CONCEPTUALIZING VULNERABILITY:
THE IMPACT, MEANING, AND THE HUMAN RESPONSE
TO SOCIAL CATASTROPHE

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
2009

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ABSTRACT

I determine how households and communities respond to vulnerabilities highlighted by catastrophe by employing a study of data from a social catastrophe. I explore the causal relationships of the 2006 Oaxacan Teacher-Strikes and resulting APPO-government standoff and rural central valley communities considering received economic support, patterns of migration, loss of work, and perceived impact to consider household and community ability to cope and recover from vulnerability. Using a political ecology framework I find that vulnerability to political strife is dependent upon the connection to Oaxaca City and that the strategies of coping and recovery are varied between households and communities. Marginality of communities and households coupled with the level of integration into Oaxaca City’s social structure are keys to understanding household and community vulnerability to the teacher strikes. The goal of my research is to identify how human populations adapt to disastrous circumstances.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout the graduate school process, there are many individuals who provide immeasurable amounts of support without which all of this would not be possible. To Dr. Jeffrey H. Cohen, my advisor, my deepest appreciation and gratitude for his guidance, patience, and words of wisdom, and for believing in me that humid day in August when I popped in his office and this journey began. Thanks also for providing me with the data from which the idea for this thesis sprang. To Drs. Arthur Murphy and Eric Jones, I am indebted for their guidance and generous offering of data, time, advice, and for always responding to random emails.

This thesis would not be possible without the use of data from research supported by the National Science Foundation grant BCS-0706795, Jeffrey H. Cohen, Principal Investigator, as well as the Ohio State University’s Department of Anthropology and the Initiative in Population Research.

My appreciation and thanks to my committee, Drs. Jeffrey Cohen, Mark Moritz, and Dorothy Noyes (of the Ohio State University), for their commitment, interest, and most especially, their perspectives. In addition, thank you to Dr. Morgan Liu for offering new insights and perspectives from which to build my future research.

Last, but definitely not least, I must acknowledge the love and support of my
fiancé, Michael George, without whom all of this would not be possible; you are my rock. To my parents, thanks for deciding at my law school graduation, and finally sharing with me, that I should go back to school and pursue anthropology. My humble gratitude, and sincere appreciation to: Michael and my family for believing in this journey and encouraging my pursuit of yet more degrees; to the cultural anthropology group here at the Department for helping me to develop an equation from which to frame this project; to Bernardo Rios for always helping me create titles, and to the rest of my cohort for time spent in amusements, procrastination, and venting; all of you are an integral part of what makes me successful and appreciative of the opportunities I have been given.
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Publication:

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Anthropology
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Oaxaca Teacher-Strikes

In the spring of 2006, social unrest erupted in Oaxaca, one of the poorest states in Mexico. Section 22 of the local teachers union (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, SNTE) assembled in its annual demand for wage increases and structural improvements, but what had been normally characterized as a peaceful mobilization, garnering little notice and public support developed into a violent stand-off between the state government and organizations siding with the union (Chibnik 2007:8-9). Soon the city was in the middle of a violent standoff between the Asemblea Popular del Pueblo Oaxaqueño (the APPO is an organization created by many organizations critical of the Oaxacan government) and the governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. Civil turmoil plagued the state as the governor attempted to maintain a stronghold on the capital and oust strikers from their blockade of the city center. The tourist-based economy of Oaxaca came to a virtual standstill due to the social unrest. Hotels and restaurants in the capital closed as tourism fell and the Guelaguetza Festival (a yearly celebration of the state’s native indigenous heritage) was cancelled (Cohen 2007:23). The Ruiz government was unable to govern the city, causing the government to instigate violent clashes with protestors, and continued through the fall. By November of 2006, President Fox sent federal public police forces to
oust the APPO and union from the square and return the city to state government control (see Chibnik; Cohen 2007:23-24; Hernández-Díaz; Waterbury).

1.2 Disasters

Disaster is a process/event combining a potentially destructive agent/force from the *natural, modified, or built environment* and a population in a socially and economically produced condition of vulnerability, resulting in a perceived disruption of the customary relative satisfactions of individual and social needs for physical survival, social order, and meaning (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002:4).

Disasters are the outcome of catastrophic natural *and* social events. Oliver-Smith argues disasters are “physical and social processes” (2002:25) and building on his approach, I explore how the teacher’s strikes and political unrest in Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, Mexico during 2006 and into 2007 lead to an economic and social collapse, exposing existing and arising vulnerabilities of some rural communities in the central valleys of Oaxaca. The complexity of these events occurs at the intersection of social, economic, and ecological factors in the natural and social environments that affect whether populations can mitigate existing or arising vulnerability and develop coping strategies to adapt to disaster (Oliver-Smith 2006). I argue that extreme events, whether social or natural, impact populations in similar ways, and that such events highlight a population’s ability to mitigate vulnerability and develop coping strategies. My work shows that research on disaster needs to include the impact of social events as catalysts of vulnerability.

Outcomes of natural and social catastrophes range from fairly innocuous, due to a population’s ability to mitigate risk or develop coping strategies that limit vulnerability, to permanently destabilizing, thereby increasing vulnerability, and thus can highlight
existing and arising vulnerability. I note that the outcome of the Oaxaca teacher strikes is different for each central valley community and households within each community, specifically the ability to cope and recover from the impact of the event. While the economy collapses in the village of El Arbol del Valle as people lose their links to the city’s tourist economy, the community of La Milpa experiences few disruptions in response to these events as its agricultural marginality remains unchanged. Vista del Rio, a bedroom community for the city with indigenous roots, experiences some difficulties in response to unrest that revolve around access to jobs. For some households in these communities, the loss of work (or reduced business) and loss of children’s education are potentially destructive of an ability to recover. For others, diversification of household employment, greater capital (social and economic) and/or limited interaction with the capitol city enabled them to weather the impact of the events and reduce additional vulnerability. The degree of marginality of communities and households coupled with the level of integration into Oaxaca City’s social structure are keys to understanding household and community vulnerability to the teacher strikes.

1.3 Vulnerability and Anthropology

If we accept that some societies live under permanent conditions of imbalance and that their “normal” state is generally characterized by huge social and economic inequalities, then it is true that if a given hazard appears and turns into a disaster a whole series of circumstances, alliances, and relations arise (García-Acosta 2002:57).

A disaster is the social process occurring after a catastrophic event hits a population unable to cope, mitigate, and/or recover from the impact of the incident (see
But disasters are not solely based upon natural hazards as is commonly perceived. They may also arise out of social catastrophic events, including (but not limited to) coup d’états, war, economic depressions, famine, and social unrest. Disasters are entangled with the economic, political, social, and cultural worlds in which they occur (Blaikie, et al. 1994:4-5). We must focus on social events, ranging from genocide to famine to war to political strife and even to ignoring longstanding social ills, such as disenfranchisement and limited access to material and social resources, (Blaikie, et al. 1994:4-5), as well as environmental events and explore the social, physical and tangible upheaval that combine with the occurrence of “symbolic, discursive, and ritual displacement of the familiar” (Greenhouse 2002:3). Human-caused events may lead to disaster. But more importantly, social events in fact highlight existing and arising vulnerabilities as households and communities experience these events. However discussions of disaster have ignored social catastrophes in part because they are motivated by human actors. Natural events exist and occur beyond the boundaries of human control thereby highlighting vulnerability, while there is a perception that in a social event humankind can mitigate the power and effects of social events.

In the 1950s, a focus on disaster studies in the social sciences emphasized natural events and “the general, typical, and recurrent forms of behavior found in disasters” and provided information on “disaster preparedness, control, and amelioration” (Fritz and Williams 1957:102). Interest in disaster focused research centered at this time on the general concern that behavior stereotyping created potential barriers to the constructive
implementation of preparation, education, and development policies (Fritz and Williams 1957:50). Anthropology centered on a functional and synchronic approach to the study of human societies. Building upon Durkheim’s idea that individuals put aside their individual interests for the collective benefit of the entire group (Durkheim 1997), and the Boasian anti-evolutionary focus of anthropology at the time, functionalists argued that specific institutions arise to meet specific needs (societal or individual) thereby functioning to maintain group stability – “the social life constantly renews the social structure” (Radcliffe-Brown 1977:29). De-emphasizing the influence of beliefs and motives on individual action functionalism failed to account for cultural change and ignored ecology. At the same time in the US, Boasians felt that to understand a culture, it must be recognized as a product of its own history and therefore only be explained according to that specific past. The historical past was viewed as a feature of a culture’s development, whereas functionalists rejected this historical based concept of culture and considered cultural institutions, taking a snapshot of a culture at one moment in time. Specific structures existed to fulfill specific functions in a culture that could then be compared to other cultures. By rejecting the value of history, the absence of cultural development, and the individual, functional theory did not provide the key focal points necessary to considering human response to disaster recognized by Fritz and Williams. Nor did functionalists acknowledge the role of dysfunction in society (see Geertz 1973:144).

