

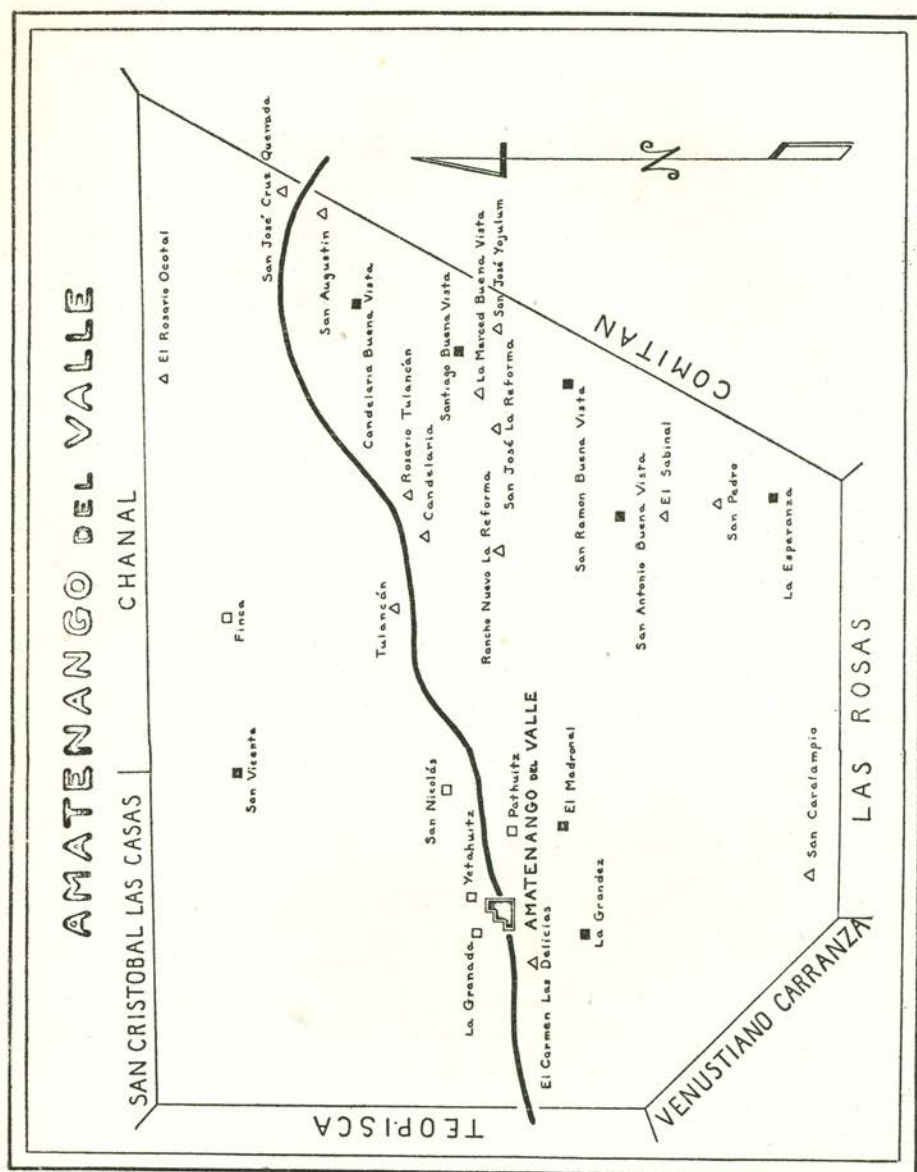
THE STRUCTURING OF SOCIAL RELATIONS: AN ACTIVITY ANALYSIS

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The structure of the bilateral kinship group has been the subject of increasing attention in recent years (Pehrson, 1954, 1957; Freeman, 1961; Goodenough, 1955; Murdock, 1960; Leach, 1961; Blehr, 1963). The delayed interest in the bilateral social system may stem from the greater difficulty in revealing the organizing principles. The structure of the bilateral group is more likely to be implicit rather than stated in codified rules. The group may in fact, think that they are organized along unilaterally prescribed lines, whereas examination of participation in work groups, housenhold rituals and communal ceremonies may reveal a shift to bilateral emphasis or even complete symmetrical balance of the descent lines. Bilaterally organized societies are apparently more complex too, in that they shift the axis upon which selection of participants is made according to the situation.

As the bilateral group has been more carefully described and analyzed, it has become evident that bilateral and unilateral systems are not polar types but that societies fall along a continuum with differences in the emphasis on the selective factors for forming social groupings (Leach, 1961, 10). The analysis of the bilateral groups has forced us to reexamine some of the conclusions on social structure drawn from unilateral groups, and to sharpen our methodological tools of analysis. The concentration on unilineal societies has led to an emphasis on ideal patterns of action. Because these are not as often expressed in jural obligations in bilateral societies, it has been necessary to look at aspects of social organization which cannot be elicited by direct interviews. In order to get beyond the private intuitions of the structuralists, we must work out



the statistical incidence of certain modes of behavior resulting from multiple individual choices. This is as crucial in the analysis of unilineal societies as in that of bilateral societies, although the range of statistical variation may be more limited in the former case.

In this paper I shall attempt to point out a method for the analysis of some principles structuring social relationships through a quantitative analysis of frequency of participation in specified activities. The method has the advantage that the data can be more easily compared cross-culturally as well as at different time periods for the same community. The search for recurrent regularities in comparative studies will depend ultimately on statistical analysis of covariation (cf. Spoehr, 1950).

The population studied is the Maya Indian Village of Amatenango del Valle in Chiapas, Mexico.¹ Amatenango is situated just off the Pan American highway, 44 kilometers south of San Cristóbal Las Casas in the state of Chiapas, México. The municipio is inhabited by a population of 2,529 persons in an area embracing 354.73 square kilometers (1950 census, Mexico). The community is an endogamous unit, maintaining an independent civil-religious hierarchy, a distinct calendar of religious fiestas, an economic specialization in the production of pottery.

