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Language, Thought, and Kinship among the Mopan Maya

EVE DANZIGER

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2001

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford New York
Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogotá Bombay Buenos Aires Calcutta
Cape Town Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul
Karachi Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai
Nairobi Paris São Paulo Shanghai Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Danziger, Eve.
Relatively speaking : language, thought, and kinship among the Mopan Maya / by Eve Danziger.
p. cm. — (Oxford studies in anthropological linguistics)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-19-509910-9
1. Mopan dialect—Belize—Toledo District—Semantics. 2. Mopan
dialect—Belize—Toledo District—Grammar—Terminology. 3. Mopan
dialect—Belize—Toledo District—Etymology—Names. 4. Mopan Indians—Kinship.
5. Mopan Indians—Social life and customs. 6. Language and culture—Belize—Toledo
District. 7. Toledo District (Belize)—Social life and customs. I. Title. II. Series.
PM3969.5.M65 D36 2000
497'.4152—dc21 99-086793

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Between 1986 and 1989, I spent fourteen months with the Maya people of the Toledo district of Belize, Central America, thinking about issues of kinship and *tzik* 'respect'. My thanks go first of all to them, for permission to live and work among them and for all that they taught me. Particularly gracious were Lino Sho and Demetero Cowoj, alcaldes in 1988 and 1989, who gave their permission for my sojourn in the community and for my work in the village school. Telesforo Paquiul, the principal, also gave his permission and encouragement. With all of the teachers, he welcomed me into the school community in a way that was extremely supportive, encouraging, and helpful. The officers of the Toledo Maya Cultural Council also offered help and support during the fieldwork period. The Peace Corps Language Training Program in Belize allowed me to profit from the services of its Mopan language consultants, Genovevo Peck and Rodolfo Teck. Sessions with them were always an unmitigated delight. The household of Dionisio Bol and Florencia Coc made me feel very much a member, while respecting the requirements of my strange kind of work. I also thank the Department of Archaeology, Belmopan, Belize, for a sense of collegial affiliation during the fieldwork period.

Many Mopan people do not like to be named in public. The individuals and families with whom I spent time and who shared talk with me are in any case too numerous to mention. But they will know who they are, and will allow me to remember them and to thank them once again.

B'o'tik te'ex, a k'ämajene'ex ichile'ex a kaj. Max k'ui a betajene'ex, max k'ui a tz'ajene'ex ti k'as. Max mak u loxajen, max mak u k'eyajen. Chen ki'e'exten; chen ki'ente,ex. Pes chen Dioos u yile'ex, ichile'ex a kuuchil, ichile'ex a naj.

B'o'tik te'ex ti a t'an.

The project was facilitated and shaped in its early stages by my contacts with Ward Goodenough, Ruben Reina, and Bambi Schieffelin. John Lucy played a major

role in the realization of the initial manuscript, both from the point of view of practical advice and from that of theoretical refinement. Peter Danziger and Karen McCollam obliged me with discussion of quantitative matters. Any remaining faults are certainly the result of my failure to take the excellent advice of these interlocutors.

Financial support for the fieldwork and analysis phases of the project was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Award No. 452-87-1337), the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (Grant No. 4850), and the University of Pennsylvania. The University of Virginia and the Cognitive Anthropology Research group of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics provided much-appreciated support for revision of the original manuscript. Some of the ideas presented here appeared in preliminary form in the Proceedings of the Stanford Child Language Research Forum (Danziger 1993). I thank the SCLRF for that opportunity. Gertie de Groen, Carlien de Witte, and Chris Haley made substantial contributions to the material production of the text and figures.

I come from a small family, every member of which made the effort to visit me during the period in which this investigation was conducted. The importance of the visits cannot be overestimated. Each visitor added something to my vision of the Mopan, and each visit added to my understanding of the Mopan view of family relationships. Thanks to Kurt Danziger, Mavis Waters, Ruth Danziger, Peter Danziger,and Dale Blue for making sure that the Mopan would become a part of our collective experience.

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GUIDE TO ABBREVIATIONS AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Mopan Maya terms are rendered here in the orthography recommended by the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (England and Elliott 1990). In this orthography the midcentral vowel (schwa) is designated with the symbol "ä." The apostrophe signals that the preceding consonant is glottalized. Doubling of vowels indicates length.

Terms of Mopan and English mentioned in the text for linguistic consideration are italicized. All Mopan forms inserted into text are also italicized. An English gloss is given for each such insertion, enclosed in single quotes. Sentence-length quotations from Mopan are set apart from the accompanying text and are italicized. They are accompanied by morphological glosses, as well as by free translation. In the gloss lines, a hyphen indicates a morpheme boundary and an underscore connects the several English glosses applicable to a single "portmanteau" morpheme in Mopan.

In a few cases involving Mopan formal speech genres, paragraph-length citations have been provided with free translation only. These are intended as illustration of the content of such speech only. Full presentation of these texts, with adequate glossing and English rendition, would be matter for a different book. Abbreviations for these morphological glosses appear below. For further grammatical detail, the reader is referred to Ulrich, Ulrich, and Peck (1987) and to Danziger (1994, 1996b):

1 = first person

2 = second person

3 = third person

A = actor pronoun (transitive actor, active intransitive participant, possessor).

APP = applicative

B = undergoer pronoun (transitive undergoer, intransitive participant)

CL = numeral classifier

CMPL = complementizer

COMPL = completive aspect

DAT = dative

DET = determiner

DUB = dubitative

DUR = durative

DX = deictic

EMPH = emphatic particle

HAB = habitual

HUM = humiliative

I = irrealis

INC = incompletive aspect

INCH = inchoative

IND = independent pronoun

NEG = negative particle

NOM = nominalizer

OBLIG = obligative

PERF = perfect aspect (archaic in Mopan)

PL = plural

PREP = preposition

Q = interrogative/conditional particle

QUANT = count scope specifier

SCOPE = scope specifier

SUBJ = subjunctive

TR = transitivizer

Relatively Speaking

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1

KINSHIP, SEMANTICS, AND LINGUISTIC RELATIVITY

This book investigates the principle of linguistic relativity by exploring the cultural and psychological reality of three different models of kinship conceptualization among speakers of Mopan Maya, an indigenous language of Central America. I ask whether it is the case that across languages and cultures, individuals find certain concepts natural in experience, implying that where languages vary in their expression of these concepts they do so only superficially. Or, instead, does the structural organization of languages actually help to *form* the categories of thought which afterward appear most natural to their speakers?

Mopan Kinship

Every language in the world has words for family members (see figure 1.1). But the exact range of meaning of these words varies enormously across languages and cultures. In Mopan Maya, for example (see figure 1.2), the word that is used for one's older brother (*suku'un*) is also used for a parent's younger brother.[1] A different word (*tataa'*) is used for a parent's older brother, and that same word (*tataa'*) is also used for what we would call a *grandfather* or a *great-uncle*. Meanwhile, brothers and sisters younger than the speaker are called by a different term (*itz'iin*).

It is certainly true that if a Mopan individual points to a particular family member—say, an elder male sibling—an English speaker can find a word to express the relationship in question (in this case, the English word *brother*). But does the English word *brother* mean the same thing as the Mopan word *suku'un*, simply because

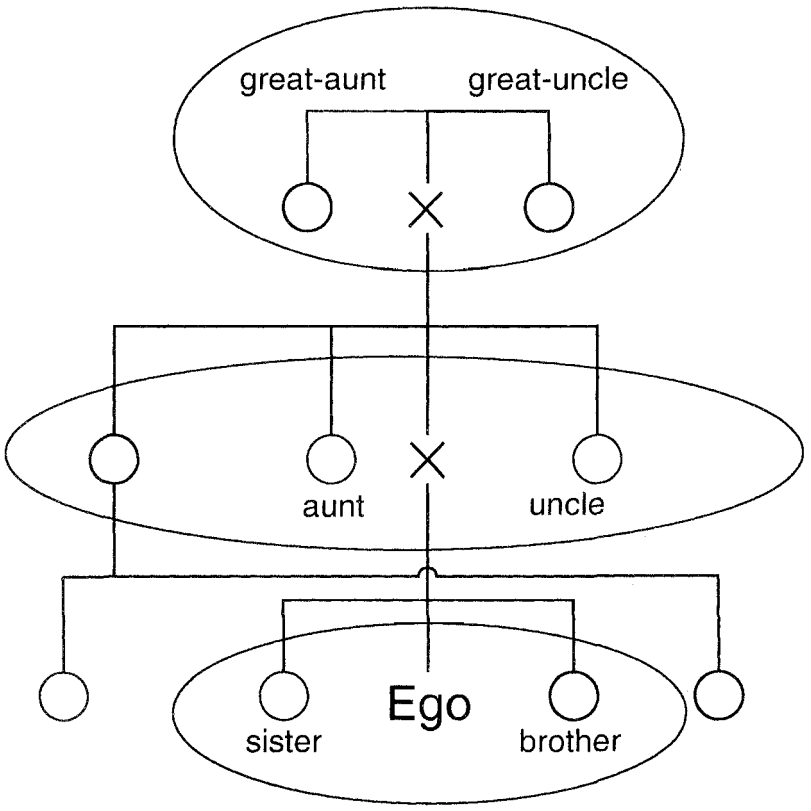

Figure 1.1 Terms for some English family relationships

the two words overlap in this (important) portion of their denotation? Or do the radical differences in the range of reference between these two words actually make a difference to the ways that Mopan and English speakers conceptualize this "same" family relationship?

Kinship Theory: Universal and Relative

Observations like the Mopan ones have given rise to generations of debate within anthropology (Schneider 1965, 1984; Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971; Goodenough 1956, 1965; Leach 1962; Needham 1962 [1960], 1971; Lounsbury 1956, 1965, 1969a; Murdock 1965 [1949]; Kroeber 1909, Morgan 1970 [1870]). The questions that have arisen have dealt with the universality of genealogy as a basis for social organization worldwide. At another level, however, these classic debates over the place of genealogy in kinship posed, in the arena of linguistic semantics, the time-honored questions of linguistic relativity.

The specific question that has vexed the field is this: Is the semantic analyst justified in proposing that certain aspects of a single word's meaning are more impor-

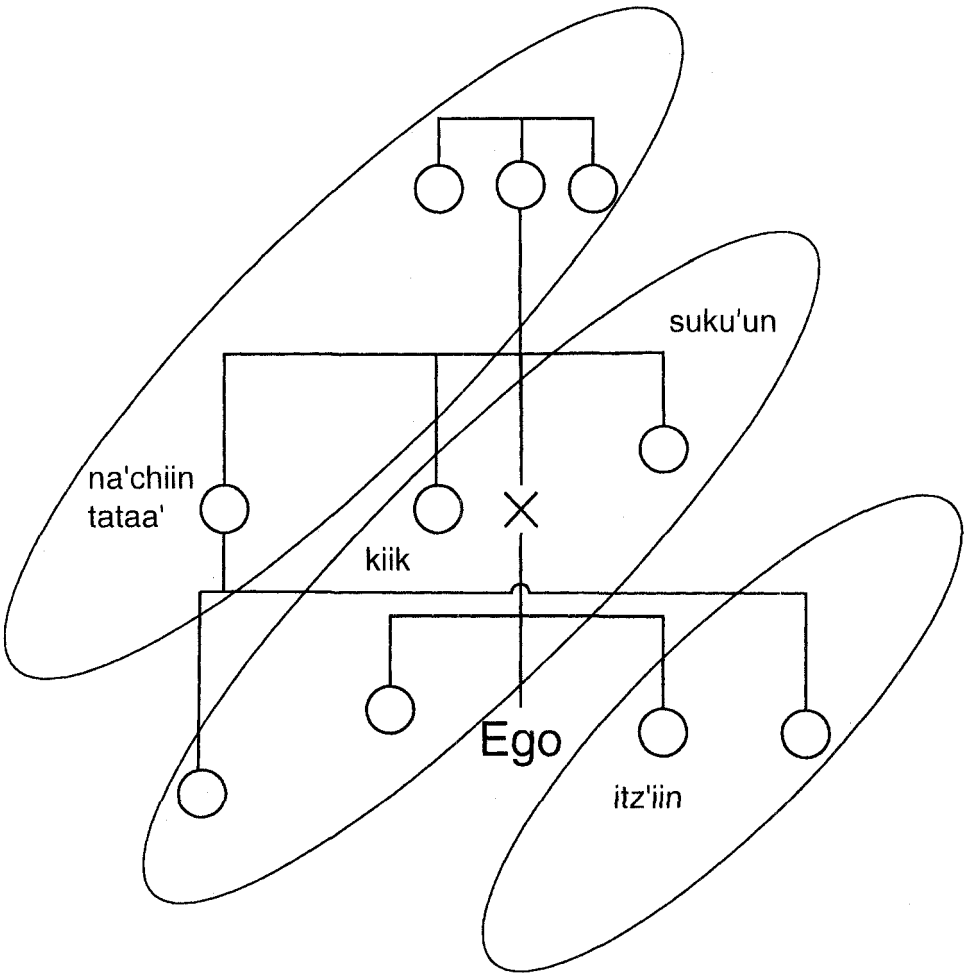

Figure 1.2 Terms for some Mopan family relationships

tant, more central than others? If we could do this, for example, to solve the Mopan puzzle above, we could relegate those aspects of the meaning of Mopan *suku'un* that do not overlap with the meanings of English *brother* to a conceptually peripheral or secondary status, thus proposing that the Mopan and the English words do indeed mean essentially the same thing (cf. Lounsbury 1964, 1969a). We could suggest, for example, that the central referent of Mopan *suku'un* is actually 'male sibling', by virtue of the natural primacy of the nuclear family over more distant genealogical bonds. We know that the word *suku'un* is also used, say, for certain of the parent's siblings, but, in this view, that is purely by extension from the more central and more natural nuclear family referent.[2]

If we take this approach in the analysis of languages and cultures other than our own, however, we necessarily prejudge the question of the primacy of the nuclear

family in the society in question. Also and more generally, we prejudge the question of the possible influence of cultural and linguistic structures themselves upon conceptualization. Most famously, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956 [1939]) has argued that linguistic classifications are psychological entities in their own right, and that to understand them as such is an excellent way to broaden our own conceptual horizons. If he was right, then the Mopan category *suku'un* should constitute an undivided and culturally unique conceptual unit, the meaning of which would have to be discovered ethnographically, and the existence of which would raise serious doubts about a universal and familiar domain of genealogically calculated kinship across all cultures (Needham 1971; Leach 1962).

To most cultural anthropologists engaged in theorizing kinship today, the latter interpretation appears not only intellectually obvious but politically compelling (Peletz 1995; Schneider 1984). The traditional categories of kinship in anthropology have been thoroughly deconstructed and are today understood to be symbolic and cultural creations rather than natural necessities. Even such apparently fundamental primitives of genealogy as 'man', 'woman', or 'mother' are understood to be socially performed and culturally constructed, rather than naturally given (Morris 1995; Strathern 1992). In view of these developments in the anthropology of kinship, it is interesting to note, on the contrary, that a view of nuclear family–based kinship as universal and natural is very much alive in current cognitively oriented attempts to discover various universal domains of modular and perhaps innate human knowledge (Wierzbicka 1992; Keesing 1990; Hirschfeld 1989). In addition, despite its controversial status within anthropology, Lounsbury's claim that the nuclear family is conceptually primary for all speakers regardless of their local terminological system is cited as foundational in the new fields of prototype semantics and cognitive linguistics which take semantic organization in terms of central and peripheral referents as their guiding principle (Kronenfeld 1996; Lakoff 1987, 22–24; see also D'Andrade 1995, 105).

Despite the existence of such radically different views, both of cultural variation in the kinship domain and more generally of the nature of human thinking in cross-linguistically variable arenas, little current debate addresses these issues directly. Indeed, opinions about what constitutes adequate evidence and about what convinces in argumentation have diverged so radically across culturally and cognitively oriented studies of meaning that today such discussion sometimes appears almost impossible (cf. Bruner 1990, Hirschfeld 1986). In the present study I attempt to bridge this discourse gap. I bring the culturally informed perspective of the older anthropological debate into the modern cognitively oriented discussion of words and their meanings. Aligning classic debates over kinship semantics with the current renewal of interest in the measurable effects of language variation on thought (Levinson 1998; Pederson et al. 1998; Gumperz and Levinson 1996; Lucy 1992a), I take up the challenge of determining the psychological reality of alternative semantic models of kinship vocabulary. I endeavor to do so in a manner that can be heard across the different disciplines concerned, by carrying out an investigation that integrates ethnographic, linguistic, and psychological observations to discriminate between competing models of kinship conceptualization in speakers of the Mopan Maya language. Since the different models proposed also make different claims about the universality of human conceptualization

under cross-linguistic variation in expression, the investigation is also one that distinguishes among different positions with respect to linguistic relativity.

Linguistic Relativity

As propounded by Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956c [1940], 214), the principle of linguistic relativity claims that an individual's unreflective acts of conceptual classification ("habitual thought"; Whorf 1956b [1939]) will follow the same patterns that also guide conventional categorization in his or her language (see Lucy 1997a, 1992b for extensive recent review). This entails that one's view of reality is linked in an extremely significant manner to the patterning of one's native language, and that cultural worldviews will vary around the globe as languages and dialects vary. Rather than labeling preexisting or universal concepts, linguistic structure in this view provides much of the architecture from which seemingly natural interpretations of reality are constructed. This in turn, according to Whorf, means that the study of languages is among the most liberating of intellectual exercises for those who would discover alternative and unexpected perspectives on the assumptions according to which they live their own lives (Whorf 1956c [1940]).

Monosemy

The principle of linguistic relativity is built solidly upon the notion that one of the most important kinds of linguistic meaning is that which is carried in structural contrast (Saussure 1959 [1916]). Sapir (1925, 1949) pointed out that where a principle of structural contrast (e.g., an opposition in phonology between voiced and voiceless consonants) is used again and again in a language and under inflection for different values, this dimension of contrast itself becomes psychologically real to speakers of the language—but not to those whose language does not employ such a contrast. In the area of speech sounds, Sapir's idea has been fully vindicated since his first writings on the subject (Jusczyk 1996). People actually do have different perceptual intuitions about the speech sounds they hear, depending on the phonological organization of their native language.

Meanwhile, in direct adaptation of this idea to the conceptual plane, Sapir (1921) and later Whorf (1956b [1939]) suggested that repeated *conceptual* contrasts (e.g., a semantic opposition made in some languages but not in others between mass and count nouns—but also and more relevant to kinship studies an opposition made in some lexical paradigms between male and female, lineal and collateral or junior and senior) would result in exactly these conceptual dimensions of contrast becoming psychologically real (i.e., the source of subjectively convincing intuitions about the conceptual naturalness of the contrast in question) to speakers of that language but not to speakers of languages in which the contrast was not made. In one example, Whorf (1956c [1940]) suggested that the fact that speakers of European languages philosophize in terms of an intuitive distinction between objects and events can be traced to the fact that European languages make a grammatical distinction between nouns and verbs. Citing such dubious natural objects as the ones represented by

English nouns like *spark* and *fist*, and such anomalous natural events as those represented by English *adhere* or *dwell*, Whorf argued that speakers of a language that did not make a noun-verb distinction in grammar would not find the conceptual distinction between objects and events self-evident either.[3]

Whorf suggested that despite the fact that languages often group together potentially quite disjunct sorts of referents, speakers in general prefer to find or construct a single conceptual meaning for each formal structure of their own language. The single common denominator is then imbued in speakers' reflections with the qualities of an intuitively natural reality. For Whorf, this preference on the part of ordinary speakers is a strong one, and it operates without regard to what experts might know about the history or typology of the linguistic grouping in question.

In the terminology of today's linguistic semantics (see Ruhl 1989), Whorf claimed that, everything else being equal, speakers assume conceptual *monosemy*—a relationship of only one meaning to every linguistic form—to hold as the default in their language (Croft 1993; see also Lucy 1992b, 47 for a general exposition of "Whorf's basic argument" in terms of disjunct reference).

In one illustration (Whorf 1956a [1941], 261–62), Whorf describes how a woman of his acquaintance owned a type of cat known conventionally as a "Coon cat." She was, reports Whorf, convinced that her cat was related to the raccoon species, and in fact saw aspects of physical resemblance between her pet and the raccoons. In point of historical fact, the cat type is evidently named for a certain Captain Coon, but this was unknown to the woman in question. Even when the experts endeavored to enlighten her, she continued to reject their diachronic perspective, and to insist that her cat indeed possessed a very unusual cross-species pedigree. In fact, this woman understood the phonologically identical forms *coon* (in the popular varietal name of her cat) and *coon* (as a shortened label for the raccoon species) as also semantically identical. For Whorf, the point of the anecdote (which is clearly best taken as didactic illustration rather than as empirical demonstration) is to show how a cognitive insistence on monosemy is the mechanism which powers the psychological effects he claims in the linguistic relativity phenomenon.

In another, more complex, but much more far-reaching example, Whorf argued that beyond the facts of our language, there are plenty of experiental reasons to believe that the referents of the English words *day* and *man* are conceptually very different from one another. But in English, both these words can be pluralized. Whorf argued that this linguistic fact has been enough to lead speakers of English to assume that there is something conceptually in common to the referents of *day* and of *man*—specifically the (ascribed) semantic attribute of discrete individuality that licenses the application of the English plural morpheme. If *day* were not a count noun in English, says Whorf, as its translation equivalent is not in Hopi, we might not so habitually conceptualize each twenty-four-hour cycle as a new individual entity.[4] For extensive further discussion of this example, see Lucy 19920a and 1992b.

Polysemy

Where it can be applied, an assumption of monosemy is not only, as Whorf proposed, the handmaiden of relativity; it also has clear practical advantages. To the field

linguist it represents Occam's razor (Sasse 1993). To language-learning children (Bowerman and Choi 1991; Bowerman 1997) and, indeed, to ordinary people in everyday thinking (Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin 1956; Kronenfeld 1996), it represents cognitive efficiency. It has also long been recognized at the level of linguistic theory, however, that to analyze semantic classes always in terms of synchronic and language-specific monosemy poses serious problems for both typological and historical study (Croft 1999; Lounsbury 1969a). And, most recently, the claim has been increasingly made (Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1986, 1987; Kronenfeld 1996; Palmer 1996; Taylor 1989) that not only linguistic analysts but also ordinary speakers conceptualize the categories of their language not in terms of monosemy and contrastive structure but as groupings of multiple and differently weighted referents, of which one is clearly central with respect to the others. The weightings involved, and speakers' intuitions regarding the identity of the central referent, derive from nonlinguistic experience. Such a model of conceptual understanding is linked to semantic analyses in terms of *polysemy* in linguistic semantics.[5]

The immediate ancestry of the recent heightened interest in polysemy is generally acknowledged to lie in the anthropological literature of enthoscience, including kinship semantics. Most often cited (Lakoff 1987, 22–24; Palmer 1996; D'Andrade 1995; Kronenfeld 1996) are Berlin and Kay's (1969) study of color terminologies, and Lounsbury's (1964, 1969a) work on the focal referents of kinship categories.[6] These authors couched their work explicitly as a response to linguistic relativity as expounded by Whorf. In these early studies, the strongest rhetoric arose from the claim that speakers *across languages* would agree with one another on the identity of focal referents, regardless of the specific lexical segmentation of the domain that might be imposed by their particular language. This claim was presented forcefully as an explicit contradiction to the Whorfian proposal that differences in language categories across cultures could result in—or even show parallels in—differences in conceptualization.

Lounsbury's (1965, 1969a) motivation in proposing universal focal referents for kinship categories was a typological one, based on the desire to preserve a common ground for comparative inquiry. At the time he was writing, the comparative domain of kinship as a cross-culturally universal domain based on genealogical calculation was under siege in cultural anthropology. The attack came from cultural relativists who proposed (monosemously) that unfamiliar cultural categories should be taken at face value, even if this meant that the comparative domain would cease to exist (Leach 1962; Fortes 1962; Needham 1971). Lounsbury's move in this debate was to propose that in order to save kinship as a comparative domain it was necessary only to postulate that that referent of any kinship term which was genealogically closest to Ego should count universally as the focal referent. Specific extension rules could then derive other referents from this focal referent in different ways in different languages. He argued that his cross-language identification of the same central referent across languages was confirmed by the fact that the number of types of kinship terminology systems found worldwide was relatively small (see also Murdock 1965 [1949]), and that each of these very few types could be understood as the outcome of applying a particular set of extension rules to the same set of central referents.[7]

Today, however, few advocates of general polysemy in semantics would defend the notion that focal referents must be universal across languages, or in fact that this is the main point of doing semantics in terms of polysemy (although see Croft 1999). In the wake of kinship and color, the method for identifying central referents in semantics was quickly converted from the demonstration of cross-language to that of within-language agreement about the identity of best example ("prototype") members of named categories (Rosch 1978).

In short order, within-language speaker agreement on the central members of clearly nonuniversal lexical categories such as furniture (Rosch 1978), speech act verbs (Coleman and Kay 1981), and indeed even numbers (Armstrong, Gleitman, and Gleitman, 1983) was demonstrated.Today's practitioners of polysemy in semantic analysis are usually content to leave cross-cultural issues implicitly to one side or to propose culturally particular focal referents for the categories they discuss (even in the domain of kinship; see Kronenfeld 1996).

In the present context it is important to be clear, however, that while a semantic analysis in terms of central referents need not claim universality across cultures, and may even be compatible with the claim that conceptualization differs across cultures, it cannot in all logic be compatible with a strictly *linguistic* relativity, even in the language to which it does apply. The conceptual primacy of the central referent under polysemy, in fact, exists in defiance of overt language structure, which on the contrary shows various other referents to be equally designated by the same term. Under analyses based on polysemy, the basic claim must be that psychological apprehension of meaning in linguistic categories depends not on linguistic structure but on something else. What that something is has been variously construed by different theorists. As in the original proposals from color and kinship, it may be referred to universal propensities of the human physiology or psyche. Under nonuniversalist accounts, it may be specified as related to functional salience or frequency of encounter with the central referent (Hunn 1976, 1985). It may be referred to the structure of the body (Lakoff 1987), the world (Rosch 1978), or the mind (Rosch 1988), or it may simply remain unexplained. Regardless of the mechanism invoked, however, and although analyses made in terms of polysemy may be very sensitive to issues of cultural variation, such analyses by their very nature must deny primary psychologically constitutive power to linguistic classification itself.

In his classic studies claiming polysemous organization of kinship categories, Lounsbury proposes extension rules that are very deliberately stated so that they operate over strictly genealogical categories.As we have seen, for Lounsbury, this was the rhetorical point of focal referent analysis. But it was also clear to Lounsbury that logical equivalents for these extensions could be found to exist, in every case, in the culture-specific sociological correlates of each extension rule (1969; see also Goodenough n.d.). In one much-debated example, a plausible sociological motivation for the Crow-type generational skewing of the Trobriand Islands was offered by Leach (1962), who appealed to the details of an economy governed by matrilineal descent but existing in the context of virilocal residence. Leach claimed that the complex patterns of economic and affective association that result from this combination of social circumstances, for any individual (male) Trobriander, would result in the functional clustering of just those groupings of relatives that, if

genealogically defined, show the distinctive Crow-Omaha pattern of generational skewing.

But if such logical equivalence is a possibility, why not reverse the psychological analysis and cite these motivating but nongenealogical generalizations as the very conceptual principles that define the domain? This was precisely the move being advocated by Lounsbury's relativist colleagues, who claimed that the "kinship" categories of the Trobrianders just cited, for example, were not the products of genealogical calculation from universal central referents but instead were sociologically defined at the level of the total category. For Lounsbury, such a course was unacceptable because it involved abandoning genealogical kinship as a comparative domain—in no two cultural cases would the sociological correlates of genealogical extension rules be exactly alike. But for most semanticists who today favor polysemy as the default analytical assumption, we have seen that a concern to maintain universal domains of comparison is not an especial priority. For these, the logical interconvertibility of extension rules with defining principles of a category can be a strength rather than a weakness. This fact allows some current theorists to claim that semantic analyses made in terms of central referents can also support linguistic relativity (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, 334–37).[8]

To ask then, whether we might find a place for linguistic relativity in a semantics based on polysemy is to ask what, if any, is the psychological weight to be assigned to the semantic extensions that are drawn from the proposed central members of language categories. And what, by contrast, is the weight of the (nonlinguistically derived) central referents? For the purposes of linguistic relativity, to the extent that polysemous analysis focuses upon conceptualizations and actions that follow from the extensions drawn from the central referents it proposes, it may approach the relativist possibilities of monosemy. To the extent that polysemous analysis focuses instead on conceptualizations and actions based on centrality of focal referents, it diverges from the tenets of true linguistic relativity.

For the purposes of the present exploration, "polysemy" is taken to claim psychological primacy for the focal referent and to assign relatively less psychological weight to the extensional links which unite focal and peripheral referents.

Homonymy: A Third Logical Possibility

In the tradition of kinship semantics and elsewhere, the monosemy-polysemy debate arises to solve the problem of disjunct reference: the case in which a single linguistic item appears to the analyst to apply to more than one potential class of referents. In addition to these two options, however, a third solution is also widely recognized. This is the strategy that refrains from attempting to solve the puzzle of disjunct reference and that instead allows the different sets of referents to remain disjunct in the analysis. This is an analysis in terms of *homonymy* (in the vocabulary of the philosophy of language, an extensional view of meaning, in which the different referents of a term are represented as an unordered list).[9] Such an analysis proposes that, as under polysemy, the same linguistic form covers multiple psychological meanings, but it does not propose that these are related to one another in the understanding of speakers. It is possible, for example, to solve my opening puzzle by proposing that the

Mopan word *suku'un* means 'elder brother', and that it equally means 'youngish uncle', but that no conceptual relationship between these two meanings exists for Mopan speakers. In the same way, a homonymous reading of English *brother* could argue that *brother* means both 'elder' and 'younger' male siblings, while claiming that no conceptual relationship between these two senses of the word exists for English speakers. While homonymy does not perhaps appear intuitively appealing in this case, there are many cases in every language in which it is a compelling analytical option (e.g., in English, when the word *bank* is used to refer both to a financial institution and to the edge of a river). The possibility of semantic homonymy will be fully respected in this book.

Psychological Reality

Systems of kinship terminology are notorious within anthropology for the multiplicity of semantic models that can be drawn up to account for them (Burling 1964). It has also long been recognized in kinship studies that although formal analyses might proliferate, there was no way to tell which analysis might correspond to the way in which users of a language actually conceptualize the meanings of terms (Wallace and Atkins 1960). For that, other measures of psychological reality would have to be used. The call for independent psychological testing of semantic analyses has also been sounded more recently as models based upon the assumption of polysemy have multiplied within the new discipline of cognitive linguistics (Sandra and Rice 1995; Croft 1998).

This book offers an empirical test of the psychological reality of competing models of semantic organization in the domain of family relationships in Mopan Maya. I set out to define the universe of interest for Mopan in terms of a particular speech act (that of respectful greeting), which characterizes one kind of situational encounter between Mopan Maya individuals. This approach has a formal motivation, in that it allows me to isolate a set of terms for study without presupposing critical aspects of cultural meaning—in particular, the prior existence of a domain of kinship. It also, however, involves the project in detailed consideration of a peculiarly Mopan set of social relationships. I take up the ethnographic description of the kinds of cultural relationship recognized in the Mopan "respect" greeting, and the ways that distinctions among such relationships are recognized and manipulated. I illuminate—especially from the vantage point of Mopan women—a particular instantiation of the pan-Mayan cultural notion of 'respect'.

Observable Reflexes in Reflective and Habitual Thought

Because they are concerned with abstract principles or features that characterize all referents rather than with any referent in particular, analyses made in terms of monosemy differ critically from those made in terms of some central referent in locating the essentials of conceptual meaning at the boundaries of lexical categories. At exactly those points, most distant from any typological or intuitive referential center, one lexical or grammatical category is distinguished from its neighbor in a

particular language. Where semantic categories are organized in terms of monosemy, we expect that the boundaries of the categories will be clear, and that judgments of whether particular entities are or are not examples of the category in question will be categorical and untroubled.

By contrast, semantic analyses in terms of polysemy locate the essentials of conceptual meaning not at the boundaries of linguistic categories but at their intuitive or typological centers. Under this kind of analysis, the boundaries of linguistic categories are held to be conceptually "fuzzy"; speakers within a language community are expected to hesitate or disagree when asked to judge whether peripheral referents are properly members of a given linguistic category—while at the same time they will agree wholeheartedly that others, more central, definitely belong (Coleman and Kay 1981; Rosch 1978).

The canonical method for demonstrating the existence of semantic organization in terms of polysemy has been established as a procedure of decontextualized reflective introspection, whether this is done singly on the part of the analyst alone as in much of cognitive linguistics, or concurrently by multiple introspecting consultants as in Rosch's original studies. Reflective judgments as to the identity and existence of best examples, and also as to the fuzziness of referent membership at category boundaries (is a *potato* a *vegetable*?), are the accepted diagnostics of this type of semantic organization. Quite on the contrary, evidence for the kinds of psychological effects predicted under linguistic relativity is expected to be observable at the level of habitual or nonreflective thought and behavior, and at category boundaries. The existence of semantic polysemy in the form of a reflective willingness to state a best example therefore does not vitiate the possibility that in nonreflective thought, linguistic categories could also show Whorfian effects.[10]

It is possible that prototype effects are those that emerge from decontextualized reflection while category-boundary effects are those that operate in everyday nonreflective and contextualized functioning. We can therefore allow ourselves to ask Mopan consultants for reflective identification of central referents of their kinship terms, and at the same time ask in other, less self-conscious or more situated ways, whether language-specific category boundaries in the same domain also have consequences for habitual thought and behavior.