Following World War II, anthropologists began exploring evolution in regards to culture. White and Steward brought materialist and ecological focused approaches that
considered cultural change and environment. For White, culture change was tied to the technological capabilities of a society to capture energy based on the environment and needs of the group (see White 1949). Steward, on the other hand, argued that the environment is the key to understanding cultural evolution – “cultural ecological adaptations constitute creative processes” (Steward 1972:34). Specifically, human groups changed as adaptive responses to specific environmental pressures. Cultural ecology was offered “as a methodological tool for ascertaining how the adaptation of a culture to its environment may entail certain changes” and to discover whether other cultures adapted similarly in like environments (Steward 1972:42).

Neither the functionalists nor ecologists, however, provided tools to address culture change due to insecurity (not adaptation), and/or how individual actors played a role in cultural change. Both functionalists and ecologists focused on social structures developed for the group, either to perpetuate society (the former) or as an adaptation to environment (the latter), and even Malinowski’s individual needs focus was concerned on a generic individual needs predetermined by anthropologists. Cultural Ecology brought environment and adaptation to anthropological focus but did not address the dynamic relationship between culture, environment, and the individual. Further, neither ecologists nor functionalists addressed the specific nature of peoples and the potential role of power dichotomies in culture change. Cultural Ecology offered explanations for how people relate to their world and the role of environment on the structure of social life. But like functionalists, cultural ecologists did not address the individual actors, but rather focused on adaptations for the group based on environmental influences.
It is with Wolf and Bourdieu that anthropology ushers in an ability to understand the individual and the social quality of disasters. Recognizing that the world in which societies existed went far beyond their social and ecological niches, Wolf argued that anthropologists must consider societies as interactive rather than existing as separate and distinct units bounded in time and space (Wolf 1982:17-18). Specifically, of importance were the interactions of human groups in time and space, but also of concern were ecological, political, demographic and economic interactions occurring now and in the past. Researchers must then look to connections and relationships weaving through space and time – and especially those processes including destabilizing and catastrophic events that link people to one another. Wolf critiqued both functional and cultural ecological approaches as structural rather than processual – “an architecture of a whole and its parts, which remain to be specified substantively only after the fact” (Wolf 1982). For Wolf, ignoring the role of oppression and disenfranchisement limited the ability to understand culture, specifically to “understand more precisely how cultural forms work to mediate social relationships among particular populations” (Wolf 1982). Wolf calls for anthropology to “invent new ways of thinking about the heterogeneity and transformative nature of human arrangements, and to do so scientifically and humanistically at the same time” so as to “attempt to understand what humans do” (Wolf 1988:760). Thus, political economy offered tools for considering the “bundles of relationships” in context, socially and historically (Wolf 1982). Bourdieu identifies the action of the individual within a social structure in which behaviors are patterns developing due to conditioning in the past and that people develop shared structures of understanding, or habitus (Bourdieu
Further, the past affects the present and the practice of maneuvering through the present and the past is so deeply rooted that they are unconsciously recognized (Bourdieu 1990:56).

Anthropological focus on political economy and human adaptation to the environment allowed a shift in attention to cultural or environmental changes causing stress or instability to a human population (see Blaikie, et al. 1987). Thus, political ecology developed out of political economy’s interest on political competition for limited resources and how such power relationships mold environmental decision-making and change. Political ecologists brought together how humans responds and adapt to their specific environments, individual agency and practice, and the dichotomies and histories of power (Walker 2005:74-75). The environment, individual practice, and access to power are viewed to be in constant interaction, ever responding and reacting to one another. Of interest are the social processes that develop in response to these interactions, specifically how historic struggle over resources and environmental decision-making promote or degrade a human group’s capacity to anticipate, resist, cope and recover from abrupt changes in their ecological or social world (Van Buren 2001:142).

Oliver-Smith identifies the early 1980s as a significant turn in the anthropological focus on disaster specifically the evolving view of hazards and disastrous outcomes as integrated with environment and human social structures and importantly, as “formidable test(s) of societal adaptation and sustainability” (Oliver-Smith 1996:304). It is with the arrival of political ecology that the nexus of ecological and political economy-focused theoretical perspectives offer ways for anthropologists to explain the human response to
abrupt change as a social process – one that is dependent upon the characters of a population as well as the catastrophe. Human behavioral ecology’s focus on human adaptation in response to ecological factors (see Winterhalder and Kennett 2006) and political economy’s concern with lost histories, culture collision, and power structures (see Wilk 1996:97-98) offered the ability to consider “the connections between the current and historical influences of the natural environment on human groups and the impact of larger political and economic forces that characterize the society of which the people are members” (Ensor, et al. 2003:170-171 citing Campbell). With political ecology, anthropologists then could begin placing “particular hazard events … in a social, material and historical context including other hazard events and environmental problems and responses” and offer disasters as processes that are influenced by the economic, environmental, historical, political, and social context in which they occur.

Contemporary anthropologists are now equipped with tools to understand human response to disaster. Specifically to consider the role of development on populations and how power dichotomies may increase vulnerability and/or reduce/preclude a population’s ability to recover – or “the nonrecovery of human systems”, what Dyer terms “punctuated entropy” (Dyer 2002:161). The broadened scope also allows us to address emic perspectives and awareness of susceptibility, vulnerability, and relationship to space and place (see Gupta and Ferguson 2006). Anthropologists consider agency, environment, power, local understanding, and the interactions of humans and their environments interceded by political, social, and economic systems (see Ensor, et al. 2003:170), anthropologists are now equipped to look at “the interaction of the social, technological,
and natural processes that produce hazards and disasters in our accounts of human environmental adaptations” (Oliver-Smith 1996:304). Disaster studies in anthropology concentrate on three areas of study: (1) behavioral response to disaster, (2) social change that comes as a result of disaster, and (3) political economic/environmental impact of disasters yet they continue to focus largely on natural and environmental events (Oliver-Smith 1996). Although social catastrophes are recognized to have many similar impacts to vulnerable populations, many anthropologists do not define the outcomes of such events as disaster. It is apparent however, that human populations respond to natural and social events in similar ways and our models of catastrophic events require a broader definition. Murphy and Jones recognize this new reality and describe the disaster as “an extreme event that has abnormally negative impacts on (civilian) human populations” (Murphy and Jones 2008:319).

García-Acosta argues that disasters are outcomes of processes in which catastrophic events play a role (2002). Thus, anthropology is able to get at the unique understanding of how people respond to disaster, especially to identify how existing and arising vulnerabilities influence how people cope and recover – this is the anthropological question. The key concern for anthropologists then, is the human response – on behavioral, social, political, economic, and environmental adaptations, changes, and coping strategies – to disaster outcomes (Oliver-Smith 1996), as well as those responses that enable populations to mitigate vulnerability and/or cope with catastrophe so as to prevent disastrous outcomes from occurring. Dawdy suggests that coping strategies, decision-making and behaviors provide clues as to how humans mitigate vulnerability to
extreme events on a daily basis through everyday living (2006: 720). The anthropological approach to disaster then is to focus not solely on the nature of the hazard but rather the people. (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002:4). Specifically it is crucial to focus on the “relations between a community and its environment (Dawdy 2006:720). This approach is a complex consideration of what the stressor is and the historical and/or recent development of vulnerability of the population affected, along with the nature of the outcome.

Inability to develop coping strategies or find ways to mitigate potential risk may have profound effects on the nature of a population – specifically in regards to their vulnerability to a specific catastrophe. Vulnerability is a social characteristic identifiable as “the characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a … hazard” (Wisner, et al. 2004:11 emphasis mine). Such vulnerability (or inability to develop adequate coping strategies and/or to mitigate susceptibility to risk) extends beyond the frailties illuminated once an extreme event occurs. It includes the histories of power relationships (the have and have nots) along with existing dichotomies that produce inequality and susceptibility to risk when catastrophic and extreme events arise. “People’s vulnerability is generated by social, economic, and political processes that influence how hazards affect people in varying ways and differing intensities” (Blaikie, et al. 1994:5). Specifically, Wisner and colleagues remind us that susceptibility to harm and the inability to mitigate risk are extremely dependent on social factors: “people’s exposure to risk differs according to their class (which affects their income, how they live and where), whether they are male
or female, what their *ethnicity* is, what *age group* they belong to, whether they are *disabled* or not, their *immigration status*, and so forth” (Wisner, et al. 2004:6). Vulnerability then can be characterized as exposure to abrupt changes in which people have a limited capacity to cope or mitigate their risk, and the possibility of long-term harm arising out of the event (Watts and Bohle 1993:45-46). Further, the ability to cope and manage risk to extreme events stems out of a people’s access to resources (“entitlement”), political power and rights (“empowerment”) and participation in the larger global market (“political economy”) (Watts and Bohle 1993:46-52).

