¿Quen Manda? (Who's in Charge?): Household Authority Politics in Rural Galicia

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Abstract: This paper focusses on the intricate contours of household authority politics in Zas, a rural township located in the Spanish Galician province of A Coruña. My main argument is that individuals living in this part of Atlantic Spain draw on the discursive themes of both social hierarchy and egalitarianism in continually negotiating their own positions and those of their co-resident kin. I illustrate this dynamic by providing ethnographic examples from three stem-family households. My inclusion of the question "Who's in Charge?" as part of the title to this paper refers to my general challenge to overly structural models of authority politics for analyses of family relationships.

Résumé: Cet article se concentre sur les contours compliqués de la politique domestique en Zas, une commune rurale située dans la province de A Coruña de la région de la Galice (en Espagne). Je soutiens que les individus qui vivent dans cette localité de l'Espagne atlantique utilisent fréquemment les deux discours de la hiérarchie sociale et de l'égalité. Elles et ils emploient ces deux discours (apparemment opposés) pour négocier leur situation et celle de leur famille et leurs parents les plus proches. Je montre cette dynamique avec les exemples ethnographiques de trois familles souches. La question «Qui est-ce qui commande?» fait partie du titre de l'article parce qu'elle reflète ma contestation de l'emploi de modèles trop structuraux d'attribution d'autorité dans l'analyse des relations familiales.

In both Castilian Spanish and Galician, the noun *manda* refers to a bequest or inheritance and in some areas refers to the written testaments. It is closely related to the verb *mandar* which can be defined variously as meaning "to be in charge," "to order" or "to be in control."

> In all types of family the extent of co-operation and cohesion should be observed, whether there is an authoritative head of the family, and who this is. . . . It should be ascertained in which member of the family authority is vested and to what extent authority can be used. Has a man right of life and death over any members of his family, or can he sell or pawn any member of this family into slavery?
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> — Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1951: 72

Delfina "On Marriage"

One evening in June of 1991, Delfina took advantage of her husband Esteban's absence to talk to me about their marriage. In order to illustrate her statement that Esteban had done things that "not every husband does," Delfina returned to the time almost 40 years previously when they were first married and she was experiencing a difficult pregnancy. Unable to exert herself physically, Delfina had been disturbed by her reliance on her new husband to do most of the farmwork. As a single woman, Delfina had sought a certain degree of economic independence by borrowing money from a brother in order to buy some land that she could "plant" herself. Ever since receiving the loan, all that Delfina could think about was her desire to earn enough profit from the sale of livestock and crops so that she could pay back her brother, thereby owning her land outright. She had always been a steady, strong worker and had therefore been confident of her ability to liquidate the loan and also to grow enough food to support her own and her mother's daily subsistence needs. To find herself restricted to small tasks and dependent on another individual at the be-

ginning of her marriage was almost intolerable for Delfina.

Then, she explained, her mother died. Although Delfina was the main inheritor of her mother's small estate, the surveyor who oversaw the *partixa* or division of the property advised her and her brothers that they would pay fewer taxes if all of the land was transferred to Delfina at the time of her mother's death. This meant that Delfina would have to buy back the land that her two brothers had received as minor inheritance portions. Esteban had himself received some cash capital in this way when he sold his inheritance portion from *his* mother's land to two siblings.

In remembering this time, Delfina told me that, in the midst of her anxiety, she had acknowledged her incapacity for action, telling her brothers to talk to her husband about the *partixa*. Delfina's voice dropped in volume as she told me about the difficulty of having sacrificed so much of her personal autonomy in voicing those words. "I couldn't do anything, say anything," she whispered.

Esteban's response to Delfina's distress and her brothers' inquiries was to use the cash that he had received as his inheritance to both buy back his mother-in-law's land from his brothers-in-law and also to pay off the small debt that Delfina had incurred with one of them before marriage. In local terms, both of these actions were done in Delfina's name.[1] Esteban understood her desire to be free of all liabilities but he did not claim her inheritance as his own. Delfina had tears in her eyes when she told me that she would rather die than be caught saying that the house and land were "hers" for they were not: "*Esteban confió en min e eu en él*" (Esteban trusted me and I him).

Introduction

I relate this personal account of a particular period in one woman's marriage as a way of introducing the intricate contours of household authority politics[2] in Zas, a rural township located in the Spanish Galician province of A Coruña. According to a structural model of the unequal inheritance and stem-family residential patterns that are found in much of rural Galicia, Delfina would be characterized as almost certainly having extensive domestic authority over her husband: she inherited her mother's dwelling and agricultural property while her husband Esteban was a minor heir and an in-marrying spouse. I would contend that she herself has shaped her narrative partly in response to a local, vernacular, and antecedent version of the academic structural model.[3] Aware that others might perceive her to have more economic power than Esteban and thus authority over him, Delfina is motivated to explain to me why she would rather "die" than have people think that she regards the house that the couple lives in, and the plots of land that they have nurtured for four decades as solely "hers." Instead, as she concludes: "Esteban trusted me and I him."

The significance of the nuances and contradictions apparent in narratives like Delfina's can be assessed through an examination of the discursive context in which she makes decisions to act, and by which she evaluates her life and the lives of others. Here, I am using the sometimes slippery term "discourse" to refer to the everyday "just talk" (Stewart, 1996: 31) about household dynamics that is as much a constitutive social practice and strategy of power as are people's actions (Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990: 9-13; also see Abu-Lughod, 1990). As elsewhere in the world, Galician women and men reflexively conceptualize and negotiate their relationships with marital partners and other members of their domestic units. Most significantly, I found that discourses of hierarchy and egalitarianism are *both* mobilized as strategic resources by household members of both genders and all ages. Although these two discursive themes are oppositional and the discourse of hierarchy often predominates, their alternating coexistence in people's speech repertoires makes "cultural sense" in the context of individual narratives and group discussions about household and intracommunity relationships (compare, e.g., with Pina-Cabral, 1986: 88).

In this part of rural Galicia, moreover, the tension between the two opposing cultural emphases of hierarchy and egalitarianism within households does not appear to be new. It is as evident in the stories I was told about household authority politics in the 1920s and 1930s as it is in recent contexts. In addition, many of those aspects of relationships which are closely connected with long-standing local and regionally specific patterns of inheritance, postmarital residence and economic survival are also supported by those discourses about relationships between women and men, and between parents and children, that are found in mass media representations and other public culture sites to which rural Galicians and other Spaniards are exposed daily.