In the years since the heyday of studies in kinship semantics and of prototype effects, it has become increasingly clear that the act of linguistic classification in any particular case depends on what one is classifying for (Levinson 1983, Frake 1980). A tissue of culturally defined felicity conditions consisting among other things of discourse conventions, cultural expectations, and personal motivations provides an interface between the word's meaning and its contextual interpretation, and links every utterance, by its function, to the speech situation in which it occurs (Goffman 1983). In turn, the situation in which any utterance occurs is always modified by the occurrence of the utterance in question.

In this book I undertake to present, in addition to the reflective commentary of Mopan speakers regarding the best examples of referents for their kinship terms, two kinds of evidence also relevant to the case for linguistic relativity. On the one hand, a formal test in psycholinguistic style is designed and implemented to access habitual rather than reflective thought. On the other, and in the course of implementing the

formal test, I use the anthropological methods of ethnographic observation and involvement to offer an extended description of the Mopan domain itself, and of its cultural constitution in context. It will become apparent that although the boundaries of the Mopan domain, as well as the boundaries between terms within the domain, appear unclear under an analysis made out of context, they are not permitted to remain so in social practice.

Combining quantitative with qualitative methodology, this work thus draws out and examines the vital links between social purpose, lexical categorization, and cognitive organization. At one level, it remains an investigation of word meaning, which uses the notions of linguistic context and function to facilitate an exploration into theoretical semantics and which contributes to our empirical knowledge of the phenomenon of linguistic relativity. At another, it inevitably becomes an investigation of the Mopan context itself.

Abstract of Method

Fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in southern Belize provide the basis for an understanding of the Mopan kinship domain. Use of family relationship terms in obligatory greeting is consistently understood by Mopan as an important instantiation of religious respect (Mopan *tzik*). A deep reverence for age as the vehicle of knowledge parallels the attention to the factor of relative age, which, as we have seen, is crucial to Mopan kin term semantics. But relative age is not always understood by Mopan to be predicated upon objective factors such as biological generation or absolute chronology. Rather, the distinction turns on collective assessment of the various social and cultural criteria that allow one person to play a teaching and nurturing role with respect to another. Also highlighting the cultural rather than the natural bases for classification within this domain, Mopan kin relationships are regularly established and maintained through performative speech acts (i.e., 'baptisms', greetings, and poetic conversational exchanges). Nevertheless, according to Mopan, relationships within this domain are ultimately based upon parent-child links, and nuclear family referents are identifiable within the Mopan categories. A more universalist semantic analysis in terms of central referents is therefore quite feasible, as suggested earlier.

On the basis of the ethnographic description, three very different models of kinship semantics are proposed for Mopan. One, an approach in terms of monosemy, proposes that a peculiarly Mopan feature of fitness for nurture by virtue of maturity functions in Mopan cognitive organization to define the category as a uniquely Mopan conceptual whole. This analysis proposes that category boundaries in the Mopan domain are well defined and psychologically salient rather than fuzzy and peripheral. The second, an analysis assuming polysemy, and made in terms of central category members, follows up linguistic and interview evidence that indicates the reflective existence of familiar typical referents within the nuclear family for each Mopan term. A third analysis assumes homonymy and uses ethnogenealogical data to make an analysis in terms of an unordered list of relative products of genealogical primitives.

Next I take up the challenge of establishing the cognitive status of these three possible analyses. Previous cross-linguistic investigations have observed that the semantic makeup of different kinship terms within one language conditions the order in which their relational aspect is grasped by children (Haviland and Clark 1974; Piaget 1928). On this basis, I am able to predict that children's Piagetian acquisition of selected Mopan kinship terms will proceed in three alternative sequences under the three competing semantic models (cf. Greenfield and Childs 1977). The null hypothesis predicts that the sequence of acquisition will correspond to chance.

Children's Language

The method adopted in the formal study observes Mopan children's developing metalinguistic abilities and interprets these in the light of previously documented cross-linguistic developmental regularities related to semantic structure. In this way, it becomes possible to distinguish among the three competing types of semantic model. Ontogenetic data are used to adjudicate between different theoretical positions that had originally been identified on the basis of observations among adults. Inversely, however, even as it uses acquisition data to distinguish among alternative models of adult semantic organization, this book also constitutes an inquiry into the growth of Mopan children's understanding of one area of the lexicon in their language and contributes more generally to the global project of the cross-linguistic study of language acquisition and of cultural learning. Accompanying this aspect of the formal study, the ethnographic portions of the book pay special attention to describing the cultural contexts and social situations in which Mopan children encounter and use family relationship terms and concepts. Although my ultimate intention is broadly comparative, and although Euro-American data and hypotheses provide a framework, I compare a given child's acquisition of certain terms only with his or her own acquisition of other terms, or else with the acquisition of the same term by other children of his or her own culture and language.

In language acquisition studies today, nativists and nonnativists alike often view language categories as superimposed onto prior and universal conceptual categories derived either from genetics (Chomsky 1988) or from universal experience based on physiology and action (Lakoff 1991; Slobin 1985). Embedded in this majority position is a view that infants approach the world of experience—including linguistic and cultural experience—as individuals, and in isolation. The acquisition problem is seen as one of matching words to things, using metaphorical motivation if that is necessary. But a minority of specialists raise the issue of language itself as possibly instrumental in the formation of concepts. The language socialization paradigm developed by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), for example, assumes an early sensitivity to the activities of nearby humans as a primary source of input data for the developing child and sees "experience" as other than merely individual and physiological. Bowerman (1985) also argues powerfully that the hypothesis of the existence of semantic concepts prior to language is susceptible to disproof, through comparative documentation of the course of acquisition in specific domains of different languages. A language acquisition position sympathetic to linguistic relativity argues, therefore, that certain kinds of cognitive prin-

ciples (metaphor, motivation) may themselves be brought into play by the prior existence of linguistic classification as a social fact.

In the arenas of both adult cognition and child language, then, the ultimate philosophical questions are similar. Are linquistic meanings given by the structure of the world, the mind, or of individual experience, or do they exist instead as culturally and linguistically framed concepts, often defined in relation to one another rather than in any discrete and objective sense? In achieving results that distinguish between these viewpoints in theoretical semantics, I also achieve results that bear upon general issues of language learning in cultural context.

Two Findings

In the Mopan study, data from one hundred children aged seven to fourteen years provide results that most strongly support the psychological reality of the analysis which assumes monosemy. The findings are therefore Whorfian in the traditional sense: even while speakers' reflective intuitions show best-example members of lexical categories, linguistic categorization itself is found to correspond to an aspect of nonreflective psychological reality. But in its conclusions, the study goes one step further. It also examines the social and discourse mechanisms by which Mopan linguistic categorization in the kinship domain could come to have such psychological force. Mopan ethnography shows us that in the situations to which 'kinship/respect' (*tzik*) is relevant, clear-cut and mutually exclusive courses of linguistic action (i.e., whether or not one performs socially constitutive acts like baptism and greeting) have well-defined and important social consequences. The local circumstances therefore do not allow for gradations of membership in *tzik*-related categories. Kinship terms themselves are found in turn to have the relativity-relevant property that their use readily creates, as well as merely representing particular kinds of sociality. The study thus concludes that while language-specific structures may indeed have psychological reality, this fact itself may be culturally relative and subject to the mediating agency of particular social and communicative practices.

Plan of the Book

In chapter 2, I introduce the Mopan Maya and offer a general framework for the ethnographic description that appears in later chapters, through discussion of the previously documented cultural notion of 'respect'. In chapter 3, the specific method for the formal study is introduced, with an explanation of how it can distinguish among alternative semantic models of adult cognition. Informed by this discussion and by ethnographic exploration of the Mopan concept of *tzik* 'respect', the problem of isolating a Mopan domain for comparative study is solved through explication of the dependence of the selected task on certain semantic and pragmatic linguistic properties of kinship terms. That is, I refrain from presupposing either the content of the domain or the meaning of the terms within it. I do not seek Mopan kinship terms. Rather, I commit myself to inclusion in the study all of the terms that occur at the intersection of two defining frames—one formal (semantic), the other based on usage (pragmatic).

Chapters 4 and 5 are almost entirely ethnographic. They discuss the kinds of social relationships to which 'respect' relationship terms apply and the ways in which Mopan children are exposed to and experience these types of relationships. An effort is made to understand the cultural ways in which such relationships are distinguished from one another. This stage of the research involves requests for Mopan reflection on the meanings of their terms, as well as careful ethnographic observation and interpretation of the kinds of Mopan contexts in which these terms are used. Such an approach necessarily involves consideration of the peculiarly Mopan nature of the social relationships under discussion. I discover in particular that a notion of relative seniority, which has already appeared in the brief discussion here of the semantics of Mopan *suku'un*, has wide repercussions in Mopan society. It is related to cultural values that privilege tradition and custom rather than innovation and novelty, and which rely on personal testimony and individual teaching rather than on impersonal or public media for dissemination. Of particular interest here is the fact that respect greeting relationships may be performatively established through negotiated interaction in culturally appropriate situations.

In chapter 6, three alternative formal analyses, respectively assuming monosemy, polysemy, and homonymy in the Mopan domain of respect-greeting relationships, are presented. Mutually exclusive predictions for Mopan children's performance on the Piagetian task under the three analyses are made. Chapter 7 presents the specifics of task administration and the results of the formal study. These include a preliminary replication, for the Mopan, of others' cross-cultural findings in the same task. The final results support a monosemous analysis of the Mopan domain. In chapter 8, this result is integrated with a review of my ethnographic findings to inform some more general conclusions about the relationship of culture to language, and of both to habitual conceptualization.

2

THE MOPAN SETTING

Ethnographic Setting

Mopan is a member of the Yucatecan group of Mayan languages and is spoken by several thousand people in the Peten regions of Belize and Guatemala. Although the language is mutually intelligible with the Yucatec, Itzaj, and Lacandón languages of the Mexican peninsula, it exhibits significant phonological, lexical, and structural differences from them (Danziger 1994, 1996b; Ulrich, Ulrich, and Peck 1986; Ulrich and Ulrich 1976, 1966; Thompson 1930). The Mopan language in Belize features many Spanish lexemes, borrowed during an earlier era when that language was spoken in Guatemala (cf. Verbeeck 1998). Today, however, Belizean Mopan in general do not speak Spanish and they understand these Spanish expressions as *Maaya*.

From October 1988 to September 1989, I lived in Belize's oldest Mopan village. I made shorter visits in 1992, 1993, and 1996. The oldest Belizean Mopan village is also the largest in a region that is home to perhaps two or three thousand speakers. Many of these people inhabit smaller villages in the area, some of which (unlike the larger village) boast a mixture of Ke'kchi and Mopan Maya inhabitants (Davidson 1987).[1] This oldest village is regarded by its own inhabitants (many of whom can remember the founding of the other villages) as the seat of tradition and cultural orthodoxy in the area. For all the Mopan of the area, to be in this largest village is to be *ich kaj*, 'in the village', the existence of numerous other villages roundabout notwithstanding. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the village consisted of about thirteen hundred Mopan Maya speakers.

In this village, Mopan Maya is acquired as a first language by all children of Mopan parents, and children are monolingual until they enter the school system, usually between the ages of five and ten years. A Caribbean variety of English is presented to children in the schools, and some level of facility in this variety has been achieved by many young adults and older children. Adult men in general have a better command of English than do women, but Mopan remains the language of choice in the home and in village life generally.

My ethnographic data consist of the notes on everyday life and on language use that I made in the course of participant observation. I conducted formal and informal ethnographic, ethnogenealogical, and linguistic interviews. I made tape recordings of traditional stories, ritual speech exchanges, and stories from life. I scrutinized my own reactions to the spontaneous teaching of Mopan people. From the beginning, I worked as much as possible in Mopan Maya, and my competence in this language improved steadily, to the point where I was able to engage in fruitful learning and teaching exchanges with the oldest generation, most of whom are monolingual in Mopan.

The Mopan understand well the idea of learning under guided tutelage, and they freely welcomed me to study their language and their way of life. They were forthcoming and even expansive on certain topics (including that of *tzik* 'respect' as discussed later) but were more guarded about other kinds of information, especially about what is perceived to be efficacious knowledge that may be applied by professionals on behalf of nonprofessionals for a fee. Into this second category came, for example, specialized knowledge of sickness and healing, and the information and charms for promoting agricultural increase and for placating wrathful deities. A studiedly noncommittal attitude is characteristic of the Mopan when they are presented with direct questions about these kinds of topics. Individuals will often provide answers of the type "It's up to you," "You know best," or "Only God knows," when asked directly for opinions and for certain kinds of information.

Mopan Life *Ich Kaj*

Today's Belizean Mopan are slash-and-burn cultivators of maize and beans for subsistence. They also plant rice, which they sell for cash in the nearby non-Mayan market town. They are the descendants of late-nineteenth-century immigrants from the Peten, themselves descended from colonial period Yucatecans of the region—perhaps originally even from central Belize (Thompson 1988, 20). The nineteenth-century immigrants left Guatemala in flight from compulsory military service and debt peonage, and their arrival in Belize approximately coincided with the arrival of Ke'kchi and "Kekchi-Chol" (Thompson 1930) peoples from the vicinity of Coban to the south. In Belize, the immigrant Maya established a way of life based on subsistence farming and a syncretic version of Catholicism that is similar in its broad outlines to the general Mesoamerican and Lowland Mayan pattern (Nash 1967; Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934).

In the Mopan village, the ideal norm is for virilocal nuclear family households to cluster in groups constituted of a set of brothers and their wives. The physical labor of extracting a livelihood from the forest is an ever-present fact of life. Division of

labor within the subsistence economy is based on age and on sex. Men work in the fields, occupied with primary agricultural production, while women work in the village, processing raw agricultural products into food. Children work diligently and willingly alongside adults in whatever capacity they can. The very old also contribute to the household economy to the extent of their ability, choosing for themselves more sedentary and less strenuous tasks. When a particularly large task, such as building a house, planting a field of corn, or baptizing a baby must be accomplished, the Mopan traditionally proceed by means of labor exchange. On such occasions, persons standing in relationships of solidarity with members of the original household—by virtue sometimes of personal friendship, but more often also by virtue of perceived family relationship—will provide labor to the benefit of the original household and will acquire the scrupulously honored right to call on that household in turn when their own need arises. In a more recent alternative to this pattern, an individual may today hire assistants by the day for a cash wage.

At the heart of the village stands a large, impressive Catholic church. The villagers have watched as the smaller villages in their vicinity have suffered the ravages of schism as a result of Protestant conversion (Schakt 1986), but they themselves have not succumbed in large numbers to the attentions paid to them by missionaries of various persuasions. In fact, a comfortable ecumenicalism characterizes much of religious discourse in the village. "There is only one God," my interlocutors told me. "What does it matter where you worship him?" Most villagers remain within the Catholic Church, although a significant minority have become Nazarenes.

But the Mopan brand of Catholicism is not quite that of Rome. Prayers and offerings of *pom* 'copal' incense are made to the mountains, the morning star, and the sun, as well as to the supernatural 'owners' (*u yumil*) of the various resources of the forest and to the Christian God. The Mopan, however, would be the first to insist that their religious behavior is *puuro Katoolika*. An important feature of Mopan Catholicism, as elsewhere in Latin America, is the institution of compadrazgo. At the Catholic ceremonies of baptism, confirmation, and marriage, godparents are chosen for the initiate. Under compadrazgo, the godparents are recognized as entering also into an important relationship of 'co-parenthood' with the initiate's biological parents (Madsen 1967).

Three mayordomos are responsible for the caretaking of the church. A system of hierarchically structured voluntary organizations traditionally took responsibility for the sponsorship of the several saints' fiestas, which took place every year. This system is in decline today, although at least one such organization still operates. A pan-village cleanup day and general meeting is held every three months, at which issues of interest to the community are raised for group decision. At this meeting, an *alkaalde*, or chief political officer, is elected yearly. He is responsible, with the help of a deputy and several village policemen (also locally nominated), for resolving legal disputes on the basis of customary law. In community matters, such as the building of a church or the burial of the dead, as well as the periodic chopping of bush to keep the village from being grown over with weeds, all households must contribute labor or pay a fine. The contribution of this communal labor is in fact the price of entry into the community. Such entry includes the right to farm in the area and is understood as a privilege (Danziger 1996a).

A village council (an institution modeled on English village traditions and introduced to the Mopan by the British colonial government in 1965) takes a leadership role, and makes many of the other decisions necessary to the running of the village. Several other village-level societies also exist. The Toledo Maya Cultural Council, an indigenous organization with international connections that aims to unite Ke'kchi and Mopan Maya to achieve political and cultural goals, has a presence in the village. Two women's craft cooperatives, a cacao producers' cooperative, and a health committee (instituted by federally employed health professionals outside the village to facilitate their contact with it) were all part of the social landscape in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The village boasts several well-stocked shops and is a destination in its own right for travelers from the more remote villages. But there is no market here. Villagers regularly travel to the non-Mopan market town on the coast to sell their produce. Since 1948, an all-weather road has connected the village to the market town. A few villagers own trucks and can make the journey (usually about one and a half hours) on their own. Most rely, however, on the biweekly run of a local market bus to take them there and back again.

The village has its own primary school, and attendance is nominally compulsory to age fourteen. Today's children reportedly attend school more regularly and for a longer period than did their parents, although complaints about absenteeism and truancy still issue steadily from school personnel (cf. Crooks 1997). A small but increasing number of Mopan villagers continue to high school and beyond. These must go to live in town or find a way to commute there from the village.

Although, with the penetration of a market economy, differences in economic standing among villagers are becoming more and more evident, differences in perceived social status among them are not extreme. Villagers are remarkable for their egalitarianism and for their insistence that the same economic opportunities and advantages be available to all households in the village. The question of private title to land is becoming increasingly pressing (Wilk and Chapin 1989). For the time being, however, access to the basic resource of land for cultivation remains available to all under a reservation system that was instituted by the British (Bolland 1988) and is modulated by the local understanding that certain tracts of land belong to certain village communities, for the exclusive use of members of the village in each case (cf. Toledo Maya Cultural Council and Toledo Alcaldes Association 1997).

The Mopan take the view that individuals are independent of and responsible for their own social circumstances. Mopan individuals assume responsibility for their own lives and those of their families. They carefully and politely refuse to do so for others. This perspective on the autonomy of the individual allows for a great deal of personal ambition, and many individuals work hard to better the economic situation of themselves and their families. A counterforce to this tendency exists, however, in the prevailing egalitarian ethic. If one household is perceived to have access to some resource that is denied to the others, long-standing and bitter enmities may result. Families who are doing well express fear of witchcraft that may be practiced against them on behalf of jealous neighbors (cf. Foster 1952; Gregory 1975). At the least, successful families can expect to suffer *p'aas* ('insult, mockery, disrespect') treatment from others in the form of backbiting and resentful gossip. In extreme cases

(which are by no means rare), the tension between individual ambition and community egalitarianism leads to violence or to emigration from the village. Emigrants may move to another village or set up house alone in the bush. These isolated homesteads become nuclei for new clusters of houses, which may in time become villages in their turn.

The tendency toward fission and mutual distrust quite clearly counterbalances and at times even jeopardizes the reliance on solidary labor exchange that also characterizes relationships among households in the village. One of the functions of elaborate forms of Mopan kinship recognition, as understood by Mopan themselves, is to display to observers and to the principals in the relationship that feelings remain on an even keel, and that the particular relationship being recognized remains one of mutual respect.

The Notion of 'Respect'

Today, the Belizean Ke'kchi and Mopan Maya live side by side with one another and with the Garifuna and East Indians of the Atlantic coast (Howard 1975). The Mopan also maintain relations with Guatemalan Mopan-speaking communities and interact routinely with the Creole-speaking inhabitants of Belize City and of central Belize. Long-term North American visitors to the area have included Catholic and Protestant missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers, a few permanent settlers, and a steady trickle of anthropologists.

J. E. S. Thompson visited Mopan territory briefly in the late 1920s and published a rich, if scattered, account of his observations there (Thompson 1930). Gregory (1984a) takes Thompson's account and the memories of old people in the late 1960s as a baseline against which to assess the changes that had taken place by the 1970s. Osborn (1982) makes use of Gregory's account, as well as that of Howard (1977 [1975]), in her own summary of life among both Ke'kchi and Mopan in Belize. I refer the reader to these accounts for broad ethnographic sketches of the traditional Mopan way of life. Osborn is the first to provide more than a cursory glimpse of domestic life among the Mopan, and her work supports Gregory's call (1984b) for further exploration of the Mopan world from the point of view of its women.

In traditional Mopan society, as documented by Thompson and Gregory, status and respect were granted to individuals as a function of their service in the civil-religious hierarchy of fiesta sponsorship and of community service:

> The pivotal concept here is "respect." . . . The idea of "respect" has an important place in Mopan cultural tradition. And though the term might be used in a variety of contexts by present-day informants in discussing traditional customs, its constantly repeated use in the context of the civil-religious hierarchy is especially notable. (Gregory 1984a, 34)

Gregory's consultants explained to him that the reason that fiesta sponsorship gave men respect was "because they are respecting the saints" (Gregory 1984a, 36). This explanation, in turn, is linked by Gregory to his reworking (1984a, 22–25) of Thompson's original characterization of the Mopan religious world as one in which

animistic deities require propitiation to ensure the well-being of humans and of their animals and crops. The individual who sponsors such propitiation does so on behalf of the entire community. Gregory (1975, 78–79) finds in this action one of the principal forces for cohesion in a Mopan world otherwise characterized by divisive social forces.

The Mopan word for the "respect" to which Gregory refers is *tzik*. The term is still "constantly repeated in a variety of contexts," although, as Gregory predicted, the annual round of observance of saints' fiestas has gone into a decline.[2] In discussing the gradual diminution of saints' day celebrations, villagers cite the increasing expense of mounting these events now that Belizean law has begun to require the sponsor to engage a national policeman for each night of festivities. This new regulation, in turn, owes its origin to the apparently increasing drunkenness and rowdiness of the fiestas. Villagers mention violence and even murder as probable occurrences on these occasions.[3]

Gregory (1984a, 117) locates the seeds of these difficulties in the emergence of "a new breed" of disrespectful youth in the late 1970s. This, in turn, was presaged in 1960 by "a youthful revolt against the authority of their elders" (Gregory 1984a, 111) by the young men of the village. The "revolt" took place on the occasion of the yearly selection of the *alkaalde*. During the 1950s, young men had been given positions of influence for the first time, as a result of their expertise in more modern domains of commerce. In 1960, the young men evidently preempted the traditional selection of an older man, experienced in matters of custom, as *alkaalde* and instead nominated and acclaimed one of their own for the alcaldeship.

Gregory (1984a) reports that his interlocutors spoke of this moment in 1960 as the point "when the young men took over" and "left the old men behind" (111). The incident is characterized as the opening of a new era in which appeal to traditional custom and to the authority of the elders became a matter of individual preference rather than one of socially enforced necessity. In public life, that era continues to this day. The reported previous practice of the nomination of *alkaaldes* by the *pasaados* (previous holders of the office) has fallen into disuse. Instead, nominations are made by the members of the village council and have become increasingly linked to issues of national party politics.[4] From year to year *alkaaldes* may be old men, praised for their familiarity with traditional law, or they may be younger, literate, modern in outlook, and praised by a different constituency for their ability to understand the modern world and relate to institutions and events outside the village.

The Ethnographer's Expectations and Experiences

Having read Gregory's account before arriving in Mopan territory, I was prepared to enter a world of humming commercialism and modern values, in which the ferment of change, entrepreneurship, and departure from the old ways would be among the most tangible of my experiences. In fact my experience was quite different. Great changes have no doubt taken place in this Mopan village since Thompson visited it in the 1920s. But what struck me as a first-time visitor in 1986 was the degree of coherence of the "deep structure" of the culture (Bricker 1987) with which I was

presented. To be sure, innovation was often eyed with interest, particularly any innovation that seemed likely to augment a family's cash income or to enliven the daily round of village and household affairs. But such innovations were appropriated, Mopan fashion, into a clearly Mopan world of meanings and values—to the despair of many a development project staffperson.

In short, I encountered far less in the way of modern values among the Mopan than I had expected to and I was surprised to find that most of my friends and acquaintances rarely traveled out of the village. Few of my interlocutors voiced disrespect or even doubt regarding the authority and correctness of the old ways, and many cited *kostuumbre* 'custom, revered tradition' as the only explanation for activities of theirs about which I inquired (cf. Reina 1966). Specifically with respect to the commercial economy that has been the motor of change in the village since 1950, I was surprised to find that many of my acquaintances still reckoned prices in terms of use-value rather than exchange value and that they expected to control only very small sums of money in their lifetimes.[5] I attribute these attitudes to the fact that many of my principal interlocutors among the Mopan were women.

A formal separation is made by the Mopan between the universe of women *ich naj* 'inside the house' and the universe of men *yok'ol kab'* 'in the world'.[6] It would be entirely inaccurate to say that Mopan women are prohibited from participating in public life. In fact, certain women do so participate, and they are not censured or hindered in any way by the community. One of the two nurses resident in the village in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a Mopan woman. A growing number of the primary school teachers are Mopan, some of them women. A few women have held jobs outside their own homes—as laundresses at nearby army camps or as domestic or sometimes administrative assistants to nurses, teachers, or missionaries who have other work to do. A certain number of village-level women's associations have recently come into existence, facilitated by non-Mopan development workers. These are supported and accepted by the community at large. Women who belong to them or who work outside their own homes are widowed or separated, or have husbands or parents who look favorably upon their involvement with the outside world.

It is certainly accurate, however, to say that most Mopan women do not participate in such activity, and that neither they nor their menfolk expect or exact such activity from them. Many individual men would indeed forbid such activity in their wives. Since the forces for change have, from the middle of the century, emanated from the outside world, they have generally been a part of public, not domestic, life. They have been available to Mopan women only to the extent that their own attitudes and those of their husbands and families have allowed them to come into contact with them. While obviously palpable in all spheres, the impact of change and modernization on Mopan culture to date has been far greater in the public sphere than in the domestic sphere. Consequently, it has had a greater effect on Mopan men than upon Mopan women.

In the descriptive account that appears in later chapters, I provide a brief sketch of Mopan life *ich naj* 'in the house'. I do so not only with the intention of providing a background to the experimental study but also with the particular ethnographic goal of introducing and illuminating a set of still-extant *tzik* 'respect' attitudes and behavior that affect both men and women and that are the domestic corollaries of the respect for public (*yok'ol kab'*) religious and political activity documented by previous observers.

3

THE MEANINGS OF KINSHIP TERMS

The Piagetian Definition Task

Psychologists, as well as anthropologists, have had a long-standing interest in terms for family relationships. While anthropologists have been fascinated by the fact that this area of meaning seemed in many cases to hold the key to social organization, and to delineate the area in which the socially or culturally imposed met the natural or self-evidently given, psychologists have concentrated on the relational and potentially self-referential logical properties of kinship terms, especially as a window onto language acquisition and child development.

Kinship terms appear on the list proposed by Ferguson (1977) of semantic domains that are universally apparent in the speech of very young language learners. Children's early usage and understanding of kinship terms (at ages one to three years) has more to do with appropriate participation in and socialization to locally relevant human relationships than it does with cognitive calculation in any genealogical grid (Schieffelin 1984; Carter 1984; Dunn and Kendrick 1982; Anderson 1977; Chambers and Tavuchis 1977; Thomson and Chapman 1977; Ruke-Dravina 1976; Burling 1970). Even in middle childhood, when children's use of such terms in discourse may be semantically adequate by adult standards, their talk about the meanings of these kinds of terms is not like that of adults (Landau 1982; Vygotsky 1934 [1962]).

One of the earliest standardized intelligence tests for children (Binet and Simon 1908, 49) made use of a technique that consisted of asking children to repeat and rectify short texts containing absurd or illogical elements. One of the texts states, "I have three brothers: Paul, Ernest, and myself." Jean Piaget (1928, 62–63) became

extremely interested in the fact that this sentence was one that French-speaking Swiss children aged nine to twelve found harder to put right—or even to recognize as "silly"—than other Binet-Simon texts. Piaget (1928, 74–88) argued that understanding of the three-brothers test depended on independent cognitive mastery of the "logic of relations" and on the ability to adopt the perspective of someone other than oneself. He elaborated the investigation by devising (Piaget 1928, 98–113) a set of new tasks that explored French-speaking Swiss children's developing relational and perspective-taking abilities with respect to sibling terms and to recognition of the right and left hands of the self and of others. From these parallel investigations, and referring to the substantial body of his other work, Piaget (1928, 112) traces "the non-relational character of childish ideas back to the ego-centricity of thought."[1]

Relational Stages in Kin Term Definition

Of particular interest to later scholars has been the task that Piaget devised at this point, requiring the children to answer for him the question "What is a brother?" (or "sister"). In his analysis of children's answers to this question, Piaget identified three stages of development. At the absolute, or categorical stage, children simply offer an absolute characteristic that applies to referents of the term, stating, for example, that a brother is a boy. At the next stage (relational stage), children recognize that the term denotes a relationship but understand the relationship as a property of the particular referent. Features of this stage include the belief that only some of the several male children of a single couple can be described as brothers, and that having a brother does not necessarily make one a brother or sister oneself. The final stage (reciprocal stage) is reached when the child supplies an answer "which implies in one way or another the idea that in order to be a brother one must have a brother or sister" (Piaget 1928, 104). At this third stage, the child understands that the status denoted is not absolute but relative—and more than that, that it involves a reciprocal relationship with some other person.

Exact replication of Piaget's "What is a brother?" task with English-speaking American children has reproduced his results and supports "Piaget's contention that the tests measure developmental changes in conceptual thinking" (Elkind 1962, 131). Subsequent replication of Piagetian stages in children's discussions and definitions of kinship terms in widely different languages and cultures has since taken place (Bavin 1990; Luong 1986; Carter 1984; Deutsch 1979; Greenfield and Childs 1977; Price-Williams et al. 1977; LeVine and Price-Williams 1974). No kin term definition study of which I am aware has failed in general to support the existence and ordering of the stages as originally outlined by Piaget.

Semantic Complexity and Order of Stage Progression

In an exact reproduction of Piaget's task, Kurt Danziger (1957), working with English-speaking Australian children, expanded his study to include family relationship terms other than those for siblings. He found that these other terms underwent a developmental progression like that of sibling terms, but that all terms did not go through the stages simultaneously. A child might give a categorical stage answer for one term and in the next breath give a reciprocal stage answer for another. Haviland and Clark (1974) repeat this observation with American English speakers, and offer an explanation for it.

Haviland and Clark (1974, 33) subject the kin terms of English to a semantic analysis that operates in terms of the property of relationality considered so important by Piaget. It is based on combinations of "relational components" (Bierwisch 1970) expressing parent-child links and sets aside "property features" or absolute semantic characteristics (Haviland and Clark 1974, 29). Under this analysis the English term *grandmother*, for example, is analyzed as containing two relational components and one nonrelational or "property" feature (Haviland and Clark 1974, 30):

[X PARENT OF A] [A PARENT OF Y] [FEMALE X]

In this notation, X, A, and Y all stand for human individuals. X refers to the person designated by a given term, and Y to the person to whom X is related by virtue of the term (i.e., the reciprocal). Relational components mention two individuals. Property features mention only one.

Haviland and Clark (1974) assign a quotient of semantic complexity to each term of the American English kinship paradigm. "The complexity of an entry," they explain, "is based on two factors: (*a*) the number of relational components in an entry, and (*b*) whether the relational components are all the same" (36). In their system, Haviland and Clark postulate two possible relational components: the first [X PARENT OF Y] we have already seen. The second is its inverse: [X CHILD OF Y]. In fact, Haviland and Clark embed a double relationality into these components, since each component not only specifies that a parent-child relationship holds between X and Y but also specifies which party—X or Y—is senior to the other.[2] For Haviland and Clark's analysis this is of no importance, since no terms in the American English system use seniority alone as a distinguishing criterion. We will find it important later, however, as we proceed to the Mopan data.