Considering the Oaxacan teacher strikes and the response of rural central valley communities, it seems almost impossible for the households and communities to anticipate and/or resist the resulting political strife and violence. Teacher-strikes occur yearly in Oaxaca with little conflict or notice. Corrupt government officials typically step down when faced with potentially violent public disapproval.ii Thus, while rural communities and households might anticipate such events, they could not predict the extreme nature of the situation in 2006. Further, the ability to resist the influence of the strikes and violence on the rural households and communities is limited. What is noteworthy is the ability of rural *Oaxaqueño* households and communities to cope and recover from the strikes and violence. In the experience of rural *Oaxaqueños*, we can identify existing vulnerability that is created and perpetuated by an ineffectual state government and a federal government that has no interest in maintaining or developing infrastructure in the state. Rural *Oaxaqueños* have been left to develop strategies to obtain resources, capital, and political power that may or may not be effective in the
wake of such government abandonment. Further, limited entitlement and political power is highlighted for all three communities in the wake of the teacher-strikes, but some communities and households are better insulated from the effects and are better able to mitigate their vulnerability.
CHAPTER 2: OAXACA

2.1 Central Valleys of Oaxaca

Oaxaca is known for its diverse population, vibrant craft production, and tourist attractions. The southern state is home to extreme economic, environmental and social problems, including the existence of a large, untrained, rural labor force, a limited job market, weak economic infrastructure and rising outmigration (Cohen 2004:6). According to the Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO), 91% of all Oaxacan communities suffer a high to very high degree of economic and social stress (based on the marginality index for all Mexican states and communities iii), such that most are recognized to be resource poor (including economic and social capital) and disenfranchised (2007:153-169). Economic and social insecurity are symptoms of the federal government’s lack of investment and interest in the state and its citizens. The state’s central valleys are somewhat better off than the sierra regions of the state, although poverty is found everywhere. There are three types of villages found in the central valleys: satellite communities serving as residential communities for those employed in the capital, agrarian communities where maize and subsistence agriculture is the rule, and craft-producing villages dependent upon tourists and exporters who market Oaxaqueño culture (Cohen 2004:8-10).
2.2 El Arbol del Valle, La Milpa, and Vista del Rio

La Milpa, Arbol del Valle (El Arbol) and Vista del Rio are just three of the many rural villages located in the central valleys surrounding Oaxaca City. The central valleys are comprised of three branches (Etla, Tlacolula, and Ocotlán/Zimatlán valleys) in the mountain region of the state (Cohen 2004:9-11). Brick, adobe, and cement homes with red-tile roofs surrounding central plazas (where religious, economic, and social life are
centered) can be seen in all communities in the central valleys. Towns are often surrounded by non-irrigated fields that are fertile enough to support a family for several months (Cohen 2004:11).

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<td>&gt; 4</td>
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Table 1: Demographic Comparison

La Milpa is an indigenous Zapotec, agrarian community with a population of 2,867 people, an average education of five years, and an average household size of four people (INEGI 2005). Milpaneos typically rely on subsistence crops (including maize and alfalfa), just over 52% of informants reported having a farmer in their household (Table 2). Many households also rely on remittances from migrant family members in the US and the community has dealt with its marginality through outmigration (Table 9). Females in La Milpa are the most frequently identified as engaging in informal work (irregular or infrequent paid work); 22 informants who identified a household member as a campesino (farmer) also had a female member engaged in informal work.

El Arbol del Valle is a craft producing, mestizo community with a population of 1,624 people, average education of six years, and an average household size of four people (INEGI 2005). CONAPO identifies El Arbol as medio on the marginality index (or with a medium degree of marginality) (2007:153-169). Out of the total households
surveyed, just over 31% identified having a household member engaged in craft production; the most for all of the three communities (Table 2). El Arbol’s artisans reported being a dependency on tourism as a means to ensure their livelihoods; for both craft sales and exportation of their wares to international markets. For craft-producing communities such as this one, tour buses daily sojourns to rural communities are crucial to the craft market (Cohen 2007:27). Further, 11% of craft-producing households (identified as those with at least one artisan) had little diversification outside of the craft market (exception to this is a female engaged in irregular informal work).

Vista del Rio is the most affluent of the three villages - CONAPO identifies Vista del Rio as bajo or low on the country’s marginality index vii (2007:156). It is a mestizo bedroom community to Oaxaca City, with a population of 1,837 people, an average education of nine years, and an average household of four members (INEGI 2005). Much of the community’s members are linked to the city through jobs, either as skilled workers or professionals and it is estimated that 20% of the community’s working adults rely on the city for employment. (Cohen 2007:23). Forty-six households (66%) identified having at least one member with regular (steady) waged or salaried employment (Table 2), many of who commuted for work in the city. Many newer residents have relocated to the village from the city proper and are drawn to its quieter, less hectic pace, while having close proximity to the city (Cohen 2004:23-24). Like other rural central valley communities, farming is still crucial to many households – 36% of Vista del Rio’s households reported having a campesino member (Table 2).
Looking at the effect of the strikes upon rural Oaxaqueños in a disaster framework requires that the population (1) experience a catastrophic event – the teacher-strikes and violence; (2) be vulnerable; and (3) suffer abnormally negative impacts that significant alter people’s abilities to function within their everyday lives. Here, I identify existing or arising vulnerabilities that might cause households and communities to suffer negative impacts on their lives. Economic support and migration provide good proxy indicators of vulnerability (that prevents households and communities from coping and recovering from stressors/extreme events) – especially economic vulnerabilities that may indicate susceptibility to harm so as to prevent people from functioning in their everyday lives. What is seen with Vista del Rio, La Milpa, and El Arbol are varying levels of vulnerability to this social event and differing perceptions of impact are reflected in the varied life experiences found in the three towns and of the households within these communities. For many Milpaneos, everyday life is concerned with farming and the effect of long-term drought on crops. Adults wonder about their children’s access to education and future employment opportunities. Remittance support from outside Mexico
is vital but often does not fully make ends meet. Vista del Rio’s residents live most closely connected to the happenings in Oaxaca City. Many residents travel to the city daily for work. As members of a bedroom community they are concerned with available transportation, good infrastructure, and the functioning of government. In El Arbol, people rely on outside interest in the crafts produced there. Artisans know that their livelihoods are dependent upon tourists and a market that extends far beyond their village’s borders or even that of the state. It is these daily realities that influence how residents of the three communities view the teacher-strikes.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND DATA

3.1 Methods

In this paper, I use data on rural responses to the Oaxaca, Mexico’s teacher strikes of 2006. Cohen’s research considered the teacher strikes’ effect on economic opportunities and migration behaviors of the rural poor in three communities in Oaxaca. I use a total of 170 households from the three communities in my analysis (Table 3).

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Arbol del Valle</th>
<th>La Milpa</th>
<th>Vista del Rio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>households</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total household members</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Households Surveyed

To consider the coping and recovery capabilities of households and communities to the teacher’s strikes on the households in the central valleys of Oaxaca, I examined survey questions focused on the following areas: received economic support; household employment; loss of work (including knowledge of loss of business and/or reduction of sales); missed school by children; knowledge of the meaning of APPO, support for APPO and/or the strikes; migration decisions; and impact of the strikes on family, friends, other Mexicans, and outmigration (Appendix A). These questions stemmed from interviews concerned with the impact of the strikes and violence on migration behavior and economic experiences in the central valleys. I recoded data from interviews following
questions that identified vulnerability (either economically or socially and in regards to coping and recovering from the events) as well as adaptations and response to the events to support my comparisons of the three communities and household variation within each.

I looked to questions concerning informant perception of the events to define whether rural communities could have anticipated and perhaps resisted the strikes and violence’s impact – specifically the meaning of APPO and support for the strikes and/or APPO (Appendix A). I coded for informant awareness of APPO and support for APPO and/or the strikes (Table 4).

To develop a received support variable I used responses to those questions regarding family member location (Oaxaca City, other parts of Mexico, and the United States) and monetary support sent back to the household (Appendix A). Economic support was identified for those households who had family members that sent money back to the household and not to the community (Table 5).