The center of Amatenango is the focus of social interaction, both as a civic and religious center and as a residential unit. Community endogamy, along with 87 per cent endogamous marriages within the dual divisions of the center have assured close proximity of bilaterally related kin. Members of the community assert the dominance of patrilineal residence, inheritance and association, but statistical analysis revealed a symmetrical balance in both familial and communal groupings. (Nash, 1960). Whatever traces of patrilineal emphasis remain—the Indian surnames associated with Spanish name groups, the bride price—are no longer related to functional groups organized on lineal principles. Other mechanisms have been developed for limiting and defining significant interaction with the broad group of bilateral and affinal relative recognized.

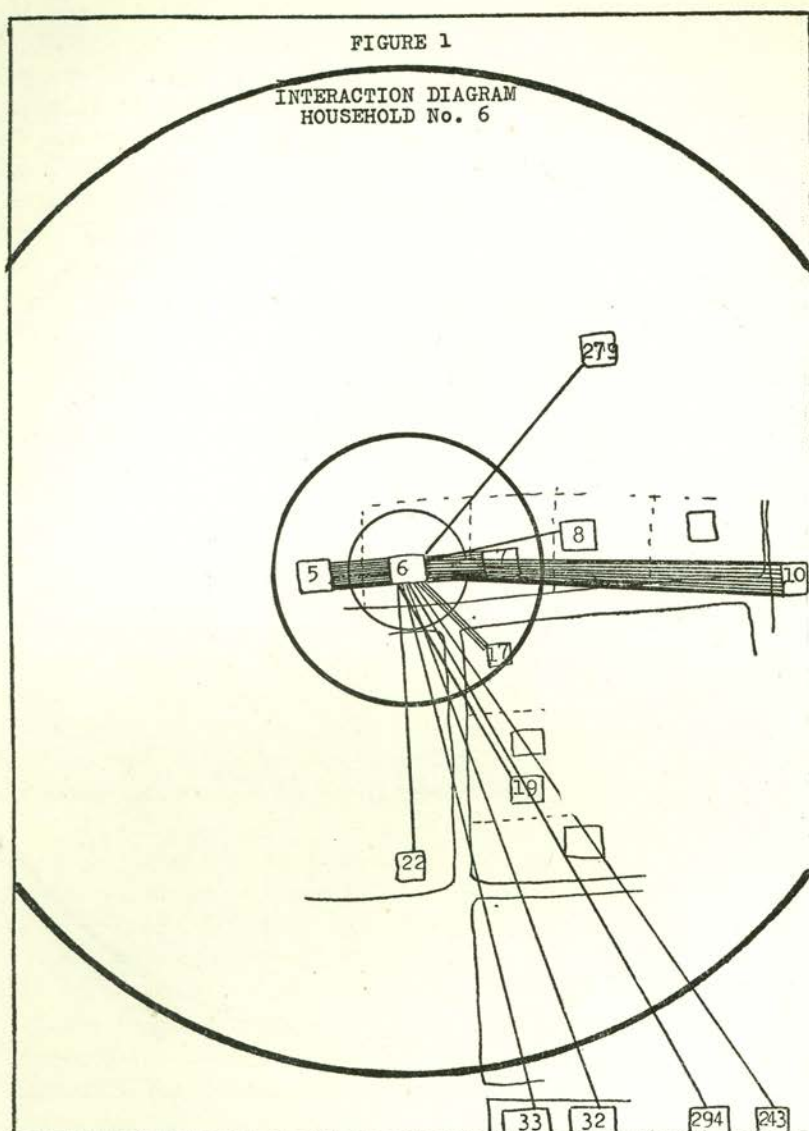
¹ Fieldwork was carried out in the summer of 1956 and from June to December 1957. I owe thanks to the National Science Foundations Man in Nature Project at the University of Chicago for support of the field work.

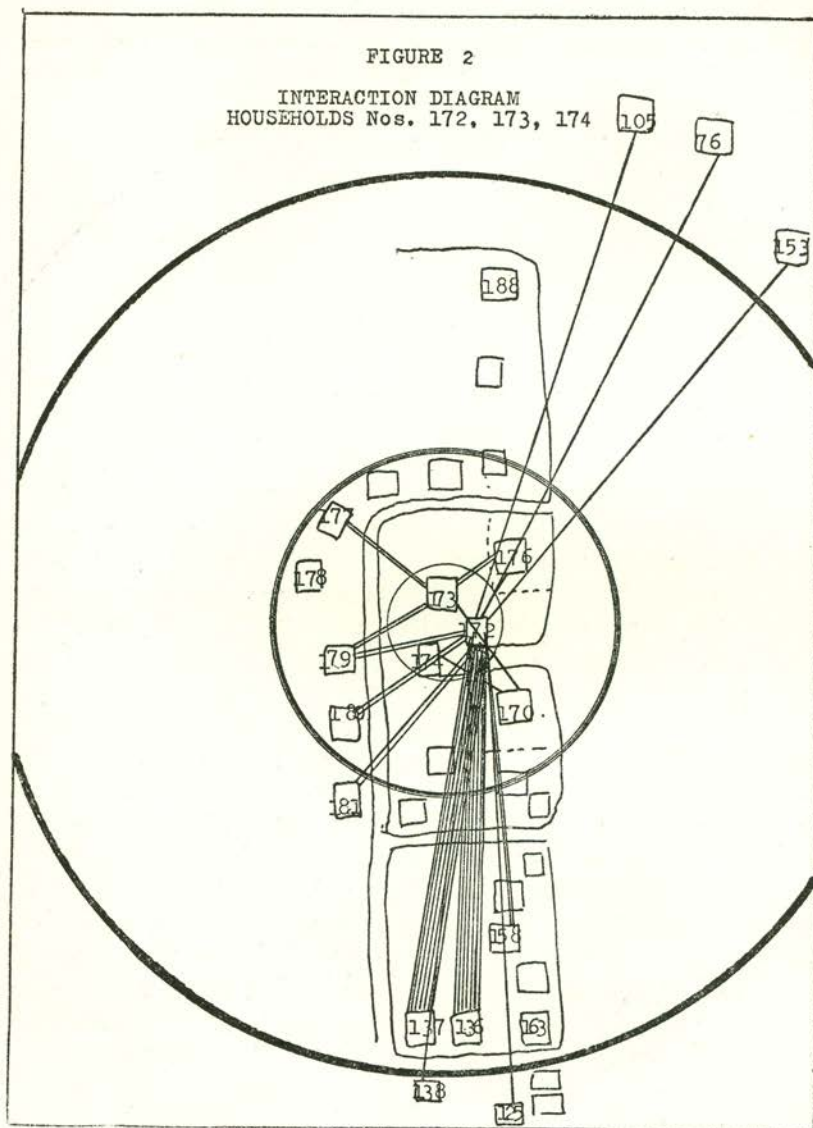
In an attempt to discover what these mechanisms are, the data on participation in daily work, informal social interaction, and at special events were collected and analyzed. Two approaches were used in the collection of data: (1) daily observation of the interaction of members of four sample families with their kin and non-kin, neighbors and those living at a distance and (2) statistical counts of the role relationships of participants in familial or ceremonial celebrations. The dual approach follows the distinctions made by Radcliff-Brown (1957) between the "interconnectedness of individuals" (1) manifested in the repetitive interaction of an individual and others and (2) that manifested in the similar actions by several actors.