Haviland and Clark hypothesize (1974, 35) that less complex terms according to this measure will go through the Piagetian stages before more complex ones, for a given child. Although the complexity factor does not account for all of the variance in the results of their investigation, they conclude that degree of semantic complexity is "a very important factor in determining the order in which kin terms are learned relative to each other" (Haviland and Clark 1974, 47). Deutsch (1979, 320) offers confirmation of their claim in his own results from the German kin term lexicon, as does Luong (1986, 30) working with Vietnamese.[3]

Test for Psychological Reality of Alternative Semantic Models

Greenfield and Childs (1977) point out that in some languages differences in the semantic analyses offered for a particular set of kinship terms will have consequences for complexity in Haviland and Clark's sense and therefore, in these cases, will entail contrasting predictions about the order of acquisition of the same terms within a given system. In these cases, data regarding the actual order of acquisition of the critical terms could be used to distinguish among the different possible analyses that might be applied to the data.[4]

Deutsch (1979) clarified the point that even in a system of "kinship" terminology in which genealogy was never at stake (Deutsch devised a fictional system of relationships among rats, based on features like relative length of tail and color of coat), the

relationality expressed in children's definitions could be coded, and that the Piagetian stages in definition phrasing could still be clearly recognized.[5] This means that Piagetian acquisition can be used in the manner proposed by Greenfield and Childs (1977) to discriminate even among semantic models that differ in their commitment to the presence of universal genealogical content in the kinship domain.

We have already seen clearly how the three approaches to semantic meaning presented in chapter 1 correspond to different positions in the debate over the relationship between language and thought, and in their assumptions about a universal domain of genealogical kinship. Combining the insights of Haviland and Clark (1974) with those of Greenfield and Childs (1977) and of Deutsch (1979), it appears possible that the Piagetian kin-term definition task might be used to discriminate among these three approaches with respect to their applicability to a particular body of data, thus contributing empirically to the debate over linguistic relativity. My goal is to make precisely such a discrimination.

In doing so it will be important to note that, in the definition task, relationship terms are processed through the Piagetian stages of relationality in an order that corresponds to their relative degree of relational complexity with respect to the adult semantics of the terms, even when the data are obtained from quite young children. This fact suggests that some approximation of the adult semantics is actually present in the children consulted, but that, in the context of the definition task, younger children find it difficult to express the relationality of more complex terms. The Piagetian task presumably yields results of the type that Haviland and Clark discovered, not because school-age children simply do not understand the kinship terms of their language but because the demands of the task are onerous enough to constitute a variety of cognitive load that interferes with normal processing. The Piagetian relationality score that is given to a child's definition of a term is thus a measure of the relational complexity of the term—but the particular definition uttered by the child is certainly not a full measure of that child's understanding of the term (cf. Hirschfeld 1989).[6]

In this task, it is precisely the limit of what is accessible to reflective thought that serves as an index of less reflective understandings. The task can therefore be characterized as one that taps nonreflective thought despite the fact that it calls precisely for reflection upon the meanings of terms, and as one that is relevant to adult as well as to child cognition, despite the fact that children alone are consulted.

Where terms are relationally complex, processing of relationality is evidently sacrificed by children to the necessity for reflection imposed by the definition task. For this reason, while I will take some interest in the content of Mopan children's definitions, definition content is not my main focus of interest. The degree of abstract relationality of children's definitions, independent of content, will be my primary concern.

The Question of Kinship

To conduct the test that I propose, a set of terms must be identified for semantic analysis under three contrasting approaches to meaning. It is crucial that such identification not be made on grounds that rely on any account of the notional content of the terms, since the test itself is designed to distinguish among various theories about

such content. In deciding upon the particular terms to examine in a given language, then, we confront a specific version of the "mapping problem" of semantics in general (see Quine 1965): that is, the suspicion of one's own intuitions about reality, leading to a general despair about the possibility of comparison under true relativism.

How, in short, can one undertake a cross-cultural study that relies on definitions of kinship terms, when disagreement about the very existence of a comparative domain of kinship lies at the core of the theoretical discussion? We are faced with the necessity of isolating a set of terms for examination in a way that is independent of their (possible) nature as kinship terms. We must discover, without reference to any notional content, a group of candidate terms for Mopan that we can justify as a set and that we have reason to suppose will replicate Piaget's developmental results on the definition task.

Linguistic Aspects of the Piagetian Task

Unlike certain other kinds of nouns and noun phrases (such as natural kind terms, e.g., *tiger*), the lexical items traditionally known as kinship terms signify the relationship between a referent and a reciprocal, rather than simply specifying the referent itself. This is the linguistic property of "two-placed predication" (Lyons 1977, 153; Silverstein 1987, 144; Bierwisch 1970). It is this semantic property that underlies the logical relationality of kinship terms in which Piaget and others have been so interested.

In many cases, the formal reflex of this semantic property is not to be found within any actual token of a term. Rather, it is to be found in the term's context of use. When such terms are used in reference, two-placed predication is encoded syntactically and is to be found in the status of kinship terms as inherently possessed forms. The pronouns of possession are themselves in turn intimately linked to the speech situation, and reference must be sought in the context of utterance (Silverstein, 1976b; Jakobson 1957). When two-placed predicate terms are used in address, a particular configuration of pragmatic rules applies such that the speaker canonically stands at the position of the reciprocal.[7]

In combination with the possessive pronoun, then, or in address, kinship terms are like "duplex terms" or shifters (Danziger 1998; Casson 1981). As such they perform an indexical as well as a referential function in speech, indicating an object in the world that can be correctly identified only with reference to some aspect of the speech situation in which the utterance is made.

The Metalinguistic Nature of the Task

To score at the highest level on Piaget's task, children must deal with both the semantic (two-placed predication) and the pragmatic (identity of reciprocal encoded in speech situation) aspects of these shifter-like terms. A simple statement that a term specifies a kind of relationship scores at Piaget's relational stage. To score higher, the child must also provide an account of the term's context-dependent aspects—often including an abstraction of the self in the canonical role of speaker/reciprocal (Benveniste 1966 [1958]). The first demand, and the one that children all over the world find easiest to fulfill, is a metasemantic one. The second is metapragmatic (Silverstein

1993) and is much more difficult. Definitions of kinship terms are not always phrased reciprocally even in the academic literature on the subject.

To motivate comparability of the data of the present study with other data on the cross-linguistic acquisition of kinship terms, it will not be necessary therefore to adopt a position a priori on the existence or otherwise of kinship itself, or on the semantic content of the terms involved. It will be sufficient to establish that the terms I intend to examine possess the two specific linguistic properties of two-placed predication and of shifter-likeness that underlie the Piagetian task.

Defining the Domain

Methods for isolating lexical sets for semantic analysis were explored and discussed at length in traditional ethnoscience, specifically to allow the analysis of terminological systems "in a way which reveals the conceptual principles that generate them" (Frake 1969, 29)—that is, starting from terms in use and not from a previously assumed metalanguage. Such methods consisted fundamentally of establishing a linguistic environment, or "frame," into which certain linguistic units would fit, and that would exclude other linguistic units. Explicitly in the spirit of inductive discovery, the early ethnoscientific linguistic frame defined its own domain of interest rather than seeking to describe the linguistic arrangement of terms related by nonlinguistic or notional criteria of intuitive meaning.

Ethnoscientific application of this method often consisted simply of the establishment of some single, perhaps uniquely occurring or interview-imposed linguistic environment, and what was discovered was therefore as much pragmatically as semantically or syntactically controlled (Frake 1980).[8] In a more naturalistic application of a similar logic, Silverstein (1976a, 1987) uses spontaneously occurring intralinguistic contexts (such as the possibility or nonpossibility that a given form can occur with the ergative marker) to establish cross-linguistically comparable domains. My own approach to the isolation of a set of terms for consideration in the Piagetian task is similar. To identify a set of terms for semantic analysis, I distinguish, for Mopan, two linguistic frames—one syntactic and the other pragmatic—at the intersection of which a certain set of terms obligatorily occurs, and from which certain other terms are systematically excluded. Only terms meeting the requirements of both frames are considered in what follows.

The *Tzik* Relationship Terms of Mopan

Mopan Attitudes toward Reference and Respect

Until very recently Mopan society has been dependent on oral transmission of its history and traditional law. Many Mopan display a strong, even religious, respect for traditional procedure. It is important to Mopan individuals that ritual and legal precedents be followed exactly, and that history not be confused with fiction, even to make a moral or instructional point (see Danziger 1996a). Fantasy and parable are little appreciated in verbal art, while a great deal of admiration and interest are reserved for the faithful rendering of traditional accounts, which are accepted as

historically true. The Mopan expression *kux-kin-t-ik-Ø* 'cause-something-to-come-into-existence' corresponds to our *create, invent, imagine*, or *make something up*. Applied to linguistic texts, it carries strong negative connotations, equivalent to that of English *lie*.[9]

Those Mopan contexts in which a statement or object is accepted as not what it seems to be are often sacred ones. Like many of their neighbors, traditional Mopan believe that the plaster and ceramic statues of saints that adorn their churches possess religious power (cf. Reina 1966). Their theatrical dances, in which people adopt the personae of deer, jaguar, or monkey, are cheerful but distinctly sacred occasions. It is precisely the attribution of literal essence to such unlikely vessels that gives these instances some of their miraculous quality.

It is considered important that certain events should be conducted as they have always been conducted in previous generations. In speeches and incantations performed at moments of religious importance—and even in everyday life when making reference to *kostuumbre*—the Mopan invoke the habits of "those who died before us," using terms for parents and grandparents. It is understood that, by virtue of their experience and their contact with those who have now died, old people represent an invaluable repository of information about traditional precedent. Young adult Mopan to whom I spoke repose comfortably in this belief. They are confident that the old people know important secrets of which they themselves are ignorant and that that knowledge will become available to them (the young) at the moment they need it.

This confidence in the role of old people as the repositories of vital cultural knowledge is the basis for a thoroughgoing Mopan sensitivity to relative seniority in their relations with one another. Seniority is cited as a very important factor in determining the *tzik* 'respect' that any one individual owes to another. As Gregory (1984a) noted, 'respect' is "pivotal" in religious ceremonies honoring the saints. And the Mopan say that it is the correct deployment of *tzik* that distinguishes them from the animals and from other ethnic groups. On different occasions I have been told that it is *tzik* to refrain from sexual relations with one's spouse on the eve of planting or hunting. It is *tzik* to greet one's neighbor politely and to abhor anger, violence, and murder. It is *tzik* to listen acceptingly to one's spouse's words and to accede to his or her wishes. It is *tzik* to marry outside the group into which one was born, and it is *tzik* to honor those who have sponsored the children of others in the ceremonies of the church. It is *tzik* to speak the truth, to treat one's compadres and comadres with careful appreciation, and to recognize with deference the old people who know the Mopan law. It is *tzik* to exercise self-discipline and not to do "whatever one wants." It is *tzik* to bear the pain of the world with patience and to cherish and forgive one's fellow humans in it. Above all, most consistently and utterly regularly, it is *tzik* to greet those others who are considered to be in certain essential relationships with oneself with the term that denotes that relationship. And in strict complementarity, it is *tzik* to refrain from sexual intercourse with those whom one greets in this way.

Tzik 'Respect' and the Greeting of Kin

As a verb, Mopan *tzik* 'respect' is morphologically transitive. It can be translated as 'to honor' or 'to offer respect to', and it has overtly religious connotations. To kill

another human being, for example, shows acute disregard for *tzik*, and such disregard has direct supernatural consequences. A spate of flooding that afflicted the village in one year, for example, was blamed on the ill humor of the *Chaaks*, or gods of thunder and rain. This ill humor in turn was itself blamed on the perceived high rate of homicide in the village the year before.

One old and learned Mopan man, when asked to describe the end of the world, told me that that calamity would be marked by the complete disintegration of *tzik*. Not only would men murder one another freely and take their own sisters, daughters, and grandmothers to wife, but on that day household furnishings would be transformed into wild beasts and wander away. *Tzik* appears in this description as a force that holds together the very foundations of the human and cultural universe. But *tzik* is also an oft-recurring fact of daily life and is said to be manifested in everyday greeting practice. The younger of any two persons meeting one another for the first time in a day initiates a short formal salutation, which the elder returns (see Lungstrum 1987; Hanks 1990, 105).

The form of the greeting is simple. Minimally, it consists of the particle *'Dioos.'* Frequently, however, the greeting is elaborated by following this form with a term of personal address. Proper names are sometimes used in this position, as are terms of social office (e.g., *alkaalde* 'mayor' or *paade* 'priest'). Popular among many who consider the use of proper names disrespectful is the formulation *nooch inik* 'old/great man', *nooch ch'up* 'old/great woman'.[10]

There are certain dyadic combinations of particular individuals in which it is mandatory for the younger person to greet the elder with the senior-party term of a two-placed predicate pair (a relationship term). The senior party then returns the greeting but without using the junior-party term in return. To put it another way, where certain reciprocal relationships are understood to apply between two people, the greeting makes mandatory reference to them. The relationships in question include those that we would render in English, for example, as *parent* to *child*, *brother* to *sister*, *father-in-law* to *daughter-in-law*, and *godparent* to *godchild*. In some cases, greeting with a relationship term may be elaborated to encompass several lengthy turns, involving formulaic poetic speech structured into rhyming couplets.

To greet someone in this way is to *tzik*, or to 'respect', them. Failure to carry out the minimal greeting procedure is a serious breach of good manners. Failure to address a person who is entitled to it with the appropriate relationship term is especially rude, prompting charges that one is behaving "like a dog" or "like an animal." The failure of two people of opposite sexes to greet with *tzik* is understood to indicate that sexual relations have occurred between them.Where a relationship term would have been expected in the greeting, this understanding of sexual intimacy is accompanied by expressions of abhorrence and anger.

There is widespread understanding among the Mopan that other peoples—actual or mythological—might have the same kinds of relationships, while failing to honor them with *tzik* address. The fact that Mopan use relationship terms in *tzik* greeting address indeed, was offered to me by both Mopan and Ke'kchi consultants as one of the hallmarks of Mopan identity. The tolerance of the Mopan for alternative worldviews is exemplified in the fact that their non-Mopan comadres and compadres are indulgently exempted from *tzik* greeting. On the other hand, the bizarre sexual

habits with which other peoples are credited by the Mopan are considered only what is to be expected from people without *tzik*. Both examples illustrate the fact that *tzik* behavior is considered characteristic only of Mopan and not of other peoples.

Two people who greet one another with a relationship term should not marry.[11] Although lexical items that correspond to English *husband* and *wife* are in frequent use in Mopan, these terms are never used in *tzik* greeting. Reaction to the suggestion of such usage ranges from summary dismissal to great mirth. Inversely, married couples, or couples who have had sexual relations with one another may not greet with relationship terms. This fact of social life constrains the negotiation of marriage and ritual sponsorship ties, since these, once established, entail obligatory greeting with *tzik* relationship terms among the family members of the principals.

My Mopan interlocutors habitually and readily talked about the reciprocal relationships that must be made explicit in the greeting as *tzik*. As my stay in the village lengthened, I began to tell people that I was interested in learning about *tzik*. My interest was understood and appreciated as an interest in the reciprocal relationships represented by two-placed predicate terms used with *Dioos* in daily greeting.

The Set of Terms

The pursuit of the Mopan study requires a set of two-placed predicate shifters, susceptible to alternative semantic analyses and coherently bounded as a domain. The terms must be two-placed predicates, to permit observation of the Piagetian categorical-relational distinction in children. They must also be habitually embedded as shifters into the speech situation context, to permit observation of Piagetian decentration. These properties, however, are all that are necessary to ensure the comparative integrity of the particular study I propose. While I am interested in examining a set of terms that offer translational equivalents of English kinship terms, the question of denotation, or of kinship content, cannot—for fear of circularity—be a criterion for inclusion or exclusion of any given term.

I begin to delineate a set of such terms in Mopan by isolating the set of those noun phrases that can be used in address, preceded by *Dioos*! Referring to the demand of the Piagetian task for relational terms, I take the intersection of this set with the set of Mopan common nouns that are obligatorily possessed when used referentially as the domain of study. This intersection excludes from consideration terms that are used in *tzik* greeting but are not obligatorily possessed in reference (proper names, social office terms such as *alkaalde* 'mayor' or *paade* 'priest' and the polite formulations *nooch inik* 'sir' *nooch ch'up* 'ma'am').

This procedure yields the set that I will call that of Mopan *tzik* relationship terms. Within the set are found the terms that an English speaker would use if called upon to translate almost all of those relationships that we call kin relationships, with the terms for English *husband* and *wife* conspicuously absent. The set also includes terms for certain relationships that might be considered only marginally kin by English speakers—the relationships of compadrazgo. Table 3.1 lists the terms of the set thus identified and provides, using the traditional terminology of kinship semantics (Kroeber 1909), a sketch of the genealogical range of each term, along with a short selection of possible English translations for each term.[12]

Table 3.1 The set of Mopan *tzik* relationship terms

Term	*Genealogical Range*	*Some English Glosses*
	Relationships Held from Birth (Consanguines)	
tat	Alter is parent/child to Ego Senior party is male Alter is senior to Ego	father
mejen	Alter is parent/child to Ego Senior party is male Alter is junior to Ego	*of a man:* son, daughter
na'	Alter is parent/child to Ego Senior party is female Alter is senior to Ego	mother
al	Alter is parent/child to Ego Senior party is female Alter is junior to Ego	*of a woman:* son, daughter
tataa'	Alter not parent/child to Ego Alter different generation from Ego Senior party is male Alter is senior to Ego	grandfather, uncle, great-uncle
mam	Alter not parent/child to Ego Alter different generation from Ego Senior party is male Alter is junior to Ego	*of a man:* grandson, granddaughter, nephew, niece, great-nephew, great-niece
na'chiin	Alter not parent/child to Ego Alter different generation from Ego Senior party is female Alter is senior to Ego	grandmother, aunt, great-aunt
chiich	Alter not parent/child to Ego Alter different generation from Ego Senior party is female Alter is junior to Ego	*of a woman:* grandson, granddaughter, nephew, niece, great-nephew, great-niece
suku'un	Alter not parent/child to Ego Alter same generation as Ego Senior party is male Alter is senior to Ego	*older than Ego:* brother, cousin, uncle, nephew
kiik	Alter not parent/child to Ego Alter same generation as Ego Senior party is female Alter is senior to Ego	*older than Ego:* sister, cousin, aunt, niece
itz'iin	Alter not parent/child to Ego Alter same generation as Ego Alter is junior to Ego	*younger than Ego:* brother, sister, cousin, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece
	Acquired Relationships (Affines)	
äli'	Alter linked by marriage to Ego Alter different generation from Ego Linking relative male	daughter-in-law *of a woman:* parent-in-law; *of a woman:* sibling-in-law
ja'an	Alter linked by marriage to Ego Alter different generation from Ego Linking relative female	son-in-law *of a man:* parent-in-law; *of a man:* sibling-in-law

Table 3.1 *(continued)*

Term	*Genealogical Range*	*Some English Glosses*
	Acquired Relationships (Affines)	
b'al	Alter linked by marriage to Ego Alter same generation as Ego Alter is same sex as Ego Alter and Ego are male	*of a man:* brother-in-law
jab'än	Alter linked by marriage to Ego Alter same generation as Ego Alter is same sex as Ego Alter and Ego are female	*of a woman:* sister-in-law
mu'	Alter linked by marriage to Ego Alter same generation as Ego Alter is opposite sex from Ego	*of a man:* sister-in-law; *of a woman:* brother-in-law
tata'yoox	Alter linked by sponsorship to Ego Alter is in sponsoring relation to Ego Alter is senior to Ego Alter is male	godfather, godparent's father
na'yoox	Alter linked by sponsorship to Ego Alter is in sponsoring relation to Ego Alter is senior to Ego Alter is female	godmother, godparent's mother
ayijaado	Alter linked by sponsorship to Ego Alter is in sponsoring relation to Ego Alter is junior to Ego	godchild, child's godchild
kompaade	Alter linked by sponsorship to Ego Alter not in sponsoring relation to Ego Alter is male	'compadre'
komaade	Alter linked by sponsorship to Ego Alter not in sponsoring relation to Ego Alter is female	'comadre'
xuul	Alter linked by *xuul* ceremony to Ego	(no English gloss)

The set of terms can be characterized in traditional terms as constituting a "Hawaiian" system of kinship appellation (Murdock 1965 [1949]), with generational stratification a primary contrast in the system. A unique set of terms is in use among direct lineals (counted through sponsorship of Ego by Alter at ritual events, as well as through biological parenthood). For most others, it is appropriate and correct to use one subset of *tzik* relationship terms for cases in which the two parties are deemed to be of the same generation (seniority within the pair is usually also distinguished), while a second subset of terms is applied to cases in which the parties are of different generations. The same generational logic is used to distinguish among all *tzik* relations, whether they belong to the terminological subset of those acquired through marriage, those acquired through ritual sponsorship, or those present from birth. A certain amount of individual difference is discernible in informants' usage and recognition of terms. In no case, however, does such variation contradict this principle of generational stratification.[13]

But where is the "generation" line to be drawn? Mopan girls marry and begin to have children in their early teens, and families of twelve, fifteen, or eighteen children are not uncommon. An eldest daughter is often closer in age to her mother than to her own youngest siblings. Her own children are likely to be older than many of her youngest siblings. Taking the perspective of the junior party in this kind of relationship, I asked one older woman directly what a person calls the younger siblings (*itz'iin*) of his or her mother. "*Suku'un,*" she replied, or

Waj yaab'-Ø u-k'in, a-tataa'.
Q plenty-3B 3A-day 2A-*tataa'*
If he is very old, he's your *tataa'*.

In Mopan practice indeed, individuals are often considered to be of the same generation for *tzik* greeting purposes if they are more or less of the same age. A woman's young children, for example, are likely to be considered of the same terminological generation as her own youngest siblings. Meanwhile, those of this woman's siblings who are closest to herself in age (as well as those older than herself) are considered to be senior generation to her children. Terminological class assignment therefore does not correspond with exactitude to the idea of generation we might form if we were to adhere to the calculation of biological relationships through parent-child links.

But the difficulties do not end there. Even absolute difference of age in years does not consistently predict assignment of a relationship to a terminological class. When asked to explain, for example, why A counted as junior generation to C, while B—who was the same age as A—counted as same generation, my Mopan interlocutors would sometimes offer explanations based on criteria that indicated relative sociological rather than chronological maturity. Individual A might, for example, be attending school longer than most, or he or she might be age-anomalously unmarried. These sociological criteria were not, however, consistently applied, and could not be used as predictors of term class assignment.

The observation that in Mopan Maya, considerations of experience (related, but not bound to chronological age) serve to decide whether an individual will be greeted as 'same-generation' or as 'different-generation' can be placed in the same category as those that have problematized the notion of a universal kinship domain for many anthropologists. The psychological significance of this departure from strictly biological and chronological calculation in the determination of Mopan generation will form the basis for my focused study.

A purely naturalistic (i.e., genealogical) account of usage in this case fails to make sense of the cultural data. Faced with this fact, the analyst has several choices. He or she can choose to abandon the naturalistic account and its attendant universality, seeking instead a cultural account (Schneider 1968) that will supply local coherence to the ethnographic observations, at the expense of cross-system comparability. A second option is to modify the initial account by augmenting the concept of nature that is invoked, appealing to salient or central aspects of human experience. Finally, the analyst may abandon the goal of interpreting the data and contents him- or herself with describing it.

For the purpose of administering the Piagetian task, a semantic analysis that corresponds to each of these three strategies will be presented in the following chapters. The first analysis is made in terms of monosemy and is oriented to discovering specifically Mopan principles of semantic contrast that will define the full range of reference of a given *tzik* greeting term. The second analysis is one that assumes polysemy and identifies, from Mopan speakers' reflective judgments, certain central referents of Mopan *tzik* relationship terms. The third analysis I have called an analysis in terms of homonymy. This analysis sets out simply to list the possible denotations of the various Mopan terms in a universalizing metalanguage that appeals to genealogical parent-child links.

In making the monosemous analysis, it will be necessary to appeal to criteria that are specific to the Mopan case. In what follows, an ethnographic survey of the nature of Mopan domestic relationships provides a culturally specific translation of the Mopan notion that I have until now inadequately characterized as that of generation. In addition, in view of the fact that the Piagetian task relies upon developmental data, in the next chapters I will pay some attention to the life of Mopan children and to the manner in which *tzik* and the relationship terms associated with it are presented to them.

4

TZIK AND KINSHIP

The Native Speaker's View

A set of Mopan terms has now been delineated for study, isolated from other forms of the language by their properties of semantic and pragmatic occurrence. We can call these the *tzik* relationship terms of Mopan and justify their membership in the set precisely in terms of their occurrence under the defining circumstances. I have considered a term as a candidate for belonging to the set of *tzik* relationship terms if it is a two-placed predicate that occurs in the *tzik* greeting frame. This is a useful and defensible procedure, and we use it to enter the domain of *tzik* appellation without presupposing the content of the domain. But it does not quite correspond to the Mopan view of things.

Discussing these matters with a woman friend on one occasion, I made an effort to verify that the prohibition on sexual relations extended to all the individuals whom she specified as requiring greeting with a relationship term. I asked, for example, whether one could marry the children of one's godmother (who are greeted with a 'sibling' relationship term). My friend replied that one could not. "Why is that?" I asked. She replied, quite simply:

Ma' jed-ek-Ø por ke yan-Ø ti-tzik.
NEG be-able-SUBJ-3B because exist-3B 1A_PL-respect
It isn't possible, because we have respect (*tzik*).

At this, I ventured the following direct question:

K'u-Ø u-nu'kul a tzik?
what-3B 3A-meaning DET *tzik*
What is the meaning of / reason for the respect (*tzik*)?

My friend hesitated. (I saw that this was a difficult question for her), but she offered this reply:

Por ke ti-wet'ok-Ø.
because 1A_PL-*et'ok*-3B
Because they are our relations (*et'ok*).

The explanatory term that this woman used (*et'ok*) signifies a relationship of general comradeship, companionship, or alliance, which can include biological relationship. On other occasions, making similar explanations, consultants might use the Spanish-derived *familia*, or English *family*. In less frequent use, but also observed, were the archaic terms *äknal* and *o'nel*, which were also glossed for me as 'family.'[1] Conversely, the fact of habitual *tzik* greeting may be invoked by Mopan speakers to justify the supposition of biological relationship between two people, where the exact family connection is not known. The same supposition is made where two people have the same surname. (Persons with the same surname should greet one another with *tzik* relationship terms and should not marry.)

The connection in Mopan discourse between the fact of being in a certain kind of essential relationship with someone and the fact of habitually addressing that person with *tzik* greeting is a close one. The two frames of reference are in fact readily and routinely interchangeable in talk. I might ask a question phrased in terms of essential relationships and receive an answer phrased explicitly in terms of *tzik* greeting.

This was true to such an extent that an effort of observation and analysis was required on my part to isolate the few cases that demonstrated the separability of the two. As I came to understand matters, although reciprocated *tzik* address using relationship terms is always taken to indicate that the two individuals are in the relationship specified, it is not always the case that persons in such relationships actually greet one another with *tzik* relationship terms, even though it is ideally mandatory for them to do so. In other words, although greeting with a *tzik* relationship term implies being in the relationship specified by the term, the reverse is not always the case.

If *tzik* greeting does not take place where it is expected, this is of great significance. It indicates either incest or extreme anger between the two parties. Such cases do occur, however, and the relationship may continue to be discussed in the breach. Thus, the gossip about a young woman who is said to have slept with her *suku'un* mentions the relationship—never again to be honored in *tzik* address—by name. The kernel of scandal in the case is that he is her *et'ok*, and remains so, even though these two disgraced individuals must now pass one another in the street without exchanging any greeting.

Jab'ix b'a'alche'-Ø!
as_if animals-3B
Just like animals!

This comment as originally made applied to the enforced lapse in respect greeting between the two. But the comment refers at least indirectly also to the sexual behavior, which now makes the abandonment of greeting a shameful necessity. The two acts, of sexual and of social disregard for *tzik*, are in some sense one and the same.

Tzik and Sexuality

The fact of *tzik* greeting with a relationship term isolates those with whom sexual intercourse is always forbidden from those with whom it can be licensed. A general equivalence runs through Mopan understanding, of sexual activity with license, blasphemy, and absence of religious respect, and of sexual restraint with abstinence, prayer, and respect. Recall for example, how husbands and wives do not respect (*tzik*) one another with a relationship term in greeting.

In contexts other than those of *tzik* greeting relationships, Mopan people differentially deploy sexual restraint and sexual activity to symbolic and religious effect (Thompson 1930). There are many ritual occasions on which husband and wife are said to refrain from sexual relations with each other, and others on which they deploy sexual relations for their supernatural efficacy. Sexual relations are traditionally avoided between husband and wife, for example, before the man goes out hunting. The game that is hunted is believed to be the property of divine 'owners' (*u yumil*), who will allow it to be captured and eaten only if they are entreated with respect to do so. An old man, locally acknowledged as expert in matters of tradition, used the Spanish word *respetar* to explain why one refrains from sexual relations under these conditions:

Tzaj *a-respetar-t-ik-Ø.*
OBLIG 2A-respect-TR-INC-3B
You must have respect for them.

The supernatural energies of the sexual act,which are sometimes constrained for respectful and religious purposes, can also be exploited, under what are felt to be less virtuous religious conditions. I was given the following account of the procedure a Mopan couple should follow if they wish to promote the growth of the beans in their field. They abstain from sexual relations for twelve days before planting. After planting, when the beans are in flower, the wife goes among them dressed in new clothes and with her long hair flowing. She prays first to the traditional guardians of the fields and crops (*Saanto Witz'*, *Saanto Jook* 'the sacred mountains and the sacred valleys'; see Thompson 1930) that no harm shall come to the beans, and she offers incense to these guardians. But, explained my teacher, when this is done, "you should ask the evil one to help you." He repeats:

Ka' *a-k'aat-e'* *ti* *a* *kisin-i!*
CMPL 2A-ask-SUBJ_3B PREP DET devil-SCOPE
You should ask the devil!

The husband has been waiting for his wife in the small shelter that stands in their beanfield. Here, he spreads a cloth upon the ground, and the couple make love. As a result of this coupling, the flowering beans will later provide fruit in abundance.

Aay yan-Ø walak-oo u-k'ax-äl-ä umen u-yal-il
aay exist-3B HAB-3B_PL 3A-fall-INC-SCOPE because 3A-heavy-NOM
u-wich!
3A-fruit
Aay! Some will even fall over from the heaviness of their fruit!

Significant for my purposes is the enactment of the sexual encounter as a way of calling upon the powers antithetical to those customarily respected in religious observance (later in the same discourse my teacher indicated again that this act invoked the aid of "Lucifer"). The *tzik* relationship greeting, with its corollary of sexual avoidance, is thus part of a general 'respect' for the other that is profoundly religious in tone.

Tzik and Compadrazgo

In Mopan belief, careful verbal greeting and respectful sexual restraint are social and symbolic practices that necessarily apply to certain members of an individual's social circle because these are biological relations (*familia, et'ok*). In those cases, being in the named relationship does not depend on these respect practices. But in other cases, the obligations to greet with a relationship term and to refrain from sexual contact are motivated not by biological relationship but by relationships acquired through ritual and ceremony. It is to these cases, and especially to those of relationship through compadrazgo, that the notion of *tzik* respect is most elaborately applied, both through verbal elaboration of the greeting and through a higher degree of outrage at the notion of sexual relations.

Recall that the relationships of compadrazgo are those that obtain between the Catholic godparents or sponsors and the parents of a young person on the occasions of baptism, confirmation, or marriage. Compadrazgo also obtains, among the Mopan, between the two sets of parents of a married couple. The relationships of compadrazgo are often those first associated by Mopan with the notion of *tzik* if it is presented out of context. When I introduced myself and my interest in *tzik*, Mopan consultants often tended to assume that I was interested specifically in compadrazgo. In one case, for example, when making a social visit, I encountered a group of other visitors who did not know me. I explained my interests to them in Mopan, using what had become a standard formula, by saying that I was interested in learning about *t'an* 'language', and about *kostuumbre* 'traditions'. One of the older women asked how long I would be staying and was pleased to hear that it would be a full year—then maybe I would have some chance of learning these things. Now using the word *tzik*, I explained further that I was also interested in learning about 'how you respect one another'. Where at this point some Mopan would understand my interest as pertaining to greeting, or to family relationships in general, many would make the leap at once to compadrazgo. On the occasion I am describing, for example, my interlocutor joked, in Mopan, "So you will look for a *komaade* here!"

Meanwhile, the degree of outrage and incredulity that accompanies the suggestion that sexual relations could occur between individuals who greet with a relationship term varies with the particular relationship in question. Sexual relations between

father and daughter, between mother and son, and between full siblings, for example, are widely rumored to occur. One consultant averred in English and without much evidence of disgust or horror that full siblings might have sexual contact "in secret, and without letting their father know," although of course they could not marry. The same consultant was asked, a moment later, to consider a situation in which the parents of a husband and wife become widow and widower, respectively. Could the older people now take an interest in one another? My consultant took a moment even to understand the question, then suddenly reacted with shocked incredulity. "You mean *kompaade* and *komaade* could get married?!" He firmly characterized the possibility even of secret or extramarital sex in such a case as unthinkable.

Finally, it is in cases of compadrazgo alone that the verbal form of everyday *tzik* respect reaches its most elaborate articulation. Between individuals in compadrazgo relation, the simple greeting may be amplified to a series of formulaic turns, in which the health of both parties is elaborately inquired after, and in which thanks are given to God (*Dioos*) for continued life and health, in the face of the constant and unpredictable presence of illness and death in the world. As in many other formal genres throughout the Maya region (Edmonson 1971), the poetic features of monotonic rhythm and the use of semantic couplets characterize this form of speech (called in Mopan *kichpan t'an* 'beautiful speech' or *nukuch t'an* 'great speech'). The skilled practice of such speech is highly appreciated in Mopan society.