To understand the impact of the teacher strikes on children (and perhaps identify an arising vulnerability) I looked at questions regarding household children having missed school and knowing other children who had missed school (Appendix A). Responses were then broken down to identify households where children had experienced a lapse in education and informants who also knew of others (Table 6).

Loss of work was identified with questions regarding informant knowledge of either a household member or another person having lost work (Appendix A). I coded “yes” to responses that the informant knew of someone in the household or community
losing work due to the strikes (Table 7). Questions regarding business closure and reduction of sales were also coded for yes or no responses (Table 8).

To develop the Migration variable, I used informant responses to questions concerned with the strikes influence on migration, decisions to migration and whether the informant knew someone who had migrated due to the strikes (Appendix A). In addition, because some of the interviewees offered information on other people that had only heard about migrating due to the strikes, I coded for “rumors of migration” due to several responses that indicated having heard of people leaving due to the strikes (Table 10). The patterns of migration variable for the three communities uses household totals for specific time periods between May 2006 to July 2007 (Table 9).

The perceived impact variable was constructed using questions that asked if the strikes influenced the lives of family members in Oaxaca City at the time of the interview and in the year previous, as well as those who had lived in other parts of Mexico (Appendix A). From those three areas, I combined responses to develop the impact variable with informant replies ranging from no impact, to low impact, medium impact, or high impact (Table 11).

3.2 Limitations

The causal relationships that I am identifying are limited due to the focus of the survey conducted. Specifically, the 2007 survey was developed to identify the strikes influence on migration patterns and economic security. Here, I am seeking to identify the strikes influence on the existing and arising vulnerabilities of central valley rural
communities and households, especially the response of households and communities to cope and recover from stressors caused by and arising out of the strikes and violence. Coping and recovery strategies that are identifiable are limited to those involving economic or migration-based responses, and do not specifically get at emotional or non-monetary support. Further, the survey does not provide indications of household or community levels of hope or lack thereof in recovery.

Further, it is important to note that I am relying on another anthropologist’s fieldwork and perceptions. I did not go into the field to conduct interviews specifically designed to consider coping and recovery strategies to mitigate vulnerability to the strikes and violence. Due to time limitations and the focus of the survey informants were not asked to elaborate answers and identify specific people to reported knowledge (for instance, who specifically lost work due to the strikes, who migrated, or who in the household is engaged in what type of employment). While the use of secondary source data provides me with the tools to begin considering these questions, it also leaves me with a fragmentary picture. The data provided offers clues to rural community and household responses to existing and arising vulnerabilities, as well as potential for future fieldwork specifically designed to answer these questions.

3.3 Data

A household’s vulnerability is related to its ability to anticipate and/or resist the stress caused by an event or series of events. Based on survey questions available, there is little data that addresses the central valleys communities and households abilities to anticipate and resist the effects of the teacher-strikes. Typically teacher-strikes occur
yearly and are peaceful events that garner little attention. Likewise, extreme criticism of government officials in the past has resulted in those officials stepping down from office. The escalating organization of groups and violent response of the state were hardly events that could have been predicted by rural Oaxaqueños. However, what is available in the survey responses is how people perceived the events and whether or not they supported the strikes. This offers indications as to whether or not households could resist the effects of the strikes through making their viewpoints known, or at least that recognizing households possessed political knowledge of the events. What we note is that for households in the individual communities, approximately a third know what APPO stands for and why it exists. More importantly, knowledge of these events is not common in communities, as two-thirds of the community have no idea what occurred in Oaxaca City. What is different is the level of support for APPO or for the teacher-strikes. In Vista del Rio a third of informants surveyed said that they supported the strikes and just over a sixth supported APPO. In La Milpa and El Arbol less than a tenth of informants supported APPO. A sixth of Milpaneos and one tenth of El Arbol informants responded that they did support strikes. Thus, there are varying levels of support for the strikes and APPO in the households of the three communities, while there is similar knowledge of the meaning of APPO in all.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>El Arbol del Valle</th>
<th>La Milpa</th>
<th>Vista del Rio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>know the meaning of APPO</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support APPO</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support the strike</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Knowledge and Support of APPO and/or Strikes
To identify the ability of households and communities to cope with the events, I looked to those responses on the survey that dealt with support received from family outside of the community; whether household children missed school and knowledge of other children missing school, loss of work experienced in the household and in the community, and knowledge of reduced sales and/or business closures in the community.

To define changes in support I looked at where households had family residing and if those family members sent support to family living in the particular community (Table 5). Each community includes households with relatives in living in Oaxaca City. The number of households having family in the capitol is well over a third. Nevertheless, only 11% of the households in these communities received economic support. More than half of the households interviewed included family members living in other parts of Mexico or in the United States. Over 15% of the households with relatives in other parts of Mexico received support from those family members and over 25% of the households with family in the United States received support.

Over two-sixths of all households reported receiving some form of economic support from family members living outside of the communities. Informants from Vista del Rio reported that 44% of households received support from a family member living in Oaxaca City, other parts of Mexico, and in the US; the lowest for the three communities. Informants in La Milpa reported the highest level of received support, with over 54% of households receiving some aid. In El Arbol, just under half of the households received some form of economic support.
The teacher-strikes directly affected children’s access to education, and it was important to consider whether children in the three communities missed school due to the strikes (Table 6). La Milpa informants reported that their children missed the least amount of school, with only 48% of the households surveyed stating it occurred. El Arbol households were in the middle with a total of 56% stating their children had missed school due to the strikes. The residents of the village most connected to the capitol had the highest response with 61% reporting that they had a child who missed school sessions. When asked if the informant knew of children missing school over 80% of informants (with La Milpa and Vista del Rio responses over 90%) stated yes they knew of others. Unfortunately, it is not clear if those other children are in the informant’s community or if more than one informant is thinking of the same child(ren). However these percentages provide us with clear indications that access to education (a potential coping strategy to poverty and employment in the future) decreased for rural Oaxaqueño children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Arbol del Valle</th>
<th>La Milpa</th>
<th>Vista del Rio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>from Oaxaca City</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from other parts of Mexico</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from US</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total households</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Received Support

The teacher-strikes directly affected children’s access to education, and it was important to consider whether children in the three communities missed school due to the strikes (Table 6). La Milpa informants reported that their children missed the least amount of school, with only 48% of the households surveyed stating it occurred. El Arbol households were in the middle with a total of 56% stating their children had missed school due to the strikes. The residents of the village most connected to the capitol had the highest response with 61% reporting that they had a child who missed school sessions. When asked if the informant knew of children missing school over 80% of informants (with La Milpa and Vista del Rio responses over 90%) stated yes they knew of others. Unfortunately, it is not clear if those other children are in the informant’s community or if more than one informant is thinking of the same child(ren). However these percentages provide us with clear indications that access to education (a potential coping strategy to poverty and employment in the future) decreased for rural Oaxaqueño children.

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<tr>
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<th>Arbol del Valle</th>
<th>La Milpa</th>
<th>Vista del Rio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>household children</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of other children</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Children Missed School Due to Strikes
To understand the impact of the strikes on household and community livelihood, I looked to informant’s responses as to having someone in the household lose work due to the strikes or knowing of someone who had lost work (Table 7). Responses however do not indicate if the informant is referring to a household member or someone else. Informants also provided information about their community’s economic state following the strikes in questions asking if he or she had knowledge of reduced sales or business closures (Table 8). In all three communities, just over a third of informants reported knowing someone who lost work due to the strikes. The difference then comes from informant’s responses to whether or not he or she had lost work. Twenty-four percent of informants in El Arbol reported losing work, while none in La Milpa did. In Vista del Rio several informants reported that while they kept their jobs, wages were delayed significantly and others reported decreased wages or reduced payment for wares. Several farmers in both La Milpa and Vista del Rio reported that they did not have to worry because they were in the fields.

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<th>El Arbol del Valle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>informant lost work</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knew someone who lost work</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Loss of Work

It is interesting to note that the two communities more integrated with Oaxaca City and the outside market, over half of the informants reported having such knowledge when considering the strikes influence on business closure and reduction in sales (Table 8). Only two-sixths of informants from La Milpa reported such knowledge. Here it is
crucial to note that as a community La Milpa is much more agrarian and less integrated into the larger central valleys economic structure and thus may be less impacted by the strikes effects on the economy because of its greater degree of isolation.

