threw (*yi-yuc'e*) three seeds into every hole and used the side of her bare foot to cover the seeds with soil (*yi-po'e*). They continued doing this all the way up and down their plot. People would work either individually, in pairs or collectively on their plot depending on their circumstances at the time, but it was never necessary for any more

⁷⁴ *Tereré* is a cold drink that is made from green shredded leaves known as *yerba*.

⁷⁵ C.f. Rosengren (1987a: 57-8) who reports that amongst the Matsigenka, men planted certain types of crops, whilst women planted others.

than one person to be carrying out a particular task.⁷⁶ The only exception was sesame, which usually required several people to work together in order to stack the branches up in a pyramid to dry out in the sun. In Jotoicha, members of the same household usually carried out this kind of collective work together. In Comunidad Nivacle Unida where larger gardens were generally grown, men would organise collective work parties to “help” (*chi-yefen-esh*) or “accompany” (*tavoqu'e*) each other with the harvesting of their sesame seeds. Those who helped were called *cavos* (“friends”) and they would be paid a proportion of the total earnings from the harvest. Like the Matsigenka (Rosengren 1987a: 57), cooperation in gardening was also based both on ties of kinship and ties of friendship.

In Comunidad Nivacle Unida any cash crops that households produced were marketed centrally through the Nivacle cooperative, which was based in the centre of the colony. The cash crop system operated on a system of credit where all cooperative members were given an initial payment at the beginning of the year based on a percentage of their aspired production for the year. From this initial payment, 5% was deducted for the hospital payments (*Ayuda Mutua Hospitalaria*) and 2% for the administration team. Following the harvest, members were given a final payment that was paid in two halves. The first was paid in June and the final one in August or September. Between these two dates, people could hire machinery from the cooperative in order to carry out the various tasks that were required to grow the crops. On top of this rental fee, an additional 10% interest was added to pay the Indigenous Foundation for Agricultural Development (FIDA), a Mennonite-run organisation who marketed the crops, and a 2% interest was paid to the administration.⁷⁷ During the harvest in May 2003, I was shown the accounts of some of the cooperative members and noted that the total most individuals received for the year’s harvest of sesame seeds, cotton and spurge after deductions was approximately 100,000Gs (£10). The totals ranged from 70,000Gs (£7) to 350,000Gs (£35). The average weekly wage at the time was 40,000Gs (see below).

⁷⁶ See Gow (1991:103-4), who explains that whilst preparing a plot is a communal effort, harvesting from one’s own garden is the responsibility of the husband-wife partnership. In contrast, he notes that the harvesting of commercial bean gardens is carried out collectively due to the fact that it ripens all at once.

⁷⁷ The final 2% interest for the Nivacle administration was a source of great contention within the community, with many people accusing the Administrator of being “corrupt” and “stealing” the money. The Administrator, on the other hand, complained to me that even although his television and his stereo were broken, he could not be seen to be going out buying new ones, as he would be “criticised” (*ja-yinchaija'y-esh*) by the community.

The cooperative was run by a Nivacle administrative team that people referred to as “*chi-ve’lba sham*” (“they’re together”). They were responsible for organising (*clovalh c’oya* “observing in the future”) the functioning of the cooperative. The team were paid through the 2% interest that people paid on any credit they received as well as the 2% deductions that were made on their final payments. The Nivacle Cooperative (known as *la Cooperativa Nivacle* or *la Cooperativa Chulupí*) was set up when the indigenous colony of Yalve Sanga was first established in 1964. It was initially set up in conjunction with the Enxet Cooperative. This “joint venture” was short-lived, however, with the Nivacle apportioning the blame to the Enxet and accusing them of theft and a general lack of organizational skills and professionalism. Both the Nivacle and the Enxet established their own cooperatives soon after.

The present-day Nivacle cooperative store is very different to that of the Enxet (which the Nivacle referred to as the *Cooperativa Lengua*). Whilst the Enxet cooperative was fully stocked with many kinds of grocery products, clothing, bicycles, and household goods, the Nivacle cooperative appeared to be almost empty. It had a basic supply of meat of the Class II grade known as *puchero*, rice, Paraguayan tea and sugar that were all sold by the kilo, a few tins of tomato sauce, the less-preferred hard bread, as well as a few items of clothing and household hardware. The Nivacle often commented on these differences and would often shop in the Enxet store for luxury items whenever they could afford it. However, the Nivacle insisted that their cooperative was better because they ran it themselves. One man explained:

But theirs has a Mennonite there! That’s why there’s a profit! That Mennonite who stands at the till by the door, he makes sure that the money stays there. You see, the Enxet don’t know either, just like us Nivacle. The Nivacle storekeeper always gives everything away, that’s why there’s nothing in our cooperative. In the Enxet store, if someone asks for half a kilo of cheese, then the Enxet gives them just half a kilo of cheese. But in the Nivacle store it’s always “more or less” (*más o menos*). If it’s kin or a friend, even worse! They will get more – a huge piece! No measurements, nothing. That storekeeper that we have, Chávez, he needs to learn maths so that he can be more exact. We never

make any profit because the storekeeper thinks that we should sell the products for the same price as we bought them from the wholesalers. Just ridiculous!

The Mennonites who worked with the cooperatives were generally perceived of as being influential figures who had a great deal of “knowledge.” In Comunidad Nivacle Unida, I was told that their Mennonite technician was someone that the community respected because of the “new knowledge” that he was providing for the community.⁷⁸ People saw him as both an employee of the community and a helper (*y-efen-esb*). He was not someone who gave orders (*vancaachenach*) or made false promises (*yifacl pa vanqu'efenesh-jayu*) like the corrupt politicians (*napi cu'ts'ajis* “the thieves”). His job was to help the leader and the community (*tos'etajuyesh ja lbcaanvacle chi ja yitsaat*), showing them the correct seeds to plant and generally how to do things properly.

The people of Jotoicha did not have a cooperative,⁷⁹ and so any decision to grow cash crops were based on offers that they received from external organisations such as the local government. People were always keen to try out new cash crop projects whenever one was offered to them, despite the fact that profits were consistently low or non-existent. During my two-year residence in the community, the local government presented the community with a sesame-seed project for two years in succession. The government representative told them that they had managed to secure sales in Japan and that they were guaranteed a good price. Most of the households in Jotoicha obtained the necessary credit to plant the crop, despite their bitter experiences of the past where prices would suddenly drop or their crops would fail. People seemed to be particularly struck by the fact that it was the Japanese who were going to be buying their sesame seeds. After the harvest, the quality of the sesame seeds was poor because of heavy rains

⁷⁸ *Tanch'anjayesh pava nich'in tó'yesh.*

⁷⁹ This was how it stood during my fieldwork, although they were in the process of negotiating the possibility of setting up an ASCIM-run cooperative in Campo Loa. I was told that the main reason they wanted a cooperative was so that they could stop spending all their money outside the community in the expensive Mennonite-run stores with their highly marked-up prices. During a small survey that I carried out in the Mennonite colonies I discovered a wide variation in prices. The most expensive food staples were sold in the more remote communities including the indigenous colonies, where the Mennonite cooperative stores would sell their products for approximately 10-20% higher prices than in their own central store in Filadelfia. The only alternatives that indigenous people had to the Mennonite stores were the Paraguayan travelling salesmen, but their prices were even higher. The cheapest places to buy food were the Paraguayan and Brazilian-owned stores in Filadelfia. However, these stores were relatively inaccessible to the majority of Campo Loa residents, with most people purchasing their weekly provisions at the Mennonite cooperative in Ribera.

that most households struggled to break even or make a profit. Another factor was that the local government representative had given them false prices before they planted the crop, which he drastically reduced once the crop was being harvested. He told the community that this was due to the falling value of sesame seeds on the international market, which was out of his control. Despite this bad experience, most people decided to participate in the project again the following year. Another commercial activity was the selling of surpluses of their subsistence crops such as watermelon, sweet potatoes and beans to the Mennonite cooperative in Filadelfia or to the traveling salesmen (known as *macateros*) at a considerably reduced price.

6.3.4. Wage Labour

Belaieff (1946:371) mentions that the Nivacle had been working as employees in Mennonite and Paraguayan ranches during the mid-1940s, and it is clear from the literature that they had been working in ranches since the very early stages of the Mennonite colonization of the Central Chaco in the early 1930s. It is also clear that they had been engaged in wage labour in the Argentine sugar cane mills since the early 1900s when they migrated there from the Paraguayan side of the Pilcomayo River during the summer months. During my fieldwork I was repeatedly told how important the Nivacle input in the creation of the Mennonite colonies had been and just how much the Mennonites had depended on their knowledge and labour in their early days there. Whilst it is always hazardous to compare different regions, according to Iñigo Carrera (1982) it seems that the indigenous labour component in the Gran Chaco was far greater than in other regions. He writes,

Comparatively speaking, the hunter/gatherer groups of Northern Argentina were recognized to be of relatively greater overall importance as a potentially stable supply of labour during the consolidation of capital's advance than were lowland Indian groups living in tropical zones elsewhere.

Iñigo Carrera (1982:3)

Nowadays, the severe lack of land in the indigenous agricultural settlements means that no Nivacle household could exist purely on “subsistence activities.” In fact, Kidd argues that “it would seem inappropriate to refer to the colonies as indigenous *settlements*” (1999:125, original emphasis), preferring instead to call them “work camps” that provide “cheap labour for ranching and farming establishments in the area” (Ibid.) This is because when the Mennonites have no work for people then they are able to leave them in their colonies and then when they need them for work they are available to work for them at a moment’s notice.

The main motivation behind engaging in wage labour was not to earn a great surplus of cash.⁸⁰ Typical goods that were purchased were manufactured necessities such as rice, pasta, sugar, *yerba*, bread, biscuits and stewing beef and bones. If there was enough money left over then people would also buy clothing (normally second-hand), cheap toys or jewelry, or alcohol and cigarettes. I shall now explain the two main types of wage labour that the Nivacle engage in, which I have termed short-term and long-term employment.

6.3.4.1. Short-Term Employment

The majority of the Nivacle men who inhabit the Central Chaco were employed for at least part of the year in short-term wage labour, which they called *cumjayash*. It can also be referred to by the Spanish term *changas*, although the Nivacle did not use this term with any great frequency in everyday conversation.⁸¹ One of my informants described *cumjayash* to me as when, “We work for a short period of time (*tóclaeishi pa lhcumjayesh*) for the Mennonites in Ribera, Corrales and Colonia 8. We work for our *c’utsfas* (Mennonite bosses).⁸² Whatever task our *c’utsfa* needs us Nivacle to do – clear the weeds from their fields, helping to harvest the peanuts and cotton, help to dig a *tajamar*, we do it. We “help” him (*sht-efen-esb*).”

⁸⁰ See also Kidd who writes: “We should not lose sight of the fact that (the Enxet) do not seek a maximization of economic returns and that autonomy of choice and a striving for a particular type of contentedness must be considered when trying to understand Enxet productive practices within the market economy” (Kidd 1999:122)

⁸¹ See Renshaw (2002:142).

⁸² See Chapter 3.

Between November and May, Mennonite and Paraguayan farmers employed the Nivacle to weed and harvest their fields of cotton, peanut and spurge. During the winter months they were often required to assist with forest clearance. While the men, women and children would often carry out the former together, only men carried out the latter. If a Mennonite required workers that day, he would usually drive along the central road of the community to alert people that he had arrived and that he was looking for workers (*personales*).⁸³ He would then double back along the path and pick up those who were interested in working for him that week. An individual's decision to work would usually be based on several factors including the productivity of their own garden during that period, whether they had the offer of better employment elsewhere, or whether they felt like working that week. During periods when *changas* were available, whole families would often leave the colony for weeks at a time. Whilst some were able to return to their community on a daily basis, others remained at their place of work for the whole week, only returning home at weekends. The payment received for *changas* varied, but was usually around 30,000Gs per week (£3). This would usually provide a better return for people than selling cash crops and was why it was such a significant part of their productive activities.

6.3.4.2. Long-Term Employment

As described in Chapter 3, almost every Nivacle man in the Central Chaco had a Mennonite boss (*c'utsfa*), and every boss employed several Nivacle men as his employees (*personales*). Men would work in groups for one boss, with co-workers referring to each other *cavos* or “companions”.⁸⁴ Most of the tasks that were carried out were similar to those described above for short-term employment, including ploughing fields, weeding, harvesting, building man-made reservoirs and looking after livestock. Those whose boss lived within cycling distance of the community (up to 40km away) would normally leave their homes at sunrise on Monday morning when the Mennonite working week began, and would not return home again until Friday evening or Saturday morning when the Mennonite working week ended. Some bosses would drive to the community to collect their workers in their pick-up trucks, but this was usually only in the case of those who

⁸³ See also Gow (1991:105), who notes a similar recruitment system amongst the Piro.

⁸⁴ Seelwische notes (1990:52), and people's comments confirmed this, that this was a new term employed by the younger generation.

worked further away and who had built up a trusting relationship with their boss over a period of time.⁸⁵ The Nivacle of Jotoicha began their relationship with the Mennonites of Rivera and Corrales in the early 1980s when both communities were first being established. This relationship has lasted over 20 years and I often heard people from the other communities in Campo Loa complain that those of Jotoicha were the only ones who had “*trabajo seguro*” (“secure work”) as they were the only ones whose bosses resided in Rivera and Corrales. The rest were forced to look further afield for employment, mainly in the Mennonite cities of Filadelfia and Loma Plata. Indeed, the community of San Pio X was practically abandoned for most of the year because most of the residents worked in a brick-making factory near Loma Plata for most of the year.

For most of the year, José worked for his Mennonite boss in Corrales. He worked there with five other men from Jotoicha, including his 15-year old son Bernardo. He would often tell me how Bernardo “needed to learn how to work.” This not only involved developing his “knowledge” (*tó’y-esh*) of the skills of the tasks of paid employment, but it was also a “knowledge” of how to relate to the Mennonites (*napi Samtô*), how to hunt, how to cook and how to live alone. Following a week of work, José would eagerly tell me how much his son was learning. His wife Teresa had also been employed in wage labour for a large part of her life. When José worked in the ranches, she was employed as a domestic assistant and where she told me she had learned to cook Mennonite food as well as how to wash and iron clothes. In comparison with many of the Anglican missionaries who employed Enxet women to look after their children (Kidd 1999), this practice was very uncommon in the Mennonite Colonies.

Another type of wage labour that was less common was employment by the Paraguayan Government as a schoolteacher (*maestro*) or health worker (*promoter de salud*). In Jotoicha there were two schoolteachers. One had taught there for over 25 years and was responsible for teaching the younger children between the ages of 5 and 9, and the other had only been teaching for the past 5 years and was responsible for the older children between the ages of 10 and 14. Both teachers were residents of Jotoicha and earned approximately ₡80 per month. They would both travel to the town of Mariscal Estigarribia each month to collect their pay. There were also two health workers in Jotoicha who also worked for the Government and who received a similar salary.

⁸⁵ See Chapter 3.

6.3.5. Domestic Animals

The term Nivacle use for “domestic animal” is *yi-cló*, which Seelwische (1990:81) translates as “my property” or “my specialty.” The fact that it can also be used to refer to a game or sporting activity that one is particularly adept at such as football and volleyball, makes it tempting for me to suggest that “my skill” might also be a suitable translation, as all of the above are things or capacities that have been “grown and developed by me.” Nivacle households typically had dogs, cats, hens, and goats, whilst sheep were kept in a separate pen near the central patio of the community. Some people also keep parrots, ducks, monkeys, donkeys or horses. As I describe in the following chapter, the Nivacle did not have a conception of communal ownership. All animals were individually owned and people would refer to an animal with reference to the person who “owned” or “cared” for it. For example, “María’s donkey” would be “*María lb-cló*” (“María’s skill”). Domestic animals were said to “lack the knowledge” of the *yaquistes* or the “wild animals” of the forest. People would say that domestic animals “do not have knowledge” (*nin-tó’yi*) because they were tame, whilst “wild animals” were said to “have knowledge” (*yi-tó’yi*) because they were aggressive. In contrast, humans who “have knowledge” were said to be generous and attentive, whilst those “without knowledge” would anger easily and behave in selfish ways. Thus, when referring to their sheep, people would often say, “*Nin-tó’yi yi-tashinshtaj*” (“My sheep is so tame” or literally, “My sheep is without knowledge”). Their temperament was said to relate to the care that was bestowed upon them by their owners, which, in turn, was a reflection of their own “knowledge” and skill.

