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"How do we not go back to the Factory?" Negotiating Neoliberal Conditions in a Latina-Led Transnational Development Organization in El Paso (Texas)

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“HOW DO WE NOT GO BACK TO THE FACTORY?” NEGOTIATING NEOLIBERAL
CONDITIONS IN A LATINA-LED TRANSNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
IN EL PASO (TEXAS)

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By

Anthony Michael Jimenez

2012

Dedication

To all those I call family...

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by

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Abstract

Background: As the structure of the global economy shifted the United States' manufacturing base South of the U.S-Mexico in the years up to and post-NAFTA, thousands of women of Mexican descent residing in El Paso (Texas) were displaced from their garment factory jobs and left without social, political and economic support. Subsequently, some of these women joined La Mujer Obrera, an organization committed to fostering community development for low-income women from both sides of the U.S-Mexico border. The organization faces difficulties in receiving economic aid from the local government, which is apparently due to their development model being incompatible with that of the city.

Design: I utilize three components of Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography: (1) in-depth interviews with 10 members of La Mujer Obrera and 6 city officials; (2) textual analyses of the documents reflecting La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso's development discourses and actions; and (3) participant observation.

Results: Members of La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso establish two very different yet intersecting models of development based on holistic community empowerment and neoliberalism, respectively. While city officials' adherence to a neoliberal paradigm predisposes them to reject some of the organization's activities and aims, La Mujer Obrera's transnational orientation toward development opens up an alternative approach for thinking about gender, development and culture.

Conclusion: Oriented by five feminist approaches toward development (Peet & Hartwick, 2009), this thesis makes four scholarly contributions: it (1) offers further critique of conventional models of development; (2) provides empirical evidence of gender subordination in neoliberal development discourse; (3) examines the relationship between certain texts (e.g., Empowerment Zone summary) and development discourse; and (4) presents a new paradigm for thinking about culture and its relevance in community development. With regard to (4), "culture as community capital" is introduced as a conceptual guide for converting heterogeneous intersections of oppression (Collins, 1991) into novel forms of symbolic capital. In terms of practical implications, this thesis provides development practitioners and policymakers a clear framework for understanding the importance and relevance of explicitly incorporating specific local-level needs and socio-demographic considerations (e.g., on gender and nationality) in development goals and discourse in order to foster comprehensive community growth.

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Ch. 1: Introduction

Study Impetus

When thinking about the term “development”, practitioners, policy-makers, scholars and social activists usually attach a particular adjective to it. Whether it is *economic* development, *social* development or *human* development, to offer a few examples, the connotation changes and the implications that follow alter the possibilities and challenges for myriad social actors across heterogeneous social contexts. Griffin (2009) suggests:

The task for those engaged in the politics of development is to improve lives through careful and committed consideration of the ways in which ‘development’ operates, the assumptions on which it depends and the uneven and sometimes contrary effects that it reproduces. (p. 20)

In analyzing the way that development “operates”, discourse about development becomes relevant, along with the texts (Smith, 1987) (e.g., written goals, strategies or objectives) reflected in such discourse. When examining the “assumptions on which [development] depends”, questions about gender neutrality may be brought to the forefront, considering that women represent 60% of the world’s 550 million working poor (International Labour Organization, 2004). Lastly, understanding the “contrary effects” of development requires that scholars problematize what appear to be the most benevolent of development outcomes, such as economic enhancement. In this thesis, I argue that the city of El Paso promotes a neoliberal model of development that carries gender-neutral assumptions and, while it is founded on a discourse of economic enhancement for all (including women), it results in further gender subordination.

Development is often posed as a humanitarian tool for fostering equality across different localities among and within the world’s nations (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Although local

governments, such as the City of El Paso, appear to present equitable, all-inclusive plans for development – for instance, through a neoliberal model of development focused exclusively on economic productivity – it is possible that these plans contain economic incentives that favor only a specific proportion of the population (i.e., wealthy, elite groups). Even if these incentives do benefit more than this small subset of the population, the social implications behind economic enhancement require further investigation. With this type of development, social injustices may be heightened, including further perpetuation or legitimization of gender inequality.

For a Latina-led organization called La Mujer Obrera¹ (LMO) in El Paso, a city located on the southwest corner of Texas and adjacent to Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua, Mexico), development is framed in terms of the empowerment of a transnational community made up of Latina women from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border – a definition that simultaneously takes on a transnational orientation and adopts a broader conceptualization of development than the local government. Both the distinction and overlap between the development models that the city and LMO adopt are important because it is between and within them that specific demographic considerations are ignored, negotiated and/or fully embraced.

In adopting a feminist orientation toward development (Peet & Hartwick, 2009), I examine development from the ground up. According to Nichols and Griffith (2009): “Seldom is there an explicit link between people’s work on the ground and the policy relation in which their work occurs” (p. 244). Considering the ongoing discourse and practice in the field of “development”, examining how development texts and discourses are reflected in one another offers fuller insight into the assumptions being made about development in specific social settings, such as the U.S.-Mexico border. Using Dorothy Smith’s (1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2002,

¹ Translated “working women.”

2005) institutional ethnography as a methodological entry point, I look at what models of development city officials and La Mujer Obrera adhere to and discuss the social implications of such models in regards to questions about gender, culture and sociodemographics. Of importance in this thesis is unraveling the symbolic legitimization of oppressive social orders (e.g., masculine order) inherent within development discourses and practices.

In this thesis, I examine how definitions of development reassert social positions of individuals on the basis of several sociodemographics, for example ethnicity and gender. Because the Hispanic (interchanged with Latino(a) throughout this study) population is rapidly growing in the United States and El Paso is predominantly Hispanic (over 80%), the relevance of this study extends beyond just this U.S.-Mexico border site. In fact, census figures show that more than half the growth in the U.S. population between 2000 and 2010 was due to an increase in the Hispanic population (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas & Albert, 2011). In terms of gender, I focus on how LMO members negotiate the feminization of labor that many of them confronted within El Paso's former garment industry. This feminized labor is still seen today. According to Peet and Hartwick (2009), 90% of the 27 million people working worldwide in export processing zones (EPZs), which include garment factories, are women.

However, the women of LMO no longer work in the garment industry, which largely resulted from NAFTA and its requirements to shift industry south of the U.S. border. Spener (2002) explains: "the loss of sewing jobs in El Paso after 1974 can be attributed in some measure to maquiladora plants opening in Mexico" (p. 143). The amount of jobs lost in El Paso's garment industry due to the implementation of NAFTA in 1994 totaled 5,414 by May 1999 (Spener, 2002). This left Latinas formerly employed within the industry without an economic base. In response, some women in El Paso sought to address this job loss by shifting into the maquiladora

workforce in Mexico. However, literature indicates that this shift may not have been the most beneficial action for women. In examining whether maquila work is exploitative or emancipating, Beek (2001) concludes that the most prominent benefit of maquila employment is an elevated economic situation. Several scholars echo this finding and have noted the economic advantages that maquiladora employment provides (Feenstra & Hanson, 1997; Sargent & Matthews, 1997). However, following critiques that have been made about work in maquiladoras (Akhter, 2003; Gettman & Peña, 1986; Honig, 1996; Machado, 2010), I problematize (although do not fully reject) the economic advantages they offer and contend that they sustain a neoliberal model of development that repositions Latinas within a cheap labor pool (Visvanathan 1986, 1991) and institutionally legitimizes a social order characterized by gender subordination. In this sociology of development, I argue that the tensions created in the overlap between city officials' and LMO members' models of development create a space for rethinking development with attention to specific local-level needs and cultural considerations, which is critical to accomplishing community development in myriad social settings.

About La Mujer Obrera

Many of the women who joined La Mujer Obrera previously worked in El Paso's garment industry. Between the 1920s and the late 1980s, the garment industry has played a vital role in El Paso's economy; it expanded after the Great Depression to meet the need for more military uniforms (Spener, 2002). In the beginning of the 1970s, women began a two-year strike against Farah, a garment manufacturing company in El Paso, calling for membership into the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers' Union and the end of repressive working conditions (Coyle et al., 1984; DeMoss, 1989; Honig, 1996; Spener, 2002). However, gaining membership in the union did not offer women opportunities for leadership, persuading the

former garment workers to form an organization called Centro del Obrero Fronterizo² in 1981, which was later renamed La Mujer Obrera to represent the organization's demographic makeup. The primary goal of the organization at the time was to call for women workers' rights. Yet the situation for women in El Paso worsened. As a direct result of NAFTA and as part of the United States' economic restructuring along neoliberal political economic lines, the garment industries in El Paso closed and relocated across the border into Mexico (Spener, 2002), China, India and elsewhere, leaving thousands of women without jobs. La Mujer Obrera subsequently became a new space for women to advocate for economic opportunity, women's empowerment, and a new economic base grounded in community revitalization.

Along with economic empowerment, La Mujer Obrera's primary aim is to foster community development for low-income Latina women. They accomplish this with six social purpose businesses, guided by an ideological framework they refer to as Plan Mayachen. They social purpose businesses include (1) Mercado Mayapan Festival Marketplace; (2) Rayito de Sol Daycare; (3) Café Mayapan; (4) Lum Metik Trading Company; (5) Uxmal Apartments; and (6) Center for Bilingual Development and Social Enterprise (CDBES) ("Women's analysis", 2011). The Mercado, daycare and café bring the experience of Mexico to residents in the United States, offering nutritional dishes that date back generations in Mexico, education for children rooted in Mexican tradition – such as the Día De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) – and live performances of groups from various parts of Mexico, like Veracruz. Lum Metik³ Trading Company, a fair-trade women's cooperative established by a bi-national organization located in El Paso called La Red, helps with the exportation and commercialization of Mexican crafts, providing items to sell

² Translated "The Border Worker Center"

³ Translated "Mother Earth" – it comes from a Mayan language called Tzotzil.

in LMO and an economic profit for women in Mexico (“Lum Metik”, 2011). The apartments provide affordable housing for residents of the community. CDBES serves as an educational program for adults that augments members’ entrepreneurial, technological and leadership skills, advancing their ability to foster economic development for the community through micro-enterprises and business incubation while simultaneously ensuring that economic opportunities are accessible to members of their community. Plan Mayachen, an ideological framework that presents Mexican heritage as an economic motor and a medium toward community development, guides all of LMO’s social purpose businesses. Its primary philosophy revolves around the embracement of culture as a means of holistically developing every component of Chamizal Barrio’s social infrastructure.

In terms of funding, the organization has managed to gain wide community support. Sources of funding include the City of El Paso Museum and Cultural Affairs Department, Bank of America, the Ford Foundation, Coca Cola, the Margaret E. Casey Foundation and Sparkplug Foundation. Additionally, the city has provided financial support to La Mujer Obrera in the form of Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs). According to the City of El Paso, this particular type of funding was provided to LMO between 1991 and 2000 and then again between 2007 and 2012 with support ranging between \$16,000 and \$250,000. Of particular focus in this study is the Empowerment Zone (EZ) grant, which La Mujer Obrera applied for in 2009 but was denied and subsequently provided to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (“Mercado Problems”, 2009). Although La Mujer Obrera does sustain funding from other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profits in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez region, the funding received has not been nearly as substantial as the prospective amounts available through local government, specifically the City of El Paso. As a primary funding source for La Mujer Obrera’s

activities, the City of El Paso enforces the conditions that designate whether or not La Mujer Obrera will receive the funding needed to continue its activities (i.e., through the Empowerment Zone grant). In order to gain necessary resources from the local government, La Mujer Obrera has had to negotiate its position vis-à-vis state politics and ideologies, to include beliefs regarding particular gender norms, ideas, and beliefs.

Demographically, La Mujer Obrera is primarily made up of Mexican women. Although the term “Mexican” usually indicates someone of Mexican nativity, the women of LMO do not accept that distinction. Lourdes (LMO) explains:

The board [of LMO] is 100% Mexican women. Now, but by Mexican women I mean . . . there’s no differentiation between women who were born on this side of the border versus the other side of the border. Some of these women may have been born and raised in El Paso, and some not.

Despite the fact that many of the women who are part of La Mujer Obrera were born in the United States, the women of this organization reaffirm an identity that draws on their Mexican descent across the international border. Vila (1999) explains: “Identities are formed partially through a complex intertwining over time of categories and identity narratives about ourselves and others” (p. 77). The women of La Mujer Obrera identify themselves in harmony with Mexican heritage and traditions, drawing on their Mexican roots for things like nutrition, clothing, and cuisine. Moreover, because the organization’s goals are relevant to a population residing on and traveling between both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border (i.e., low-income women of Mexican descent) and resources are drawn from both localities, La Mujer Obrera may be understood as a transnational community organization.

Gender and nationality are not the only characteristics that compose members of La Mujer Obrera. Other intersecting attributes include age, race and ethnicity, language, level of education, whether or not they were formerly employed in maquiladoras, marital status,

socioeconomic status and location. According to members of LMO, many of them have been part of the organization since its inception in the early 80s, resulting in an organization spanning three generations. Ages thus range from early twenties to early sixties. Racially and ethnically, the organization is mostly comprised of non-white Hispanics. In terms of language, members generally agree that about 15% of the organization is bilingual while Spanish remains the primary language for the rest of the membership. Members of LMO indicated that many of them have not completed higher than a middle school education, although level of education does range all the way up to the graduate level. In terms of maquila employment in Mexico, several members suggested that about 50% of the organization's attendees (i.e., individuals who attend LMO's functions) work in maquiladoras today, while nearly 80% of LMO members (i.e., those who work for LMO) had worked in maquiladoras in the past. Moreover, approximately 25% of interviewed LMO members previously worked in El Paso's former garment industry. Members also indicated that over 90% of the organization was married. The socioeconomic status of most LMO members is low, reminiscent of the situation for many residents in the Chamizal Barrio where LMO is situated. Erica (LMO) briefly explains how several of these demographics intersect to marginalize the organization's members:

It is true that women workers are marginalized, and when you add race, and when you add class and gender, I mean that's a triple no matter what. But then when you talk about being at the border, and that they're immigrants, and that they're Spanish-speaking, it's a whole other layer and level of marginalization.

The intersections of all these demographics are carefully considered in LMO's development model, which is not the case for the city's model. Intersectionality thus becomes an important theme to consider in development discourse.

About Chamizal Barrio

Situated along the U.S.-Mexico border, El Paso is a transnational site, serving both U.S. and Mexican residents, and it is not particularly wealthy. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, more than 82% of the El Paso County population identified as being of Hispanic/Latino origin. About a quarter of the county's population fell below the poverty level, and about 27% of residents were foreign born (U.S. Census, 2010). Vila (1999) suggests that El Paso and Juárez's transnational positioning influences how perspectives and identities are cultivated in the region, which becomes pertinent to the way the members of La Mujer Obrera negotiate gender norms and ideas propagated by the City of El Paso. In 2002, El Paso was characterized by some of the cheapest labor in the United States and noted for having the highest unemployment of any major city in Texas (Spener, 2002). Additionally, like other U.S.-Mexico border locales, El Paso confronts issues of high underemployment and participation in the informal economy (Anderson & Gerber, 2008).

For Chamizal Barrio, a neighborhood adjacent to the U.S.-Mexico border in El Paso, the situation is bleaker. La Mujer Obrera sits at the heart of Chamizal Barrio, located in census tract 28, which has been designated an eligible Empowerment Zone area ("Executive Summary", 2010). El Paso is one of fifteen cities nationwide to be designated an empowerment zone, contingent on being federally recognized as a "distressed area in need of sustainable community development" ("Empowerment Zone", 2012, p. 1). Table 1.1 illustrates some of the ways the neighborhood compares in socio-demographic terms with the El Paso Metropolitan Statistical Area.

Table 1.1: Comparison Statistics for Chamizal Barrio and the El Paso MSA

TABLE 1			
Comparison Statistics		Chamizal	El Paso MSA
Poverty Rate	Poverty rate 1970 ^a	54.4	21.4
	Poverty rate 2000 ^b	58.7	23.8
Income	Median household income ^c	\$11,362	\$31,051
Demographics	Population 2000 ^d	10,086	679,622
	% Population change, 1970 - 2000 ^e	-34.0	89.2
	Racial/ethnic composition, 2000 ^f		
	% White	2.4	17.0
	% Hispanic/Latino	96.2	78.2
	% Black/African-American	0.7	2.7
	% Residents under age 18 ^g	34.8	32.0
	% Single-parent households ^h	26.0	12.2
	% Foreign born, 2000 ⁱ	48.0	27.4
Education	% Population in same house as five years ago ^j	52.9	55.2
	% Adults without a high school diploma, 2000 ^k	71.2	34.2
	% Adults with a college degree, 2000 ^l	1.9	16.6
	% Students proficient in reading, 2005 ^m	64.1	80.7
Labor Market	% Students proficient in math, 2005 ⁿ	55.0	65.5
	Unemployment rate, 2000 ^o	18.0	9.5
Housing	% Adults in the labor force ^p	40.9	56.5
	Homeownership rate, 2000 ^q	21.1	63.6
	% Renters with a housing cost burden ^r	46.7	43.2
	% Rental units that are HUD subsidized ^r	55.4	15.4
	Median value for owner-occupied units ^s	\$40,596	\$69,600
Access to Credit	Median year structure built ^t	1956	1976
	% Credit files that are thin, 2004 ^u	36.1	24.7
	% Credit files with high credit scores ^v	50.2	49.8
	% Mortgage originations that are high cost, 2005 ^w	38.1	31.8
	Mortgage denial rate, 2005 ^x	52.9	25.5

Source: Lopez (2007)

In 2000, the Chamizal Barrio poverty rate was more than double that of the El Paso MSA. The median income level of those residing in Chamizal Barrio was just a little over a third of the MSA's. More than 90% of the neighborhood identified as Hispanic, and almost half the district was foreign-born. Lastly, over 70% of residents in the Chamizal Barrio did not have a high school diploma, more than doubling the percentage for the entire El Paso MSA.

Several residents and LMO members identify the Chamizal Barrio as a site in major need of assistance and revitalization. Carolina (LMO) describes the area:

In this area we don't have a library; either we have to go to Clardy or to the one downtown. A lot of people, well, they don't have a car to move around in or anything. [The area] is very abandoned and contaminated. Also, there are a lot of junkyards. There are

pornographic stores. This street, Texas, is very dangerous for children . . . There are a lot of bars . . . This community has been forgotten in relation to the contamination, the education, the lack of investment. I'm not talking to you about the market [LMO's Mercado], because this is a space for the community, but we, little by little, are accomplishing something [with LMO]. Do you understand me? This is for them. (Translated from Spanish)

Several members of the organization feel like Chamizal Barrio is a place that has been forgotten by the city, although this may not entirely be the case. The City of El Paso's Department of Community and Human Development (DCHD) has established what is called a Weed and Seed program, designed to address major gaps for the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA), which the Chamizal Barrio comprises (see Figure 1.1). The Weed and Seed program draws on information from meetings with residents, non-profits, businesses and other stakeholders in the area to strategically address the systemic issues in the Chamizal Neighborhood ("Chamizal Neighborhood", 2012), clearly illustrating that the city has not forgotten about the region.



Figure 1.1: Chamizal Neighborhood Weed and Seed Boundary ("Chamizal Neighborhood", 2012)

According to the program, major gaps for this region were identified as follows: (1) youth/educational programs; (2) substance abuse/gang prevention; (3) affordable homeownership

programs; and (4) workforce/economic development programs. With their model of development, LMO consciously orients their activities toward addressing all four of these gaps.

Consolidating Development, Gender, Transnationalism and Culture

In this section, I document the work that has been done in relation to the intersections among development, gender, transnationalism and culture, all relevant to discussions about effective community development. Understanding gender inequality as a prospective byproduct of particular development models requires knowledge of how certain models function. Although entities that facilitate development, such as the City of El Paso, overtly promote economic, social, and political sustainability for receiving groups like La Mujer Obrera, underlying motives for ideological restructuring may exist (Kingsbury, 2008; McGillivray, 2008). Hunt (2008a) echoes this sentiment: “Many donors provide aid not only for humanitarian reasons, but to enhance their own economic and political interests” (p. 74). Bourdieu (1991a, 1995) explains this act of giving as an act of possessing, a form of symbolic violence where social exchange yields an unspoken and misrecognized obligation toward the facilitator. Therefore, in the facilitation of development funds (e.g., in the form of an Empowerment Zone grant), aid acts as a catalyst for social debt, requiring that receiving entities (e.g., La Mujer Obrera) politically and ideologically align themselves with those providing the funds.