My aim to find a way of accounting for the variety of influences that affect gendered social positions, identities and strategies of power in Zas in the 1990s reflects a prevailing dilemma in much of contemporary anthropology and has thus been theorized in a variety of related ways over the last decade (see, e.g., Appadurai, 1991; Hannerz, 1992; and papers in Miller, 1995). In trying to account for the myriad of influences that are associated with both widespread social changes and representations

and the rootedness of the histories of "places" (Stewart, 1996), it is tempting to adopt the metaphors of "creolization" or "hybridity" and to emphasize processes of cultural heterogeneity and fragmentation that are often linked to postmodernist frameworks of representation and explanation. However, as ethnographers such as Barber and Waterman (1995) have discovered, this approach can be just as reductionist and essentialist as a former binarization of people's cultural resources into the "traditional" and the "modern" or the "endogeneous" and the "exogeneous."

For me, the key starting point is that one can see the emphasis on *both* hierarchy and egalitarianism in daily conversations as well as in almost every response to my direct "anthropological" questions (after Abu-Lughod, 1993: 170) about authority patterns within households. Here is an example:

Sharon:	Who used to be in charge in [the] houses?
Señor Marcial	(92 years old): Older people.
Sharon:	Men and women?
Señor Marcial:	Everyone worked.
Sharon:	Women were also in charge?
Señor Marcial:	Yes, everyone was in charge, each one . . . ¡*Bah*!

As Señor Marcial and other informants indicated to me, it is the older couple in a stem-family rather than individuals of either gender who can be generalized as "being in charge" (compare with Pina-Cabral, 1986: 37, 47-50, 87-88). One can characterize this aspect of his answer as referring to a hierarchical discourse which is generated mainly out of local and regionally specific household arrangements. However, as one can see through reading the latter part of his answer, there is a more egalitarian component to the dynamics of personal interaction in stem-family households: "everyone" is "in charge" to some extent because all (adults) "work" for the household. Along these lines, all contributing adults to a household should have some degree of authority and thus the dominance of the older legal owners of property is somewhat mitigated.

To elaborate briefly, in the context of this part of rural Galicia, in referring to discourses emphasizing social inequality, I am referring to those discourses which reinforce that households are hierarchized along the lines of age and gender as well as the basis upon which particular members are affiliated with a domestic unit. Since the majority of households in Zas continue to be reproduced as multigenerational stem-family households, in the abstract, older individuals who are household heads are defined as having more authority than younger individuals within the family; in addition, married individuals of any generational cohort who are born into a household and who will eventually inherit much of the parental property have more authority than either their in-marrying spouses or their unmarried siblings who are minor heirs. Clearly, this household type is not found in most areas of Spain (however, see Douglass, 1988a and 1988b for other exceptions). At times, though, the reinforcement of a social hierarchy associated with this regionally specific household system is echoed in verbal references to other, more macro-level discourses which also reinforce social, and in particular, gender inequality. For example, there is a widespread Judeo-Christian ethic that younger people should "respect their elders"; I have heard this ethic repeated by Spanish television and radio broadcasters when censoriously reporting on crimes committed against elderly individuals. In addition, as in other societal contexts, I have observed instances of both men and women in various parts of Galicia and elsewhere in Spain relying on an essentialization of gender "difference" as a way of explaining why men may insist that women listen to their viewpoints, follow their advice, act on their decisions, respond reactively rather than proactively to men's sexual advances or otherwise act in submissive ways.[4] Such a rhetoric of male precedence affects people living in Zas who, like other Spaniards, are exposed to the mass media and to powerful hegemonic institutions such as the Catholic church, schools, military service, government offices and employment posts both in Spain and in other countries.

However, as I have discussed elsewhere, a second and contrasting discourse emphasizes an egalitarianism that serves to counterbalance to some extent the discourse of hierarchy (see Roseman, 1993). Like the discourse of hierarchy, a rhetoric of egalitarianism is generated out of local household and intracommunity arrangements but is also reinforced by "talk" about social equality introduced from outside the area. In Zas, the age, gender, class and other hierarchies that characterize both intra- and interhousehold relationships are softened by a strong emphasis on each individual's ability to advance her or his personal autonomy. Even within multigenerational households based on unequal inheritance, local strategies of power specify that any member of a household gains a certain degree of personal autonomy through his/her contributions to that social unit, these contributions ranging from property to regular wages to unpaid labour (see Roseman, 1993, 1996a). The same notion of personal autonomy applies to interhousehold exchange relationships. Additionally, some inhabitants of Zas mobilize the notion that gender equality is tied to "modern" marriages that

should allow for the establishment and maintenance of positive, egalitarian "romantic" relationships between partners. Cole (1991: 144-146), Collier (1997: 100-112), and Pina Cabral (1986: 38, 48) have of course clarified that discourses of "romantic love" and "modernity" and "bourgeois" marriage arrangements, can disadvantage women. Moreover, as I describe below, the emphasis on the importance of the health of the marital relationship is not a new nor necessarily an imported concept and contributes to a tendency for people to refer to couples as units rather than consistently distinguishing between the in-marrying and the inheriting spouses. The power struggles which emerge within some households in the 1990s are therefore often either between younger married couples and their siblings or between these couples and one or both of their parents. Based on the descriptions of older individuals such as Delfina, I would argue that these lines of contest and the strength of the married couple's unity is also characteristic of the past. In the remainder of the paper, I briefly introduce Zas and then illustrate the mobilization of discourses of both hierarchy and egalitarianism through the example of two households. I end with a concluding statement about the project of intracommunity and intraregional comparisons of household authority dynamics in this part of Europe and elsewhere in the world.