It was usually women who cared for the domestic animals, although men could also carry out this work if they were required to do so. Indeed, men who worked for the Mennonites in their ranches often “cared” (*clóvalb*) for their boss’s goats, horses and sheep. Raising animals was also described as “work.” Men would usually build a pen for the household hens (*vótó’jôjis*) made from wood that they had gathered in the forest and chicken wire that they acquired from their Mennonite bosses. If no wire were available then people would build roosts in the hedges that surrounded their patios. Women would provide water for the hens on a daily basis and feed them dry rice, which they

would scatter on the ground. Normally the hens would run freely around the patio throughout the day, attempting to steal any food and crumbs that happened to fall on the ground. It was usually the women's task to disperse the hens during mealtimes. This was often done with a stick or sweeping brush with the accompanying sound of “*sbbbb*” or “*cacbbb*”. The women would also provide water for the sheep by carrying it to the pen as well as sack-loads of grass and weeds that they had cleared from their garden plots.

The quantity of domestic animals that a household owned at any one time depended on a number of factors including the availability of game animals, whether they had money to purchase meat at the Mennonite stores, or whether the leader had a good relationship with the development organizations that were running projects. In Jotoicha, most households had several chickens and some also owned ducks. “The community” was also given 42 sheep through a PRODECHACO project in November 2002, although as the Nivacle have no conception of communal ownership and all domestic animals are individually owned, an individual from each household assigned themselves responsibility for a particular sheep.⁸⁶

It was usually the women who slaughtered the smaller domestic animals such as chickens or ducks, whilst the men were responsible for slaughtering the larger animals including goats and sheep. Domestic animals were not consumed on a daily basis. They were usually only slaughtered when the wife had “a hunger for meat” *tsi-nôjpon* (Lit: “It makes me want to eat meat/fish”). This was usually during the week when there was a shortage of game animals or when there was not enough money to purchase meat from the Mennonite stores or the traveling salesmen.

6.4. Living with Grandma (or Working alongside your Mother-in-Law)

The concepts of “work” and “morality” have often been connected to the maintenance of the body in Western society. The nature of this relationship seems to have transformed over the course of time from a “social” form of bodily maintenance to a more “individual” one. Turner (1984) has written on the adoption of ascetic regimes in religious communities, such as monasteries. Here bodily control is emphasised, with the

⁸⁶ “Ownership” is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

body being subordinated to “higher” spiritual ends. The dominant ethos of Christianity has been that human bodily desires should be repressed,⁸⁷ with Jesuits, for example, being taught on entering the order to accept Ignatius Loyola’s maxim *Perinde ac cadaver* (“Henceforth as a corpse”) (Benthall 1976:69). The Christian tradition glorified an aesthetics of the soul, not the body. In contrast, the commodification of the body in late capitalist, consumerist culture has engendered an interest in the body’s cultivation through work and discipline. Social success in the modern West is contingent upon the careful construction of a particular image, the cultivation of what Turner has called, “successful bodies, which have been trained, disciplined and orchestrated to enhance our personal value” (1984:111). Drawing on the work of Foucault, Turner argues that “the emergence of the detailed, disciplined control of the self in a matrix of cultural settings” has spawned the development of the ethic of “a sober, disciplined and rational life style in capitalism” (1982:256-7). Becker adds to this by observing that, “the cultural validation of this ethic of intensive work on the body as the primary expression of the self has transmogrified the goal of work on the body from the end product of health or aesthetic to the display of its cultivation” (1995:37). To work hard on one’s body through disciplined effort is therefore considered a moral achievement. Foucault writes that “one of the big problems of this “cultivation of the self” is to determine the proportion of one’s day or one’s life that should be devoted to it...the time is not empty; it is filled with exercises, practical tasks, various activities. Taking care of oneself is not a rest cure...There is the care of the body to consider...the carefully measured satisfaction of needs” (1988:50). As a remark on Western society, Josef Peiper remarks that people mistrust rewards that come with too little effort: “[Man] can only enjoy, with a good conscience, what he has acquired with toil and trouble” (1952:32).

Within the lowland South American literature, a series of recent writings have shown that this “Western” conceptualisation of the moral value of “work” and measured discipline does not fit with how indigenous people understand and express it.⁸⁸ Overing (1993:3-4) has shown that amongst the Piaroa, productive power is based upon the creative forces for a material existence (*ta’kwanya*) combined with culturally specific capabilities for social action (*ta’kwakomenae*). It is an individual form of power that might also be regarded as an individual capacity or “knowledge.” The Piaroa linguistically and

⁸⁷ See also Weber (1970) on the Protestant work ethic.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Heckler (2004), Kidd (1999), Overing (1989b; 1993; 2003) and Passes (1998; 2000). See also Pierre Clastres, who describes “primitive societies” as “work-rejecting societies” (1977:167).

conceptually link “beauty” (*a’kwakwa*), “thoughts” (*ta’kwarü*) and the “products of one’s work” (*a’kwa*), with the expression one most often hears being “*cha’kwakomenae!*” (“What I do is my business, and not yours – nor anyone else’s!”) (Overing 1993:7&13). As Overing explains *vis-à-vis* the Cubco, “No Cubeo could be coerced to work, and while headmen could direct certain collective work by men, no-one had jurisdiction over the work of women. Nor could one demand the products of one’s work: each crop belonged to the one responsible for its growth” (Overing 1989b: 162). The application of one’s power or “knowledge” is therefore also an aesthetic endeavour that ideally manifests itself in “beauty.” This is not, however, an autonomous self akin to Foucault’s description of “modern man” who is a self who “cultivates” himself towards beauty through self-discipline, hard work and sobriety.⁸⁹ Instead, the forces that drive a person to produce are conceptualised by lowland South American peoples as being an individual “social capacity” (Overing 2003:1) that enables the creation of productive forms of sociality through “knowledgeable” practices. As Rosengren has put it, “Instead of rules and sanctions that structure and organise social behaviour, the ideal of individual freedom to act and behave according to one’s own liking is prominent in the Matsigenka’s view of social conduct.” (2000:232).

Overing (2003:1) writes that the Amazonian “collectivity” only manifests itself when autonomous individuals cooperate with one another. Ingold suggests amongst hunter-gatherers the best idiom to capture this sense of shared experience is “companionship...with the person constituted as a wilful agent within a matrix of intersubjective relations” (1988:282). “Knowledge,” however, is not something that is intrinsically collective. Instead, “knowledge” manifests itself through inter-subjective other-directed “knowledgeable” behaviour. Overing (1989:161) argues that is through the practice of such knowledge that community is created and a wealthy community is one with high morale. Good morale is generated through agreeable interpersonal relationships to the extent that work is only considered possible when morale is high. Overing refers to this as a “social aesthetics” (1989:165) and continues that amongst the Piaroa, “Daily work was loosely organised and as such usually reflected the personal moods and preferences of the individuals involved” (Ibid: 165). As Oliveira writes for the Mebengokré, their social philosophy is actually a “social psychology” (2003:143).

⁸⁹ See Carrithers *et al* (1985) and Overing (1989:162).

As a highly social activity, “work” is not associated with tedium and drudgery, but instead as something that is fun and is intrinsically valued as a relational activity between kin, affines and co-residents. Goldman writes that amongst the Cubeo, “an unproductive community is normally not underprivileged by virtue of location or of tools but simply by its own lack of social health” (1963:53, my emphasis). In describing the “work” involved in house building Goldman continues,

Men worked on the house only when they felt cheerful and dedicated to the work. The man who felt out of sorts dropped away and returned only when his spirits had improved. Dependency upon mood was one of the most important factors delaying completion of a house.

Goldman (1963:67)

It is clear that efficiency is not the objective here.⁹⁰ Sahlins (1972:74) writes that amongst hunter-gatherers, “domestic contentment” and “livelihood” are more highly valued than the maximisation of production. The rhythm of life is such that intense social activity is always interspersed with quieter periods of rest and relaxation. Passes describes “sociability” as “a vital component of the productive process” (1998:177). He continues,

The more cheerful one was, the more companionable the atmosphere; and the more literally dialogic the event. The greater one’s zest for work seemed to grow, and the longer one kept at it.

Passes (Ibid.)

During my stay with the Nivacle, I remember on many occasions having offered to help someone with a particular task, how I had ending up feeling as though the breaks had lasted longer than (what I regarded as) the actual work sessions. For example, one evening my friend Alberto mentioned that he was planning on planting watermelons the following morning. As I had not yet seen how this was done, I offered to help him. The following morning I arrived at his house with a hoe that I had borrowed from my neighbour, feeling fresh and ready to help. When I got there his wife told me that Alberto was already in his plot and that I should go up and meet him there. I remember

⁹⁰ See, for example, McCallum (1989:193) and Passes (1998:177ff).

thinking to myself that he must be really enthusiastic to get on with the work if he had started already. When I arrived he was already doing some weeding on one of his other rows of beans. He then proceeded to show me the new well and water pump that had just been built in his garden and the fresh water and shade that it provided for drinking *tereré*. He then showed me the area that he was planning on working on and that I should copy him in the way he was planting the watermelons. The sun was beginning to rise and I was already beginning to plant my second drill. Alberto was working two drills along from me and I remember thinking that we would probably manage to finish all the work within the next hour or so if we kept on going at the rate we were. Just as I was thinking this, Alberto looked over to me and said “*Tereré?*”, to which I obliged. We wandered over to the spot by the new well that he had mentioned earlier where there was good shade and we started drinking *tereré*. We must have been sitting there for well over an hour drinking and chatting and I was surprised when he reached over to pick up his hoe and started walking down the path towards his house saying, “It’s hot now, isn’t it?” I asked him whether we had finished for the day, to which he replied, “Another day, that’s fine for now.”

An aspect of Nivacle women’s attitudes to work that intrigued me at first was that, despite the widespread availability of shop-bought bread rolls, they preferred baking their own. If a woman ever managed to acquire a large bag of flour, whether through an emergency relief project or through purchasing it in the shop, the first thing she would do was endeavour to acquire a packet of fresh or powdered yeast from the Mennonite store so that she could make bread. Making bread was rarely an individual activity, with it normally being the product of several women’s combined efforts.⁹¹ A group of women that I often encountered baking bread together was a mother and her three married daughters who lived in neighbouring houses. The mother would usually start by kneading the dough in a basin at her house, whilst her eldest daughter would begin lighting the clay oven over at her house. Once the dough had been kneaded, her two other daughters would begin shaping the dough into different shapes and sizes. Some were criss-crossed, whilst others were oblong. The balls of dough were then placed on a metal tray and taken over to the clay oven to cook. And so the process would be repeated until all the dough was prepared.⁹² The overriding feeling that I got whenever I (probably rather clumsily) helped them was that the whole process was great fun and an

⁹¹ C.f. Belaunde (1992:178ff) on bread making amongst the Airo-Pai.

⁹² I was told that Mennonite women had taught them how to make this kind of bread.

opportunity for them to chat and joke. It certainly did not seem to be carried out because they “needed the bread.” The radio would be on and the younger children would be running around in the patio playing football. Aside from the fact that it could be argued that home made rolls tasted far better than shop-bought ones, I suggest that another factor influencing their desire to bake their own rolls was the conviviality that a group of women baking together generated. This, I believe, was the key factor behind their desire to engage this time-consuming and rather laborious task.⁹³

Overing describes the Piaroa concept of “production” as “the acquisition or transformation of resources for use through the work of self or that of close kinsmen” which involves “the internal relations of community built through productive work, co-operation, sharing and the creation of intimacy and high spirits” (1992:179). Such forms of relationality are relevant to both men and women, with the emphasis being on degrees of intimacy. There is no distinction between public/private and male/female, but instead a complementary opposition between male and female agency as aspects of the living human agent. Autonomous gendered other-regarding individuals, who have what could be termed the skills for appropriate forms for social living are the ones who carry out what we call “work.” Amongst the Nivacle, as soon as work became too tedious people would stop what they were doing and look for ways to relax. The Paraguayans would often tell a joke that went, “How many Indians does it take to dig a hole?” With the reply being, “Eight. One to do the digging and the other seven to stand there watching him.” Whilst I cannot deny that this is undoubtedly an accurate portrayal of Nivacle “work” habits, surely the point is that if the seven men watching were engaged in friendly banter and good-humoured joking, then surely they were also working just as hard at creating convivial social relationships as the man with the spade? I shall now go on to describe the value of work in the creation of social relations between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law.

If the literature is anything to go by, the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship is a notoriously tense one. Viveiros de Castro, for example, describes the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship amongst the Araweté as highly conflictual. He writes, “In virilocal marriages, relations towards the older couple are generally tense; in the only two cases in which the virilocalized wives had living mothers, conflicts frequently arose

⁹³ See also Passes (1998:178ff) and (2000:97ff).

between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law – actually between the mothers of the spouses” (1992:167). The notion that women find affinal relationships more difficult than men are summed up by Gow, who writes that, “Close kin relations are valued by women, whereas close affinal relations are highly valued by men” (1991:174-5). Nevertheless, it is the relationship between an uxorilocally-resident man and his parents-in-law that has received greatest attention in the literature.⁹⁴

The concept of “brideservice” has been employed in the literature to refer to the relationship of debt that exists on the part of a young bride’s husband towards his parents-in-law. It is argued that the young husband’s debt is towards his parents-in-law through his desire to have the right to remove their daughter from their home and set up his own home together with her. In exchange for this right he is obliged to offer his services to them for a particular period of time on the promise that he will then be able to marry their daughter. McCallum (1989:198) describes the most important relationship of production that a young Cashinahua man enters into upon marriage as not being with his wife initially, but rather with his parents-in-law. Rosengren (1987a: 122ff) reports that amongst the Matsigenka the relationship between a husband and his wife’s parents is one of control and dominance. He describes the relationship as being, for the wife’s parents, one of a balancing their demands with encouragement for their son-in-law. He explains:

It is a question of trying to get as much labour and subordination as possible out of their potential sons-in-law before they give their daughters away. If their demands are too taxing or if they could have been greater it means that they want [*sic*] get as much bride service as they could if they had managed to strike a balance.

Rosengren (1987a: 123)

This is reflected in the relationship terms that the Matsigenka employ. If a person wishes to stress the debt inherent in the relationship then the son-in-law will employ the term *nagashintotirira* (“the one whose daughter I took”), whilst the wife’s parents will say *gashintototarira* (“the one who took my daughter”) (1987a: 127). The degree of stress

⁹⁴ Forrest (1987:37), for example, cites the most common affinal relationships in Kulinya households as being that between a wife’s parents and her daughter’s husband and a wife’s sister and her sister’s husband.

placed on these terms depends on the spatial distance between the houses of both parties, with Rosengren (1987a: 131) arguing that the greater the spatial distance between the houses, the less the control the parents-in-law will have. McCallum describes the relationship between a woman's husband and her parents amongst the Cashinahua as one of "responsibility" (1989:197) on the part of a son-in-law towards his parents-in-law. In particular, the son-in-law owes his father-in-law labour but it is not understood as an "exchange" or "payment" for his wife. Rather, "it takes the form of cooperative work in the name of an adult individual of the same sex...Such help...is predicated on relations of sameness between two people, rather than on relations of difference" (McCallum 1989:198). McCallum continues that young women who live virilocally after marriage are in a similar position *vis-à-vis* her parents-in-law in that she will also work, "on behalf of her same-sex parent-in-law" in everyday tasks such as cooking food, collecting firewood and washing clothes.⁹⁵ She continues that a young woman's mother-in-law "is more of a friend and helper than a father-in-law is to his co-resident son-in-law" (1989:128). A similar point is made by Gow (1991:134), who writes that with the relationship between a woman and her parents-in-law, "there is also respect, but of less intensity [than that between a man and his parents-in-law]. Women talk freely with their parents-in-law, but do not joke with them or gossip about them." (1991:136).