Development within and across nation-states is an important aspect of globalization, which must be understood in gendered terms. Acker (2004) suggests that the majority of the literature presents globalization as gender neutral, providing a cloak for what Freeman (2001) and Ward (1993) refer to as the implicit masculinization of macrostructures. As Griffin (2009) puts it: “Gender is not, as many would have it, marginal to relations of economic governance, but the belief that it is remains persistent, not least among those who believe economics, even

politics, to be neutral sciences peopled by functionally similar, rational actors” (p. 6). Exposing this latent gender positionality within macro-level processes such as globalization – or its ideological enabler, neoliberalism – is crucial for creating more progressive gender politics.

Connell (2009) summarizes this point:

The world in which neoliberalism is ascendant is still a gendered world, and neoliberalism has an implicit gender politics the neoliberal agenda for the reform of national and international economics involves closing down historic possibilities for gender reform. (p. 110)

Adopting a gender-neutral perspective of development falls into what Scott (1998) calls “general knowledge”. In order to recognize the complex and diverse developmental needs of a region, Scott (1998) suggests that practitioners draw on “local knowledge”, zeroing in on the community’s specific needs and making social categories, such as gender, relevant.

Taking off during the early years of the Reagan administration, Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Yet the neoliberal ideology has served as an effective political instrument to advocate for the maximization of profits for elite class interests and to deny the acute social problems that result from neoliberalization in practice (Harvey, 2005; Collins & Jimenez, 2012). Such ideology is what guides the City of El Paso’s orientation toward development.

Rethinking development requires a new understanding of how specific institutions, such as the City of El Paso, facilitate a particular gender order (i.e., a patriarchal order). Connell (2009) emphasizes this point: “the hegemonic form of masculinity in the current world gender

order is the masculinity associated with those who control its dominant institutions” (p. 110). In terms of development, these dominant institutions hide neoliberal agendas (Klein, 2007) with a rhetorically appealing yet flawed logic: “Production means jobs. Jobs mean money. Money equals economic growth. Economic growth means development. Development is good for everyone” (Robbins et al., 2010, p. 109). This logic, although intuitively appealing to some, conceals the realities of uneven development, including the fact that regional economic growth is fueled through highly socially exploitative practices and accompanied by decline in other regions (Smith, 2008). According to Pellow (2007), “the production of social inequalities by race, class, gender, and nation is not an aberration or the result of market failures. Rather, it is evidence of the normal routine functioning of capitalist economies” (p. 17).

A recent wave of economic restructuring in the United States came during the latter half of the twentieth century, which included initiatives such as the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA, which came into full effect in 1994, was created to establish a “free-trade” connection for the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Although the program may have been intended to generate ‘win-win’ outcomes, it has negatively affected many U.S.-Mexico border residents. For example, NAFTA influences interactions between the U.S. and Mexico in a way that reinforces the ongoing drug war economy in Ciudad Juárez (Marchand, 2004). Additional ramifications of neoliberal policies have been shown to affect women specifically (Stevenson, 2004), including a widening economic gap based on gender (Jaggar, 2002; White, 2004) and increased maternal mortality (Jaggar, 2002). Additionally, as a direct result of NAFTA, manufacturing jobs once present in El Paso have been outsourced to Ciudad Juárez (Machado, 2010; Spener, 2002), resulting in job losses for thousands of women, some of whom joined La Mujer Obrera.

Harnessing development to promote gender equality is idealized as a goal to work toward for all localities on a global scale (see Millennium Development goal three in “United Nations”, 2011). The intersections between gender and development have received a tremendous amount of attention with a range of diverse foci to include: the role of women in economic development for industrial capitalism (Tilly & Scott, 1987), differential impacts of development on the basis of gender in third world settings (Leacock & Safa, 1986; Nash & Safa, 1980), and ways in which development fosters gendered divisions of labor that place women in roles that typically demand difficult, tedious, and/or unfulfilling labor (Connell, 2009; Freidberg, 2009; Fuwa, 2004; Gupta, 1998; Hunt, 2008b; Newell, 2005; Scheyvens, 1998). Grounding this literature in the context U.S.-Mexico border, Fernández Kelly (1989) discusses the relationship between development and gender in terms of the economic restructuring that the U.S. had experienced in the years up to and post-NAFTA, alluding to the movement of garment manufacturing bases into Mexican *maquiladoras*. Fernández Kelly (1989) explains: “Relocation [of the garment factories] to less-developed countries allowed employers to tap large wage differentials while, at the same time, eluding rising workers’ demands in advanced countries” (p. 625). Thus, for women formerly employed in the garment industry in the United States, such as those who joined *La Mujer Obrera*, part of NAFTA’s implementation meant that not only was their economic base being taken out from underneath them, but their voices against unjust working conditions were being silenced.

However, the factory employment is not something that former U.S. garment workers are eager to reclaim in the U.S. or Mexico, considering the working conditions in the factories. For the women employed in the garment industry in Mexico’s *maquiladoras*, the working conditions are anything but fulfilling (Wright, 2006). Plagued by low wages, physical injuries and

limited/unenforced protections against sexual harassment, women's health in these factories continues to deteriorate (Akhter, 2003; Gettman & Peña, 1986; Honig, 1996; Machado, 2010). However, women in these factories have not passively accepted the harsh conditions of the garment industry and have actively engaged in strategizing various forms of resistance (Kamel & Hoffman, 1998; Peña, 1997).

Drawing on their transnational economic and social resources, La Mujer Obrera moves beyond the city's neoliberal orientation toward development and adopts an approach that is reminiscent of women's resistance to development initiatives that reinforce gender subordination (Nash & Fernández Kelly, 1983; Safa, 1980; Ward, 1987). This study examines both the city's and LMO's approaches toward development and grounds them within the U.S-Mexico border's transnational context. For Marchand (2009), such an approach fills a void in development literature: "migrant transnationalism provides a unique site of 'in-betweenness' which has not been explored sufficiently and which potentially provides a platform for rethinking development, gender equity and justice" (p. 933). Despite the fact that many of the women part of La Mujer Obrera are not "transnational" in the sense of moving between the U.S. and Mexico, as an organization committed to promoting gender equality and justice for both sides of the border, La Mujer Obrera functions within this site of "in-betweenness", which makes it an ideal case study for seeking understanding of the transnational institutional gender dynamics of globalization (Ross-Sheriff, 2007) and the ways in which such dynamics mediate neoliberal orientations of development.

As the development literature suggests, La Mujer Obrera must ideologically position itself favorably in relation to its providing source (i.e., City of El Paso) in order to secure a primary stream of funding. In this study, I examine how much, if any, of this ideological

alignment is gendered or based on other intersections of oppression/opportunity (Collins, 1991), to include nationality, age, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In other words, I examine if and how the City of El Paso's model of development influences the ways in which members of La Mujer Obrera conceive of development, and vice versa. Additionally, I assess how these women's transnational lives shape/mediate their negotiations with the city's development agenda.

La Mujer Obrera is not the first organization to confront the conditionality of a local government's development model, as evident in the case of Empowerment Zone grants. Davila (2004) followed the implementation of Empowerment Zone funding (EZ) in a primarily Latino-populated (over fifty percent) region in Upper Manhattan and found that the EZ stifled cultural empowerment. The primary reason for this was the EZ's exclusive focus on entrepreneurial success. According to Davila (2004): "This business treatment of culture serves as a deterrent to ethnic and racial debates by making business considerations a key priority of the initiative, not culture – not its cultural value to residents or prospective visitors" (p. 50). In other words, the social dimension of development appeared to be missing from the Empowerment Zone grants program. The sole focus on economic growth eclipsed the importance of grappling with the racial/ ethnic dimension of oppression as a premise for genuine, culturally-grounded community development in this particular site. In order to secure EZ funding, Latino residents "had to prove that their cultural initiatives could create jobs and monies, an emphasis of current neoliberal policies favoring entrepreneurship and state deregulation" (Davila, 2004, p. 52). However, as is similarly illustrated in LMO's case, these neighborhood institutions in Upper Manhattan aimed for more than just entrepreneurial employment. According to Davila (2004): "Contrary to EZ's

vision, neighborhood-based cultural institutions were never just about business, but about people and their dreams and aspirations for assertion and identity” (p. 61).

This thesis adds to Davila’s (2004) study in three significant ways. First, I question the gender-neutrality of the EZ and other components of the city’s neoliberal development discourse and add gender to Davila’s (2004) ethnic and racial considerations in her critique of Empowerment Zones. Second, Davila (2004) presents the neoliberal tenets of EZ as obstacles for full cultural embracement but does not expand on ways for negotiating or confronting such obstacles. In this thesis, El Paso’s proximity to the border and LMO’s transnational orientation provides a possibility for mediating the city’s neoliberal development model, presenting novel avenues for thinking about development and culture. Lastly, I critique the relevance of Davila’s (2004) “culture as industry” and “culture as ethnicity” dichotomy and argue that the role of culture in the transnational context of El Paso and Ciudad Juárez (MX) is more complex. I illustrate that LMO adopts both “culture as ethnicity” and “culture as industry” to create a “culture as community capital” category. For the city, culture serves as an indicator for where exploitation may take place in order to maximize comparative advantage.

Research Questions

In order to assess the social implications of development in particular social settings, an initial evaluation of the development models that city officials and La Mujer Obrera espouse was completed. These models are articulated in discourse and reflected in texts. This led to the first research question:

RQ₁: What do city officials’ and LMO members’ discourses and texts about development reflect in terms of the development models they adopt, and what are the social implications of these models, particularly in regards to gender?

Answering this research question necessitates collecting data that allow me to evaluate ideas about development in relation to gender norms or beliefs (i.e., the role gender in development and/or its assumed neutrality). However, even if members of La Mujer Obrera appear to tolerate the tenets associated with the city's model of development, it was possible that they would also recognize the oppressive nature of these tenets, that was, unless the local government's discourses and actions minimized the degree to which the oppressive framework may be recognized. This led to the next research question:

RQ₂: To what degree do members of LMO recognize the negative social implications of the city's development model?

Contingent on whether and how oppressive conditions were recognized within a particular development model, members of La Mujer Obrera had to actively (re)negotiate their ideologies, beliefs, and practices regarding multiple social categories (e.g., gender, nationality, class, etc.) in order to receive necessary funding, leading to the next research question:

RQ₃: How are ideologies about gender and other social categories (re)negotiated in relation to the tensions created between and within the city's and LMO's development models?

Lastly, La Mujer Obrera is situated within a transnational context where flows of people, material resources, and ideas could influence the forms of capital available to individuals along the U.S.-Mexico border and mediate the ways in which reactions to gendered ideologies are negotiated (Villa, 1999). The next research question was therefore:

RQ₄: How do the transnational dynamics of La Mujer Obrera mediate the formation of gender ideologies and hegemonic ideas revolving around other social categories?

Research conducted in relation to RQs 1-4 focused on the establishment, recognition and negotiation of particular development models and their associated social repercussions.

However, for this work to inform community development efforts in other U.S.-Mexico border locales, I identified concrete barriers and opportunities that could clearly be articulated to prospective development practitioners. Therefore, the final research question was as follows:

RQ₅: What barriers or opportunities for promoting social equality are encountered by community development organizations like La Mujer Obrera as they pursue development resources from the local government?

In addressing this question, I was able to complete four research tasks: (1) identify the economic, cultural, political, and social obstacles that community development groups face in receiving assistance from external organizations and/or community members; (2) propose specific strategies to help community development groups overcome those obstacles; (3) provide external organizational sources of development aid with specific suggestions for how to promote the agency of community development groups in order to better achieve development goals; and (4) recommend specific state practices (for providing development aid) to ensure greater transparency of the constraints imposed on community development groups that receive development assistance.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters

Closely following Peet and Hartwick (2009), chapter two provides an overview of two approaches to development – neoliberalism and feminism – and offers a brief historical account for how the ideas and assumptions of these kinds of development have transformed through time. For the City of El Paso, the assumptions of neoliberalism illuminated in this chapter reflect city officials’ assumptions about development, which have explicit social consequences detailed in

the discussion. The feminism approach outlined in this chapter does not necessarily parallel La Mujer Obrera but is rather intended to further illustrate what work has been done in understanding the intersections between development and gender.

In chapter three, I discuss the theoretical orientation I employed while collecting/analyzing data. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence is brought to the forefront of the discussion, along with a glimpse of his ideas regarding what he refers to as the "linguistic market". These concepts are grounded in LMO and the city's development discourse and are returned to in the discussion.

Chapter four is about the methods I employ in collecting my data. I provide an overview of institutional ethnography (Smith, 1990a, 1990b, 1999, 2002, 2005) and explain why I chose to utilize it as an entry point for my data collection. Details about in-depth interviews, textual analysis, and participant observation are presented, and I disclose how the sample was selected and data were analyzed.

In chapter five, I present results of the data analysis, which directly addresses my research questions. I offer several themes and briefly discuss their social implications. Chapter six provides an in-depth discussion of the significance of results and revolves around the importance and relevance of culture not only as a medium toward economic development but also as a novel form of community capital that addresses the specific and heterogeneous needs of Chamizal Barrio members. This discussion is separated into two sections, which focus on (1) the tensions created in the disjuncture and overlap between the city's model of development and La Mujer Obrera's and (2) the ways in which these tensions speak to the possibilities for consolidating neoliberal tenets with community-level needs.

A summary of the study is provided in chapter seven, followed an overview of barriers and opportunities for organizations like La Mujer Obrera, recommendations for similar organizations, limitations and areas of prospective research. I close the thesis with a few concluding thoughts about rethinking development along the U.S.-Mexico border and other non-border localities.

Ch. 2: Approaches Toward Development

Depending on ways in which development is defined, resources are unevenly allocated on the basis of varying sociodemographics. Accordingly, development is as much about inequity as it is empowerment, although the term “empowerment” is often used to rhetorically legitimize inequitable development practices. It is therefore important to problematize development and delve deeper into the social consequences of particular development approaches. As Peet and Hartwick (2009) put it: “Theory easily diverges into ideology when the mind tries to comprehend scarcely comprehensible things such as racism, imperialism, sexism, and exploitation – all involved in unequal development” (p. 14). I accomplish three things in this chapter. First, I briefly trace the historical trajectory of neoliberalism and discuss its establishment out of earlier forms of development, to include the classic and neoclassic economy and Keynesian approaches. Next, feminist critiques toward development are discussed, setting up a framework for understanding what type of development LMO will not subject to. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a few thoughts regarding alternative approaches toward development, which are indicative of orientation that LMO adopts in their efforts toward community revitalization.

Neoliberalism

Before neoliberalism was established, capitalist conversations about development revolved around what was known as the classic economy model. As the first of the conventional development models between 1776 and 1848 (Peet & Hartwick, 2009), the classic economy approach lays the groundwork for subsequent models to follow. Its distinguishing characteristic is its unwavering focus on the balance between rational production and consumption (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). The input of labor and output of resources were assumed to be in state of equilibrium. In terms of finances, the classic economy model posits that one’s labor results in

both a livable wage and social mobility. However, this is not the case. A primary critique of the classical economy model is that it places a misguided trust in the morality of the market – that is, the assumption that capital accumulation results in equitable economic distribution (Peet & Hartwick, 2009), which is a framework that is revisited in neoliberal thought. Critics of the model assert that the market is not moral, and the distribution of economic capital is tailored to the elite class.

The neoclassic economy model was not much different than its predecessor. A key distinguishing factor was its proclamation of the market as a value-neutral space where everyone could participate equally (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). This discourse of equal access provided a legitimization basis that neoliberalism would later build upon. Another aspect of the neoclassic model was its position that efficiency would be maximized with little government intervention. In terms of critique, the neoclassic model inherited the assumption that a rational consumer-producer relationship existed. The postulation that the market offered an equal space for participation meant that consumers would naturally purchase what is being produced, resulting in a stable supply-demand economy where aggregate economic development and well-being innately followed the growth of the market. However, such smooth-sailing growth was not accomplished via the neoclassic economy model, precisely because only the entrepreneurial class could fully participate in it (i.e., reap its economic benefits) (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). As is seen today, elites invested in large-scale projects and maintained control of the market, whereas those of lower socioeconomic status consumed only what was necessary for survival. Branching globally, this model initiated a systematic process of uneven development.

As the market expanded within and across international borders and the gap between the rich and the poor widened, consumerism gradually decelerated, spurring Keynesian ideas about

development. Peet and Hartwick (2009) provide a detailed account of how Keynesian economics transitioned into neoliberalism. First, decreasing consumerism meant that there was relatively little spending in relation to the amount of goods produced (i.e., the rational consumer-producer relationship was debunked), which threatened the investments of the elite class and thrust the U.S. economy into the depression of the 1930s. John Maynard Keynes then proposed a strategy for stimulating the economy. A key aspect of this plan was to lower the interest rates of loans to increase borrowing and increase spending (creating a multiplier effect). Doing so, he argued, would increase product demand, stimulate the economy, and increase confidence in businesses, which would result in increased investments (accelerator effect) and economic growth (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Another aspect of Keynesian economics is increased governmental regulation through the form of monetary and fiscal policy, which would be used to ensure that the market does not fall out of a state of equilibrium (Peet & Hartwick, 2009).

Keynesian economics, however, reached a crisis point in the late 1960s. When the market stabilized (i.e., when the market was no longer in recession), consumers were not able to economically keep up investment capital (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). The amount of money that consumers were making declined while the prices of products increased (i.e., inflation), followed by a point of stagflation in the 1970s where there was little economic growth and high unemployment. Layoffs became necessary for the elite class to maintain profits and remain competitive in the market. According to Peet and Hartwick (2009), it was difficult for the Keynesian approach to address this crisis because the monetary policies that allowed for the lowering of interest rates in loans increased inflation – that is, they increased spending, sustained corporate competition and led to a rise in the price of goods. Additionally, monetary policies aimed at lowering inflation (i.e., lowering prices) would have inhibited growth (competitive

efficiency), prompting employers to participate in further layoffs and increase unemployment. As this crisis intensified, rising unemployment meant that market competition was increasingly dominated by corporate elites, which marked a point in time where Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman could easily advocate for a reorientation in economic policy and a model that would come to be known as neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism follows earlier forms of economic thought and is rhetorically legitimated under the discourse of economic liberty (Griffin, 2009; Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Harvey (2010) describes neoliberalism: “Masked by a lot of rhetoric about individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility and the virtues of privatization, the free market and free trade, [neoliberalism] legitimizes draconian policies designed to restore and consolidate capitalism class power” (p. 10). Characterized by capital accumulation, deregulation, and privatization, neoliberalism contests Keynesian economics and revives the (neo)classic economy idea of a moral market where accessibility is equal. However, the difference between neoliberalism and previous economic models is the rhetoric it functions through, which promotes the model as an empowering device intended to allocate resources to populations equitably and which is ideologically legitimated through a utopian discourse predicated on the ideal that we are all “free” to sell our labor and are therefore equal (Collins & Jimenez, 2012; Peet & Hartwick, 2009).

In this discourse, a crisis-ridden capitalist system is indicative of an *inefficient* market, which neoliberal advocates assert is cause for economic recession and a threat to development. According to neoliberal logic, “it is not capitalism that has caused underdevelopment, it is the insufficient development of capitalism that has caused it” (Lo, 2012, p. 51). Economic capital is thus seen as a liberating tool in neoliberal discourse. Friedman believed ““millions of able, active

and vigorous people exist in every underdeveloped country’ and ‘require only a favorable environment to transform the face of their countries’ within neoliberal policies aimed at creating ‘more competitive markets with brave, more innovative entrepreneurs’” (as cited in Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 83). There are two particular problems with this assertion. First, although the message is intended to appeal to a broad-based audience, actual practices only benefit elites – those that already hold the most influence and capital in the market. Second, Friedman is asserting that the benefits of neoliberalism are available to everyone regardless of gender, race, class or other social categories, although this is hardly the case.

Griffin (2009) outlines four of neoliberalism’s primary assumptions about economic development, which are as follows: (1) the market is value-neutral; (2) a free market facilitates the distribution of resources most efficiently; (3) competition is necessary for smooth market functioning; and (4) a competitive market is *naturally* efficient (Griffin, 2009). First, the assumption that the market is a value-neutral space dismisses the relevance of gender and other social categories in terms of social mobility. According to Connell (2007), “neoliberalism does not pursue social justice in relation to gender” (p. 619). Second, the flow of capital in a free market may efficiently travel through the economic system, but it has a strong tendency to concentrate in the hands of elites at the top of the corporate food chain, which the government enables. Third, competition as a catalyst for smooth market functioning may keep the economic cycle going, but, following a Marxist framework, if this system is already hierarchically structured based on exploitative divisions of labor, unequal class relations are generationally perpetuated. Fourth, suggesting that the market is “naturally” efficient hides the socially structured toil, exploitation, and misery that appear necessary in order to prop an “efficient” market up.