<table>
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<th>El Arbol del Valle</th>
<th>La Milpa</th>
<th>Vista del Rio</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>reduction in sales</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>closure of business</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Knowledge of Sales Reduction and/or Closure of Business

Oaxaca is often considered a model example for economic-motivated migration due to a long history of economic insecurity that necessitates looking elsewhere for work (see Cohen 2004) and outmigration includes an average of 45% of all central valley households (2007:25). Such migration can have a profound effect on the nature of family structure and can drastically alter the social landscape of a community. Informants in all three communities were asked to discuss migration patterns from just before the strikes began over the next year to July 2007 when the interviews were conducted (Table 9). Households in Vista del Rio and La Milpa have a fairly steady household size from May 2006 to July 2007 with an increase for the Christmas holiday (a time when many migrants return home) and slight decrease after the new year. For El Arbol households, we find an increase in migration after the end of the year with the surveyed households losing members. This is one indication that outmigration increased for El Arbol residents following the end of the strikes and the Christmas visiting.
There is a substantial difference for those people in the three communities who knew individuals who migrated because of the teacher strikes. While the negative impacts of a disaster can include the loss of family structure, it is just as important to acknowledge the teacher strikes’ impacts on migration and decisions to migrate. Just over a tenth of the informants in Vista del Rio reported knowing someone was migrated because of the strikes. In contrast, just over half of the informants from El Arbol reported knowing someone whose migration decision had been motivated by the strikes. And although the responses for La Milpa fell in the middle, with a quarter knowing someone who migrated due to the strikes, many of the informants responded that there was an equal rate of migration after the strikes as before. This is likely due to high rate of outmigration the community experienced through the 1990s, and the marginality of the town (DIGEPO 1999). For La Milpa, migration to the US is a tradition or a way of life,
especially after many years of drought and little opportunity beyond meager subsistence agriculture.

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<tr>
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<th>Arbol del Valle</th>
<th>La Milpa</th>
<th>Vista del Rio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of people migrating because of the strikes</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness of rumors that migration due to strikes</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Knowledge of Migration

To define the impact of the teacher strikes upon the lives of residents of El Arbol, La Milpa and Vista del Rio I combined questions that asked about the influence of the strikes on family in Oaxaca City, currently and previously living in the city, and those previously in other parts of Mexico (Appendix A). I recorded no impact if the informant answered that the strikes had no influence on lives for the questions; a low impact was marked to a positive response to one of the three questions, a medium impact was a positive response to two of the three questions, and a high impact was identified for positive responses to all three of the influence questions. The effect upon the three communities progresses on a continuum of increasing impact and stress (Table 11). Vista del Rio and La Milpa, have fewer higher level impact responses. Informants in La Milpa respond that the strikes had little to no influence upon family. In Vista del Rio, 54% felt that the strikes had no influence. In La Milpa, 66% of informants felt that the strikes had no influence. While, in El Arbol, about a tenth felt that the strikes had no influence.
In El Arbol, 39% felt that the strikes had a high impact. This is quite different to the perceptions of individuals in La Milpa and Vista del Rio where at most 1% of each community’s respondents considered the strikes to have a high impact. La Vista responses are fairly low across the perception of strike influence on family with 42% reported a low impact, and 3% reported answers that are of a medium impact. La Milpa, had a slightly wider range of perceived influence, with 27% responded with a low impact and 7% having a medium impact response. A two-sided t-test indicates that, assuming a normal distribution, if the actual mean impact is 39% (the high impact observed in El Arbol), the t value is 1.612 corresponding to a 75.16% Confidence Interval.

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<tr>
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<th>Arbol del Valle</th>
<th>La Milpa</th>
<th>Vista del Rio</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low impact</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium impact</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High impact</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Perceived Impact\textsuperscript{xiv}
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Discussion

The three communities are at first glance similar. They are small, rural, central valley communities with rich histories as agrarian peasant settlements. However, Oaxaca is a diverse state and the experiences of rural communities and Oaxaqueño households cannot be lumped. La Milpa represents the most economically marginal community of the three (see CONAPO). Many of its residents are disenfranchised and their lives are framed by a lack of jobs and opportunity and a state and federal government that have done little to develop the community’s infrastructure. El Arbol’s residents have adapted to their own impoverishment and developed a craft-based economy that is tied to tourism and international demand (see for example Chibnik 2001). Vista del Rio serves as a satellite for the capital city and its residents are secure in their everyday lives combining agricultural labor and jobs in Oaxaca City. It is the least marginal of the communities and the most economically and socially integrated into the Oaxacan capitol.

The teacher-strikes and standoff between the governor and APPO were varied in their impacts and effects for these three communities and for households. The effect of the strikes can be viewed as falling on a continuum of impact from bothersome to
devastating. More importantly, is the impact of the strikes and violence to highlight existing and arising vulnerability in households and the communities.

It is these economic, educational, ethnic and social vulnerabilities, existing and arising, that are crucial to understand a populations ability to “anticipate, resist, cope and recover” from the stress of an extreme event(s) (see Wisner, et al. 2004:11), here the teacher strikes and resulting violence. Rural Oaxaqueños can be characterized as economically vulnerable; residing in one of the country’s poorest states, subject to socio-economic insecurities such that they are recognized to have high to very high marginality (see CONAPO 2007:153-169). As a group, Oaxaqueños are represented in the migrant population leaving Mexico and for many communities migration has become a coping strategy to social, political, economic and environmental stresses. Nevertheless, such coping strategies are not necessarily the same for every community or for every household within the village. Moreover, vulnerability is not the same for all.

There are specific social factors that determine each community’s and each household’s ability to cope with and recover from the teacher strikes. For El Arbol, La Milpa, and Vista del Rio coping strategies are influenced by the level of poverty or degree of each community’s marginality, existing and longstanding migration patterns, and amount of integration with Oaxaca City’s economy. Household coping strategies are influenced by received support, diversification of household employment, educational level and access to education. These factors “cause differential burdens of harm because of barriers that deny them access to social and material resources” necessary to cope with the teacher strikes (Fjord and Manderson 2009:67). The ability of households to recover
from the stresses of the teacher strikes and violence is dependent on economic, educational and food security (specifically employment opportunities). For those who lost work or reduced sales, migration may be the only option and thus a sign at least for the short term of rising household vulnerability.

Perceptions of the strikes and resulting violence indicate that there was little rural Oaxaqueños could have done to anticipate or resist the events of May to November 2006. Strikes occur on an annual basis with little to no response and typically government officials listen to public dissent and leave office. What occurred in 2006 then was a social anomaly. For rural communities there was little expectation that the strikes would lead to violence and the collapse of the tourist economy. While approximately a third of the informants in all three reported knowing what the APPO stood for most informants had little support for the APPO or the strikes themselves. Exception to this was in Vista del Rio were just over a sixth (16%) of the informants reported supporting the APPO’s goal to remove the governor and a third (33%) reported supporting the strikes. What these figures indicate is the level of connection each community had to the events occurring in Oaxaca City influenced outcomes. Vista del Rio is the most connected to the capitol economically, politically, and socially. Milpaeo informants, members of the least integrated village, had the second highest support for the teacher-strikes. But this may indicate the insecurity Milpaneos feel in regards to education, specifically for their children’s future. Education is viewed as the way out of poverty (see Murphy and Stepick 1991:137-170), and with an average community education level of five years many Milpaneos are limited in their future livelihoods – either in farming (subject to the long-
term drought), wage labor, or migrant labor. The teacher strikes challenged the very institution valued as the tool to make a better life for Milpaneo children and their families.

Vista del Rio is economically the least vulnerable and at the same time holds the strongest connections to Oaxaca City where many of its citizens work. In considering a household’s ability to cope with the stresses of the strikes and violence diversification of employment, a high concentration of formally employed household members, and higher levels of education are crucial indicators of the ability to mitigate existing vulnerabilities and prevent new vulnerabilities from arising. As a community, Vista del Rio is rated by CONAPO, or having a low degree of marginality, while household’s range from either medio (medium marginality) or muy bajo (very low) (CONAPO 2007:153-169). Thus there is little economic vulnerability as a community. Further, Vista del Rio reported the highest number of household members who are formally employed in Oaxaca City. Like many rural communities, most households are fairly resourceful in diversification of employment, but it is the higher concentration of formally employed members that provides greater economic security in Vista del Rio households.

Average education is substantially higher in Vista del Rio, in comparison to El Arbol (9 years in the former and 6 years for the later), and La Milpa (5 years). Access to education also provides people with tools that may provide a wider range of options for future employment. Education for children is of crucial importance in the informant responses. Just under two-thirds of informants spoke of their children having missed school due to the strikes and almost all of spoke of knowing other children who had
missed school. It is here that there is the greatest potential for children to be affected in the long-term.