Stem-Family Households in Zas

"Delfina" lives in a section of the Galician township of Zas where I conducted field work in 1990-91, 1994 and 1995.[5] The villages of Santiago de Carreira, Pedramaior, and Villaestevez all pertain to the township of Zas; Santiago de Carreira and Pedramaior together form the parish of Santiago de Carreira and Villaestevez, although adjacent to these two settlements, is officially part of the parish of Santa María de Gándara. Depending on the route one takes, the three villages are situated approximately 20 to 25 kilometres inland from the series of maritime villages strung along this part of Spain's Atlantic coast. Over the course of the last century, those residing in the inland valley landscape of Zas (or, as it is also known, the valley of Soneira) have made a living from varying combinations of unwaged subsistence agriculture, the sale of agricultural commodities and livestock, wage work performed both locally and in migrant destinations elsewhere in Spain and in foreign countries and from government remittances such as unemployment insurance and old age pensions (Roseman, 1993). In each generation, significant numbers of individuals have also left this part of Zas permanently; others have remained and a stem-family household system (or *familia troncal*) continues to be reproduced in the majority of cases. In 1990-91, 55% or 50 of the 91 inhabited households in these three settlements were composed of three- or four-generation stem-family households. Taking into account variations over the course of the domestic life cycle, this is a relatively high percentage for both Galicia and other areas with historical traditions of a stem-family system (H. Buechler, 1987; e.g., Douglass, 1988b: 8, n. 11).[6] At the time when I did my long-term field work in Zas, 68% of those 50 stem-family households were uxorilocal which implies that parents were granting more daughters than sons the major inheritance portions from their estates.

In Galician stem-family households like these that continue to be reproduced, individuals may formally pertain, and financially contribute, to their natal domestic units while working over the long term in distant migrant destinations. In Zas, until the 1960s most of these absent household members were men. However, from the mid-1970s until the early 1990s, increased employment opportunities for women in the service and manufacturing sectors of countries such as Switzerland, West Germany and France resulted in a prevalence of young women from Zas joining their husbands in working abroad (see J.-M. Buechler, 1975). Most of the children of these couples remained in Galicia and were raised largely by their grandparents. Despite their lengthy absences, unless they established an alternative household in a Galician city or elsewhere, the parents of these children were regarded to be full-fledged members of these households in Zas. For many households, the stem-family household pattern was not, therefore, fundamentally disrupted by this new wave of both male and female seasonal out-migration.[7] It is clear, however, that these migrants and their relatives were affected by even more external cultural influences than previously. How did they accommodate their own adherence to a system of unequal inheritance and stem-family kinship bonds with those nuclear family household models that both existed in abundance in migrant destinations (including Spanish cities) and were also represented in mass media venues such as television programs?

I now turn to an illustration of my general argument about Zas with the example of two specific stem-family households. Due to space limitations, to make the best use of the comparative method, I compare stem-family households that are at points in their developmental cycles when they include members from three generations. The first example deals with a household which is virilocal in the present generation but was uxorilocal in the previous one, while the second household is an

example of two successive generations of uxorilocal postmarital residence. Most of the details presented in these accounts derive from my 1990-91 field trip, with some updating as a result of later visits.

"Casa da Herba Seca"

> *Hai que luchar.*
> (One has to struggle [economically].)
> — Susana, in-marrying daughter-in-law in a stem-family household with five members.

Señora Concepción was a charismatic, garrulous woman in her 70s whose eyes sparkled when she saw a visitor approaching but who, like many of the middle-aged and older women I know in Zas, rarely chatted without doing something else as well. During the majority of my many visits to her home, she drew me into the family's stable which is attached to their present house by a short passageway and which used to be their dwelling. In the stable, Concepción would degranulate dried maize cobs[8] or do some other necessary task; on cold winter evenings, she would heat up a watery meal for her three cows in an old-fashioned heavy iron pot over the open hearth. Until the time shortly before her death, Concepción took care of these cows, as well as the family's other livestock and crops with the help mainly of her daughter-in-law Susana.

The other members of their household included Alberto, who is Concepción's only son and Susana's husband as well as the younger couple's children: María and Eduardo. During the time I lived in the area, Alberto was living at home and commuting to work on nearby construction projects whenever he could; previously, he had spent more than a decade working in Switzerland for 10 months of each year. María was attending university but was normally home during the weekends to help with the work and Eduardo was attending his last year of secondary school.

In contrast to his mother, Alberto was a quiet man who rarely spoke at length and often appeared shy. However, like her, his wife Susana and the majority of their neighbours, Alberto was a very hard worker who always completed tasks related to the farm in the evenings and on weekends after returning from his paid employment. Having often observed Alberto interacting with his mother and wife, I never saw him contradict them or take the leadership role in decision making. When the children needed money to buy clothing or other items, they frequently asked their mother or grandmother if they could have it. Susana and Concepción also decided how much of their home-raised food to send back to the city with María each week for her to share with her roommates. Furthermore, the two women frequently told Alberto and the two children what to do and how to do it.

The two women appeared to have a very close emotional bond. Additionally, as was the continuing custom in this part of rural Spain, Susana addressed her mother-in-law with the formal pronoun *usted* but she did not act as though she was subservient to her. In contrast, Concepción frequently asked Susana what she thought about decisions related to either the farmwork or domestic matters. Generally, however, they divided up the chores easily according to their own preferences as well as age-related patterns that were common throughout villages in Zas. Susana, for example, like many younger women in stem-family households almost always prepared the meals. One evening while I was chatting with Concepción in the stable, Susana joined us with a large basket full of potatoes that she intended to peel in preparation for the family's evening meal. Alberto came in from work and asked them if the cows needed to be fed or if he could do anything else. Susana suggested that he sit down and peel the potatoes which he quietly began to do. Susana herself got up and began to tend to the cows before going into the kitchen to begin supper. Concepción soon finished degranulating her basketful of maize and stood up to sweep the stable.

On another occasion, we were planting the family's rape, kale and potatoes and Alberto was driving the tractor to make the furrows. The work party included, in addition to myself and the three older adults in the family, several other relatives and neighbours. After those of us who were helping had been kept in anticipation for about a week, it was Concepción and Susana rather than Alberto who decided which day we would do the planting. In our planting party, there were three adult men present in addition to Alberto and a teenage boy. However, whenever the group paused to consider matters such as how much distance to leave between rows and where to plant the different species in the slightly sloping field, the women present addressed Concepción and Susana and waited for them to make the decision jointly. Relying on a structural model of Galician inheritance, an observer of events such as this one might have thought that Susana (rather than Alberto) was going to inherit the property, house and outbuildings from Concepción.