Other neoliberal assumptions about the market revolve around discussions of human beings' true nature. Peet and Hartwick (2009) critique neoliberalism's "assumption about the inherent nature of human beings, seen by von Mises as 'egoistic and self-interested' and by Friedman as 'imbued with freedom'" (p. 99). The assumption that all human beings are egoistic and self-interested fails to explain altruistic behavior and places the responsibility of selling labor exclusively on individuals. Moreover, Friedman's assumption that all human beings are "imbued with freedom" ignores the intersections of various social categories in the creation of opportunities and constraints (Collins, 1991) as well as the uneven allocation of resources in the free market. Feminist approaches toward development, however, do not ignore such intersections.

Feminist Critiques

Feminist approaches toward development originally initiated under the frameworks of Smith (1990) and Haraway (1991), who assert that "the only way to find a larger vision [about women and development is] to be somewhere in particular" (as cited in Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 249). Thus, development is understood from the ground up, beginning with the practices and discourse of individuals in their daily lives and connecting these micro-processes with macro-structures of ideology. With this approach, feminists critique knowledge about development and rethink its value-neutrality. Peet and Hartwick (2009) explain: "feminist criticism raises the suspicion that all modern products of reason, like progress and development, are not universally good for everyone (as usually pretended) but instead are masculine projects, conceived by masculine minds, that are particularly good for men" (p. 250). Whereas previous models of development keep a sharp eye on the economy as an indicator of success, feminist approaches toward development challenge its very assumptions about all-inclusive accessibility. Although

gender relations vary across time and space (Flax, 1997), feminist approaches offer ways to understand how such relations are created and reflected in development discourse.

Peet and Hartwick (2009) document the establishment of five feminist consecutive approaches toward development: Women in Development (WID); Women and Development (WAD); Gender and Development (GAD); Women, Environment, and Development (WED); and Postmodernism and Development (PAD) (Rathgeber, 1990; Young, 1993; Visvanathan et al., 1997). First, the WID approach posits that women are not fully integrated into the development framework of modernization and its orientation toward economic efficiency as a tool for emancipation (Boserup, 1970). Modernization is characterized by the idea that “development is a linear process of economic growth and that differences between modern and traditional societies [result] from lack of sufficient contacts between them” (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 256). The problem with this approach, however, is that it assumes that “women’s problems stemmed from insufficient participation in what was otherwise assumed to be a benevolent process of growth” (p. 255). That is, the linear economic trajectory of modernization was not taken into question, but women’s participation was (Rathgeber, 1990; Young, 1993). In turn, the WID approach advocates for the integration of women in an economic system that perpetuates further gender subordination.

The WAD perspective diverges from the WID approach by rejecting the idea that women need only be brought within modernization in order to share equally the fruits of development. This approach focuses more on social relations between women and men instead of class relations (Rathgeber, 1990). In this approach, the feminization of labor (i.e., division of labor based on sex) is critiqued, along with domestic labor (Fuwa, 2004). WAD illustrates how gender and class work together to reproduce particular social relations in development discourse (Peet &

Hartwick, 2009). An individual's gender and social class intersect to form varying challenges and opportunities for accessing development resources, such as funding. However, the problem with the WAD approach is that it does not account for heterogeneity within the particular gender or social class categories (Rathgeber, 1990). In other words, important determinants of opportunities and resources, such as race and ethnicity are not considered.

Whereas WID and WAD assume that women form a homogenous group, unified by similar situations of class, race, and ethnicity, GAD rejects this notion and takes on a more holistic approach, to include WED's focus on nature. In exploring how other sociodemographics intersect with gender in processes of development, "GAD was seen as opening doors for women as social actors within wider structures of constraints" (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 268). This was precisely because GAD adopts a fuller conceptualization of individuals and broadens the number of intersecting social categories to its approach. The WED approach takes this a step further and adds environmental sustainability to its framework. Established in the 1970s, WED illuminates the apparent parallel between men's control over women and their control over nature. In particular localities, nature provides sustenance for women and access to nature is indicative of the control they have over their lives. In this respect, WED closely intersects with GAD. In their critique of GAD, Parpart and Marchand (1995) argue that GAD fails to substantially challenge the modernist orientation of development, thus essentializing poor women in the development discourse.

PAD offers the most recent approach toward understanding the relationship between gender and development, arguing that GAD represents Third World women as the "other" while perpetuating WID ideas of modernization (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). This conceptual lens allows for the deconstruction of development discourses that disempower women. In doing so, PAD

adopts a critical approach toward the meanings of development and continues to analyze the intersections of gender, class, ethnicity and the environment like GAD and WED. Further, PAD orients scholars toward challenging systems of knowledge regarding development. That is, development jargon is problematized, examined and then reconfigured in order to address the specific needs of women in myriad localities and across heterogeneous contexts.

Alternatives in Progress

Peet and Hartwick (2009) suggest that scholars and practitioners “rethink the development project rather than . . . discard it” (p. 279). In this thesis, I reference feminist critiques of development and challenge knowledge of development in both the City of El Paso and La Mujer Obrera, specifically in terms of economics. After identifying particular models of development in discourse and texts in the results, I discuss the implications of the tensions created between and within the models in the discussion, contending that certain cracks exist in development discourse that enable practitioners and policymakers to tailor development to the specific needs of communities. I conceptualize the transnational dynamic exemplified by LMO as a component necessary for rethinking alternative models of development – a component that has received scant attention in previous feminist development approaches.

Following Griffin (2009), I do not intend to promote development models as universal frames for practitioners and policymakers to utilize at any time or in any place. Rather, I stress the importance of recognizing the two development models (i.e., the city’s and LMO’s) specifically within the context of the U.S.-Mexico border and during a particular point in time where neoliberal discourse continues to dominate global governance. To borrow from Haraway (1988), such models should be regarded as “situated development”, specific to a particular social context yet relevant to the ways in which development is both conceptualized and practiced.

Ch. 3: Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation I employ in this thesis closely follows the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his concepts of symbolic capital, symbolic violence, and the linguistic market, which are detailed in this chapter. As indicated in the beginning of this thesis, the term “development” is typically preceded by an implied adjective, which indicates the economic and social concerns that orient/bias a particular development discourse. In order to extract the meaning of development for particular social actors in specific settings, underlying definitions of development had to be probed for and problematized. Through this process, I was able to create an entry point for drawing out assumptions about development along the U.S.-Mexico border, allowing for “natural” aspects of development to be contested.

Perreault (2003) indicates that development is always already about a material and symbolic struggle. Pierre Bourdieu grants scholars insight into the conditions of this struggle and the realm of invisible politics. Being oblivious to these politics ensures a cyclical system of what Bourdieu refers to as *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu, 1991a). Following this concept, the most dangerous type of violence is not just invisible, but it is also sustained by our day-to-day activities. Understanding symbolic violence requires an understanding of symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1986) asserts that there are four types of capital: (1) cultural, (2) economic, (3) social, and (4) symbolic. Cultural capital refers to sets of knowledge, skills, and education an individual has within a particular social setting. Economic and social capitals refer to the amount of money an individual has and the degree to which a person’s social network is developed, respectively. Symbolic capital is capital not recognized as capital (Bourdieu, 1991a; Bourdieu, 1995; Hussey, 2010). Additionally, symbolic capital hides elements of the other three capitals under the guise of legitimacy, that is, as items that appear to be inherently natural or given (e.g., in the form of

knowledge, language, and authority), which yields symbolic power. Bourdieu (1991a) provides a definition:

Symbolic power . . . is a power that can be exercised only if it is *recognized*, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary . . . it is defined in and through a given relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it. (p. 170)

Therefore, symbolic power comes into existence only if its conditions are reaffirmed between those in power and those without such power. However, the only way to accomplish this is through the ambiguity of language, reflected in both discourse and texts.

Symbolic power is often embedded within what Bourdieu refers to as *linguistic markets*, which are language-governed social systems of exchange. Like economic markets, linguistic markets are characterized by competition. Those with the most resources have greater control of the societal language (i.e., the way a community thinks about certain concepts, such as development). For example, the City of El Paso wields the most power over the region's linguistic market because it controls a primary flow of economic, social and cultural capital for its citizens. This also means that the City of El Paso is in a better position to implement its particular model of development than organizations with contrasting models, such as La Mujer Obrera. The City of El Paso is able to do this with the language embedded in both discourse and printed development objectives. Language is not just about what is written; it is also about what is spoken. Spoken and written language both reflect a way of life, a collection of social norms, and an internalized social order. Further, as Bourdieu (1991a) indicates, language is one of the most unrecognized forms of symbolic capital, utilized from day to day, reinforcing authoritative ideologies unconsciously and repeatedly.

Symbolic violence is the use of symbolic power in order to justify the political agendas of the elite in such a fashion where the oppression is invisible and simultaneously reinforced by the oppressed. Scholars have drawn on Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic violence* to explain varied phenomena (Araújo et al., 2009; Parkin & Coomber, 2009; Parnaby, 2009). In a specific example, Herr and Anderson (2003) demonstrate that symbolic violence is inherent within certain policies geared at addressing school violence – these policies are based on an inadequate theorization of violence, which symbolically hides their ineffectiveness. From these examples and others, institutions emerge as the primary sites from which symbolic violence is perpetrated.

The power of institutions lies in their ability to appear objective, yet remain politically oriented (Bourdieu, 1991b; Bourdieu, 2003). In specific reference to gender, Kimmel (2008) explains: “Part of an institution's function of maintaining inequality is to first create the differences and then to attempt to conceal its authorship so that those differences seem to flow from the nature of things” (p. 238). However, when speaking about institutions, I am not referring only to those where power is already being critiqued, such as the World Bank (Griffin, 2009) or a corporate giant like Wal-Mart. Where symbolic violence may be most harmful is through the institutions that *do not appear* as institutions, those that appear more as “normal” facets of our everyday lives, evading critical skepticism. An example of this might be the family since it is not a “formal” institution yet continues to provide very strong rules for practice in society.

Although the field of development has certainly faced tremendous critique (see chapter 2), the ways in which it is defined and legitimized in localities like El Paso has received less attention. Institutions, such as the City of El Paso, utilize symbolic power to propagate certain social orders with a certain set of rules and resources, which are recognized (i.e., *misrecognized*)

as inherent *givens* of a “moral” society. Therefore, it is in institutions and their practices that the perpetuation of social injustices and inequalities may be found. According to Bourdieu (1991b):

If one wishes to understand the ways in which symbolic power is exercised and reproduced in our societies, one must look more carefully at how, in different markets and fields, institutionalized mechanisms have emerged . . . to inculcate a belief in their value. (p. 24)

Thus, the theoretical framework of *symbolic violence* not only reveals that hidden political agendas are put into action via institutionalized means, it illuminates the fact that minorities’ (e.g., members of La Mujer Obrera) exposure to detrimental working conditions, displacement and marginalization are by no means accidental.

Therefore, symbolic violence is utilized as a theoretical and conceptual tool for explaining disjunctures and overlaps between the city’s and LMO’s models of development. As I will show in subsequent chapters, the ways in which these models are simultaneously detached and united reveals cracks in knowledge about development in El Paso, which can enable organizations like La Mujer Obrera to secure greater leverage in the region’s linguistic market.

Ch. 4: Methods

Institutional Ethnography as an Entry Point

Understanding U.S-Mexico border development discourse and its social implications requires that relationships between local experiences and global institutional processes be made. Doing so depends in part on the critical examination of generic vis-à-vis local knowledge about development (Scott, 1998) – for example, the knowledge informing the practices of the City of El Paso and the situated, experiential knowledge informing LMO’s activities. Following other scholars (Connell, 2000; Gibson-Graham, 2002; Mohanty, 2009), Acker (2007) suggests that the local be conceptualized “as an ethnographic moment embedded in ongoing, complex processes linking the moment into webs of relations extending into global processes” (p. 22). This conceptualization marks the entry point for utilizing Dorothy Smith’s institutional ethnography.

Since its inception, institutional ethnography has been used widely, to include investigations of the stress nurses face in the medical institution (McGibbon, Peter, & Gallop, 2010), regulation of sexuality (Khayatt, 1995), policy-making in the United Nations (Eastwood, 2006), psychiatric intervention (Hak, 1998), and nursing home experiences (Diamond, 1995). In another example, Nichols and Griffith (2009) use institutional ethnography to reveal how the daily activities/discussions of educators and parents who serve on a school planning council are coordinated by school policies that place greater value on political accountability than genuine schooling concerns. In this thesis, I utilized institutional ethnography as an entry point for understanding the disjuncture and overlap present in the two groups’ development models, which are reflected in their discourses. Instead of mapping the social organization of activities and practices in texts, as is typically done in institutional ethnography (Smith, 2006b), I examined texts as elements of development discourses, which enabled me to triangulate evidence about

assumptions being made by social actors and to more clearly illustrate where symbolic violence was misrecognized or unapparent. This also enabled me to locate what Smith (1987) refers to as “relations of ruling”. Smith defines relations of ruling as the “extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that . . . connect us across space and time and organized our everyday lives” (as cited in Appelrouth & Edles, 2008, p. 593). For this thesis, this referred to the city’s and LMO’s unchallenged knowledge and ideas about development.

A component of institutional ethnographers’ work is to analyze local knowledge and perceptions via texts and discourse (Smith, 2006), which is a process I utilized to identify particular development models and answer research question number one. Notably, when speaking of texts, Smith (2005) is referring to “stretches of talk as well as to what is inscribed in some more or less permanent form” (p. 166). This means that “text” is not just about what is written; it is also about what is spoken, implied, and/or nonverbally indicated in narratives. Thus, omissions become important both in terms of what is not included in writing and what does not receive attention or is ignored in stretches of talk. This is reflective of Bourdieu’s understanding of language, symbolically ambiguous and exclusive enough for political use. Smith (1990b) compares texts (i.e., as stretches of talk) to crystals that bend light as it passes through them. In this thesis, I treat texts as elements of broader discourses that bend experienced reality into specific forms of knowledge (i.e., development models) – for example, a neoliberal model that establishes/reinforces a social order (e.g., a patriarchal order) while simultaneously hiding the conditions and assumptions that make up that order.

The usual starting point of an institutional ethnography is in the examination of standpoints (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; DeVault & McCoy, 2006; Smith, 1987; Stooke, 2010). Sandra Harding (1998), a major contributor to the concept of standpoint, contends that

standpoint theory can illuminate the politics of various fields, such as economics: “Standpoint epistemology sets up the relationship between knowledge and politics at the center of its account” (p. 241). Placing politics at the center of knowledge about certain things, such as development, illuminates the true agenda of those adopting a certain development discourse. Beginning with individuals’ standpoints also illuminates the relevance of myriad social categories. Distinguishing herself from Harding, Smith (2005) contends that her conceptualization of standpoint is not constructed merely in terms of gender, race, or class; it is rather regarded as a component of what she refers to as “a sociology for the people.” This became relevant for my questions pertaining to intersectionality.

I began my data collection by examining the standpoints of LMO members, city officials and myself. This not only yielded data illustrating how the negative social implications of the city’s development model are recognized, as per research question number two, but it also revealed how those implications were negotiated (as per research question number three) and transnationally mediated (research question number four). Assessing city officials’ and LMO members’ standpoints also enabled me to identify concrete opportunities and barriers for community development organizations like La Mujer Obrera, addressing research question number five. In terms of my own standpoint, Harding (1998) advocates what she refers to as “strong reflexivity”, which she describes as the process of being critical of our own standpoint – or what Madison (2005) might call “positionality” – in order to increase intersubjectivity. I practiced this strong reflexivity in both data collection and analysis (see Appendix A).

Methodological Overview

Drawing on components of institutional ethnography, I collected data for La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso using (1) in-depth interviews, (2) textual analysis, and (3)

participant observation. I began data collection in June 2011 and concluded in January 2012. Members of La Mujer Obrera and representatives of the City of El Paso were presented with their own version of interview questions and consent forms (see Appendix B), which had prior approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).

In-depth Interviews. I conducted approximately 16 in-depth interviews, six of which were with City of El Paso officials and representatives, and ten of which were with members of La Mujer Obrera. Table 4.1 outlines the ethnic distribution of my sample. An undergraduate research assistant, Leslie Landin, assisted me with Spanish-spoken interviews (n=3) with members of La Mujer Obrera. Interviews were conducted in each organization's respective worksite or in a location specified as most convenient for the interviewee. Interviews typically lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes. The interview protocol was initially constructed to examine the 2009 incident when the City of El Paso denied La Mujer Obrera a \$40,000 Empowerment Zone grant ("Mercado Problems", 2009). Subsequently, the protocol was used to follow the emerging problematic. Smith (1987) explains: "The concept of problematic is used . . . to direct attention to a possible set of questions that may not have been posed or a set of puzzles that do not yet exist in the form of puzzles but are 'latent' in the actualities of the experienced world" (p. 91). Therefore, assessing the problematic coincided with my aim to identify the symbolic aspects of development discourse (e.g., assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas about development). Informal follow-up interviews were conducted as necessary.

Table 4.1: Ethnic Characteristics of La Mujer Obrera Members and City Officials

Interviewee Name ¹		Ethnicity
La Mujer Obrera	Erica	Non-Hispanic
	Manuel	Hispanic
	Angelica	Hispanic
	Lourdes	Hispanic
	Rachel	Hispanic
	Eva	Hispanic
	Beatriz	Hispanic
	Daniela	Hispanic
	Carolina	Hispanic
	Marisol	Hispanic
City Officials	Jonathan	Hispanic
	Patrick	Hispanic
	Jocelyn	Hispanic
	Jessica	Hispanic
	Natalia	Hispanic
	Eric	Hispanic

¹ All names are pseudonyms.

La Mujer Obrera. The ten members of La Mujer Obrera selected for interviews consist of the organization's coordinators/directors, employees, and volunteers. With La Mujer Obrera's permission⁴, a member from La Mujer Obrera assisted me in contacting/setting up interviews with individuals who had worked at least five years in the organization (n=7). Given the relatively small number of LMO members at the time of the study (between 15 and 20), the perspectives and opinions shared by the ten members that participated in the study are generally representative of the organization as a whole at the time. Selecting members with five or more years of experience in the organization ensured that members had more to talk about in their interviews and increased the likelihood that they were present during a 2009 incident when the City of El Paso denied the organization funding. After members with five or more years of

⁴ A letter of collaboration was drafted, signed by an administrative official at La Mujer Obrera, and documented by UTEP's IRB (see Appendix C).

experience in the organization had been contacted for an interview, my LMO contact assisted me in contacting members with varying years of experience in the organization. This included contacting former members of LMO who no longer resided in El Paso. Considering the relatively small number of members still active within the organization, La Mujer Obrera members were selected via snowball sampling and contacted about scheduling an interview. If the member was not interested in participating, another member was selected until interviews with ten members of La Mujer Obrera had been conducted. One member declined an offer for an interview.

City of El Paso Officials. Interviews with six officials/representatives from the City of El Paso were conducted with City Council members and administrators. A review of the literature on the 2009 incident when the City of El Paso denied EZ funding to La Mujer Obrera indicated which city officials/representatives were present or directly connected with the incident, creating a pool of City Officials. These individuals were the first ones to be contacted for an interview. If they were not interested in participating, another city official/representative was selected from the pool. Upon completion of the interviews with city officials/representatives, interviewees were asked if there were any other city officials/representatives that I might be able to interview, following the snowball sampling method utilized for members of LMO.

Textual Analysis. Textual analysis was conducted using two public sources of information: (1) description of La Mujer Obrera and its goals, which was accessed via the organization's website, (2) the City of El Paso website, which contained information regarding the city's consolidated plan, CDBG grants, the Weed and Seed program, Empowerment Zone qualifications and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department. Specifically, city tests that I examined include: (1) the city's consolidated plan; (2) language used in the CDBG; (3) descriptions of the city's Weed and Seed Program; (4) Empowerment Zone objectives; and

(5) the mission statement of HUD. In terms of La Mujer Obrera, I analyzed: (1) the organization's goals; (2) the primary question that orients the organization's activities; and (3) descriptions about the organization's CDBES. These texts were analyzed after in-depth interviews were conducted, enabling triangulation between spoken narratives/actions and certain applications, organizational descriptions, and local governmental policies.