Lorrain (1994:152) suggests that the "groomservice" relationship amongst the Kulina is characterised by far less tension than the "brideservice" one, as far less cooperation is required. There is therefore no rarity of potential mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. Lorrain describes the relationship that can develop between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law as being almost kin-like. She explains,

A young wife in virilocal residence works for her mother-in-law like a daughter, assisting her in the garden and in the house, fetching water and firewood. Like brideservice it is an essential condition to her marriage: her mother-in-law will throw her out if she refuses to cook, for instance. A bride's work is very appreciated by her mother-in-law, but much more weight is given to the large gardens, housebuilding and additional fish and game

⁹⁵ See also Gow who writes that the son-in-law and parent-in-law (particularly the mother-in-law) relationship is characterised by "intense respect, which amounts to a perpetual injunction to mutual aid" (1991:135).

provided by the groom, which again points out quite clearly the respective importance of women's and men's work ...after all, men provide most of what female productive activities depend on...But despite being ambilocal, the Kulina give relatively less importance to groomservice than to brideservice.

Lorrain (1994:159)

The experience of young Nivacle women who decided to live with their husband's parents was very similar to that which Lorrain (1994) has described for the Kulina. It could be argued that the main benefit of having a son-in-law is that it potentially provides the household with greater access to consumer goods as the majority of young men worked for their Mennonite boss during the week. A daughter-in-law, on the other hand, would not provide this, as women did not work independently for Mennonite bosses.⁹⁶ Instead, a daughter-in-law would spend most of her day helping her mother-in-law with the everyday tasks that she usually carried out with her unmarried daughters. Managing to retain a virilocal son would also enable a young man's parents to benefit from the additional consumer goods that he will bring back with him through his work with his Mennonite boss. However, I do not believe that the Nivacle perceived these relationships in such calculating "economic" ways.

An insight into the nature of the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship lies with the term for "mother-in-law." As described in Chapter 3, there is a similarity between the terms for father-in-law (*cact'ech*) and mother-in-law (*cact'è*), and those for grandfather (*ct'ech*) and grandmother (*ct'è*). This appears to be a relatively widespread phenomenon amongst Chaco peoples.⁹⁷ The only feature that differentiates these terms is the inclusion of the infix [-]ca[-], which, it has been suggested, may mean "my own."⁹⁸ This linguistic transformation is more than mere coincidence. I suggest that the close working relationship that ideally characterises the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship is reflected here in the construction of the relationship term.

In the case of a young Nivacle woman who resides virilocally, the most important relationship she will initially enter into is with her mother-in-law. Although she will

⁹⁶ C.f. Gow (1991:137).

⁹⁷ See also Alvarsson (1988:85), Kidd (1999:90) and Palmer (1997:109).

⁹⁸ See Alvarsson (1988:85).

usually continue to “help” (*efen*) her own mother and sisters, particularly if they resided in the same community as her, her main day-to-day contact will be with her mother-in-law and her other female affines if they were unmarried. From the initial stages of moving into her husband’s parents’ household, a young woman will work closely with her new mother-in-law in everyday household tasks such as fetching water from the well, washing clothes, sweeping the patio and cooking, and she will also accompany her on trips into the forest to look for firewood or wild fruits. The high value that Nivacle men and women place on the sociality of such activities means that a close and trusting relationship begins to develop between women who were initially affines. This was especially the case between a young married woman and her co-resident sisters-in-law.⁹⁹ These women would spend most of the day working, relaxing and eating together, so rather than being based on “respect,” it was more of a gradual process of creating a relationship of trust, care and intimacy.

As an aspect of the Nivacle “moral economy of intimacy,” the relationship between co-resident female affines was usually far stronger than that between a married man and his father-in-law, as they tended not to work for the same boss. Nevertheless, neither relationship was based on distance, but instead on an ethos of mutuality.¹⁰⁰ Passes has written that amongst the Pa’ikwené, “the productive process is valuable in the same way and for the same reasons as words and speech, i.e. its intercommunicative and sociable features and the fact that, though physically exacting, it is as fruitful emotionally and socially as it is materially...the joint action of words and work is itself not just intrinsic but generative of sociality” (2000:109). This relates back to a point I made earlier about Nivacle women’s preference for preparing their own bread rather than just purchasing it from the Mennonite stores. The work that goes into preparing and baking bread is just as significant in terms of conviviality as the act of eating the bread together. The fact that Nivacle women spend most of their time together either cooking, cleaning, weeding or looking after children means that, over time, a married woman’s mother-in-law could be said to become more “like her grandmother.”

⁹⁹ Gow writes that amongst the Piro, “Women joke with their sisters-in-law, but with less of the drama that characterizes male joking” (Gow 1991:174).

¹⁰⁰ See also Kidd (1999:178ff).

6.5. Conclusion

Reflecting in the colonization processes that have been taking place in the Argentine Chaco since the late 19th century, Nicolas Iñigo Carrera writes,

When talking about the indigenous peoples of northern Argentina, one must use the past tense. Hunter/gatherer societies in that region have been constantly undermined since the late 19th century as indigenous resources of land and labour were pulled into the capitalist economy. Vestiges of the identities and the cultures of the Maticos, Tobas, Mocovies and Vilelas (though twisted and changed as a result of the contact process) are now disappearing...indigenous peoples are being integrated irrevocably into national society...indigenous settler populations have been forced to emigrate to the towns in search of work. This emigration and absorption into the poorest social stratum of Argentinian society has spelled the end of indigenous social and cultural distinctiveness.

Iñigo Carrera (1982:2)

Despite what could be termed their “insertion” into the market economy of national society, it has been shown time and again that lowland South American people’s moral values have been very difficult to change.¹⁰¹ Production is not something that is carried out in order to amass copious amounts of material wealth and is not valued in and of itself (Overing 1993a). Renshaw (1988) has shown that amongst indigenous people of the Chaco, it is *similarity* that is a defining feature of their morality as people continually strive for an equality of resources. He writes, “One of the features that strikes even the most casual visitor to any of the Indian communities in the Chaco is the remarkable uniformity in the material conditions of life” (1988:338). This should not be regarded, however, as them simply all being together at the bottom rung of society. Rather, this equality should be seen as a hard-fought achievement that is based on an ethic of whoever has surplus has a moral obligation to share with others. Renshaw continues,

¹⁰¹ See especially Kidd (1999) and Renshaw (2002) on the “economic morality” of the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco.

“the accumulation of material possessions – beyond a certain, very limited level – [is viewed as] a threat to the social order” (1988:339).

In this chapter, my aim was to consider the Nivacle concept of “knowledge” as it develops relationally within the gendered Nivacle person. I began by discussing the Nivacle concept of “work” and how it is expressed through two terms: *t’acum-in* which refers to activities that are repetitive and that require a prior “knowledge” and *naash* which refers to wandering around looking for something that is already there (see Gow 1991). Whilst the Nivacle do distinguish between these two kinds of activity, neither relate to our Western conception of “work” as something that is inherently tedious, draining and asocial. Instead, the Nivacle conceive of “work” as an inherently social activity that is also generative of sociality. This is the case for both men and women. Furthermore, there is also no gendered spatial hierarchy of work such that men work in the “public” arena of social life and the women work at home in the “private sphere.” Instead, I have shown that there are in fact very few tasks that are gender-specific and that rather than conceive of work in terms of gendered domains, a more fruitful approach is to consider the potentiality that each working opportunity has to generate sociable situations. I also showed that, in the case of women, such relations most commonly took place amongst kin (in particular mothers and daughter, grandmothers and granddaughters, and sisters). However, my example showed that this could also take place amongst female co-resident affines. Working on a daily basis with one’s mother-in-law can, over time, become akin to the congeniality of “living with one’s Grandma.” In the following chapter I shall consider the concept of reciprocity and how it relates to Nivacle understandings of “similarity” and “difference.”

Chapter 7: Gambling Relatedness

I begin this chapter with a Mataco myth, which I believe provides insight into the issues that I intend to explore in this chapter:

A woman had a son and a daughter. The son married the daughter, and the woman married the dogs and disappeared. By the dogs she had five children, who cleared a field and planted gourds. Once when the daughter was in the forest she came to the field and wanted to exchange ornaments for gourds. The children replied that they were of the same tribe and did not want to exchange; instead they gave her gourds.

Wilbert and Simoneau (1982:280)

As the myth shows, whilst the daughter wanted to exchange gourds with the offspring of her mother and the dogs on the basis that she understood them to be different, the children's reply was that they were all, in fact, the same and that they would just give her the gourds as a gift. In this chapter, my aim is to explore Nivacle understandings of reciprocity. As well as discussing it from the perspective of the intimate relationships between "close" kin, I shall also consider the kinds of reciprocity that Nivacle people engage in at community and inter-community levels. An integral aspect of reciprocity at these levels is the distinction that people make between those that they consider to be "similar" and those who are "different." Yet, as I shall explain, both of these concepts are ephemeral due to the fact that they are embraced by a more general desire to maintain the intimacy of specific kinship relationships over space and time. I shall begin by briefly discussing some of the ways in which the topic of "exchange" has been approached in the hunter-gatherer and lowland South American literature.

Many writers working amongst hunter-gatherer peoples, including Ingold (1986:227ff) and Woodburn (1982), have attributed the obligation to share as resting with "the community." Renshaw has written that for the indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco, "the obligation to share is seen, ideally at least, as extending beyond one's own household and kindred to all members of the community or residential group" (2002:161). This, he suggests, is due to the fact that all community members will attempt

to manipulate ties of kinship or affinity if they require either food or durable goods and that people generally find such requests very difficult to refuse. Renshaw (Ibid.) continues that rather than define the obligation to share in terms of specific types of relationships, it would be more fruitful to approach reciprocity in terms of those who have a surplus during a particular point in time. Ingold (1986:222ff) sees the community's communal ownership of land as the cornerstone for sharing: that which an individual appropriates is described as "sharing in," whilst "sharing out" is when goods are distributed to other members of the community.

Overing (1992) writes that the anthropology of lowland South American has been strongly influenced by both Mauss (1990)[1950] and Lévi-Strauss's (1969) characterization of the internal economic relations of indigenous societies as being based on the principles of "exchange" and "reciprocity." Both terms have appeared with great frequency in the literature.¹ Whilst for Lévi-Strauss, "true human existence begins when groups begin to exchange women in marriage," (Carrier 1996:218) for Mauss, "exchange is the earliest solution to the Hobbesian war of all against all" (Ibid.). Overing explains that while "the relational approach," concerning "how exchanges reflect and shape the identity of the social actors involved, as well as the relationship those actors have with each other, with the thing exchanged, and even with the act of exchange itself" (1996:219) was later widely applied to Melanesian societies,² in lowland South America, many writers began approaching "exchange" and "reciprocity" in terms of "the dialectics of production and exchange" (Overing 1992:181).³

In his description of ceremonial friendship amongst the Cubeo, Goldman suggests that the bonds that exist between ceremonial friends are extremely close, to the extent that they have "the quality of close kinship" (1963:133). He stresses that it is the quality of the relationship between ceremonial friends that is significant and that it is the gift exchange that drives it. He writes,

The Cubeo...are not so much property-minded as they are person-minded...it is not goods they seek but intense

¹ See, for example, Clastres (1987), Siskind (1973) and Santos Granero (1991).

² See, for example, the works of Strathern (1988) and Wagner (1967).

³ See, for example, Belaunde (1992), Kidd (1999), Overing (1992), Ellis (1996), Passes (1998) and Overing and Passes (2000).

relationships...It seems...that being surrounded by “brothers” and “sisters” the Cubeo have exalted expectations of warmth and assistance which ceremonial friendship helps satisfy.

Goldman (1963:133)

Goldman’s work has strongly influenced the approach of subsequent authors including Belaunde (1992:21), Gow (1991), McCallum (1989; 2001) and Overing (1989b; 1996b; 2003), who suggest that the act of giving is part of the process of creating kinship relations, just like the act of receiving is an acknowledgement of it. Sharing is understood as being generative of sociality, with writers linking it to the processes of production, reproduction and consumption.⁴ Both Overing (1989b; 1992) and McCallum (1989; 2001) have attributed “sharing” to the generation of kinship relations and the safe inside. “Exchange,” on the other hand, is related to activities including trade and barter that are said to take place between indigenous leaders and dangerous outsiders. “Exchange” is a marker of social differentiation, whilst sharing is generative of relations of increasing similarity. Ellis (1996), however, has argued against a dichotomous understanding of “safe inside” and “dangerous outside” and instead suggests that relationships should be understood from the perspective of the ego-centered kindred, which can take place both between both co-residents and non-co-residents.

In this chapter I have chosen to employ the term “mutuality” to describe Nivacle reciprocity. Belaunde (1992) first used this term in her work amongst the Airo-Pai. She writes that mutuality “is the most appropriate [term] for describing the social logic which underlies the flow of assistance and food between community members” (1992:20).⁵ It has been observed by both Belaunde (1992:21) and Kidd (1999:4) that relationships of “mutuality” or “sharing” amongst the Airo-Pai and the Enxet respectively are non-reciprocal as there is no expectation of return on the part of the receiver. My aim is to explore Nivacle understandings of “mutuality” and its relationship to wider spheres of sociality. As I explained in Chapter 3, Nivacle relatedness is not static and should instead be conceived of as rhizomaic strands that are interwoven and connected over an

⁴ See Chapter 1, where I discuss the performative nature of lowland South American sociality and show that it is the “practice” or “action” that is generative of the relationship. See especially Overing (2003:300-2), where she discusses the “practice of generative cultures.”

⁵ Viveiros de Castro (1992:107) describes an “ideology of mutuality” amongst the Araweté, the other side of which being “competition.”

unbounded territory. As relatedness is always reckoned from the perspective of ego, mutuality could be seen as an action that takes place between autonomous, other-regarding individuals. It is through repeated gestures of mutuality that relatedness and community are created.

I shall explore Nivacle mutuality through a discussion of the reciprocal activities that take place during the games of football (*fútbol* or *pelota*), volleyball (*volibol*, *volei* or *pelota*), and a game of chance known as *tsucóc*.⁶ Whilst Mennonites, Paraguayans, and indigenous people played football and volleyball, the game of *tsucóc* was played exclusively amongst indigenous men. Amongst the Nivacle of Campo Loa, each game was associated largely (although not exclusively) with a specific gender and age group. Football was most popular amongst the younger men (known as the *nich'ac sha'nei* “The new people”), whilst volleyball was played by women of all ages as well as younger men. As Dyck (2000) has shown, there has often been reluctance on the part of anthropologists to approach the topics of games and sport with any level of seriousness. Instead, there has been a tendency to regard sport as inconsequential, or else consider it only from the perspective of ritual as ephemeral and extraordinary.

In many of the earlier anthropological writings, descriptions of play and games would often be found under the heading of “religion,” with Tylor (1879) being one of the first to attempt a description of the diffusion of certain games. Since the 1930s, games started to become part of many anthropological writing including those of Firth (1930), Opler (1944) and Burridge (1957). One of the most influential writings on sport as a cultural phenomenon was Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (1949 [1944]), where he examined the extent to which “culture itself bears the character of play” (Ibid: ix). Huizinga was interested in the creative quality of play in the evolution of culture, with his work paving the way for Caillois (1961[1958]), who was interested in the meaning of games in everyday life. Caillois suggested that they may “reinforce established values” or they may “contradict and flout them” (Ibid: 66). Since then, perhaps the best-known writings on play have been those of Victor Turner (1969; 1974; 1983) who wrote extensively on the play element of ritual activities. Turner has suggested that the playful “liminoid” or “liminoidal” activities associated with ritual and other performance often invert or flout what is considered appropriate in everyday life.

⁶ A similar game is played amongst the neighbouring Enxet (Kidd 1999).

However, rather than view football, volleyball or *tsucôc* as “liminoidal,” or as activities that establish the social order, my aim is to interpret the practice of these sports in terms of “knowledge” and the generation of sociality.