1. OBSERVATIONS IN FOUR HOUSEHOLDS

In assessing the strength of kinship and residential proximity I have compared three areas of observations: (1) the interaction in four households which varied in size and role sets; (2) the frequency of interaction and the situation in which they interact of pairs of relatives linked to these households and living in equivalent spatial proximity to the members of the household but differing in their kin bond; (3) equivalent relatives, specifically siblings, living at different degrees of proximity. I have checked observations from the core sample of four households with observations of households scattered throughout the community.

Two of the households analyzed at length, No. 6 (Fig. 1) and No. 13 (Fig. 3), were three generation families, one virilocal, the other uxorilocal. Another, Nos. 172, 173, 174 (Fig. 2) was made up of a group of three nuclear families, generationally linked and living within the same compound sitio. The incidence of this kind of household network is in the minority (26 per cent of the households in the community are located in compound sitios) but it is extremely significant because of the high preference of this co-residence where economically feasible—the three families controlling the greatest amount of agricultural wealth are situated in this pattern—. The fourth family, No. 135 (Fig. 4), was a nuclear unit, significant in addition to the high frequency of this kind of residence (72





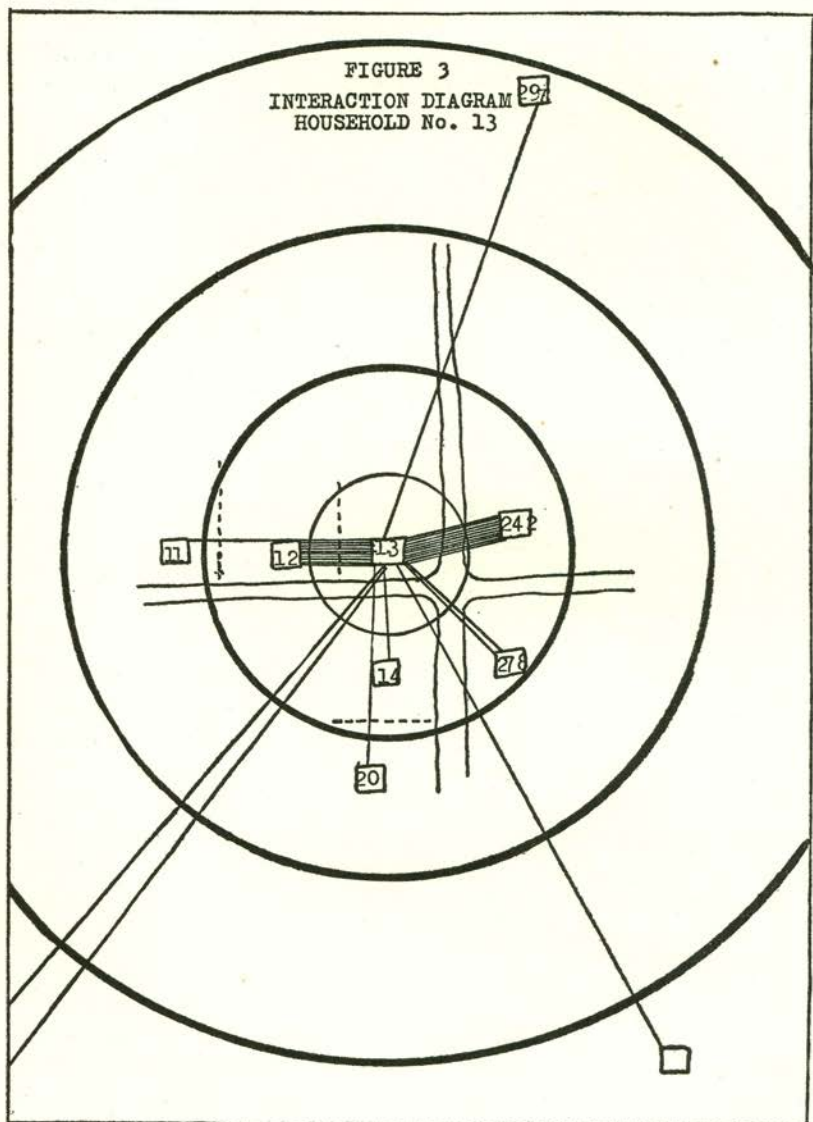
per cent) because the male head of the family was president of the town. The burden of official duties required this man to seek more assistance than families in which the male head of the house was fully occupied with his own agricultural functions. Of the four households, two were located in Akonantic, two in Alannantik (two sides of the dual division). They were selected on the basis of their representativeness of types of household composition, location in the dual barrios, and congeniality and easy access for the investigator.

The Network of Interaction Compared

The four households can be ranged on a continuum from the least to the greatest interaction with kin and neighbors outside of the household.