Participant Observation. La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso occasionally held public events for the local community. Activities for La Mujer Obrera included art festivals, health fairs, and community outreach events at local parks. For the City of El Paso, officials announced meetings where the public was able to attend and participate in discussions about development projects in the El Paso community. Although I was unable to attend the city's public meetings, I attended approximately four of La Mujer Obrera's public events and compiled field notes relevant to the themes indicated in the data analysis section.

Data Analysis. After providing consent, interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder, translated into English (when applicable, by Leslie Landin), transcribed, and analyzed using N*VIVO qualitative analysis software. Initial data were coded and analyzed to include the following themes:

- Definitions of development (e.g., development as a business venture versus development as community revitalization)
- Recognition of oppression (e.g., statements regarding unfair policies, biased language in applications or policies, inaccurate perceptions of La Mujer Obrera and/or its goals)
- Responses/Negotiations (e.g., reacting to funding conditions and/or policies through resistance, conformity, and/or compromise)

- Transnational context (e.g., statements regarding Mexican cultural practices and thoughts pertaining to flows of people, material resources, and ideas)
- Barriers and opportunities (e.g., social, cultural, political, economic)

Ch. 5: Results

Interviews with members of La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso reveal a strong disjuncture on the meaning of development in El Paso. While La Mujer Obrera's definition of development aims toward increased economic, social, and cultural capital, the City of El Paso subscribes to a neoliberal model, focused exclusively on economic gain. This chapter draws primarily on interview and written textual materials to reveal what development means in El Paso to city officials and members of LMO and reveals the ways in which the tensions created between and within development models create a space for negotiating alternative approaches toward development. In this chapter, I answer my research questions, present data reflecting the city's and LMO's development models and illustrate how the negative/limiting components of these models are recognized, negotiated, and transnationally mediated, offering multiple points of entry for discussing development in the context of the U.S.-Mexico border in the next chapter.

Perspectives on Development

Addressing my first research question, the data suggest that La Mujer Obrera and city officials adopt strikingly different models of development that yet have critically important overlap. Narratives and textual material from both La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso reflect each group's notion of what "development" is (i.e., what adjective should precede "development") or rather, what development should be. In order to conceptually understand the differences between the city's and LMO's development models (similarities between the models are discussed in the third and fourth sections of this chapter), this section is separated into two themes: (a) holistic community development and (b) neoliberal development, which align with the goals and practices of La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso, respectively.

Holistic Community Development. When asked explicitly about whether La Mujer Obrera sees itself as a business or something else, Rachel (LMO) responded, “No, we don’t see it as a business. I think we would like to see it as a community center.” This statement represents the general consensus among members of La Mujer Obrera. Most members mentioned this perspective while answering another general question, or when they were asked to generally describe La Mujer Obrera. Although the entrepreneurial element of La Mujer Obrera is an important dimension of the organization’s functionality, it is not the exclusive goal. Angelica (LMO) indicates: “It’s not about only being a business. It’s about redeveloping an entire community.”

Through interviews, development of an entire community emerged as La Mujer Obrera’s overarching goal, which encapsulates more than just economic profitability, micro-business, or business-incubation. To members of this organization, development is holistic and captures elements of the community’s needs that economic means alone cannot address. According to Daniela (LMO), the organization satisfies what they call the seven necessities of a community, which include health, housing, work, education, peace, political freedom and nutrition. Economics is only one aspect of LMO’s holistic plan. Eva (LMO) provides a representative summary about what exactly the organization is:

La Mujer Obrera is an organization that’s 30 years old from the Chamizal neighborhood here in El Paso that has a very comprehensive vision about community development, and so it’s hard to define it in one quick [statement], but essentially it was born out of defending the integrity of Mexican women as workers and has evolved into defending the integrity of Mexican women as leaders and visionaries to rebuild their own community in the way that they see how to do it, not in an imposed way . . . and it’s all rooted in dignity, fair wages and trade, culture, safe spaces for families and the right to grow and develop and learn as human beings after decades of disempowerment and being treated like slaves or just as workers. [Within] the garment industry, there was never an opportunity to develop as human beings and all the women’s potential. So it’s a very comprehensive vision that the organization has and is trying to build in this neighborhood amidst all the obstacles.

This description represents the perspective that all members of LMO have about the organization. They steadfastly adhere to a definition of development that moves beyond economic gain and recasts their role in the community as agents of change. Angelica (LMO) explains:

[La Mujer Obrera] is not a business, it's a school where the community can actually learn how to plan and think and learn how to do things, you know? Why are we supposed to just take orders all day?

Thus, reconstituting women's role in the community is central to the vision shared by members of LMO.

When the women of La Mujer Obrera speak about their organization not being a business, they simultaneously convey a challenge to the city's perspective that successful development follows economic achievement. This creates a tension between the two groups:

Anthony: So when the organization was denied the funding, what specific reasons were provided?

Angelica (LMO): . . . They didn't think we knew how to run a business or know what we were doing. That was it.

Members of LMO are aware that their model seeks to address a broader range of the community's needs than just economic enhancement. An explanation that many members of LMO offered regarding their broader emphasis on community is that the economy historically relegated their social position along the U.S.-Mexico border. Before the organization was created, discourse about Spanish-speaking women subjugated them to the role of "the worker" in the garment industry. Now, La Mujer Obrera provides a medium for challenging and changing such discourses. They now emphasize pursuing economic activities on their own terms. As Angelica (LMO) states:

We have our own ideas on what things should look like It wasn't enough anymore to say 'we need this' because they never gave it to us anyways, and if they did, it was the way

they saw it. But we had ideas on how to do things.

In response to research question one, it is evident that the development discourse members of La Mujer Obrera subscribe to destabilizes gender ideologies regarding women's role as mere "workers", resulting in positive social implications for Latinas along the U.S.-Mexico border. By repeatedly articulating a model of development that requires actions to encompass more than the economic realm, the women of La Mujer Obrera assert themselves into new social positions within the community.

Whereas their gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic situation and migrant social status may have hindered their access to individual and community level development in the 1970s, these same attributes are now celebrated and utilized as motors for holistic development for a segment of the community that has received relatively little state support. To accomplish this, members of La Mujer Obrera seek to implement what they call "Plan Mayachen", which is described by Erica (LMO):

Plan Mayachen is a framework not just as a set of projects. It's arguing that there has to be a recognition of the contributions that Hispanics, Mexican immigrants make to the U.S. culturally, economically, politically, socially, and that that can be motor for development that is respectful of and encouraging of that community instead of criminalization and marginalization and erasure. That's where La Mujer grows.

The idea behind Plan Mayachen is not only to celebrate El Paso's rich Mexican heritage, but also to embrace the notion of letting the community speak and plan for itself not in spite of demographic attributes, but in celebration of them. Such an approach, according to members of La Mujer Obrera, allows the community to have a voice and enables the women to become leaders. In order to accomplish this, La Mujer Obrera includes and extends beyond entrepreneurial activities by subscribing to a holistic community-level model of development. Lourdes (LMO) concludes:

Fully inclusive responsible community-led development is the answer where human beings are cared about and not profits. And it's not about the bottom line, and it's not about consumption consumption consumption. It's just about providing people with very basic human rights. And that should not be too much to ask.

La Mujer Obrera's ideas about and practices toward a holistic community model of development are reflected in the organization's website, which lists three primary goals ("Women's Analysis", 2011):

- (1) "Women's Empowerment: Secure the right and the capacity to develop as women, in community, and for our families, as a people with a history and a rich cultural heritage to affirm and share."
- (2) "Economic Development: Generate women's economic *empowerment* [*emphasis added*] through social enterprises, small business support, and bilingual workforce development."
- (3) "Community Development: Build community while sustaining our roots through neighborhood revitalization, job creation, housing development, and educational projects that celebrate Mexican cultural heritage."

These three goals align with the seven necessities that LMO aims to meet and speak to their holistic community approach toward development. In terms of goal one, community development and cultural embracement are explicit terms of accomplishment, which resonate with members' discourse and practices toward Plan Mayachen. Next, goal two tends to the economic needs of the community but utilizes the term *empowerment* versus *employment*. The distinction here is critical because each term comes with very different social standing implications. Empowerment indicates less exploitation within a particular social (or gender) order, whereas employment denotes higher exploitation and integration *into* a social order characterized by gender subordination. Finally, goal three emphasizes community development

and lays out different sectors for this development to occur, such as in housing, education.

Respectively, these sectors have indeed materialized into activities/programs on the ground, as evident in the establishment of the organization's housing complex, daycare center, and GED classes.

Neoliberal Development. Although members argue that La Mujer Obrera is not intended to be a business based on an exclusively entrepreneurial model, the City of El Paso views the organization through a different lens. When asked if the organization is promoting a business or a social enterprise, Patrick (City Official) responded:

Umm [laughs] That may be part of their problem, I think they're trying to do both. I know that one of my concerns . . . is that they did not have a strong business plan. The passion was probably there. The heart was probably there, but in terms of the nuts and bolts of a solid business plan, that was absent. And here's the other thing, if I was going to talk to them very frankly is, they don't have a very narrow focus.

As illustrated above, a "narrow focus" is precisely what La Mujer Obrera is trying to avoid.

Implementing a more holistic approach that accomplishes its seven necessities and builds up the entire community, La Mujer Obrera purposefully resists contracting its activities or practices to focus solely on increasing economic gain, despite what the city may think is best.

In-depth interviews with city officials reveal that they have a different idea about what LMO's development should be. When Jessica (City Official) was asked about the challenges that La Mujer Obrera faced, she responded:

You know I think probably it's that their vision is this big [indicates with hands], which is very big, and their resources are this little. And so, and that's true of any organization, but I think also because it's a non-profit model; it's not as entrepreneurial as it could be.

Patrick (City Official) echoes this sentiment:

Some of these women could have PhDs by now if the money was just used in a different way, but they just don't seem to have a slam dunk business model or business plan, and so that's of concern to me.

Every city official interviewed made some mention of a deficient business model in La Mujer Obrera's activities, indicating that the city has subscribed to a particular idea regarding what they think LMO should do in terms of development. These ideas revolve around profit-maximization and the neoliberal assumption that surplus revenues will trickle down evenly to the community. Models that diverge from this approach are not viewed favorably, as indicated in the following dialogue:

Anthony: What does Mujer Obrera contribute to the city of El Paso, in your opinion?

Jonathan (City Official): In *my* opinion [laughs]. In my opinion you know I think they . . . I'm sure they contribute in some way. I just don't see how they contribute to . . . the El Paso economy or whatever it is they're trying to do. I don't see anything from them, or at least anything that I would consider worthwhile.

Another disjuncture about the meaning and normative aims of development is illustrated in discussions about the location of La Mujer Obrera. Four out of six of the city officials interviewed indicated that La Mujer Obrera's location was not ideal for business. Jonathan (City Official) explains:

I think most people would agree, that you can get enchiladas in this town for four bucks or rice and beans, and hell in some restaurant they might even throw in a soup [laughs], but you go there [La Mujer Obrera], I think the prices are out of whack . . . I think the prices are out of whack with the rest of the town, especially in the location where they're at. I mean if you're in the middle of nowhere and there's nothing around you, you can't charge \$10 for a plate of enchiladas [laughs].

When asked about La Mujer Obrera's reasoning for remaining at their current location, Eric (City Official) responded, "They had property there." However, members of La Mujer Obrera have a broader vision that underpins their desire to remain in their current location. According to women of the organization, La Mujer Obrera's practices within a building where a former garment factory used to be symbolizes the reclaiming of what was once a site of oppression as a site opportunity for Mexican women. This site is at the heart of the disenfranchised Mexican

American immigrant community LMO intends to serve. Advocating for the neighborhood of Chamizal Barrio outside of the community does not make sense. Through the city's neoliberal perspective, the location of LMO is horrible for business, but for members of LMO, it would be ungrounded and unethical to try to conduct activities to benefit Chamizal Barrio from somewhere else outside of the neighborhood. Carolina (LMO) explains:

Many people ask us: 'why did you make a market here, if there's not a lot of people and they don't come and all that?' Well because it's part of the objectives of the organization, to renew this area – also because all the buildings that we have were sewing fabrics [i.e., factories] that were already forgotten, abandoned, and we have rescued them, the daycare, the apartments. The La Mujer Obrera building used to be an abandoned warehouse; this was a sewing fabric. It's part of the objectives to be here, but above all, our main goal is to fight for the rights of workers, of migrant women workers. (Translated from Spanish)

While La Mujer Obrera has strategically chosen this location as ground zero for its development goals, the City of El Paso perceives their rejection of moving downtown as a missed economic opportunity and an approach lacking a well-informed strategy. This perception reflects a paternalistic view of La Mujer Obrera. The city's concern about LMO's location does not appear to be grounded in what would be good for the organization. Rather, it appears to be more about what the city would have preferred to see in terms of LMO aligning their development model with the city's and participating in neoliberal practice (i.e., spurring business growth to increase business and tax revenues, which would primarily serve elite class interests). Thus, one of the primary social implication's of the city's development model is that it privileges economic growth over all other aims of community revitalization, which translates into a stark dismissal of a community's non-economic local-level needs while producing increased profits primary for elites.

As is the case for La Mujer Obrera, specific texts reflect city officials' discourse on development, particularly their concern with entrepreneurial practices. The city's consolidated

plan and CDBG are illustrative examples. The executive summary section of the consolidated plan describes the document's purpose: "The City of El Paso's 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan is a five-year planning document, strategy, and process management tool to direct the use and measure the effect of federal funds granted to the City of El Paso" ("Executive Summary", 2010, p. 3). In other words, the document is used to assist city officials in spending government funds. The city's consolidated plan for 2010-2015 explicitly articulates that programs and activities will not be funded under the city's HUD Department unless they adhere to "the basic statutory goals of HUD: the creation of a suitable living environment, the provision of decent housing, and the *creation of economic opportunities [emphasis added]*" ("Executive Summary", 2010, p. 3). These goals are reflective, at least in part, of LMO's aims, to include economic development. However, city officials seem to recognize only the "creation of economic opportunities" (albeit, not the sort of economic opportunities LMO was trying to create in the Chamizal Barrio) as a "worthwhile" component of an organization seeking city-level funding.

A particular source of funding that is available through the city's consolidated plan is the CDBG, which is intended specifically for low-to-moderate income populations. The city's consolidated plan contains an "Outcome Performance Measurement" tool, designed to assist the city in granting HUD funds – in this case, CDBG grants – to programs/activities that best align with three primary objectives: creation of a suitable living (SL) environment; providing decent housing (DH); and the creation of economic opportunities (EO) ("Executive Summary", 2010, p. 4). Further simplifying this, the city outlines specific outcomes and indicators that would indicate successful accomplishment of these three objectives. In terms of the creation of economic opportunities (EO), specific indicators center on the number of micro-enterprises and job training opportunities established. With such indicators, this text reflects the city's neoliberal ideology

and reinforces the value of business orientation in development, which city officials accordingly articulate.

It is clear that the City of El Paso aligns itself with a narrow neoliberal development model that is reflected in discourse and, to a degree, certain government texts. The primary distinguishing factor between La Mujer Obrera's development model and the city's is that LMO considers several components of development for the community, to include economic development (e.g., via micro-enterprise creation and job training), whereas the city focuses exclusively on the economic dimension. Beatriz (LMO) describes how she thinks the two models differ:

Anthony: Is the City of El Paso's definition of development different than La Mujer Obrera's definition of development?

Beatriz (LMO): Yes. I don't think the city's definition [of development] is rooted in reality, rooted in the border reality. The city has to account for 250 years of underdevelopment. El Paso is a transient town. People come here on their way somewhere else. People who study at UTEP get their degrees and leave [laughs]. People who come from Mexico get their degrees and leave, and building a base, an economic base, requires a bigger vision, requires more aggressive politics and politics with some integrity where you say 'okay, here's the workforce, and this is how we can retrain and retool.' And you know, I don't know if it's happened in any other part of the country either The sad thing is that if it had happened here in El Paso, it would have been a model for the rest of the country.

According to Beatriz, city officials' development model is focused exclusively on economic gain and is dismissing the "border reality". With such a narrow focus, city officials' discourse reflects their desire to constrain LMO's activities exclusively to profit-maximizing ventures (e.g., increasing tax revenues by relocating the Mercado downtown) and to position members as "workers" serving the elite rather than as economic "planners" seeking to revitalize an ignored community. As shown in the next two sections, however, members of La Mujer Obrera recognize this pressure from the city and renegotiate what it means to be a Spanish-speaking woman along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Recognizing the Game

As revealed in the previous section, members of La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso adhere to two separate yet overlapping development models with specific social implications for populations such as those who reside in Chamizal Barrio. The first model presents development as a holistic community project wherein achieving economic goals must occur in harmony with addressing other aims in contributing to the broad-based empowerment/rebuilding of a marginalized El Paso social space. La Mujer Obrera follows this model intently. The City of El Paso follows and promotes a neoliberal model whereby economic gain takes full precedence while other of development goals are ignored and implicitly subject to being undermined. This section pays attention to the city's neoliberal model and examines the degree to which members of La Mujer Obrera recognize the negative consequences of this model, addressing my second research question. The underplaying of Chamizal Barrio's specific local-level needs was identified as a major negative social implication faced as a result of city officials' neoliberal development model. In this section, other adverse consequences are presented.

Interviews with city officials and members of La Mujer Obrera indicate that the organization recognizes the oppressive nature of the city's development model far more than the city does. Eric (City Official) provides an exception:

Anthony: In your opinion, what does the organization [La Mujer Obrera] bring to the city of El Paso?

Eric (City Official): Well for one thing, they look at a population that is in a dire need of help I think what La Mujer Obrera does is holds out hope for training people in order to become self-sufficient, and now they're working with a new generation of young people, many of them the dependents of those women who found themselves displaced back in the 90s.

This quote exemplifies a notion shared by only a few city officials. While this statement reveals a sincere appreciation for the organization's work toward helping "a population that is in a dire

need of help”, it falls short of recognizing how the city’s development approach creates barriers to La Mujer Obrera’s success. Thus, the negative ramifications of the city’s neoliberal model are invisible to (i.e., symbolically misrecognized by) city officials, even the few who are genuinely sympathetic to LMO’s cause.

For members of La Mujer Obrera, the damaging effects of the city’s subscription to a neoliberal model are very easy to recognize, especially on the basis of education, age, gender, nationality and ethnicity. Daniela (LMO) describes how limited education has inhibited their credibility as planners:

The people that have the money don’t believe that we, as workers, have the capability to create economic projects. They often judge us because we don’t have a college diploma, or we weren’t enrolled in college at least a year; nothing. Then they believe that [our only purpose is] to work in a [factory and make] pants. (Translated from Spanish)

Many of the women in the organization do not have an advanced degree. Whereas City of El Paso officials perceive this as a barrier to economic gain, members of La Mujer Obrera see this as an opportunity for the women and other members of the community to learn.

Age is another facet of the city’s development discourse that limits La Mujer Obrera’s success. Erica (LMO) provides an example:

I literally had leaders in this community tell me and another member of La Mujer Obrera, ‘why should we worry about these women, they’ll be dead in ten years’.

When discussing how age acted as a barrier for the women of this organization, they explained that their age was an indicator of productivity to the city and that their older age conveyed the idea that they did not have as many years of productivity compared to individuals right out of high school. If older age is seen by city officials to indicate reduced productive potential, then this reflects their adherence to a neoliberal development model that systematically devalues the women of LMO. For city officials then, it would seem that support is contingent on the number

of estimated years of worker productivity (i.e., profitability or tax revenues).

Although no city officials openly talked about gender as a problematic dimension of the organization, all members of La Mujer Obrera felt that the organization's focus on women's issues disadvantaged them in their dealings with the city. When asked about what specific challenges the organization faced in its activities, Carolina (LMO) responded: "Investment. The investment is a challenge and even more because we are women, the ones running this"

(Translated from Spanish). When asked why she thinks the city has not been more supportive of the organization's goals, Erica (LMO) quickly responded:

Because we're Mexican immigrant women workers. What the hell do we know? We're not planners. We're not developers. We're workers. And we're Spanish-speaking, and we're old, in their mind. [According to them], we'll be dead in ten years.