In this chapter I shall concentrate on the volleyball matches that the Nivacle women regularly participate in. During these matches the women divide themselves into teams. There are always two teams and these teams are created for the matches either through dividing the community into two “sides” of the community or, in terms of the particular community or colony that one lives in. Many writers have depicted sport in indigenous societies as being an outlet for aggression, with the emphasis being on the competitiveness between the teams. Using Gary Witherspoon and Glen Peterson’s (1995) twin concepts of dynamic symmetry and holistic asymmetry, I explore the composition of the women’s volleyball teams and their gambling activities alongside the pitches. I argue that the contingent teams or “sides” of the community are neither static nor solidified. Rather, they are fluid and constantly changing depending on the perspective of the whole and the context from which the whole is being reckoned, be it at an inter- or intra-community level. The fractal nature of these expressions of sociality shall also be explored through Roy Wagner’s (1991b) concept of “The Fractal Person.” In combining these perspectives, my aim has been to show that whilst the scale of particular relationships may appear to vary, what is constantly being enacted during all these acts of mutuality is the creation of sociality between “close” kin. I begin this chapter with a reflection on how sport has been interpreted within anthropology and then move on to discuss the central plaza of Jotoicha as a place of play and sociality. I then go on to describe Nivacle pre-match preparations and the commensality that takes place between household and community members prior to the match. I then discuss the fractal nature of the volleyball team composition and the relationships that are being generated within these divisions. Finally, I describe the gambling activities that the women partake in and suggest that rather than regard gambling as competitive exchange between two teams, a more fruitful approach would be to consider the whole process of play as a series of repetitive acts of mutuality between female kin.

7.1. The Conviviality of Competition

As well as being played throughout the year at weekends and also during the week, football, volleyball and *tsucôc* also formed an integral part of Jotoicha's activities during any major religious festival or national holiday, such as Christmas, Easter, Paraguayan Independence Day, the festival of San Juan, or the Day of the Indian (*El Día del Indígena*). Whilst the ethno-historical literature gives no precise information as to when football and volleyball were first introduced to the region, the Nivacle generally attribute their introduction to the arrival of the Mennonites in the early 1930s, with their popularity increasing markedly during the late 1950s with the establishment of indigenous work camps. The Nivacle told me of how during this period the Mennonites would play volleyball against them in the form of friendly matches during the evenings and at weekends. Nowadays, they told me, with the Mennonites no longer taking care of them as they used to, these games are played strictly according to ethnic group.

The ethnographic literature on games and sporting activities amongst the Nivacle is rather limited and that which does exist has tended to focus on either the traditional game of hockey (which was known as *casati*) or on the above-mentioned game of *tsucôc*, both of which were played prior to the Chaco War (1932-35) and are generally considered to be "authentic" indigenous games.⁷ Métraux has argued that Chaco societies have been heavily influenced by Andean culture to the extent that even the name "Chaco" is said to be derived from a Quechua word meaning "hunting ground" (1946:197). In explaining the origins of *tsucôc*, Métraux writes: "All Pilcomayo River Indians are rabid gamblers. Their favorite game is called *tsuka* or *tsokok* (from the Quechua *chunka*, "10"), which may be played by 2, 4, or 8 persons" (1946:337).

The majority of the authors writing on games and sports amongst Chaco peoples have tended to focus on portraying the competitive and violent aspects of these activities.⁸ The crux of their argument is that games and competitive sports constitute an outlet for violence and that these are signs of a wider significance that enable the Nivacle to represent society unto themselves.⁹ In his "Ethnography of the Chaco", Métraux provides a description of the aforementioned Nivacle hockey game:

⁷ See, for example, Benítez Alvarenga (1999) and Fritz (1994).

⁸ See Métraux (1946:334-8), Alvarsson (1988:141-3) and Fock (1982:23).

⁹ See Geertz (1973).

The play is decidedly aggressive, and ... is regarded by the Indians themselves as a substitute for open warfare...The game, lacking a referee, is at times rough, and several players are always injured. As a protection against the blows, the *Mataco*¹⁰ wear shin guards made of rows of sticks tied together with twine.

Métraux (1946:334)

Following Métraux (1946:334) and Fock (1982:23), Alvarsson describes the game of hockey as an important way of controlling inter-community aggression amongst the Mataco and as such served as “an important political instrument” (1988:141). He writes:

(Hockey) was employed as a means of releasing aggression, and according to the Indians, as a substitute for armed conflicts between villages that were at variance with each other...Instead of waging war on each other, the battle was fought on the hockey ground.

Alvarsson (1988:141)

According to Alvarsson, the hockey field was a place where community members could assess the relative physical strength and courage of their neighbours and thus anticipate the outcome of potential conflicts. However, following intensive Pentecostal missionisation and the resultant pacification that has taken place since the Chaco War, he suggests that hockey has lost this “political role” (*Ibid.*: 142) and so is no longer played. This perspective of violence and aggression is, to a certain extent, backed up by the following myth on the origin of the hockey game amongst the Mataco (Wilbert and Simoneau 1982). The myth explores the delicacy of competition between two teams and the violent consequences of uncontrolled sociality that can often rupture during the excitement of the game:

If a man accidentally struck another on the shins with his stick, a fight often ensued, the two players attacking each other with their sticks. Sometimes the struggle ended well, with the

¹⁰ The Mataco are neighbours of the Nivacle.

teammates taking the sticks away from the two antagonists and thus restoring peace. On other occasions, however, Tokhuah [the Mataco culture hero] created bad blood between the opponents, and both teams would join the fight with their sticks. After a while they would stop fighting and go home, but only to get their bows and arrows so they could continue the conflict in a more deadly way. Nobody fled, and they kept shooting at one another.

The next day the fight would continue, and one of the headmen, a Chulupi [Nivacle], for example, would go home and fetch more people in order to defeat the adversary. Thus a simple fight could develop into a big war, with many villages participating. Finally the clearing would be full of dead bodies, and the winners would cut off the heads of their enemies and take them home as trophies. The old women played with the heads, took off the skin, and kept the scalps.

Wilbert and Simoneau (1982:124-5)

Whilst this myth somewhat exaggerates actual practices, it does serve to illustrate the impression that both Métraux and Alvarsson are attempting to portray, with the two teams just biding their time for an opportunity to release their suppressed aggression and attack one other. Such interpretations appear to reflect Simon Harrison's observation that anthropologists have often based their analyses of sport on what he has called "notions of a death drive, killer instinct, or some other innate destructive or aggressive predisposition (where) activities such as sport, games, or rituals... function as non-violent outlets for aggression" (1996:561).¹¹ The hockey pitch for these authors constitutes a microcosm of male society at large. The two teams appear to represent other, more significant male relationships, particularly those of affinity and warfare, and women are noticeable through their absence. On a similar vein, Lévi-Strauss (1966) has written that games create inequality. He argues that whilst ritual and myth are based on a premise of inequality between participants that create equality, games have what he

¹¹ See also Crump and his account of the transition of the nature of play "from a type of innocent, solitary play, characteristic of the very young child...to serious adult games, with intricate rules creating obstacles to be overcome...In this process play becomes increasingly a matter of competition, in principle between equal sides, generally two in number" (1996:424-5).

describes as a “disjunctive” effect. As with science, games produce events by means of the structure of rules. Thus, the two teams begin the game as equals, and, through play and the application of rules, inequality is created.

In this chapter I shall follow Alvarsson’s advice that football, volleyball, and *tsucóc* are indeed “important political instrument(s)” amongst the Nivacle of Jotoicha, although not for the reasons that he, or indeed any of the other authors mentioned above, have given. Rather than focus on the differences between teams at sporting events as sources of tension between men, my aim is to consider individuals’ attendance at matches as an opportunity to generate pleasurable forms of conviviality between co-residents and those living in other communities. The “political” point here is also, as it happens, a moral one, as the “outcome” of the matches is not the result of the “mock warfare” between the two teams. Instead, the most important outcome is the participation and experience of the individual in contributing to the creation of a convivial atmosphere. However, rather than just focus on the actions of the players as previous works have done, my aim is to focus on the relationship between the players and the audience, thus incorporating the activities that take place around the volleyball courts. A particularly favoured activity amongst the women who are watching the match is the gambling of clothes. Before going on to describe this, I begin with a description of the central plaza of Jotoicha, which is known as the *clóija’vat* or “the place in which to play.”

7.2. *Na Clóija’vat*: “The Place in which to Play”

An important aspect of every modern Nivacle community in the Central Chaco is the presence of the volleyball court (*pelotavat*)¹² and the football pitch (*cancha*), both of which are situated in the central plaza (*clóijavat*) of the community alongside the church, the school, the medical clinic and the radio station. Figure 7.1. is a plan of the Jotoicha central plaza. There are two full-sized volleyball courts for the women (with a third one being planned), a smaller-sized volleyball court for the schoolgirls (*pelotavat-lhaós* “The son of the volleyball court”), a full-sized football pitch for the men (*cancha*), a smaller pitch (*cancha lhaós* “The son of the football pitch”) with mini-goals for the schoolboys, and a cleared designated for playing *tsucóc*. Whilst the full-sized football pitch and

¹² This is a relatively new term that is constructed from the Spanish term for “ball” (*pelota*) with the addition of the suffix [-]vat which means “place in which the action is carried out.”

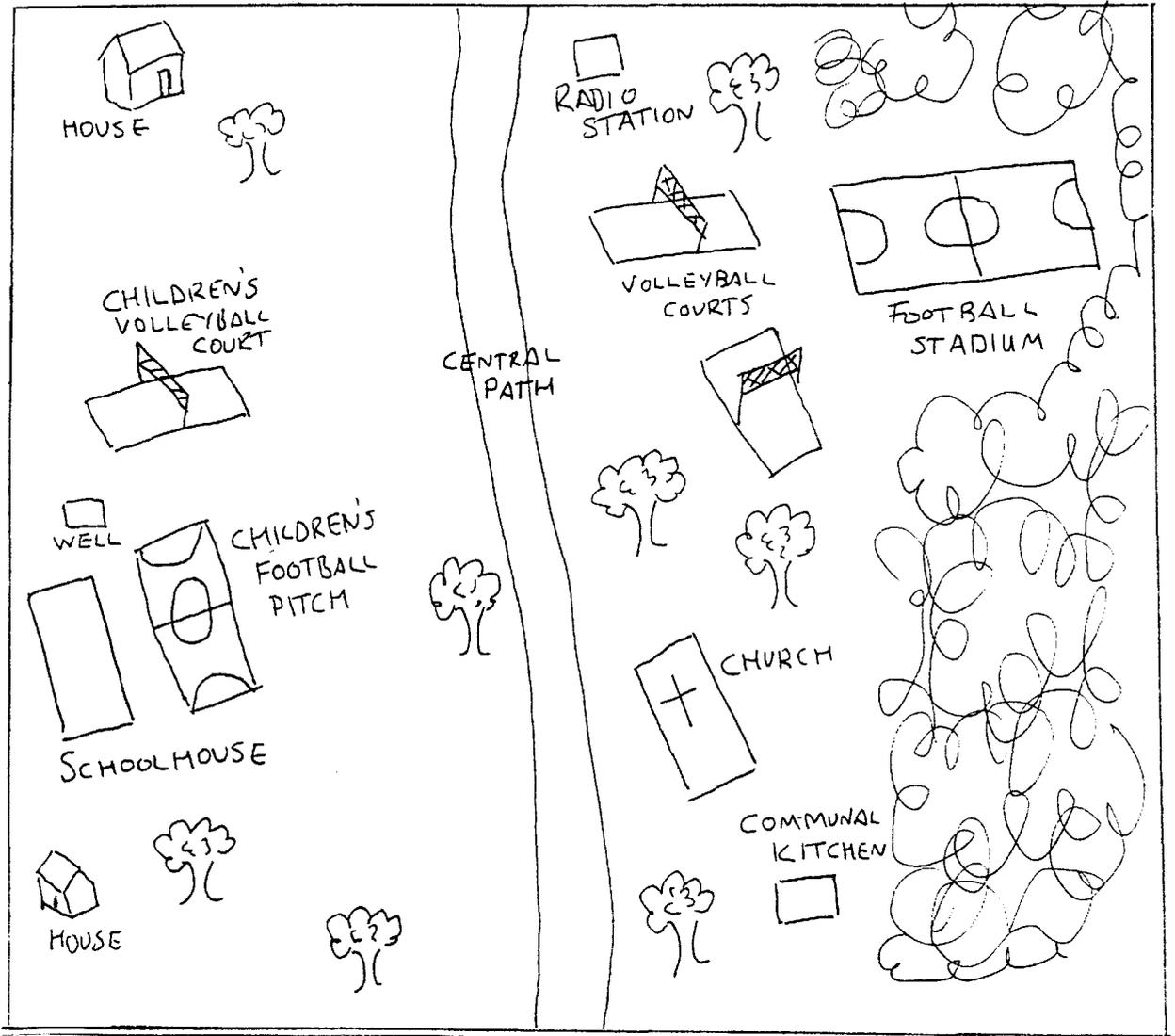


Figure 7.1. The Central Plaza of Jotoicha

volleyball courts were located together on the southeastern edge of the community, the smaller pitches were associated with, and therefore located next to, the schoolhouse. The church sat on its own on the far western edge of the community next to the communal kitchen (*ito'vat* "place where there is fire"), which was used for cooking the communal meals and for storing the community crockery and church songbooks.

The residents of Jotoicha took great pride in the central plaza and would often describe it as "*is*," which means "clean" or "beautiful." Groups of women would often go there for the whole day to work with their hoes in order to keep the ground weed-free. There were several different types of mature trees in the plaza that I was told had been planted there when the community was first built, including several grapefruit trees and some *algarrobo* trees. Every so often people would decide to paint the lower sections of the trunks of these trees white in order to enhance the beauty and cleanliness of the plaza. Nevertheless, despite the obvious pride and care that was invested into the maintenance of the plaza on the part of the community members, it was the football pitch that was considered to be the ultimate example of the Jotoicha's exemplary status as a large and successful community. In 2001, the previous football pitch was improved with funding from the local government along with help from the local Catholic missionaries who were also based there. Grass (*yitjataj*) was sown, two full-size goal posts with nets were erected, and a wire fence (*tsuche*) was constructed around it. When the work was completed, the community decided to name it the "José Seelwische Stadium" ("*El Estadio José Seelwische*") in memory of the late Catholic missionary and Nivacle linguist José Seelwische who was also heavily involved in establishing Campo Loa. In January 2000 the local authorities organized a formal opening ceremony with a brass band, a football match and a barbeque. This took place before my arrival in the Chaco, although people were very keen to show me photographs of the day's proceedings and would go to great lengths to explain the events that took place during the day, the work that everyone carried out, and who everyone was. Jotoicha was the first community in Campo Loa to have a new football stadium built and since then, two other communities have done the same.

The volleyball courts were more discrete. The nets were made from two posts of Palo Santo wood (*joo*) of approximately 6 feet in height that were dug deep into the ground, with a store-bought net strung tightly between them. Due to the dusty nature of the

Central Chaco terrain, the markings on the court were temporary and were usually marked out just before a match. This was done by four of the participants from opposing sides taking six large strides outwards from the net and then marking the distance by scraping their feet back towards the net. There was no defined seating area around the volleyball courts and the women and children who were there to watch would sit cross-legged on the ground in small yet clearly defined groups on small individual pieces of cloth that they had brought along with them for that purpose. They would sit in the general area of the volleyball courts, often under the shade of the grapefruit trees if it was a particularly hot afternoon. The football stadium was situated adjacent to the forest, which provided the men with some shade from the afternoon sun. Large tree trunks had been positioned around the pitch that some of the men would sit on, whilst others would sit on their bicycles and lean against the wire fence, or just stand. The majority of the children would spend the day playing around the plaza, moving from one place to the other. They would sit with their mothers and watch the match for a short period of time before moving on somewhere else, whilst others would flit between groups on bicycles and help their mothers by fetching cool water for their mothers' *tereré* from the community well.

The majority of the men did not return home to the community following their work with their Mennonite bosses until late on Friday evening or Saturday lunchtime. During the week, the women would usually organize volleyball matches in the afternoons, although these were never to the scale of those played at weekends and there was no gambling involved. Sunday was the day that was wholly designated to games and sport. Following the church service at 10 o'clock on Sunday morning, people would make their way back to their houses in order to have their main meal of the day and prepare for the afternoon's activities.