Figure 5 illustrates the range of interaction for the four households for specified events. Each concentric circle corresponds to the circles radiating from the household as a center in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4. The number and width of outside contacts is inversely correlated with the number and range of relatives within the household or compound. In the daily activities, households of the compound sitio, Nos. 172, 173, and 174, have the fewest contacts with people outside of the compound. The four women of these households are a sufficient cooperative group for all the household chores of preparing food, making pottery and even firing pottery. There was no casual visiting because all members of the original family of procreation were living within the compound. It was only after the nomination of the eldest son as Alferez that the wider kin group participated in the cooperative work leading up to the fiesta. The compound households Nos. 6 and 13 have a nearly similar pattern of interaction with nearby kin and neighbors. In both households the women are a sufficient group for the preparation of food, and for pottery making, but both are assisted by nearby kin or neighbors for firing pottery. There is constant daily visiting by married children living nearby in both these households. The men of household No. 6 are sufficient for all agricultural work except the harvest, but since the younger daughter's husband in household No. 13 works at the sawmill, the male head of the family works cooperatively

FIGURE 3
INTERACTION DIAGRAM
HOUSEHOLD No. 13



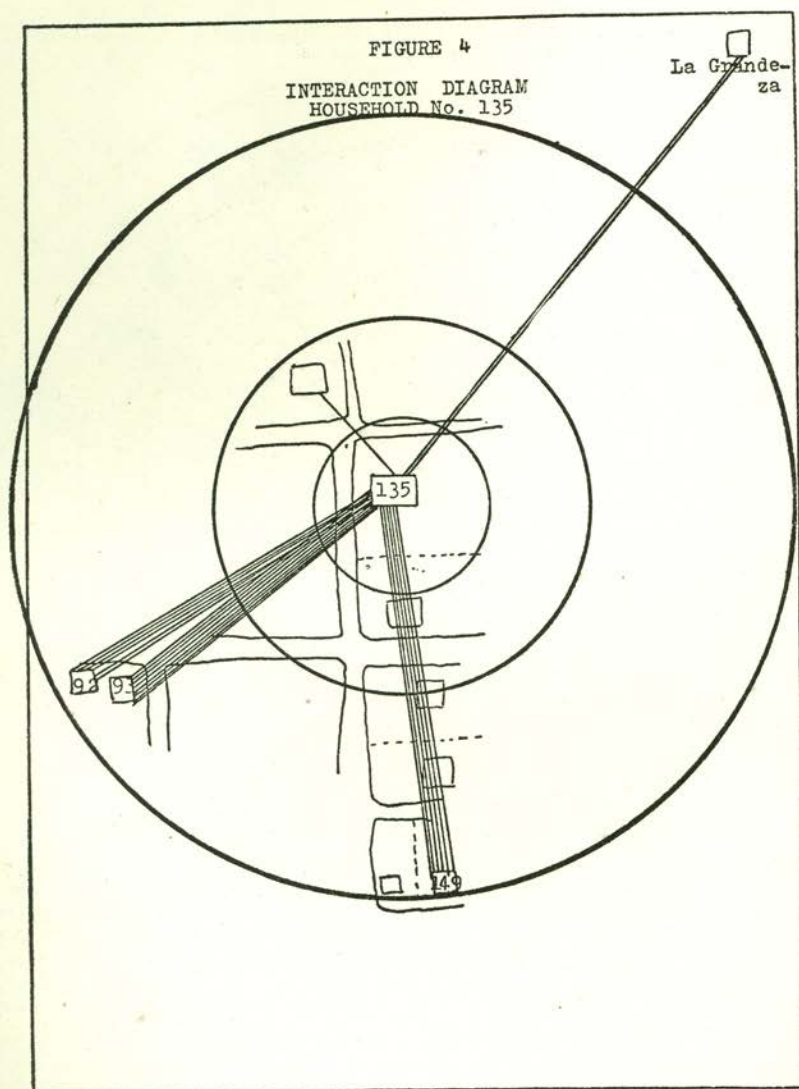
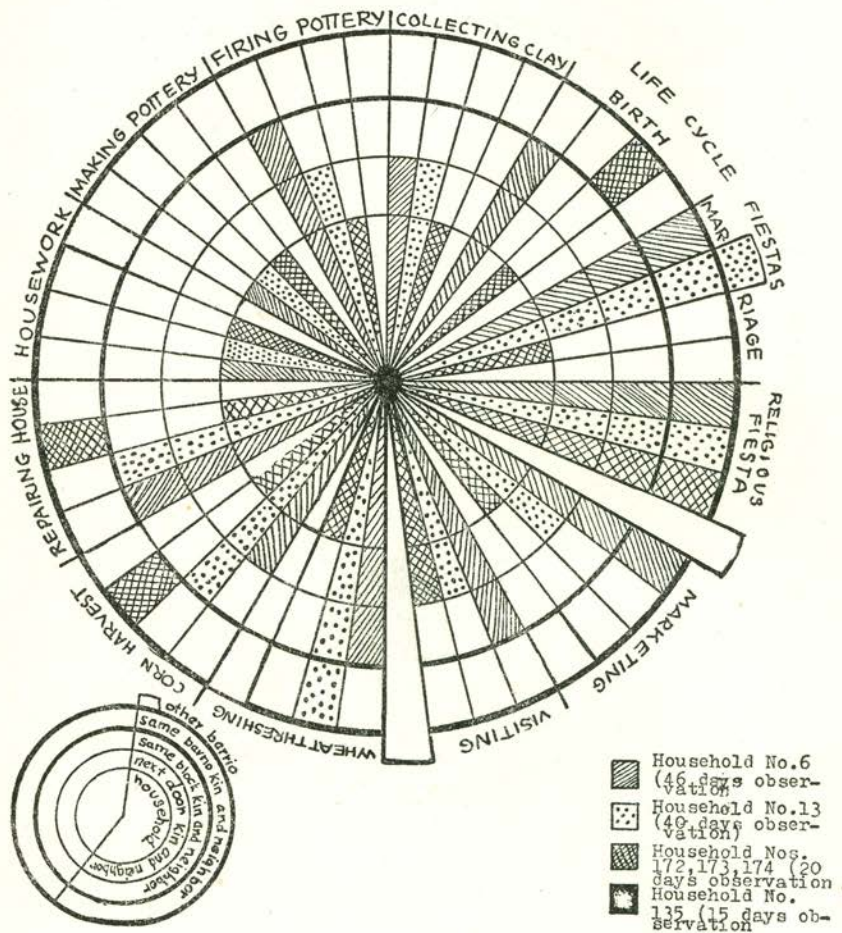


FIGURE 5

RANGE OF INTERACTION ACCORDING
TO EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



with his son living next door. Household No. 135 is the least self-sufficient of the households studied, and must enlist the aid of a niece to carry out the daily tasks of food preparation. The male head of the family has to seek assistance for all agricultural tasks, particularly since he is now acting as president of the municipio. Non-kin neighbors as well as relatives contribute gifts of food daily to this household.