In this statement, Erica identifies ethnicity/nationality ("Mexican immigrant), gender (women), language/ethnicity (Spanish-speaking) and age ("old") as factors that inhibit LMO's ability to establish novel models of development where they can be more than just "workers". Although city officials' attempts to have La Mujer Obrera follow a business model do not reveal explicit gender biases, their desire to have the women conform to the role of "workers" within a traditional business arrangement in a location situated outside of the Chamizal community does imply the concomitant desire to reestablish hierarchal social positioning. Moreover, the difference in the social status between a "planner" and a "worker" is stark in socioeconomic terms. Given the increasing gender wage gap in the United States (Perry & Gundersen, 2011), the difference between the women of LMO being "workers" (i.e., following the city's model) rather than economic and community-level "planners" (i.e., following La Mujer Obrera's model) has strong gendered implications, the most important being the reproduction of women's oppression.

Lastly, members of La Mujer Obrera recognize their Mexican ancestry and ethnic status as being disadvantageous in relation to the city's development orientation, and many feel perpetually embattled because of it. As Angelica (LMO) explains:

And so [it's like a constant] battle. As Mexicans . . . Chicanos [and] . . . people of Mexican origin . . . we have [a] history here We have to do our own plan and [push] the Chicano movement to be able to create our own [economic and social] structures It's an eternal battle because we can't let them win Every plan that the city has come up with has not thought of the Mexican people at all.

As indicated in this statement, the women of La Mujer Obrera reaffirm their Mexican origin and disclose the historical struggle they've had to endure to create a community on their own terms. Not being able to establish their own community means that they would have to participate in the city's plans for development, which is oriented toward making the community a goldmine for business ventures. Such an orientation dismisses the relevance of ethnicity, nationality, and ancestry.

Just as particular texts reflect La Mujer Obrera's holistic community development model, they are also reflective of many LMO members' aims. In addition to LMO's goals, the organization's website presents a question that members hold onto in their activities: "In the midst of globalization, how do we, as women and workers, defend our rights and build sustainable communities rooted in justice and human dignity?" ("Women's Analysis", 2011). With this question in mind, members of La Mujer Obrera are skeptical about models of development that do not appear to be rooted in "justice and human dignity", precisely because such models threaten their rights and capacity to build sustainable communities. Recognizing the threatening components of the city's neoliberal development model, members of La Mujer Obrera negotiate their own model of development, as discussed in the next section.

Negotiating Identity

This section addresses the third research question and illustrates how both groups negotiate their perspectives on and approaches toward development. Findings reveal two themes: (a) challenging the status quo and (b) maintaining the status quo. Statements that fall into the first theme reflect strong adherence to La Mujer Obrera's model of development, which means economic development is perceived as just one component of community development. The opposite is true for narratives that fall into the second theme. Interestingly, although no city officials' perspectives on development aligned with La Mujer Obrera's holistic, community-based model, the perspectives of a few members of La Mujer Obrera aligned with the city's model, illustrating the presence of important overlaps and tensions both between and within the two development models.

Challenging the Status Quo. When asked who La Mujer Obrera was, Beatriz (LMO) responded, "women who want to be free", which evokes the utopian nature of Friedman's neoliberal tenet that everyone is already "imbued with freedom" (as cited in Peet & Hartwick, 2009). Although the city's model of development appears to present promise of economic prosperity through a large concentration of business ventures, many of the women at La Mujer Obrera directly challenge this promise and advocate for economic and social independence on their own terms. La Mujer Obrera provides a space for women to do so. Marisol (LMO) explains:

La Mujer Obrera teaches you that you have rights, that you cannot be discriminated against. I believe this [starts to set us] free We value ourselves as women. If others come and say something [negative] to us, then we can say, that is not [true]. I know that I am worth something. (Translated from Spanish)

Eva (LMO) adds:

It's not about kissing anyone's butt. And I think people are used to having their butts kissed [laughs]. Leaders and decision-makers are used to the soft, giggly, skirt-wearing woman, the West Texas woman, and the women here are not that I think people don't expect

women, like the women that work here, to be leading this type . . . of project. You know? Like [people think] women that work here should be the staff, the restaurant worker, the waitress, or the cleaning lady, but [instead] they get to be the planners here. They get to be the visionaries here. They get to travel to the conference in Washington. They get to speak at wherever. They get their seat that they've earned with their work, and . . . people don't expect that.

In rejecting the exclusive focus on economic activity in the city's development model, LMO members are advocating for the empowerment of Spanish-speaking women and promoting the development of an entire community, as reflected in Daniela's (LMO) overall thoughts about the organization:

Well, I am "La Mujer Obrera" and together my coworkers and I . . . work to . . . achieve a developed community. That's what I want from "La Mujer Obrera", to be able to help my community . . . I believe in "La Mujer Obrera" because I am her. I'm part of it and this is my fight for all [Latinas]. (Translated from Spanish)

It is also clear that members of La Mujer Obrera are cognizant of the economic package they may be forfeiting when they do not conform to the city's narrow view of development. Although city officials may see La Mujer Obrera's rejection of the city's development discourse as irrational or self-sacrificial (or self-destructive), members of the organization argue that the real sacrifice would come if they actually were to abide by the city's development model:

Anthony: How much has La Mujer Obrera had to transform or alter their practices or policies or the like in order to gain support or funding from the city? Or has it?

Erica (LMO): No, no. We won't. We don't. We can't [laughs]. That's why we're in trouble all the time.

Members of La Mujer Obrera implied that, if the organization were to constrain its holistic development approach to a focus solely on economics, it would sacrifice the needs of its community in Chamizal Barrio, and that this would undermine the identity and entire purpose of the organization.

By adhering to their own self/community empowerment development model, La Mujer

Obrera creates a space where women are free to be who they are regardless of how their gender, age, socioeconomic status, level of education, nationality or ethnicity may be viewed in US society generally and by City of El Paso officials in particular. This is a struggle that these women have been fighting for years. Angelica (LMO) explains:

There are two ways of defining our history. One is that we've always been cheap labor and . . . disposable cheap labor. That's [the city's] version Our version is like, well even if we've had all these difficulties, we've always spoken up and we've always made an effort to better our conditions. That's our version of history, and that's our version of who we are Like if you walk through our doors and you're a woman, all those labels that the system puts on you are going to disappear and . . . you will begin to discover what your potential really is, and you can confront those other labels, like 'no, you're just cheap labor, or you can only work at a bar, or no you're just some neighborhood girl, a drug addict or whatever'. All these labels that are put in on us, we're trying to create a space where that won't be a barrier for you to learn anything.

The message that women conveyed in these interviews is that La Mujer Obrera is a place where women could feel happy in their own skin, an environment beyond the factory or home that they could call their own. Echoing the sentiments of all the organization's members, Daniela (LMO) describes the sense of liberation felt within the organization:

Having this space [allows you to expand] your capabilities and [fully appreciate] everything that you have inside yourself, because as I told you, most of the time you were behind a machine [where] you never really had the opportunity to . . . think that you could learn other things [and] manage a business, kitchen . . . [or] community [project]. You only thought about . . . sewing pants for somebody else. (Translated from Spanish)

In direct response to research question three, the women of La Mujer Obrera negotiate their identity in favor of a development model that works towards the revitalization of a community in all components of its infrastructure, to include economics. Before having this space, they were the “workers”, producing on a mass scale within an economic system to which they were subjugated. Now, they are actively taking charge of their futures, challenging the status quo, and rebuilding a community that has been neglected for far too long. The following quote from Angelica (LMO) illustrates this point:

It's a lot easier to just produce because that's what we're used to. But we do have to challenge ourselves as a community to think . . . plan and . . . be creative, because our community isn't going to get better . . . unless we start thinking and planning for ourselves. Look at our neighborhood; it's completely abandoned and they [city officials] don't care. Nobody cares. Nobody thinks it's a community worth investing in. We do. So . . . we have to resolve the problem.

Maintaining Status Quo. Both groups indicate that there is a strong effort on the city's part to maintain the status quo, which involves the continued promulgation of a neoliberal development model and the subordination of women. The city accomplishes this in three ways: (1) they display a dismissive attitude toward La Mujer Obrera's struggles; (2) they consciously and unconsciously operate to render invisible the very real problems La Mujer Obrera faces; and (3) through their talk and actions, they reaffirm a belief that women have "appropriate" (albeit subordinating) roles within the capitalist order. Although most members of La Mujer Obrera reject and challenge the city's development model, a few of them subscribe to its tenets.

Dismissive Attitude. While discussing reasons why the city has not provided more financial support to La Mujer Obrera, Patrick (City Official) insisted:

It's a demographic that I'm sympathetic for, but then I have to ask myself, what's the track record of success for this organization, and is getting women, 15 years after NAFTA, into a six-dollar an hour job with no benefits, something that I could feel good about in terms of the organization, and the answer to that question was no.

Here, Patrick (City Official) displays sympathy for La Mujer Obrera and the community it serves, but this sympathy translates into paternalism. Although he claims that he cares about the organization, he does not adopt a position that would empower members of La Mujer Obrera on their own terms.

In another statement that represents the perspective shared by city officials, the women's difficulties are portrayed as isolated personal problems, separate from broader social structural

influences. However, such a perspective opens a potential space for LMO's resistance. Jonathan (City Official) states:

I mean NAFTA passed a long time ago. I mean really, those people should have transitioned by now. If they haven't, it's been a . . . I don't want to say a failure in the system, but there's obviously a problem, and we need to identify what that problem is.

Here, Jonathan first recognizes and then summarily gropes to deny that there has been a failure in the system for the women of La Mujer Obrera. He subscribes to a classic tenet of neoliberal ideology, convinced that everyone is equal to sell their own labor and that if LMO fails to do so, it is their own fault. Although he seems to realize that social structural forces are at play, he does not want to accept it. His ideology is apparently at odds with the material reality that structural forms of oppression are indeed operating. This reveals an internal conflict wherein city officials' ideas about development cannot be reconciled with the social realities confronting the women of La Mujer Obrera, which highlights cracks in the foundations of the development model promoted by neoliberal advocates.

Invisibility. Another way that the city sustains the status quo is by (un)intentionally rendering the challenges confronted by La Mujer Obrera as invisible. When asked how she thinks the city sees LMO, Beatriz (LMO) replied, "the most benign way of viewing them [the women of La Mujer Obrera] was not seeing them at all." Angelica (LMO) complements this notion in stating, "they don't see how we fit into their world." Some members explicitly acknowledge how invisible their problems are to the city, such as Erica (LMO): "We're more invisible now as a community of women workers and their families than we've ever been in our thirty-year history, in my opinion. It's gotten much, much worse." These statements imply that members of La Mujer Obrera have not been granted voice in discussions regarding the development of their own community. The silencing of LMO conveniently serves the city's

development interests by veiling the existence of oppression or an unjust social order characterized by implicit masculinization (Freeman, 2001; Ward, 1993).

Symbolic violence is most apparent when the most benevolent of notions imperceptibly or unconsciously promotes an oppressive social order. In describing a period when members of La Mujer Obrera went to city hall to protest not receiving city government support, Eric (City Official) explains:

I finally got them to move into my office and tried to talk with them there and they kept screaming and yelling at me in Spanish, and I said ‘well you know that’s really doing you absolutely no good because I don’t even know what you’re saying. If you want to yell at me, at least get an interpreter.

This statement promotes a social order based on the assumption of US acculturation (i.e., in terms of English language proficiency), which is unfounded in the context of the U.S-Mexico border. It signifies a disconnection between the kind of cultural embracement that La Mujer Obrera’s model of development advocates and the cultural erasure that members of the organization believe is repeatedly instantiated through the talk and actions of city officials. Because Eric recognizes (i.e., misrecognizes) linguistic differences between LMO and the city as an indicator of incompetency, he is accepting the symbolic (i.e., inherently accepted) notion that the social categories of ethnicity, nationality and race are irrelevant in development discourse, which aligns with the neoliberal assumption that access is equal for all individuals regardless of myriad forms of social oppression.

Another example of symbolic violence may be seen in the divide between what La Mujer Obrera is doing and what city officials think LMO is doing. When asked what La Mujer Obrera contributes to the El Paso region, Jocelyn (City Official) responded:

Jocelyn (City Official): Nothing [laughs] . . . I think what they’re trying to do is merge some of the culture and kind of have, cultural events, you know, but, I don’t know....

La Mujer Obrera does more than contribute “cultural events” to the region. Jocelyn’s articulation of La Mujer Obrera as an organization that holds cultural events relegates the organization’s activities to minimal performances aimed at small-time entertainment, but the organization’s goals clearly reach far beyond this. By inaccurately characterizing as well as denigrating the aims and activities of La Mujer Obrera, city officials render the organization’s actual development efforts invisible – including their economic efforts – which serves to maintain the status quo, keeping members of La Mujer Obrera and the population they represent in subordinate social roles.

Reaffirming Subordination. The last way that city officials work to maintain the status quo is by reaffirming the women’s roles as “workers”, thus sustaining the traditional gendered labor arrangements of their neoliberal development model. When asked what the goals of La Mujer Obrera were, Jonathan (City Official) responded: “To get people stabilized and providing them the means to be able or retrain them I guess so they can go back into the workforce.” As a representation of the general consensus among most city officials, this response mostly suggests what the city desires the members of La Mujer Obrera to be: workers. In suggesting that the organization’s central goals are to retrain women “back into the workforce”, Jonathan is essentially demoting members of La Mujer Obrera from the “planner” status that they strive to achieve. Jocelyn (City Official) suggests, “instead of moving towards job skills that are what we need now, they’re not. They’re just missing the boat.” The “boat” that Jocelyn is referring to here is a solid business model where the women are repositioned as subordinate “workers”.

Obviously, city officials’ desires to reaffirm women’s roles as “workers” are strongly gendered; in the context of LMO, these desires also have implications for labor market

segmentation and stratification based on ethnicity. After being asked to go over some of the strengths and weaknesses of La Mujer Obrera, Eric (City Official) explained:

I've had this conversation with the guy from Hoover vacuums. I said 'you know what, I personally would rather have a hundred workers who can work efficiently in Spanish and hire one person who can speak to them as their manager, *the guy* [*emphasis added*] that makes sure the whole thing gets produced correctly, rather than spending all my time trying to train one hundred people how to speak to the manager.'

Given that Eric's and my discussion was specifically about La Mujer Obrera, this statement reflects his preference for the women of La Mujer Obrera to (1) remain Spanish-speaking workers who are unable to communicate with management and (2) be subordinate to a (presumably bilingual) Anglo man who himself is subordinate to (presumably Anglo male) top managers. He adds:

In retrospect, I think the federal government would have done a lot better had it trained a few managers how to speak Spanish than try to train all the workers how to speak English, especially seeing most of them were female mono-language Spanish only and had very little job skills other than knowing how to sew or cut or form patterns.

What is demonstrated in these two preceding statements is the intersection of ethnicity/nationality, gender, and education as axes of oppression utilized as a means to enhance corporate profitability within the neoliberal development model. How the well-being of Spanish-speaking, Mexican-origin women of low socioeconomic status can be directly promoted through such exploitative arrangements remains an important albeit unanswered question for neoliberal advocates (while their claims are empirically baseless, neoliberal theorists continue to trumpet the elusive benefits of indirect "trickle-down" development mechanisms). Although Eric is discussing these types of arrangements as a means for social empowerment, if implemented, they would do no more than integrate women into an economic system structurally designed to generate capital specifically for elites (i.e., the presumably Anglo male managers).

City officials' beliefs that members of La Mujer Obrera should simply go back to work

are recognized and negotiated by the organization's members as a desire to enlarge the cheap labor pool and to renew exploitative relations. Manuel (LMO), who has been a longstanding volunteer and support of the organization in all of its activities, describes a conversation he had with a city official:

[They said] I want to help you but you have to do what I tell you to do, because I want you to do the things that I want you to do. And that kind of mentality . . . doesn't function for this sector of the community. It keeps them . . . [as] cheap labor [with cheap wages].

Lourdes (LMO) adds:

You know, the people in the government want the cheap labor around while it's convenient, but when it comes the reality of the children and the schools and the people trying to live in their homes, then it's a problem. Then they're in the way.

After recognizing what they believe to be the real aims of the city's development model, many members of La Mujer Obrera resist, making it difficult for the organization to accomplish the economic component of its goals. Beatriz (LMO) reflects on the city's model:

I don't think it's a value shift. I think the underlying value is . . . women have their place, and [they'll say] we don't care if you do speak English and if you wear a business suit. You have your place [laughs]. And if you don't play the game that way, then you're a 'strident feminist' or a 'bitch on wheels', or whatever term they want to use.

What is demonstrated here is the internalization of strong social liberation ideals related to gender among members of LMO, which are not shared by city officials, along with a pragmatic sense that there is a game to be played in which the city holds more cards.

Recognition of the existence of a development game may pressure members of La Mujer Obrera to align their development ideals with those of the city, since the city provides a significant source of potential economic support that might facilitates important economic goals of LMO. Eva (LMO) acknowledges this reality:

It feels like if you want to get the funding, you have to play the game. You have to wear the skirt, and you have to giggle at their jokes, and you have to tie your vision to their vision.

Tying their vision to the city's requires that members of La Mujer Obrera embrace at least some

elements of the city's development model – along with gendered notions of femininity – which does not necessarily stipulate a concomitant rejection of LMO's development tenets. For some members, this may be seen as the necessary next step for growing the organization. When asked if they had any suggestions for making La Mujer Obrera more successful or efficient, Rachel (LMO) replied:

Rachel (LMO): [Sigh] Wow. I think we need to be a little bit more open to outside ideas. I know [we] have a vision [and] want to stay as close to that vision as [we] possibly can, but at the same time, [we] want to broaden [our] vision and knowledge. And there are so many people, so many experts out in our community that have that knowledge. I feel like 'gosh, let's at least listen to what they have to say.' So that would be something that I see maybe we could expand on.

Rachel's willingness and curiosity to explore the ideas of other experts in the city hints at the overlap between LMO's and city officials' development models. Economic development is an explicit goal of LMO, a goal that the city might potentially facilitate. The organization's micro-enterprise and business incubation activities are reflective on the economic component of LMO's entire community revitalization project. Whereas many members of reject the city's orientation toward development entirely, some members, such as Rachel, see the relevance of expert knowledge from other sources (e.g., community development individuals or city officials), at least in terms of facilitating economic activities. The tension exists, however, in the negotiation between LMO's conceptualization of economic development and the city's. LMO's emphasis on micro-enterprise-based development makes the women of LMO susceptible to opening themselves up to potentially exploitative "business" relationships with the city that would do little to revitalize the Chamizal Barrio community. Thus, the critical tension that LMO members face in their dealings with the city involves negotiating their integration within the capitalist order in order to address broader community-based goals while simultaneously rejecting the

neoliberal tenets embraced by city officials that would undermine their capacities to achieve those goals.

A couple of texts reflect both LMO's and city officials' development discourses, particularly the city's Weed and Seed Program and Empowerment Zone objectives. La Mujer Obrera is listed as an affiliate of the city's Weed and Seed program, which was designed to revitalize the Chamizal neighborhood. Within the official document outlining the Weed and Seed program, objectives are presented, along with specific tasks, timelines, indications as to which organization is responsible for the objective, performance measures/outcomes, and expected funding sources. Objective 14d of the city's Weed and Seed program, which falls under the program's economic/workforce development section, reads: "Develop a Mercado/Cultural Market Place in the neighborhood to create employment and micro entrepreneurship opportunities" ("Chamizal Neighborhood", 2012, p. 49). Certainly, La Mujer Obrera pursued this program as an opportunity to further its economic development goals. According to the text, successful accomplishment of this objective is measured in four ways: (1) a business plan is finalized; (2) a substantial number of funding sources are contacted; (3) the Mercado is built; and (4) a significant number of micro businesses are in full operation within the Mercado. All of these four activities have been completed. Although the Weed and Seed program clearly coincides with LMO's economic development goals, other components of community development are not explicitly addressed.

Objective 14d, which stipulates that a Mercado be built "to create employment and micro entrepreneurship opportunities" nicely fits with LMO's economic development goals and activities (e.g., micro-enterprises). However, city officials' perception of the Mercado as an unsuccessful business venture indicates that a disjuncture exists between the way city officials

operationalize economic success and the way LMO members do. The women of LMO appear to tolerate entering into economic relations with the city only on their own terms (e.g., via community-based micro-enterprise development initiatives), even if doing so does not result in immediate business success. As demonstrated above, there are clear limits to the types of business/economic ventures that members of LMO are willing to pursue. First, LMO explicitly and repeatedly articulates their unwillingness to relocate downtown, precisely because doing so would undermine the holistic aims of community-level development for and within Chamizal Barrio. Second, LMO members find the idea of being re-trained with city funds so that they can work in the Hoover factory (or any factory) under a bilingual floor manager as intolerable, since participating in such an economic “development” program would subjugate them once again within highly exploitative social relations.