In many ways, then, the relationships of compadrazgo are treated as the most respected of *tzik* 'respect' relations. Here the mutually constructive relationship between the performance of the everyday act of *tzik* greeting and the existence of the kinds of relationships that call for this greeting is thrown into high relief. In some sense, it is the very fact that a high degree of *tzik*—including sexual restraint—is called for and maintained in the absence of biological motivation that constitutes the essence of these relationships.

The Ideology of *Tzik* Greeting Terminology

Use of the Mopan relationship greeting is usually explained by consultants as a signal, delivered in order that a genealogical connection calling for respect in the form of sexual restraint will be recognized. But the greeting, and the avoidance of sexual intimacy that accompanies it, is itself quite clearly also the offering of such respect. The greeting at once identifies a relationship that calls for respect and supplies the respect called for.

Mopan individuals are extremely concerned to greet others with the right relationship term. Most such relationships are a matter of general knowledge, but, when necessary, a careful reckoning based on biological, affinal, or ritual sponsorship relations among persons, in combination with issues of sociological maturity, is used to determine an individual's being in a certain *tzik* greeting relationship with another. A great deal of importance is attached to this kind of reckoning, precisely because of its relationship to the social necessity for *tzik* behavior. Adopted children, for example, are always taught to greet their birth relatives with the appropriate term, lest they should unwittingly fail to offer respect to those who are entitled to it.[2] Conversely, there is extreme unwillingness to use *tzik* greeting—especially that appropriate for

compadrazgo relations—under incorrect conditions. My consultants were reluctant to demonstrate the use of *tzik* greeting and ritual speech exchanges with partners who were not considered to be related to themselves in the manner to be demonstrated. This reluctance to violate *tzik* convention was presented to me, among other things, as a serious hazard to extramarital adventures. A husband might find out that his wife was having an affair in just this way, since a woman would be unable to respect her lover in greeting, if she and her husband happened to meet him in the roadway. The punishment for adultery in a Mopan woman is likely to be severe. The perceived inability of a Mopan to violate *tzik* conventions even under such serious threat is an indication of the more-than-practical importance that the correct application of *tzik* behavior assumes, even in everyday life.

The correctness of *tzik* application is decided, in native speaker exegesis, through assessment of various factors of gender, seniority, ritual sponsorship status, and sameness or differentness of maturity. Although in usage or reflection individuals may disagree strongly over the particular term to be applied in a given case, they are unanimous in accepting the necessity for the ultimate adoption of one term or the other. The one inadmissible solution, for the Mopan, is that the situation remain a fuzzy one.[3] A single relationship status must be decided upon for each dyad, and the particular terms used in greeting are understood to denote the true and essential relationship that obtains between the two individuals concerned. It is noteworthy that the final decision is based on an assessment of the relationship between the two parties involved and may or may not conform to the dictates of strict "transitive" calculation from the particular *tzik*-greeting relationships that either person might hold with the relatives of the other (see Danziger 1996a).

Because of the religious penumbra surrounding the notion of *tzik*, if a certain relationship term is expected in greeting, use of any other term or of no term at all would be considered not merely falsehood but something closer to blasphemy. If in certain cases, then, relationship terms are used in *tzik* greeting by virtue of non-genealogical criteria such as absolute age or school attendance, we must take this seriously as part of the meaning of the term in question, and more generally as part of the concept of *tzik* 'respect' as this is constituted in the domestic world.

Mopan Life *Ich Naj* ('in the House')

Mopan men and women cannot live easily without one another. Where a family is left completely without members of one sex or another, it is not unknown for men to grind corn or for women to farm, but it is the fact that each typically performs gender-specific tasks crucial to food procurement and preparation that forms the basis for the Mopan view of relations between the sexes. Marriage is seen less as a matter of romance, or even of sexuality, than as a matter of mutual feeding and interdependent labor.[4]

The universally recognized interdependence of men and women probably underlies the notable absence, among both women and men, of any belief in the inferior capacity or ability of females, as well as of any tendency to trivialize or downgrade female work or the products of female labor. Men and women in couples make daily

decisions together, especially as they get older. Ritual and traditional offices are in fact held by couples, not by individual men.[5] Women are recognized as full members of the community, on a par with men, and having as much right to the resources of the community as men. I was told (by men as well as women) that, yes, a woman could become *alkaalde*; women could attend the village meetings and discuss and vote alongside the men. On one occasion, in fact, I saw a Mopan woman—one of the high school–educated teachers—do exactly that, without comment or question from the assembled men. By contrast, in actual fact, most Mopan women's activities are almost exclusively restricted to the domestic sphere, and their movements and opportunities are quite explicitly controlled by family members.

Although the ethic of egalitarianism and of individual autonomy applies to women as well as to men, then, and although some women enjoy great freedom of movement and variety of activity, the majority of women's behavior is controlled by others. Further, the egalitarianism that marks everyday relationships among individuals of different households in the public sphere is not visible in the domestic sphere. There, the traditional rule that made juniors answerable to seniors continues to apply.

The Authority of Age

Gregory (1984a) tells us that the "coup" of 1960 broke the political authority of the old men over the young. No such coup, to date, has interfered with the authority of old women over young ones, in their particular sphere. A new young bride is not considered to be a grown woman, and she is not expected to be responsible for her own household. On the contrary, it is expected that she will be untutored in many of the domestic arts, which her mother-in-law must undertake to teach her. (These will include infant care, when children are born.) The young husband continues his previous life of farm labor alongside his father, or of wage labor away from the village. The young wife adjusts to life and labor in a new setting under a new mistress.

Relations between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law are extremely close, although not always amicable. The younger woman works in the older woman's kitchen, and the young couple sleep together in the house of the husband's boyhood. The girl obeys her mother-in-law as she had obeyed her mother, in particular in the matter of public outings. Imperious demands for overtly displayed diligence and industry are made, and they are backed up by the sharp tongue of the older woman.

Jokes and stories abound of severe matrons who whip their daughters-in-law to keep them inside the house. In serious conversation, I was told more than once that it is the mother-in-law who originally commands her son to beat his wife as punishment for sins of laziness and waste committed in the older woman's kitchen and unwitnessed by the son. Women recount their resentment, in early marriage, of a husband's obedience to his mother, at their expense. The same women, however, now old themselves, speak fondly of the loyalty of their own adult sons, who listen to their mothers rather than to their wives.

This period is obviously a very difficult one for young girls; talk of young wives attempting suicide is not uncommon. But older women recall and contemplate it with surprising equanimity. Marriage is difficult, yes, they say, but so is the rest of life. Elders seem to regard a bride's tears at marriage with something of the attitude that

I might take toward a child who cries on the first day of school. Distressing, yes, and regrettable, of course, but the procedure is inevitable, and everyone knows she will get used to it (*suktal*). In particular, members of the family of origin of a young bride are unwilling to speculate publicly about the possibility that she may be in distress.

The Authority of Gender

In the only social relationship in which gender is specifically linked to power, wives are answerable to husbands. According to verbal report, physical violence of husbands to wives is so common as to constitute something of a norm. Although this is a focus of concern in the community, both for men and for women, it apparently is not a recent phenomenon. Even some of the oldest of my informants report having suffered extreme violence at the hands of their husbands in their younger days. One elderly widow expressed her surprise at having outlived her husband. She had always been sure he would eventually kill her.

Women have certain defenses open to them against brutality from their husbands. Under traditional Mopan law, a husband can be fined if he beats his wife too severely. Older women may simply stand up to their husbands, leaving to set up house on their own account or to live with a grown child. Some women, I was told, turn around and beat their husbands right back.[6] In Mopan life as I observed it, however, in general a husband is free to discipline his wife with physical force.

Beatings are apparently nominally administered as a punishment for idleness or for any perceived forwardness on the part of the woman that a husband takes for incipient infidelity. For some women, the mere fact of being seen out alone on the public road can be enough to precipitate violent retaliation from the husband. The fact that these attacks usually occur when the men are drunk renders them no less terrifying to the women involved.[7]

If a young bride is too unhappy with her situation, she may take flight from her husband's family and return to her own parents, perhaps taking her baby with her. This usually happens early in the marriage; it is seen to be a realistic option only as long as there are not too many children. It is a drastic step for a young wife to take and usually produces contrition and promises to change on the part of the husband—backed up by his family, who have an investment to protect in the marriage (see later discussion). The girl's parents, by contrast, have an ambiguous role to play here. Her mother is likely to be delighted to have her daughter back, but her duty to the other family (and, ultimately, her continued hold on her own daughters-in-law) requires that she cooperate in returning the girl to her husband and his family.

In some cases, however, the girl does not return. She remains at home with her children or goes on to establish a new relationship with another man. This is an outcome about which young men express great anxiety, especially in view of the financial investment that they have made. Some say that it would be better to live with a girl first for a year, to see if she were going to run away, before getting married.

Because of the danger that the girl will abandon the marriage at its outset, the mother of the bride adopts a posture of elaborately displayed consideration for the mother-in-law's claim to the young girl and to her labor. Exaggerated exchanges of respectful speech demonstrate the continued good relations between the two sides of

the family (now *komaades* and *kompaades* to one another). A mother is cautious about visiting her daughter and about encouraging visits from her (which in any case should be conducted only with the mother-in-law's permission and company). When these visits are made, the mother is careful to avoid giving the impression that she and her daughter have any private concerns whatever, to the point of ostentatiously avoiding being alone with the girl. Admonitions against too frequent or too lengthy visits to one's mother are included in the formal advice (*tzeek*) given to a young girl at her wedding.

Work

This early period of difficulties notwithstanding, most Mopan couples continue to live together and to achieve their fair share of happiness. There is a Mopan expression that is translated as English *love*:

Yaj u-yuh'-ik-Ø.
acute 3A-feel-INC-3B
She feels it strongly.

This expression is used to characterize the relationship between loving newlyweds, as well as for the relations between parents and children. However, Mopan tend to characterize the relation between a married couple of long standing somewhat otherwise, although no less strongly. A Mopan woman, for example, might say of a long-standing relationship with a certain man that she is 'accustomed to him'.

Suk-aj-en ti'-i'.
be_accustomed-INCH_COMPL-1B DAT-3B
I have got used to him.

This expression conveys a deep sense of linkage, and in particular, that this person's absence would be keenly felt as loss. It is a bond established through steady association that is not easily broken. The same expression (*suk-aj-o'on ti'i* 'we are used to them') is used by Mopan to refer to their attachment to their revered traditional customs and law.

Sustaining and underlying the relation of mutual feeding that provides the framework for thinking about relations between the sexes is the fact of arduous and quasi-continuous physical labor on the part of both men and women. Women's labor consists of house-maintenance tasks (sweeping, laundry, the drawing of water), some wild food gathering, and the minding of domestic animals. It consists especially, however, of food processing. The preparation of corn for tortillas is the primary task. Particularly fatiguing and monotonous is the necessity to grind by hand whatever is to be eaten that day.[8]

Industry is one of the principal values of the community and 'laziness' (*sakan*) the commonest slur. The Mopan woman demonstrates her virtue by rising early and working hard at traditional manual labor throughout the day. Even when the heavy chores are done, the Mopan woman will be observed sitting at embroidery or the manufacture of kitchen utensils rather than completely idle. Moments of rest and

respite are available only at times when she knows she is not under scrutiny from authoritative others,[9] or when she is ill.

Illness is an ever-present actual threat and is the focus of much concern among the Mopan. Specialists in traditional healing offer their diagnoses and services, which are widely trusted. But death is never a remote possibility, and it is mentioned freely and frequently, even in the presence of children. Illness constitutes one of the few legitimate respites from continuous labor, and extremely hard work is also understood to be a cause of illness and fatigue. Complaints and laments about one's weariness and one's symptoms of illness therefore perform the double function of calling attention to one's virtue in having worked hard enough to get sick, and of excusing one for whatever lapses in industry one might currently be exhibiting. Illness and death are accepted as frequently occurring and inevitable facts of existence, arising partly from the necessity for constant labor on the part of human beings.

Tzik Relationships and Their Socialization

Early Life

Mopan women frequently remark on the arduousness of marriage, and of the labor involved, particularly as the family grows and before any little girls reach an age at which they are able to assist. The birth of a girl child is often announced as that of *ix juch'* 'a girl (who) grinds'. Women say it is better to have daughters than sons. Girls will help you, whereas boys just make more work.

Birth control is largely unknown, and families of ten, twelve, or more children are common. For the most part, children are desired and welcomed, although the increasing economic burden as the family grows larger is certainly a cause of anxiety. Women may find solace from the difficulties of marriage in the company of their children, particularly tiny babies. "A baby is like a toy," explained one woman to me; it can be a source of joy and comfort when everything else looks bleak. Women who have no children are pitied, and there is some fosterage on this basis—a woman with many children may give one to another who has few or none to raise. This is fairly rare, however, primarily because even those with large numbers of children are unwilling to give any away.

Mothers carry babies with them wherever they go, in a cloth hammock that hangs on the woman's back, supported by a band around her forehead. When a baby cries, an effort is made to discover what is wanted and to supply it.[10] When not on the move, the baby is cuddled or put to sleep in the hammock or on a mat on the floor. Once at the work location, a premium is placed on the baby's ability to lie quietly and alone for fairly long periods to allow the mother to get on with her work.

A baby talk register (Ferguson 1977) is used by both men and women in speaking to infants. It is characterized by high pitch, special lexemes, and much repetition. It differs from White American English baby talk in the fact that it does not provide conversational openings for the baby. Open and tag questions are not characteristic of this register; neither are pauses and interpretations of utterances. The Mopan baby is not asked what it is doing; it is told.

In general, the baby's utterances and actions are interpreted with amusement as versions of adult activities. The waving of a baby girl's arms is her attempt to grind corn; those of a baby boy to chop wood. A popular game with girls is a form of patty-cake that imitates the pressing of tortillas onto the griddle. The vocalizations of infants are sometimes described as 'cursing' (*k'ey*), 'singing' (*kay*), or 'greeting' (*tzik*). Despite these characterizations, I did not notice much interest in the contents of these early vocalizations, or any consistent attempt to interpret them as words. Infants and children are also frequently characterized as *tz'iik* 'angry' and are playfully accused of 'lying' (*tus*) when their demands are perceived as inconsistent or unclear. Note that *tzik* greeting, like lying and cursing, is one of the adult linguistic activities with which infants are playfully credited.

Tzik relationship terms are introduced to children very early in life. The terms *na'* 'mother' and *tat* 'father' (sometimes modified with the diminutive suffix *-ich*) commonly occur in Mopan baby talk register, as playful terms of endearment for the child. A baby girl is frequently and repeatedly addressed by adults as *in na'* 'my mother'; a baby boy as *in tat* 'my father'.[11] These forms of address are normally, but not always, abandoned with baby talk register. An only child or the youngest child of a large family may bear this form of address as a nickname, used by all in the community, into adulthood.

As juniors in society, Mopan children do not receive the *tzik* greeting. In fact, the existence of reciprocal *tzik* relationships is not always even attributed to very young children. One family I knew well became very merry over my suggestion that a baby under a year old could be *kiik* 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder sister' to another, a few months younger (the mother of the first baby was the nuclear family sister of the second baby). Although the elder siblings of the two babies were habitually recognized as related, and although it had been agreed that both babies could be *itz'iin* 'junior same-generation consanguine/younger sibling' to these other children, the family ultimately refused to endorse the idea of an infant as *kiik* even in principle. They cited the inappropriateness of giving so much respect to a very young person. Since *tzik* greeting is expected to be initiated by juniors, however, and since it is juniors who must use relationship terms in greeting if they are appropriate, *tzik* greeting and the correct production of *tzik* relationship terms are routinely expected from children, including the very young.

Reinforcing the link between absolute age and the respect greeting, I noted that it was acceptable and even encouraged for young people to greet a wide variety of older adults with a term of the set I have so far isolated. In the opinion of one learned and highly respected old man, children should greet all old people with *tzik* terms, to show their generalized respect for age (consultants disagreed on the suitability of this practice).

Again, when I asked Mopan individuals to reflect on and talk about those whom they greeted with *tzik* relationship terms, I often encountered the situation in which an individual stated that the junior term did not apply to a particular dyad, when the senior term had already been quite readily supplied. Conversely, children do not generally use the *tzik* greeting among themselves, although older children are aware that they may be entitled to it from their younger playmates. Adults say of children that they are *sudak* 'shy, modest, humble, ashamed' to receive the greeting, with its burden of cultural respect.

During the first year, most Mopan babies undergo two important rituals. The first is Catholic baptism, at which the baby is initiated into the church and acquires a pair of godparents. The second ritual, which takes place at the age of about six months, is similar to ceremonies described for the Yucatan (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934). On this occasion (called the *xuul* ceremony in Mopan), an adult of the same sex as the child (not the parent) shows to it the objects that it will use for its work later in life. The adult speaks to the child throughout and finishes by spreading the baby's legs astride his or her hip. In early infancy, and before this ceremony, the baby's legs are tied together, in the belief that this helps them to grow straight. It is also believed that if the baby's legs are allowed to spread before the ceremony occurs, severe diarrhea (a common killer of babies and young children) could result.

This demonstration to infants of the tools of gender-appropriate labor was described to me as *u sekreetajil kuxtal* 'the secret of life' and is indeed treated as secret and important information. A permanent and somewhat formal relationship is established by it between the child and the adult who performs it. I have been told that this relationship entails the obligation to greet with a relationship term, and I have observed such greeting once or twice. Beyond the enactment of the original ceremony, however, the relationship is not highly visible today.[12]

As the baby girl in the household in which I lived approached the age of one year, I was told that she was beginning to *kaal winikil* 'acquire maturity' and to gain understanding of the things around her. She now recognized individuals and activities, I was told. At about the same time, I noticed a new kind of speech addressed to her. The fond baby talk register was maintained, but at times now I would hear an order or a reprimand addressed to her, in the sharp peremptory tones that I had grown used to hearing spoken by adults to older children. At this stage, the baby was beginning to be held accountable, as older children are, for crimes of waste (spilling something, or asking for something not consumed), especially if the caregiver was likely to be held ultimately responsible for the loss (a similar family dynamic is described for the Yucatan in Gaskins and Lucy 1986).

Sometime shortly after the first year, most Mopan children will acquire a younger sibling. The older child is weaned when the younger one is born and must start to walk the long distances that he or she still travels with the mother while the new baby is carried. When the child cannot accompany the mother, another caregiver is found for it, perhaps an older sibling (boy or girl, from the age of six or seven) or the father during slack agricultural periods. Child caregivers are socialized into an attitude of tender solicitude toward the *itz'iin* 'junior same-generation consanguine/younger sibling', which endures into later life (cf. Schieffelin 1984).

Even in the very early years, Mopan children are remarkable to Euro-American eyes for their self-possession. They conduct their own affairs without much supervision from adults, and they do not rely on adults to amuse them. Children are not used to engaging in conversation with adults and often subside into silence when addressed directly. They are, however, extremely affectionate during early childhood and unabashedly approach those they know for cuddling and physical play.

Infants and children alike do without elaborate toys. One of their greatest pleasures lies, as it does for children elsewhere, in the imitation of adult activities. Mopan children are allowed to play alongside adults and to participate in the tasks that adults

carry out. In the second year, children are already being praised and encouraged in their efforts to perform minor adult tasks such as shelling corn. By about age three or four, children are of genuine assistance in the house. At this age they are called upon to run errands (including shopping trips that involve responsibility for precious reserves of cash) and also to provide companionship and chaperonage to women on their outings to village and farm.[13]

Middle Childhood

As childhood progresses, children eagerly insist on carrying out new tasks. Learning occurs predominantly through observation and example, rarely through formal teaching. I never saw an adult push a child to attempt something new, but I was constantly being surprised by the precocity of children at performing the various tasks of daily life. Adults told me that although it is necessary to teach children how to do things (by showing them what you yourself are doing), it is not necessary to force them into labor.

But children are reprimanded for other things. The principal crime at this stage remains that of waste. Little, if any, attention is paid to the intentions of the child who spills a dish of food or who loses a piece of property. The severity of the punishment matches the value of what is lost more closely than the degree of malice attributed to the child. Children do not attempt to excuse themselves on the basis of good intentions, and more often they deny responsibility or blame others to avoid punishment themselves. I have heard caregivers ask children, in rhetorical reproach at waste, "Don't you have any respect?"

Ma' waj yan-Ø a-tzik?
NEG Q exist-3B 2A-*tzik*
Don't you have any respect (*tzik*)?

As Mopan children get older, parents and other caregivers explicitly and repeatedly inform them of the term with which they must greet the various older people in their lives. In one of the rare instances of formal teaching to Mopan children, greetings are prompted or coached, with caregivers offering the correct phrase for children to repeat. These coaching sessions represent more than just practice, however; production of the utterance by the child has performative weight, and caregivers will not willingly abandon the effort until the appropriate phrase has been produced by the child. (The situation is not unlike that of a middle-class American parent coaching a child to say *please* or *thank you* to a visitor.) Usage that is considered erroneous is quickly corrected.

Mopan children have abundant opportunity, therefore, to learn exactly who among the interlocutors they meet in daily life they must greet with a relationship term and precisely which term it should be. The appropriateness of a certain term to a certain specific relationship is established, for the child, through a historical chain of reference, very much in the manner that has been described for natural kind terms (Kripke 1972, 328).[14]

By about age six, children are expected to manage the greeting without coaching or modeling, and they are held accountable for lapses. Children do not undergo

ceremonial introduction on ritual occasions and do not use the affinal set of terms. They are often taught instead to greet the spouses of their older brothers and sisters as *suku'un* 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder brother' or *kiik* (*kikij*) 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder sister'. Sometimes this is reciprocated with *itz'iin*, but usually it is not. Such usage may change at the child's own marriage, with ceremonial introduction to a new *tzik* status (see later discussion).

Toddlers' tears are still silenced with indulgence but sometimes also with fantastic threats (The cat will come and scratch you if you don't stop crying! The nurse will come and give you an injection! cf. Brown in press). It becomes important for children to obey adult commands quickly, silently, and efficiently. Children who have trouble doing so are labeled 'hardheaded' (*chich u pol*), an expression that has negative connotations, and is also used to describe a person who cannot learn easily (once again, factors of intentionality in the child's disobedience are not considered relevant). Children who do not obey or who are loud, rude, or generally undisciplined are also scolded as *tzimin* 'horse, tapir'. The dominant mode of adult address to children becomes the sharp tone of command or rebuke. The threat of blows is common, although these are only rarely administered. In general, small children are interested in participating in the world of adult tasks and are proud of themselves when they are able to do so. Their tasks are learned informally, through observation and imitation. Adults allow children to watch freely and will carefully show a learner what they are doing.

Schooling

Almost every child in the village attends school intermittently from the age of about six or seven to that of twelve or fourteen. The community supports and nominally appreciates the school. It is a part of every alcalde's yearly round to appear there and to exhort the children to attend conscientiously. There is a growing feeling that education is in principle a way for children to achieve the prosperity that the Mopan see outsiders as having (see Crooks 1997 for more on this point). But educating one's children is expensive and troublesome. Often they are needed at home (usually for child care) during school hours. Their labor is definitely needed after school, and time and space for homework are rarely provided. The children themselves in general prefer the activities of home and farm to those of the school. Children's early training in obedience, however, and a genuine willingness to do what adults ask of them, keep them engaged and attentive to a surprising degree, even under quite trying conditions. The village school, which is one of the largest in the region, is staffed by conscientious but often frustrated young teachers (some of them Mopan) who struggle with the difference between their own values and those of the community. Classes are large, and equipment is poor and scarce. Much of the learning consists of rote memorization and the copying of set lessons from the board.[15] Corporal punishment is a part of school life. It is feared by the children but is accepted as inevitable.

Formal teaching and learning also occur in certain settings distinct from that of the school. Certain domains of knowledge, notably those of *puliyaj* 'witchcraft, obeah' and *ilmaj* 'seeing, healing' are reportedly learned through formal apprenticeship that culminates in an initiation event. In matters of traditional ritual and law, younger adults

seek out older ones for explicit instruction (e.g., how to conduct themselves as compadres for the first time). At marriages, and sometimes also at confirmations, older people come forward and deliver formal homilies (*tzeek* 'advice, serious business') to the young people on the correct manner in which life should be lived. In each of these cases it is understood that old people possess the requisite knowledge, and that young people are in the position of learning it. Traditional knowledge is understood, by young and old alike, to be unequally distributed on the basis of age. This confidence in the wisdom and experience embodied in absolute age is the basis for the generally stated attitude of respect (*tzik*) for the old, codified in *tzik* greeting norms. As we have seen, it is always the younger individual who initiates the greeting, and who uses a relationship term in greeting the elder.

Late Childhood

As Mopan children continue to grow, the tasks expected of them in the home begin to diverge on the basis of gender. At about age seven or eight, little boys are taken by their fathers to the fields to learn a man's work. Sometime later (usually by the age of about eleven or twelve) they will be given their own field to plant. Little girls remain with their mothers, but their tasks, too, expand. They now must begin to contribute their share of muscle power to the daily corn grinding, and, a little later, they must learn to shape tortillas and cook them on a hot griddle.

Older children take an interest in *tzik* and ask explicit questions about family relationships and about the appropriate *tzik* term to use in a given context. Even in late adolescence and into early adulthood, young people turn to their elders to inquire about correct *tzik* greeting practice in unfamiliar cases. Adult talk to older children about *tzik* address and *tzik* relationships is "explanation-rich" (Linde 1987) and expansive. Adolescents have explained to me the process of an almost mystical enlightenment as they become aware of their biological connection to individuals whom they had been virtuously addressing with a *tzik* term ever since they could remember. What is being learned is the adult exegetic view of *tzik* greeting, that certain relationships are honored in greeting ultimately because they are relationships of preexisting essence. This knowledge is infused with the sense of religious importance that correct *tzik* address has had for these children since their infancy.

It is at this stage, and as children approach adolescence, that the first charges of being 'lazy' (*sakan*) appear and that punishments with scoldings, threats, and sometimes beatings occur for what is characterized as unwillingness to work. Many women recall this as a harsh period in their own lives but reflect, from the vantage point of age, that their caregivers had in fact done well by them, since they had learned to work hard. Current caregivers characterize and justify their behavior in similar fashion. Children must learn to work, they say, even if they do not want to. This, I was told, is not for any reason of future proficiency but because of the imminent possibility at any moment of the parents' death. "Who will feed them if I die?" I was asked rhetorically. "Who will take them in and feed them if they cannot work?"

5

CREATING *TZIK* RELATIONSHIPS

Ritually Established Relationships

My informants' immediate responses to my inquiries about *tzik* often had to do with the acquisition of *tzik* relations through ritual sponsorship or with the maintenance of such relations through the special speech genre called *kichpan t'an* 'beautiful speech'. As we have seen, such ritually established relationships, especially the relations of compadrazgo, remain in various ways (solemnity of everyday encounters, elaboration of the *tzik* greeting in the form of *kichpan t'an*, and accentuation of the degree of abhorrence in contemplation of illicit sexual relations) the most *tzik*-like, or most highly respected, of Mopan *tzik* relations. That this is so highlights the tension between the ascriptive and social-interactional meaning of *tzik* terms in Mopan life and their alternative biological-procreative meanings that is at the heart of this book.

Godparents and Godchildren

In previous accounts (Farriss 1984), the institution of compadrazgo ('co-parenthood', on the basis of ritual sponsorship of children in the ceremonies of the Catholic Church) has been discussed as an emergency adaptation of Spanish practice to the alarming decline in indigenous population that followed the conquest. It came into being in its New World form, it is argued, to provide insurance for the upbringing of children in a world where adults died with devastating suddenness and frequency. The godparent remains an extremely important figure in Mopan conceptualization. It is still said

that the godparent is a kind of parent (see later discussion) and, as such, must make sure that the child is doing right and guide him or her in doing so.

Mopan godparents have a certain amount of authority to socialize and discipline the child, as well as some right to the child's labor and a responsibility to supply certain of the child's material needs. The homilies delivered by godparents on public occasions constitute one instance of traditional teaching in the formal mode. Godparents are sometimes selected for their perceived present and future advantage to the child in terms of connections and wealth. For this reason it is quite common for Mopan families to undertake godparent relations with non-Mopan individuals. Many of the high school students from the village, for example, make use of non-Mopan godparents in town to solve their boarding problems. Alternatively, and more often, godparents are selected for their status as examples of good Mopan lives correctly lived. Ideally, they are people who are perceived as having experienced the major Mopan life events and who await "nothing else before death." The virtues of industry, piety, sobriety, and fidelity are sought in godparents, and the formal advice that they deliver to their godchildren makes explicit and repeated reference to these qualities. Godparents may be chosen from among those whom the parents already greet with a relationship term.

In advance of the day set by the church for the baptism, confirmation, or marriage ceremony, a formal visit is made by the child's parents to another individual or couple to make the request that they serve as godparents. The special genre of formal speech, known in Mopan as *kichpan t'an* 'beautiful speech' or *nukuch t'an* 'great speech' is used on these occasions. This kind of speech is structured in parallel semantic couplets and marked by a readily recognizable and monotonous intonation. The request is framed as a request for 'work' (*meyaj*) that the godparent will perform for the parent. The godparent also refers to it as such. If the request is accepted, the participants consider themselves *komaades* and *kompaades* from that point and begin to address one another as such. The child also, from this point on, has an obligation to address the godparents in respectful greeting as *na'yoox* 'godmother'and *tata'yoox* 'godfather'. It is extremely important that children give respect to those who are entitled to it with this *tzik* greeting.

The new godparent has undertaken minimally to pay the church's charge for the ceremony and to supply a candle and a white cloth for the child's use during it. After the ceremony, the godparent is invited to a celebration at the home of the child's parents. The lavishness varies, but the meal served will feature meat, and a certain amount of female labor from outside the household will probably have been necessary to prepare it. At this gathering, compadrazgo relations are established between the principal adults and the ascending lineals of each side (i.e., the parents and grandparents of my *komaades* are also my *komaades* and *kompaades*).

An exchange of *kichpan t'an*, complete with couplet structure, takes place when the godparent arrives at the house, when food is offered and accepted, and again when the godparent leaves. The parents thank the godparent for having agreed to take on the work that had been requested, for not having swept the request aside, or having 'spilled it like water'.

Ma' in-päl-aj-Ø, in-tox-aj-Ø.
NEG 1A-discard_solid-COMPL-3B 1A-discard_liquid-COMPL-3B
I did not sweep it aside; I did not slop it away.

The godparent acknowledges that he or she has indeed accomplished the promised work and accepts the food that is offered.[1]

The responsibilities of godparent to child once the ceremony is over are somewhat vague and depend largely on the goodwill of the persons concerned. As the child gets older, he or she visits the godparent, bringing food from the parents and offering to help around the house. The godparent will try to provide a small gift in return. In my observation, relations between children and their godparents were in general characterized by deference and a certain amount of fear, but a range of relationships is of course known. In some cases godparents provide a welcome outsider's perspective on family problems and can be of great support to the child.

Co-Parents

As in other Latin American societies, the cultural weight of the godparent relation among the Mopan falls not on the interaction between godparent and godchild but on that between the child's parents and the godparents. Of all of the relationships that are respected by name in *tzik* greeting, it is this one that calls forth the most pronounced performances of *tzik* behavior. Relations between *komaades* and *kompaades* are taken extremely seriously. Individuals who have this kind of relationship should always speak the truth to one another and should never laugh together. Sexual contact is strictly forbidden. Enemies are easily made in this face-to-face society, but should *komaades* and *kompaades* become enemies, it is a grave matter, contrary to the spirit of respect that unites them.

Formal visits mark the relations between *komaades* and *kompaades*, and a special subgenre of *kichpan t'an* continues to be exchanged between them. This is the *k'aat tojoolal*, literally an 'asking as to health'. On visits between *komaades* and *kompaades*, long, repetitive speeches are ideally exchanged that felicitate the two parties on being in continued good health and that comment upon the suddenness and inevitability of sickness and death. *Tzik* is frequently mentioned in these exchanges as a desirable personal quality that endears one to God and also as an essential ingredient of the compadrazgo relation.

A short excerpt from one recorded exchange gives the flavor.

> *Jadi' ilik a tojoolala. Ki' u yub'ab'äl, ki' u xikininbil yok'lal jun tuul ti tzikmaj. Jab'ix alaa ti tan ti wilik, ti chaantik ti b'ajili. Ma' tan ti k'atintik waj yajil, waj k'ojaanil yok'lal jun tuul ti tzikmaji. Tojoolal ilik kuchij a ki' u yub'ab'äl, u xikininb'ili. Leek ab'e' a mas tzaja, porke jun tuulik Dios, kichpana, ku tz'aj u tojil tak ti woole'ex a wetel kompaade.*
>
> "Good health is only this. It's something good to learn, good to hear, about our compadres. Just as we are seeing, regarding one another today. We do not desire any pain, any sickness for our compadres. Only good health is good to learn of, good to hear about. That is the most important, because it is only God, the perfect, who gives health to us, compadre."