The interaction networks compared for these four households suggest the following hypothesis: multiple nuclear families in compound sitios reinforce cooperation and preservation of the generational tie. Single three-generation households preserve some of the features of cooperation in multiple household compounds, but important cooperative relationships are established with neighboring kin regardless of the genealogical tie, or with non-related neighbors. In nuclear families the household requires frequent recourse to kin or neighbors for aid even in daily chores. The validity of this hypothesis could be tested by a comparison with communities in which the compound sitio is found with high frequency. A good case for comparison would be the municipio of Chanal, where a preliminary census by Guiteras Holmes, (1959) shows a high incidence of compound sitios coincident with greater importance of the patrilineally defined unilateral kin group. In Amatenango there are 29 compounds which include 74 households, or 26 per cent of the 280 households in the community center. The majority of the generationally linked households in these compounds are cases in which married daughters live with their parents.

*Locality vs. Kin Bond in Determining
Frequency of Interaction*

In the following table I have compared the frequency of interaction between Carmen and (1) a sister, (2) a distantly related woman both living next door on opposite sides of household No. 6, and (3) another sister living in household No. 279.

TABLE 1

INTERACTION BETWEEN RELATIVES HOUSEHOLDS
Nos. 5, 7, 279 IN 6

<i>Occasion for Interaction</i>	<i>Household Nº 5 Younger Sister</i>	<i>Household Nº 7 Mother-in-law's Nephew's Wife</i>	<i>Household Nº 279 Older Sister</i>
Casual visiting (in 6)	4	4	2
Firing Pots	2	3	—
Gathering clay	1	—	—
Curing	2	—	—
Baptism	2	—	—
Fiesta Pottery Preparation	1	1	1
Total	12	8	3

The sister living a few houses away in No. 279 visits with much less frequency than the sister next door, and even less than the distantly related woman living next door in No. 7 (Fig. 1). Where residence is co-distant, the closer kin link makes for more frequent interaction than with the more distantly related neighbor. (Compare the 12 occasions of interaction between the sister next door to eight occasions with the woman in No. 7.)

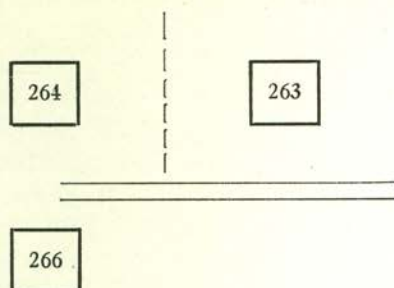
A comparable situation is shown in the following table.

TABLE 2

INTERACTION BETWEEN RELATIVES, HOUSEHOLDS
Nos. 264 AND 266 IN 263

<i>Occasion for Interaction</i>	<i>Household Nº 264 Dean Husband's dead brother's widow</i>	<i>Household Nº 266 Daughter</i>
Casual visiting	5	7
Curing	2	2
Firing pottery	—	1
Total	7	10

Both women live in close proximity to household No. 263 as the diagram of households below indicates:



The kin relationship between No. 263 and No. 264 is tenuous, since the two women are linked only by the sibling relationship between their deceased husbands. Nevertheless, since the women live next door they have maintained almost as close a relationship as that between mother and daughter living in No. 266.

The figures in the two tables above are based on daily observations of the two households, Nos. 6 and 263, for a period of two months. The visits were made primarily for the purpose of collecting daily consumption, but data on visitors and events occurring in the informants' day were recorded. Although numerical data on interaction are limited for this community because schedules for such observations were not formally drawn up and filled for a larger number of informants, these summaries are important checks on general impressions. They strongly support the conclusion that kin bonds are strengthened and reinforced by proximity.

2. PARTICIPATION IN RITUALS AND FIESTAS

Data on participation in rituals which occur in the life cycle of the individual, in ceremonies marking the annual calendar of religious fiestas, and in work groups were collected based on observation of events occurring throughout the community. Only those events are included in which complete "guest lists" were recorded. Observations of participation in the total range of activities in the community reveal the significant kin roles enacted in defined situations and disclose the principles underlying the selection of individuals to fill these roles.

Participation of Relatives in Events Occurring in the Life Cycle

Life Cycle Ritual. At all the fiestas surrounding events in the life cycle, the participation is by members of the bilaterally defined kin group. The nucleus of all these fiestas is the household group. This is the group, in addition to the grandmother (either paternal or maternal) depending on whether the parents of the child live with or near one or the other set of child, who attend the birth of a new member of the family (Fig. 6).

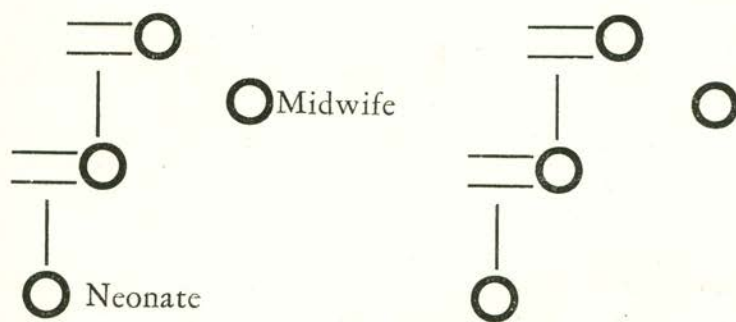


Fig. 6

At baptism, the child becomes an official member of the community and is introduced to a wider circle (Fig. 7).