Like the Weed and Seed program, the objectives of the Empowerment Zone simultaneously reflect components of both city officials’ and LMO’s development model. According to the City of El Paso website, “an Empowerment Zone is a federally recognized distressed area in need of sustainable community development” (“Empowerment Zone”, 2012). The executive summary of the Empowerment Zone strategic plan states, “The vision that emerged from a collaborative effort continues to treasure the zone’s core values of strong families, solid work ethic and cultural diversity to maximize services to the residents and businesses in their venture for economic success (“Strategic Plan”, 2012, p. 2). Moreover, the first goal outlined in the strategic plan for the Empowerment Zone is “economic self-sufficiency”. These aims coincide with LMO’s and city officials’ development aims. The primary challenge for LMO, however, is to pursue economic self-sufficiency without sacrificing

social mobility and community development for members of Chamizal Barrio. LMO's transnational orientation offers a way to do so.

Transnational Mediation

Previous sections revealed the features of each group's development models (and discourses), examined how oppressive relations inherent within these discourses were recognized by members of LMO and illustrated how both groups negotiated the meaning and broader implications of these models. In this final section, research question four is addressed, examining how transnational dynamics mediate La Mujer Obrera members' abilities to challenge oppressive gender ideologies and ideas revolving around other social categories promoted via city officials' development model. Interviews provide two overarching themes for this section: (a) reclamation of capital for La Mujer Obrera and (b) the creation of a political space where voice is otherwise missing. This section demonstrates that the transnational nature of La Mujer Obrera serves to increase the organization's leverage with the City of El Paso and discusses the possibility of development models that could accommodate both the city and La Mujer Obrera's goals.

Reclaiming Capital. Although the violence in Juárez (Mexico) (Campbell, 2009) may have impeded the transnational dynamics of the organization to a degree between 2006 and the present day, La Mujer Obrera has always served the ends of women on both sides of the border.

Beatriz (LMO) explains:

The unusual thing about the garment workforce was that people were binational. You had women who had their houses in Juárez and would travel here to work and/or establish a house here and have their family, like their mother and father or their brothers and sisters, still in Juárez. So it was very much a binational workforce, and that's still the case, I think today. A lot of the women [here at La Mujer Obrera] have that ease, that flow between the two countries and keep their feet in both places.

Everything that the organization does is in an attempt to redefine what it means to be a Mexican woman, who historically had a limited say in her future. In order to do this, members of La

Mujer Obrera embrace a model of holistic community development built upon their own shared identity. This is accomplished, in part, by providing items and festivities that celebrate their culture, such as the annual *Dia de Los Muertos* event. According to the women of La Mujer Obrera, all the items in the organization are brought in from Mexico for the dual-purpose of providing economic return for the women who made the crafts in Mexico and bringing Mexico to El Paso.

Both city officials and members of La Mujer Obrera appreciate the celebration of Mexican heritage. When asked what La Mujer Obrera is bringing to the city culturally, Jessica (City Official) replied:

You know certainly I think a real focus on Mexico as a place of pride, as a place of heritage, as a history that we need to be proud of, a culture that we need to recognize, and they've done a lot of great work, particularly their festivals in bringing in dance or food or music from particular regions. They're really talented in really making these festivals that connect people, both Mexicans who probably miss their home to their country of origin and also people in the community, maybe newcomers from Ft. Bliss, people that live in the neighborhood, kind of gives us an opportunity to connect to what is an incredibly rich heritage.

Natalia (City Official) complements this sentiment:

What I have seen La Mujer Obrera attempt to do is educate the community about our cultural heritage, and I think they've been very successful at that . . . They've taken something that's at the heart of who we are and celebrated it. And so I've been very, very impressed by that.

Thus, it is clear even to some city officials that, although the organization may be short on economic capital, they maintain substantial cultural capital.

An example of the organization's cultural capacity is found in its daycare practices. After being asked to describe the daycare, Marisol (LMO) explained:

The daycare is not only a daycare where you come to take care of kids . . . Here, we are helping them in everything that is our culture . . . we are focusing on teaching both American and Mexican culture to them. (Translated from Spanish)

The education that these children receive about their Mexican heritage follows them home and is shared with the family unit, which expands knowledge about a culture that may otherwise be lost through acculturation to dominant US norms. The spread of knowledge regarding Mexican heritage among the community enables the organization to do two things: (1) to increase the breadth of its cultural capital and (2) to extend the reach of its social capital. Both forms of capital are pivotal to accomplishing the organization's goals because both enable community-level development participation.

Creation of Political Space. According to Angelica (LMO), “the only [economic] structures that we had as a people – as women, Mexican women, or of Mexican origin, because we were both born on this side and Mexico – were those factories.” The factories were all that economically sustained the women of La Mujer Obrera, and when the factories moved into Mexico post-NAFTA, a new space for economic growth was needed. La Mujer Obrera ended up being that space, and it also brought opportunities for developing new forms of personal and community growth not formerly accessible. The following dialogue with Daniela (LMO) reveals this:

Leslie: In which language are services provided here?

Daniela (LMO): Well in Spanish, but there are English-speaking peers too. We're not against speaking or learning English. Actually right now there are English classes that we are giving. We all desire to learn English also; we are not against that. It's just that this is our space where we can express ourselves most freely while we learn English too. (Translated from Spanish).

As a space of open expression that embraces U.S.-Mexico cultural diversity, La Mujer Obrera facilitates the creation of a political voice in a region where women of Mexican origin have historically been silenced. They do this by embracing and celebrating all the social categories

that make them who they are (e.g., on the basis of gender, age, education) and claiming a new meaning of “the woman worker” (i.e., “La Mujer Obrera”).

Members of LMO also enhance their political voice by creating a museum that connects the organization’s visitors to their history. The women’s futures were formerly governed by the factories, and their past struggles used to be unknown, but today, La Mujer Obrera offers the women a space to speak and to educate generations about their past. The museum in La Mujer Obrera connects visitors not only to the women’s historical struggles but also to their cultural roots in Mexico.

Leslie: What is the purpose of the museum?

Daniela (LMO): The purpose of the museum is . . . to teach people . . . who we are culturally and who we are as factory workers. We wanted to create a museum where you could know who we are This is a space for people to know that we exist as working women. (Translated from Spanish).

In educating the community about the women of La Mujer Obrera and cultural ties to Mexico, the organization positions itself as a medium for advocating social justice and situates itself as a gateway for transnational flows. Beatriz (LMO) explains: “families have always transitioned into the U.S., and I think Mujer Obrera is a pathway for that to happen, for that transition to happen now.” LMO’s intimate connection to Mexican heritage extends the reach of Mexico’s culture beyond the international border, allowing transnational migrants to experience their cultural roots in both El Paso and Ciudad Juárez (MX).

As a gateway between two nations and an advocate of social justice for Mexican women, La Mujer Obrera embraces a transnationally-oriented development model that enables the organization to serve the interests of both city officials and the women of La Mujer Obrera. Erica (LMO) explains:

The fact that they were Mexican immigrant women workers was actually the very asset that

could build a development strategy that could have *profound* economic impact for El Paso, and the border, and the U.S., because this is the emergence of the demographics in the US . . . And then that becomes a model for anywhere else where you have a significant population of Hispanics, and particularly a significant population of Mexican immigrants . . . Their cultural identity as a living practice, as a living tradition, is both something that sustains them and enables them to not feel marginalized, but it's also a tremendous economic motor for the larger Hispanic community.

Therefore, according to the women of La Mujer Obrera, embracing Mexican heritage has the potential to reorient the economy of this region, allowing for simultaneous economic growth and social empowerment for women of Mexican descent. This would seem to resonate with both the City of El Paso and La Mujer Obrera's development interests. However, as Beatriz (LMO) puts it: "What's going to happen here [in El Paso] is whatever people are ready for."

The transnational orientation of La Mujer Obrera is pivotal to the organization's development model, but this begs a question as to why such an orientation is not articulated by the city; the answer: it is not explicitly considered in the city's development model. Building from Davila's (2004) "culture as industry" and "culture as ethnicity" concepts, whereas the city seems to adopt a "culture *as an indicator of industry*" (i.e., culture as an indicator of where exploitation may occur), LMO subscribes to more of a "culture as community capital" paradigm, holding onto culture as an important component of the rich Mexican heritage present in El Paso and a motor for economic development.

In terms of city officials' texts, the crucial transnational component of Chamizal Barrio's (and all of El Paso's regional) development is not explicitly acknowledged. All of the city-based development programs discussed in this chapter are linked to a particular U.S. federal department: HUD. Figure 5.1 illustrates the connections among these programs. DCDH falls under HUD, and under the jurisdiction of DCDH are the City of El Paso's consolidated plan, CDBG grant, Weed and Seed program and Empowerment Zone. According to the department's

website: “HUD’s mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes: utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination; and transform the way HUD does business” (“Mission”, 2012). HUD’s mission effectively grants considerations to components of both city officials’ and LMO members’ development models, to include an explicit economic component. However, what is entirely missing from this text is a transnational (or international for that matter) component. Its absence indicates the invisibility of the border in development discourse, which travels its way down to the practices and neoliberal ideas of development that the City of El Paso advocates. At the HUD level, border discourse may not appear relevant, but in El Paso, its consideration is critical.

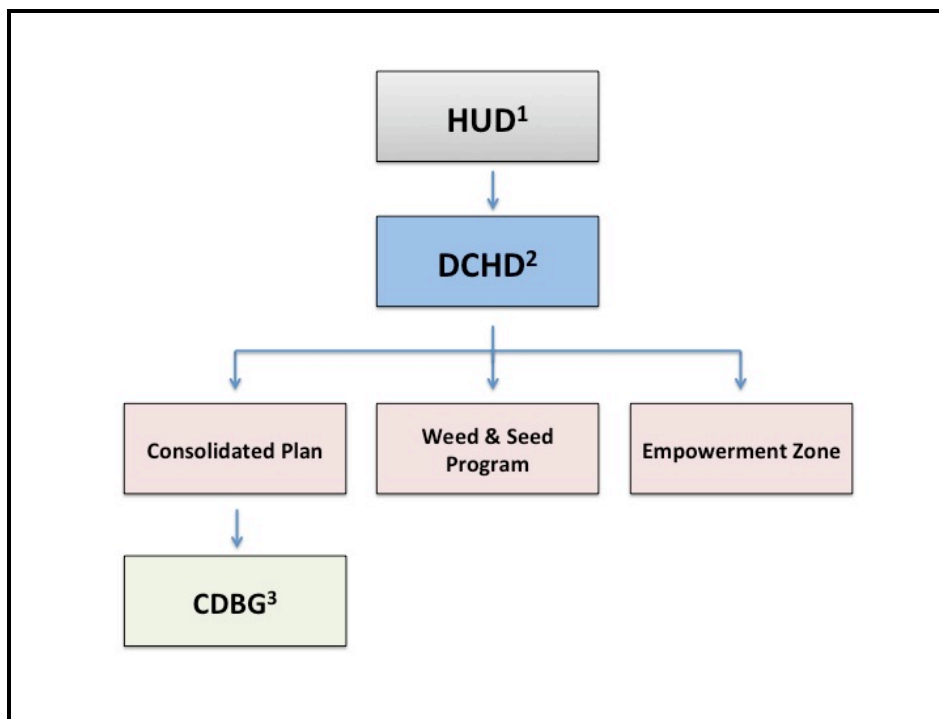


Figure 5.1: Government Textual Connections

¹. Federal Government - Department of Housing and Urban Development

². El Paso Department of Community and Human Development

³. Community Development Block Grant

Conversely, La Mujer Obrera's development model explicitly endorses a transnational orientation. The organization's CDBES program is described as follows:

La Mujer Obrera established CDBES to balance the demands of *creating a community economic development process that is rooted in the needs of Mexican immigrant women workers* [emphasis added]. The challenge in this process is how to create access to economic alternatives while ensuring that this 'access' is not achieved at the cost of leaving behind the women who have given it birth ("Women's Analysis", 2011).

In calling for a community-based economic development process, there is fusion of both economic goals and community-level empowerment. Articulating that this process is "rooted in the needs of Mexican immigrant women workers" not only crystallizes a clear transnational approach, but it also emphasizes that the intersection of multiple social categories should be integral to locally-relevant development practices (including gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, and nationality).

Ch. 6: Discussion

In this chapter, the implications of La Mujer Obrera's and the City of El Paso's development models are discussed. The data suggest that these models are simultaneously distinct and connected, which presents barriers and opportunities for community organizations like La Mujer Obrera and cities like El Paso. Interviews illustrate that women from the organization recognize the oppression inherent in the city's development model, and a few of them make explicit connections between this model and the reaffirmation of their social position as "workers". Additionally, the data also suggest that the women of La Mujer Obrera are firm in resisting the city's version of economic development. Contrarily, city officials adopt a neoliberal orientation toward development that predisposes them to undervalue most central tenets of La Mujer Obrera's holistic community development model and seek to maintain a status quo characterized by gender subordination. Finally, the data indicate that while LMO adopts a strong transnational orientation in their model of development, the city makes no acknowledgement of the border. The implications of these findings are discussed in the remainder of this chapter, which has been separated into four sections, in which the following objectives are accomplished, respectively: (1) I examine the negative social consequences of the two development models in terms of their similarities and nuances in economic development; (2) I discuss the role of culture in negotiating the neoliberal conditions of economic development. Together, these two sections emphasize the importance of assessing community- and culturally-specific needs when establishing metrics of successful economic development in the Chamizal Barrio and similar border localities.

Disjuncture in Economic Development

In response to my first research question, the data reveal two models of development with differing central aims and social implications. The primary goal of La Mujer Obrera's development model is community development, characterized by the revitalization of the community's infrastructure, to include education, nutrition, the embracement of Mexican heritage, and economic development. Conversely, the central aim of city officials' development model is business-creation, shoving aside other aspects of community development (e.g., education) as secondary concerns at best.

Although city officials and members of La Mujer Obrera adopt models of development that would at first appear to be at odds with one another, both groups share a pivotal economic development component. This economic overlap of the groups' models is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

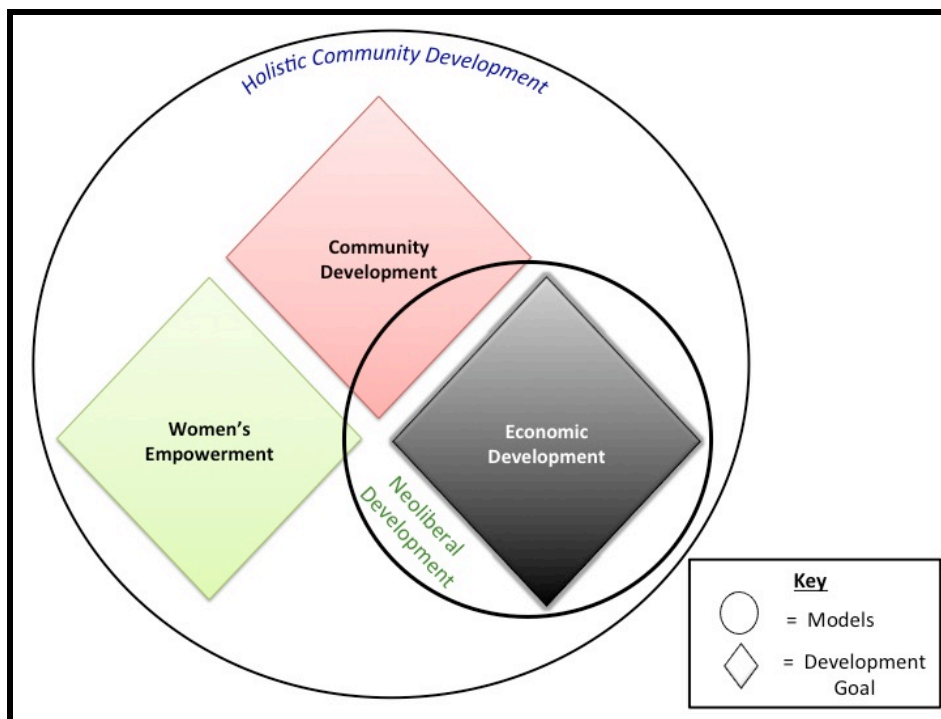


Figure 6.1: Overlap in Development Goals in El Paso

As the figure illustrates, the city's neoliberal development model is, in a sense, fully encompassed by La Mujer Obrera's holistic community development model. Because both groups advocate economic development as component of their models, there are resonances in development discourse, which have implications for both organizations. Notably, the intersection of the two development models creates a forum and audience for city officials in promoting their neoliberal development agenda, which privileges specific forms of economic development. For La Mujer Obrera, their model of development necessarily encompasses the city's model because economic development is a significant component of community development, especially in terms of facilitating for-profit ventures (e.g., the Mercado). Thus, the primary tension between the city's and LMO's development models exists in their contrary definitions of economic development. Angelica (LMO) presents this overarching tension:

How do we not go back to the factory? Like we don't want to go back to the factory, and I don't mean literally. I mean for real [laughs]. We don't want to go back to the factory where we just take orders and they just beat us down until you're not human anymore. So how do we create a community that takes us away from that so that we're a real community and not just a bunch of people living side by side and hurting each other?

This quote demonstrates precisely where and why the members of LMO draw the line in terms of the type of exploitation they are willing to tolerate within the capitalist order via economic development programs. Both groups want economic development, but they do not agree on what successful "economic development" means.

Addressing my second research question, the differences in the meaning of economic development result in negative social consequences for members of La Mujer Obrera and the entire Chamizal neighborhood. Gender is an illustrative example. The factory is a site of oppression for the women of La Mujer Obrera, but it is also a reminder of the relevance of gender in development discourse. Gender is intimately enmeshed in economic governance and

the neoliberal paradigm (Connell, 2009; Griffin, 2009). Within this model and all alternatives, there is never a question about women's inclusion or exclusion in development. Women are *always* included. The real question revolves around *how* women are included in myriad models of development.

City officials clearly articulate that they want the women of La Mujer Obrera to engage only in certain activities (e.g., profitable business ventures) and roles (i.e., ideally as workers), which draws attention to the implicit masculinization (Freeman, 2001; Ward, 1993) of a supposedly value-neutral neoliberal development model (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). However, the city fails to recognize the gender value they are (dis)placing on LMO in their development discourse. This is nothing new. Griffin (2009) describes how this process works in the World Bank: "the Bank reproduces gender at the very heart of its work through the discourse with which it medicates the developing world, a discourse predicated on the attainment of certain, entirely gendered, desirable behaviors, identifications and attributes" (Griffin, 2009, p. 4). Members of La Mujer Obrera recognize the relevance of gender and assert that the city's dismissal of it indicates a desire to reposition the women of LMO as low status workers. The relevance of other social categories plays into this.

As the data illustrate, gender is not the only social category that is made neutral (i.e., an axis of social difference symbolically veiled or accepted as irrelevant) in the city's neoliberal model of development; language/ethnicity, age and the location of Chamizal Barrio are also neutralized. Returning to the neoliberal assumption that the market is a space free for everyone to participate in (Peet & Hartwick, 2009), it is not surprising that city officials do not bring the intersection of these social axes of oppression to bear in their discussions on local economic development. As illustrated above, some city officials explicitly advocate acculturation in the

sense of learning English in El Paso. However, this assumption dismisses the relevance of the international border and undermines the reality that in this particular locality, Spanish-speaking individuals maintain access to a variety of resources (and bilingual individuals are generally conferred relative advantages). Pertaining to age, a city official's comment (recounted by Erica of LMO) that the women of the organization would probably "be dead in ten years" dismisses the relevance of age in LMO's model of economic development. In the city's definition of economic development, devaluation based on age makes perfect rational sense, since productivity and profit maximization are tied to years of labor input. However, this discriminatory perspective on age reveals an internal contradiction in the neoliberal logic. How can the city's approach to development be "good for everyone" (Robbins et al., 2010, p. 109) if it systematically devalues and excludes groups of people based on age? In terms of space, LMO members repeatedly indicated that they felt Chamizal Barrio was "nonexistent" to the city. Although city officials would certainly disagree with such assertions, their inability to grasp why LMO continues to function in the barrio instead of downtown is indicative of their incapacity to assess the situation based on anything other than pure neoliberal economic calculus.