Given the consistent manner in which Concepción and Susana, rather than Alberto, seemed to be the ones who openly took credit for decisions related to the farm I was surprised one day to encounter the two women telling an animal trader that they could not agree on the price that he was offering to pay them for one of their calves without consulting Alberto. The animal trader

tried to insist that he was proposing a fair price and that they could surely make a decision that day; he was eager to close the deal and said that he might not be able to come back later in the week. The two women responded again that they could not know whether it was a good price without consulting Alberto and would need his permission to make the sale. The trader switched tactics and agreed with them: "*Claro* (Right). Of course you have to ask your husband," he said to Susana. When Alberto came home later that evening, I was standing with the women in the yard. Rather than asking for his advice or permission, they simply informed him that the trader had come by, that he had offered them a price for the calf and that they were trying to decide whether to sell it to the trader. I wrote in my field notes that night that individuals such as Susana and Concepción apparently employed notions of gender or age *hierarchy* as a discursive tactic when they did not wish to be forced to make a business or other serious decision. I noted other instances which I could remember when young couples had claimed that they had to consult their older parents and household heads before agreeing to a transaction that I was convinced the parents had left as up to them to settle.

Furthermore, although Alberto's wages were used by the family to install running water, a bathroom and otherwise renovate the house; to purchase the tractor, car and other large items; and to pay for the children's education, his wife talked about this process of saving and spending the funds as a collective activity. For example, she told me that she and Concepción ate modest meals made with home-grown products when Alberto and the children were away at work and school. These women's contributions to running the farm and in being thrifty were described by both of them as inextricably linked with Alberto's earning of steady cash wages and formed one theme in their articulation of an ethos of egalitarian contributions to the household.

On the other hand, on one occasion Concepción explained to me that Susana and Alberto had been thinking about redoing the kitchen for a second time and that she was not sure exactly what they wished to do. I wrote in my notes that Concepción "spoke about this decision as if she had little part to play in it, as if the kitchen isn't hers." However, it seems significant that Concepción's comment followed another remark in which she told me that she had told Susana and Alberto not to feel compelled to buy more land with some of their savings because she understood that the money had to be used for the children's education. My "reading" of her way of talking about the kitchen is that she might have been voicing her mild disapproval of the plan to spend money renovating it. If the savings were not needed for the children's education as all three adults had agreed, Concepción might have preferred to spend it on farm land. In this example, one sees that just as older household heads were able to assert their authority over younger couples in the past because they were the ones who had contributed property to a household, now younger couples can assert a reversed hierarchy whereby they have more right to decide what to do with cash income that they contribute (see Collier, 1997 for a detailed consideration of the impact of such an economic shift in Andalusia).

During evening conversations held in Concepción's stable, we were often joined by one or both of her brothers who are witty raconteurs. When they were present, Alberto was more voluble than usual and rather than holding the floor as they often did, the two women encouraged the older men to tell jokes and recount stories to all of us as well as to explain current political news. I noticed that whenever I appeared to disagree with the men or asked too many questions, Susana would try to encourage me to restrain myself. Her normally dominant personality seemed to have gone momentarily underground during these occasions. However, Concepción often watched the proceedings with her dancing eyes; on one occasion, she was eager to tell me to be quiet and said while winking quickly "*Non sabemos Sarón, somos mulleres*" (We don't know [about that] Sharon [because] we're women). The men were pleased with the statement, not having ever publically granted me any particular recognition for my knowledge of history and politics, despite my higher education.[9] Like the majority of women I knew in Zas, Susana and Concepción also voted for the political candidates that their husbands or sons indicated were the best ones. However, the two women did frequently ask me questions about such matters in an all-female audience; for example, in gender homogeneous contexts, they would ask me about birth control, Spain's economic crisis and the divorce laws.

I heard in Concepción's perhaps, but not necessarily, ironic comment the influence of translocal notions of men's superior knowledge about these topics; the women's silencing of me or of other younger, educated women such as María was familiar to me from my experiences in some middle-class families in towns and cities. However, in other urban families there was another translocal rhetoric employed to offset this one—that of feminist claims for gender equality.

My necessarily brief description of the authority politics in this household indicates that one might draw the conclusion that it fits Rogers' (1975) characterization of

gender relations in the French farming village of Grand Fault in the 1970s. She argued that a balance was maintained between women's informal power and men's publicly acknowledged prestige. The lives of Zas worker-peasant families also coincides with Rogers' argument that the apparent authority that peasant men had in "public" in this part of France, like peasant agriculturalists elsewhere, was relatively ineffectual given their subordinated position within the overall political economy. However, how does one reconcile a comparison of this one household with Rogers' village-wide example? And how does the importation of her seminal work combine with previous research on the connections between household form and gender relationships in rural Galicia? After all, the "Casa da Herba Seca" is virilocal, yet virilocal households such as this one are located within settlements in which uxorilocality is currently the dominant form of postmarital residence.

At first glance, the last few pieces of data that I include regarding women's promotion of men's superiority might seem to be consistent not only with what I argue is an aspect of a Spanish-wide discourse on gender "difference" but also with Lisón Tolosana's (1983 [1979]) description of the operation of authority roles in virilocal households in which a son will inherit the majority of the parental property. But how does one incorporate into these frameworks the frequent alternations between uxorilocality and virilocality that one finds occurs in many households in Zas through different age cohorts? Concepción herself had been a main heir to her own mother's estate and it had been her husband who had "married into" the household. Under these circumstances, according to some of Lisón Tolosana's (ibid.) descriptions, one might expect Alberto to defer to his mother. Furthermore, one would not expect Susana to have as much authority as she does within her husband's natal household. She is the *"nora"* or daughter-in-law who *"veu de afora"* (came from outside). Why, then, did the family's neighbours frequently remark that they wondered what *"elas"* (feminine plural) were intending to do about a particular household decision rather than utilizing the masculine, generic plural *"eles"* which would have included Alberto in the reference? Clearly, one of the most important factors to consider in this case is the fact that Alberto spent so many years labouring abroad and his mother and wife established a close working relationship in running the farm and raising the children at home. As we see in this example alone, it is very important for Europeanist anthropologists to develop better comparative ethnographies of the impact of long-term, temporary labour migration on household dynamics. What are the impacts of long separations on the relationships between parents and children, and those between spouses?