Volleyball, football and *tsucóc* matches were all primarily conceived of, and experienced as, ways of having fun. Like all collective endeavours, the primary goal is not to be efficient or to work with tenacious grit, but rather to laugh and enjoy oneself.¹³ The Nivacle describe this feeling as "*c'uus-in*." The translation of the term *clóija'vat* as "the place in which people play" refers not just to the narrow English concept of "playing" sports, but also to the collective sociality that is generated there through participating in

¹³ See Oliveira (2003:194), who expresses a similar association of work and collective activities with joy.

the matches. In fact, if one were feeling sad (*tacshin-in*), it would be considered highly inappropriate to engage in such activities. This was made clear to me during a conversation that I had with Roberto, a Nivacle priest and also one of the schoolteachers in the community. We had been talking about the sadness that many of the women of Jotoicha had been experiencing following the sudden death of one of their male co-residents through a spiritual attack by a neighbouring shaman. Many of the men had been complaining about how untidy the plaza was and how this was a result of the women's sadness.¹⁴ However, Roberto was adamant that its untidiness was not necessarily a result of their sadness:

But they aren't sad! Because they're playing volleyball so they're not sad! If they were sad they would be staying in their houses, just like my wife. Her brother has just died and she stays in her house all day, she doesn't want to leave, not even to fetch water. I know that these women are not sad because they play volleyball. They just don't want to clear the plaza, that's why it's like that. I don't know what's wrong with the women...

His criticism was therefore that it could not feasibly be "sadness" that had been at the root of the untidiness of the plaza (although this could have been a potential reason) as they were out happily enjoying themselves playing volleyball and so their activity "said" otherwise.

A key aspect of the creation of joy and happiness during these matches was the commensality that would take place before, during and after the matches. As I have described in previous chapters, nurturance and feeding are moral acts that are central to Nivacle sociality. To offer food is generative of sociality, whilst to deny food is to be "stingy" (*cuyee*) and is effectively a denial of sociality (see Gow 1989). A happy Nivacle community is one where individuals are able to satisfy their own desires, whilst at the same time being able to satisfy the desires of "close" others. Feeding is one aspect of the generation of sociality during matches that I go on to describe below, first in the context of the household and then through communal meals.

¹⁴ See Lagrou (2000) and Gow (2000) on "sadness" in Amazonia and the effect that it has on conviviality.

7.3. Pre-Match Preparations

One woman explained to me that Nivacle people prepare for football and volleyball matches by eating their midday meal together.¹⁵ A typical pre-match meal would usually consist of rice (*arroz*) or pasta (*fideo*) to which were added boiled beans (*quequeleiche*), sweet potato (*pejaya*), pumpkin (*c'asus*) or meat (*tsjaan*). People also liked to add tinned tomato puree (*tomate*) to their rice and pasta, especially if they had meat, which was usually on either a Friday or Saturday at the end of the Mennonite working week. If none of these foodstuffs were available then people would eat rice or pasta on their own, but with the addition of more cooking oil.¹⁶ Oil was said to make the food tastier (*acoj-ji*) and was also considered to be a substitute for the fat in meat. If no meat or vegetables were available then hard bread rolls would accompany the rice or pasta. As I have described in Chapter 2, whilst people preferred to eat vegetables grown in their own gardens over manufactured foodstuffs, if the latter was correctly combined (for example rice or pasta with meat or vegetables), then it would also be considered *ôc* (“real food”). When describing her and her daughters’ pre-match preparations, Teresa explained,

I sit in my patio with my daughters, my mother, and my sister Rita Juana at the table and we eat our food – maybe some rice with some tomato and onions and some meat from Santacruz¹⁷ or pasta with chicken. Then we sit on the chairs in the shade and drink some *tereré* and eat some *tortillas* if we have any. We just sit

¹⁵ This was a statement that I initially found rather surprising as I was asking her how Nivacle women prepared themselves for volleyball in general and had been thinking more in terms of preparatory exercises and the like. However, as time went on, I came to realise that they did indeed prepare through eating together.

¹⁶ The kind of oil used would depend on the availability of the Mennonite-produced peanut oil. Otherwise, people would buy sunflower oil from the Mennonite Cooperative or from one of the travelling salesmen.

¹⁷ Santa Cruz was the travelling salesman who visited the community every Saturday morning selling basic provisions such as meat, rice, pasta, sunflower and peanut oil. His meat was 33% cheaper than the meat in the Mennonite cooperatives and the people were well aware of this. In a survey that I carried out on the prices of goods in the Mennonite Colonies, I discovered that the price of goods in the Mennonite cooperative in the capital of Filadelfia where the majority of the Mennonites purchased their provisions was approximately 20% cheaper than in the branches (*sucursales*) in the villages where most of the indigenous people bought their provisions. A Mennonite explained that this was due to the additional cost of transporting the goods. In addition to this, Mennonites were entitled to various discounts on their groceries by virtue of them being members of the cooperative, which no indigenous person could be because they did not own any land, which was a prerequisite of being a cooperative member.

and relax and listen to the radio then we get our bags ready and go.

Goldman wrote about the relationship between mutual feeding and kinship in lowland South America when he described how “Food passes among close kin and rarely goes outside the sib” (1963:77). The relationship between feeding and the creation of social intimacy has been noted by other Amazonian ethnographers including Gow (1989; 1991), McCallum (1989) and Belaunde (1992). Belaunde writes that amongst the Airo-Pai, “the community [is] a place where life processes are enacted and kinship is created through the bestowal of assistance and feeding (1992:19). Rather like the “mutuality” described above, giving one another food is also constitutive of relatedness. What follows is an extract from my fieldwork diary describing the activities that took place during lunchtime one Sunday:

The church service had just finished and the women stood up and started making their way back to their houses to begin preparing the midday meal. I began walking back with Teresa, who had been sitting at the back of the church on the floor alongside the other women and young children. Teresa’s husband José was also there and he was seated on one of the chairs with the other men at the front left-hand side of the church, and their youngest daughter Santa María was seated on the chairs alongside the other schoolchildren and the choir. José and Teresa’s house was located next to the central plaza approximately 300 meters from the church, so we didn’t have far to walk. Teresa did not wait for José but walked straight to the house with the other women in order to start cooking, whilst José helped the other men return the chairs to the schoolhouse. When we returned to the house, their eldest daughters Ricarda and Rosa were washing clothes (*tacfoom*: Literally “squeezing out”) in the patio. Teresa re-lit the fire and began boiling the water to make rice for the meal. It was almost the end of the dry season and there were very few vegetables at this time of year so we were

going to accompany the rice with fried eggs with tortillas, which Ricarda has made while we were at church.

As the water was boiling for the rice to cook, José returned and we all sat on the chairs together and chatted about the fact that so few people were coming to the church services these days, amongst other things. The chairs in the patio are always positioned and repositioned according the location of the sun as well as the direction of the prevailing wind. Another important factor was to ensure that everyone had a good enough view of the road that ran through the center of the community. During the course of the conversation everyone who passed was acknowledged and a comment was made about them and whatever they may be carrying or where they were going.¹⁸ The wind seemed to be getting stronger, which was making the dust blow around all the more.

“*Dol, achaj na mesa!*” (“Ricarda, bring over the chair!”), Teresa said to her daughter. Ricarda brought the table and a few more chairs over and we waited for Teresa to hand us our plates. Like every Nivacle woman, Teresa always filled each person’s bowl herself from the pot that she had placed on another small table in the center of her patio. She went on to hand each person his or her plate individually. Everyone’s bowl was filled to the top regardless of its size. After handing everyone their plate of rice and fried egg with tortilla, Teresa served herself a portion, took a seat, and we began eating our lunch, scooping up the rice and egg with our spoons.¹⁹ Everyone was chatting and laughing as they ate. When we had finished, Teresa offered everyone more and if they accepted she would carry their bowl over to the pot and spoon more rice into their bowl. After we had all finished, she gathered all the bowls together and carried them over to her basin. Ricarda started rinsing them in water straight away.

¹⁸ This was often what people meant when they complained about how “the people always talk.”

¹⁹ A younger leader once told me that Nivacle people “know” how to eat with a spoon, but that many have eaten with Mennonites and Paraguayans where they have been presented with knives and forks. “There are some who are learning how to use knives and forks,” he told me. “Not many ‘know,’ but we are learning.”

This is a description of a very typical midday meal. It seems to bear many similarities to Belaunde's description of the role of the cook, in that although she seems to exercise strict control over the division of portions, she will continue to serve people additional portions until they decide themselves that they have had enough. The Nivacle cook is also generous in that she will always fill bowls up to the brim regardless of their size. She is never the one who decides when each person has had enough to eat.²⁰ The midday meal was the only cooked meal that most Nivacle people would have in a day. In contrast to Nordenskiöld (1926:53)[in Alvarsson 1988:210] and Alvarsson (1988:210), who write that Chaco peoples had no fixed mealtimes, I found Nivacle mealtimes to be very regular. People would often refer to lunchtime in Spanish as "*las once*" ("eleven o'clock") and this was always when everyone would eat. First thing in the morning people would usually drink *tereré* or the hot version known as *maté* and in the evenings they would eat a snack version of the midday meal, such as tortilla and fried egg or some rolls. Women would carry out the preparation and serving of food within the household. Men will usually butcher larger animals, whilst women usually prepared any smaller animals such as chicken or pigeon, as well as the vegetables.²¹

Every household usually had one hearth (*itôj* lit. "fire") where all the food was cooked, unless there was another family visiting in which case they would build their own fire. The hearth consisted of a fire with a triangular metal griddle on top where the pot or kettle would be placed. Apart from boiling, baking in the cinders was another popular way of cooking sweet potato, particularly in the winter when it was cold and people spent a great deal of their time sitting by the fire.²² After an hour or so the cinders would be raked away and the sweet potato would be eaten. The grilling of meat was usually reserved for communal meals and it was very often the men who would perform this task. Whilst women generally cooked alone, when they cooked together they would cooperate in the different tasks that constituted the creation of a meal. For example, one might begin by lighting the fire, whilst another chopped up the meat. Another might be roasting pumpkin, whilst another might be preparing bread or making fruit juice (*refresco*). It was usually not necessary for there to be more than one cook, but women very much

²⁰ See also Belaunde (1992:203).

²¹ See Alvarsson (1988:209) who states that whilst the women do the cooking and the preparation of vegetables, the men butcher the meat and prepare fish for grilling.

²² See Alvarsson (1988:210).

enjoy the companionship of cooking together. Belaunde (1992:201) describes the cooking of food as a very dangerous activity that is strongly linked to Airo-Pai concepts of trust and gender. Nivacle women also valued trust when cooking, with this being particularly evident in the preparation of communal meals. This trust also extended to consuming cooked food. Belaunde continues, “Taking a meal together creates intimacy, and the more people share their meals the more the social and physical ties between them are seen to grow” (Ibid.). This is a point that is echoed by Ellis, who writes that that Tsimane “ideas of safety and intimacy [are] inextricably linked to eating and drinking activities” (1996:138). Unlike the Cubeo (Goldman 1963:80), there was no hierarchy in either seating arrangement nor in the order of who ate first. Everyone ate together and people could sit wherever they wanted.

Seelwische has written that amongst the Nivacle, “All edible products are destined towards the sustenance of the community...Foodstuffs, as we have seen above, belong to the entire clan” (1974:155-6, my translation). Renshaw (1986:188) has also expressed this view of communal ownership when he states that indigenous peoples of the Paraguayan Chaco have no concept of the individual ownership of food as they lack a possessive term for such consumable items. Kidd (1999:152), on the other hand, has argued that amongst the Enxet, food, like all other goods, is individually owned at the point of receipt. Kidd stresses the action of receiving the foodstuff by the potential owner as being the key factor in establishing ownership. He also shows, *contra* Renshaw (1986:188), that the Enxet do, in fact, conceive of food as something that is personally owned through the use of the possessive prefix. The concept of personal ownership is also expressed in the Nivacle language in the following ways: *y-ôc* is “my food,” *ôc* is “your food,” *lh-ôc* is “his/her food” and *cats-ôc* is “our food.”²³ Furthermore, I would agree with Kidd (1999:152) that food is individually owned at the point of receipt and that it is entirely the individual’s decision whether or not they hand it over to another individual as a gift, or whether they hand it over as a contribution to a household’s supply of food. After Sahlins (1974:188), Kidd (1999:155) refers to the process of individuals handing food over to the communal supplies of the household as “pooling” and describes it as “the conversion of personal ownership of food into collective ownership, although, in this context, the boundaries of the collectivity do not reach beyond the household” (1999:156).

²³ C.f. Kidd (1999:152) for a similar declension of prefixes for the noun “food.”

The Nivacle refer to the action of “handing over” food using the verb *jut* (“to give” or “to offer”) and the food that has been handed over is referred to as *jut'ai* (“one gives”). Once a person has decided to “give” the food that they have acquired either through work, “asking,” or through being given it as a gift, over to the household then that food becomes available for all permanent residents of that household to help themselves to. As Rosengren writes for the Matsigenka hunter, “It is consequently not as the hunter that the man receives meat but as a member of the household” (1987a: 77). The same goes for crops that individuals have planted in the household garden plot. As one older man explained to me,

There is no need for anyone in my house to ask permission to take plants from the garden. For example, I planted the manioc that we were eating at lunchtime today, but if I'm not home and my daughter wants to eat some, then she can take it (*“yi-chauj pa nucsich”*). There is no need to ask me or anyone else in the house.

The food that is prepared in the household is therefore goods that have been acquired by individuals within the household. This is food that has been acquired by both men and women, prepared by women and consumed by men and women together. Often people from outside the household will visit and have a meal there.²⁴ Some weekends if it is near an election or if the leader manages to convince the local government that they need additional food supplies, then the community will organize a communal meal either prior to or during the matches. One of the leaders explained to me that with development organizations, “*El que no llora no mama*” (“He who doesn't cry doesn't suckle”).²⁵ What he meant was that if you do not ask or complain about your situation, then you get nothing. He elaborated, “If a community wants a school, then they need to tell them that they want a school, and if they want some cattle, then the same thing. They need to ask for them or they will get nothing.” The relationship between the

²⁴ As Alvarsson puts it, “No-one is invited to a meal, but all are welcome” (1988:210).

²⁵ When I later visited Buenos Aires I discovered that this is a line from a tango known as Cambalache, one of the verses of which goes:

<i>Siglo veinte, cambalache</i>	Twentieth century, bazaar
<i>Problemático y febril!</i>	Problematic and feverish!
<i>El que no llora no mama,</i>	He who doesn't cry, doesn't suckle,
<i>Y el que no afana es un gil</i>	And he who doesn't steal is a fool

(Cambalache 1935, Juan Santos Discépolo)

Nivacle and outsiders is very much as Kidd (1997; 1999:194) describes for the Enxet, where, rather than seeing their relationship with outsiders such as missionaries and politicians as being one of “exchange,” they regard such people as kinds of leaders. The Enxet have transformed the use of their term *wese* (“leader”) from referring to the most generous and therefore poorest member of the community to referring to powerful White people who are characterized by their ability to accumulate material possessions. These outsiders are expected to be generous towards them, with no expectation of return.²⁶ It is very rare for the Nivacle to offer anything to outsiders, yet they have the expectation that the White person will behave like the epitome of a good leader and show great generosity towards them. Often when the leader Carlos was meeting with politicians or development workers he would wear a hat and sunglasses that he had bought in Filadelfia. This was so that he could “copy the Whites” (“*noyojesh-ch’e japi Samtô*” or “*nach’etesba napi Samtô*”) in the hope of being able to receive more “help.”

During communal meals, groups of women who either shared the same household or who were “close” kin would cook together in the communal kitchen. Several different fires would be lit and different women would use the ingredients that they had been given to cook a meal. Communal meals were either called *yan’e’vatjulb* (“putting things down in the same place”) (see section below on gambling) or *la olla común* (“the common pot”). When eating communal meals, men and women would eat apart. If the community had a White visitor then some of the men would sit at the table on chairs under the porch in front of the schoolhouse. The women would sit on their mats cross-legged in the central plaza under the shade of one of the trees or under the church. As I shall show in the following section, the women who have eaten together will usually also sit together in small groups during the volleyball match and will also play together in the same team. It is the intimacy that is created during the sharing of the meal that provides the basis for the creation of further forms of sociality at community and inter-community-levels.