I am told that people extend the length of these *kichpan t'an* conversations as much as possible for fear of "people saying that they are bad." Extended respectful exchange of this kind reassures not only the community at large but also the *komaades*

and *kompaades* themselves that there is neither sexual intimacy nor bad feeling between them, and that the relationship is being respected as it should be. The everyday perils of misunderstanding and anger between individuals are magnified when the individuals are in compadrazgo relation to one another. During the exchange of *kichpan t'an*, the participants promise not to *p'aas* 'insult, mock' one another,[2] and instead, to *tzik* each other all of their days. In particular they promise to do this by always honoring the obligation to make a formal greeting to one another.

It is unequivocally good to be asked to sponsor another family's children and to become *komaade/kompaade* with them. People who have received and honored many such requests are proud of the achievement because it represents recognition of adherence to exemplary values and good standing in the community. To be asked to serve as a godparent is a form of prestige that members of the community can bestow on one another. As one consultant explained it (in English), "You feel good when you are a *komaade*. You have more respect."

Acquiring Relationships through Marriage

As a woman ages, she continues to bring forth children, and her eldest children take a great deal of responsibility for their younger siblings. Adolescent and teenage girls provide much help to their mothers, especially since by this stage they are beyond the demands of school attendance. Grown daughters take the weight, as well, of the ever-larger burden of domestic labor. The women of the family now probably feed several adult men, as the older brothers repair to the fields with their father every day.

But a daughter is not a permanent asset. As she enters her teens, the young girl is seen in public less and less, and she becomes the object of marriage (and other) proposals from young men. After she marries and leaves home, her mother will be short one hand to help. If a recent bride has no grown sisters, it will become more and more obvious to everyone that one of her grown brothers must now marry. Many women to whom I talked stated that they had married because their husband's mother was unable to manage her work alone, either because of an imbalance of males to females in the household or because the older woman had become ill.

Informal Marriage

As one young male consultant told me, "There are many ways to get a wife." The simplest, and the least expensive from the point of view of the boy, is to "steal"one. This involves a boy meeting a young woman secretly, perhaps while she is washing clothes or dishes at the river, and engaging her affections over the course of several meetings to the point where she is willing to run away with him. Certain young swains make use of magic spells administered by specialists to accomplish this.[3] The parents of young girls (especially fathers) are extremely concerned to guard against this possibility and may react violently toward both young people if they discover that plans of this sort are afoot. It is therefore quite a dangerous undertaking to plot such an elopement. Difficulties and pitfalls notwithstanding, these matches are frequently made and are successfully carried off in many cases.

The young woman then goes to live with the boy and his family without benefit of matrimony. In some cases, the couple begins to save for a formal wedding, which may take place up to several years later. In others they dispense with this ceremony altogether. Where no ceremony is carried out, there is no use of *tzik* relationship terms, either in reference to the partner's family or in greeting them. Women who are not married to the men they live with may feel themselves to be at a minor social disadvantage. But the real disadvantage to this arrangement for the woman comes in case the man begins to abuse and beat her. When a woman is not legally married, there has been no expense on the part of the husband's family to obtain her and therefore no necessary interest on their part in retaining her by restraining the excesses of the young man. Quite apart from that, however, her own family of origin often refuses to allow her back into their house. "You chose him yourself," they are reported to tell her. "Now you live with him!"

Formal Engagement and Marriage

Traditionally, however, and still most commonly today, the parents of a young man interested in marriage visit those of the girl three times to make the request that they allow him to marry their daughter. The girl's parents are usually difficult to convince, and refusals are not at all uncommon, especially if the girl is very young or the suitor lives far away. Refusals are couched in terms of the youth and inadequacy of the girl for marriage, and in particular her inability to do household work independently.[4] The request and its acceptance or refusal are carried out by means of lengthy exchanges of *kichpan t'an*. Some families engage an expert at this kind of speech to make the request for them. During the entire proceedings, the young people may not contact one another. I was told that the girl's father might shoot the boy if he tried to speak to her at this stage and that the girl might even be unaware that anything out of the ordinary was in the wind.

The parents of a girl give careful thought to the acceptance of a suitor for their daughter and show a great deal of emotional concern when the time comes to give her up to him. In some families, a girl's opinion may be solicited regarding her acceptance of a suitor. But young Mopan girls are not schooled in resistance to authority, and refusal of a suitor favored by parents is rare. Girls quite trustingly accept their parents' choice, all the more so since most are ignorant of the facts of sexual intercourse and reproduction.[5] Older women speak of the feelings of anger and betrayal that they felt in early marriage toward parents who had consigned them to a violent or drunken husband. Having let it be known that it is time for him to marry, the boy's parents, on the other hand, usually allow him to tell them which girl he would like them to ask for. As long as she is healthy and, above all, hardworking, they are likely to accede to his choice. The constraints of the *tzik*-greeting and its relationship to sexuality must be taken into account, however, and these are not always simple. The two young people to be married must not be related to one another before marriage in a way that requires greeting with a relationship term. In addition, the young people's parents and grandparents must be eligible to enter into compadrazgo relations with one another. A certain girl, for example, was eliminated as a marriage possibility for one young man because it was widely known that his father and her mother had en-

joyed a brief sexual liaison many years before. That earlier relationship disqualified the older people from ever entering compadrazgo relationship with one another, and the young man was told that he must choose a different girl for his bride.

It is considered very modern for a young couple to modify the traditional request procedure slightly by engaging in a written correspondence before the formal request is made. The young man tries to discover, by letter, whether the girl is likely to look favorably upon his suit. Only if he gets some reassurance from her will he approach his parents to undertake the formal arrangements. I was told that in some families a girl who receives such a letter will tell her parents about it and let them know obliquely if she favors a young man's candidacy. Parents are not averse, in principle, to marrying their daughter to a man she likes, and these marriages have become more and more acceptable. Certain adults see this practice as the wave of the future and look forward to a time when all village marriages will be made in this way.

A girl's parents often refuse the first few suitors who come their way and evince great reluctance to marry their daughter off. Eventually, however, a suitor will be accepted. The young man's family press their case on the basis of the natural and universal interdependence of man and woman and on the necessity for every adult to find a partner who will join with him or her in producing food and drink from the land.

B'aalo ilik walak u yantal, b'aalo ilik walak u yuuchul. Ma' chen jun tuul, ma' chen ka tuul mak walak u tuklik, u naatik a tukul alo'. Tulakal; mejen, nukuch, laj ti b'aalo ti walak u winikunb'ul umen u yaj ch'isajil, u men u yaj na', u tat. Jun tuul kristiaano tan u kaal winikil, siempre walak ilik u käxik jun tuul mak u tz'eente'; mak u tz'aj u janal, u yuk'ulu. Laj, tulakalo'on, laj mani tak to'on ti b'aalo. Ma' chen, "K'u ka b'oob'e'?" "K'u ka b'aalo tun b'etik?" ma' ko'onaki. Bel ti a kuxtala. Dios ilik u tz'aj ti b'aalo.

"This is exactly the way it always happens, exactly the way it always comes to pass. It's not just one person, it's not just two people who think, who ponder this way. All, large and small, they have all been made into men this way by those who raised them, their dear mothers and fathers. A person who is coming to manhood, he always looks for someone who will feed him, someone to make his food, his drink. All, all of us, we have all passed that way. It's not just 'What's this?' We can't say, 'Why are they doing this?' This is the nature of life." God himself has made it this way.

The girl's family finally succumbs to the logic of this position, which is accompanied by profuse assurances that the prospective groom's parents (and especially his mother) will be kind to the young girl and patiently help her to complete her domestic education.

Ma' tik tub'a tan in jok'sik; waj tub'a xayb'ej, waj tub'a xook pokche'. Tz'i tin jok'sik ka xiik ti kuntal te'i; siempre ichil in tz'i kuuch, in tz' i jedeeb'al u b'el. Tzaj toj ilik in tojkintikoo'. Tzaj toj ilik u känänb'aanäloo'. Siempre leek ilik a nooch ch'up, b'el u ku tz'i ilaj, b'el u ku tz'i känänte' tun.

"I will not leave her just anywhere, at some crossroads or in some hollow tree. I will humbly take her to live there, just in my home, in my resting place. Of course I will teach them well. Of course they will be well taken care of. My wife herself will watch over her, she will care for her."

There are very few older Mopan people of traditional lifestyle who have never married.

The End of the Asking

At this point preparations begin to be made for a fourth visit of the young man's family to the house of the young girl. This is called in Mopan 'the end of the asking' (*job'ol u k'aat*). Both the boy's and the girl's family recruit female labor for this event, since each side will feed the other. The girl's parents and godparents receive the boy and his parents and godparents in the front part of their house, while a frenzy of food preparation activity takes place in the kitchen.

An exchange of *kichpan t'an*, which may be of astonishing length (half an hour or more), is made among these principals (the boy himself is not expected to participate) and especially between the parents of the bride and the groom, who are to become *komaade* and *kompaade* to one another at this event. The formal speech exchange concludes with an exchange of *tzik*, which consists of the first occasion of mutual address in the compadre/comadre relation. "*Dioos komaade*," says one participant solemnly to the other, extending one hand. "*Dioos kompaade*" is the equally serious reply as the two shake hands.

By this time, many members of the boy's family will have arrived at the girl's house. They have brought heaping containers of luxury food, and a box containing the gifts of the boy to the girl.[6] Late in the day, the groom's present to the bride is opened, and she may retire to try on some of her new finery, which she displays to the guests. The entire gathering, by this time very large and consisting of many members of both the boy's and the girl's family, is fed from both boy's and girl's dishes. Large quantities of rum circulate, and there is probably music (either traditional marimba or taped reggae). Dancing begins, and the merriment continues until the last man must be carried home.

The Tz'aj Tzik *Ceremony*

At some point in the festivities it becomes noticeable that members of both families are arranging themselves to be introduced one by one to the newly engaged couple. In each case, as the guest approaches the couple, the parents and godparents of the bride and groom confer among themselves to decide upon the new relationship that the guest will undertake with the young spouse. When the decision has been reached, it is conveyed to the protagonists, who extend their hands and greet one another for the first time in their new capacity. "*Dioos mu'*," one hears uttered solemnly and shyly; "*Dioos mu'*" is the self-conscious reply. The timbre of both voices bears witness to the solemnity of this moment.

This is known as the occasion of the *tz'aj tzik*, the 'giving of respect'. More practiced individuals accompany the simple introduction with a short speech. One friend explained to me that this speech explains to each person that you "would like to respect them as they should be respected." She translated a short segment for me: "Up to now I have called you Auntie, but now I will respect you more than Auntie. I will call you Mother-in-law."

Note that in this example, as in many other cases, the individuals who acquire a new *tzik*-greeting status with respect to one another had actually previously maintained a different greeting relationship, on the basis of other ties (in this case, a relatively distant consanguinity). Because of the fact that *tzik*-greeting relationships do not necessarily follow a transitive logic (Danziger 1996a), this observation is not incompatible with the strict requirement that the new husband and wife should themselves not greet one another with a relationship term. Taped performances of this kind of introduction that I have obtained invariably also refer to it as the conferral of a new degree of 'respect' (*tzik*):

Pes ma' tach ti-tzik-ik-Ø ti b'ajili.
well never 1A_PL-respect-TR_INC-3B 1A_PL-self
Well, we never used to respect (*tzik*) one another.

Pes aleeb'e, ud-o'on ich a jun-p'eel a sutu.
well now arrive_here-1B_PL in DET one-CL DET change
But now we have come to a turning point.

Pes ma' yan-Ø b'ikij.
well NEG exist-3B how
There's no other way.

Pes tzaj wal tun ti -tz'i- tzik-ik -Ø ti-b'ajil.
well OBLIG DUB EMPH 1A_PL-HUM-respect-INC-3B 1A_PL-self
We just have to humbly respect (*tzik*) one another.

After the engagement ceremony has taken place, it is extremely difficult, not to say excruciatingly embarrassing, to call off the match. The reason cited is primarily the expense that the boy's family has already undertaken in providing a feast and making over their gifts to the bride. For example, I was told the autobiographical story of one intrepid young girl who, screwing up her courage to refuse an engagement that her parents had already accepted, put off the announcement of her refusal until the very moment when the knife was being sharpened to kill the pig for the engagement party. At that crucial point, however, she felt she would be committed if she waited even a moment longer, and so made her move. In another case, a match is said to have been broken off after the engagement ceremony, at the forced instigation of the groom's family (he had run off with another girl between the engagement and the wedding date). The original girl kept her gifts, but the *tzik* introductions that had been made were not honored afterward. The groom's mother in this case was considered much to be pitied for her humiliating ordeal.

Divorce and remarriage are not permitted among the mostly Catholic Mopan. Marriages, however, often go awry, and individuals may take new partners informally. But in such situations, Mopan honor the relationships that were first constituted through formal introduction at the *job'ol u k'aat* ceremony. These relationships do not lapse, whatever the status of the particular union that was the occasion for their original creation.[7] Conversely, new relations arising from sponsorship of any

kind are never undertaken without a similar introduction ceremony being performed, in anticipation of a church marriage (cf. Danziger 1996a). Those who undergo informal marriage (see earlier discussion) do not acquire relationships of this kind.

Performative Aspects of *Tzik* Appellation

I was present at one baptism celebration at which the young parents and godparents solemnly decided, after some deliberation, that since they were already related as *suku'un/kiik/itz'iin* 'same generation consanguines/ brothers and sisters', they did not choose to become *komaade* and *kompaade* to one another at all. These were young people, and their motivation was to avoid the strict traditional formality of interaction that ideally accompanies Mopan relationships of compadrazgo. Their decision was accepted, albeit in a spirit of disappointment and dismay, by all present, including the elders. No introduction ceremony was performed. Neither was *kichpan t'an* exchanged, despite the fact that some of the older people had been rehearsing their performance in solitary anticipation of the alliance. The two families are today not considered to be in compadrazgo relationship, although the godparent relation itself, cemented in a church ceremony, is recognized.

The dilemma posed by the potential doubling up of *tzik* relationships is also well recognized by Mopan. A woman who has always been addressed by her younger first cousin as *kiik* 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder sister', for example, finds that he is to marry a girl to whom she is already the godmother. She is now entitled to become *äli'* 'different-generation affine/mother-in-law' to the boy. The individuals concerned in situations like this invariably choose one or the other of their possible *tzik* statuses relative to the new spouse and thenceforth are considered to occupy only that one.

My friends and acquaintances joined in spontaneous debate on this sort of topic more than once during my stay, reviewing the benefits of remaining in the relationship that one was 'used to' (*suk-tal*) as against the increased respect that would come with the adoption of the new status. Either option was considered a defensible one, but if the new status was not chosen and no introduction made, the individuals concerned were never considered, by themselves or anyone else, actually to be related in the manner not chosen.

Rejection of a *tzik* status to which one is entitled can take place for less friendly reasons. In general, individuals who are related through biology or ritual sponsorship, but who do not present themselves at the appropriate ceremony of *tz'aj tzik* introduction, are not considered to have entered into new *tzik* relations with one another as a result of the marriage. This kind of absenteeism therefore constitutes a deliberate and highly visible repudiation of the alliance that is being celebrated.[8] For these and other reasons, it sometimes happens that the closest biological relatives are not present at engagement and other *tz'aj tzik* events. When this occurs, there is no scientific or essentialist concern that the missing parties should be sought out and identified. The concern, rather, is that a gathering may supply too few actually present candidates for *tzik* relationship to the new couple. Under these circumstances, doubt-

fully distant biological relations may be pressed into service. These are unhesitatingly categorized as legitimate *tzik* relations after the ceremony.

In the case of relationships acquired through sponsorship and marriage, then, this first public greeting constitutes a case of linguistic usage like those described by Austin (1979 [1961]) as "performative," in which the act of speech itself makes true the fact of reality to which it refers. Many Mopan consider this the focal moment of all *tzik* exchange.[9]

Negotiating *Tzik* Class Assignment

Once willing candidates for new *tzik* greeting status have been identified, a new problem arises. Exactly which of the possible terminological statuses will the new relationship occupy? Occasions of *tz'aj tzik* are often the scene of discussion and argument as issues of essential relationship between the two parties are negotiated. The discussions are sometimes quite heated, since individuals may have very different opinions on the subject. What often is at issue is the question of what I have been calling "generation," since affinal relations (like those among consanguines) are terminologically stratified in terms of the age and experience of the two parties with respect to one another, rather than in terms of strict genealogical calculation. Thus the Mopan term previously glossed as 'mother-in-law' (*äli'*) might apply equally well to one's husband's older sister as to his mother—but could never apply to a younger sister.

To be greeted by one's juniors as different-generation is not a status that those involved necessarily welcome. Disagreements over assignment of generation status occur when the elder person disavows his or her extreme differentness of maturity from the younger person and makes a bid for treatment with a term denoting sameness of generation status. Just as children and young people do not receive *tzik* appellation from others by virtue of their absolute youth, adults at *tz'aj tzik* ceremonies plead their own youth and their consequent unfitness to occupy *tzik* statuses associated with great age elsewhere in the culture.

Ma' chumach-aj-en!
NEG be_venerable-INCH_COMPL-1B
I have not grown old!

maintained one man in his twenties stoutly as he resisted conscription to *äli'* 'different-generation affine/father-in-law' status vis-à-vis a young bride.[10]

This young man was, in biological terms, an older sibling of the groom. His case illustrates the fact that in Mopan the assessment of fitness for different-generation status does not hinge on calculation from existing terminological conditions. That is, the fact that the groom greeted his brother with the same-generation term *suku'un* 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder brother' did not preclude discussion of the possibility that he might be sufficiently different in age and experience from the bride to warrant her greeting him as *äli'* 'different-generation affine/father-in-law' rather than as *nu'* 'same-generation affine/brother-in-law'. In fact, some consultants state that, almost as a rule, the eldest biological siblings of bride and groom will be

recruited to different-generation rather than to same-generation status with respect to the new spouse.

In this particular case, however, the young man was successful in achieving his bid. The new bride was instructed to greet him as *mu'* 'same-generation affine/brother-in-law', and he went home that night with no extra weight of culturally recognized maturity upon his shoulders. What is perhaps most interesting about his case, however, is the fact that his own younger sister (who was also older than the groom) had earlier on in the same afternoon likewise resisted conscription to different-generation status and had similarly pleaded for treatment with a term denoting the same degree of maturity as the bride. In her case, however, the elders had prevailed. Unlike her brother, the young woman had allowed herself to be persuaded by the arguments and authority of her elders. She had at last accepted the different-generation classification (*äli'* 'different-generation affine/mother-in-law') that they proposed. But after her elder brother had successfully pressed his case for treatment with a same-generation term, this young woman was actually called back by the officiating elders, and she was formally reintroduced to the bride—this time with a same-generation term (*jab'än* 'same-generation affine/sister-in-law'). One of the officiating elders explained to me that it would not do to have a younger sister (*itz'iin*) receiving a term that indicated a *tzik* status senior to that of her own elder brother (*suku'un*).

This complex example alerts us most forcefully to the fact that the interplay between the world of natural things and that of linguistic labeling in the matter of *tzik* greeting is not quite what it had initially seemed to be. Although the Mopan preference for adherence to the literal truth applies in full force to reflection upon and use of *tzik* relationship terms, and although in Mopan exegesis and usage, the system of *tzik* relationships is never treated as an inexact or inconsequential one, we see clearly here how little the appellatory outcome of *tz'aj tzik* discussion is in fact predictable on the basis of quantifiable factors. The perceived difference in age and experience between two individuals and the amount of such difference that qualifies the elder to become different-generation to the other are both open for discussion. And although the system of *tzik* category assignment clearly has its own internal logic that must be satisfied, recruitment to *tzik* category status is also clearly open to social negotiation. Once the decision has been made, however, it is regarded as definitive and binding.

In the assignment of acquired *tzik* greeting statuses, discussion and argument is framed as a matter of allowing judgments about essential reality to dictate the linguistic label that should apply. We have now seen quite clearly, however, the extent to which that reality is in fact socially constructed. We have also seen that assignment to one *tzik* greeting category rather than another (or to none!) on these occasions is not a matter of unilateral imposition of a socially created reality upon malleable participants. The occasion, on the contrary, is one of interaction, in which all participants have some say. The outcome depends, in any particular contested case, upon the strength of participants' personal conviction and charisma, modulated by the overarching Mopan sociological factors of gender and age that give certain kinds of individuals advantage over others in matters of authority. Mopan speakers themselves, however, see *tzik* greeting with the appropriate term as a form of civilized

behavior that corresponds point for point to the fact that individuals actually occupy the relational statuses that are named in the greeting.

What Does Generation Mean?

I set out on this ethnographic discussion to establish the cultural criteria that motivate the Mopan to distinguish among their *tzik* relations on the basis of generation, for the purpose of constructing a monosemous analysis of the semantics of the system.

Age and Firsthand Report

We have already seen how one type of answer to the question why one greets certain individuals as *tataa'* 'senior different-generation consanguine/grandfather' and certain others as *suku'un* 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder brother' invokes the absolute age of the recipient of the former greeting. Mopan respect for absolute age, as reflected in the practice of *tzik* greeting, is directly linked to the attitudes toward reference, authority, truth, and tradition. As we have seen, it is understood to be of paramount importance that cultural performances—such as those of the religious fiestas honoring the saints, but also those of the individual life cycle, such as baptism or marriage—take place according to the template of *kostuumbre*—(i.e., as they have always been performed). Individuals who find themselves responsible for the playing out of such ceremonies—whether a middle-aged man who finds himself, as newly promoted first *priosti*, responsible for sponsoring the fiesta of San Luis or a very young woman who contemplates the baptism of her first child—seek actively for advice about the correct procedures to follow.

Since Mopan utterances are interpreted strictly as being either true or false, speech that reproduces the words of another original speaker—as in translation, quotation, or report—is for this reason almost always hedged with quotative particles or clauses. When important matters are at stake, utterances are carefully scrutinized for literal truth and, where warrants for truth are lacking or doubtful, are not likely to be trusted. If secondhand testimony takes the form of reported speech, it is devoid of clear authority; firsthand testimony in matters of *kostuumbre* is much preferred. As a matter of sheer practicality, then, those individuals whose firsthand experience in matters of *kostuumbre* is the greatest will be those most sought after for advice. As a person ages, of course, he or she accumulates firsthand experience of cultural performances and gradually attains a position of greater and greater testimonial authority by virtue of this experience. Others in the community will begin to seek his or her advice in the planning of their own domestic and public rituals. The importance of this position, and of its relationship to traditional matters of religious significance, is acknowledged in the respect greeting.

Parenthood

Mopan consultants' reflections on the notion of generation in *tzik* greeting, however, sometimes took the matter of age a step further and linked greeting norms to

the fact of childhood dependency on industrious and nurturing adults, in a context of the elaborate fragility of life and health on earth. We should greet certain older people as *tataa'* or *na'chiin* rather than as *suku'un* or *kiik*, I was sometimes told, because the older people would be the ones who would feed us, should our mother and father die.

For both men and women, and up to an advanced stage of life, parents represent a kind of insurance against the possible disasters of life. A married woman's family of origin, recall, represents a haven for her, to which she can return if conditions in her marriage become unbearable. An adult man remains in close proximity to his family of origin and uses them as sources of female labor should his wife die or desert him. Conversely, the death of a parent is experienced as not just an emotional setback but an economic one. Repeatedly, in getting to know Mopan individuals, I was asked whether my mother and father were still alive and was congratulated when I answered that they were. I could therefore have no real worries, I was told. Adults fear in particular that they themselves will die before their children are old enough to fend for themselves. The much-respected institution of compadrazgo also reiterates and elaborates Mopan cultural concern over responsibility for children in an environment where their survival is perceived to depend upon constant labor, and in which the continued fitness of adults for such labor is in perpetual jeopardy.

Viewed from this perspective, the phonological relationship among certain terms of the *tzik* relationship greeting set in fact also traces a semantic affiliation. The terms *tat* 'father' and *na'* 'mother' are the anchors for a parallel set of analogies that link one's relationships with one's parents,on the one hand, to one's relationships with senior consanguines of a different generation (*tataa'*, *na'chiin*) and, on the other, to one's relationships with one's godparents (*tata'yoox*, *na'yoox*). Even where lexemes do not share phonological material (as in the set of terms for relations established at engagement or marriage), the perceived similarity between the relationship that one holds with members of a different terminological generation from oneself and that between biological parents and children is often explicit. One old man, expert in these matters, explained to me the 'meaning' (*nu'kul*) of the initial performative greeting (*tz'aj tzik*), using the example of a man who establishes a relationship of *ja'an* (different-generation affine/father-in-law) address with his daughter's fiancé:

A-tat-in-t-aj-Ø *a* *ch'ajom* *ab'e'*.
2A-father-APP-TR-COMPL-3B DET youngster DX_3_I
You have fathered (*tat*) that young man.

Once the ceremony has taken place, both those introduced as godparents (*na'yoox* and *tata'yoox*) and those introduced as 'different-generation affines/parents-in-law' (*äli'* and *ja'an*) may sometimes actually be greeted with the terms *na'* and *tat* (literally, as 'mother' and 'father') by their junior partners. And in explanation of the terms denoting relationships to godparents and parents-in-law, consultants often make use of the terms for biological parents without qualification or hedging. For example, one young woman explained to me the relationship between herself and the mother of her husband's mother:

In-wäli'-Ø, *in-na'-Ø.*
1A-mother-in-law (*äli'*)-3B 1A- mother (*na'*)-3B
She's my mother-in-law (*äli'*); my mother (*na'*).

In view of Mopan attitudes toward literal truth, and in view of the gravity with which the *tzik* greeting domain is invariably treated, we must take these sorts of observations very seriously. It is this equivalence, for example, that appears to dictate that the parents of a new bride and groom become *komaade* and *kompaade* to one another. By this arrangement, all who stand in a perceived parenthood relation to the same child—whether through birth, baptism, confirmation, or marriage—also stand in compadrazgo relation to one another. It is noteworthy, too, that Mopan children are taught, with all the seriousness of other *tzik* appellations, to characterize those age-mates who are the children of their godparents as *suku'un, kiik* and *itz'iin* 'same-generation consanguines/brothers and sisters'. Like other relationships in this terminological catergory, these relationships are not established in individual performative ceremony.

It is noteworthy however, that, relationships with senior consanguines of a different generation from Ego (*tataa'* and *na'chiin* 'grandparents') are never characterized as literally isomorphic with those of parenthood, and these people are never greeted with *tat* 'father' or *na'* 'mother'. Instead, they are characterized as:

U-jel-oo' *ti-na'* *ti-tat.*
3A-substitute/ successor-3B_PL 1A_PL-mother 1A_PL-father
They are substitutes for our mothers and fathers.

The term used here, *u jel* 'someone's substitute, successor, counterpart' denotes something that constitutes a valid substitution for an original, but it also critically indicates that the substitute does not have exactly the same characteristics as the original. The term is used, for example, in Mopan in political and religious contexts to refer to the yearly rotation of incumbents in office. Use of this term indicates that the two entities on either side of the relation are similar in many crucial respects—but also that they are, critically, not actually the same.[11]

Therefore, a distinction is clearly made between those who are recruited to serve quasi-literally as parents on marriage and ritual sponsorship occasions, and these senior consanguines who are regarded instead as possible substitutes for the parents. But overall, and in some deeply felt cultural sense, the constantly marked distinction between same-generation and different-generation status in Mopan *tzik*-greeting semantics appears to be related to the vital and asymmetrical link of dependency/ responsibility—both for sustenance and for knowledge—between parents and children.

Such an understanding of the difference between the relationships one holds with one's *suku'un* 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder brother' and one's *tataa'* 'senior different-generation consanguine/grandfather' certainly invokes what we could call genealogy, through its allusion to the parent-child link. But it also differs considerably from the kind of understanding we expect from a strict genealogical calculation. In particular, and most critically for linguistic relativity, the understand-

ing that has been explored here claims that the different referents of each term (for *suku'un*, for example, those different relationship clusters that in English are labeled separately as *brother*, *cousin*, and *uncle*) are not experienced by Mopan speakers as conceptually disjunct by virtue of their genealogical distinctness but instead are felt to be fundamentally alike in that each referent of the term is perceived to bear a similar relationship to Ego with respect to his or her degree of fitness for assuming the parentlike role of teaching and nurture.

6

THREE SEMANTIC ANALYSES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Semantic Analyses

In earlier chapters, I suggested that we might use Piagetian acquisition of relationship terms to address broader theoretical questions in the realm of language and thought. Specifically, I argued that we might use the order of acquisition of *tzik* relationship terms by Mopan children to distinguish among competing hypotheses corresponding to specific positions in the language-and-thought debate. I asked whether there were cases in which it could be demonstrated that the entire range of reference, as well as the focal center, of a culturally distinct category was operative at the cognitive level. I also asked whether universal nuclear family primitives lay behind translational equivalents of kinship concepts in all cases.

In this chapter, I present three semantic models to account for the meanings of Mopan *tzik* relationship terms. Specific and mutually exclusive predictions are made about the expected order of Piagetian acquisition of the Mopan terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* under each of the three analyses. Evidence that any one of the three models is operative in this cognitive task constitutes evidence in favor of its particular orientation toward language and thought.

Many aspects of the three semantic analyses presented are quite similar. Each must recognize, for example, that the sex of the senior party in many *tzik* greeting relationship plays a role in determining the correct term of address to be used (see table 3.1). Major differences among the three, however, are to be located in their treatment of the terminological difference between relatives greeted as 'same-generation' (e.g., with *suku'un*) and those greeted as 'different-generation' (e.g., with

tataa') . One's theoretical stance on the nature of this distinction in the set of Mopan *tzik* relationship terms has consequences for one's expectations regarding the number and similarity of relational components embedded in each term, and therefore for the order in which one predicts that Mopan children will process the various terms of the system through the developmental stages relevant to the Piagetian task.

Assumption of Monosemy: Analysis by Total Class Definition

In the most cautious approach to the situation in which a single term (say, Mopan *suku'un* or English *brother*) appears to include more than one possible kind of referent, the semantic analyst endeavors, despite the apparent differences, to identify some common aspect of meaning that is shared by all referents (e.g., in the case of English *brother*, perhaps the fact of siblinghood, regardless of age status; in the case of Mopan *suku'un*, perhaps a particular level of seniority, regardless of status with respect to the nuclear family). This common feature then has the status of definitional criterion for membership in the named class. Other aspects of the various referents of the terms may differ (e.g., the age of an English *brother* or the sibling status of a Mopan *suku'un*), but they are not, in this kind of analysis, relevant to the meaning of the term. If this kind of analysis has psychological reality, we expect cognitive processing to take place in terms of a single conceptual sense, and not in terms of multiple ones.

Assuming Monosemy in Mopan Tataa' *and* Suku'un

To arrive at a monosemous analysis of the Mopan terms *tataa'* and *suku'un*, I make use of the ethnographic description provided in the previous chapters. In Mopan domestic life, a cultural emphasis on seniority is linked to the status of elders as caregivers and as the repositories of knowledge as to precedent—in particular in religious and ritual matters. This is expressed in the simplest respectful greeting: an unornamented *Dioos* from junior to senior on the occasion of their meeting. This fact is combined with the denomination of certain others as sexually out of bounds, to delimit the arena in which a relationship term is appended to the simple greeting formula.

Within this arena, the emphasis on seniority is maintained. In reflection upon the difference between senior nonparents of a 'different generation' from oneself and those of the 'same generation' as oneself, Mopan people sometimes say simply that an individual (e.g., a parent's male sibling) will be greeted as *tataa'* (different generation) if he is very old and as *suku'un* (same generation) if he is not. Degree of seniority is also precisely the point of contention that arises at performative moments when new *tzik* greeting categories are negotiated. On other occasions, Mopan explain that this greater age makes elders possible substitutes for one's parents, while people of one's own approximate level of maturity cannot so substitute.

In the context of general Mopan attitudes to the meaning of age, I propose that what is culturally at stake in the highlighting of extreme age as a salient characteristic of certain relationship statuses is the demarcation of a significant degree of difference in the nature and the quantity of experience on which different individuals

are equipped to draw. In a society that is extremely concerned about fidelity to past templates, and that also prefers to rely on firsthand testimony regarding the nature of those templates (see Danziger 1996b), such a demarcation is an extremely important one. Where learning takes place, as it still does for the Mopan, through attention to eyewitness accounts and through imitation and example, one's most important teachers are those who, by virtue of greater age, possess superior personal experience to oneself. Equally, in a world in which survival depends upon one's capacity to labor, a capacity constantly threatened by the lurking presence of sudden illness or death, one's elders are also potential caretakers.