Another important issue that renders a structural model overly rigid are the effects of previous postmarital residence and inheritance patterns on the current and future trends for each household, and not just at local or regional levels. Although Concepción was herself a main heir and the daughter of a single mother and she frequently honoured her mother's achievements as a household head, she did not promote the idea of the household reproducing this pattern of the female line. Instead she talked about how her grandson, rather than her older grandchild María, would inherit the farm and house. In doing so, she referred to the estates of wealthy landowners in the area and said that patrilineality was *"millor"* (better). Concepción made such statements in front of her daughter-in-law Susana who would voice her agreement. There is another component to the association that these two women make between virilocality/patrilineal inheritance and "pulling one's household up" (or economic success): from their own experience, they must also value the solidarity that can be achieved through the development of a positive relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law in such households.[10]

"Casa de María"

> *Antiguamente* [Castilian in original] *a xente chamaba ós seus pais 'a miña nai' u 'o meu pai'. Agora din 'mamá' e 'papá'. Foi mais formal antes pero tamén cariñoso.*
> (People called their parents "my mother" and "my father" in the old days. Now they say "mama" and "papa." It was more formal before but just as affectionate.) — María in 1990

"Casa de María" was a three-generation stem-family household composed of eight members that included the widowed *"patrona"* or household head María, her married daughter Encarnación, her son-in-law Perfecto, her unmarried middle-aged son Jesús and Encarnación and Perfecto's four living children who in 1990 ranged in age from a young school-aged boy to an eldest daughter in her mid-20s. Perfecto worked full time for a small construction contractor but helped out with farmwork whenever he could. However, it was María and Encarnación and whichever of the daughters was currently at home who cared for the family's cattle, poultry, pigs and subsistence crops. In 1990-91, the son Manolo and his sister Asunción attended school. The two older daugh-

ters María and Mercedes were often absent, working as housekeepers and babysitters for middle-class professionals in a nearby city. The farmwork was labour intensive and required María and Encarnación's full attention and any help that they received from other family members. Unlike many other households in the area, the women had not given up their small herd of cattle over the last few decades; nor had they modernized their stable or installed a mechanical milking system. The income that they received from selling milk to dairy companies and from selling calves to butchers was earned through intensive labour which included their cultivation of grains and pasturage to keep the animals through the long, wet winters.

In this household, María and Encarnación were overtly "in charge" of making most of the decisions dealing with the farm and the day-to-day running of the household. "Casa de María" is an example of a second-generation uxorilocal household since María also remained, in what she once called in Castilian Spanish (rather than in Galician), her *"casa de nacimiento "* (natal house or literally, "birth house"). The two women's administration of the farm included their asking Encarnación's unmarried brother Jesús to help out with chores under their orders. Despite this overall pattern of what appeared to be female authority, Perfecto and Encarnación seemed to be jointly in charge of the major renovations that they were making to María's old farmhouse. When the elder María talked about the various structural and decorative changes that they were planning, she often used the pronoun *"eles"* (them) instead of *"nós"* (we). María and her son-in-law Perfecto had an openly affectionate relationship and she was particularly pleased that they were renovating the house with the aim of retaining many of its old features, such as her beloved hearth in the old kitchen and the stone façade. The car that Perfecto used to commute to work was also referred to as "his car" (*o seu coche*) rather than as household property.

Perfecto also appeared to have a close relationship with his wife Encarnación with whom he enjoyed going out to festival dances and suppers at friends' homes during the holidays and on other special occasions. Whenever I was visiting the family at the time of day when he returned home from his wage job, Perfecto would invariably demand to know where Encarnación was and would go to join her if she was out fetching the family's cattle from a distant pasture. María was eager to give the couple time together in their busy schedules and would make a point of telling me that it was a very good thing that they had time to chat while walking to and from the pasture on such occasions. Her comprehension of the difficulties for married couples of living in a stem-family household undoubtedly arose from her own experiences as a young woman but also coincided with her granddaughters' references to the findings reported in popular women's magazines that "modern" marriages should be egalitarian (*igual*) and should contain an element of "friendship."

Despite María's having made the quality of her daughter's marital relationship one priority in the household, as one can see in the quotation with which I begin this section she preferred some of the formality that she perceived to have more commonly accompanied the position of older household heads in the past. One day she remarked to me that all of the younger individuals in a house used to say *"a nosa madriña"* (our godmother) to refer to the eldest (*"a mais maior"*) woman in a *casa*. Even the in-marrying husband of a granddaughter would have used the term, she emphasized. María's nostalgia for the internal household hierarchy that she perceives was associated with stem-family households in the past is juxtaposed by her commonly granting men social precedence. For example, she frequently referred to her husband as having been "smarter" than herself and as having commanded respect from the members of his famiy and others in the community. During holiday suppers at her house, I noticed that both she and Encarnación made a point of serving the men their meals and wine before women visitors and of making sure that they were pleased with the dishes. In rural Galicia, even when in restaurants, groups of men and women most often tend to sit at opposite ends of a table so this pattern of differential service is very obvious to either a participant or an observer. In addition, María frequently talked about her eldest son's successes in school and his other talents but did not comment on how skilful her daughter Encarnación was with the cows. María also made a point of praising the renovations that Perfecto had undertaken in her house and his reputation as a good worker in the construction circuit but did not highlight the wage work that her granddaughters María and Mercedes performed in the city.

These young women's preference for working as *"criadas"* (maids/domestic servants) as opposed to remaining on the farm full time perplexed María to some extent. She told me that this was an inversion of what was socially current during the period of her youth. Having come from a relatively wealthy landed peasant household, in the past it would have been unthinkable for young María and Mercedes to work in other families' households. In 1995, when their younger sister Asunción