²⁶ This view contrasts somewhat with Renshaw (1986:202), who has written that “exchange” characterises the relationship between indigenous people and outsiders. He explains that indigenous people will usually only give to these outsiders on the expectation that they will receive something back in return (2002:162).

7.4. “This Side” and “The Other Side”

During the football and volleyball matches as well as during games of *tsucôc*, the men and women of Jotoicha would divide themselves into two competing teams that they referred to as “this side” (*ta’vai-elb-sbi*) and “the other side” (*ts’isbi-elb*). Within these two “sides” there were some women who played volleyball and others who did not play, instead preferring to watch. As well as playing against each other and sitting in separate groups when they were watching the matches, the teams also named themselves after the two best-known football teams in Paraguay, which were Olimpia and Cerro Porteño. Those who played for Olimpia tended to wear items of clothing that were black and white (Olimpia’s team colours), whilst those who played for Cerro Porteño would wear the team colours of blue and red.²⁷ The distinction that people would make between “this side” and “the other side” was formed mainly around notions of relatedness that were conceived of through dividing the community up according to the two “sides” of the central path. As described in Chapter 4, Jotoicha was built along a straight path and people would refer to the different “sides” in terms of different “sides” of the path. The center was the plaza and the two “sides” were discussed as though they radiated out of this central hub. The actual division was not so clear-cut, however. Whilst the majority of people from each “side” did in fact belong to one side of the community or the other, there were also many people who did not live on the same “side” as their other team members. In spite of these technicalities, those who were from “this side” were considered to be the same as ego, or *ve’lba sham* (“one together”), whereas those who were from “the other side” were said to be “other people” or “different” (*vena’lba*). This does not mean that such people were neither kin nor affines, because, as I will show, ego’s kin and affines were, in fact, present on both “sides.”

During the course of the matches the women would take turns either watching or playing volleyball. Those who liked to play were called the “*yi-yu’-sha’neŕ*” and were said to “know” (*yi-tô’yesh-ch’è*) how to play volleyball, whilst there were others who “did not know” how to play (*nin tô’yesh-ch’è*). Any individual who was participating in a sporting activity during a particular point in time was known as a “*pelota lhavo*” (M) or a “*pelota lhavoque,*” (F) which means “ball person” or “ball specialist.” As I explained in Chapter

²⁷ Their association with team colours extended not just to the clothing people wore. The women would also knit bags in the colour of their team, paint their chairs in the team colours and dress their children in their colours.

6, this is a term that is linked to the Nivacle conception of “knowledge” and “skill” and is also used to refer to a person who is working on a particular task. Whether a woman played volleyball on a particular day would usually depend on whether she felt like playing. If she did not feel like it then another woman who felt like it would play. The teams of eight who played together during a particular match were not considered a definite composite whole, but instead were based on a particular division of the community that I will discuss below.²⁸ I calculated there to be approximately thirty women on each “side” who had “knowledge” of volleyball and who had played on different occasions.

The Nivacle women had a particular aesthetics of playing volleyball that differed from how Paraguayans would play it. The most significant difference with the Nivacle women’s game was that they played with a size 6 basketball, which is very hard and heavy, instead of a standard size 5 volleyball, which is lighter and much bouncier. Only the young girls used the latter. The Nivacle women’s aesthetics of play was also markedly different from the standard men’s game in that it was much slower and required a far greater degree of strength in the arms and wrists. Whilst with conventional volleyball players would use a variety of different kinds of shots including jump serves,²⁹ digs,³⁰ hits,³¹ forearm passes,³² spikes³³ and line shots,³⁴ Nivacle women used a relatively narrow range of shots that were mainly underarm, including digs and forearm passes. This combined with the weight of the ball and the fact that the net was almost 7 feet high, made it a much slower game that required a great deal of strength but not that much speed. If the ball went too far away, the women would tend to just leave it rather than run for it, and I never at any point witnessed a Nivacle woman perform one of the diving digs that are so commonplace in American beach volleyball. Instead, the emphasis is on strength, measurement and control in one’s movement, combined

²⁸ Stuchlik (1976:163) writes that the sports club in a Mapuche community “cannot be conceived of as a discrete group which clearly includes some members and clearly excludes some others; it is impossible, for example, to make a list of the members of the Coipuco sports club. In other contexts, the team may be narrowed to include only the eleven players.”

²⁹ A serve that is started by the server tossing the ball into the air and jumping into and hitting the ball when it is in its downward motion.

³⁰ Passing the ball when it has been struck forcefully by the opponent and is close to the floor in an upward fashion with the forearms joined from the elbow to the wrist with the player striking the ball with the fleshy part of their forearm in an upward motion.

³¹ When the ball is hit with an overhand, forceful shot.

³² When a player joins their arms from the elbow to the wrist and strikes the ball with the fleshy part of their forearm in an underhand type of motion.

³³ A forceful strike with the fist in a downward motion.

³⁴ A ball that is spiked down an opponent’s sideline.

with close cooperation with one's teammates. This, I believe, reflects a much broader Nivacle aesthetics of movement in which calm, slow, patient movements and gestures are constitutive of a "knowledgeable" person, whilst rapid, panicky or aggressive movements are for children, White people and crazy people.³⁵

Those who were not playing were said to be "those who watch" (*yi-van-sha'nez*). As mentioned above, women who were watching always sat in small groups of between 3 and 10 in different positions around the central plaza. These groups usually comprised women who were "close" kin such as mother and daughter, but could equally be sisters or mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. There were no rules and people could sit with whoever they wanted to, although usually the same people would sit together. There would always be copious amounts of *terré* being consumed. If it were the right season, women would also bring along pieces of fruit such as grapefruit or oranges to snack on, or tortillas and bread if they had just made some. Such foodstuffs would be shared amongst those who were sitting together.

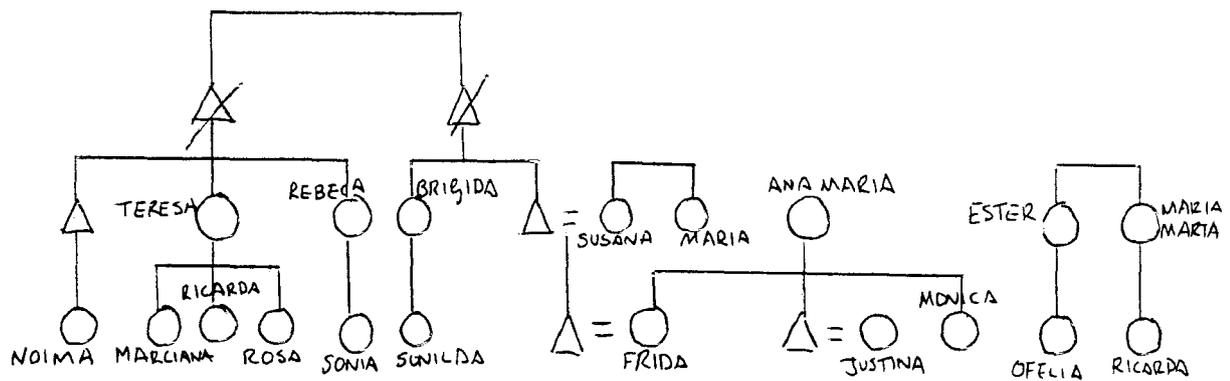
While the women all played for one "side" or the other, all the women of Jotoicha considered themselves to be *chifachei* (co-residents) and would often say "*ve'lha ts'ivee nava yitsatis napi pelota lhavoquiez*" ("The women who play volleyball here are one community"). The term "*chifa*," which was usually used to refer to a co-resident, translates literally as "one who participates in the action." It could therefore be said that co-residents are people who participate in the action of living together. This is a powerful concept in the Central Chaco as people were very definite as to which community they came from, who the leader was and who their *chifas* (co-residents) were. A co-resident is expected to be generous towards other co-residents and to want to help and participate in communal activities. Conversely, someone who is individualistic, selfish and stingy was said to be "*nintachifad*" ("not a co-resident"). More significantly in the context of this discussion, "co-residency" also encompasses a way of perceiving non-co-residents that was articulated during inter-community volleyball matches.

During my fieldwork I asked Teresa to tell me who some of the women were who were on her team or "side." Those she mentioned first were her three co-resident daughter ("*y-óse?*") Marciana, Ricarda and Rosa. Ricarda still lived in the same house as Teresa,

³⁵ Such an aesthetics of comportment appears to be commonplace in lowland South America. See, for example, Belaunde (1992) and McCallum (1989; 2001).

whilst both Marciana and Rosa were married and had their own houses in Jotoicha. Teresa's FBD Brigida, whom she calls *yi-chita'jô* ("my elder sister, she really is") and Brigida's daughter Sonilda (*yi-facchee*) also played on Teresa's side as did her BD Noima Ovelar (*yi-facchee*) who lived four houses away. The wife of her FBS Susana Poqui de Ovelar (*yi-facchis'a*) and her sister María (*ni-lba-velhche-a*) also played on her side, as did Susana's daughter-in-law Frida (*ni-lba-velhche-a*). Frida's sister Mónica (*ni-lba-velhche-a*) also played for this side and was said by some to be the captain and leader of the team. This was a highly contested point, however, with some of the women laughing when I asked them whether Mónica was the captain.³⁶ Mónica's mother-in-law Ana María (*ni-lba-velhche-a*) and her sister-in-law Justina Acosta (*ni-lba-velhche-a*) (who was the sister of Teresa's son-in-law Jorge) also supported this side. Sisters Ester and María Marta Benítez (the leader's wife) and their two daughters Ofelia and Ricarda also played for and support this side. Teresa's younger sister Rebeca (*yi-ch'injô*) and her daughter Marciana (*yi-facchee*) were the final key players. Figure 7.2. below is a diagram of the relationship between these women.

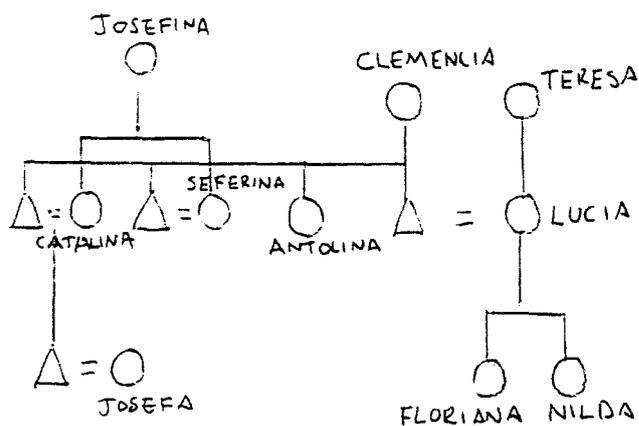
Figure 7.2. Members of Teresa's "Side"



³⁶ This coincides with other instances when I asked about other self-appointed leaders such including one young woman who had said that she was the *caanvacche* (female leader of the community). This was a result of one of the multi-national development projects that had arrived in the community that had a gender-equality aspect to their programme that asked for each community to nominate female leaders. Most of the other women just thought that it was funny and would laugh about it because their legitimacy was highly questionable.

As can be observed from the relationship terms that Teresa used to describe her relationship with these women, some of these women were not her “close” kin at all and were in fact her affines. However, when considered from the perspective of each of the women in the team, all were linked by “close” relationships through being either mother and daughter or sisters. When considering who, from Teresa’s perspective, were on “the other side,” it soon becomes clear that she has an equally wide range of relationships with these women ranging from “close” kin to non-kin. The first member of “the other side” (*ts’isbi-elb*) was Teresa’s eldest daughter Lucía (*c’utsja-esb y-óse* “old woman is my daughter”), who had been married for over 15 years to José (*yi-tômit’a*). Lucía’s two daughters Floriana (*yi-nots’ójqee*) and Nilda (*yi-nots’ójqee*) also played for her team. José’s mother Clemencia (*ni lha-velhche-a*) also played for “the other side,” as did her daughter Antolina (*ni lha-velhche-a*) and her other daughters-in-law Seferina (*ni lha-velhche-a*) and Catalina (*ni lha-velhche-a*). Seferina and Catalina’s mother Josefina (*ni-lha-velhche-a*) also played for “the other side,” as did Catalina’s daughter-in-law Josefa (*yi-nots’ójqee*). From Teresa’s perspective, “the other side” also comprised both “close” kin in the form of her daughter and granddaughters as well as women who were her daughter’s husband’s kin and who she called “non-kin” (*“ni lha-velhcheivot-a”*). Figure 7.3. depicts the relationship between the women who played on “the other side” of the community.

Figure 7.3. Members of “The Other Side” of Jotoicha



Amongst those who Teresa considered to be on “the other side” were her eldest daughter, her two granddaughters and daughter’s husband’s kin. From Teresa’s perspective, most of these women were her daughter’s affines, although her daughter Lucía considered herself to be “close” to her mother-in-law and her husband’s kin. When she married she went to live with her husband’s household as many of her own brothers and sisters were still very young and lived in her mother’s household. Over time, Lucía became increasingly “used to” (*faijan*) her mother-in-law (*yi-cact’è*) as she worked alongside her and when she had her daughters her mother-in-law helped her a great deal. Thus, whilst Lucía had many “close” kin on Teresa’s team, she was “used to” the women on “the other side” and so would play with them.

During volleyball matches that were played between communities, it was “the community” (*na yitsaat*) that was described as being “this side,” whilst those from the other community (*non yi-chifas-a*) were “the other side.” However, whilst the distinction might initially appear simple and clear-cut, in reality it is just as complex as intra-community relations, reflecting the Nivacle dispersed kindred described in Chapter 4. I shall continue with my example of Teresa and assume that Jotoicha were playing against the neighbouring community of San Miguel. This community was, in fact, Jotoicha’s most common opponent and these communities would usually play against each other at least once a week either at the weekends or during the week. Teresa’s elder sister Rita Juana (*yi-chita*) lived there. Rita Juana had two sons and her eldest son had two daughters named María (*yi-nots’ójquee*) and Julia (*yi-nots’ójquee*), who also played volleyball. Teresa and Rita Juana also had a cousin (MBD) called Mónica (*yi-ch’injô*), who had two daughters named Ana (*yi-noth’ójquee*) and Adriana (*yi-nots’ójquee*). Mónica’s husband Eduardo (*yi-facl’u*) had a sister named Victoria (*ni lha-velhche-a*) who played alongside her daughter Linda (*ni lha-velhche-a*).

It is clear that from Teresa’s perspective, the volleyball team from San Miguel comprised “close” kin, affines and non-kin in much the same way as “the other side” of Jotoicha did. Those who were “similar” and those who were “different” during these matches had the potential to be continually recast with every changing context. During lunchtime, all of Teresa’s daughters were “the same” as her as they were all kin eating their midday meal together. During an intra-community volleyball match between the residents of Jotoicha, her daughter was cast as being from “the other side” alongside her

affines. Then during an inter-community match, community members all regarded themselves as *chifas* (co-residents) and so they were “the same” and it was the other community that was different. This is reflected linguistically through the term *ve’lha sham*. This term means “a oneness of people.” It indicates a plurality of passive subjects and is generally used to describe different spatial cohesions of people. It can therefore refer to similarity at any scale, whether it is between household members, members of the same volleyball team, residents of the same community, residents of the same agricultural colony, or all Nivacle people. The volleyball teams are created through different manipulations of these senses of “oneness.”

Witherspoon and Peterson (1995) write that the Navajo conceive of the whole as relational and the sum of dynamic yet complementary elements. This could be summed up through the image of yin and yang that constitute complementary yet opposing pairs such as earth/sky, male/female or night/day. It is through being together that these relational parts achieve oneness. However, the whole that they describe is asymmetrical in the sense that its contingent parts are never exactly the same in either shape or in form. This holistic asymmetry is one of underlying unity and beauty that is created through the dynamic interplay between yin and yang that reflects a world in perpetual movement. The contingent parts therefore define the whole, but they are constantly interacting and so their composition is always changing through movement. Witherspoon and Peterson call this movement “dynamic symmetry,” reflecting the ebb and flow resulting from the interaction of binary pairs. They write,

In Navajo philosophy, activity – change, process, event, movement, and transformation – is the primary attribute of the universe, an unmarked category in Navajo language...Static is the marked idea; active is the unmarked premise...The fundamental dimension of the Navajo universe is activity, movement, or change.