In this culturally based monosemous analysis of the meaning of the words *tataa'* and *suku'un*, it is the fact of individual differences in access to culturally valued experience, usually (but not always, and never categorically) based upon chronological age, that is taken to underlie the distinction between the meanings of the Mopan words *suku'un* and *tataa'*. The two Mopan terms represent two inflections upon this single nongenealogical dimension of contrast such that *tataa'* represents the positive value (significant degree of difference between referent and reciprocal in degree of access to past experience) and *suku'un* the negative one (nonsignificant difference between referent and reciprocal in degree of access to past experience). In the current analysis, this fact underlies the observation that, throughout the set of *tzik* greeting relationship terms, again and again those who are venerably old receive a different greeting from those who are merely senior.[1]

It is clear that in principle the degree of access to past experience that characterizes any individual is a point on a continuum. We would expect that in some cases the assessment of whether a given relationship should be assigned a positive or a negative value on this dimension might be difficult to make—in a word, "fuzzy." But we have also seen how, in practice, Mopan find it imperative to create and maintain clear assignments of individuals to *tzik* greeting categories, if necessary engaging in public debate at moments of performative baptism in order to render quite categorical the verdict of the collectivity on this point. In fact, Mopan attitudes and practices with respect to the application of *tzik* greeting terms actually underwrite and reflect a cultural belief in the felicity of monosemy.

Monosemy: Consequences for Piagetian Acquisition

To draw out the consequences of any semantic analysis for Mopan children's treatment of the two terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* in the Piagetian definition task, we must render the analysis into a language of relational components similar to that used by Haviland and Clark (1974) and others, in previous studies of the acquisition of kinship terms. Under the monosemous analysis, the relational semantics of the Mopan relationship terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* correspond to two symmetrical clusters of nongenealogical relational components that do not exist in English. They may be rendered as presented below:[2]

Tataa': [X OLDER THAN Y] [X MUST BE GREETED WITH A RELATIONSHIP TERM BY Y] [X WAS NEVER PERFORMATIVELY INTRODUCED TO Y] [X IS NOT A PARENT/CHILD OF Y] [X HAS A DIFFERENT DEGREE OF ACCESS TO PAST EXPERIENCE FROM Y]

Suku'un: [X OLDER THAN Y] [X MUST BE GREETED WITH A RELATIONSHIP TERM BY Y] [X WAS NEVER PERFORMATIVELY INTRODUCED TO Y] [X IS NOT A PARENT/CHILD OF Y] [X HAS THE SAME DEGREE OF ACCESS TO PAST EXPERIENCE AS Y]

Analyzed thus, the two terms display an equal degree of relational complexity, both in terms of the number of relational components involved and in terms of identity of components across terms (although, by design, most of the relational components are not phrased in terms of the familiar [PARENT OF] and [CHILD OF] relations of genealogical analysis). Recall that the number and identity of relational components are significant factors in the ordering of Piagetian acquistion of kinship terms elsewhere in the world. On this basis, if the monosemous analysis has psychological reality, then the two terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* are expected to pass through the Piagetian stages simultaneously for a given Mopan child.

Assumption of Polysemy: Analysis by Central Referent

A second kind of semantic analysis proposes that cognitively central nonlinguistic concepts lie at the centers of linguistic categories. Here the analyst proposes that although many kinds of referents seem to be denoted by a word like Mopan *suku'un* or English *brother*, only one—the prototypical, or focal, referent of the term—has psychological priority. Other senses derive from this one by various motivated but not predictable mechanisms of association. In current versions of prototype semantics, the identity of the focal referent of a linguistic category cannot necessarily be assumed on universalist principles but must be discovered. A strong case has been made in the past, however (Murdock 1965 [1949]; Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971; Lounsbury 1969a; Malinowski 1930), for nuclear family relationships as universal central referents of kinship categories. If we are to find central referents for Mopan *tzik* greeting relationship categories, then the nuclear family is surely the first place to look.

Assuming Polysemy in Mopan Tataa' *and* Suku'un

Certain of the many possible genealogical relationships denoted by the terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* emerge from Mopan discourse practices and from Mopan introspection as arguably more central than others to the meanings of the terms. I have no observations, for example, of an individual greeting his or her own biological siblings with a term that would assign them to a generation class different from his or her own. That is, no matter how great the difference in age between two male siblings, in every case the younger greets the older as *suku'un*, and in no case as *tataa'*. When questioned about this, my consultants informed me that they would never make such an assignation.[3] One consultant explained in English that this is "because we have the same father and same mother." Meanwhile, regardless of other criteria, the difference in the age of any individual from that of the parents of his or her parents is always enough to ensure that the parents' parent never receives *tzik* greeting with a term that assigns him or her to the same generation as the greeter. That is, no parents' father is ever greeted as *suku'un*, but always as *tataa'*. These observations from

usage suggest that a plausible central referent for the Mopan term *tataa'* is the parent's father; for *suku'un* the male sibling.

A linguistic modifier can be added to certain terms of the *tzik* greeting set. This is the term *chukul*, which elsewhere is used as a stative predicate meaning 'to be full, satisfied, sufficient or complete'. For example, when one young woman asked me to be sure to save some of my possessions for her when I left the village, I pointed out that she had already got a mosquito net that had once been mine hanging over her bed. The girl persisted, teasing me and saying:

Ma' chukul-en ti'-i.
NEG be_complete-1B DAT-3B
I'm not satisfied with that.

Yaab' in-k'at-i!
much 1A-want-SCOPE
I want lots!

When used as a modifier of the 'same-generation consanguine' terms *suku'un*, *kiik*, and *itz'iin*, it is clear that *chukul* 'full' indicates biological siblinghood. When use of *chukul* in this way is amplified or explained, it is always with the specification that the two individuals in the relationship have the same mother and the same father. This modifier then identifies a *suku'un*, a *kiik*, or an *itz'iin* who is such 'completely'. This completeness is explained as a matter of the closeness (*ma' naach* 'not far') of the relationship—which is itself understood as a question of nuclear family relationship.

With reference to *tzik* greeting in particular, one bilingual speaker used English to explain to me that *chukul* indicates that the relationship in question is one of "close family." Conversely, the Mopan characterization of *tzik* greeting relations that are not *chukul* uses the predicate *naach*, which elsewhere has the meaning 'to be far or distant in space'. Thus, on one occasion of agricultural planting, when a number of women had gathered to prepare food for the laborers, I saw a face I did not recognize. I hazarded a guess and asked the friend who had brought me if this person was *kiik* to our hostess. My friend affirmed in Mopan that she was. But a moment later—perhaps doubting my understanding of the Mopan concept—she added:

Ma' chukul kiik-Ø. Naach et'ok-Ø.
NEG full kiik-3B. Far relation-3B
She's not a full *kiik*. She's a distant relation.

Later I discovered that the woman was what we would call in English a *first cousin* of the hostess.

The modifier *chukul* 'full, complete' is less often spontaneously applied to the terms for different-generation consanguine relationships *tataa'*, *na'chiin*, *nam*, and *chich*. Mopan consultants' answers to my direct questions regarding the identity of the *chukul tataa'* were also not completely consistent on this point. The majority of those to whom I spoke, however, told me that the *chukul tataa'* is a parent's father.

Given the meaning of the English word *full* when it modifies a family relationship term, it is important to be clear at this point that Mopan *chukul* 'full' is not used when the issue of correct assignment of an individual to a named category is under discussion. That is, when my friend described the relationship above using *chukul* and a negation (glossed above as 'She's not a full *kiik*'), there is no sense in which she could be taken to be stating that the woman in question was not really, or only partially a *kiik*. Existence of more and less *chukul* referents of a *tzik* greeting term does not imply that those who are not *chukul* are not correctly members of the category. In this sense *chukul* corresponds to the English locution *central* as sometimes used in prototype semantics; it identifies the best examples of a category without vitiating full membership in the category of those who are not so designated.

Nor is any gradation in the degree of respect owed to the relationship implied. In one conversation—conducted in English but using the Mopan relationship terms—I asked about the differences between *suku'un* who have the same mother and father as oneself and those who are the younger siblings (*itz'iin*) of one's own parents. "Which relationship has the most respect?" I asked. At first, my interlocutor did not find my question intelligible at all. Eventually, however, he found a way to reply that took account in an interesting way both of the fact that Mopan households consist largely of nuclear family members and of the convention that *tzik* greeting is offered only at the first meeting of two individuals on any given day. "If you have *suku'un* outside the house," he suggested, "you can *tzik* every time you see them. But if you have *suku'un* who live with you, you can't give *tzik* every time." By this particular and ad hoc measure, then, *suku'un* who are not biological siblings are actually likely—for reasons having to do with residence rather than with genealogy—to appear more central to the category in that they get "more respect" than full siblings.

In cases where the question of actual membership in the named category arises, the Mopan modifier *jajil* is appropriate. The root predicate is *jaj*, meaning 'to be true, actual, veracious'. A parent's sibling who is greeted as *suku'un* is not a *chukul suku'un* 'full *suku'un*'. He is, however, no less a *jajil suku'un* 'true *suku'un*' than a biological sibling of one's own, and *tzik* obligations for greeting and against sexual contact apply no less strongly to the latter than to the former.[4]

We can conclude, however, with reference to the two terms *suku'un* and *tataa*, that central referents are readily isolable from Mopan practice and reflection. The central referent of the term *suku'un* is the (elder) male sibling. The central referent of the term *tataa'* is the parent's father.

The semantic centrality of the nuclear family sibling among the referents of *suku'un* may arise out of Mopan experience, in which biological siblings normally reside together in childhood. Or it may arise out of some more global and less contingent predisposition of the human psyche for sensitivity to the members of the nuclear family (Malinowski 1930). By either measure, however, the central meaning of the Mopan term *tataa'* 'parent's father' does not qualify for the same degree of naturalness. Mopan grandparents normally do not reside in the same household as their grandchildren, and the parent's father is not a member of the biological nuclear family.

In this analysis, the overlapping genealogical meanings of *tataa'* and *suku'un* ('parent's sibling') that inhabit the two sides of the generation boundary are accounted

for as a matter of the blurring together of the fuzzy edges at the peripheries of two distinct categories. The motivation for this blurring presumably lies in likenesses of age and concomitant maturity of the parties concerned, along the cultural lines presented here and in previous chapters. Under an analysis like this one, however, primary cognitive importance is assigned to the central referents of the terms and not to these peripheral and subordinate ones, or to the culturally particular nongenealogical principles that motivate the links from central to peripheral referents.

Polysemy: Consequences for Piagetian Acquisition

Under this analysis, the referents that appear to correspond most centrally in speakers' practice and reflection to the Mopan lexical items have been identified. These correspond to concepts that are equally recognizable in English. By definition under polysemy, other usages are understood to be cognitively secondary extensions from these focal referents. For those who first proposed focal referent analysis of kinship terminologies (Lounsbury 1964), the desired outcome was that a single comparative metalanguage of kinship could continue to apply in every cultural case. In rendering the present analysis into a metalanguage of relational components, therefore, I will hope to maintain the specific genealogical components found by Haviland and Clark (1974) to be adequate in accounting for the relational semantics of English kinship terms.

Under this analysis, the central referent of Mopan *suku'un* is very similar to that of English *brother*. Basing their predictions only on relational components expressed as parent-child links, Haviland and Clark (1974, 44) found that the sibling terms of English were in fact learned out of the predicted order. That is, they were defined at a relational level higher than that of the grandparent terms of English. Since the other terms in their study supported their complexity theory of acquisition, this result led Haviland and Clark to revise their analysis of the sibling terms of English. They propose post hoc that the incorporation of "both" relational components within a single term should count as less complex than the repetition of a single component. In fact, as implicit in their notation (they use the shorthand "[X SIB Y]" throughout), they propose that an additional primitive relational component is relevant to the semantics of American English kinship terms—that of siblinghood. To make an acquisition prediction for Mopan under this analysis, then, we also add the relation [SIB] to [PARENT OF] and [CHILD OF] in the relational component notation used by Haviland and Clark (1974).

Faced with the terminological facts of Mopan alongside those of English, however, it becomes clear that the notation needs some modification to accommodate the deployment of the new relational component. Among the nuclear family siblings, Mopan clearly distinguishes among those who are older and those who are younger than Ego. The relation [SIB] needs further qualification to allow for that fact. This may be done by adding yet more relational components to the inventory, in order to express the relative seniority of the partners in the relationship. That is, using [SIB], the relational components of the central referent of the Mopan term *suku'un* would be expressed as follows:

Suku'un: [X SIB Y] [X OLDER THAN Y]

But once the components [OLDER THAN] and [YOUNGER THAN] (the latter is necessary if the complexity calculus currently dependent on always mentioning X before Y is to be preserved) are added to the inventory, it becomes problematic that the original relations [PARENT OF] and [CHILD OF] already covertly expressed these relations, in addition to the strictly genealogical one of a single link of direct lineal descent (henceforth [LIN]). To regularize the existing notation, then, as we adopt the additional component [SIB], we abandon [PARENT OF] and [CHILD OF] in favor of [SIB]'s analogue, [LIN], and add specification of seniority relations to both kinds of relations wherever necessary. To express the relational components of the Mopan term *tataa'*, this yields:

Tataa': [X LIN A] [X OLDER THAN A] [A LIN Y] [A OLDER THAN Y]

This of course is only one of the two parallel alternatives open to us. Our other notational option (probably more compatible with Mopan intuition) is simply to introduce two kinds of [SIB], analogous to the two kinds of [LIN] already covertly present in the notation. In short, we can opt to leave [PARENT OF] and [CHILD OF] as they are and propose that [SENIOR SIB] and [JUNIOR SIB] are the new components. This yields:

Suku'un: [X SENIOR SIB Y]
Tataa': [X PARENT OF A] [A PARENT OF Y]

Either solution yields a notational statement for the central referent of Mopan *suku'un* that is lower in relational complexity than that of the central referent of Mopan *tataa'*. We therefore expect, if the concepts behind Mopan terms correspond primarily to natural unitary concepts captured by the central referents of the terms, that an individual Mopan child will process the term *suku'un* through the Piagetian stages of acquisition earlier than the term *tataa'*.

Allowing Homonymy: Listing the Relative Products of Genealogical Primitives

When faced with the situation in which a single linguistic term seems to have many kinds of referents, a third analytical option simply takes this impression at face value and proceeds to identify the number and nature of the different senses that the term includes. Under this approach, we list what we take to be the various senses of a given term, without committing ourselves to any theory regarding the relationships among these various senses or the semantic or cognitive reasons for which they all appear in the same lexical category. The psychological analogue of such an analysis proposes that each listed sense has separate and equally weighted cognitive existence.

Allowing Homonymy in Mopan Tataa' *and* Suku'un

It is clear that we must make use of some metalanguage in which to list the proposed set of senses of any given term. Although it is not in principle necessary for that

metalanguage to be genealogical (Tyler 1969), it is striking that within the Mopan *tzik* greeting set, the terms *na'* 'mother' and *tat* 'father' are the only ones that can be used to denote and greet the biological parents. Although these terms may be used to greet other relatives (notably, the godparents and the parents-in-law), these other relatives may be denoted as well by other terms. This lexical evidence is entirely in the spirit of Wierzbicka's (1992) claim that the concepts 'mother' and 'father' are to be found universally as primitives of the kinship domain. If we presume, then—following both the claims of kinship theorists and certain of the reflective intuitions of Mopan people themselves—that Mopan terms of *tzik* address index actual and essential relations that exist by virtue of parent-child links, we will certainly choose a genealogical metalanguage in which to list the various referents of *tataa'* and *suku'un*. I will state, for example, that the Mopan word *suku'un* may denote equally both one's parent's male child and one's parent's parent's male child.

In gathering data for a list of the possible meanings of Mopan *tataa'* and *suku'un* with respect to a genealogical metalanguage, I conducted a specialized form of ethnogenealogical interview (Conklin 1969). I told my friends and acquaintances that I wanted to learn about *tzik*, and I asked them if they would be willing to tell me the names of the various people in their *famiilia*, and what they would call them *ti tzik* 'for respect'. This formula was always immediately understood as referring to the relationship terms used in greeting.

If my interlocutor agreed to help me, I would elicit a genealogical family tree from him or her, making use of the single-referent relationship terms *na'/al* 'mother/child-of-a-woman' and *tat/ mejen* 'father/child-of-a-man', as well as the modifier *chukul* 'full' for the different kinds of siblings. In each case I would ask what my interlocutor called the individual *ti tzik* 'for respect', and I would elicit a reciprocal by asking

Mak-Ø t-ech?
who-3B DAT-2B
Who is that to you?

In genealogical terms, the interview continued collaterally outward and lineally upward and downward until my consultant declared that the people being named were not greeted with a relationship term. In the same way and on the same occasion, information on habits of address for relations established through ritual sponsorship (compadrazgo) was gathered using the expression *wa'tal* 'to stand' that signifies the act of such sponsorship itself.

The ethnogenealogies thus elicited were found to have fuzzy edges. That is, there was no principled end to the list of possible genealogical uses for many of the *tzik* relationship terms. At variously distant points from Ego I would be informed about genealogical relatives who were not greeted with *tzik* relationship terms, although other relatives of the same genealogical type in another branch of the family might be so greeted. The prohibition on sexual relations and agreement with the statement that these were *famiilia* also faded out at that point.[5]

On the basis of ethnogenealogies thus elicited from three Mopan men and three Mopan women, aged from their late teens to their early seventies, and assuming

homonymy, the Mopan term *suku'un* corresponds to a cluster that is unlike any in English but unites several that English speakers, by virtue of the common genealogical metalanguage, would easily recognize. *Suku'un* denotes a conceptual set that frequently includes genealogical senses such as that of the nuclear family sibling, the parent's sibling, and the parent's sibling's child, which are also captured among the different senses of the English words *brother*, *uncle*, and *cousin*. Similarly, Mopan *tataa'* denotes a conceptual set that frequently includes genealogical senses such as that of the parent's father, the parent's grandfather, and the parent's sibling, which are also captured in English *grandfather*, *great-grandfather*, and *uncle*.

Homonymy: Consequences for Piagetian Acquisition

In the ethnogenealogies I elicited, the kinds of relationship that are denoted in English by the word *cousin* (parent's sibling's child) appear far more frequently among the senses of the term *suku'un* than among the senses of *tataa'*. This is a circumstantial result of the frequent isomorphism of genealogical generation with chronological age and degree of sociological experience.

In Haviland and Clark's (1974, 36) analysis of English kin terms, English *cousin* is among the most complex, and the latest acquired, of the terms observed. Not only does English *cousin* consist of many relational links, but the components [PARENT OF] [CHILD OF] and [SIB] are all included.

Suku'un includes *Cousin*: [X CHILD OF A] [A SIB B] [B PARENT OF Y]

English-speaking children have a great deal of trouble processing this term through the Piagetian stages. Under an analysis in which the conceptual set associated with the Mopan word *suku'un* more frequently includes kin types that are equivalent to those included in English *cousin* than does Mopan *tataa'*, I predict that for many Mopan individuals, Mopan *suku'un* will, like English *cousin*, be very late in its passage through the Piagetian stages. If this analysis in terms of homonymy has psychological reality, then, we propose that many Mopan children will process the term *tataa'* through the Piagetian stages earlier than the term *suku'un*.

Acquisition Outcomes and Linguistic Relativity

Reasoning from the findings of Piaget (1928) and Haviland and Clark (1974), we expect that similarity or dissimilarity in the relational level at which a given Mopan child defines each of a particular pair of *tzik*-greeting terms will reflect similarity or difference in the relational semantics of these terms. We will be particularly interested in the degree of relational similarity of the two Mopan terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* that we can deduce in this way. If we discover that, most often, the definition given for *tataa'* by a given Mopan child falls into a higher Piagetian category than that given for *suku'un* by the same child, we will conclude that the semantics of the former term is less relationally complex than that of the latter. Such an outcome is expected under a semantic analysis based on homonymy, in which the meanings of the two

terms correspond to a list of multiple but equally weighted relative products, drawn from a universal genealogical metalanguage of semantic primitives underlying kinship concepts. If, on the other hand, a given child's definition of *tataa'* falls in general into a lower Piagetian category than does his or her definition of *suku'un*, we will conclude that the semantics of the former is more relationally complex than that of the latter. This is the expected outcome under a semantic analysis made in terms of polysemy. Such a model understands kinship (and other) concepts in terms of prelinguistic focal referents having little to do with variation in language structure. If the definitions offered for each of the two terms tend to be at the same Piagetian level for any given child, the relational complexity in the semantics of the two terms is evidently similar. Such an outcome is expected under a semantic analysis that assumes monosemy of underlying meaning. In such a model, the terms are understood to stand in conceptual relation to one another in exactly the terms of the linguistic and cultural system of which they are a part, such that they cannot easily be assimilated into a universal genealogical domain of kinship. A final possibility, of course, is that no one of these three patterns will be discernible in the data, and that the observed distribution will show no divergence from chance in the Piagetian level of the definition of these two terms offered by a single child. This possibility represents the null hypothesis against which the other three may be evaluated.

7

FORMAL FINDINGS

I am now ready to describe how data was collected for the purpose of discriminating among the three different semantic models proposed to account for the meanings of the Mopan words *tataa'* and *suku'un*. The data are directly relevant not only to the question of the existence of a universal domain of kinship but also and more generally to the question of linguistic relativity itself. Under the hypothesis of linguistic relativity, the predicted Piagetian outcome from Mopan children is the one that accompanies the monosemous analysis: a given Mopan child should define the two terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* at a similar relational level with respect to one another, when degree of definition similarity is measured against chance. The stage is set for asking about the degree of mastery of relational semantics revealed by Mopan children's answers to the Piagetian definition question.

Putting the Question

Over a period of about two months, 102 Mopan Maya children from the ages of seven to fourteen were asked about the meanings of *tzik* relationship terms. Given the ubiquity of application of these terms in Mopan life and the cultural importance accorded to them, it was assumed that every child had been exposed to the system of terms and was involved in at least one relationship of each kind not excluded by childhood status—if not in his or her own nuclear family, then outside it.

Setting

The interviews were conducted in Mopan, and took place in the village elementary school, with the permission of teachers, principal, and village leaders. By the time the interviews were conducted, I was a public figure in the village, and I had been visiting the school as an observer and assistant for several months. All of the children therefore knew me at least by sight before the interview encounter. The children's response to the interview situation was generally positive and interested.

The population of children interviewed is summarized in table 7.1.[1] The very youngest children in the sample were the first interviewed, and it was on the basis of their answers that the decision was made to proceed by interviewing older rather than younger children.[2]

Although table 7.1 includes data on the gender of the Mopan children interviewed, gender will not be discussed further. In general, the girls in the study, especially among the older children, achieved slightly higher scores than did the boys (cf. Jordan 1980, who observed a similar tendency in American English-speaking children). Otherwise, no gender differences were discovered in the general direction or the distribution of the data.

General Procedure

On a typical interview day, I would arrive in the classroom early and explain my project, in Mopan and English, to the class. I presented the project as an effort to understand Mopan words that I did not know very well but that I knew the children knew. I said that I hoped they would help me in this way. I would then install myself in a spot at the back of the classroom indicated by the teacher. As soon as the first stint of quiet and individual work began, the children would come to me in turn, and I would begin to ask, in Mopan only, about Mopan *tzik* relationship terms. The children's answers were recorded in writing as they were given. An excerpt from my notes gives the flavor of the interviews.

> I begin with a friendly hello, and I give a heartbeat to relax before I ask anything. Then, in a friendly manner, I ask the child's name and age. I ask this as if it were natural for me to want to know and to be writing it down. . . . At this opening moment, I aim for conversational nods from the child, for agreement that this is a reasonable effort, and that the child is willing to go ahead.

Table 7.1 Population summary: Children in study, by sex and by age-group

Age-group	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Both*
7–9-year-olds	10	8	18
10–11-year-olds	15	17	32
13–14-year-olds	24	28	52
Total children	49	53	102
Mean age in years	11.0	11.4	11.2

The interviews took about ten minutes each, and the children participated with alacrity and pleasure. Children I missed on the first day in a given classroom would clamor to be heard the next day.

In carrying out the study, I kept Haviland and Clark's methodological description before me as a model. Haviland and Clark (1974) mention that, in their study, "a number of the younger children found the procedure tedious after the interviewer had gone through only four or five kin terms, and showed definite and unmistakable signs of boredom" (37). As a result, they were not able to elicit as many definitions from younger children as from older ones. My implementation sought to recognize this from the start by varying the number of terms given to each child, roughly according to age. My decision regarding how many terms to ask was always made individually and corresponded to my assessment of the interest and attention level of the child to whom I was talking.

The Content of the Questions

In designing the interview questions, I intended to generate data that would be as comparable as possible to that of Piaget and his followers. I wanted the children to attempt definitions of *tzik* relationship terms within the context of a somewhat more free-ranging conversation about such terms and relationships. To this end, I prepared a set of several questions, within which a single definition question of invariant form was included. The definition question administered to the children was arrived at over a period of weeks, through consultation with adult native speakers of Mopan.

Interviews with the children took place on seven different dates, in five different classrooms, and the set of questions went through three versions in the course of its administration. The three versions differed from one another with respect to certain of the questions asked and the order in which questions followed one another in the interview. These differences resulted from the fact that in the course of conducting the interviews I found that certain questions that were encouragingly simple for the youngest children to answer were too obvious to be taken seriously by the older ones. I attempted to ask questions of each child that he or she would find it both possible and interesting to answer. In the same way, my ordering of the questions in the actual interviews resulted from a sense that the youngest children responded most articulately to the definition question when they had already been talking on the subject for a few minutes. Older children, on the contrary, responded best to an initial presentation of the definition question. In each case, adult speakers were consulted about changes in question form, and the invariant definition question appeared in all three versions.

The Form of the Question

The additional questions were designed as extra probes for specific developmental stages or to answer particular ethnographic questions about Mopan *tzik* semantics. I shall deal here primarily with the children's answers to the definition question alone. The definition question was based on the form:

K'u-Ø u-nu'kul X?
what-3B 3A-meaning X
What does X mean?

This is a thoroughly standard Mopan metalinguistic formulation that I had occasion to use almost every day, in more informal situations. Although *nu'kul* (like English *meaning*) need not always prompt a literal definition, this is the most direct way to elicit one. The sentences below show the formulations provided by one adult consultant when I asked him how to phrase the following:

What is the meaning of that word?
K'u-Ø u-nu'kul a t'an ab'e?
what-3B 3A-meaning DET word DX_3_I

I want to know the meanings of these words.
In-k'ati-Ø in-weel-t-e' u-nu'kul a t'an ada'
1A-want-3B 1A-know-TR-SUBJ_3B 3A-meaning DET word DX_1

On a separate occasion, I asked my instructor the question as phrased below, for both *tataa'* and *suku'un*. His answers follow.

K'u-Ø u-nu'kul tataa'?
what-3B 3A-meaning *tataa'*
What is the meaning of *tataa'*?

Tzik-Ø ti jun-tuul nooch inik, a-familia.
respect-3B PREP one-CL old man 2A-family
It's respect (*tzik*) for an old man (in) your family.

K'u-Ø u-nu'kul suku'un?
what-3B 3A-meaning suku'un
What is the meaning of *suku'un*?

Tzik-Ø ilik ti jun-tuul-ak a mak-Ø a chumach-Ø
respect-3B also PREP one- CL-QUANT DET who DET venerable-3B
tz'eek-ak ti-a-wich.
little-QUANT PREP-2A-face
It's also respect (*tzik*), for someone who is just a little bit older (and wiser) than you.[3]

The answers he gave corroborate the validity of this formulation in eliciting explanatory answers. Incidentally, they also illustrate the centrality of the concept of *tzik* in the domain of family relationship terms, even in much of adult exegesis.

The definition question was initially presented to the children in two parts. I began by explaining that I would like the child to help me by telling me the meanings of some Maya words that I did not know very well. In the interests of maintaining informality, this explanation was conducted extempore in Mopan, and so it could not correspond to any precisely standardized form. My field notes for one interview day record the following rendition:

Le'ek a k'u-Ø-i a tan-in-b'et-ik-Ø-i,
the_one DET what-3B-SCOPE DET DUR-1A-do-INC-3B-SCOPE

tan-in-k'aat-ik-Ø ti'-i a tz'ubu u-nu'kul a t'an.
DUR-1A-ask-INC-3B DAT-3B DET child 3A-meaning DET word
What it is that I'm doing, I'm asking children the meanings of words.

Le'ek a t'ana a ma' top in-weel-i, jab'ix le'ek a tata'yoox.
the_one DET word DET NEG very 1A-know-SCOPE like the_one DET *tata'yoox*
Words that I don't know very well, like *tata'yoox*.

A-weel waj u-nu'kul ab'e?
2A-know Q 3A-meaning DX_3_I
Do you know the meaning of that?

Children who had received this opening were then asked:

Pes k'u -Ø u-nu'kul ab'e?
well what-3B 3A-meaning DX_3_I
So what is the meaning of that?

Children were asked in this way to define *tzik* relationship terms, as well as some common nouns and social office terms. The following five *tzik* relationship terms were defined by more than ten children in each of the age-groups shown in table 7.1. These are the terms with which I shall be concerned in the discussion that follows: *tata'yoox, tataa', suku'un, itz'iin, and kompaade.*

The term *tata'yoox* was consistently presented to the children as the first term to be defined. Definitions for *tataa'* and *suku'un* were also usually requested early on in the interview, in order to be sure that as many children as possible defined these two items. The task then continued with ad hoc selection of terms until the child could no longer proceed. It is likely that the children's responses to the term *tata'yoox* were influenced by the fact that this term always appeared first in the interview. It was used, in effect, as a way of introducing the task to the children. For this reason, definitions of *tata'yoox* are not considered in the analysis that follows.

Data Tabulation

The answers the children gave to the definition question took the form of simple sentences and sentence fragments, most of which I had no difficulty in understanding. I reviewed these while still in the village, to eliminate any comprehension difficulties.

Definition Content: Children's Reflective Thought

Before proceeding to the coding of Piagetian relationality in children's responses, a brief summary of the content of the children's definitions is in order. If we consider only specific contents that were offered by five or more children in the sample, the following sketch emerges:

There were two modal responses for *tataa'*: responses translating into English as 'old' or 'older' (16/100) and those translating as 'grandfather' (38/100). The former is found in all three age-groups, but the latter is not found among seven- to nine-year-olds.

For *suku'un* there are three modal responses in the data. 'Old'/ 'older' also appears here (12/101), and once again this response is found in all three age-groups. Definition of *suku'un* as the nuclear family sibling also appears somewhat commonly (16/101)—although never among seven- to nine-year-olds. Finally, a response phrased simply as

Yaax kux-aj-i.
first be_born-INCH-3B_COMPL
He was born first.

is also numerically popular (17/101). This response is also confined to the two older age-groups.

This sketch of content of the children's definitions tells us that, just as among Mopan adults, genealogical phrasing of discourse about *tzik* greeting terms is to be observed in the Mopan children whose definitions were recorded. Reassuringly, the particular genealogical referent that is mentioned by children is identical to the one I identified earlier as central to the adult terms as well. But genealogical phrasing is not the only idiom in which even the older Mopan children (and Mopan adults) express themselves. For many children, and for both terms, a characterization of the referent simply in terms of superior age is common. Finally, it is noteworthy that identification of a genealogically defined central referent emerges only in late middle childhood (after age ten)—an age at which, as we have seen, Mopan children have already begun to come under explicit tutelage from adults regarding the perceived genealogical underpinnings of the requirement to greet with a relationship term and the 'central' (*chukul*) referents of each term. In the content of children's definitions of *tzik* greeting terms, we see how genealogical dimensions of meaning do eventually attain relevance for (some) Mopan adolescents, but that earlier understandings of *tzik* greeting relationships are grounded in facts of immediate cultural experience.

Recall, however, that under the extreme cognitive load represented by the formal definition task, we do not expect that children's definition contents necessarily represent a full measure of any child's understanding of terms in the *tzik* greeting domain. Instead, we expect definition contents often to be reduced in this situation of high cognitive demand. It is therefore the relative degree of relationality of the children's definitions—regardless of content—that is expected to reveal the relative semantic complexity of terms in the *tzik* greeting matrix with respect to one another. Definition contents, then, can be considered a partial measure of reflective thought on the part of Mopan children. Degree of definition relationality will be considered the measure of unreflective or habitual thought, which, I have argued, may exist in counterpoint to such reflection.

Relationality of Definitions: Nonreflective Thought

The answers that the children gave to the definition question were coded in such a way as to yield data comparable to that of Haviland and Clark, and of Piaget himself. Each response was placed only into the highest coding category for which it qualified. Since I am ultimately interested in using the acquisition results to distinguish among models proposing different semantic contents for the terms, every effort was made to avoid coding on the basis of definition content itself. Instead, the abstract degree of relationality of a definition was coded, regardless of content. For example, relational uses of properties such as chronological age ('older than me') were distinguished from nonrelational ones ('an old man'). It should be clear, then, that the content of children's definitions cannot be directly mapped onto the analysis in terms of Piagetian relationality. It is in this sense that the test departs from elicitation of reflective thought.

The published account of a coding system cannot do full justice to its subtleties, nor illuminate the inevitable ambiguities that arise when an attempt is made to reapply it by investigators other than the original ones, especially to responses obtained in a language that is as different from the original language as Mopan Maya is from French or English. In spite of my best efforts, it is therefore a virtual certainty that I have made coding decisions in dealing with my data that Haviland and Clark or Piaget would have made differently, each in their own way. The current investigation, however, compares definitions of Mopan terms coded by myself with other definitions of Mopan terms, also coded by myself, within the parameters of the consistent coding system outlined in the following.