decided to join them in the city to attend the local college, her grandmother and mother were less surprised than worried about how they would be able to do all of the farmwork and also take care of young Manolo. "They've been left all *alone*," relatives and neighbours said to me, implying that it was possible that none of the three sisters would "marry into" her natal household. Despite their living in the city, however, the three young women came home almost every weekend and gladly helped the older women with farm chores and housework. In return, their mother or grandmother would give them household produce to take back to the city on Sunday evenings.[11] This behaviour drew on both hierarchical and egalitarian strategies of power: the younger women paid attention to their elders and addressed their grandmother formally yet they also expected to be recognized for the labour that they individually contributed to the farm. Although understandably, María never discussed with me the process whereby she and her husband decided that Encarnación should remain in the house and inherit the bulk of the property, she did talk at length about her own experience of having been her parents' second choice. She introduced the topic by stating in general terms that it "Used to be the custom for the eldest son [to be chosen] but then [it changed]." In her family, it was her eldest sister who was chosen from among five siblings of both sexes to "marry into" the house. However, this sister "didn't have 'a family'" (meaning that she did not have any children) and later moved out with her husband. María's explanation of why this sister left indicates that the child who remains does it as a favour to the parents: she said that she decided that, given that she did not have children who would be future heirs to the farm, "why struggle with these ones [her parents]" and "she left them alone." María described how "I remained with my parents and later we got married" and that many families of her generation ended up with the youngest daughters rather than the eldest sons inheriting the land. After a long disquisition on the pros and cons of sons as opposed to daughters remaining with parents, María concluded that the most important thing was to have one of the children remain and for there to be a younger woman in the house, whether it was a daughter or a daughter-in-law. A young woman is necessary to help the older couple with the farmwork and also to take care of them when they are ill.

From this and other conversations, it became clear to me that María and Encarnación would like to have one of the young women in the family "marry into" the house. The eldest daughter, María's namesake and goddaughter, has now married and lives with her husband in a Galician city. It seems that the youngest daughter Asunción was perhaps being raised to remain.[12] After she completes her trade school course and/or gains work experience, she could of course eventually return home to either do farmwork or commute to a job in a nearby town or in the city. If she did the latter, her relationship with her parents and grandmother would resemble her father's more than her mother's given that she would mainly be contributing cash wages to the household as opposed to her daily labour in agricultural work. In addition, I observed Asunción consistently follow the older women's orders without complaint during her teen years; it is unclear how the dynamics of her relationship with them would change in the future if she returned as a married woman and a wage earner (compare with the discussion of similar changes across generational cohorts in Collier, 1997).

It is interesting that María's emphasis on the power that younger people have over their parents is not restricted to the present but also extends back to her own youth in the 1920s and 1930s. There is not enough space to explore this issue fully in this paper but it is very significant. This recognition on her part indicates the reversal or weakening of discourses of age and gender hierarchy associated with the unequal inheritance and stem-family household systems that were rooted mainly in an economy based on agriculture and animal husbandry. María's comment is especially significant given that her natal household was one of the more prosperous of the peasant farms in the area. Even if her daughter and son-in-law had not been interested in continuing to raise cattle and to farm, the financial reward of the house and land would seem to have been incentive enough for them to live with María and care for her as she ages. The relatively central location of Zas makes it possible for Perfecto to commute to work and for the couple's daughters to easily travel home almost every weekend. As I have indicated elsewhere in my discussion of households in which no child has remained with elderly parents (Roseman, 1993: 116-125), wealth differences have always been a key determinant of whether households are reproduced as stem-families. In addition, Lisón Tolosana (1983 [1979]) refers to this factor as a qualification to his overall description of the unequal inheritance system in virilocal and uxorilocal zones. Furthermore, his observation is echoed in more recent accounts of rural depopulation in mountainous Lugo by Joaquín Rodríguez Campos (1983, 1990) and Rainer Lutz Bauer (1983: 190-244; also see Bauer, 1987). The fact that María, who is from a relatively wealthy household, made this remark suggests that the interdependence

between children and parents should perhaps be considered to be as salient a metaphor for household politics as either an age or gender hierarchy which maintains older household heads and main heirs in rigidly dominant positions. After all, it is the pressing obligation for someone to care for elderly parents that is often most intertwined with heirship mechanisms and postmarital residence decisions (e.g., see Brettell, 1986: 44-47).

Conclusions

During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, like other anthropologists working elsewhere in the world, Europeanists such as Friedl (1967), Rogers (1975, 1985), Dubisch (1986) and Herzfeld (1985, 1986) displaced more rigid, structural models of male dominance by drawing on ethnographies of everyday life to illustrate the complexities of gendered strategies of power. In particular, they highlighted the significant impact within households and local communities of the operation of what has variously been called women's "informal power," women's social networks and women's solidarity. Their work in European locations converges with the research of Weiner (e.g., 1976, 1992) on "women's wealth" in the Trobriand Islands and other Pacific societies as well as with the early work of Wolf (1972, 1974) and the more recent contributions of Kondo (1990), Tsing (1993) and others in research on gender in Asian societies. These ethnographic and theoretical interventions also parallel a focus over the last two decades on the "everyday forms of resistance" employed by subordinated people (compare Ong, 1987 and Scott, 1985) and on those daily practices that illuminate how ordinary people negotiate their place within constraining social institutions (e.g., de Certeau, 1984; Okely, 1996; Reed-Danahay, 1993; Roseman, 1996b, 1999).

It does not follow, therefore, that the older social structural models of patriarchy are the sole or main route that one would follow in developing analytical frameworks for the dynamics of power in locales where there is a relatively greater degree of gender equality. A clear link can be made, however, between relative gender equality in some parts of rural Galicia and northern Portugal and women's dominant position in the administration of subsistence agriculture and other income-generating activities, extensive male out-migration, women's frequent inheritance of major portions of their parents' estates, and uxorilocality (see Brettell, 1986; Cole, 1991; Kelley, 1988, 1991; Roseman, 1993, 1996a, in press). Furthermore, coincident with the work of Parkhurst in this volume, some ethnographers of Galicia have reported that women's position within households and communities can be weakened with the expansion of mechanized and commoditized agriculture (e.g., see Rodríguez Campos, 1983: 107-116). However, even if one does not use the term "matriarchy"—as does the folklorist Rey-Henningsen (1994) in her recent book—one has to be equally careful when applying the concepts of "matrifocality," "matri-centric," or "female-centred" to such households and communities (Brettell, 1986: 9; 1988; Brøgger and Gilmore, 1997; Cole, 1991: 62; Kelley, 1994). One of the most subtle early pieces on "female-headed" households is Carol Stack's (1974) account of the lives of African-Americans living in an urban neighbourhood in a city in the northern United States. In her work, Stack has demonstrated the complexity of gendered kinship relationships by illustrating that the households she studied were bound up in interhousehold "domestic networks" and that men were not absent from these households and networks (also see Stack, 1996). Her approach is similar to that of the authors I mention above, who have all emphasized the singular importance of carefully considering the many influences on men's and women's claims to be "in charge" in specific contexts.