Witherspoon and Peterson (1995:112-3)

The differences between the volleyball teams were in no way binding or stable and there was always potential for transformation and movement, whether the relationships were within a community or between communities. Amongst the Nivacle women, I suggest

that “the whole” is variable depending on context. In one situation it might be “the community,” whilst in another situation it might be “the colony.” These are not “givens,” but rather they are processual relationally achieved states, with the basis of their divisions being contingent and constantly changing. The nature of the dualistic concepts that overlie this holistic asymmetry varies depending on context. In one context they could be different teams or “sides” of a community, whilst in another context they could be different communities or colonies. The underlying premise during each of these contexts is the achievement of sociality and convivial states of being. It is therefore not the dualism and the distinction between the teams that is significant, but rather it is the sum of its parts and what is created as a result of its establishment that matters to the Nivacle, and that is why these divisions are created in the first place. Within each team, the process of eating, chatting and drinking *tereré* together further enhances the experience of intimacy and enjoyment and it is the achievement of this state of being in every individual person that enables it to be created and henceforth perpetuated.

It is the same relationship that is being re-enacted at different scales through different relationships and expressions of mutuality. A useful way of conceptualizing these changes of scale ranging from household to ethnic group is through Wagner’s (1991b) writings on the fractal person and Strathern’s (1991) notion of self-similarity across scales, a concept that was initially borrowed from Haraway’s (1985) concept of the part-human and part-machine cyborg. Wagner explains that in order to understand the great-men systems of the New Guinea Highlands, instead of interpreting different sizes and compositions of aggregates as parts of a much larger whole, we should understand different scales as being versions of the whole. Instead of being parts of the whole, they *are* the whole, with this whole manifesting itself through different fractal instantiations. Wagner writes, “A fractal person is never a unit standing in relation to an aggregate, or an aggregate standing in relation to a unit, but always an entity with relationship integrally implied” (1991b: 163). This has been expressed in different ways by other lowland South Americanists, including Oliveira (2003), who describes the village-level rituals that take place amongst the Mebengokré as having a fractal nature in that they replicate household kinship relations. He writes that for the Mebengokré, humanness can only be achieved in the village. It is village life that defines what it is to be Mebengokré. “Life at the wider, village level has to be constructed as a fac-simile of the

state of affairs that obtains within the circle of people with whom one is in most intimate terms” (2003:130). He continues,

Life at the village level is thus seen as a fac-similar of life among the most intimate group of conviviality: something that, for some intents and purposes at least, can be in the place of the original state of affairs that obtain within this most intimate circle of people. One can see here how misleading a distinction between the ‘domestic’ and the ‘public’ can be in this context. Because Mebengokré conceive life at the village ‘level’ as a fractal of that within each individual’s most intimate group. Village life is ideally an icon of life within the manifold intimate groups that compose it. A whole that resembles (in many ways) the manifold wholes ‘of lesser order’ that are comprised in it.

Oliveira (2003:144)

Gow has also written that amongst the Piro, notions of kinship should extend to the whole community and that co-residents should treat one another like kin. He writes, “Living together and sharing food are what kin are meant to do, so the practical enactment of coresidence and of sharing food makes people interact with each other as kin” (1991:194). Others have stressed the ephemeral nature of notions of “similarity” and “difference” and the fact that relationships can vary depending on context. Lepri (2005), for example, writes that kinship amongst the Ese Ejja is about degrees of sameness, similarity and difference that can be shifted and inverted in different ways depending on an individual’s particular situation. This has also been expressed in terms of flexibility in the concept of “Otherness.” Lorrain (1994:131-2), for example, explains that amongst the Kulina, “This category is flexible: it can extend inwards so that within a single cluster the geographically most distant villages, and even neighbouring but *boque* kin, can be referred to as “other people”; outwards it can extend to other Indian groups, and even to humankind as a whole.”³⁷ On a similar vein, Lagrou has written that amongst the Cashinahua, “All categories or concepts that refer to ‘others’ are conceived in such a way that they always end up referring as much to the category of otherness as to that of self” (2000:164).

³⁷ See also Belaunde (1992:48), Jackson (1983:227) and Rivière (1984:71).

Amongst the Nivacle, the volleyball teams are two and yet one at the same time. The teams are created for the purpose of the games and the divisions are significant only insofar as they create the basis for proper reciprocity through establishing similar and dissimilar entities (see also Overing 1983-4:345). Matches provide people with the opportunity to socialize, share and laugh with members of individuals' dispersed kindred from near and far and the divisions are created in terms of the community one resides in.³⁸ The dispersed nature of the Nivacle kindred means that divisions that are created according to co-residence necessarily incorporate a variety of individuals including ego's "close" kin, "distant" kin, affines and non-kin. It is these opportunities for different individuals to continually re-establish ties with kin both within and without their community that enables the Nivacle of Jotoicha to live a social life. I shall now go on to describe one of the ways in which sociality is created through the gambling of clothes that the Nivacle women engage in.

7.5. *Yan'e'vatjulh*, or the Sociality of "Putting Things Down in the Same Place"

A match of any sort would seem almost inconceivable to the Nivacle without some kind of bet taking place. Métraux writes, "Interest in the game is stimulated by high gambling stakes, laid by the leaders and members of each team...All Pilcomayo River Indians are rabid gamblers" (1946:334). This point is mirrored by Chase-Sardi's description of *casati*, a Nivacle version of hockey (or *yukasati* in his ethnography), where a leader would visit a neighbouring community in order to invite them to a match. Whilst drinking *cumjó*, an alcoholic beverage made by the women from fermented maize, honey, manioc or watermelon, he would present the other leader with the items that his community intended to bet, for example a poncho, a shell necklace, clothing, rifles or horses. Despite several decades of intense missionary activity, and although *casati* is no longer played, gambling remains a widely- (if not universally-) practiced activity amongst the Nivacle. The Nivacle term for gambling is *yan'evajulh*, which is a composite verb deriving from the root *[-]an*. Depending on the suffix, this verb can mean "to put," "to hang," "to cook," "to mount" or "to receive in one's house." As mentioned earlier, it refers to communal meals where people are cooking together in the central plaza of the

³⁸ Gow has written, "For the native people of the Bajo Urubamba, it is obvious that the community is a phenomenon of kinship" (1991:195).

community. In the case of gambling, *yan'e* can best be translated as “to put something in a definite place,” with the suffix [-] *julb* meaning “to do the same as another.” *Yan'evatjulb* could therefore be translated as “to put things in one place as do others.”

Gambling is practiced by both men and women exclusively within the context of sporting activities and games. Whilst men gamble with money (*peso/plata*), women gamble with either clothing or household utensils. As described in Chapter 6, Nivacle men received money mainly through the short-term or long-term employment with their Mennonite bosses. They were also able to acquire money through selling cash crops, logs or wild birds to traveling salesmen or through purchasing goods such as cigarettes and sweets in Filadelfia and Asunción and selling them at marked up prices in the community. The average wage during my fieldwork was approximately 30,000Gs (£3) per week. A wager is referred to as “That which I put down” (*chi y-an'ei*), with a typical wager being approximately 2,000Gs (£0.20). The women used their working clothes (*cóvenjal*) as wagers, with the most common item being the skirt. They always wore their most beautiful skirts to the match and I was told that they would never gamble with these ones, only with their older working clothes. Household utensils such as plates, cups, pots and bowls were also gambled, with the general practice being that like was always gambled for like. While it would be interesting to compare the men’s gambling practices with those of the women, during my fieldwork I spent most of my time watching the volleyball with the women and much less time with the men. It is for this reason that I have chosen to focus solely on the women’s gambling in this section.

Before a match, the women would be seated on the ground next to the volleyball court in groups as described above. The woman from one side would take it in turns to raise the item that she was intending to use as a wager during that match into the air and wave her arm from side to side. The women from the other side would all be observing this and the woman who liked the skirt and thought it was beautiful (*is*) would raise her chosen wager into the air. The bet between these two women was now sealed and the two skirts would be tied together by another women and placed in the center along with all the other women’s wagers.³⁹ While a bet is something that is carried out by two “sides,” it is essentially an individual transaction between two individual women, whether they are players or spectators. A similar point relating to the specific nature of

³⁹ *Japi Nivacchei y-an'e cava vat-t'uijat-chi-yis* “The Nivacle women put down their wagers.”

transactions has been noted by Goldman who writes, “The distribution [of fish], according to an important Cubeo principle, is personal and never anonymous or generalized” (1963:54). He continues, “The point about Cubeo property rights is that generosity and sharing go along with the assertion of individual rights. The privilege of the individual is thereby respected” (1963:74). It is therefore each individual woman’s choice whether she takes part in gambling or not, and it is also her decision which article she chooses to gamble for, with this being dependent on whether she considers the item to be “beautiful” or not.

The Nivacle term for “property” is the noun *venjat*. The Nivacle conceive of goods as being the private property of one individual to the exclusion of others.⁴⁰ That is not to say that ownership was never contested (see Kidd 1999:142ff), but an owner is generally considered to be the person who “cares for” or “observes” (*clóvalb*) their property, although this term could also be extended to include “caring for” people, particularly children. A person is also considered to be the owner of an item if they have bought it (*cashai*), if they have been given it (*tis-esh*) or if they found it (*cut*). These goods include clothing, crockery, pots, bicycles, stereos, torches, and also extend to the ownership of domestic animals such as chickens, sheep and dogs. Even goods that have been given to “the community” by development organisations were always interpreted by “the community” as in fact belonging to one particular person. This was often a source of great tension as certain leaders would inform development organisations to deliver goods for “the community” to their home on the understanding that they would distribute them later. The leader would then deceive “the community” into believing that the goods had actually been given to them personally as a gift or alternatively they would pick out all the best quality pieces and distribute the rest. I made this mistake on several occasions during the early stages of my fieldwork when one of the community pastors convinced me that “the community” needed a cassette recorder to record the church songs with. He told me that they wanted to send on several of their recordings to the Catholic radio station “Radio Pa’i Puku” but they could not do it because they needed a recorder. Thinking that this was an excellent idea I dutifully purchased them a cassette recorder during one of my trips to Asunción. On my return I handed it to the pastor, pleased that I had been in a position to help “the community” with something that they

⁴⁰ This seems to be common amongst indigenous peoples of lowland South America. Also see, for example, Alvarsson (1988:208), McCallum (1989:200), Overing (1993b: 47) and Renshaw (1986:182) and Seelwische (1974:155).

needed. However, several weeks later, one of the other pastors approached me and asked me if I could buy him a cassette recorder so that he could record the church songs. I told him that I had already bought a cassette recorder for “the community” and that if he asked the other pastor to borrow it then he would surely oblige, as it was “communal property.” His reply was that he had seen Alberto with a new cassette player but that it was Alberto’s. He then went on to tell me that I should refrain from handing over any “community” items to Alberto as he did not look after them properly and that I should give them to his brother-in-law, who was one of the schoolteachers instead. However, if I were to have done that, I would have been effectively giving the recorder to his brother-in-law as his personal property instead.

The first way in which ownership can be expressed is through the noun *venjat*, with *na-yi-venjat* meaning “my property.” A second term is *vaatsha*, which means “me” or “mine” and is usually used in a secondary sense to mean, “what is mine.” For example, “*achaaj ni yi-vaatsha*,” means, “give me what is mine.” A third term is *cló*, which refers specifically to domestic animals so that, *na-yi-cló* means “my domestic animal” or “my property.” This term can also mean “my skill” or “my capacity.”⁴¹ A fourth way of expressing ownership is through the use of prefixes followed by the noun stating what is owned. Therefore, *yi-nuu* is “my dog”, *a-nuu* is “your dog”, *lh-nuu* is “his or her dog”, *yi-nuu-elb* is “our dog” literally translated as “the father of me and others,”⁴² and *casti-nuu* is “our dog.”⁴³ The verb *tsót’aj* means, “to be the owner of” something and also means “to be (morally) straight or correct” or “to possess.” However, this verb uses the causative suffix such that *tsi-tsót’aj-esh* means, “it makes me the owner of.” This implies that ownership is not a given, but rather it is something that is processual and is created over time.

In the lowland South American literature on property, distinctions have sometimes been made between goods that have been produced by the owner and those that have been acquired in other ways. The argument is that there is a metonymical relationship between the person who makes the item and the object itself.⁴⁴ A distinction is also

⁴¹ For more on the relationship between “domestic animals,” “ownership,” and “skill” see Chapter 6.

⁴² Seelwische (1975:56) refers to this as the “exclusive plural” because in this case ego is referring to others who are not in the presence of those with whom he or she is conversing.

⁴³ Seelwische (1975:56) refers to this as the “inclusive plural”

⁴⁴ See, for example, McCallum who writes that amongst the Cashinahua, “things are aspects of the person who owns them” (1989:201). See also Renshaw (2002) and Seelwische (1974).

frequently made between objects that are made and manufactured ones that have been purchased. For example, the Piaroa describe artefacts as being a specific individual's "thought" (*a'kwa*) (Overing 1997:8). Guss (1989:69) similarly explains that the Yekuana distinguish between objects that are made and manufactured "stuff." Whilst it would not be expressed in such a linguistically specific manner, this is something that the Nivacle would imply. An individual could say of an object *yi-snat-esb lhavaatsba* ("I made it/I created it"), however it does not make it any more metonymically connected to that person than other manufactured "things," which the Nivacle call *matas*. All goods, whether they have been produced by the owner or not, are equally the personal property of their owner. The skirts and durable goods that are gambled are therefore the personal property of the woman that is gambling with it. It is neither the property of the household nor the property of the team and each woman makes her own decision as to what will happen to that item as well as what she is prepared to gamble it for.

Once everyone who wants to gamble has placed their bet, the match begins. Those who are watching the match sit with whoever they want, whether it be their kin from Jotoicha or others who have come to visit (*jôchi-ei*) from a neighbouring community. The women who have come to visit will often bring with them gifts (*tis-esb*) such as cooked sweet potato, watermelon, grapefruit, or tortillas that they share with the others who are also watching the match. They will also drink *tereré* together. All this is done in silence as they devote their full attention to the match. The only time I ever witnessed adults shouting was during volleyball matches. Women would cheer on those from their "side" and instruct them on how they should hit the ball and where they should be standing. This was particularly the case with the younger women, who were effectively being trained by the older women in how to play.

When the match is finished and the winners are decided, the women would immediately stand up and huddle round the pile of clothing. One woman would take charge and raise each pair of skirts in turn. The woman from the winning "side" would acknowledge that a particular skirt belonged to her and she would receive the skirt that she had gambled with as well as the one that had belonged to the woman that she had gambled with. The women would enthusiastically arrive at the matches with a large bag full of clothing that they intend to bet with. Some weeks they would return home laden with clothing, and other weeks with hardly anything. Skirts and other items of clothing

were constantly being circulated around the colony and I would often see certain items of clothing being worn by one woman one week and another the next. When I first arrived in the Chaco I remember having bought Teresa a yellow skirt as a gift during one of my visits to Filadelfia. The very next week I noticed that one of the women who lived at the other end of the community was wearing a yellow skirt exactly the same as the one that I had given Teresa. I had wondered what the connection might have been and soon came to realize that it was gambling that had created this movement of clothes. Several weeks later I noticed that the skirt had worked its way back to Teresa's "side" as her daughter was then wearing it.