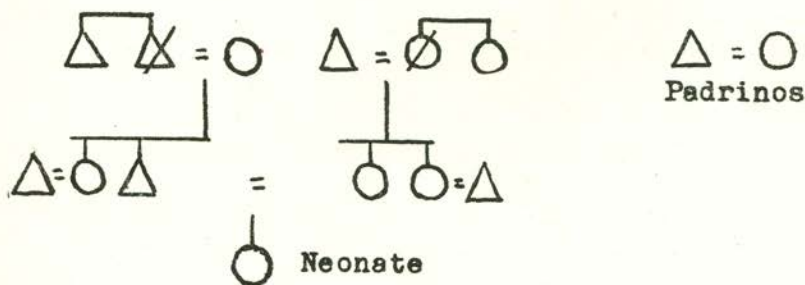


Fig. 7

In the wider participation events of engagement and marriage (Fig. 8 and Fig. 9), parents, grandparents, and collaterals of ego and of first and second generations attend. This group

gathers together regardless of their place of residence (unless it be outside the municipio) and more distantly related kin who live nearby also attend. Participation at the wedding is bilaterally symmetrical. Respect is accorded in terms of relative

A. Pedida

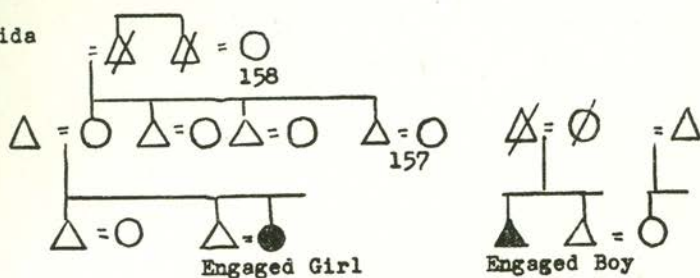
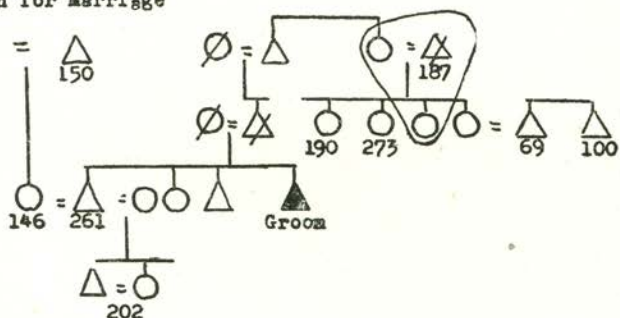


Fig. 8

B. Preparation for Marriage



(Same as A)

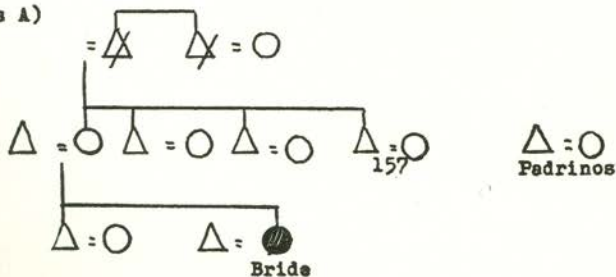


Fig. 9

age regardless of the closeness of the kin link. The eldest man assumes the seat to the right of the entrance to the house on the benches which lines the interior of the porch. All men sit beside him in clockwise fashion in accord with relative age.

The widest kingroup assembles at the funeral (Fig. 10). The inner core of collateral and affinal, relatives remain inside the house while neighbors around the fence of the patio gather at the peak of the mourning preceding the funeral march. Often they join the procession to the cemetery. Their participation, specially in cases in which witchcraft was suspected, seemed to be an affirmation of their freedom from guilt and good will toward the deceased and survivors.

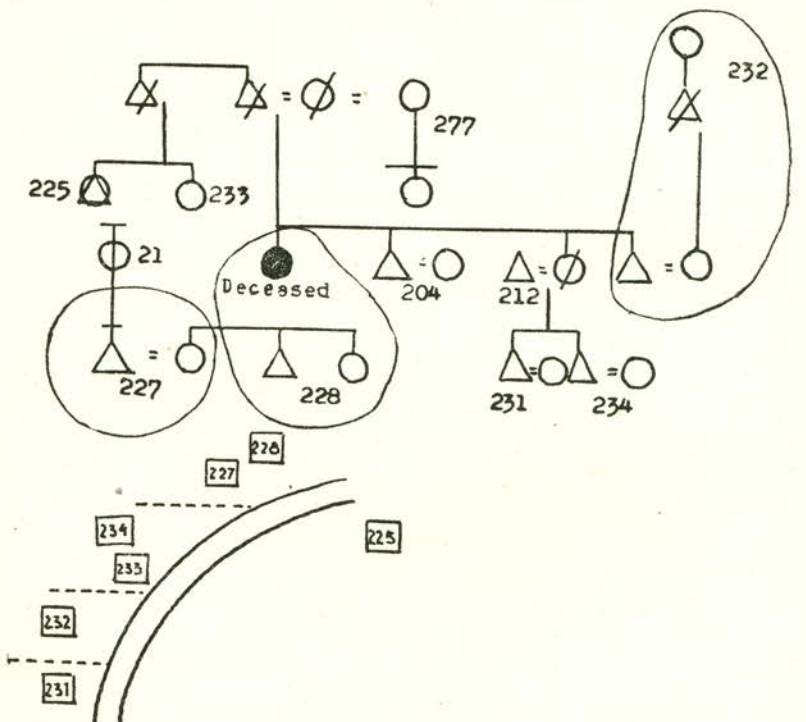


Fig. 10

262

204

277

In events occurring in the life cycle of the individual, such as birth, marriage and death, residence is not a primary selec-

tive factor determining participation but is a limiting factor since kin living nearby tend to participate with greater frequency than those at a distance.

Participation in Communal Fiestas

Fiestas celebrating saint's days are the occasion for public ritual performed in the plaza, the church and the cabildo. The visiting priest performs the formal Catholic ritual with the assistance of the fiscales. The mayordomos maintain the religious atmosphere pervading the community at these occasions by playing the pita and tambour throughout the day and evening. The integration of the civil and the religious wings of the hierarchy is recognized in the formal ceremony at which the flags of the saints are removed from the church and presented to the top officials of the civil hierarchy in the cabildo. The Alfereces take part in the public aspect of communal fiestas, but a significant part of the fiesta takes part in the homes of the Alfereces. The Alfereces visit the four homes in which each resides in succession, bearing the religious banners, and at each home drinking and dancing accompanied by the music of the tambour and pita take place.