In addition, in attempting to delineate how people conceptualize, discuss and make decisions strategically, anthropologists have begun to develop more sophisticated approaches to elucidating the specific impacts on individual discourses of wider cultural messages and social changes (see Cole, 1991; Collier, 1997). Ethnographers are well-placed to continue to develop influential explanatory frameworks (rather than models) that account for the operation of strategies of power and authority in relationships among individuals. In other words, detailed ethnographic work based on particular locales does not have to lead us away from the goal of comparison. In the case of authority politics within households, intracommunity level comparisons of individuals' social practices can be repeated at the wider intercommunity or regional level. As Pina-Cabral (1989) suggested several years ago, comparative work on gender in southern Europe should ideally proceed gradually outward in concentric circles to replace a tendency for anthropologists from "northern" countries to implicitly compare locally discrete observations that they have made in countries such as Spain and Portugal to their own personal class and gender-biased experiences in their home societies.

Comparison of two households in Zas thus reveals that authority politics can be examined through paying attention to both the material basis of relationships and the manner through which interpersonal strategies of power are shaped by daily actions and "ways of talkin'"

(Stewart, 1996: 29). My awareness of the layered nuances in peoples' storied accounts of their lives was piqued by my noticing—in the footsteps of others such as Friedl (1967), Riegelhaupt (1967), Rogers (1975, 1985), Wolf (1972, 1974) and more recently Moore (1994: 86-106)—various juxtapositions and interconnections between the public reinforcement of particular discourses of social prestige and the operation of power within intimate relationships in local communities. In making sense of the contours within which two oppositional discourses are articulated, an invaluable guide is found in Judith Okely's (1996) analysis of the distinction that can be drawn between structures of inequality and the "defiant moments" that occur when individuals take advantage of cracks in the structure: "Through careful examination and in the telling, we can discover that specific moments in individual lives inform us about both dominance and points of resistance" (ibid.: 214).

I have emphasized that both hierarchical and egalitarian cultural emphases constitute and reflect intra- and interhousehold relationships in Zas. Individuals' behaviours, and their ways of conceptualizing their own and others' actions, can be demonstrated to refer to one or both of these general orientations. In previous work, I have demonstrated that the age hierarchy that in part characterizes most postmortem and unequal inheritance systems is salient within rural households in the part of the province of A Coruña where I have carried out field work. Despite the evidence of the social authority of legal property owners within these households, though, this authority is neither absolute nor ensured. It is not ensured because parents who do not have much wealth to pass on to their children find that they do not have enough leverage (Roseman, 1993: 116-225) and even those who do own substantial dwellings and relatively large expanses of agricultural property may find it difficult to lure children to remain in a rural community (compare with both de la Gala Gonzalez's paper in this volume and with Gulevich, 1997). As the case studies of Casa da Herba Seca and Casa de María illustrate, parents' authority is never absolute because the labour and other inputs that are contributed by younger household members can be viewed as outbalancing their eventual legacy. In cases in which labour migrants or other wage earners contribute substantial cash to the "building up" of a household estate, these younger members may have a basis for a great degree of social authority over their parents.

It is clear, in parts of rural Galicia such as Zas, not only that age and gender hierarchies are intertwined but also that the weakening of age hierarchies is applicable to the case of gender hierarchies. If women are in many instances situated as having less authority than their husbands or fathers-in-law (for example, in a virilocal household), they also have a claim to authority through their ongoing bestowal of labour to their residential unit. Furthermore, gender hierarchies in this part of rural Galicia are not constituted solely as a result of which spouse is the main heir in a local and regional inheritance system but are also affected by those discourses of male superiority prevalent throughout Spain and Europe.

A number of ethnographers of rural Galicia have produced important studies of gendered inter and intrahousehold relationships, marriage and widowhood that guide us toward a careful consideration of ambiguities and apparent contradictions. I am thinking here particularly of the work of Gala González (1995; this volume); Gulevich (1994, 1995, 1997), Kelley (e.g., see 1988, 1991, 1994), Gondar Portasany (1991); Moreno Feliú (1999); Valentine and Valentine (1992) and Lisón Tolosana's work (e.g., see in particular his compelling 1987 [1979] study of "witchcraft"). I maintain that their collective example demonstrates that, rather than attempting to facilely reconcile such contradictions and ambiguities, we can pay attention to the variety of discourses that individuals adroitly employ in negotiating and describing their relationships. For an excellent discussion of the generation of ambiguous and contradictory images of power relations between women and men that are found in the refrains or proverbial sayings collected by early folklorists and ethnographers, see Susana de la Gala González (1999). She cites, for example, Moreiras Santiso's recording of the following refrain that is still heard in Galician communities like Zas:

> *Hai tres crases de matrimonio: varón, varela e varicuna; varón, manda el i ela non; varela, el non manda e manda ela; varicunca, manda ela i el nunca; e éste é o que máis abunda.* [There are three types of marriage: *varón, varela e varicuna*; *varón* (male) when he is in charge and she is not; *varela*, he is not in charge and she is; *varicuna*, she is (always) in charge and he never is; and it is this last type which is most common]. (Moreiras Santiso, 1978: 71 in Gala González, 1999: 303; bracketed translation into English is my own).

In Zas, however, I found that in households such as Casa da Herba Seca and Casa de María, both inegalitarian *and* egalitarian discourses simultaneously pervade people's experience of age and gender "difference."

In most branches of anthropology, micro-level research is inextricably tied to the goal of comparison. The production of subtle analyses of the relationships of

individuals living in particular locales is successfully achieved through long-term field work and ethnographic portrayals. These portrayals and analyses are the starting points for wider comparisons both geographically and longitudinally. Solid intra and interregional comparisons can only be achieved, however, if the complexity of this data is accounted for rather than being submerged under abstract generalizations.[13]

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Notes

1 In contrast to this local understanding that Delfina had inherited her mother's estate, according to the property laws instituted early in the Franco period, Esteban likely would have had the legal authority to buy and sell his wife's property. See Sponsler (1982) for more information about the impact on women of changes to such laws.