Vista del Rio households have an ability to recover from the strikes and violence’s effects as they are the most able to cope economically. Although characterized as creating insecurity, the longer-term effect of the strikes on Vista del Rio’s residents can be articulated as an inconvenience or an annoyance. While 39% of informants knew of someone who had lost work, only 10% responded that they had lost work due to the strikes. Employment levels were maintained but rather what people spoke of was the hit to sales and businesses. Over half mentioned a reduction in sales, having to take a “bad” offer because that was the only option, or of businesses being closed due to the strikes. Unfortunately no one elaborated as to what businesses were closing (if they were in the village or in Oaxaca City) or if it was just media and news reports.

People in Vista del Rio felt the impact of the strikes as residents who must deal with road blockades and unrest that interrupted commutes to city jobs. Responses ranged from those who felt that their lives and the lives of those around them were influenced little (responding to questions concerning the strikes influence as having an effect on one of the following: himself or herself, the household, community members, or other Mexicans), to those that felt two of the above were influenced by the strike. Such responses reflected the insecurity that came with a lack of transportation to get to work, or the inability to work due to blockades and the standstill of the tourism market. The APPO’s efforts against the state and the take over of the city center inhibited the ability to earn a living, not because there was a lack of jobs, but rather they could not physically
get to work. The strikes and APPOs efforts have lead to what an informant states as “mas inseguridad dentro de la comunidad”, much insecurity inside the community because of the violence and chaos existing in the city.

As members of a bedroom community to Oaxaca City, Vista del Río’s inhabitants are better equipped to handle the strikes and could maneuver through the turmoil with less long-term harm. They are most able to cope with the insecurities arising out of the teacher strikes and this ability to mitigate the effects of the strikes enables households and the community of Vista del Río to mitigate risk to the stresses of the events, have little arising vulnerability to these particular events and recover. What remains to be seen is whether children are affected in the long term due to the prolonged hiatus in school attendance.

La Milpa is the most marginal community and on paper looks to be the most economically vulnerable. It is an indigenous village, and many households are reliant on subsistence agriculture, informal wage earnings, and migrant remittances. But having a limited connection to Oaxaca City the community’s population was less focused on the strikes as a contributor to a deteriorating situation, and much more concerned with the lengthy drought and its influence on motivating migration as the only way to make ends meet (Cohen 2007). In a community impoverished in education, the lengthy strike served to further limit access to education for La Milpa’s children and nearly half of informants responded that household children missed school due to the strikes. With an average of just over five years in school, the strikes were seen as harmful to perceived future opportunities outside of La Milpa for its young inhabitants. What is of concern for the
future of this indigenous community exists in the historical stress and potential for increased environmental and economic vulnerability stemming out of ongoing drought, lack of education and extreme poverty. When asked if migration increased as a result of the strikes, many informants replied that it was equal to migration rates before the strikes. Recognizing that there is no available work that might motivate young people to leave, migration is not a new process nor is it solely caused by the strikes. The history of migration “ya existe muchos anos”, (has existed for many years). Informants reported the feeling that there is lack of opportunity and many campesinos must migrate to find work. For the community, migration is a recovery strategy to mitigate long-term vulnerability. In the words of one individual when asked of the impact on La Milpa: “Pues la comunidad es independiente a los sucesos que ocurridos en Oaxaca . . .” (the community is independent to the events occurring in Oaxaca [City]). Thus, in a community that is economically marginal and would seem vulnerable to any catastrophe, the strikes and unrest have caused little discomfort in part because of the lack of integration with the capitol’s economic, social and political structure. In other words, La Milpa is so far removed from events in the city, and the residents responded to questions about the strikes and unrest in a way that reflected that distance.

The response of the citizens of Vista del Rio to events in the city is similar, as most reported little to no immediate impact. Nevertheless, while there is a similarity in responses to the strikes and civil unrest in both La Milpa and Vista del Rio, the communities are very different. Vista del Rio’s residents are plainly better equipped to manage the turmoil caused by the strikes, while La Milpa’s residents arguably suffer
must cope with daily challenges that are independent of the events in the capital city. It is an independence caused by poverty and a subsistence farming lifestyle, a disinterested state and lack of federal support that leads the people of La Milpa to ignore the city in return and instead rely on migration and remittances.

The response to unrest and strikes in El Arbol is quite pronounced. When tourism and local markets for artisan products are running, the citizens have an economy to build upon and migration is less important as are remittances. In fact, several of the artisans reported almost complete reliance on the craft-based economy with perhaps supplementation from informal work by household females. However, the long standoff between the APPO and Ruiz’s government brought tourism to a halt. International travel into the region was discouraged during the summer and fall of 2006, such that tourist-based interest in the region slowed to a trickle. For El Arbol, tour buses no longer drove to the village, nor are import/exporters traveling to the region in search of Oaxacan folk art. Almost a quarter of informants reported that they had lost work due to the strikes (in comparison with none in La Milpa and only ten % in Vista del Rio). It was not surprising that almost 40% of the informants in El Arbol felt the strikes and unrest in Oaxaca City had a very high impact on the community; three quarters of informants spoke of reduced sales and over half report closed businesses. The loss in work due to decreased interest in crafts lead to over half of informants having first-hand knowledge of migration motivated by the strikes and a number of other people heard migrants who left in response to unrest. Further when looking at the patterns of migration over the course of the strikes and the months following, there is a dramatic decrease in the overall population, with over 50
Arbolenos having left after the Christmas season in 2006. The strikes have caused the craft-production economy to collapse hitting the ability of the community and artisans to cope and recover from these events.

While strikes did not happen in El Arbol, the events were a catalyst that disrupted the very ability of people to meet their basic physical and social needs. Many individuals talk about the lack of tourists in their streets and one artist portrayed the consequences of the strikes as an 80 to 90% loss of business. This has lead people to head to the US because there are no other options and no work. The informants in El Arbol, just hope for “tranquila y segura”, tranquility and security so that tourists can return and the craft-production may begin again. Migration indicates the vulnerability of households, specifically their ability to cope and recover.

Many families are involved in craft-production as a livelihood and the craft economy may never fully recover. In addition there is a second potential impact. As people look to employment outside of their community, there is the potential that families will split and important social connections will be altered. El Arbol families have been forced to make difficult decisions, turn their backs on craft production and instead look to migration. Over half of the informants reported that they knew people who had migrated because of the impact of the events in Oaxaca City in the year since the strikes began. Aside from community members leaving, this means that for certain households able members may need to look for opportunities outside the village’s borders, and often beyond the state’s borders, causing households to split.
4.2 Conclusion

I began this thesis with the expectation that the teacher-strikes impacted all three communities and households similarly. Instead, the project has evolved into a micro-comparison of these communities and households in Oaxaca’s central valleys. Each community can be characterized as a potentially vulnerable population (having limited entitlement and political power), although Vista del Rio and its households are the least vulnerable overall. But it is the type of community that actually has dictated whether existing or arising vulnerability is highlighted. For El Arbol, the teacher strikes served as a catalyst to highlight household and community vulnerability. The strikes, coupled with heavy reliance on craft-production and informal work have resulted in a “perceived disruption of the customary relative satisfactions of individual and social needs” (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman 2002:4). Here it is apparent that these events have highlighted existing and arising vulnerabilities that may prove to have a greater impact on households or communities in the future. Integration with the economic and social structures of the capitol and the global economy seem to be greater indicators of vulnerability here than marginality. For the households of La Milpa lacking connectedness to the city proves to greatly mitigate the strikes and violence’s potential impacts. Vista del Rio, while more integrated as a community and potentially more at risk for the strikes effects, is characterized by households who have greater economic security, access to social and economic capitol and while inconvenienced are able to weather the storm.

The victims of the social crisis here are different than those of a natural disaster. Due to the characteristics of the event, these victims are harder to identify at first glance
as the catastrophe did not directly act upon them. They are invisible to the happenings of the event, people whose lives or homes are not washed away in the front headlines. Vulnerability is exacerbated by the reality that the catastrophe did not “hit” the rural villages of Oaxaca, but rather the wave of harm occurs secondary to the actual event; they are passive victims, especially those in El Arbol. This causes a dichotomy where the government is less likely to step in and provide aid and assistance when the identification of who is a victim of the catastrophe is less delineated. Flood victims are identifiable because there is a visual impact of loss. Irreversible loss of economic livelihood and the devastating impact to family structure may be less visible, but they are no less stressful or profound. These outcomes too can cause irreversible change, forever altering the social landscape.

Victims of extreme events “…become attached to imagined places, as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality” (Gupta and Ferguson 2006: 609). Thus, we see development of strong community reliance and culture arises out of the ashes of tragedy. Vulnerability catapults a human need to connect to time and space pre-catastrophe; at these moments is where to find the connection to space and identity surface, exposing our most basic social structures; as survival, coping, and recovering cause superficial behavior to fall away and pure need causes communities to turn inward for aid and support.