Three categories of Mopan children's response were recognized.

Category 1: Precategorical Responses

Category 1 corresponds to Kurt Danziger's (1957, 218) precategorical stage, in which the term to be defined is not assigned to any general class of things. Danziger (1957) mentions that Australian English-speaking children's responses were coded into this category when they consisted only of a proper name. Haviland and Clark (1974, 37) add "don't know" answers and "totally irrelevant or blatantly wrong" responses to this category.

The Mopan children frequently stated that they did not know the meaning of a term when asked, and they sometimes gave responses that failed to assign the term to a class of objects. Several children simply repeated the term as asked, and one or two supplied an English gloss, refusing to elaborate further. These responses were all coded as category 1. In accord with the commitment not to make coding decisions on the basis of semantic content, no response was coded into category 1 for being "wrong."

Probably the most common Mopan category 1 response was simply not to speak at all. Silence is often appropriate between Mopan interlocutors, where it would not be in other societies (Danziger 1996a; see also Basso 1972). In particular, a Mopan person who does not feel that he or she has definite information on a subject will often prefer silence to hazarding a guess. I therefore do not interpret the Mopan children's silence as unwillingness to cooperate. In fact, the same children who were

silent when it came to offering a definition for a *tzik* greeting relationship would answer other questions willingly enough, maintaining a chatty and affectionate attitude toward me.[4] The following are some examples of category 1 responses:

Tataa': *Umen jun-paay-Ø.*
because one-difference-3B
Because (he's/it's) different.

Suku'un: *Max k'u-Ø-i.*
NEG what-3B-SCOPE
Nothing.

Category 2: Categorical Responses

Category 2 in the present study corresponds, as it does for Haviland and Clark (1974, 38) to K. Danziger's (1957) categorical stage and to Piaget's (1928) stage 1. Responses in this category are those that offer absolute rather than relational characteristics to define a term. These are easy to recognize and give rise to few coding difficulties. Most uses of intransitive verbs (easily distinguished from transitives by their morphology in Mopan) fall into this category. A child's simple mention of another Mopan term without elaboration was also coded into this category. The following are some examples of category 2 responses:

Suku'un: *Walak u-lox.*
HAB 3A-fight
He gets into fights.

Tataa': *Nooch inik ab'e-Ø.*
old man DX_3_I-3B.
That's an old man.

Category 3: Relational Responses

Category 3 responses are those that recognize the term to be a relational one. Most commonly, the child takes the point of view of the reciprocal and talks about the relationship between him- or herself and a referent of the term.

This category is intended to correspond to Piaget's (1928, 107) second stage of relationality and to Haviland and Clark's category 3. Haviland and Clark's (1974, 38) examples and discussion of relational definitions suggest that for the children in their sample the relationship mentioned was always a biological one. Whether or not this was true in their data from American English children, it is not the case among the Mopan (see also Deutsch 1979). Many of the relational qualities of *tzik* relationship terms that were mentioned by Mopan children did not have to do with biology, although some, of course, did. Any statement of relational characteristics of a term was coded as category 3, regardless of the content of the relationality invoked. The following are some examples of category 3 responses:

Suku'un: *Walak tak u-yaan-t-ik -o'on.*
HABEMPH 3A-help-TR-INC-1B_PL
He helps us.

Suku'un: *A-da', nooch-Ø ti ki wich.*
DX_1 big-3B PREP 1A_PL face
This one, he's older than us.

Suku'un: *U-mejen in-tat, in-suku'un-Ø.*
3A-child-of-man 1A-father 1A-*suku'un*-3B
The child of my father is my *suku'un.*

Reciprocal Responses

In Haviland and Clark's (1974) study, as in Piaget's original discussion, a type of response was recognized in which the child states the relationship between a referent of the term and its reciprocal in such a way as to recognize both sides as essential to the definition. As Haviland and Clark (1974, 38) put it, by this stage, "the child had become aware that *being* an example of a certain kind of kin relation meant *having* its reciprocal." Extremely few responses of this type were found in the Mopan corpus. To facilitate manipulation of the data, no separate reciprocal category appears here. The few reciprocally phrased definitions identified were counted into coding category 3 (see also Danziger 1957).[5]

Data Analysis

For each of the four Mopan *tzik* greeting terms to be considered, a statement of the number of Mopan children's responses that fell into each coding category, broken down by age-group, appears in table 7.2.

Table 7.2 also provides the mean level of definitions given for each term, at each age-group. This is the measure used by Haviland and Clark (1974) and by others (Benson and Anglin 1987; Greenfield and Childs 1977) who have been concerned with the relative order of acquisition of different relational terms within the same domain. It is noteworthy in this context that the mean scores for the two terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* are identical across all age groups in table 7.2. This measure, however, is not ideal for discovering whether, within the psychology of any one Mopan child, the two terms are treated similarly, or whether the similarity of mean scores is an artifact of taking the term, and not the individual child, as the unit of analysis. An extended treatment of the data, using a within-child measure, is presented later in this chapter.

Replication of Piagetian Developmental Trend

Before proceeding with the question of order of acquisition of the two test terms *tataa'* and *suku'un*, I am concerned to avoid that pitfall of cross-cultural psychological study (Cole and Scribner 1974; see also Danziger in press b), which consists in the assumption that methods and tasks that function in a certain way in one society will unfail-

Table 7.2. Number of responses in each coding category, by age-group

	Category					*Relational Responses*
Age (years)	*1*	*2*	*3*	N	*Mean*	(%)
	tataa'					
7–9	9	4	5	18	1.8	28
10–11	10	7	13	30	2.1	43
12–14	8	4	40	52	2.6	77
All	27	15	58	100	2.3	58
	suku'un					
7–9	8	6	4	18	1.8	22
10–11	13	2	17	32	2.1	53
12–14	8	2	41	51	2.6	80
All	29	10	62	101	2.3	61
	itz'iin					
7–9	3	5	5	13	2.1	38
10–11	7	4	14	25	2.3	56
12–14	10	4	37	51	2.5	72
All	20	13	56	89	2.4	63
	kompaade					
7–9	9	1	5	15	1.7	33
10–11	9	2	16	27	2.3	59
12–14	12	4	29	45	2.4	64
All	30	7	50	87	2.2	57

ingly do so in another. Replication of basic observations relevant to this task is necessary to establish that Mopan children engage meaningfully in the task, and that the test instrument and its administration have yielded coherent results. A first priority, then, is to establish that for Mopan, when definitions of *tzik* relationship terms are coded as outlined earlier, there in fact exists the expected Piagetian developmental progression in coding category level.

Results: General Measures and Developmental Trend

In the present coding scheme, the difference between category 2 and category 3 corresponds to the critical developmental threshold between categorical and relational thinking, in Piaget's larger theory. For the four terms under consideration, the number of responses coded 3 relative to those coded 1 or 2 was tabulated over the three age groupings. The final column of table 7.2 presents the data.

For each of the terms, the proportion of relational (category 3) scores to nonrelational (category 1 or 2) scores was higher in the oldest age-group than in the youngest. The combined data are summarized graphically in figure 7.1.

Across the four terms, the seven- to nine- year-olds in the sample tend significantly toward nonrelational responses, while the twelve-, thirteen-, and fourteen-year-olds tend significantly toward relational ones. The responses of 10 and 11 year-olds are distributed nonsignificantly between the two possible kinds of response. The significance of the overall distribution is high ($p < .01$).[6]

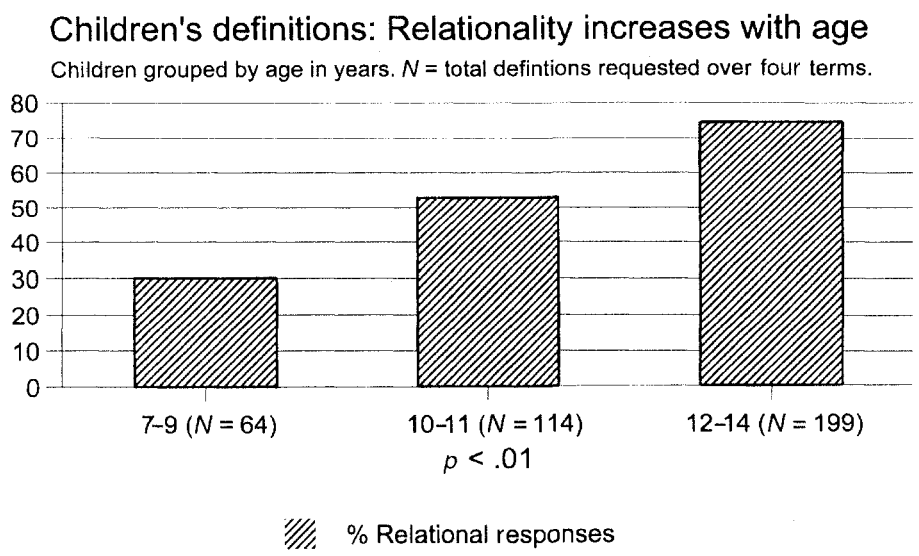

Figure 7.1 Developmental trend in Mopan children's definitions

Discussion: Developmental Trend

The developmental results of the Mopan study resoundingly replicate those of Piaget and of the other kinship acquisition studies that have followed his. For all four terms, and significantly across terms, older Mopan children achieve higher scores than younger ones on the task and, in particular, are more likely to define these kinds of terms in ways that make reference to their status as relational terms. These findings indicate that the Mopan children in the study were engaging with the task in a meaningful fashion and in the expected way. The question I asked of them and the coding system with which I treated their answers appear to be tapping and reflecting a facility broadly comparable to that discussed in studies of the acquisition of relational terms since Piaget's original efforts in the area, and also found in many other linguistic and cultural contexts. This replication constitutes a first-level of universality in the task results, which is critical to undertaking the specific investigation of linguistic relativity that now follows.

Distinguishing among Alternative Semantic Models

We now know that a Piagetian developmental trend characterizes the acquisition of Mopan *tzik* greeting terms. Reasoning from Haviland and Clark's (1974) demonstration that semantic structure is a factor conditioning the order in which relational terms go through the Piagetian stages when defined by an individual child, we can use this knowledge to read back to the semantic structure of different terms by comparing the order in which a given child processes them through the Piagetian stages. Relative order of Piagetian acquisition of different terms can be taken as a measure of the nonreflective psychological reality of alternative structurally valid models (Wallace

and Atkins 1960). Since the different models at stake represent different positions not only with respect to a universal domain of kinship but also with respect to the very role of language in shaping thought, the results of the test will also speak to classic questions of the universality of thought under the influence of linguistic structure.

Review of Predictions and Corollaries

Following Whorf's claim that speakers unconsciously take the categories of their language accurately to reflect reality, and therefore adapt their perception of reality to accord with language structure, a monosemous analysis of the meanings of *tataa'* and *suku'un* depends only partially on the metalanguage of kinship and defines the meanings of these terms in culturally particular ways. That analysis predicts that the terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* will pass through the Piagetian stages in the main simultaneously for any given child.

The analysis in terms of polysemy, meanwhile, reasons from certain facts of Mopan reflection that genealogically based (and universal) central referents exist for the two terms. That analysis predicts that in general the term *suku'un* will pass through the Piagetian stages ahead of the term *tataa'* for any given child.

The analysis in terms of homonymy understands the meanings of the two terms as a matter of exhaustive listing of conceptually disjunct referents. Once again following Mopan reflection, a genealogical metalanguage is chosen to construct the list, and this analysis is therefore also nonrelativist. It predicts that in general the term *tataa'* will pass through the Piagetian stages ahead of the term *suku'un* for any given child.

Finally, the null hypothesis predicts no significance in the divergence from chance in the order in which the two terms pass through the Piagetian stages for any given child.

Results: Piagetian Acquisition of the Two Test Terms

Table 7.3 shows the number of individual children who gave a definition of *tataa'* that was coded at the same, a higher, or a lower relational level as the definition that he or she gave for *suku'un*. By far the majority of the children in the study defined *tataa'* and *suku'un* at the same coding category level, regardless of age-group.

The same results are summarized graphically in figure 7.2. In this figure, all age-groups are combined, and the observed results are juxtaposed to the expected null

Table 7.3 Relational level of definitions offered for *tataa'* and *suku'un* by individual Mopan children

	Relational Level			
Age-group	$T = S$	$T > S$	$T < S$	N
7–9-year-olds	12	3	3	18
10–11-year-olds	17	5	8	30
12–14-year-olds	40	5	6	51
All ages	69	13	17	99

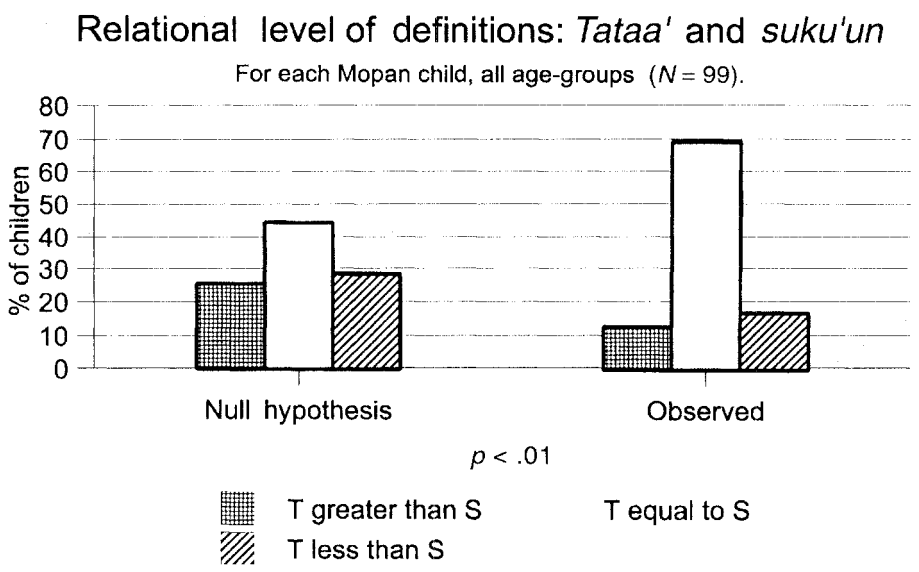

Figure 7.2 Order of acquisition of the two test terms

hypothesis distribution, which is derived from the observed total distribution of children's scores over coding categories 1, 2, and 3. The tendency for the Mopan children to define the two terms *tataa'* and *suku'un* at the same relational level is statistically significant with respect to the expected distributions. The probability of finding such extreme similarity of relational level in the definitions offered for the two test terms by any individual child is less than .01, even when the actual distribution of all of the responses for the two terms across the three coding categories is taken into account.[7]

Additional Manipulations

To further confirm that the significant similarity in relational level of definitions offered for *tataa'* and for *suku'un* by an individual Mopan child is not simply due to a blanket tendency on the part of these children to define all terms at the same relational level, the five other term pairs that can be extracted from the data were examined. These are the pairs *suku'un/itz'iin*, *suku'un/kompaade*, *tataa'/itz'iin*, *tataa'/kompaade*, and *itz'iin/kompaade*. Exactly as was done for the pair *tataa'/suku'un*, for each of these additional term pairs, an expected (null hypothesis) distribution was calculated, based on the actual distribution of scores for each pair of terms across the coding categories 1, 2, and 3. Data from all age groups was combined.

The three pairs *tataa'/kompaade*, *suku'un/kompaade*, and *itz'iin/kompaade* barely diverge at all from the null expectation in the degree to which any Mopan child provides definitions at the same relational level for both terms. It is noteworthy that the remaining two pairs *suku'un/itz'iin* and *tataa'/itz'iin* do show a significant degree of

similarity in the relational level of definitions offered for both terms by a single child. Such a pattern is in accord with the assumption that semantic structure plays a role in the order of Piagetian acquisition of relational terms of this kind. *Suku'un/itz'iin* ('same-generation consanguines/elder brother and younger sibling'), after all, is a pair of reciprocal terms, and we expect a high level of similarity in the relational semantics of the members of such a pair under almost any semantic model. The similarity of relational level of definitions offered for *tataa'* and for *itz'iin* by any individual child, then, simply follows from the similarity of this reciprocal pair combined with the demonstrated similarity between *tataa'* and *suku'un*. A breakdown of the data into age clusters fails to yield significance for any pair other than *tataa'/suku'un*.

As a final manipulation relevant to my three competing hypotheses, the ratio of cases in which a given child defined *tataa'* at a higher Piagetian level than *suku'un*, and vice versa, was obtained, after duly noting and setting aside the overwhelming majority of children who defined *tataa'* and *suku'un* at the same Piagetian level. Of those Mopan children who did not define *tataa'* and *suku'un* at the same category level ($N = 30$), the number who defined *tataa'* at a higher category level than *suku'un* (thirteen children across all age-groups) was lower than the number who defined *suku'un* at a higher category level than *tataa'* (seventeen children across all age-groups). This difference,however, is not numerically large and should not be taken to show a definitive result in favor of one alternative or the other.

Discussion; Piagetian Acquisition of the Two Test Terms

Overwhelmingly, and in contrast to other term pairs, Mopan children defined *tataa'* and *suku'un* at the same relational level. The results of this formal test appear clear in their application to the three proposed semantic analyses and to the hypothesis of linguistic relativity. They support the particular semantic analysis that assumed monosemy of meaning for these terms. The results fail to support either the analysis of the meanings of these terms that assumed polysemy, with peripheral meanings derived from central genealogical referents, or the analysis that proposed homonymy, with meanings represented in the form of an unordered list of multiple genealogically-phrased referents.

On the evidence from this Piagetian task, designed to tap into a realm of cognitive processing other than that of reflective introspection, it seems that the Mopan children subjected *tzik* relationship terms to psychological treatment according to a semantic pattern that is distinctive to their own language and culture, rather than according to a pattern unrelated to language structure or to social facts. The results thus reflect the linguistic and conceptual effects neither of the disembodied and universal objective reality that underlies the assumption of homonymy, nor of any cross-culturally common and pan-contextual natural experience, of the kind which often underlies the assumption of polysemy.

8

LANGUAGE, THOUGHT, AND REALITY

Review

What does it mean to inquire about linguistic relativity in the era of rampant polysemy? Prototype effects of the kind central to linguistic polysemy certainly exist. They have been observed in a number of domains (although in relatively few languages) both in analysts' introspections and in consultants' demonstrated reflective agreement on best-example members of language categories. Such effects are also evident in the data of semantic change in language, and they are both necessary to and vindicated by the pursuit of cross-linguistic typology (Croft in press, 1998). But these effects were first presented against, and are still today quite logically antithetical to, the notion that cultural variation in habitual conceptualization might itself be based upon the classifications imposed by language.

I have tried to argue here that investigation of the Whorf hypothesis remains viable in this context and, in particular, that alternative modes of inquiry into linguistic conceptualization might yield contrasting results. Requests for explicit reflection on the part of native speakers may yield analyses in terms of central referents, often perhaps amenable to cross-cultural comparison. But inquiries designed to tap nonreflective thought may at the same time show the conceptual workings of the entire referential range of a linguistic category, and therefore the influence of linguistic classification on cognition.

A certain amount of data already exists in favor of the notion that various types of conceptual organization with respect to semantics may coexist in the same speaker, alternatively observable depending on the context that is observed, and

on the kind of question that is asked (Kronenfeld 1980). We certainly know that prototype effects exist with respect to linguistic categories that also clearly have feature-based definitional boundaries (Armstrong , Gleitman, and Gleitman 1993). Whorfian effects of language-specific categorization on color perception have been documented (Kay and Kempton 1984) to coexist with the famous focal referent effects also reported in the color domain. In phonology, where the effect of linguistic category boundaries on perception has been well theorized and demonstrated (Jusczyk 1996; Sapir 1949), prototype effects are also observed (Miller 1994). And a certain tradition of semantic description (Sweetser 1987;Werner 1985; Casson 1981; Labov 1973) acknowledges the apparent fuzziness of semantic organization in decontextualized reflection but shows how this may be absorbed by the rules constituting context of application to yield clear conceptual boundaries in social practice.

Universal and Relative in Models of the Organization of Meaning

Since the original formulation (Whorf 1956b [1939], 1956c [1940]), work on the linguistic relativity hypothesis has again and again confronted issues of method (see Lucy 1992a for a review). The early formulations (Lee 1959; Mathiot 1968) followed Whorf himself in presenting suggestive accounts rather than substantial investigations. In the tradition of ethnoscience that followed, speakers' reflective intuitions about the meanings of words were elicited as data relevant to the Whorf hypothesis (Berlin and Kay 1969)—an approach that is still used by many today. With the demise of behaviorism in psychology, however, and most recently with the reawakening of interest in connections between language and other areas of cognitive processing (cf. Jackendoff 1987), a new kind of method for investigating linguistic relativity has come to the fore. Here, the formal techniques of experimental psychology have been enlisted to distinguish among the competing hypotheses of linguistic relativity and of conceptual universality (Lucy 1992a; Pederson et al. 1998; Levinson 1998). In this latest approach, data are drawn, as here, from tasks designed to tap nonreflective cognitive practice rather than from the reflective intuitions of speakers.

In this latest tradition of research, the favored strategy has been to compare two languages in which linguistic structures differ and to seek evidence of parallel differences in the thinking of speakers of the two languages. But even as it represents a significant advance over previous traditions, such an approach does not problematize the original linguistic analysis that pronounced the two structures to be different in the first place. In practice, there exist different theoretical approaches to the analysis of language, and, as we have seen, these approaches differ in the assumptions they make about exactly the issues at stake in the linguistic relativity debate.

Where two distinguishable sets of referents appear to be denoted by the same term, the analyst has classically been perceived to have two options for procedure (Lounsbury 1969b [1964]). A monosemous solution postulates a relationship between signifier and signified in which the single linguistic term is held to represent a single concept, itself corresponding to some principle that distinguishes the named category

from other categories in the language. The concept could be said to consist of the answer to the question:

How are all things called 'A' alike?

The polysemy, or central referent solution, meanwhile, proposes that one set of referents is more typical of the category, a better example than the others. The second set of referents is then analyzed as an extension of the first, on the basis of various kinds of similarities between the two. In this view, there may be only one linguistic term, but two (or more) distinct conceptualizations are held to exist. Briefly, the analysis can be paraphrased thus:

If B is like A, then call B as you would call A: 'A'.

Under polysemy, then, we are offered a view that states that when two things are alike, they should have the same name. Under monosemy, it is proposed that when two things have the same name, they are seen by speakers as being alike. The first viewpoint invokes the existence of unproblematic real-world things (including social and cultural things) independently of language. The second calls on a presumed capacity and willingness on the part of every human individual to actively *make sense* out of the linguistic and cultural environment and to abstract such "things" from this environment as the classificatory evidence itself might warrant.

A third solution, corresponding to semantic analysis in terms of homonymy, constructs a list of all the possible referents of a term and proposes the corresponding existence of multiple cognitive entities in the minds of speakers. If, for kinship terms, the list is drawn up in terms of a genealogical metalanguage, this kind of analysis also takes a universalist position with respect to language and thought. Although the scope of reference of terms that are also translation equivalents may be very different across two languages (e.g., between words in the English kinship and the Mopan *tzik* greeting domain), the cognitive apprehension of concepts in the two domains is held to be largely similar. What differs across the two languages is merely the distribution of universal conceptual synonyms across phonological forms.

In the present study, a task was implemented to distinguish among these perspectives in the case of apparent disjunct reference as it appears in the semantics of Mopan family relationship (*tzik* greeting) terms. The task called upon previous documentation of children's Piagetian acquisition of kinship terms. Alternative expectations regarding acquisition order of two Mopan terms under three different semantic analyses that emphasize, respectively, the locally distinctive boundaries of categories (monosemy), their central referent (polysemy), and the listing of their contents in terms of a universal metalanguage (homonymy) were outlined. When placed in competition with the other models, the analysis assuming monosemy is the most faithful to Whorfian principles. It assumes that, for Mopan speakers, the conceptualization of *tzik* greeting relationships is in alignment with overt language structure and not with universal or other aspects of nonlinguistic experience. Under

the hypothesis of linguistic relativity, therefore, the predicted Piagetian outcome from Mopan children was the one that accompanied the monosemous analysis.

Mopan 'Respect'

To produce a culturally sensitive monosemous analysis of the particular defining features and extension rules that are in play in the Mopan situation, a lengthy exploration of the cultural context in which the Mopan terms appear, and in particular of Mopan *tzik* relationships from the point of view of "generation," was undertaken before implementing the Piagetian task.

In traditional Mopan society, there exists a fundamental appreciation for the autonomy of the individual (male or female, child or adult) and of the household or house cluster relative to others. But the regard for the individual and for his or her right to choose how to live is constantly poised against the contrary fact that humans are dependent upon one another and on supra-individual forces for survival. Agricultural, domestic, and ritual activities periodically require the pooling of adult labor from many different households. And, since life and health are precious and precarious possessions of which no individual can be entirely sure, humanity also depends upon a capricious supernatural world for their preservation.

Gregory (1975) understands the respect that characterized those who offered support to the Mopan fiesta-sponsoring system of bygone times as a quality that accrued to the officeholder himself in exchange for his activities and expense on behalf of the community. But *tzik* ('respect') is not given only in simple exchange to those who work on behalf of the community. Neither is having respect always a matter simply of receiving it from others. In the domestic sphere, *tzik* is sometimes less a matter of respect of one party for another than of respect from both parties for the relationship that unites them.

Tzik is an attitude of religious deference that is understood to distinguish the Mopan from other ethnic groups and from the animals. It is given directly to the gods, and it is given in the form of human action. Murder, incest, profligacy, mockery, carnality, animality, and lack of self-discipline are its antitheses. In addition to their clear social consequences, to the Mopan these vices have supernatural consequences as well, in the form of natural disaster. To avert these consequences, respectful (*tzik*) behavior must be maintained. An attitude of mutual respect between two people, then, is ultimately a form of prayer.

The Mopan term *tzik* signifies a broad-based demeanor of deference and an attitude of respect that is linked to social cooperation, to religion, to sexual avoidance, and to ethnic and human identity. As part of this demeanor, in the domestic world of the Mopan household, the term signifies the recognition of perceived essential relations and denotes the greeting activity that both maintains and justifies the maintenance of such relations. The display of *tzik* in formal greeting thus serves to establish that the best kind of positive and solidary relations continue to hold between the two parties concerned—no small matter in a societal context of frequently erupting fission and feud. By emphasizing polite, nonviolent, and cooperative interpersonal relations, *tzik* operates as a counterweight to the prevailing, often aggressive and divisive, individuality of Mopan society. I leave the final summation to a Mopan elder who comments thus:

Pes y laj ket, kristiaanojo'on. K'ik' a yan to'on. See' chen jun tuul mak u tz'ajo'on. Pes tzaj kuchij ti tzikik ti b'ajil, tzaj kuchij ti yajkuntik ti bajil. Pero ma' kechak ti'i a mak iliki a ma' yan u tziki.

We are all equal, we are all human beings. We bleed alike. There is only One who made us all. And so we should certainly respect one another; we should certainly love one another. But you cannot explain that to those who do not understand *tzik*.

The Linguistic Construction of Reality

Felicity of *tzik* greeting is felt by the Mopan to depend upon the actual existence of an essential relationship obtaining between two people. But, Mopan ideology notwithstanding, the existence of the relationships licensing *tzik* greeting does not rely in practice on a reality that is independent of social facts. The application of a certain *tzik* relationship term to the relationship between a given pair of individuals is ultimately a matter of empirical history, which turns on collective acceptance of an initial authoritative statement that such applicability is correct and valid. A historical chain of reference originating directly from an elder or from a specific baptismal event (itself orchestrated by elders in discussion with one another) must have occurred in order to make the usage felicitous. In the absence of this contextual feature, no reciprocal *tzik* relationship is understood to apply.

The *tz'aj tzik* introduction ceremony functions like a baptism to a proper name (Lyons 1977). Performance of the explicit baptismal act can be the single most important feature asserting the existence of a relationship within a particular *tzik* greeting class. It is sufficient to have undergone it—however doubtful one's initial claim to membership—to count fully as a member of the class. It is sufficient not to have undergone it—however powerful one's essential claim—to be denied membership. The category of *tzik* relationship that is ultimately decided upon may depend uniquely upon the performance of this act for its justification and existence. In certain cases, then, *tzik* behavior actually serves to create the social categories to which *tzik* relationship terms refer.[1]

Mopan thus deliberately act to restrict their circle of licence—of sexual possibility, as well as of levity and lack of control in other areas—at several important moments in their lives. This fact is the source of the religious and serious tone which the domain has in Mopan life, and goes far to explain why the cultural center of *tzik* respect greeting—as opposed to that of American 'kinship'—lies not in the nuclear family but with ritually acquired relationships of voluntary 'respect'.

Viewed ethnographically, although the category of *tzik* relationship in Mopan is not isomorphic with a universal domain of kinship, kinship may perhaps be found intersecting with it. Among the Mopan, we find some evidence for certain nuclear family relationships as focal referents of particular named *tzik* categories. The prohibition of sexual contact within the circle of *tzik* relations is also compatible with anthropological accounts of kinship that emphasize alliance and the incest taboo. But biological or nuclear family relationship alone does not account for the Mopan notion of interpersonal respect that is reflected in and constituted by the obligatory *tzik* greeting. Of all *tzik* relationships, it is that one with no prior template in biology—

that of compadrazgo—that seems to form the cultural center of the domain. Like those of the civil-religious hierarchy in the public sphere, the office of godparent is construed as one in which the incumbent performs 'work' (*meyaj*) for the good of others in the community. Fictive kin in the realm of compadrazgo are the recipients of the most elaborate forms of religious respect (*tzik*) in Mopan, both in verbal greeting and in matters sexual. From the Mopan point of view, which associates sexual restraint with religious respect, and not with the gene pool, this seems quite natural. From the point of view of "kinship," it is distinctly odd.

The Outcome of the Study

In many domains in both anthropology and linguistics, the particular kind of analysis that is most faithful to the data of any actual meaning system is often also the one least likely to provide grounds for cross-cultural comparison. By contrast, the analysis most suited for drawing comparisons across cultures is likely to be precisely the one that presupposes elements of meaning and therefore may not adequately account for certain of the cases in the cross-cultural sample (Lucy 1997a). I have tried to argue that, as interpretive procedures, the two perspectives, with their complementary limitations, might be seen as alternative research perspectives rather than as mutually exclusive theoretical positions.

The obligation to greet certain of their interlocutors with a relationship term is understood by Mopan speakers in terms of the obligatory homage due to an essential relationship that itself precedes and is independent of the act of greeting. In many cases the relationships in question can be expressed in terms of parent-child links. This kind of evidence aligns the relationships which are honored in *tzik* greeting to theoretical anthropological characterizations of kinship relations—both for those theories that highlight biological relationship and those that emphasize the regulation of sexual intimacy. Other evidence—notably, on the one hand, that which links the domain, through the concept of *tzik* 'respect', to the sphere of religious observance, and, on the other, that which marks off the relationships of compadrazgo as central rather than marginal to the domain—suggests that the domain of relationships respected in greeting by the Mopan also bears culturally unique significance, not always readily reconcilable to comparative analysis in a universalist framework.

Reflecting these issues in microcosm, the internal semantics of the relationship terms used in *tzik*-greeting display a structure that is based on a contrast that traditional kinship analysis would be inclined to call one of "generation" (Murdock 1965 [1949]; Kroeber 1909). Although the cultural notion embedded in this contrast in Mopan is not based on calculation of parent-child links, it is sometimes explained by Mopan as an explicit analogue for the relation of parent to child, itself construed as partly a matter of the provision of sustenance through labor and of the offering of formal instruction based on experience.

Three different semantic analyses that reflect alternative understandings of Mopan "generation" were constructed, and contrasting predictions were made for children's Piagetian performance under each analysis. The Mopan children in the formal study treated the key test terms in a manner that is compatible with a monosemous seman-

tic analysis made on the basis of cultural observation, and incompatible with the two more universalist analyses, based, on the one hand, on adults' reflective intuitions about central referents in the domain and, on the other, on the supposition of a universal metalanguage of genealogical primitives. This outcome of the empirical study supports a view of language and thought that grants cognitive importance to local patterns of linguistic organization and recognizes the relevance of cultural experience in language acquisition.

Genealogy is certainly part of the understanding of *tzik* greeting that is eventually achieved by older Mopan children, but my results support a view of language acquisition in which, rather than matching words to things (genealogical or otherwise), the novice assumes instead that the world—including the utterances of adults—makes sense and struggles to construct a conceptual connection between potentially disjunct communications. The connections thus generated are not necessarily accessible to consciousness; still less are they available for critical scrutiny as being other than completely natural (cf. Bourdieu 1982).

The process of inference upon which the child's search for commonalities among observed usages itself depends on the child's simple but devoutly unshakable faith that what human beings do is meaningful. It must be predicated upon some cultural version of initial premises that require social persons to be communicative in their interaction with one another (Goffman 1983; Grice 1975; Keenan 1976). Under such a view, the first-guess search for commonalities that will make unitary sense of disjunct communications is the faculty that lies at the heart of both human learning and of human language.