The institution of Alférez defines and strengthens family and neighborhood bonds in the fiestas of the communally recognized saints. This institution contrasts with the corporate religious groups organized in Cofradías, characteristic of many other Mayan Indian communities. Participants in the Cofradía celebration are organizational members the Alcaldes and Vocales, recruited without reference to their family of orientation while those in the Alférez system are chosen on the basis of their parents' social and economic position. They are young men who are not able to pay all the expenses of this duty, so they must depend on their father's support. He is aided by his relatives (Fig. 11). Neighbors and members of the civil hierarchy were officially invited guests at the end of each work day when the large ceremonial pots were made and food prepared. The final celebration was attended by more than 200 guests, and in its final stages, most of the residents of the center had participated in some aspect of the celebration.

There is an interesting paradox in the institution of *Alférez* as it functions in Amatenango. The *Alférez* is chosen on the basis of ability to pay the 3000 pesos expended during a year of service, regardless of previous communal service. He is expected to accept the post, unless he can prove inability to bear the burden, as a sacred obligation to the community. However,

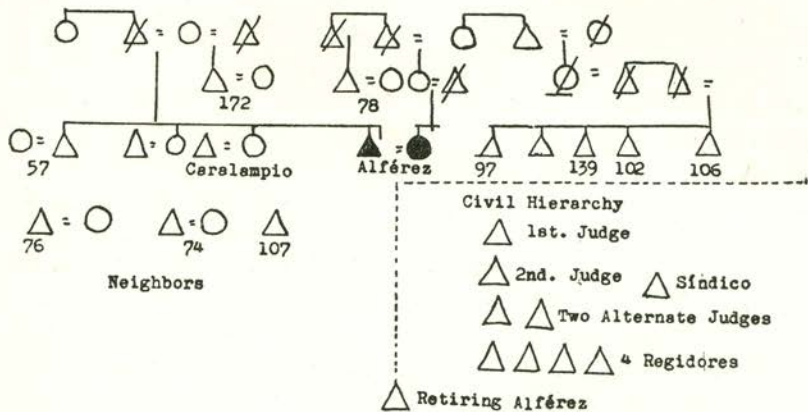


Fig. 11

in undertaking the post, he is subject to witchcraft exercised by neighbors envious of the wealth he displays in fulfilling his obligations. Three of my informants whose husbands had served as *Alférez* said that shortly after they had served in this post, they themselves or one of their children had fallen ill, a victim of witchcraft. They at first denied knowing who had exercised the witchcraft, but insisted that it was because of envy of a neighbor aroused by the expenditures necessitated by the fiestas in their homes. (These neighbors were not related to the informants.) The paradox may result from the anomalous role of the *Alférez*: although recruited to perform communal service, he is supported by his familial group in undertaking the service. He recognizes this obligation in a fiesta in which they are invited to participate, along with neighbors. In providing the food, liquor and meat consumed at this fiesta, he displays greater economic power than any of his neighbors. It is in the exercise of this power that he arouses envy and thus becomes the object of witchcraft.

Participation in Work Groups

In combined work groups, the principles underlying task allocation differ according to the size of the group involved, the task and the time period. Within the household group, tasks are assigned on the basis of age and sex. This assignment of functions changes in the life cycle of the individual: At marriage, the new daughter-in-law or son-in-law proves his or her capacities by under-taking a greater role of assistance in the common work effort of the household. When the married couple have a child, their new responsibilities make for a redistribution of the task assignment. The mother of a new-born child is expected to do much less pottery production and is never involved in tasks outside of the home. As the children mature, they take on tasks geared to their age and physical capacities. The careful assessment of the capacity of children in the assignment of tasks is best seen when children go with their mother to the water faucets to bear water home. Each has a container differing in size but with minute gradations depending on the relative size of the bearer.

Harmonious relations are maintained when each member of the household performs the task expected of him. When disagreement arises, the recalcitrant member may make amends by exceeding his normal task. I have seen a man bring home over a month's supply of wood in an attempt to reintegrate himself into the household of his in-law after beating his wife.

In combined work groups with people outside of the household, reciprocity is the basis for the organization of work effort. In firing pottery, women seek help from nearby kin and neighbors. This work requires the quick mobilization of help at a crucial point in the process, and the aid given is reciprocated shortly thereafter when anyone of this group requires help.

TABLE 3

ASSISTANCE IN FIRING POTTERY

<i>Relationship to person aided</i>	<i>Nº of occasions</i>	<i>Location in reference to person helped</i>
Mother	4	2 next door, 2 same side
Daughter	4	3 " " 1 same block
Sister-in-law	6	6 " "
Niece	1	1 " "
Daughter-in-law	1	1 " "
Granddaughter	1	1 same block
Neighbor	2	2 next door
Son	2	2 same side
Mother-in-law	2	2 next door
Household group only	3	
Total	26	17 next door 2 same block 4 same side

The table indicates that the primary assistance from outside the household group is between mother and daughter (in 8 of the 23 occasions noted, assistance was of mothers to daughters and of daughters to mothers.) In 17 of the 23 observations in which outside assistance was called in, the assistant lived next door. Next door residence, rather than specific kin relationship is the primary basis for cooperative work in this activity.

There is some evidence that the work group for pottery making has shifted in the present generation from and emphasis on the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship to the mother-daughter relationship. La Farge and Blom (1927) report that women trained their daughter-in-law how to make pottery. Today mothers train their daughters. This reflects the increasing age of marriage from about 12 to 16 or 17 when a girl is already proficient in making pottery. With this training, women become accustomed to their daughters' cooperation and resist losing their help at the daughters' marriage. Early marriage is a way men tied their son to them, and the lineal rather than the affinal tie was fortified.

In agricultural work, men seek aid beyond the household only at the time of the harvest, or wheat threshing. Fathers, sons and daughters' husbands, brothers and sisters' husbands are the usual group of kin from which one chooses helpers, but friends and neighbors may be requested to help at this time. This help is reciprocated immediately afterward, during the same harvest period.