Two clear consequences of a neoliberal development discourse emerge from the data: displacement and marginalization. Displacement of ordinary citizens for the economic benefit of elites is a recurrent outcome of neoliberal practices (Collins & Jimenez, 2012; Gunewardena, 2008; Klein, 2007). Based on their development model, city officials ultimately act to displace poor, minority populations to make room for people engaged in higher economic-yielding activities. For members of La Mujer Obrera and the community it serves, displacement appears to be one of the few alternatives to integration in a system where they would serve as cheap labor. This facilitates gentrification. The downtown revitalization plan is an example that many

members of LMO pointed to (“Downtown Plan”, 2011). This plan is characterized by the construction of high-dollar businesses, such as a Doubletree Hotel, which are intended to attract what Klein (2007) refers to as “high-yield” tourists. The intended service workforce for these businesses: marginalized populations like members of La Mujer Obrera.

Marginalization is another consequence of neoliberal development. Wright (2006) indicates that “the disposable worker” is an archetype of the entire neoliberal paradigm. The women of La Mujer Obrera have no intention of conforming to this archetype and they continuously advocate for themselves as economic and social planners. For LMO, being repositioned into the low-wage service workforce is no better than going back to the garment factory. Angelica (LMO) poses the question: “What’s the difference between making a million burritos and being behind a machine?” Although the women of LMO do make food at their Mercado, they are doing so as their own managers. They call shots in terms nutritional value of the items on their menu, which they would not be able to do in another restaurant in El Paso. Members of La Mujer Obrera no longer want to be disposable workers, yet neoliberal advocates see that as their niche, and expect them to fulfill those roles. When LMO members strive to achieve economic development on their own terms, those who abide by the neoliberal development paradigm (e.g., city officials) categorize them as incompetent, inefficient individuals. However, city officials choose not to recognize the unjust working conditions that their neoliberal development model is predicated on. They prefer to attribute LMO’s rejection of the neoliberal paradigm to incompetency, which is characteristic of the neoliberal framework (Harvey, 2005). This explains Jonathan’s (City Official) comment that members of LMO “should have transitioned by now” post-NAFTA. Instead of challenging the neoliberal paradigm itself, he is critiquing LMO’s reluctance to participate in it, reminiscent of the WID orientation.

The city's ability to promote its conceptualization of economic development may be explained by its competitiveness within Bourdieu's linguistic market. Revisiting Bourdieu's (1991a, 1995) "giving as possessing" framework and the neoliberal assumption of value-neutrality, the act of giving can also be construed as an act of possessing because it enters the receiving individual/group into a position of obligatory exchange. The city acts as a development facilitator and wields the economic capital that LMO needs to accomplish their goals, but the city does not give the funds to LMO unless the city can possess (i.e., control) the flow of capital in LMO's economic activities. Specifically, the data indicate that the city does not support LMO unless the organization acts more like a business, and less like a social enterprise (i.e., unless LMO aligns itself more with the city's idea of economic development). Given the positionality of city officials within the positions of economic power and political influence, they are endowed with competitive bargaining chips within the linguistic market and are able to articulate what they think economic development ought to be, despite the social implications.

The economic development component of city officials' neoliberal development model is less about individuals (e.g., a specific city official) and more about the politics and ideologies that certain institutions adhere to as a whole. This is not to discount city officials' perspectives or actions. Rather, it is to demonstrate the link between action (e.g., denying LMO the EZ grant) and an oppressive ideology/structure (e.g., a neoliberal conceptualization of economic development). Here, the hegemony of neoliberal development discourse acts as what Smith (1987, 1990b) terms the "relations of ruling", which city officials subscribe to. The language of the city's everyday world revolves around a discourse of development that does not recognize heterogeneous social categories as relevant to effective development. Beatriz (LMO) offers that city officials do not recognize the oppressive nature of their development model because they do

not experience the harsh realities of it. She explains:

I think that the city doesn't really see the women for who they are, and what I mean is that they can't see. They cannot see. They do not experience the problem. They're not on the streets looking for work. They have no clue what it's like, and they have no respect for the process that needs to happen in order for change to be successful.

The city's ideas about development serve as symbolic capital in this example. The problems and assumptions inherent in these ideas are invisible to city officials, and because they are invisible, they are accepted as natural phenomena, or as Bourdieu might assert, they enact a form of symbolic violence.

The negative ramifications of the neoliberal development discourse are symbolically denied or accepted as a result of natural market competition (and, hence, fair) by those from the city who are supposedly concerned with 'community development', which is precisely what facilitates symbolic violence. Peet and Hartwick (2009) explain:

The classical economists legitimated selfish, competitive profit making as 'natural'. This makes 'unnatural' *other* motives for economic practice, such as cooperativeness, the desire to work for the common good, and the desire to organize production to meet the needs of everyone. (pp. 41-42)

Like classical economists, proponents of neoliberalism effectively vilify any alternative model of development that does not adopt a narrow economic orientation (e.g., LMO's model) while relying on legitimating discourses to deflect resistance. Thus, facilitators of neoliberal development not only seek to promote free-market objectives, but they strive do so without having others detect the social biases in their agenda. They engage in utopian rhetoric (Collins & Jimenez, 2012; Peet & Hartwick, 2009), actively promoting pure free-market economics as a means to empowerment. Further, this rhetoric undermines the relevance of gender. According to Connell (2007): "Neoliberalism can function as a form of masculinity politics largely because of

the powerful role of the state in the gender order” (p. 619). Thus, shared adherence to neoliberal ideology coordinates the activities of particular groups (e.g., city officials) without those groups recognizing their positionality within a particular development paradigm. Figure 6.1 illustrates the relationship between LMO’s holistic development model and the city’s neoliberal model in El Paso.

In contrast to the city’s development model – where economic activity takes full precedence, even at the cost of social displacement and marginalization – La Mujer Obrera’s holistic community development model advocates for the empowerment of Latinas and the entire Chamizal Barrio community via several aims, including economic development. This places LMO alongside several other groups that resist varying development initiatives due to implications of gender subordination (Nash & Fernández Kelly, 1983; Safa, 1980; Ward, 1987). With their development model, LMO moves beyond capital accumulation as a sole goal and aims for broad-based social empowerment and political reconfiguration (i.e., in establishing a proud, strong Latina identity). Such an approach speaks to the whole community and not just elites. As Devine (2003) indicates, having social and political considerations spearhead conversations about “sustainable” development appears to offer benefits to more people than conversations revolving solely around economic concerns. For members of La Mujer Obrera, they accomplish this by bringing culture into the development discourse.

Culture in Border Development

Addressing research questions three and four, culture is highly relevant in the ways both city officials and members of LMO negotiate contrary ideas about economic development. The city is looking for programs and activities that will yield the most economic output for the city and not necessarily the Chamizal neighborhood. For city officials, it makes no difference if these

activities are situated downtown or in on the west side of the city. All that truly matters is how much money can be pumped back into the city (e.g., in the form of tax revenues); such activities are what Jonathan (City Official) refers to as “worthwhile”. In contrast, LMO’s primary stakeholder is the Chamizal community. The economic development component of LMO’s holistic development model is crucial for the empowerment/revitalization needed in the community, but this economic development has to happen on LMO’s own terms. Outside of these terms, for example, the city promotes free market practices such as outsourcing. Outsourcing is a significant component of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005) and is reflective of the city’s attempt to maximize economic capital input. However, this does almost nothing for LMO and members of Chamizal Barrio. Economic activities guided by people from outside the community for which these activities are intended to empower deny community members the opportunity to participate in their own community development on their own terms.

The tension between these two models highlights the need for scholars and practitioners to adopt a more nuanced perspective on the role of culture in development, one which moves beyond Davila’s (2004) ideas of *culture as ethnicity* versus *culture as industry* as mutually exclusive categories. With economic development as the prominent common thread shared between the City of El Paso and LMO, both groups clearly adopt certain components of the *culture as industry* concept. Measuring LMO’s success exclusively on the merits of economic development reflects city officials’ ideas about culture as an indicator for exploitable comparative advantage. Rather than adopting the perspective of culture as industry, city officials ignore the relevance of culture in Chamizal barrio and keep their attention fixed on economic enhancement, thus dismissing the local-level needs of the entire community. The relatively small amount of attention that city officials give to culture, as reflected in the data, indicates that the

city has only begun to recognize the potential economic value of marketing Mexican culture. One explanation for city officials' limited attention to the value of local and regional culture as a motor for development is their positionality within the government sphere. The fact that their daily activities are situated inside a state institution means that they are oriented by the generic, extra-local neoliberal development discourse that permeates all levels of government, from federal to local levels.

Contrary to Davila's (2004) presentation of *culture as industry* and *culture as ethnicity* concepts as mutually exclusive, La Mujer Obrera adopts both, and, like city officials, views culture as exploitable comparative advantage, albeit not exclusively so. Through activities such as the Mercado and business incubation, it is clear that LMO wants to market their culture for their own economic gain and advance their position within the capitalist order. However, as the data indicate, they have very clear limits as to how they define what is tolerable in terms of exploiting their culture for their own advantage. They will not go back to the factory, metaphorically and literally. Although their shared desire to step out of the worker role seems to contradict the name of the organization ("La Mujer Obrera") and reposition them back into the factory, the women of LMO clearly seek to redefine what it means to be a Latina worker and to exploit every social category previously used against them in the factory as leverage for community and economic growth. To do this, the women draw on their transnational identity.

Transnational Mediation of Inequality. What helps La Mujer Obrera challenge the city's orientation toward development is their steadfast pronouncement of what the "Mexican woman" is, in relation to what the City of El Paso thinks the "Mexican woman" should be. Hence, drawing on and redefining a transnational identity that transcends both sides of the border not only helps La Mujer Obrera with their organizational goals, it offers them the symbolic

capital needed for negotiating the City of El Paso's neoliberal model of development. Here, I examine how La Mujer Obrera is able to draw upon their transnational orientation in order to envision a social order rooted in justice and to challenge the city's neoliberal development model.

Despite a shortage of economic capital, women of La Mujer Obrera have been resourceful in generating social and cultural capital, and reconvertng them into novel forms of symbolic capital for the El Paso community (especially women). Bourdieu (2003) explains this process: "In the face of such a complex and refined mode of domination, in which symbolic power has such an important place, one must invent new . . . symbolic weapons, capable of undermining common beliefs" (p. 36). This is where La Mujer Obrera's transnational orientation becomes most relevant. In drawing on their Mexican heritage, LMO converts Mexican crafts, traditions and celebrations – all of which may be regarded as cultural capital – into symbolic capital (i.e., aspects of daily life in El Paso that are accepted as inherent, authentic, and natural). Whereas Davila (2004) presents the tension between culture as *industry* and culture as *ethnicity*, the transnational orientation that La Mujer Obrera embraces allows them to introduce a "culture as community *capital*" paradigm. I purposefully refer to "capital" here ambiguously because it is meant to encompass all four of Bourdieu's (1986) capitals (i.e., economic, social, cultural, and symbolic). This is different than "cultural capital" because cultural capital refers explicitly to sets of knowledge, skills, and education. Culture as capital, rather, indicates the possibility of drawing on culture holistically, that is, in all intersections of an individual/group's socio-demographic makeup (e.g., gender, class, ethnicity, nationality) within a particular social space. Recognizing that these social categories are anything but homogeneous, a culture as capital paradigm enables social actors to draw on unique sets of capital *within* their social category. La

Mujer Obrera accomplishes this very effectively. They draw on their identity as Mexican immigrant women – intersecting categories that neoliberal discourse systematically devalues – and use everything that is intended to oppress them (e.g., their gender, age, class, nationality, ethnicity, education level) as catalysts for empowerment. This is reflected in LMO’s Plan Mayachen.

Given city officials’ positionality, any organization that contributes significantly to local economic growth helps underwrite and expand the operating budget. Hence, the City of El Paso’s aims for development to conform to a narrow neoliberal agenda favoring elite class organizations that can best contribute to economic growth through the maximization of profit. For La Mujer Obrera, in contrast, development is equated with multiple forms of empowerment for women and communities of Mexican descent, which is a goal that resonates across the U.S.-Mexico border. These findings suggest that the generation of a well-developed identity as a “Mexican woman” creates transnational political space for the women of La Mujer Obrera to negotiate the City of El Paso’s conditions for funding.

Outside of this transnational development framework, the City of El Paso has nearly complete control of the region’s linguistic market and is able to utilize this in their attempts to socially organize the lives of the women at La Mujer Obrera. Contrarily, embracing a transnational orientation of development along the U.S.-Mexico border illuminates the possibility of challenging a neoliberal model of development aimed at legitimizing the marginalization of low-income Mexican women. Thus, rethinking development in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez region requires that scholars and practitioners look beyond community and international development as independent processes and embrace a transnational lens, one which

allows them to envision and enable marginalized groups along the U.S.-Mexico border to draw on culture as capital as they pursue multiple forms of social justice.

Ch. 7: Conclusion

Summary

Drawing on several components of institutional ethnography for my data collection, I identified particular models of development through an analysis of development discourse and texts. While La Mujer Obrera promotes a holistic community development model that addresses several facets of Chamizal Barrio's infrastructure, to include the economic sphere, city officials subscribe to a neoliberal development model, characterized by a narrow focus on profit maximization and enhancing the city's operating budget. These models constrain possibilities for local development activities and engender competing definitions of what constitutes development program success. While city officials act to maintain the status quo based on a neoliberal order that subjugates individuals on the basis of gender, race and class, among other axes of oppression, LMO adopts a transnational orientation that helps them convert their culture into symbolic capital and mediate the city's neoliberal discourse and actions.

The remainder of this chapter is broken up into five brief sections. First, I present specific barriers and opportunities for organizations like La Mujer Obrera that operate along the U.S.-Mexico border. Next, I provide recommendations to community development organizations and development facilitators at the city, state and federal levels. Then, I discuss the limitations of this study, followed by different areas of prospective research. Finally, I conclude the thesis with a few thoughts about rethinking development in border and non-border localities.

Barriers and Opportunities

In addressing research question five, several barriers were identified for organizations like La Mujer Obrera along the U.S.-Mexico border. As the data indicate, a major barrier to La Mujer Obrera's success is their unwillingness to adopt certain components of the city's economic

development discourse. Although it is clear that LMO willingly navigates through the capitalist order and advocates for economic development on their own terms, the organization may benefit from calling on economic development experts from the city and/or other sources, such as the community itself. The data illustrate that LMO has a clear sense of what sort of economic activities it is willing to engage (i.e., what exploitation they are willing to tolerate), but there is less of an indication that they are willing to compromise with the city and their conditions for development. As the primary tension of this thesis, negotiating economic development without sacrificing cultural identity and social mobility is particularly challenging for organizations like La Mujer Obrera, especially in light of the city's dismissal of culture as a relevant component of development in El Paso. For organizations like La Mujer Obrera, city officials' perception of culture as an irrelevant component of development in the region is a major barrier. Convincing entities like the City of El Paso that a holistic community development model is effective requires presenting such a model with explicit foci on economic activities. If LMO is interested in marketing myriad social categories (e.g., age, education, gender) as motors of development, the organization will have to explicitly demonstrate how such a strategy can yield high economic return.

In terms of opportunities, non-profit community development organizations like La Mujer Obrera receive high interest from the community because of their U.S.-Mexico border location. The transnational dynamic of LMO allows the organization to tap into social, cultural, and economic resources on both sides of the border, an opportunity not readily available to other community development organizations in non-border localities. Relevant to both border and non-border organizations, however, is the use of a region's culture as both industry and a means of creating community capital. Utilizing culture as both a motor for economic growth and a way to

celebrate native roots can work as a means of community development, as it defines all the social nuances among individuals that comprise communities as relevant, indeed critically important, qualities to be valued.

Recommendations

In this section, I present recommendations to community organizations like La Mujer Obrera and development facilitators (e.g., city officials/representatives) in terms of better achieving development goals and improving decision-making processes regarding city-level funding.

For community development organizations like La Mujer Obrera, I recommend two actions. First, seek out marketing experts or individuals who are becoming familiar with marketing as a career. Although this may conform to a degree with the city's neoliberal model, such action will enable LMO to reach a broader audience and market Mexican heritage to a fuller extent. To minimize the economic and social costs of doing this, good places to start recruiting such experts are universities, high schools and other community centers. With the approval of these institutions, recruiting individuals to assist in the organization's outreach programs can be conducted on a volunteer basis (i.e., simply for the experience) or a negotiated salary. In any case, having marketing experts on board can significantly extend the reach of organization's activities, as long as organizational goals explicitly inform strategies developed in cooperation with these experts. Next, organizations like LMO need to clearly lay out for development facilitators (e.g., city officials) what sort of economic activities they are willing to engage in. The data indicate that there is a significant overlap between LMO and the City of El Paso, which means opportunities for compromise and mutual benefit do exist. The first step in compromising with the city, however, will be to clearly lay out for city officials what the organization will and

will not do. Lastly, LMO should specifically utilize the daycare center to deliver information to community households. Pamphlets and announcements regarding the organization's activities may be sent home with the children so that they may share the information with their parents and/or siblings, extending the organization's audience.

My recommendations for city officials include four items. First, the advisory boards for funding need to include more residents from locally-affected communities than from city government, and these members need to be representative of the demographic make-up of the Chamizal neighborhood. According to the Empowerment Zone strategic plan, the EZ Advisory Board only consists of individuals from the EZ area that own a business or are an employee of a business – either of which are profit or non-profit (“Strategic Plan”, 2012). In the make-up of the EZ advisory boards, no explicit attention is given to gender, age or education, which are all very relevant in creating a representative sample of individuals from the region. Following Fischer (2000), inserting voices of local people into policy formations yields positive community development outcomes. This allows for “participatory governance” (Fischer, 2006), in which members of the community are able to “own” the solutions to their community's challenges. The real “experts” in communities are community members, which should be reflected in meetings about policy creation and implementation.

Second, in terms of recruiting community members to participate in such meetings and/or advisory boards, broader considerations regarding accessibility to “public notices” need to be made. While these notices are made available online or at city hall itself, additional modes of communication may be considered, such as mass mailing or physically visiting the communities. Third, city policies, plans and strategies for community development need to be reexamined and reassessed so that they explicitly emphasize location-specific needs. This includes considerations

based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, education level, and particularly important in the U.S.-Mexico border context, nationality. Although the city already attempts to identify community-specific needs and consolidate findings in reports, such reports should be bilingual and distributed to community stakeholders for approval or rejection. If such a report is rejected, the process should be repeated until a substantial percentage of community residents approve the city's development plans and strategies.

Third, development practitioners and policymakers should undertake training that educates them about the social consequences of particular development models. This would involve support from multiple departments of the City of El Paso such as the Economic Development Department, the City of El Paso Museum and Cultural Affairs Department and the Community Development Department. The training would cover the cultural relevance of development in particular localities and establish a protocol for city officials to follow when facilitating (i.e., funding) development practices, which would make them more accountable for cooperating with community-based organizations (e.g., LMO) to improve opportunities for program success. Although this training would ideally increase city officials' awareness of the assumptions that orient their neoliberal development model, I acknowledge that more concerted efforts in that area will be needed.

Lastly, as Eva's (LMO) puts it: "Don't be afraid to be El Paso". The rich Mexican heritage of the El Paso community is an immensely powerful economic, social (and political) resource. Consolidating the city's cultural understanding with that of El Paso residents is crucial for creating a more authentic representation of who residents along the U.S.-Mexico border are. Embracing culture in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez context means embracing difference and

diversity. Failure to do so promotes segregation and discrimination on the basis of myriad social categories.

Limitations

There are three major limitations in this study. First, the pool of individuals from La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso was very small. Whereas LMO contained well over a hundred members in previous years, its membership today is relatively small, making it difficult to gain the perspectives of more individuals who have been involved in the organization over time. Utilizing a snowball sampling method, I attempted to address this limitation by contacting members of La Mujer Obrera who no longer resided in El Paso. However, even with a snowball sampling approach, it was difficult to tap members for interviews. For city officials, relatively few individuals were directly affiliated with LMO or aware of its activities.

Another major limitation of this study was that data were not collected from other stakeholders in Chamizal Barrio, such as residents unaffiliated with LMO. Members of this community are affected by both the City of El Paso's and La Mujer Obrera's development ideas and practices. Assessing community members' perspectives of the two groups may have provided insight as to which group's development discourse is more appealing and for what reasons. The perspectives and ideas that members of La Mujer Obrera articulated about the city and the needs of Chamizal Barrio should not be recognized as a representative of the opinions and perspectives that other members of the community adopt.

Lastly, I used cross-sectional data that did not follow the negotiations between city officials and La Mujer Obrera until approximately three years after they were denied EZ funding. This means that recall may have been affected for both members of LMO and city officials. To address this, my questionnaire protocol consisted of more questions about development and the

organizations in general than questions specifically about the incident in 2009 when the city denied LMO EZ funding.