As the world and its population become more connected it is crucial to understand how vulnerability and response to stressors including social and natural catastrophes
affect communities; the long-term ramifications of these events; and how people cope with outcomes. Oliver-Smith argues that, “the increasing complexity of disasters is rooted in the interplay of social and economic factors in the environment, exacerbating the vulnerability of people and environments” (2006). As populations globalize, we become more aware of crisis situations that require relief and response to both short-term necessity and long-term rebuilding efforts. How people respond to vulnerability and extreme events can help aid our understanding of how to prepare for potential outcomes of disaster and crisis, such as Diasporas, migration, poverty, homelessness, post-traumatic stress, physical illness, and loss of community, social networks and loved ones. According to the Red Cross, as many as 94,500,000 people have been affected by disaster events in Latin America (Norris, et al. 2005:15) through 2005.

It is crucial for governments to have data on the detrimental effects of social and natural catastrophes upon diverse and vulnerable populations. The broader impact of this project is thus to provide an understanding of how rural communities respond to extreme events that they cannot anticipate or resist, specifically developing information on how household and community vulnerabilities may be highlighted by extreme and abrupt changes in the social and/or ecological worlds. Developing and adding to the comparative research of disaster study will contribute to public policy as well as research within the discipline of Anthropology. Understanding similarities and differences between populations affected by abrupt change due to social events will enable social and governmental agencies to better aid in rebuilding and reconstruction efforts and plan for future disaster and crisis events.
Teacher strikes have occurred each year since the mid-twentieth century, occurring peacefully and ending in compromised agreements between the teachers and the government. In the past, the teacher’s efforts received little fanfare or public support (Chibnik 2007:7).

Historical Oaxaca responses to teacher strikes and disapproval of government officials are based on conversations with Cohen in the Winter/Spring 2009.

CONAPO measures marginality based on a summary of indicators identifying a community’s deprivation level due to: lack of access to education, inadequate housing, and lack of property. Marginality levels show the intensity of exclusion from entitlement to social and material resources deemed essential. The marginality index offers a view of communities and states in Mexico in relation to one another based on education access, housing and available household property (CONAPO 2007: 11-15).

From Cohen 2004. El Arbol del Valle, La Milpa and La Vista del Rio are all located in the central valleys of Oaxaca. Each of these three towns and all informants were renamed as per standard anthropological procedure to protect informant identities from repercussion for opinions expressed regarding the APPO, the governor, and strikes generally (Cohen 2007:23), and in addition as protection of identity regarding migration activities.

My descriptions of La Milpa, El Arbol del Valle, and Vista del Rio come from conversations with Dr. Cohen as well as several publications (see Cohen 2007; Cohen 2004).

The education statistic is based on the average number of years completed in school by persons 15 years or older. (INEGI 2005); *statistic from data sets.

Individual households in Vista del Rio are between medio and muy bajo.

Numbers indicate that an informant responded that someone in the household engaged in the type of employment (craft production, formal/informal work, farming, teaching, student, retired/other, and unemployed). The same person may be engaged in more than one activity and the questionnaire does not require the informant to connect household members to specific employment activities.

^ formal employment
(El Arbol: 6 women, 10 men, 6 construction, 6 transportation, 1 other)
(La Milpa: 17 women, 26 men, 1 construction)
(Vista del Rio: 28 women, 43 men, 4 construction, 2 transportation)
~ informal employment
(El Arbol: 42 women, 18 men)
(La Milpa: 40 women, 7 men)
(Vista del Rio: 51 women, 8 men)

Due to the nature of the second source data, I do not attempt to identify whether or not a disaster actually occurs.

^ percentage of households having positive responses – rounded to nearest hundredth
* total percentage based on positive response to one or more of the following received support from Oaxaca City, other parts of Mexico, and/or the US.

xi Statistic on knowledge of other children who missed school due to the strikes may or may not indicate children in the community. Informants were not specifically asked to identify the children beyond knowing others who missed school due to the strikes.

xii Informants were not asked to identify who it was they were referring to when responding to knowing someone who had lost work due to the strikes.

xiii Indicates the informant’s knowledge of reduced sales and/or business closures occurring within the community. Survey does not ask for the informant to identify type of business or its owner experiencing reduction and/or closure.

xiv Impact levels in this variable are determined by responses to four questions asking the informant to rate level of impact for the following questions: The strikes impact to family? The strikes impact to friends? The strikes impact to other Mexicans? The strikes impact on decisions to migrate? 0 is no impact, 1 is low impact, 2 is medium impact, and 3 - 4 is high impact.
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APPENDIX A: SURVEY

In Spanish

U2007: crisis y migración en Oaxaca, México

Pueblo:
La fecha y tiempo de la entrevista:
Número de la entrevista:
Nombre de entrevistador:

Información sobre informante:
Total en la casa
Hombres
Mujeres
Mínores
Adultos

**ACTIVIDADES QUE REALIZAN LOS MIEMBROS DEL HOGAR, DENTRO Y FUERA DE LA COMUNIDAD

1. Me podría decir ¿Cuáles son sus actividades o trabajos más importantes en su casa o en su comunidad?

2. ¿Tiene usted familia en la Ciudad de Oaxaca?
   ___ Sí, continúe debajo. ___ No, proceda a la próxima pregunta.
   2.1 ¿Describa quiénes son?
   2.2 ¿Qué hacen ellos?
   2.3 ¿Qué tan seguido los ve usted?
   2.4 ¿Poseen ellos o alquilan su casa?
   2.5 ¿Poseen ellos una casa en este pueblo?
   2.6 ¿A quienes apoyan ellos dentro del pueblo (ustedes/otra casa/otro hogar)?
   2.7 ¿Han cambiado su trabajo dentro del último año?
   2.8 ¿Las huelgas influyeron la vida de estos individuos?
3. ¿Si usted no tiene familia ahora en la ciudad, lo tuvo en el pasado?
   __ Sí, continúe debajo. __ No, proceda a la próxima pregunta.

3.1 ¿Describa quiénes?
3.2 ¿Qué hicieron ellos?
3.3 ¿A quienes apoyan ellos dentro del pueblo (ustedes/otra casa/otro hogar)?
3.4 ¿Por qué no viven ellos en la ciudad ahora?
3.5 ¿A dónde fueron ellos?
3.6 ¿Las huelgas influyeron el movimiento de estos individuos?

4. ¿Ha tenido o tiene usted la familia en otras partes de México?
   __ Sí, continúe debajo. __ No, proceda a la próxima pregunta.

4.1 ¿Describa quiénes?
4.2 ¿Dónde están ellos?
4.3 ¿Qué hacen ellos?
4.4 ¿Qué tan seguido los ve usted?
4.5 ¿Poseen ellos o alquilan su casa?
4.6 ¿Poseen ellos una casa en este pueblo?
4.7 ¿Qué tan a menudo los ve usted?
4.8 ¿A quienes apoyan ellos dentro del pueblo (ustedes/otra casa/otro hogar)?
4.9 ¿Han cambiado su trabajo en el último año?

5. ¿Si usted no tiene familia ahora en otras partes de México, las tuvo en el pasado?
   __ Sí, continúe debajo. __ No, proceda a la próxima pregunta.

5.1 ¿Describa quiénes?
5.2 ¿Dónde están ellos?
5.3 ¿Qué hacían ellos?
5.4 ¿A quienes apoyan ellos dentro del pueblo (ustedes/otra casa/otro hogar)?
5.5 ¿Por qué dejaron ellos la ciudad?
5.6 ¿A dónde fueron ellos?
5.7 ¿Las huelgas en la ciudad de México influyeron el movimiento de estos individuos?

6. ¿Tiene usted la familia en el EE.UU.?
   __ Sí, continúe debajo. __ No, proceda a la próxima pregunta.

6.1 ¿Quiénes?
6.2 ¿Dónde son ellos?
6.3 ¿Qué hacen ellos?
6.4 ¿Poseen ellos o alquilan su casa?
6.5 ¿Poseen ellos una casa en este pueblo?
6.6 ¿Qué tan seguido los ve usted?
6.7 ¿A quienes apoyan ellos dentro del pueblo (ustedes/otra casa/otro hogar)?
6.8 ¿Ha cambiado su trabajo en el último año?
7. ¿Si usted no tiene familia ahora en el EE.UU., algún miembro de su familia estuvo en los EE.UU. en el pasado?
   ___ Sí, continúe debajo. ___ No, proceda a la próxima pregunta.
   7.1 ¿Describa quiénes?
   7.2 ¿Qué hacían ellos?
   7.3 ¿Apoyaron ellos a su casa?
   7.4 ¿Por qué ellos no viven en la ciudad ahora?
   7.5 ¿A dónde fueron ellos?