Woodburn (1982) has described Hadza gambling, which takes place through a game of chance. The game requires participants to throw bark discs against a tree; with the winner being the one whose discs fall in the correct formation. The participants do not gamble with everyday objects, but rather with ones that are not widely available in all regions. This, he argues, enables "scarce and local objects (to be) circulated throughout the country" (1982:443) in a form that does not create binding economic ties between individuals or corporate groups. Instead, "transactions are neutralized and depersonalized by being passed through the game" (Ibid.). With both kinsmen and affines gambling against each other, the game also prevents the development of a unilateral flow of goods or dependency relationships between individuals and so serves to reduce individual accumulation of non-perishable goods that cannot be immediately consumed.⁴⁵

The gambling that the Nivacle women partake in is very different to that described by Woodburn. First, rather than attempting to "neutralize" or "depersonalize" transactions by passing them through the game, the Nivacle women's transactions are in fact highly personal and significant in relation to each woman's web of relationships. It is gambling that provides women with the opportunity to socialize and participate in this community-level activity. Furthermore, it is practiced with individual intent and purpose and not as some kind of generalized blanket-gesture where they are carrying out impersonal "transactions" with those whom they need to "exchange" with. On the topic of reciprocity, Oliveira has written that amongst the Mebengokré, "One gets from others not because one has given to him/her, but to show that one is on good terms with that

⁴⁵ This point is, of course, linked to Woodburn's (1982) theory of immediate- and delayed-return societies, where hunter-gatherer societies fit squarely into his "immediate return" category.

person” (2003:138-9). Gambling is about mutuality and the creation of sociality between women, it is not an impersonal or necessary in the Western economic sense of the term.⁴⁶ Its purpose lies in the desire for women to interact as social and relational beings. Renshaw has described sharing amongst the peoples of the Gran Chaco as,

A positively valued ethic in itself. Indeed, one often finds foodstuffs being exchanged between households that have no need to share at all...sharing is obviously not determined by any sense of economic ‘rationality’ but is a function of social relations and is primarily a means by which the group, usually the residential group, defines itself. This exchange of goods is not determined by kinship but provides the practical basis for kinship, the people with whom one exchanges food becoming as it were one’s kin.

Renshaw (2002:163)

The other aspect of Woodburn’s argument that differs from my experience amongst the Nivacle is the notion that gambling exists as a kind of “leveling mechanism” to prevent the individual accumulation of goods. None of the Nivacle women explained gambling to me as being about making sure that everyone ends up with the same amount of clothing. When they left for a volleyball match, they would all go in the hope of winning and returning with as many items of clothing as they could. Gambling was not carried out to ensure that those who “lacked” an item somehow managed to win something to “even things out.” If a woman was to require a skirt, she would only need to ask her “close” female kin if they would give her one of theirs, or else she would borrow one. Rather than being an exercise of necessity, I suggest that gambling serves the “purpose” of generating enjoyable social relations between women. It also seems to be a form of what Annette Weiner (1992) has termed “keeping-while-giving,” as the ebb and flow of gambling, eating, drinking and sociality mean that skirts often return to their original owners, only to be caught up once again in the peripatetic nature of Nivacle relationality.

⁴⁶ See Rosengren (1998:251) who writes that amongst the Matsigenka, the feeding of one’s spirit helper with tobacco and grass should not be seen as an “exchange relation but as an indication upon the bonds of ‘community’ between the two which is characterized by a mutual sharing of resources.”

7.6. Conclusion

In his description of the “social psychology” of the Mebengokré and the conviviality that is generated through sharing, Oliveira writes,

[It] is not that reciprocity should obtain in social relations, but that the relations should not cause ill-feeling in the individuals involved. . . Relations between persons, in sum, are not social but individuals. But the feelings and emotions involved in them are collective, and are molded as such”

Oliveira (2003:143)

The Nivacle share a similar positive value regarding sharing or mutuality in that it is always an individual endeavour and an individual decision. In the multiple social milieus in which mutuality is practiced, whether at household, inter-household, community or intercommunity levels, the same types of relationships are being created. Whether it is between individuals who regard themselves as “close” kin, “distant” kin or non-kin the processes are still the same in that people are endeavoring to generate desirable forms of sociality through the processes of becoming increasingly similar through eating and drinking together and through wearing each others’ clothing. The central concept running through all these transactions is that they are always carried out between two individuals who have established their relationship at a particular point in time and who have a particular desire and purpose for carrying it out.

This chapter began with a review of the recent lowland South American literature on “exchange” and the works of recent authors who have stressed the importance of sharing in the creation of sociality. I illustrated this through a discussion of the weekly sporting events that take place both within and between communities in Campo Loa and suggested that rather than seeing them as an outlet for violence, a more fruitful way of approaching them in the Nivacle context is to understand them as an expression of sociality. This is carried out in a number of ways, the key means being through mutual feeding which takes place both a “pre-match preparation” and also carried on throughout the duration of the afternoon. I went on to consider the significance of

teams and showed, in line with my earlier argument, that teams are not created on the basis of “difference,” but instead on the basis of “similarity” and a desire to share an enjoyable experience with co-residents. A key aspect of this was the momentary creation of relations of “similarity” and “difference” between individuals that would usually change the following week when a different kind of match was being played. The desire to become increasingly similar to either “close” kin, “distant” kin and non-kin and co-residents is a constant endeavor that encapsulates the everyday “work” of Nivacle humanity as it unfolds.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

During the final month of my stay in the Chaco, I was invited to attend the 15th birthday party of a young Nivacle woman called Julia. Juan and Ana, a young couple that I had been living with at the time, had invited me. I was aware that it was an important occasion in Paraguayan national society, although I had never been to a 15th birthday party before. On the evening of the party, Ana prepared dinner as usual but mentioned that she had only cooked a little as there would be lots to eat at the party. After we had eaten our meal of fried egg and bread, we washed, put on clean clothes, and made our way over to Julia's house. Julia was Ana's brother's daughter and Ana had brought along a present that she planned to give her at the party. She had bought Julia a T-shirt that she had purchased from a Bolivian travelling salesman who sold clothes throughout the Mennonite Colonies and who had passed through the community earlier in the week. Despite having debts (*tpói* lit: it's sour) with him, she managed to buy one of his T-shirts as she was able to pay it in full (*yi-ófisjat* "she made it reach"), and promised that she would clear her debts with him the following week. She had wrapped the T-shirt up in floral wrapping paper that she bought in Filadelfia and carried it over to Julia's house in her string bag.

As we approached Julia's house we could hear music playing as well as people chatting and laughing. We walked in through the gates and past the house into the patio at the back where everyone was seated. A light bulb had been wired up to the back of the house and I could see the other guests sitting in small groups on the benches and chairs that had been set out in the patio. As we passed the house and made our way towards the seating area, Ana handed her gift over to Julia's mother Marta. We then made our way over to the seating area and shook hands with some of the other guests before sitting down. We sat with Ana's elder sister and her husband and two daughters who had been drinking *tereré* before our arrival. We accepted their offer of *tereré* and engaged in light-hearted conversation with them. The music was quite loud so it was difficult to hear what the other guests were saying, but looking around there seemed to be at least thirty other guests who were all sitting in small groups chatting and drinking *tereré* together.

Ana's brother Roberto was standing with some of the other men at the side of the house barbecuing the cow that he had purchased from his Mennonite boss for the occasion. Marta was with her daughters setting out bowls of freshly cooked sweet potato, pumpkin, homemade bread and salad on the table she had set up just under the light, in view of all those who were seated. The table was dressed with a clean white tablecloth and all of Julia's presents were placed to one side. After several moments Roberto went over to the table with a large plateful of beef he had just cooked. Marta then signalled for everyone to make their way over to the table in order to receive their food. The food was set out as a buffet where people could help themselves to as much as they wanted. When everyone was seated with their food, Roberto said a prayer and people began eating what had just been cooked. When they had eaten their first serving, people returned to the table several times in order to fill their plates with more food.

After everyone had eaten as much as they could, Roberto stood in front of the table and welcomed everyone who had come along. He began talking about the importance of an adolescent's 15th birthday and the fact that they would soon be thinking about marriage and developing the "knowledge" necessary for adult life. He stressed the need for young people to go to school and that they should always be hard-working. As he spoke people nodded or said "*heeb*" ("yes") in agreement every so often. Julia looked rather embarrassed as she stood at the other side of the table in front of the large birthday cake that Marta had baked for her. The sponge cake was covered with thick white icing, small plastic figures and fifteen candles. After Roberto's speech, Marta went over to the cake and lit the candles. Everyone began singing "Happy Birthday" and Julia blew out all fifteen candles. Marta then cut the cake and offered everyone a slice, which they came up to receive before returning to their seats to watch Julia open her birthday presents.

All of Julia's presents were positioned around her birthday cake. All the guests had brought her a present (*vatlhis papu* lit. "Those who give gifts") and we waited in anticipation for her to begin opening them.¹ She opened her first present, which was a red T-shirt with a floral design on the front. She went on to open her next present and it was a green T-shirt with another design on it. She opened her next present and it was a

¹ People would also say "*yi tô'yi-ch'e lhavaatsha ti chi tis*" ("those who give gifts really know"). The verb *vatlhis* is derived from the noun *tis*, meaning "gift." It is usually "close" kin who give each other gifts ("*vatlhis papu lb-tatvelhavot*" meaning, "close' kin are those who exchange gifts").

light-blue T-shirt with yet another design on it. I was beginning to think what a coincidence it was that all three presents had been the same. It was not until she opened the seventh present, which was an identical coloured T-shirt that I started to wonder whether perhaps this was no coincidence at all. With every present she opened her guests would sit and comment on the T-shirt, saying how “*is*” (“it’s beautiful”) and “*is jum*” (“it’s really beautiful”) it was. No one commented on the fact that all of her presents were the same; thirteen T-shirts of differing colours and designs.

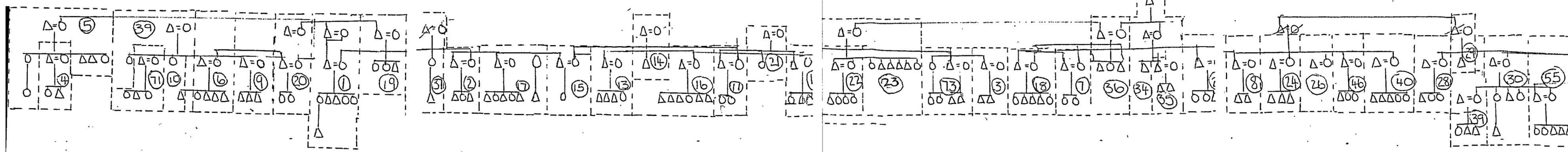
After opening all of her presents the party games began. Everyone joined in and we played a variety of games that all involved accompanying music. During one game we were divided into two teams where team members were attached to each other at the ankle by a piece of rope. The aim was to try to make the other team fall down by knocking them off-balance. In another game everyone had to hop within a demarcated circle and try to avoid being touched by the other team members. The games were all great fun and both the players and those who chose to watch were constantly laughing and shouting out advice to their fellow team-mates. The games carried on for over an hour until people started sitting down to drink *tereré* once more. Later on different individuals would stand up and tell humorous stories that would make the audience roar with laughter. Not long afterwards, people started making their way back home and it was not long before we followed and went home to bed.

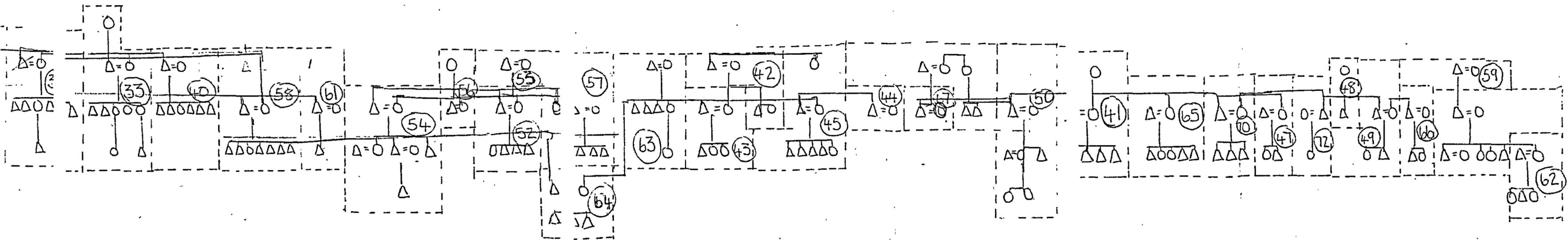
The events that took place during Julia’s 15th birthday party are, I believe, illustrative of some of the central themes in this thesis. “Knowledgeable” people are these who practice “knowledgeable” behaviour. The giving and receiving of gifts is an integral aspect of this, with such practices taking place between those who consider themselves to be “close” kin. At Julia’s birthday party, people were eating food that had been cooked by Marta and her daughters. Although not all the guests were “close” kin, they were all Julia’s “close” kin and this party presented an opportunity for people who were both similar and different to momentarily enjoy the intimacy of household relations through eating and having fun together. Such practices are generative of increased similarity, which is an ongoing process that takes place in all social milieus, whether at household, community or inter-community levels. Over time, this creates autonomous

other-regarding individuals who begin behaving towards each other in similar ways (*lbai'yaashvatjulh*) so that they become “similar” (“*lh-junashcb'evatjulh*”), though not “the same” (*junash julh*).

The presents that Julia received from her “close” kin are illustrative of this point: everyone had given her a T-shirt for her birthday that was similar though not identical to those given to her by the others. There was room for the exercise of an individual’s personal autonomy in deciding the kind of T-shirt to give her as well as its design and colour. This was an aesthetic choice of the part of individual woman who had purchased it and is a reflection of her own unique perception of beauty. The T-shirts were personal gifts that reflected the uniqueness of Julia’s relationships with each of the guests that she had invited.

Despite their insertion into the market economy, the Nivacle have managed to maintain a strong egalitarian ethic that forms the basis of their economic and social morality. This ethic is based on an underlying conviction of what constitutes “knowledgeable” behaviour that is more than just a “belief” or a “moral principle.” A “knowledgeable” person is a gendered productive person whose relations with other human beings can extend spatially often over hundreds and even thousands of kilometres. The practice of “knowledge” always opens up the possibility for the reactivation of “close” relationships, with the constant activation and reactivation of relationships forming the basis of Nivacle social life itself. Relatedness for the Nivacle is about the creation of “knowledgeable” people, and it is the everyday practice of “knowledgeable” behaviour that leads to a constant (re)generation of similars. “Knowledgeable” behaviour is a particular way of doing things that guides one’s actions in daily life and which forms the basis for Nivacle personhood itself.





Appendix B: Household Composition of Jotoicha

House Number	Total Members	No. Adults	No. Children	H/W	F/D	M/D	F/S	M/S	B/Z	WM/DH	WF/DH	HM/SW	HF/SW	MB/HZS
1	8	4	4	1	1	1	1	1						
2	5	2	3	1										
3	4	2	2	1										
4	4	2	2	1										
5	7	4	3	1	1	1	1	1						
6	6	2	4	1										
7	4	2	2	1										
8	4	2	2	1										
9	5	2	3	1										
10	2	2						1						
11	4	2	2	1										
12	5	2	3	1										
13	6	2	4	1										
14	3	3		1			1	1						
15	3	2	1	1										
16	8	2	6	1										
17	9	3	6	1					1					
18	7	2	5	1										
19	5	2	3	1										
20	5	3	2	1						1				
21	3	2	1	1										
22	6	2	4	1										
23	8	2	6	1										
24	5	2	3	1										
25	5	2	3	1										
26	2	2		1										
27	4	2	2	1										
28	5	2	3	1										
29	2	2												
30	7	4	3	1	2	2								
31	4	2	2	1										
32	10	6	4	1	4	4								
33	9	7	2	1	5									
34	3	3		1	1	1								
35	5	2	3	1										
36	7	4	3	1	1	2								
37	3	3		1	1	1								
38	7	2	5	1										
39	3	3		1	1	1								
40	8	2	6	1										
41	7	2	5	1										
42	4	2	2	1										
43	5	2	3	1										
44	2	2		1										
45	8	5	3	1	1	1				1				
46	5	2	3	1										
47	4	2	2	1										
48	4	2	2	1										
49	2	2						1						
50	7	5	2	3	2	2				1	1			
51	4	3	1	1	1	1								
52	6	3	3	1										1
53	2	2		1										
54	8	6	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
55	7	3	4	1	1	1								
56	3	3		2						1	1			
57	6	2	4	1										
58	5	2	3	1										
59	2	2		1										
60	7	5	2	2								1	1	
61	3	2	1	1										
62	5	2	3	1										
63	7	5	2	2			3	3				1	1	
64	5	2	3	1										
65	7	2	5	1										
66	4	2	2	1										
67	2	2		1										
68	5	2	3	1										
69	2	2		1										
70	5	2	3	1										
71	5	2	3	1										
72	3	2	1	1										
73	7	5	2	1	3	3								
TOTAL	342	191	151	77	26	22	7	9	2	5	3	3	3	1

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