Prospective Research

There are two areas of prospective research that may take off from this study. First, a comparative study about La Mujer Obrera and other non-profit community development organizations in El Paso could be conducted. City officials brought up La Fe as an effective organization. La Fe is a non-profit community-based organization that provides El Paso residents health services and educational programs. Comparing an organization like La Fe with La Mujer Obrera would yield greater insight as to the relationship between city-level funding allocations and differentiating development discourses that community development organizations like La Fe and La Mujer Obrera adopt. Next, a study that adopts the methodology utilized in this study but in a non-border locality would be very insightful in terms of how useful a transnational orientation of development is outside of a border context.

Concluding Thoughts about Development

Communities are heterogeneous, and so are their members. Accordingly, the specific needs of a community are ever changing and evolving. For practitioners and facilitators of development, this is an extremely important consideration to make. Development discourse always reflects a specific purpose (whether explicit or implicit) at a certain time and within a particular context. Failing to consider how a community's context changes over time means that a community's history may be shoved aside, along with its members. In terms of economic development, it is also important to recall that capitalist economies are not homogenous, and the ways in which economic activities are regulated vary across sociopolitical contexts (Djankov et al., 2002). Therefore, development practitioners and city planners within El Paso must examine

the appropriateness and applicability of a neoliberal development orientation in the context of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Leadership in government offices is always changing, along with the structure of programs aimed at facilitating development (e.g., the Empowerment Zone). However, this does not mean that the orientation of development will change, which is what Postmodernism and Development (PAD) advocates stress. The ways in which men and women are integrated into a development ideology are certain to fluctuate across time, but in order to rethink development critically and draw out assumptions about accessibility and freedom, the ideology itself must be problematized and challenged. Davila (2004) proposes: “the fallacies on which neoliberal discourse and policies are predicated are what I suggest need to be questioned as inefficient for neighborhoods and economic development. Insofar as these policies work to reassert the meaning of culture, ethnic-based claims are important and necessary” (p. 62). Change is a constant; ideas about development do not have to be. For all those who engage the politics and processes of development, to include La Mujer Obrera and the City of El Paso, this point is crucial. Beatriz (LMO) provides an appropriate closing:

A leader who underestimates the momentum of change which is constant and chaotic has to expect the rug will be jerked out from under them. La Mujer Obrera has to take its share of responsibility for this lack of vision. But a political leader charged with the responsibility of the economic development of a city is doubly pressed to widen their view.

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Appendix A. Positionality in the Field

To conduct an institutional ethnography appropriately, and to fully consider the role of texts, scholars must articulate (i.e., write about) their observations in terms of “relations” rather than as “objectifications” (Harding, 1998; Smith, 1990b; Smith 1998). To illustrate this, Smith (1990b) describes how articulating empirical data from an objective perspective is like a *geocentric* system where one sees his/herself as the center of the universe (i.e., their observations occur *external* to their subjectivity). Conversely, Smith proposes that sociologists take a more heliocentric perspective, recording and articulating empirical data from a perspective where our observed phenomena circulate the universe just as we do (i.e., their observations occur *in relation* to their subjectivity). This is not to say that objectivity is something to be avoided. It is rather something to be skeptical about. Harding (1998) argues that the problem with objectivity is that it “has not been ‘operationalized’ in such a way that scientific method can detect sexist and androcentric assumptions that are ‘the dominant beliefs of an age’” (p. 238). In order to truly be “objective” in research, scholars must practice what Harding (1998) refers to as ‘strong reflexivity’, in which one’s own standpoint, perspectives, and privileges are critically accounted for as contributors toward knowledge. This section is an account of how I practiced this “strong reflexivity” in my own data collection and analysis.

On my way to La Mujer Obrera for the first time, a couple of things immediately came to mind. First, I was about to enter an organization made up mostly of women. As a man, this caused some anxiety. A few questions circled through my mind: Would they be open to speaking with me? Should I speak a certain way? Am I dressed too formally? Another thought that came up was the fact that most of the women at La Mujer Obrera primarily speak Spanish, provoking

the question: Will they become less willing to talk to me when they realize my Spanish skills are limited?

I found myself asking similar questions when preparing to meet with city officials. A primary difference between the two: the way I dressed. Whereas my presentation was very informal with La Mujer Obrera, I found myself wearing slacks, black shoes and a collared shirt every time I was to meet with a city official, as if I were preparing to go to church to confess to a group of priests. Before every meeting with a city official, I had internalized the necessity to present myself as a professional, someone who could be taken seriously. In short, not only was I playing their game; I was also subscribing to their texts. Although full detachment may appear unrealistic in the field, I had to make conscious note of my relationship to the city, not only in terms of their ideas, but also in terms of my ideas of them.

The thoughts and questions that rose out of my anticipated meetings with members of La Mujer Obrera and city officials reflected a distinct set of assumptions regarding my positionality. According to Madison (2005): “Positionality is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects” (p. 7). I realized that as a young, light-skinned Hispanic male coming from a university setting, there was a definite *possibility* that as I walked through the doors of city hall or La Mujer Obrera, a set of assumptions about me would follow. Negotiating this became challenging at times. For example, my inability to speak Spanish fluently caused me to initiate conversations at La Mujer Obrera timidly. In the most humble sense of my experiences, I was reminded of the fact that my inability to speak the Spanish language not only contextualized my lack of cultural qualifications but also undermined my ability to build substantial rapport.

Fortunately, with the help of Leslie, a cultural broker who volunteered to assist me in interviews, the negative ramifications of my inability to speak Spanish fluently were mitigated.

In examining my relation to the field, and all those who occupy it, I found myself reflecting not only on what I found, but more importantly, on what I was looking for. Such is the slippery slope of remaining “objective”. In my initial meetings with the city, I found myself *looking* for forms of gender oppression, but then I had to ask myself: What *is* gender oppression? How am I operationalizing this? How might my definition of gender oppression reinforce opportunities for particular groups of people? I had to consciously take a step back and recognize my participation in the construction of a particular gender ideology in the process of *looking* for a particular ideology. The same recognition was necessary in my understanding of development. I recognized that before I could critically extract dominant ideologies about development, I would have to unearth what ideologies I was already subscribing to in my talk and actions.

In sum, critical reflexivity became an indispensable component of my fieldwork. Reflecting on who I am, what I’m assuming, and what ideas I was unconsciously perpetuating allowed me to conduct my research with the explicit understanding that the field, my interviewees and I would adapt to each other simultaneously and continuously. Such a relational perspective allowed me to extract *ideology en route* as opposed to *ideology in place*. That is, I was able to substantiate my data under the caveat that it is temporally and spatially specific, making prospective research with similar aims yet different contexts both important and necessary.

Appendix B. Interview Protocol

Questions for La Mujer Obrera

1. How would you describe your day-to-day experiences at La Mujer Obrera?

- Probe:** What is a typical day at La Mujer Obrera like for you?
- Probe:** Who do you report to?
- Probe:** How strict is your work schedule?
- Probe:** What sort of accommodations does La Mujer Obrera make for your family? Examples of such accommodations might be schedule flexibility to care for children, maternity leave, or sick leave.
- Probe:** How many days a week do you work?
- Probe:** How many hours a week do you work?
- Probe:** What is your primary reason for being a part of La Mujer Obrera?

These next few questions are about the organizations itself.

2. How would you describe La Mujer Obrera?

- Probe:** Who formed the organization?
- Probe:** What are the primary goals of the organization?
- Probe:** In which language are services primarily provided?

3. How did NAFTA influence the creation of La Mujer Obrera?

- Probe:** How many women lost their jobs because of NAFTA?
- Probe:** Who took over the jobs that were lost because of NAFTA?

4. How does someone join La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: What are the requirements or qualifications that are needed to become a member of the organization?

Probe: Are applicants interviewed prior to being accepted into the organization?

5. Who are the participants of La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: Are there any men working in La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: The organization website indicates that La Mujer Obrera was established to create economic opportunity with and for displaced women workers and other *low income* community members. What exactly is meant by “*low-income*”?

Probe: What is the age range of the participants?

Probe: What percentage of the participants would you say speak primarily Spanish?

Probe: What percentage of the participants would you say speak primarily English?

Probe: What percentage of the participants would you say are bilingual?

Probe: What would you estimate the general education level to be for La Mujer Obrera members generally?

Probe: What percentage of women would you estimate worked in maquiladoras prior to working in La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: What percentage of women would you estimate are married?

Probe: What percentage of women would you estimate are divorced, widowed, or single?

The organization website indicates that there are three primary types of development being fostered through La Mujer Obrera: (1) economic, (2) educational, (3) and community development. First I would like to ask you about economic development.

6. Why is economic development important for La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: What sort of economic opportunities do women have outside of La Mujer Obrera?

7. What activities does La Mujer Obrera do in order to bring about economic development?

Probe: Please explain a few of these activities.

Probe: Who manages the money for La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: How successful has La Mujer Obrera been in bringing about economic development? Why is this? Can you provide a couple few examples?

Probe: Can you please describe what you think an ideal “economic development” outcome would be for La Mujer Obrera? What challenges has La Mujer Obrera encountered that has prevented this outcome from being achieved?

8. Why is educational development important for La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: What sort of educational opportunities do women have outside of La Mujer Obrera?

9. What activities does La Mujer Obrera do in order to bring about educational development?

Probe: Please explain a few of these activities.

Probe: How successful has La Mujer Obrera been in bringing about educational development? Why is this? Can you provide a few examples?

Probe: Can you please describe what you think an ideal “educational development” outcome would be for La Mujer Obrera? What challenges has La Mujer Obrera encountered that has prevented this outcome from being achieved?

10. Why is community development important for La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: Can you explain what La Mujer Obrera considers their “community” to be?

Probe: What sort of opportunities do women have outside of La Mujer Obrera to build their own communities?

11. What activities does La Mujer Obrera do in order to bring about community development?

Probe: Please explain a few of these activities.

Probe: How successful has La Mujer Obrera been in bringing about community development? Why is this? Can you provide a few examples?

Probe: Can you please describe what you think an ideal “community development” outcome would be for La Mujer Obrera? What challenges has La Mujer Obrera encountered that has prevented this outcome from being achieved?

The website indicates that the core of the La Mujer Program is made up of four social purpose businesses, which include (1) a daycare, (2) a restaurant, (3) a housing complex, and (4) a festival marketplace. First I would like to ask you about the daycare.

12. Can you tell me about the daycare?

- Probe:** How long has the daycare been running?
- Probe:** Who may use the daycare? Is its use restricted to only those who work for La Mujer Obrera?
- Probe:** What is the age range of children at the daycare?
- Probe:** How many children does the daycare take care of?
- Probe:** How much does it cost to use the daycare?
- Probe:** Where does the money made through the daycare go?
- Probe:** How does the daycare contribute to the development goals described above?
- Probe:** What specific challenges have you faced in operating the daycare?

13. Can you tell me about the restaurant?

- Probe:** How long has the restaurant been running?
- Probe:** What does the restaurant serve?
- Probe:** How much does it cost to eat at the restaurant?
- Probe:** Who cooks the food for the restaurant?
- Probe:** Who cleans the restaurant?
- Probe:** How many people work in the restaurant?
- Probe:** Who comes to eat at the restaurant?

Probe: How does the restaurant obtain its food products? Are there any international trade policies that La Mujer Obrera must follow in order to obtain these products?

Probe: Where does the money made through the restaurant go?

Probe: How does the restaurant contribute to the development goals described above?

Probe: What specific challenges have you faced in operating the restaurant?

14. Can you tell me about the housing complex?

Probe: Where is the housing complex located?

Probe: How long has the housing complex been running?

Probe: What qualifications or requirements must potential tenants have before they can rent in the housing complex?

Probe: How many bedrooms are available to tenants?

Probe: Do men or women pay the rent for the housing complex?

Probe: Where does the money made through the housing complex go?

Probe: How does the housing complex contribute to the development goals described above?

Probe: What specific challenges have you faced in operating the housing complex?

15. Can you tell me about the festival marketplace?

Probe: How long has the festival marketplace been running?

- Probe:** What sort of items may be purchased at the festival marketplace?
- Probe:** How much do the items cost?
- Probe:** Where do the items in the festival marketplace come from?
- Probe:** Where does the money made through the festival marketplace go?
- Probe:** How does the festival marketplace contribute to the development goals described above?
- Probe:** What specific challenges have you faced in operating the festival marketplace?

16. Can you tell me about La Mujer Obrera's museum and media center?

- Probe:** How long have the museum and media center been running?
- Probe:** What is the purpose of the museum and media center?
- Probe:** How do the museum and media center contribute to the development goals described above?
- Probe:** What specific challenges have you faced in operating the museum and media center?

The website indicates the idea that "development tied to empowerment".

17. Can you explain how development is tied to empowerment for the women of La Mujer Obrera?

- Probe:** How is La Mujer Obrera changing the way the local community views women of Mexican descent?
- Probe:** How is La Mujer Obrera influencing the way Mexican women are portrayed in the media?

Probe: How much visibility has been given to Mexican women as a result of La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: Are the roles of women in (1) the home and (2) the workplace changing as a result of La Mujer Obrera? If yes, how so?

These next questions pertain to the barriers that La Mujer Obrera has had to face while working towards sustainable development.

18. What sort of economic barriers does La Mujer Obrera face in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez community, if any?

Probe: How has La Mujer Obrera overcome these economic barriers?

19. During the Fall of 2009, the El Paso Times indicated that City Council denied funding to La Mujer Obrera. Can you describe what happened during that event?

Probe: What specific reasons did the City give for not providing further funding to La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: Did the City reference any specific policies in their decision to deny La Mujer Obrera funding? If yes, what were those policies?

Probe: If La Mujer Obrera had received funding, what do you think the money would have been used for specifically?

Probe: Where did the money end up being allocated?

Probe: Has La Mujer Obrera pursued funding from the City since that event?

Probe: How has La Mujer Obrera continued functioning without funding from the City?

Probe: What other forms of funding is La Mujer Obrera using or pursuing?

20. What sort of cultural barriers does La Mujer Obrera face in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez community, if any? Examples of cultural barriers might include language barriers, nationality, or level of education, to name a few.

Probe: How has La Mujer Obrera overcome these cultural barriers?

21. What sort of political barriers does La Mujer Obrera face in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez community, if any?

Probe: What has been the state and federal response to La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: How has La Mujer Obrera overcome these political barriers?

22. What sort of social barriers does La Mujer Obrera face in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez community, if any? Examples of social barriers might includes, gender, limited networks with external organizations, or an inaccurate perception of the organization by outside community members, to name a few.

Probe: How has La Mujer Obrera overcome these social barriers?

23. How has the violence in Ciudad Juárez affected the functions of La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: How does La Mujer Obrera help individuals affected by the violence in Ciudad Juárez?

24. What other barriers has La Mujer Obrera faced as an organization along the U.S.-Mexico border?

Probe: Please explain.

Probe: Are there any specific individuals or organizations that have acted as a barrier to La Mujer Obrera's further development?

25. What do you hope to accomplish for the community through La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: How do you think La Mujer Obrera will change (or is changing) the U.S.-Mexico border?

Probe: What sort of economic and cultural changes do you feel that La Mujer Obrera is making on the U.S.-Mexico border?

Probe: What sort of political and social changes do you feel that La Mujer Obrera is making on the U.S.-Mexico border?

26. What overall thoughts do you have about La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: Please explain.

27. Do you have any suggestions for how La Mujer Obrera might be more effective?

Probe: Please explain.

Snowball Question

28. Can you provide information on any other individuals and/or organizations that we should talk with about La Mujer Obrera, its functions, and any challenges/barriers it has faced?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME FOR TALKING WITH US. WE APPRECIATE YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Questions for City of El Paso

1. What is La Mujer Obrera?

Probe: What are the primary goals of La Mujer Obrera?

- Probe:** What does La Mujer Obrera do for the City of El Paso economically?
- Probe:** What does La Mujer Obrera do for the City of El Paso culturally?
- Probe:** How important is La Mujer Obrera to the overall El Paso community?
- Probe:** How effective are the initiatives in La Mujer Obrera?
- Probe:** What specific suggestions do you have in terms of making La Mujer Obrera a more effective, successful organization?

2. What sort of challenges or barriers do you see La Mujer Obrera facing today or in the near future?

- Probe:** What sort of economic barriers does La Mujer Obrera face, if any?
- Probe:** What sort of cultural barriers does La Mujer Obrera face, if any?
- Probe:** What sort of political barriers does La Mujer Obrera face, if any?
- Probe:** What sort of social barriers does La Mujer Obrera face, if any?
- Probe:** How might these barriers be overcome or mitigated?

Briefly reading through the website, it seems like La Mujer Obrera is working towards community development.

3. What policies govern La Mujer Obrera as a development program?

- Probe:** Do international trade policies affect how La Mujer Obrera functions? If yes, how so?

4. How do the development goals of La Mujer Obrera compare or contrast with the development goals of the City of El Paso?

- Probe:** What developments are being made in El Paso right now?
- Probe:** In what areas of El Paso are city developments being implemented?

In the fall of 2009, an article was published in the El Paso Times indicating that the City of El Paso denied La Mujer Obrera additional funding, specifically a \$400,000 Empowerment Zone Grant.

5. Can you describe what happened during that event?

Probe: What specific reasons were given to La Mujer Obrera for not providing the funding?

Probe: Did the City reference any specific policies in their decision to deny La Mujer Obrera funding? If yes, what were those policies?

Probe: If La Mujer Obrera had received funding, what do you think the money would have been used for specifically?

Probe: Where did the money end up being allocated?

Probe: Has La Mujer Obrera pursued funding from the City since that event?

6. Generally, how much transparency is there regarding how funding is allocated in the City of El Paso?

Probe: How do citizens of El Paso contribute toward decisions regarding funding for programs in the city?

Probe: How are pending City Council decisions communicated to the El Paso community?

Probe: Are these communications made available in both English and Spanish?

7. Overall, what is the City doing to help community development programs like La Mujer Obrera grow in the El Paso community?

Probe: Please explain.

Snowball Question

- 8. Can you provide information on any other City Officials and/or organizations that we should talk with about La Mujer Obrera, its functions, and any challenges/barriers it has faced?**

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME FOR TALKING WITH US. WE APPRECIATE YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Appendix C. Letter of Collaboration

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO



June 24, 2011

Chair, UTEP Institutional Review Board
ORSP Admin-209
El Paso, TX 78868

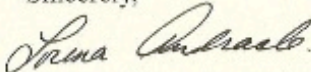
Anthropology
Research Center
Department of
Sociology &
Anthropology

Dear IRB Chair:

The purpose of this letter is to grant Anthony Jimenez, a graduate student at the University of Texas at El Paso, and Leslie Landin, undergraduate research assistant working with Mr. Jimenez, permission to conduct research at La Mujer Obrera. The project, "Transnational Gender Construction: An Institutional Ethnography of a Development Program Along the U.S.-Mexico Border" entails conducting in-depth interviews with approximately (10) individuals who have been members of La Mujer Obrera for at least five years. Interviews will be conducted at a time and location most convenient for members of La Mujer Obrera. The purpose of this research is to understand what La Mujer Obrera is and examine the obstacles it has faced with the City of El Paso. La Mujer Obrera was selected because of an incident in 2008 when the City of El Paso denied the organization funding. Neither Anthony Jimenez nor Leslie Landin have any relationship to the organization. Participants may get information on the results of the study later, if they wish.

I, Lorena Andrade do hereby grant permission for Anthony Jimenez and Leslie Landin to conduct the proposed research at La Mujer Obrera.

Sincerely,


Coordinator, La Mujer Obrera

El Paso, Texas
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(915) 747-7532
FAX: (915) 747-8038

Curriculum Vita

Anthony Michael Jimenez was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. The fourth son of Armando Jimenez and Alicia Jimenez, he graduated from Eastwood High School, El Paso, Texas, in the spring of 2005 and began his undergraduate work at The University of Texas at El Paso the following fall. As an undergraduate, Anthony worked for the Department of State and various departments at The University of Texas at El Paso, to include the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. By the time he had obtained his bachelor's degree in both sociology and communication studies, Anthony had served as the president of two organizations, maintained a 4.0 GPA, and was named one of the university's Top Ten Seniors. Additionally, he has co-authored in two forthcoming publications, secured funding to present in six academic conferences and conducted ethnographic research in various regions of Indonesia. In the fall of 2010, he entered the Graduate School at The University of Texas at El Paso and will be the first person in his immediate and extended family to pursue a doctoral degree.

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