Some Explanatory Explorations

The relativist position as presented by Sapir and Whorf is concerned to account not for the origins of a linguistic system in facts of reality or otherwise but for the psychological reaction of human individuals to their encounter with linguistic systems already in existence. Human children are born into a social and linguistic world, and the problem of language acquisition is as much one of making sense of existing data as it is of generating new data. From the acquisition point of view, the language and culture into which a child is born are themselves experiential givens for that child. Culture and language are in general not originally experienced as an overlay on nature. Nor, as my results indicate, are they necessarily cognized that way.

The experimental results of the study in and of themselves support a view of language and conceptualization that recognizes the role of cultural experience, including linguistic experience, in the formation of cognitive concepts. The convergence of linguistic, ethnographic, and experimental evidence in this case offers further support for that conclusion. In the final section of this chapter, I examine some possible explanations—both those peculiar to the Mopan situation and those perhaps more universal—for the observed convergence of experimental and ethnographic evidence as to the importance of local linguistic organization in the construction of reality.

Culture-Specific Linguistic Beliefs

Mopan ideas about language are characterized by a reverence for custom and precedent as conveyed in oral tradition, which leads in turn to an insistence on historical and literal exactness that does not allow for much referential freedom in matters as important as those of *tzik*. In ethnographic context, *tzik* address is never inexact, even when applied to relationships that are far from the genealogical centers of the categories in question. A culture-specific respect for the literal force of particular performative speech acts, motivated by a cultural intolerance for fuzzy *tzik* categories, ensures that the exactness and firmness of semantic boundaries, so important to the Mopan, are maintained.

There is an obvious parallel between this fact of Mopan culture and the empirical observations of the formal study, which support a monosemous semantic analysis of Mopan *tzik* greeting terms. The connection between ethnographic fact and psychological observation is palpable in the public debate that occurs on *tz'aj tzik* occasions, in which fuzzy edges for categories in the *tzik*-greeting domain simply are not to be tolerated. Such a connection between ethnography and experiment is specific to the Mopan case. I draw attention to it to point out one way in which the very relationship between language and the world of referents may itself be culturally conditioned (Lucy 1985; Hymes 1966). It may not in fact be the case that linguistic conceptualization is a universal psychological procedure that operates in the same way in every cultural case. Particular cultures hold different attitudes to language and reference, and at times these attitudes may themselves have consequences for classification and conceptualization.

Social Classification

But there are other, perhaps more generalizable, factors to be taken into account in considering the evident importance of semantic boundaries to Mopan conceptualization in the domain of *tzik*-greeting relationships. In Mopan performative introductions to *tzik* relationship statuses, as well as in Mopan adherence to a historical chain of reference for the identification of nonacquired *tzik* relations, we find an instance in which, as in other instances of social classification, the fuzzy boundaries dictated by nature quite clearly, and for good social and cultural reasons, simply will not do. The classifications involved in Mopan *tzik* relationships, then, have moved beyond universal human experience, or even the observation of culturally salient natural discontinuities (Dougherty 1978), and into the realm of social facts. In considering them, we have entered the quasi-legalistic world of social classification and of social obligation, in which we are perhaps not surprised to find that monosemy is at a premium.[2]

We know that if social or cultural necessity dictates discrete boundaries among entities that are not separated by discontinuities of universal experience or of nature, then there is no difficulty in supplying socially occurring discontinuities instead, through cultural transactions (cf. Douglas 1966; Van Gennep 1960 [1908]; Durkheim and Mauss 1963 [1901]). In the case of Mopan family relationships, both linguistic address and other forms of social action (sexual abstinence, deferential demeanor) help to accomplish this purpose; these are the actions and behaviors I have been dis-

cussing as those of *tzik*. We must add to our understanding of the concept of *tzik*, then, its role as a constituting behavior in the maintenance of social classification. A certain kind of ethnological analysis (Durkheim and Mauss 1963 [1901]) might in fact conclude that the religiosity of domestic *tzik* activity arises precisely from this role.

The Mopan believe that a set of actual and essential relationships underlies and motivates the use of *tzik* relationship terms in greeting. The fact of *tzik* greeting is itself enough to motivate the supposition of biological relationship where such is not already known. But as I explored the examples of negotiated *tzik* category assignment given in previous chapters, I found in them a gradual sliding away from the situation as so described, and as the Mopan themselves are usually aware of it. *Tzik* appellation in these examples appeared less and less to be a matter of the recognition and subsequent naming of obvious discontinuities in the genealogical relatedness of individuals, and more and more to be a matter of the creation of social categories by means of a performative act of speech.

In the process of pursuing the ethnographic description, I have confronted the fact that the system of Mopan *tzik* classification is not just a way of categorizing biological or even social relations. It is a way of ensuring, through socially created cognitive distinctions, that social relations continue to occur. Language, in the end, does not merely occur in a context of use; it also creates the circumstances of that context itself. In the Mopan case, speakers can modify their *tzik* relationship status relative to others in the community by modifying their *tzik* behavior toward them—especially at the culturally sanctioned moment for doing so. For the Mopan, the relationship between the use of a kinship term in *tzik* address and the identification of empirical features that make two people kin is a mutually constituting one. Mopan terms of *tzik* address correspond in nonreflective thought to monosemous analysis, I argue, at least partly because they may denote categories of (social) reality where nothing else does. Where nature itself is socially constructed, it is cultural behavior, including linguistic usage, that must provide the sharp contrasts without which meaningful symbolic action cannot occur.[3]

The Linguistics of Kinship

We have seen that kinship terms, in conjunction with their obligatory possessor and especially in address, have the linguistic features of shifter terms (Silverstein 1976b; Danziger 1998). At one and the same time, therefore, any occurrence of such a term both *refers* to a type of relationship (e.g., by identifying a specific set of genealogical links) and simultaneously *indexes* the fact that just this relationship applies among the participants of the speech situation in which it occurs. This duality of linguistic function echoes the ethnographic duality that Schneider (1980) has documented in the American English kinship domain, which he calls "substance" and "code for conduct." Schneider found that even where Americans make strictly biological distinctions of kinship, they do so not to maintain a cultural discourse about biology, but to maintain a cultural discourse about "love." Comaroff (1980, 38), speaking more widely, calls the domain of kinship a "genealogically ordered sociological field." Both writers seek to document the interplay of the ethnographically referential—the appeal

to locally selected facts of biology—with the indexical, or social relationship, aspects of kinship usage.

In the Mopan discussions that accompany the performative *tz'aj tzik* ceremony, the protagonists struggle over an aspect of conduct (the particular *tzik* greeting to be assigned) that in practice has consequences for a matter of substance—the degree of maturity that will thenceforth be attributed to the recipient of the greeting. The initial act of baptismal address, which determines local belief in essential entitlement to the term used, responds as much to the goals and purposes of individuals as they are able to impose them upon the situation as it does to observable facts of nature. Given the performative possibilities of *tzik* class assignment, different genealogical relationships referred to by *tzik* relationship terms may in the end have nothing in common but the fact that they have been named alike. This single similarity, however, is fully sufficient for native speakers to consider that such classes indeed exist, and exist essentially.

We know from other studies involving shifter terms that in certain usage contexts, the indexical or social relationship aspects of the meaning of such a term may take precedence over the purely referential in just this way (see Silverstein 1976b). The best known example is Brown and Gilman's (1960) analysis of the European system of personal pronoun address that assigns one second-person pronoun to relationships of mutual distance and another to relationships of intimacy. In this system, a speaker can make a bid to change the intimacy status of his or her relationship with another simply by changing the pronoun that he or she uses. Casson (1981) argues in a similar vein that use of a kinship term where it is not biologically warranted by the local system is an act of social negotiation. Luong (1990, 35) also emphasizes the role of social negotiation in individual context-sensitive choice between alternative and coexisting kin term possibilities within a given language. In these cases, just as in that of Mopan *tzik* assignment, the existence of an independent reality that must be labeled by language becomes increasingly problematic even while speakers' reflective intuitions may insist on the existence of such reality. Rather, it is precisely the interplay between the referential component of kinship, conceived of by speakers as a matter of essential relatedness through parent-child links, and the indexical component, critical in the creation of social categories, that is perhaps the essence of the "kinship" phenomenon. In short, while kinship perhaps indeed does not exist, the Mopan, like ourselves, have clearly been extremely concerned to invent it.

Reflective Judgments and Shifter Terms

Among the Mopan as elsewhere, the reflective intuitions of native speakers regarding the referential and the indexical properties of shifter terms are widely distinct. Silverstein (1981; see also Hanks 1993) points out that, in general, the more referential, or "relatively presupposing," aspects of the meanings of shifter terms (for kinship terms, these are the aspects of a term's meaning that relate to essential genealogical substance) come readily to awareness in native speaker introspection, and speakers have little difficulty discussing and explaining these. The indexical, or "relatively creative," aspects of the meanings of terms of this kind (for kinship, these are the aspects that relate to "code for conduct" and are susceptible to social construc-

tion and negotiation) are much less accessible to awareness, whether that of the native speaker or of the analyst.

Behavior conforming to a given code of conduct (e.g., *tzik* greeting) can in fact delineate a socially constructed category that, in native-speaker exegesis, is construed as the simple labeling of a natural fact (essential relationship). Concomitant with this is the fact that, as observed here, the identification through reflective introspection of universal central referents, entailing the relative peripherality of other referents and the fuzziness of category boundaries, can coexist in cultural practice with exactitude of category boundaries and, in nonreflective thought, with cultural specificity (relativity) of the conceptualization of the categories involved.

It is somewhat ironic in fact that kinship has had a central place, both in the historical foundations and in the expository rhetoric of today's cognitive linguistics—a field dedicated to the erosion of clear-cut boundaries between lexical categories, and in which appeal to the reflective judgments of native speakers has become the methodological standard. As forms delineating social categories, kinship terms are in fact among those most likely to insist on sharply delineated boundaries. And as shifter terms, these are also among those in which speakers' reflective introspections are most likely to betray the analyst. For similar reasons, the tendency for culturally oriented studies of kinship to decouple the study of kinship terminology from that of social interaction in the kinship domain captures only part of the picture. The effort to do so results once again from a reliance on the misleading intuition that it is exclusively nonlinguistic social action that negotiates and reflects interactive realities, while kinship terms merely refer. In constitutive linguistic behavior such as explicit performative utterance, on the contrary, the act of speaking itself creates the (social) reality that is the referent of the utterance.

As with other shifter terms, however, this most creative aspect of the application of kinship terms tends to remain at the margins of speakers' reflective awareness. A full understanding of the meaning of such terms must therefore call on investigative techniques that go beyond the elicitation of reflective intuitions, to include both measurement of nonreflective thought and observation of usage in cultural context.

Conclusion

The forces that define the Mopan kinship domain in cultural as well as in biological terms are symbolic ones, having to do with the maintenance of social and religious order. And within the *tzik* greeting domain, the forces that emphasize category boundaries rather than the identification of central members are those of social practice. Use or nonuse of a particular relationship term in greeting is a binary matter, and the Mopan depend upon this and on other *tzik*-related actions for the making of crucial distinctions of ethnicity, morality, and humanity. The fact that Mopan habitual thought about categories in the *tzik*-greeting domain is more closely predicted by a monosemous than by a polysemous or a homonymous semantic analysis is thus multiply underpinned by the relevance of these categories to culturally meaningful action in the particular contexts. The specifics of this relevance are to some extent peculiar to the Mopan case and to some extent universally generalizable.

Between words and things, I conclude, lies social action. Classifications have purposes, and it is only rarely in the human universe that those purposes have to do uniquely with the scientific identification of categories according to their existence in universal experience. In the Mopan case, it is clear that where genealogical or physiological reality constitutes a fuzzy continuum, contextualized speech itself may function to create the sharply bounded categories necessary to social action. The results of the formal study reported in chapter 7 suggest, in turn, that these categories have psychological reality in the minds of speakers. As measured by progression of the different *tzik*-greeting terms through the stages of the Piagetian definition task, Mopan nonreflective thought in the kinship domain conforms to the predictions of a monosemous analysis, even while consultants' conscious reflections fit better with a polysemous analysis focused on the nuclear family.

An unconscious cognitive preference for monosemy is the mechanism which powers the phenomenon of linguistic relativity as proposed by Whorf and Sapir. The results reported here support their thesis that habitual conceptualization can be guided by the structure of language itself. In fact, "kinship terms" reveal themselves as particularly likely to yield to such influence, since, as shifter-like forms, they function sometimes to label and sometimes actually to construct the "reality" to which they refer. This dual function often entails an asymmetry of both speaker and analyst awareness, such that reflective attention falls primarily on the labeling rather than on the constructing function, even while the constructing function itself may demand—as in the Mopan case—that cultural and linguistic practice treat all referents of a single term as socially alike. Once again, these generalizations are congruent with the result reported here that, with the support of cultural institutions and practices, and at the level of habitual thought, as distinct from that of reflective intuition, language structure can play a role in bringing into being a culturally particular form of conceptual organization.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. Mopan orthography follows the recommendations of the Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala (England and Elliott 1990, viii). Exceptionally, the Mayan language-name "Ke'kchi" is spelled here in the manner adopted by the Toledo Maya Cultural Council and the Toledo Alcaldes Association (1997).

2. Note that those who choose this approach must grapple with the meaning of English *brother* in light of *suku'un*, as well as the converse. That is, unless some exonerating argument is offered, only those referents of English *brother* that overlap with those of Mopan *suku'un* can in this view be entertained as conceptually central. Others, such as the use of English *brother* to denote younger as well as older siblings, must presumably be taken to be conceptually secondary.

3. Whether such a language actually exists remains a matter of linguistic debate (Sasse 1993; Croft 1993; Danziger in press b). Regarding *spark*, *dwell*, and so on, however, Whorf was certainly on the right track. His comments prefigure current linguistic analyses of predicate classes in terms of aktionsart (Vendler 1967; Van Valin 1990) and predicate-argument relations (Perlmutter 1978) rather than in terms of brute object/event semantics.

4. Note that this implies not that two referents of the same term must objectively share properties or features but that speakers—under the influence of linguistic classification and for the purposes of habitual thought—assume that they do and behave accordingly.

5. Following much recent usage in cognitive linguistics, I will restrict my use of the word *polysemy* to those cases in which the multiple referents of a term are not only claimed to be conceptually related, but in which the particular relationship that is proposed takes various noncentral or peripheral referents to be independently networked to a clearly central referent by means of motivated but unpredictable links of association or extension.

6. Color terminology is not further discussed here. For expansion and critique of Berlin and Kay's study, see, among others, Heider 1972; Lucy and Shweder 1979; Kay and Kempton 1984; Lucy 1997b; Davidoff, Davies, and Roberson 1999.

7. In particular, Lounsbury's ingenious extension rules provided an elegant way of translating the complicated Crow-Omaha systems found scattered throughout the world into terms that could readily be grasped by Euro-Americans. Lounsbury (1969a) finds particular support for the universality of focal referents from the fact that the same set of extension rules will account for all Crow-type systems, and their gender inverses for all Omaha types. But Crow-Omaha was of course originally identified as a kinship type by virtue of the fact that it showed a very specific form of generational skewing with respect to Euro-American genealogical categories.

8. On the other hand, for a few scholars, Lounsbury's comparativist issues remain central (Croft 1998, 1999). For such theorists, as for Lounsbury, the Whorfian question remains that of the "Coon cat": What is the psychological reality, if any, of semantic contrasts documented historically or cross-linguistically but not made in one's own current linguistic variety? To what extent, and under what circumstances, does a normal speaker have access to the typologist's view?

9. Note, of course, that, confusingly, the meaning of the word *extension* in the linguistic discussion is quite different from its meaning in philosophy.

10. In any case, it would clearly be circular to ask that reflective introspection, whether on the part of one or many speakers, function as the determining evidence for the psychological reality of any semantic model that has itself been derived from introspection. This problem of methodological circularity plagues some of the otherwise laudable recent attempts at verifying the psychological reality of polysemous models.

Chapter 2

1. Ke'kchi is also a Mayan language (cf. McQuown 1956), but it is not closely related, and it is not considered by native speakers of either language to be mutually intelligible with Mopan.

2. It is probably advisable to take such apparent decline with a grain of salt, however. In 1989, for example, I observed a routine performance of the *kanank'in* ceremony marking the beginning of the agricultural year. Osborn, writing in 1982, speaks of this ceremony as a vanished one. In 1989, I also witnessed the riotous celebration of the patron saint's fiesta in full traditional manner. The New Year, Esquipulas, Easter, and Christmas are also still quite regularly observed, and by the 1990s, efforts toward purposeful revival of these celebrations were in evidence.

3. The village accepts its reputation as a place where murders frequently occur and are only infrequently punished. Crimes of murder cannot be dealt with by the village justice system but must be referred by the *alkaalde* to the national legal system.

4. In 1988, I was witness to what was characterized as the first democratic selection of an *alkaalde*. More than one name was proposed, nominations were accepted from the floor, and ballots were cast to decide among the candidates.

5. Locally produced items that are in everyday commercial circulation among Mopan households (such as an egg, one woman-hour of labor, or a quart of beans) have fixed prices that are known to all. These prices do not shift with market conditions, and bargaining is very unusual.

6. I take this opposition from a pair of parallel verses offered to me as a demonstration of the speech associated with the *xuul* ceremony performed for babies at three to six months, which outlines the different responsibilities and kinds of work required of males and females.

Chapter 3

1. For Piaget, the necessity to resort to verbal tasks was always an unfortunate and complicating one. By coupling sibling-term tasks with other, nonverbal, tests of relational ability, Piaget made it clear that the cognitive progression to which he linked the child's developing ability to discuss and define kinship terms was not a verbal one. Later investigations in many parts of the world (LeVine and Price-Williams 1974; Swartz and Hall 1972) support Piaget's original correlation of relational abilities in the discussion of kinship terms with nonverbal relational abilities in the conceptual manipulation of space (see also Danziger 1996b, 1998).

2. In typological terms, there is certainly nothing obligatory about terminologically distinguishing junior from senior across lineal generations. Many kinship systems worldwide require the same term for both senior and junior in a cross-generation relationship.

3. In citing these results, and indeed in basing my own investigations upon them, I do not intend necessarily to endorse Clark's more global (1973) semantic complexity hypothesis of lexical acquisition, in which complexity is measured in terms of the sheer number of semantic features. Complexity of a kinship term is measured by Haviland and Clark for Piagetian purposes with respect only to relational components. Nonrelational features (such as sex, which distinguishes between English *brother* and English *sister*) are not expected to play a role in the order of progression through the Piagetian stages. Since Piaget's stages were originally designed to capture increasing degrees of appreciation of the nature of relationality, the finding that, in this domain, terms with fewer relational features move through the stages ahead of terms with more, is quite acceptable from an intuitive and domain-specific point of view (see also Gentner 1978; Greenfield and Childs 1977).

4. Having achieved this critical insight, Greenfield and Childs (1977, 356) themselves chose to concentrate upon a production task, in which children's sheer ability to recall all of their relatives emerged unexpectedly as an important factor. Their results on semantic complexity are somewhat inconclusive.

5. This is, of course, strictly within the spirit of Piaget's original study, which juxtaposes a discussion of children's understandings of words for genealogical relationships ('brother') with those of words for spatial relationships ('left/right') to make the argument that what is at stake developmentally is accession to manipulation of relational concepts in general.

6. Another side effect of the cognitive load imposed by the task may be that the child phrases his or her definition in terms of a specific exemplar of a referent (perhaps giving the proper name of someone standing in this relationship to him- or herself; perhaps specifying the culturally central referent) as a kind of expressive shorthand.

7. This fact is subject to transposition in the same way as are uses of almost all shifter terms (Bühler 1990 [1934]; Haviland 1996). For example, utterances of the type "Go show Daddy!" referring to the addressee's and not the speaker's father, are common—and not always in baby talk (Luong 1986; see also Danziger 1998). The triangular systems of relationship address found in Australia (cf. McConvell 1982) constitute a different pattern.

8. The problem was compounded by the reintroduction of notional criteria into the definition of domains investigated by the later (and better known) ethnoscientific studies such as those of biological taxonomy and color terminology (cf. Berlin, Breedlove, and Raven 1973; Berlin and Kay 1969).

9. These observations should not be taken to mean that the Mopan are in general any more truthful than other peoples. On the contrary, there are necessarily a great many Mopan contexts in which an individual's statements are vulnerable to being challenged as untruths (see Danziger 1996a).

10. I myself was often addressed in this way. These are also the forms used as vocatives (not greetings—and never with *Dioos*) by husbands and wives to one another.

11. It is worth pointing out that the relationships in which marriage is prohibited by virtue of *tzik* greeting with a relationship term are different from those prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church.

12. It should be clear that the attempt to characterize the meaning of each term in such a table recapitulates in a nutshell all the issues of cross-linguistic semantics that motivated this study in the first place. The reader will note, for example, that for some Mopan terms more than one English translation is possible, and that certain of the possible English glosses in table 3.1 are correct for more than one Mopan term. Thus the gloss *uncle* is a possible one both for *tataa'* and *suku'un*. Conversely, traditional terms of genealogical reckoning such as "consanguine" or (especially) "generation" must be taken as rough guides only, awaiting further elaboration in the chapters that follow. In the same way, the relationships dependent on "sponsorship" have not been adequately characterized. In the text henceforth, where equivalence with English translations is in question, terms appearing in table 3.1 are glossed both with a statement of the features denoting their genealogical range and with one of their possible English glosses. For example, *suku'un* appears glossed as 'senior same-generation consanguine/elder brother'. For simplicity, features dealing with sex ('senior party male', etc.) are not included in these glosses.

13. Certain individuals use the terms *mam* or *mamaa'* and *chiich* for seniors, as well as for juniors. This is the usage that Thompson observed in 1925 (Thompson 1930); today it exists only in the oldest individuals. In addressing senior females, the Mopan show more individual variation than in addressing senior males. In particular, some individuals make use of the term *kikij* as a synonym either for *na'chiin* or for *kiik* (in each case with the appropriate reciprocal). While there is variation across individuals in this respect, every individual was consistent in his or her own use of *kikij*. A term *naaj* (reciprocal *chiich*) was used by some informants where most would use *na'chiin*. I was told that this was an old usage; most of my consultants did not recognize the term. The terms *tz'ana'* and *tz'ayum* were known to some but not all of my consultants, as terms for stepmother and stepfather, respectively.

Chapter 4

1. I rarely heard these terms used spontaneously, and those who used them were unable to be more explicit about their exact meanings. I note, however, the similarity of the first term to Yucatec *u yiknal*, denoting an individual's area of personal space (Hanks 1990; Danziger 1994), and of the second to Lacandon *onen* 'patriline' (Boremanse 1986, 17).

2. Such children may also address members of their adopted family (usually people to whom they are also biologically related although in more distant ways) with *tzik* terms.

3. When members of one household became aware (as a result of my interests) that other speakers treated a certain biological relationship differently from the way they themselves did (e.g., that in another family the father's younger brother was greeted as *suku'un*, whereas in their own family the father's younger brother was greeted as *tataa'*), they were inclined to say that the other speakers were wrong rather than to conclude that the system of *tzik* appellation was fluid.

4. It is a matter for sexual joking if a man brings wood or corn for a woman to whom he is not married. As I learned to make tortillas of the requisite roundness and smoothness, I was told repeatedly that now that I could feed an Indian man, I could marry one. The possibility that a woman might live with "two husbands," as some men are known to have "two wives" (i.e., to support both a wife and a mistress) was instantly rejected, even in jest, by my

female informants—because of the huge amount of labor that would be involved in feeding both men.

5. Single women and couples served as *priosti* ('host') of the saints' day celebrations that I witnessed. I know of no case in which a single man did this, although I was told it was a possibility.

6. I have in fact at times been regaled with stories of murders committed by wives against their husbands.

7. The consumption of alcohol is a time-honored indigenous Mopan activity (Thompson 1930), which men and older women have always enjoyed. Mopan people agree, however, that there is more drinking today than there used to be, and that it occurs in a greater number of contexts.

8. For those who can afford this luxury, a recent innovation in larger villages has been the installation of electric-powered community corn mills.

9. This is one of the main attractions of moving into one's own house and away from one's mother-in-law as one grows older.

10. Even with older children, pointing or investigative behavior is often interpreted as practical desire rather than intellectual curiosity.

11. The Spanish forms *mama* and *papa* (sometimes *papito*) are also used in address to babies. This is the only use of Spanish kinship terms that I observed.

12. Within living memory, I am told, more was made of the celebration surrounding this ceremony than is made today.

13. Social visiting other than sometimes on Sundays is not approved; it is seen as a sign of laziness. However, where the purpose of the visit is to share labor with another household, outings are permitted and even encouraged. These occasions punctuate village life at frequent intervals and provide the rationale for outings and excitement.

14. As part of the formal interview with children that I describe in chapter 7, I asked them how they could tell if someone was a *tataa'*. The question had originally been intended as a probe for the children's grasp of essential or defining features of this term (cf. Landau 1982). Rather than answering in such terms, however, a great many of the children simply said that they knew someone was a *tataa'* because they had been told that he was.

15. Mopan schoolchildren, incidentally, clearly already sensitive to the value placed in their community on reproduction of existing templates rather than on production of new ones, very much enjoy performing this sort of task. One non-Mopan teacher wrung her hands to me in private over the fact that the children in the village do not understand that being given lines to write is a punishment. Apparently the children in her classes volunteered for this treatment with enthusiasm.

Chapter 5

1. The offering and acceptance of food is an important Mopan means of displaying solidarity. In a society in which overt sullenness is not tolerated, the even-tempered refusal of another's offer of food conveys a definite message of hostility.

2. The same verb is used of the failure to treat a religious object with the required scrupulous reverence.

3. I spoke to one young wife whose husband told me he had used this method. The woman was quite sure that she had indeed been bewitched and laughed as she spoke of the way her senses had been affected.

4. Older women obliquely boast about their incompetence at domestic labor during their early married years.

5. Mopan women often remain uncertain about the details of conception (and contraception) as they grow older. Even sturdy matrons are unsure when and how they will cease to be fertile.

6. These are substantial, since ideally they represent all that she needs in life. Several dresses or dress lengths of cloth will be included, as will some changes of underwear and slips. Hair ornaments and oil, a necklace, and perhaps the expensive gold earrings of the region will also appear. A few household staples, such as coffee and soap, are de rigueur.

7. Protestant missionaries tend to deny the significance of compadrazgo relations because these are intimately associated with the ceremonies of the Catholic Church. Even where Mopan individuals convert to Protestantism, however, preexisting Mopan compadrazgo relationships continue to be honored in address.

8. Where absence is construed as clearly nonmalicious (as in cases of severe illness), the introduction ceremony can be performed on another occasion.

9. A collective term exists in Mopan that refers explicitly to the relationships of compadrazgo, and in modern Mopan it appears as a possessed noun. From what we know about neighboring languages (Bricker 1981), it is evident that we see in this term what was once a perfect suffix, referring to a single past moment of 'respect', now completed.

In-tzik-maj-Ø.
1A-respect-PERF-3B
I have respected (*tzik*) them. [ARCHAIC]
They are my *compadres* and *comadres*. [MODERN]

10. The reluctance to assume senior-generation *tzik* statuses recalls the Mopan habit of referring to the risk that prospective godparents will refuse the labor of that office, as well as the well-documented pan-Mayan reluctance (known also among the Mopan) of nominees to public office to assume the burden of such positions (see Danziger 1996a).

11. A number of the traditional stories I have collected also involve use of this word where a protagonist is saved by substitution of a decoy in some critical context. For example, in one story the woodpecker is recruited to provide the sound of chopping wood so that a man's captors will think he is working while in fact he escapes. The woodpecker in this story is described as *u jel* 'his substitute' with respect to the man who is saved.

Chapter 6

1. A full analysis of all the dimensions of contrast relevant to the meanings of *tataa'* and *suku'un* would of course include numerous other dimensions, such as that specifying whether or not the relationship was acquired through the enactment of a performative ceremony (no for *tataa'*, *suku'un*, and others; yes for *na'yoox*, *ja'an*, and others), or whether the referent is the senior or the junior party in the relationship (senior for *tataa'*, *suku'un*, and others; junior for *mam itz'iin* and others). Such a full analysis is not provided here (although see table 3.1 and Danziger 1991), since it is claimed, in the spirit of monosemy and contrastive analysis (Goodenough 1956), that the single dimension of contrast 'access to past experience' expresses the entirety of the distinction between the terms *tataa'* and *suku'un*. On all other dimensions of contrast relevant to the *tzik* greeting set, this analysis claims that the two terms have the same semantic value. In the same spirit, in this analysis, both positive and negative values on a single dimension of contrast have semantic weight and conceptual consequences.

2. The order of the components is roughly that which a Mopan person faced with a greeting situation would have to consider if consciously using this analysis to decide whether to speak, and if so, what to say. For example, the initial component [OLDER THAN] specifies which of the parties must speak first in the respect greeting situation.

3. Although on one illuminating occasion I was witness to an argument between two adult siblings calling one another *suku'un/itz'iin* 'same-generation consanguines/brothers' regarding whether, when the elder began to grow very old, the younger would begin to greet him as *tataa'* 'senior different-generation consanguine/grandfather'. The younger brother argued that they would always remain in the relationship that they now occupied. The older brother thought not, maintaining that as his hair grew white he should indeed be respected as *tataa'* rather than as *suku'un*. This interesting example notwithstanding, I never heard or saw any evidence that the greeting exchanged in these kinds of reciprocated relationships did actually change as a result of the aging of the parties concerned.

4. In a known case of sexual relations between a pair of individuals whom English would consider to be related as *uncle* and *niece* and in which the woman had always before greeted the man as *suku'un*, the friend who provided me with the story in English ("maybe it's sin if I tell you, but we all see it") emphasized that the man had become involved with "his own sister!"

5. From ethnographic observation, it is also clear that the edges of the recognized kindred are elastic and can readily be expanded, within an individual's lifetime, through changes in physical and social proximity.

Chapter 7

1. Two initial pilot interviews are not included in table 7.1.

2. In Piagetian investigations, the absolute age at which various stages are achieved is not of interest and has been shown to vary a great deal, especially in cross-cultural circumstances (Dasen 1977). It is the verification of the existence of Piagetian stages within a culture, and in particular of their constant sequential nature relative to one another with respect to a single task, that is most important.

3. The Mopan term *chumach* 'old, ancient, venerable' used here denotes chronological agedness but contrasts with the more neutral term *nooch* 'old, big, large'.

4. Only four children gave silent or "don't know" answers to *every* question they were asked, including requests to define words from outside the *tzik* greeting domain (e.g., *alkaalde* 'mayor'). In these four children only, we might suspect that a category 1 response reflects nonengagement with the task.

5. Haviland and Clark (1974, 28) make the thought-provoking point that, by postulating all relationships in terms of Ego, much of the classic expert literature on kinship semantics in anthropology has also taken a perspective that, in Piaget's terms, is relational but not reciprocal.

6. Significance is established at $p < .05$ in this discussion and in those that follow. Probability statements relevant to the data in figure 7.1 are based on chi-squared calculations made by combining the scores for all four terms, both separately for each age-group and for the overall distribution. The calculation was made using expected values for each age-group that were weighted toward the observed total proportion of relational to nonrelational responses in the data (the proportion is about 60 percent relational overall). If expected values are instead set at 50 percent (equal chance of any response falling into the relational or nonrelational group), the pattern of significances does not change. The analysis using expected values

weighted toward the observed total proportion (about 60 percent relational) was also performed after first excluding responses that fell into coding category 1. Since category 1 includes many kinds of responses, including silent ones, it might perhaps be considered less reflective of developmental stage than the other categories. Once again, the pattern of significances does not change.

7. The probability figure is based on a chi-squared test. The observed distribution diverges even more radically from a distribution in which expected values are set at chance (predicting that .33 of the total would fall into each of the three categories). The significance derives primarily from the performance of the younger children: when the sample is divided into age clusters, significance declines in the oldest age-group (presumably due to a ceiling effect: Where all responses approach the highest coding category level, then the probability of observing similarity at chance is also high). Data from ages seven to eleven retain significance.

Chapter 8

1. See also Blount 1975 and Dixon 1968 for accounts of cases in which facts of historical or mythical circumstance must be taken into account before felicitous reference can occur. Comaroff (1980), and Needham (1960) discuss other instances in which social action creates a kinship class.

2. The establishment of classes of people who are potential spouses and spouse-givers, for example, has been considered one of the most important and universal of human classificatory tasks, since the making of such distinctions is an indication of cultural rather than natural awareness (Lévi-Strauss 1963).

3. In recent treatments (cf. Lakoff 1987), monosemous analyses have frequently been linked, through their reliance on speakers' clear judgments about the truth or falsehood of membership of any particular referent in a semantic category, to a philosophy on the part of the analyst that specifies the existence of an objective reality unrelated to human construal. It should be clear by this point, however, that such a necessary link is often quite untenable. If anything, the Mopan data suggest instead that to create a conceptual category in which a speaker entertains clear intuitions about truth or falsehood in every referential case is the most radical act of linguistic reality construction of all.

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