Selection from among this group is made on the basis of excellence in work rather than residence. In building a house, the siblings of both the husband and wife are obligated to assist them. Since this work is undertaken infrequently, the obligation to reciprocate aid is not immediately acted upon. If for some reason a sibling is not able to help in housebuilding, he will pay a substitute to work for him. The sibling bond, since it is more enduring than friendship or neighborhood bonds, is the preferred basis for recruiting help when the obligation to reciprocate is not immediately acted upon.

In a system of labor exchange, reciprocal relations can be established only between people of equivalent economic position. The wealthier families hire assistants, since their own lands keep them sufficiently busy so that it would be uneconomic for them to return labor in kind. Poorer families, on the other hand, do not require assistance on their small ejido land holding, and must hire out to others in the community. Differences in wealth may have eroded some of the area of social organization bound by reciprocal obligation in Amatenango. On the basis of the data on reciprocal labor exchange in Amatenango, I would suggest the following hypothesis, to be tested by comparison with other corporate communities: the greater the disparity in wealth, the more likely there will be found a labor market, and the greater proportion of labor exchanges will be mediated through this market rather than through systems of reciprocal aid.

The following model summarizes interaction within household groups and within the community:

	<i>Within household</i>	<i>Beyond household within community</i>	
		<i>With kin</i>	<i>With non-kin</i>
Interchange	"cooperation" — reciprocity based on implicit understandings	reciprocity — explicit, defined by traditional expectations	reciprocity — explicit, often defined by contract as well as tradition
Sanctions	authority of elder member - male in men's work group; female in woman's	authority of elders of bilaterally extended kin group; Recourse to <i>cabildo</i> if no strong elder	informal — fear of gossip of neighbors formal — local judges, president of recourse to district courts
Time Span	extended, indefinite	extended usually some defined limit on repeated tasks (harvest) but over life-time for non-repeated tasks, as housebuilding	immediate return expected or explicitly stated time allowance

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The data from observations of participation in daily work and in special events indicate that participation varies according to the kind of situation and is modified by the relative proximity of the participant. I shall summarize these observations in terms of a series of questions.

1. *How is the allocation of roles to members of the household affected by the size and composition of the residential unit?* The household is organized in terms of a structure of tasks. Within the household, all work is undertaken cooperatively with few orders or directions exchanged between mature members of the group. Every member of a household is expected to share in tasks according to his ability.

Since cooperative work is a major principle organizing the household, consideration of efficiency and mutual aid influence the composition and size of the residential unit. For the parents of married children, the ideal residential unit is for one of their children to remain with them. The younger man assists

the older in agricultural work on the household land holdings. The older woman then has an assistant in the preparation of food and pottery production, while the younger woman is freed of the outside trips for wood, clay or marketing, remaining at home with the small children and preparing meals. These three-generation households account for 24 per cent of the households in the center, with 50 per cent of these virilocal and 50 per cent uxorilocal.

The advantages in cooperative work to both parents and married offspring is retained in the single unit households within a compound. One-third of the 75 households within compounds are married offspring living in house provided by the parents of one of the spouses next to the parental household. In this form of household group, a maximum of privacy to the individual households is ensured along with maximum cooperative relations.

The majority of the households are nuclear, two generation families. If the children are young, the incapacitation of any mature member of these households requires the "adoption" of a relative, usually one without familial obligations, to assist in the daily tasks. In the nuclear households, cooperation between generations is limited, although assistance for special tasks is given when requested. The fractured landholdings have made it impossible for most parents to keep their married children occupied on their landholdings, and in the densely settled center they are frequently unable to acquire a house site near the parental house. The ideal multi-generational household is therefore met in a minority of cases.

2. *How is the rate of interaction between relatives affected by the degree of residence proximity?* The structural division of the center in two endogamous units tends to limit social interaction. Within each division, neighborhood enclaves of closely related families make for a further concentration. A corollary of the intensive social interaction in the neighborhood is the magnifying of spatial distance. Daily interaction and reciprocal working relations are, for women specially, limited to relatives and non-related neighbors living within the same block. When residence is equidistant, the tendency is to interact with greater frequency with the primary kin. However, next door residents, even though distantly related, interact with

greater frequency than close relatives, such as one's sister, who may live no more than a block away. Men are less limited than women to the immediate neighborhood in their social interaction.

Neighbors cannot be ignored, whether they be kin or non-related. They are the most likely to cast witchcraft in case of conflict, or when their envy is aroused. The neighborhood group stands in judgement in cases of witchcraft accusations. All households, and particularly those of the more powerful and wealthier members of a community, attempt to neutralize the neighbors by forming *compadrazgo*, or ritual god parent relations with them. Neighbors are invited to the curing ceremonies, to the houses in which the *Alfereces* of a fiesta celebrate the saints' days, and to other household celebrations. Failure to do so would imperil members of the household, possibly making them subjects of witchcraft. Finally, neighbors are the preferred source of spouses for one's children, and as such, are frequently bound by affinal ties.

It is this neighborhood group, then, which is the outer limit of repeated, daily interaction. Relatives beyond the neighborhood are visited on special occasions, not as part of their casual, continuous pattern of interaction.

3. *To what extent is participation determined by the kin bond regardless of proximity in residence and conversely by proximity regardless of the kin bond?* Outside of the household in Amatenango, there is no single unit which provides a core of participants in all occasions. Beyond the household group, the closest ties are between parents of both spouses and their married children, siblings and siblings-in-law, and parents-in-law related through their children's marriage. The relationships with people are established and defined by the events in which they interact.

The "ideology" of patrilineal dominance has survived in Amatenango, but its real effects are limited to the patronym inheritance. It is no longer underwritten by residence, inheritance (Nash 1960) or activities, as is demonstrated in the foregoing analysis.

Spatial reference is an important consideration in this activation of relationship and because of propinquity alone, certain relationships are emphasized over others. The generational tie

between fathers and sons has weakened as earlier marriages and fractured land holdings have removed the basis for its activation. Territorial contiguity is often the basis for activating relationship rather than the descent relationship alone.

The statistical analysis of group interaction in Amatenango reveals the divergence between ideology and behavior and provides a means of assessing the significance of the shift from status in a kinship system to position in a residential network modifying kinship role relationship.

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