2 Due to space limitations, I have chosen to write an article that consists of a specific response to the lineage of work in Galician ethnography on the subject of gender, power and intrahousehold dynamics. Clearly, a full account of gender and power in any ethnographic setting would require an analysis of local, regional, national and transnational political and economic relationships and processes. For example, activist women have developed full analyses of the operation of gender marginalization within Galician language politics (Roseman, 1997). And women's and men's labour activities must be viewed within the context of regional political economies that have historically been based largely on insecure wage opportunities and unpaid subsistence production (e.g., Bauer, 1987; Buechler and Buechler, 1984; J.-M. Buechler, 1975; Iturra, 1988; Kelley, 1991; Rodríguez Campos, 1990; Roseman, in press).

3 Evidently, this "local" or "vernacular" model is one of many that originally informed scholars' development of the structural model. However, interestingly, these "local, peasant" arrangements can be traced back to feudal prescriptions for rented land to be maintained intact through parents' bequests of usufruct rights (Lisón Tolosana, 1983 [1979]: 273-302). It is difficult to be certain about the specific types of inheritance systems that existed in different parts of Galicia prior to feudalism.

4 For a more detailed consideration of the operation of male precedence in one part of A Coruña, and women's responses to it, see Roseman (1999). In her dissertation based on field work data gathered in the 1980s, Heidi Kelley notes that "Alternatively, in concert with cultural notions of the inherent superiority of masculinity (nurtured by the frameworks of male precedence provided by the Catholic church and the Spanish legal-political system), male work is seen as more valuable than women's work" (Kelley, 1988: 271). She goes on to say that "Notions of inherent male superiority are frequently expressed in Ezaro . . ." (ibid). In particular, her comments about the way in which most women cater to men's tastes and timetables when planning meals and make sure to serve them the best parts of a meal (ibid.: 273-274) are confirmed by my own observations in Zas. Furthermore, this is one of those daily enactments of female subordination that urban feminists have highlighted to me as problematic for them and as proof of Spanish "patriarchy" operating full-force in all parts of rural Galicia (see Queizán, 1977, 1980, 1989).

5 Please note that all of the names of individuals and households used in this paper are pseudonyms. Rather than using pseudonyms for the names of locales, I have described the area of Zas to which I am referring and have then disguised the settlements in which each of the three households mentioned is located by not using nomenclative indicators in my focussed discussions of them.

6 There is a long list of relevant ethnography on Galician communities that includes, among others, work by Bauer (e.g., 1983, 1987); the Buechlers (e.g., 1981, 1984); Fernández de Rota (e.g., 1984); Fidalgo Santamariña (1992); Iturra (e.g., 1988); Méndez (1988); Moreno Feliú, Fernández de Rota y Monter and Santamariña (1987); and Rodríguez Campos (1983, 1990). Also, refer to the introduction to this volume where we outline Lisón Tolosana's impressive corpus which includes his early publications that all deal with households and community in rural Galicia (1973a, 1973b, 1976, 1983 [1979]).

7 Clearly, some households were dramatically altered as a result of both out-migration and a stem-family household

system that meant that their children could "marry into" their spouses' natal households. For example, several elderly couples and widowed individuals lived alone because all of their offspring had established themselves either in in-laws' households or neolocally. In the latter case, most rented or purchased apartments in Galician cities or in other parts of Spain. A very small minority of individuals from this area settled permanently abroad in migrant destinations such as Switzerland.

8 Both maize and potatoes are staple crops in much of Galicia, having been successfully introduced there as a result of the Spanish colonization of parts of Latin America (see Bouza-Brey Trillo, 1957; Brandes, 1992). In the 1990s maize continues to be planted by almost every household in Zas as fodder for cows, pigs and poultry. Earlier in the century, it was also grown as a staple for human consumption in the form of bread and dumplings (Roseman, 1993).

9 During revisits to the area in both 1995 and 1998, I noticed that some men have begun to treat me differently on such occasions by referring to my possibly having "authoritative" knowledge and opinions (for example, with the use of the phrase: "She knows" [*Ela sabe*]). They know that I have a teaching post at a university, and have therefore begun to identify me as a "professor" rather than as a "young female student."

10 One of the anonymous reviewers of this article asked whether Concepción would have had a very different relationship with her daughter-in-law Susana *if* she (Concepción) had had a daughter of her own. Although that is of course possible, I do not think that this is likely, given the number of times that people in Zas and other parts of rural A Coruña have explained to me that they are often closest to those with whom they live. Although there are cases in which co-dwelling kin do not get along at all and there are many instances of interpersonal tension between in-laws, many women and men of all ages described to me the concern and compassion that they developed for their in-laws after years or even decades of companionship. These positive feelings were evident in the warmth that characterized their interactions and in the way in which choices were made about household affairs.

11 For comparison, see Gulevich (1997).

12 As far as I am aware, the important topic of how children might be raised as preferential heirs has not been dealt with in any breadth in European ethnography, notwithstanding the very important examples of Douglass' study of Basque migration (1971, 1975) and the attention paid to this issue by Rogers (1991) in her investigation of the *ostal* system in southern France.

13 This general argument has been made by Europeanists such as Caroline Brettell who is a leading scholar in the areas of anthropology and demography; household, inheritance and migration patterns; and historical anthropology. For example, in 1991 she writes: "If a broad regional pattern is no longer sustainable, how are comparison and generalization possible? The myriad local variations that I have just described provide an answer. These variations are different solutions to the common problems faced by families.... Rather than emphasizing property first as the determinative factor organizing kinship relations and domestic group structures, we should begin with social relations and cultural values and determine how they shape decisions about when property is transferred, what is transferred, and to whom it is transferred. In the context of property transactions, of which the bestowing of dowry is merely one, the rights and obligations among kin and between men and women are both expressed and negotiated" (Brettell, 1991: 349). Jane and Peter Schneider (1995, 1996) similarly demonstrate the value of drawing on historical and ethnographic detail on birth control practices in one Sicilian town to develop comparisons of the way in which Europeans of different regions, social classes, occupations, genders and religious traditions experienced broad social and economic changes of the late 19th and 20th centuries. Judith Okely (1996) provides one of the most eloquently argued general arguments we have for the vital necessity of the anthropological focus on individual "moments."

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