8. ¿Está usted pensando usted emigrar al EE.UU.?

9. ¿Hay otros miembros de su casa que piensan en emigrar al EE.UU.? ¿Por qué sí o por qué no.

10. ¿Hay emigrantes o trabajadores migratorios en su casa? ¿Cuántos?

11. ¿Puede contarme usted sobre las diferentes formas de migraciones que hay en este pueblo?

12. ¿En que año fueron las primeras migraciones en la comunidad?
   12.1 ¿O Cuándo empezaron a emigrar del pueblo a (México, EEUU)?

13. ¿Las huelgas influyen para tomar la decisión de emigrar? ¿Por qué?

14. ¿Cómo influyen las huelgas en la migración para los hombres y mujeres?

15. ¿Los que han salido del pueblo debido a las huelgas, a donde se han ido?

16. ¿Por qué salieron los emigrantes de este pueblo?

17. ¿Puede contarme usted algo sobre lo que pasó en Ciudad de Oaxaca el año pasado (abril)?

18. ¿Qué pensaba usted durante las huelgas?

19. ¿Apoya usted la lucha de los maestros?

20. ¿Sabe usted qué significa APPO?
   20.1 ¿Puede contarme usted un poco sobre el APPO?
   20.2 ¿Qué papel tuvo el APPO dentro de las huelgas?
   20.3 Yo apoyo (o no apoyo) el APPO

21. ¿Conoce usted a algún niño que falto a la escuela debido a las huelgas?
21.1 ¿Tiene usted algún niño que falto a la escuela (aplica si tiene niños)?

22. ¿Cerraron los negocios debido a las huelgas?
22.1 ¿Puede hablar usted sobre eso?

23. ¿Actualmente como son las ventas para ustedes?

24 ¿Conoce usted alguna persona que haya perdido (un) trabajo debido a las huelgas?
24.1 ¿Perdió usted trabajo debido a las huelgas? (en caso de que él trabaje)

25. ¿Conoce usted alguien que vive en la ciudad?

26. ¿Viaja usted a la ciudad?
26.1 ¿Por qué viaja usted a la ciudad?
26.2 ¿Cuántas veces viaja usted a la ciudad (por día, por semana, por mes)?
26.3 ¿Cuándo fue su última visita?
26.4 ¿Los viajes a la ciudad han cambiado después de la huelga?

27. ¿Actualmente, piensa usted que la ciudad de Oaxaca ha sido transformada por las huelgas?

28. ¿Qué cambios le gustaría ver en el futuro para la ciudad?

29. ¿Puede contarme usted algo sobre su comunidad?

30. ¿Qué cambios nota usted en la comunidad desde el año pasado?

31. ¿Qué cambios le gustaría ver en su comunidad?

32. ¿Piensa usted la migración al EE.UU. es menos, el mismo o más que hace un año?
32.1 ¿Por qué es menos, igual o más?
32.2 ¿Cómo sabe usted que es menos, igual o más?

33. ¿Quién es un trabajador migratorio típico hoy?

34. ¿Quién fue un trabajador migratorio típico en el pasado?

35. ¿Piensa usted que las huelgas han llevado a las personas que emigran de su comunidad?

36. ¿Conoce usted a alguien que emigrado debido a las huelgas?
47. ¿Las huelgas impactaron diferentemente a las mujeres que los hombres (explique)?

Preguntas para los líderes de la comunidad:

*48. ¿Puede contarme usted sobre la historia de su comunidad?

*49. ¿Puede contarme usted un poco sobre la historia migratoria de su comunidad?

50. ¿Puede contarme usted algo sobre como ha sido la relación entre su comunidad y la Ciudad de Oaxaca?

51. ¿Puede contarme usted algo sobre los eventos en Ciudad de Oaxaca la primavera pasada?

52. ¿Cómo han impactado los eventos en Ciudad de Oaxaca a su comunidad?

53. ¿Ha aumentado la migración desde que pasaron los eventos de la última primavera?

54. Comentario:

**In English**

2007: crises in migration outcomes, Oaxaca, Mexico

Town:
Date and time of the interview:
Interview number:
Name of interviewer
Information on interviewee

Household membership and organization
Name:
Age:
Sex:
Relationship to HH head:
Social status:
Educational status (note years):
Languages spoken:
Place of birth:
Place of Residence:
Work:
Location:
Status:

1. Can you tell me which are the most important activities or jobs in your household or in your community?

2. Do you have family in Oaxaca City?
   2.1 If yes, who?
   2.2 If yes, what do they do?
   2.3 If yes, how often do you see them?
   2.4 Do they own or rent their home?
   2.5 Do they own a home in this village?
   2.6 Do they support your/another household in this village?
   2.7 Has their job changed in the last year?
   2.8 Did the strikes influence the lives of these individuals?

3. If you do not have family in the city now, did you in the past?
   3.1 If yes, describe who
   3.2 What did they do?
   3.3 Do they support your/another household in this village?
   3.4 Why are they no longer in the city?
   3.5 Where did they go?
   3.6 Did the strikes influence the movement of these individuals?

4. Did you have or do you have family in other parts of Mexico?
   4.1 If yes, who?
   4.2 Where are they?
   4.3 If yes, what do they do?
   4.4 How often do you see them?
   4.5 Do they own or rent their home?
   4.6 Do they own a home in this village?
   4.7 If yes, how often do you see them?
   4.8 Do they support your/another household in this village?
   4.9 Has their job changed in the last year?

5. If you do not have family in other parts of Mexico now, did you in the past?
   5.1 If yes, describe who
   5.2 Where are they?
   5.3 What did they do?
   5.4 Did they support your/another household in this village?
   5.5 Why are they no longer in the city?
   5.6 Where did they go?
   5.7 Did the strikes influence the movement of these individuals?
6. Do you have family in the US?
6.1 If yes, who?
6.2 If yes, where are they?
6.3 If yes, what do they do?
6.4 Do they own or rent their home?
6.5 Do they own a home in this village?
6.6 If yes, how often do you see them?
6.7 Do they support your/another household in this village?
6.8 Has their job changed in the last year?

7. If you do not have family in the US now, did you in the past?
7.1 If yes, describe who.
7.2 What did they do?
7.3 Did they support the household?
7.4 Why are they no longer in the city?
7.5 Where did they go?

8. Are you thinking of migrating to the US?

9. Are other members of your household thinking of migrating to the US? Why or why not.

10. Are there migrants or migratory workers in your household?

11. Can you tell me about the different forms of migrations in the village?

12. When were the first migrations?
12.1 Or when did people begin to migrate from the village to (Mexico, the US)

13. Do the strikes influence the decision to migrate? Why?

14. How do the strikes influence the migration of men and women?

15. Those who left the village because of the strikes, where did they go?

16. Why did the migrants leave the village?

17. Can you tell me what happened in Oaxaca City last year (April)?

18. There were strikes by the teacher’s union. What do you think of the strikes?

19. Do you support the rights of the teachers?
20. Do you know what APPO stands for?
20.1 Can you tell me a little about the APPO?
20.2 What role did the APPO have in the strikes?
20.3 I support (or I do not support) the APPO.

21. Did you know of any children who missed school because of the strikes?
21.1 (If applicable) Do you have any children that missed school?

22. Did businesses close because of the strikes?
22.1 Can you talk about that?

23. How are sales for you now?

24. Do you know of anyone who lost a job because of the strikes?
24.1 (If applicable) Did you lose any work because of the strikes?

25. Do you know anyone that lives in the city?

26. Do you go to the city?
26.1 Why do you go to the city?
26.2 How often do you go to the city (daily, weekly, monthly)?
26.3 When was your last visit?
26.4 Have your trips to the city changed after the strikes?

27. Now, do you think that Oaxaca City has been changed by the strikes?

28. What changes would you like to see in the future for the city?

29. Can you describe your community for me?

30. What changes do you note in the community since last year?

31. What changes would you like to see in your community?

32. Do you think the rate of migration to the US is less, the same or more than a year ago?
32.1 Why is it less, the same or more?
32.2 How is it less, the same or more?

33. Who is a typical migrant today?

34. Who was a typical migrant in the past?

35. Do you think that the strikes have led people to migrate from your community?
36. Do you know anyone who has migrated because of the strikes?

47. Did the strikes impact women and men differently (explain)?

Questions for community leaders:

48. Can you tell me about the history of your community?

49. Can you tell me about the migration history of your community?

50. Can you tell me about the relationship of your community to Oaxaca City?

51. Can you tell me about the events in Oaxaca City last spring?

52. How have the events in Oaxaca City impacted your community?

53. Has migration increased since last spring’s events?

54. Comments: