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Toward a cultural phenomenology of intersubjectivity: The extended relational field of the Tzotzil Maya of highland Chiapas, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

Among the Tzotzil Maya of San Juan Chamula (Chiapas, Mexico), dream experience, symptom formation, and certain forms of emotionally heightened self-consciousness are drawn upon to gain knowledge of the social surround. Through an exploration of these domains (and their epistemological and ontological entailments), I trace the contours of the “extended relational field” of the highland Maya, emphasizing a distinctly multimodal approach to intersubjectivity—one that subsumes interpersonal relations, intersomatic processes, and soul-based “counterpart relations.” Through this discussion, I seek to broaden the frame through which we view cross-cultural inflections of intersubjectivity, emphasizing the importance of tracing differential manifestations of relational processes across diverse experiential registers, only some of which involve “minds coming to know other minds.”

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1. Introduction

“About himself everyone knows directly, about everything else only very indirectly. This is the fact and the problem.”

—Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (1819/1966)

“To recognize that the object of our feelings, needs, actions, and thoughts is actually another subject, an equivalent center of being, [this] is the real difficulty...”

—Jessica Benjamin, *Beyond Doer and Done To* (2004)

Recent years have seen the emergence of a growing ethnographic and linguistic literature addressing questions of relationality and theory of mind within their cultural matrices. Contributions have addressed topics such as intersubjectivity (Jackson, 1998; Duranti, 2010), empathy (Throop and Hollan, 2008; Throop, 2008, 2010), agency (Murphy and Throop, 2010), and more broadly, cultural–epistemological approaches to intentionality and the knowability of the hearts and minds of others (Tomasello et al., 2005; Danziger, 2006, 2010a,b; Rumsey and Robbins, 2008a,b). Despite attention to issues of cultural specificity, many orienting concepts drawn upon in these works—particularly those involving intersubjective processes of “mind reading” and intentionality—remain grounded in a markedly psychological idiom, one that may be of limited value

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as a universalized heuristic for understanding diverse construals of interpersonal experience. Indeed, available cross-cultural evidence indicates that local ethnotheories may place much greater emphasis on bodily experience as a mediator of inter-subjective processes and communication.¹

The present paper is intended as an empirical and theoretical contribution to this growing literature, exploring themes of relationality, intentionality, and intersubjective knowing amongst the Tzotzil Maya of San Juan Chamula of highland Chiapas, Mexico.² The Tzotzil Maya, like many groups in both Mesoamerica and the Pacific, hold a distinct interpretive stance toward the knowability of other minds: the inner states of others (in their cognitive, conative, and affective dimensions) are generally held to be relatively “opaque” to many forms of everyday appraisal. This sense of “social opacity” is widespread throughout the Mayan world, and appears to serve as a basic axiom of local social life. Indeed, in many interactive contexts, people disavow their ability to make explicit claims about the content of others’ hearts and minds. Despite this, people regularly stake moral claims against one another, question motives, gossip, and generally conduct themselves as if such interpersonal knowledge were readily available (or at least amenable to discussion and speculation). As we will see, in spite of explicit attestations of opacity in face-to-face interactions, in the Tzotzil social milieu one comes to know others’ intentions through careful attention to culturally-specific “oblique” or indirect forms of intersubjectivity, including dreaming and certain classes of somatic experience.

Accordingly, this paper ranges widely across seemingly unrelated ethnographic domains, taking up the relationship among language ideologies and local norms of polite comportment, “anti-cooperative” verbal exchanges, social-exposure anxiety, and the experience of dreams. Through an exploration of these ostensibly non-intersubjective domains (and their epistemological and ontological entailments), we will begin to see the contours and dynamics of the “extended intersubjective field” of the Chamula Tzotzil, one that gives rise to a distinctly “multimodal” approach to intersubjectivity (understood to include direct interpersonal exchanges and intersomatic processes, as well as soul-based forms of “counterpart relations”). By attending to experience across these diverse phenomenal registers, contemporary Tzotzil Maya gain a deeper sense of the contours of the dispositional surround—particularly those aspects of feeling and intention that are systematically stripped from most face-to-face social interactions. I am therefore proposing a more culturally contextualized (and therefore less psychologically- and linguistically-biased) understanding of the intersubjective field, highlighting the various experiential channels drawn up by the Tzotzil Maya in coming to understand the interpersonal and relational world in which they are embedded.

At a conceptual level, this paper explicitly engages a basic communicative and epistemological issue: How do local ideologies of occluded subjectivities relate to actual interpersonal practices? Does an attested sense of the difficulty of knowing others’ inner states always lead to a “philosophical disinterest” in questions of motivation, intentionality, and the content of other minds (as argued for the Mopan Maya by Danziger, 2006, 2010a,b)? Or might it instead lead to a heightened preoccupation with the “subjective factor” (e.g., the degree of concordance between social presentation of self and underlying—but unexpressed—dispositions, affects, and intentions), as argued for the Tzotzil Maya by Groark (2008, 2010)? Through this discussion, I hope to broaden the analytic frame through which we view cross-cultural inflections of intersubjectivity, emphasizing the importance of tracing differential manifestations of intersubjective processes across diverse phenomenal and experiential registers.

2. Cross-cultural approaches to intersubjectivity

Before diving into the ethnographic material, I turn briefly to the theoretical literature on intersubjectivity. Within philosophy, the social sciences, and applied clinical disciplines such as psychoanalysis, the topic of intersubjectivity is enjoying increasing attention. Regardless of the particular theoretical bias brought to bear on the topic, most psychologically sophisticated discussions of intersubjectivity recognize a basic tension between relating to others as extensions of self (as internal objects, as containers for projective identifications, etc.) or as true “others”—that is, as “whole subjects” existing as autonomous centers of feeling, need, action, and desire. Within the philosophical and psychoanalytic literatures on intersubjectivity, this latter position—with its emphasis on recognizing the other as “another subject, an equivalent center of being” (Benjamin, 2004:6)—tends to dominate, and is usually understood, implicitly or explicitly, as a hard-won developmental achievement that is experienced as unambiguously positive at both the personal and social levels (see Honneth, 1995, 2005, 2008; Benjamin, 1988, 1995, 2004; Jay, 2008).

However socially or ethically desirable such a stance may be in the abstract, empirical and clinical evidence suggests that this form of mutual intersubjective recognition is much harder to achieve than one might initially suppose, both cross-culturally and interpersonally (see Butler, 2008; Lear, 2008). More often, in its place, we find *fantasies of intersubjectivity*—relational forms that, while appearing to provide transparent access to the thoughts and feelings of others, are in fact dominated

¹ For a detailed overview of this pronounced somatic bias in highland Maya ethnopsychology, see Groark, 2005:127–172. See also Kirmayer (1984a,b, 1985, 1989), who has argued that societies differ in their tendency to either somatize or psychologize social experience (attending primarily to the somatic or “feeling” component of social life, or in contrast, privileging its cognitive–emotional dimensions), with most societies adopting a strongly somatically-biased stance.

² The bulk of data presented in this paper was collected in 2002–2003 field season. All interviews were conducted by the author in the Chamula dialect of Tzotzil. Research support was generously provided by the National Science Foundation (Grant No. 9910193), The Ford Foundation, The Tinker Foundation, and the UCLA Department of Anthropology.

by complex projective processes in which self and other, inner and outer, subjective and objective are systematically conflated.

For the purposes of this paper—and for cross-cultural analysis in general—I suggest that we adopt a less value-laden (and covertly developmentalist) view of intersubjectivity. Following Robert Stolorow and colleagues (see [Atwood and Stolorow, 1984](#); [Stolorow and Atwood, 1992](#); [Stolorow, 1997](#); [Orange et al., 1997](#)) we might opt for a minimalist position, in which intersubjectivity is understood as *an always-present and basic aspect of any interactive field constituted by two or more subjects, regardless of the accuracy of the intersubjective processes at work, or the abilities of the parties to relate to one another as unique subjectivities* ([Stolorow, 2004:547](#)). In addition, I argue that a cultural-phenomenological approach to intersubjectivity must establish at least four coordinates when exploring any given intersubjective field: (1) the range and contours of the field, focusing on the manifestation of interpersonal processes, as locally understood, across diverse phenomenal domains; (2) local ethnotheories of the person, emphasizing: a) the various dimensions or aspects of self thought capable of sustaining intersubjective engagement, and b) the various interactional modalities through which thought, feeling, and intentionality are held to be accessible; (3) ontological assumptions postulating the kinds of other-than-human beings, entities, or forces capable of entering into relational engagements, both with each other and with humans; and (4) the variable quality and feeling tone of these diverse forms of intersubjective engagement as they manifest within their corresponding experiential registers.

Intersubjectivity, thus conceived, serves as a sort of broad placeholder concept, capable of reflecting diverse classes of relational phenomena ranging along a continuum between extreme psychological solipsism (in which the external world is experienced and understood as isomorphic with the inner world of the experiencing subject) and interpersonal mutuality (which entails appreciation of the unique and autonomous subjectivity of each interactant). As positions along a non-developmental cline, within every human life and lifeworld we should expect to find forms of intersubjectivity lying at all points along this continuum. While some of these positions may be more familiar, comfortable, and habitual than others, none are alien to us in our interactions with our fellows.³

This broad approach to the phenomenology of intersubjective processes allows us to subsume more configurations and inflections of relatedness and sociality under the umbrella of intersubjectivity, including both the denial of intersubjective access (as epitomized in various theories of social opacity) as well as its valorization (as in intentionalist models of relational mutuality). Perhaps most importantly, such an approach ameliorates the interpretive dangers of taking one culturally-particular form of intersubjectivity (for instance, accurate mind-to-mind knowing of others' intentions and feelings) as the standard against which all other forms of social knowing are to be measured.

2.1. "Social opacity ideologies" in the Pacific and the Americas

In Pacific societies, where issues of intentionality and theory of mind have occupied a place of prominence in anthropological research (see [Rumsey and Robbins, 2008a,b](#)), we find a continuum of attitudes toward mind reading, ranging from "strong opacity positions" which assert the global impossibility of accessing such knowledge, to "weak opacity positions" marked by an assertion of opacity in interaction, but a recognition that such knowledge can in fact be gained, often from novel forms of interaction or from non-linguistic contexts (see [Robbins, 2008](#); [Schieffelin, 2008](#); [Stasch, 2008](#)). We might think of this as a contrast between global epistemological commitments to opacity, versus a more limited language-ideological position which stresses the occlusion of self-related factors in certain forms and contexts of interaction (see [Robbins, 2008](#)).

In contrast to this well developed Pacific-based literature, the exploration of Amerindian theories of mind and intersubjectivity is just beginning (see [Course, Danziger, Hanks, and Nevins, this issue](#)). Despite the historical lack of focus on such issues, strikingly similar "opacity ideologies" have been documented among Mayan-speaking groups in highland and lowland settings throughout Southern Mexico, Belize, and Guatemala (see [Hanks, 1990](#); [Warren, 1995](#); [Danziger, 2001, 2006, 2010a,b](#); [Groark, 2008, 2010](#)). Describing the Yucatec Maya, Hanks writes:

There is a cliché in [Yucatec] Maya which says that every person is a different world. . . . The thrust of the remark is that there are sharp limits on the degree to which one can know another person and share in his or her feelings Interlocutors cannot reasonably assume that they know each others' true agendas, or that they are really on the footings they appear to be on. . . . ([Hanks, 1990:92–93](#))

Among Mayan-speakers, such claims seem to be part and parcel of local language ideologies, and the conviction that subjectivity is occluded in face-to-face interaction—often quite intentionally—is widespread. [Warren \(1995\)](#) presents a similar argument for the "opacity of social life" among the Kakchiquel Maya of Guatemala. Like the Yucatec Maya, the Kakchiquel hold that intentionality and subjectivity are hidden in everyday social interaction, leading to a widespread conviction that one cannot trust the self-presentations of others because deception is felt to be ubiquitous ([Warren, 1995:58](#)). Themes of transformation, unmasking of deceit, and revelations of true (but purposefully hidden) identities are common in folktales,

³ Although this continuum can be understood to reflect certain progressive developmental trends in the life history of the individual, I prefer to view its two poles as extreme positions between which all individuals oscillate throughout life, in response to interpersonal stressors, intrapsychic conflicts, and activation of earlier modes of integrating experience.

myths, and gossip, suggesting a marked cultural preoccupation with the relationship between surface forms and underlying identities or dispositions (Warren, 1995:57).

Danziger's (2006, 2010a,b) analysis of Mopan Maya data suggest a similar opacity ideology, but one that has been elaborated in a culturally distinct direction. She argues that, while the Mopan do indeed acknowledge the existence of others' mental states—and in line with an opacity model, might even be willing to agree that it is difficult to know what others think or feel—in practice they “seem to take little interest in other's mental states when interpreting their utterances” (Danziger, 2010a)—in short, Mopan are reluctant to “read” intentionality, knowledge, or beliefs from speech acts, choosing to focus instead on the absolute truth value of utterances, regardless of the intentional states one might assume to motivate them (Danziger, 2006, 2010a,b). This gives rise to anxieties centered on the presumed prevalence of lying and deceit, and a general valorization of constrained and “conventional” modes of interaction, in which highly formulaic interaction decreases the likelihood of inadvertently uttering a lie (Danziger, 2006).

Generalizing from the particularities of the Mopan, Danziger has suggested that Amerindian theories of mind may reflect a distinctly non-psychological stance: rather than leading to a heightened interest in the problematic and occluded content of others' minds (as in the Pacific context), Amerindian societies tend toward a “philosophical disinterest” in such matters (Danziger, 2006:266). As I discuss below, this generalization does not reflect the Tzotzil Maya orientation toward intersubjectivity, intentionality, or the knowing of other minds. In this social context, where local language ideology posits a disjuncture between underlying motivation-intentionality and the speech act, one of the primary vehicles for coming to know the dispositional states of others is recast as largely irrelevant as a source of meaningful information. As a result—at least among the Tzotzil—people tend to look elsewhere in order to gain an “intersubjective” understanding of the motivational contours of their social world (Groark, 2008). While the denial of intentionality as a relevant factor in the interpretation of speech acts tells us much about local language ideologies, it tells us little about the ways in which other subjectivities are construed and accessed within particular lifeworlds.

2.2. *Social opacity (and its limits) in highland Chiapas*

Among Tzotzil Maya speakers in San Juan Chamula, other hearts and minds are indeed approached as largely opaque and occluded in the immediacy of face-to-face interaction. However, this does not mean they are viewed as unknowable or unimportant. Tzotzil speakers regularly attribute intentionality to speech acts, maintaining a keen—perhaps even obsessive—interest in those aspects of self which are assumed to be actively hidden from public view (Groark, 2008). Moreover, they enjoy gossiping about others' words and actions, revisiting conversations, and speculating about the motives and social strategies that might be in play.

Although the assertion of interpersonal opacity is commonly invoked as an explicit ideological position, it exists alongside manifest examples of implicit intersubjective attunement and interaffectivity. For example, Tzotzil Maya speakers clearly recognize that speech can be unproblematically read as reflecting many everyday intentional states (e.g., when someone asks for a tortilla, this is implicitly understood to reflect their intentional stance—they want a tortilla!). This should come as no surprise; as Danziger (2006:268) points out, most “natural” communication does not involve what we might term “acute” (conscious, focused, labor-intensive) readings of others' minds; rather, implicit intersubjective understanding is mediated largely through non-conscious registrations of affects, apperceptions of expression and gesture, and implicit (and often culturally directed) implicatures of meaning and relational knowing (see also Stern, 1985; Lyons-Ruth, 1998).⁴

Despite this, my Tzotzil interlocutors are also acutely aware that more complex cognitive, conative, and affective states—particularly negative ones—are harder to appraise owing to the directed and purposeful “emotion work” people perform in order to actively hide these feelings, censoring them from expression or modifying their social presentation in line with morally compelling norms of comportment (Groark, 2005:159–168, 2008; see also Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1979). Indeed, much anxiety stems from the fact that this vital information is both purposefully occluded, yet indispensable for navigating a social world shot through with complex and ambivalent feelings and motives for action.⁵

As will be discussed below, in cultural settings characterized by a negative approach to many forms of intersubjective knowing, framing ethnotheories of personhood, subjectivity, and interaction may lead to elaborate strategies for concealing one's inner states, as well as equally elaborate countermeasures designed to provide increased access to the private lives of others. In other words, Tzotzil speakers recognize that much of everyday interaction involves the performance of emotional display norms emphasizing concord, amity, conventionality, and politeness, leading to a rather studied occlusion of the “subjective factor” in many modes of interaction (see Groark, 2008). Everyone knows that words reveal little about the speaker's “true” intentions, feelings, and agendas, yet as we will see below, these universally compelling components of social life can be accessed through certain oblique experiential and communicative channels.

⁴ Following Stern (1985), it is useful to distinguish between these modes of “implicit” or “primary” intersubjectivity and interaffectivity (modeled on non-verbal parent-child interactive dyads) and developmentally later explicit, declarative, deductively-gained intersubjective knowledge of another's *specific intentional states*. I contend that it is this latter “acute” or explicitly declarative form of social knowing that most social opacity models tend to shy away from.

⁵ Note that I am not arguing for an obsessive mentalism in conversation. As Danziger (2006) has pointed out, in the immediacy of most interactions, people are not attending overtly to questions of intentionality. However, all of life is not contained within conversation. Sooner or later—reflecting on what was said, not said, or misrepresented—thoughts turn to the speaker's underlying motivations and communicative intents.

3. Intersubjective attenuation, interpersonal safety, and the occlusion of the subjective factor

Tzotzil Maya claims regarding social opacity and the resulting agnostic stance toward the inner states of others are not merely theoretical—they are enacted continually in everyday interaction. Indeed, many forms of social exchange among traditionalist Tzotzil Maya are structured around a controlled presentation of self emphasizing the display of conventional modes of feeling over those which disclose the speaker's particular—and often idiosyncratic—subjective stance (Groark, 2008). As will be discussed below, I characterize this as a preference, across many domains, for *self-occlusive* rather than *self-disclosive* forms of interaction.

3.1. Politeness, conventionality, and anti-cooperative exchanges

As Brown (1980, 2004) documents for the Tenejapa Tzeltal, much of Highland Maya interaction is characterized by a style of conspicuous “positive politeness” intended to convey agreement, empathy, and positive affect. This style is both expected and required for smooth interaction between adults, serving as a sort of “empathy display package”—a suite of interrelated linguistic features (structural, prosodic, and lexical) in which comportment, restraint, and social grace are highlighted (Brown, 2004).

While Brown highlights the positive aspects of politeness, John and Leslie Haviland have focused on the shadow side of these conventionalized and scripted modes of interaction among neighboring Zinacantec Tzotzil speakers (see Haviland and Haviland, 1982, 1983; Haviland, 2010). The authors describe Zinacantec “polite” discourse as highly conventionalized exchanges “marked by formulaic inanity,” designed to ensure that “nothing of substance is revealed or brought into talk” (Haviland and Haviland, 1982:335). Based on ethnographic observations concerning the importance of envy, gossip, and interpersonal monitoring in community life, they go on to articulate a psychologically-based ethnotheory of information exchange, one in which polite or conventionalized speech is recast as a purposefully uninformative and opaque mode of interaction:

Looking at ordinary talk... leads to the conclusion that *all information is taken as inherently dangerous*; that people's interests are thought to be inevitably opposed; that access to one another's business invites not shared confidences but breaches of confidence. *Living [here] involves... constant circumspect hiding*” (Haviland and Haviland, 1982:336; emphasis added)

This strategy of “circumspect hiding”—of subtly concealing oneself in plain view—leads to a broadly “anti-cooperative” style of interaction in which each side works to gain the upper hand in terms of information gathering, while simultaneously attempting to deny similar access to the other (Haviland and Haviland, 1982:335). Despite the seeming “opacity” produced by such interactions, they can also be understood as reflecting complex intersubjective assessments of self-presentation, performance, subtext, and motivated self-occlusion.

As I have argued in a previous publication (Groark, 2008), in this cultural matrix—and across many interpersonal contexts—a form of intersubjective attenuation is *necessary and desired* in order to preserve a felt sense of attunement; too accurate an understanding of the inner states of another may actually be experienced as an impingement, violation, or threat. Although many modes of highland Maya polite interaction may be conspicuously self-occlusive, at an affective and performative level, they are more accurately understood as highly intersubjectively attuned, positively inflected, and desired forms of normative interaction. In such interactions, the goal is not the mutual exchange of relevant information (as argued by Grice, 1975), but rather, a highly conventionalized (and therefore “safe”) interaction in which the subjective factor is systematically attenuated and/or backgrounded in interaction. This self-guarded defensiveness serves as a continual and studied enactment of personal occlusion, which in turn reinforces local models of opacity. Simultaneously, however, on affective and enactive levels these same self-occlusive modes of interaction are felt to be empathically attuned, resonating with local norms of privacy and conversational style, and reflecting a mutual awareness of the limits and boundaries of self-disclosure.

3.2. Self-occlusive versus self-disclosive speech

As this discussion suggests, all genres of speech involve, as one of their distinctive elements, varying appropriate levels of self-disclosure and self-occlusion. Both modes of self-presentation are present among Tzotzil Maya, but they are distributed unequally across public and private contexts. Public speech tends toward the formulaic and polite, largely stripped of meaningful subjective or idiosyncratic content (see Haviland, 2010). In contrast, the most self-disclosive forms of speech tend to be quite private (for instance, confessional discourse in shamanic curing, supplicatory prayer, dream telling, and various household-level rituals of reconciliation) (see Groark, 2005:378–441). A more fully-dimensional approach to the question of intersubjectivity among the highland Maya might not privilege abstract linguistic or psychological ideologies (for instance, the claim that local theories of interaction lead to a “disinterest in the inner states of others”), but rather, would focus on the distribution of self-occlusive versus self-disclosive forms of interaction—both verbal and non-verbal—across various cultural domains and modes of communication, and the relative balance and moral valence of these polar modes of interaction (see Duranti, 2008).

In conventionalized conversation, the surface clues that might otherwise reflect inner states—what I am referring to as the “subjective factor”—are systematically stripped from the interaction. The interlocutor's ability to infer certain of the

speaker's inner states is thereby frustrated, encouraging imaginative speculations about what the speaker is really feeling and thinking behind the facade of interaction. This systematic attenuation of one of the prime channels for gaining intersubjective knowledge of others gives rise to moral-interpretive questions centering on degree of concordance between inner and outer, public and private, and the perhaps more to the point, between the *suppressed* and *expressed* dimensions of subjective life. Seen in this light, the highland Maya ethnotheory of “opaque minds” might productively be recast as one of *purposefully-occluded selves*. This reflects a cultural logic emphasizing a single emotionally compelling truth: self-disclosure is dangerous and will likely be used against you, so limiting the flow of self-relevant information to others is prudent (Haviland and Haviland, 1983). Tzotzil adherence to polite modes of verbal comportment can thus be interpreted, in part, as a motivated self-protective conventionality designed to control the flow of personal information through the performance of conversational opacity. As Hallowell (1941) pointed out long ago, in social contexts marked by high levels of interpersonal suspicion and envy (both of which are rife in traditionalist highland Maya communities), the best offense is often provided through a good defense.

Normative “polite” communication—despite its socially valorized dimensions—thus serves to establish a field of cultural blind spots toward the subjective factor, which nonetheless remains relevant and very much on people's minds. Indeed, one might argue that such a conspicuous emphasis on the cultivation of “circumspect hiding” enacted in speech creates a deficit of more fully disclosive forms of interaction. This gives rise not to a disinterest in others' heart and minds, but to an expanded intersubjective horizon in which registers of experience which elsewhere are construed as non-interpersonal are here inflected according to a broadly relational cultural logic. Through careful attention to this “extended intersubjective field”—which subsumes a number of embodied forms of social gnosis—Tzotzil Maya gain an increased ability to triangulate in on the occluded motives and emotional states of others, thereby restoring some sense of transparency to social life.

4. Exploring the “extended intersubjective field” of the Tzotzil Maya

Contemporary Tzotzil Maya ethnotheories of experience posit an array of intersubjective agents and phenomenal registers through which human beings are understood to interact with one another, thereby revealing something of their desires, intentions, and feelings. These ontological presuppositions give rise to a significantly expanded intersubjective milieu characterized by a culturally distinct form of “multimodal intersubjectivity” which includes domains of experience that, on the surface, would not appear to be intersubjective spaces.

Through an exploration of the contours of intersubjectivity within two limited domains—one somatically-mediated, the other soul-based—I begin to trace the outlines of an extended intersubjective field in which the hearts and minds of others become knowable not through a disembodied mentalist form of extrospection, but through deeply embodied experiences of the impact of others' intentional and affective states on the self.⁶ As we will see, each of these interstitial zones of intersubjectivity is clearly intelligible as a *social space* when understood in light of local cultural logics of the self and experience that serve to structure it *qua* relational domain.

4.1. Social anxiety, shame experience, and symptomatology

In contrast to much of everyday life, in which people display some reluctance to make claims about the inner states of others, certain self-vigilant modes of experience linked to public exposure are saturated with attributions of intentionality and mind reading. In Tzotzil, this class of experience is glossed under the broad term *k'exlal* (“shame, embarrassment, or humiliation”), and is often linked to the onset of an acute gastrointestinal illness known as *apun* (“shame sickness”). In this context people show little reluctance to make quite explicit claims about the intentions and thoughts of others—most of which are assumed to be of a hostile and persecutory nature (see Stasch, 2008 for similar observation among the Korowai). These “shame experiences”—distinguished by their immediacy, immanence, and quasi-telepathic quality—seem to exist as counterpoises (or perhaps more accurately, as reaction formations) to more opaque forms of interaction.

During interviews, I was struck by the acute anxiety reported when people described socializing with, or being seen by, large gatherings of people, particularly those who “recognize” you (*-ojtikin*) and for whom gossip about you would be meaningful. In these public exposure situations, people—particularly women—tend to become highly self-conscious. They assume that they are being secretly watched (*k'elbil*), mocked (*-labanvan*), and criticized or ridiculed (*-na'levan*), despite the manifest absence of any critical speech or interaction. Reflecting these preoccupations, there is even a special verb for this presumed critical observation by others (*-laban/-labaj*; to mock, watch hostilely, look at critically, criticize, or ridicule [usually in secret]), and a person presumed to be engaging in this activity is described as a *jlabtavanej* (“a mocker, a critical person”). The always-present fear is that these people will begin to gossip, spreading “hidden words” (*mukul k'op*) and increasing one's sense of public shame.

The following quotations give some idea of the psychological texture of *k'exlal* experiences, which blend acute social monitoring with heightened somatic vigilance:

I feel *k'exlal* when I am secretly ridiculed (*-labanat*). [The people] look at me, [and I think that] they see me as not very smart. Well, I feel humiliated because of that, when we encounter a large gathering of people (*ep tzobol jente*).” [MSS; Text 1]

⁶ For a discussion of the working of these intersubjective processes across other domains—for instance, in shamanic diagnosis and curing—see Groark, 2008.

I came to market and encountered *k'exlal*, I encountered shame sickness (*apun*). There were a lot of people there. And when I passed [by them], they stared (*-k'elvan*) at me, they criticized me secretly (*-na'levan*). “Ah, they are criticizing my body” I said to myself. Thus I became ashamed. . . we become ashamed after we are ridiculed (*-laban*), after they embarrass us (*-k'exliltas*). . . [SSL; Text 2]

I felt *k'exlal* yesterday. I was embarrassed/ashamed because a man came here into my house [while my husband was away]. I felt fevered (*-k'ak'ub*), I was trembling (*-t'el*) from the shame, I was shivering (*-nik*) from it. [He was thinking] “What a delicious woman here. . .” But he didn't say anything [out loud], he just thought it in his head, he just said it in his heart. Indeed, he was ridiculing the surface of my body (*-na'le -ba -bek'tal*). I became ashamed because I could feel that his blood was very strong (*toj tzotz sch'ich'el*). Because of this my blood just fled (*-jativ*) from the shame, and thus I became sick. . . [ASG; Text 3]

As this last excerpt suggests, along with pronounced awareness of the critical gazes and thoughts of others comes an acute awareness of one's own body.

When there are a lot of people, like at a gathering, [you feel that] they perceive whatever your transgressions may be (*ta xa'i amule*), and your face blushes. Someone comes talking here, one more there, another there, [saying]: “That man has done something wrong. . . He doesn't know the proper way to comport himself. . .” Oh, they talk so much! The illness comes right away, but it's [because of] their fevered eyes. [XLK; Text 4]

Sometimes we encounter *k'exlal* when we are walking about or going somewhere. We don't know if there is someone who looks badly upon us (*chopol -il*) and criticizes us (*-laban*). . . Thus it arrives (*-k'ot*) in our bodies, thus we encounter *k'exlal*, we encounter shame sickness (*apun*). . . [ASG; Text 5]

When I become ashamed/embarrassed, I myself feel that someone is mocking me (*oy buch'u chislabanun*), we could say. . . When someone says something, it seems I feel it in my body (*ta jbek'tal xka'i ya'el un*), and at the same time I alone criticize myself (*ta jna'le jba jtuk*) we could say. . . [SSL; Text 6a]

When I asked about the last time she experienced *k'exlal*, the informant quoted in the last example replied:

I have *k'exlal* now, we could say. I became embarrassed/ashamed there where a man spoke to me, or where those damn women were secretly staring at me (*-k'elvan*). So I was ashamed there. One becomes ashamed when the women stare at you. I bowed my head (*-mayet sat*), I hid my face (*-nak' sat*) [behind my shawl], I hid my eyes (*-muk sat*), I turned my back on them (*-joyij*). I came straight [home] and I don't look back. Thus I became ashamed. If we are looked at a lot, we receive *k'exlal* (*-ich' k'exlal*). . . [SSL; Text 6b]

For the purposes of this paper, what I would like to emphasize is not the “mind-reading” taking place in these experiences, but rather, the way in which the mental states of others are understood as causal factors in one's own bodily experience. This aetiological-interpretive stance potentiates a relatively straightforward reading of physical symptoms as indices of the content of other's hearts and minds. Most immediately, the “fevered gaze” (*sk'ak'al sat*) of onlookers is registered in the body by the flushing response, which is taken as manifest proof that strong critical feelings are being directed toward you. Others report a ringing in their ears, or a lack of coordination that causes them to trip and fall. When discussing the origins of these self-critical feelings, people often say that the “surface” of their body is being criticized, ridiculed, or mocked (*ta sna'le sba jbek'tal*, ‘He criticizes/mocks/ridicules the surface of my body’).

It is interesting to note that the name for shame, *k'exlal*, appears to be a nominalized form of the intransitive verbal root *-k'ex* (“to be changed”), suggesting the immediate and profound physical and affective transformations that are produced by the felt experience of social hyper-self-consciousness. These self-conscious doubts and worries are projected onto any onlooker, of whom it is said “he shamed me” (*ta sk'exlaltasun*). Interestingly, the language used to describe the “arrival” of shame/embarrassment in the body is marked with directional adverbs indicating motion toward the subject, entering the body from the outside: *ta xoch tal k'exlal*, “*k'exlal* comes entering [toward me],” thereby highlighting its extrasomatic and invasive nature.⁷ This corporeal “mindfulness” of the thoughts and opinions of others is marshaled as proof that others are watching (*-k'elvan*) and criticizing (*-labanvan*) from the sidelines. The body of the observed person implicitly registers these critical opinions and hostile gazes, giving rise to the various signs and symptoms mentioned in these interview excerpts.

4.1.1. Body-mindedness and intersomaticity

Tzotzil Maya shame experience (*k'exlal*) provide us with a clear example of one form of somatically-mediated intersubjectivity, in which the monitoring and interpretation of the body, its symptoms, and changing states play a key role in coming to understand the ways social life and interpersonal relations are impacting on the self. In this context, other minds can be known—or better yet, felt—but only obliquely, through attention to their impact on the body. This

⁷ In Chamula Tzotzil ethnotheories of emotion, many negative affective states are viewed as externally-originating, intrusive, quasi-substances (often described as vapor, smoke, or various fluid pollutants in the blood) that can be transmitted and exchanged between bodies (see Groark, 2005:257–287).

“attentive body” is felt to give clues about what is happening in the interpersonal realm. Indeed, these somatic sensations serve an almost deictic function—they point out into the social surround, indicating the presence of hidden rancor, ill will, and critical appraisals (all of which remain “buried” beneath an otherwise benign social surface).

Inasmuch as this focus on body-based “symptoms” provides insight into the state of the self and the social milieu, we might describe this as a “somatic attentiveness” to events in the social world—a sort of *embodied intersubjectivity* involving distinctive “culturally constructed somatic modes of attention” (Csordas, 1993, 2002). Somatic modes of attention represent culturally elaborated attentional processes through which we attend both *to* and *with* our body and its sensations:

To *attend to* a bodily sensation is not to attend to the body as an isolated object, but to attend to the body’s situation in the world. The sensation engages some thing in the world because the body is “always already in the world.” Attending to a bodily sensation can thus become a mode of attending to the intersubjective milieu that give rise to that sensation. Thus one is *paying attention with* one’s body. . . attending to one’s body can tell us something about the world and others who surround us [Csordas, 2002:244; emphasis mine]

As this case study illustrates, the Tzotzil Maya experience of *k'exlal* in contexts of acute public exposure clearly captures both modes of processing experience. It represents an intense “attention to” the body and its sensations, and the connections between these somatic states and social experience. But these same sensations also represent an “attending with” the body, which registers and provides information about the social world. Inasmuch as this represents a more or less directly embodied registration of the critical feelings of others, we might, refer to this as a form of “intersomaticity” or “intercorporeality” (Csordas, 2008)—an intersubjective mode of connection through which the individual body becomes organically and viscerally linked to the thought, desires, motives, and emotions of others.

4.2. Dreaming and “counterpart relations” in the society of souls

In this section I shift to a focus on soul-mediated modes of interpersonal engagement, with a focus on dream experience. Although much of the classic anthropological literature on dreaming has focused on the indexicality of dreams—the ways in which various dream motifs or images indicate current or upcoming events (for Mayan data, see Bruce, 1975; Laughlin, 1976), less commonly emphasized is the fact that, in many traditional societies, the dreamspace forms an alternate interpersonal sphere characterized by forms of social interaction and experience that are qualitatively different from waking life, yet intimately related to it (Lohmann, 2003; Mageo, 2003). Among the Tzotzil Maya, human sociality is explicitly understood to consist of both face-to-face relations (relations between physical selves) as well as relations between various self-extensions or soul-based “counterparts.” The dreamspace serves as an interpersonal realm in which the normally occluded motives and feelings of others (both human and extra-human) can be perceived and experienced through the medium of soul-based interactions.

The Chamula Tzotzil, like most “traditionalist” highland Maya, understand the human being to be a “compound self” composed of a physical body animated by (and connected to) various souls, some internal and others external.⁸ Central among these is the body-based “essential soul” (*ch'ulel*) an immortal and transpersonal entity that only temporarily occupies and animates a given human body. At death, this soul travels to the underworld where it recycles—aging in reverse, then taking rebirth in a new human body (typically of the opposite sex, and in a neighboring municipality). Even within the span of a single human life, this soul is only provisionally connected to the physical body in which it resides. It transits in and out of the body on a regular basis, most notably during sleep, when its extracorporeal adventures are “seen” (*-k'elbil*) in the form of dreams. Once in the dreamspace, the soul mediates relationships with other “essential” agents, interacting with the souls of other human beings as well as supernatural entities both benign and malevolent. As such, it serves as a point of articulation for interpersonal relations unfolding on both the level of souls and the human realm.

Just as we recognize that other-than-human entities and agents (such as spirits, saints, ancestors, and deities) may be the objects of intersubjective relations (see Course and Hanks, this issue), so too must we nuance our understanding of the other-than-corporeal dimensions of self (such as component selves, subtle selves, or souls) that may be understood as relational subjects. Dream experience allows for a translocation or shift in the focus of attention and intersubjective engagement from the relatively opaque phenomenal realm of physical bodies to the essential realm of souls. In doing so, it brings the extended intersubjective field of soul-based “counterpart relations” (Hanks, 2005) into focus as part of the total field in which relationality is embedded.

4.2.1. Dream aggression and the experience of negative sociality

In Chamula, the experience of “seeing bad dreams” (*-il chopol vayichil*) is generally understood to be both symptom and cause of a class of illness referred to as “dream scolding” (*utilanel ta vayichil*) or “dream torment” (*ilbajinel ta vayichil*), a com-

⁸ In this community, the essential soul is generally held to consist at least two aspects (and sometimes more): a senior aspect (*bankilal ch'ulel*) which resides in one of the three levels of heaven, a junior aspect (*itz'inal ch'ulel*) which resides inside the human body (usually in the heart or center of the person), as well as one or more animal co-essences. For classic ethnographic treatments of highland Maya soul beliefs, see Vogt (1965, 1970), Gossen (1975, 1999) and Rachun and Priscilla (1989) on the Tzotzil, and Pitarch Ramón (1996, 2003) and Pitt-Rivers (1970) on the Tzeltal.

plex illness category in which the latent conflicts and hostilities of waking life—both real and imagined—are experienced in the realm of souls.⁹ Such dreams are usually explained as forms of covert social aggression (usually motivated by suppressed envy, anger, and ill-will) in which the “strong souls” of witches, neighbors, or acquaintances try to injure, imprison, or kill one or more of the dreamer’s soul extensions through direct assaults or magical procedures designed to bring about misfortune. Despite the inability to directly “know” (-*na*) or “see” (-*il*) what goes on in the heads and hearts of others, symptoms of latent social discord and rancorous feelings can manifest directly in the body as physical or psychosocial symptoms linked to soul-based causes.

Within Tzotzil Maya oneirocritic practice, dreams are often used to gain insights into “negative sociality”—the otherwise hidden and suppressed emotional economy of everyday life, marked by aggression, envy, competition, and hostility. The order of bodies is assumed to be the realm of cause, intentionality, and affront (as manifested in conflicts, arguments, and problems small and large), while the realm of souls is the domain of response and punishment. In other words, the vicissitudes of face-to-face interpersonal relations are presumed to translate into a series of soul-based interactions, often structured according to a logic of retribution, punishment, and revenge.¹⁰ The “counterpart self” of the dream narrative is thus understood to exist within a numinous landscape characterized by often unconstrained soul-relations, manifestations of hidden power, and the expression of socially suppressed affective and intentional states in both self and other.

Below, I present two brief ethnographic vignettes illustrating the interweaving of dreams and waking life, and highlighting the usefulness of dreams in discerning underlying (and often purposefully hidden) relational processes as well as the self-directed feelings of others in one’s social orbit.

Vignette 1: “They Punish Us Through Our Souls”—In the following conversational extract, I was talking with a Tzotzil Maya friend who had recently debuted as a curer. Here, he describes the experience of praying for a patient in the church in Chamula center, in full view of other well-established curers:

I arrived at the church [in Chamula Center], I went to speak to Our Father [in Heaven], to cure there. There were already a lot of curers there—the more senior/established curers—they recognize me there now, inside the church...[Text 7a]

I was interested to learn how he handled the common problem of envy and hostility directed toward newly debuted curers by senior practitioners, so I asked, “Did the other curers become angry (-*ilin*) that you were working as a curer?” He replied:

They didn’t become angry, no. But it’s just that I don’t know how it is there in the gathering place [of the souls] (*tzoblebal*). For it is through our souls [*ta jch’uleltik*, ‘through our souls’ or ‘in our dreams’] that they see us... that they punish/scold us.¹¹ [When] I go inside the church [to pray or cure], sometimes I see a bad dream [afterward], sometimes not. [Perhaps] there is someone there who feels upset (*chopol ta xa’i*) that a new curer is coming around... [Text 7b]

In this excerpt we can see how the invocation of souls and the dreamspace—the “other scene” of social interaction—subtly shifts the discussion away from the overt aspects of the face-to-face interaction, highlighting the importance of soul-based “counterpart relations” (Hanks, 2005) in providing some degree of insight into the otherwise hidden realm of others’ subjective states, feelings, and intentions as they bear on the self.

Vignette 2: “A Place to Resolve Our Conflict”—The second example was recorded in Chamula in 2003. I was returning with a friend from an All Souls’ Day ceremony in an outlying hamlet. On our way home, we were intercepted on the trail and summoned to the house of an old man who announced that he was the rightful owner of a plot of land that my friend had inherited from his father. The old man claimed that he had been sold the land some twenty years prior and had moved the stone boundary marker to reflect his ownership. My friend rejected this claim, maintaining that the land had never been sold. Local authorities were called to adjudicate, and over the next three days, a series of hearings were held. Near the end of the mediation—on the eve of the decision—my friend had a dream:

There is a disagreement over some land that was left unresolved, we could say. As for me, I dreamt last night. [I dreamt] there was a thief—an old man. [This was] the [old man] who had stolen the boundary marker for the land, it appeared. This is the way his face appeared [to me] in the dream.

The old man said to me in my dream, “The conflict we’re involved in has stalled out, it hasn’t progressed. Let’s see whether you will win the dispute or not...”

⁹ Both terms derive from transitive verb stems (-*il* and -*ut* respectively) whose core meaning is “to scold, rebuke, criticize, reproach, reprimand” (Laughlin, 1975:59, 75). These terms also provide derived forms referring to expressed anger, such as -*ilin* “to reprove or scold angrily” and -*utin* “to scold or criticize” (ibid).

¹⁰ This tendency to displace real hostility and social conflict to the level of dream conflict appears to be widespread, reflecting a cultural affordance allowing dream experience to be used as a fantasied (but experientially and epistemologically real) arena for the expression of strongly disavowed emotions, as well as a space in which the imagined aggressive motives of others can be directly experienced (see Hallowell, 1941 for strikingly similar dynamics among the Ojibwa [Salteaux] Indians).

¹¹ This comment refers to one of several celestial gathering places (*tzoblebaletik*) where the animal souls of humans live and eat together collectively in elaborate hierarchies. These gathering places provide an important imaginal locus for various types of soul-based aggression known as *ilbajinel ta ch’ulel* (‘soul-based chiding/upbraiding/punishment’) or *utilanel ta vayichil* (‘molestation/torment in dreams’), both of which result in physical illness.

“Great,” I replied.

“I’ll mount you! I’ll ride you!” he said.

“Ah fine then, you will mount me. . .” I said.

“Of course!” he replied.

“Okay, fine. Let’s wrestle!” I said.

So I grabbed his arm! [He acts out grabbing the man’s tunic and arm, and throwing him to the ground]. As for me, I jumped on top of his back! I mounted him! I grabbed his arms and pinned him down! Just like a professional wrestler does on television! Yes, Indeed! I grabbed him, mounting him right away!

In my dream the old man said to me, “Well then, you’ve won. As for me, I wasn’t able to, for I am already old. . .”

“Indeed. . .” I said to him. “Since you wanted to [wrestle] we gave it a try. . . As for me, I mounted you, and you were unable [to do anything]. . .” I said to him in my dream. I saw in my dream that the old man was just really angry! “Tomorrow—Tuesday—the dispute will be settled. . .!” he said.

[When I woke up] I told my wife, “Well, I saw the old man in my dream—the thief. He spoke to me in my dream, he wrestled with me. . . ‘Here we will see which one of us will prevail’ he said [to me]. . . Well tomorrow all the mediators will arrive. But I’ve won. I dreamt of it, I saw that it was so. . .” For I see everything in my dreams—problems, conflicts—truly I dream of it all. [Text 8a]

I asked about the source of the dream, and my friend responded:

[It came] from that man, for his soul is really wicked (*mas pukuj sch’ulel*). The old thief, he was really upset (*chopol ta xa’i*), he was angry (*solel ta x’ilin*)! The old man’s soul (*-ch’ulel*) walks up above [with the other souls in Heaven], but the old man—his body—remains in his house, in his bed, asleep. . . [Text 8b]

The implication of this statement is that the man’s essential soul had initiated this oneiric challenge in the dreamspace while he remained asleep in his bed. In this example, the transposed footing between waking conflict and its expression (and resolution) in dreams is particularly clear, highlighting the usefulness of soul-based “counterpart relations” as a mediating element in the processing of complex and often obscure interpersonal relations. Of particular interest is the causal efficacy of dream experience suggested by this example—not only did the claimant’s soul issue a very real oneiric challenge to the dreamer, his defeat was taken as concrete proof that my friend’s soul was stronger and that he would thus prevail over the old man in the upcoming hearing.¹²

As this discussion has illustrated, among the Tzotzil Maya waking social interactions and the experiences of the soul represent two halves of a single dispositional field.¹³ Dream experience (and subsequent dream telling) serves to index both the topos of souls and that of physical selves, in effect grafting soul-based experience onto actual interpersonal experiences, thereby potentiating a form of binocular vision in which both here-and-now social relations as well as transposed soul-relations are maintained in narrative focus. Each phenomenal “horizon” represents partial access to broader field of human relationality construed in its fullest sense as the interaction of complex compound selves which span two phenomenal domains: the physical and the essential. Indeed, the dream is located within the broader dispositional field as a sort of separate reality: an arena of interacting self-essences, closely linked to the waking world. It is, quite literally, a dream-space: “a psychic area in which the dream-process is actualized into experiential reality” (Khan, 1972:99). Through correct interpretation of the relationship between these two realms of experience, dreamers are able to weave them back together into a single “experiential braid” (Fau-re, 1996). This blending of two distinct phenomenal registers adds greater dimensionality to social experience, allowing dreamers to triangulate in on the unseen (and often intentionally hidden) flows of feeling and intention that forms the fabric of human relationality.

4.2.2. The moral economy of dream-based social claims

Despite a commitment to the ontological reality of dream experience, the veridical status of dreams and the social implications of “the extended relational field” they reflect is not always so clear-cut. While there is a marked personal tendency to attribute negative dream experience to the malign intentions of others—an interpretation that is often reinforced during shamanic diagnoses—there is a limit to the extensibility of these beliefs, and the degree to which they are socially acceptable as moral claims against others. The actual interpersonal and social utility of dreams is crucially determined by considerations of speaker, audience, and context.

For instance, despite their importance at the household level, dreams are not admissible in court as evidence of witchcraft (see Collier, 1973). This official incredulity stems from the lack of confirmability of dreams, and their potential for fabrication for ulterior social ends. However, when curers dream of impending epidemics (sent by witches in other communities) they will often report these dreams to civil officials so that apotropaic rituals can be arranged in order to shield the community from sickness.

¹² Despite the theme of conflict, this was interpreted as a positive dream. Indeed, the next day he won the land dispute—but after vanquishing his enemy’s soul in the dreamspace, his success on the earth’s surface came as no surprise.

¹³ Although dream experience is viewed as continuous with mundane daily experience, I do not mean to imply that Tzotzil Maya fail to distinguish the two, or that they confuse dream experience and waking experience—they do neither. Rather, through this discussion of soul-mediated intersubjective processes, I emphasize the ways in which—as a form of social knowing—dreaming facilitates a special form of distant, displaced, and often fantasy-inflected intersubjectivity.

Skepticism is also evident in the domain of “dream election”, in which a person is shown certain kinds of dreams signaling that they have been chosen by the deities to assume a specialized vocation (such as a curer, midwife, or religious authority); a person who advertises publicly that he or she has experienced these special dreams is immediately suspected to be a pretender. Somewhat ironically, the dreams of established curers can be used to refute or subvert competing claims of dream election by novice curers, thereby contesting emerging political and social power (see Robbins, 2003).

For example, a well-known Chamula curer denounced as a charlatan a politically powerful younger man from the town center who had recently debuted as a curer. When I asked the older man how he knew that the upstart was not “chosen” by God to cure, he said:

That man, he's not a curer, he hasn't been named [by God]. You know what? I saw it in my dreams: Our Father [in Heaven] showed me a big book—like a register [with the names of all his chosen curers], and [José's] name was not recorded there. That bastard, he's not a curer—he's just a braggart, a deceiver (*jun jlo'lovanej*). ... [MSG Text 9]

In cases such as these—in which the truth of the dream claim is in question—it is not the ontological reality of dream experience or the dreamspace that is at issue; rather, it is the veracity of a *particular* dream claim for a *given* individual that is being questioned.

Returning to our theme of intersubjectivity and social opacity, it should be evident that even this occasional skepticism toward dream-based social claims reflects a complex assessment of the speaker's intentionality, accompanied by the formulation of alternate claims about underlying motivations, desires, wishes, and fantasies. In short, even skepticism toward the veracity of others' dream experience is the exception that proves the rule—such incredulity requires a robust and sophisticated set of intersubjective appraisals mobilized in a social context in which the manifest surface of interaction and self-presentation is carefully attended to with mixed credulity and suspicion.

5. Closing coda: approaching intersubjectivity “in the round”

In “From Anxiety to Method,” George Devereux's classic 1967 book on anthropological hermeneutics and epistemology, we are urged to approach culture “in the round,” focusing both on hypercognized values and ideologies, as well as on their shadow sides—the less conspicuous forms that serve as conjugates or counterpoises for more central and explicitly attested beliefs or practices. In typically provocative style Devereux writes:

[A cultural exoticist bias] is sometimes combined with... an oversimplified conception of personality structure which exaggerates man's plasticity. As a result, quite extreme psychological characteristics—or else beliefs requiring singularly unambivalent and extreme psychological attitudes—are presented to us as being ‘the whole story.’ *No one stops to ask how so unbalanced a psychological position can be maintained indefinitely; no effort is made to discover the compensatory attitudes and beliefs which make the—often superficial—‘official’ view, or social fiction, possible.* (Devereux, 1967:209; emphasis mine)

Devereux's admonition that we focus on the “shadows” cast by dominant social ideologies has served as a sort of charter during the writing of this paper. Indeed, in highlighting less obvious—but no less important—dimensions of intersubjectivity in a lifeworld organized around a broad denial of the accessibility of others' inner states, I have attempted to restore some conceptual balance to our handling of what is, in fact, a complex relational-intersubjective phenomenon marked by multimodality, ambivalence, contradiction, and intra-ideological tension.

Accordingly, in this paper I have outlined Tzotzil Maya approaches to intersubjectivity understood in terms of both their hypercognized cultural and interactional logics, as well as their implicit ontological, psychological, and affective underpinnings. Throughout, I have emphasized cultural domains that exist in tension with—and serve to work around—the broader explicit orientation toward social opacity (with its attested inability to know others' inner states) in an attempt to challenge the monotonic and psychologically untenable solipsism such a view would seem to imply. Rather than adopt an either-or approach to the question of intersubjectivity, I have employed a bifocal mode of analysis in which interpersonally attuned cultural forms are assumed to exist in tension with, and against a background of, social opacity—one which is experienced with some ambivalence, and which gives rise to countermeasures designed to circumvent the studied circumspection of everyday life.

We have seen how valued norms of comportment, which emphasize a conventionalized “polite” relationality (supported by associated ideologies of opacity, agnosia, self-protection, and empathic respect for interpersonal boundaries), can best be understood as but one pole of intersubjectivity, existing alongside—and counterbalanced by—differently-inflected modes of social knowing which place greater weight on directly embodied registers of experience. For example, the hyper-vigilant self-consciousness of shame experience reveals a domain in which, far from experiencing other minds as opaque, the person literally “feels” the impingement of others' negative thoughts and feelings upon their body. Similarly, dream experience is understood in a deeply relational mode as a form of extrasomatic interpersonal experience (involving quasi-autonomous self-components) whose experience reveals the otherwise suppressed feelings—usually negative—that underpin everyday face-to-face interactions. In both instances, I explore the ways people harness these distinct modes of experience in order to challenge and circumvent the explicitly enacted opacity of everyday life, arguing that these epistemological stances provide psychological counterbalances and correctives to what would otherwise be a lopsided and ideologically-homogenized view of human sociality and interaction.

As argued in the opening pages of this paper, in order to understand the operation of intersubjectivity in its cultural context, we must attend to the implicit conceptual topos of dispositions, meanings, and cultural logics that provide the basic coordinate system organizing the relational domain.¹⁴ This underlying “dispositional” field (Boothby, 2001)—a matrix of perceptions, dispositions, epistemological commitments, ontological assumptions, and interpretive registers—plays a crucial role in structuring various experiential domains as social spaces, characterized by *distinct intersubjective processes* (regardless of the “objective reality” of these processes).¹⁵ When understood in these terms, the intersubjective field becomes yet another dimension of the “culturally-constituted behavioural environment” (Hallowell, 1954), a realm of cultural objectifications that—although sometimes purely hypothetico-imaginary in nature—readily function as real constituents of perception, thought, feeling, experience, and action (see also Groark, 2009). By exploring the varied domains and interpretive practices through which social gnosis is actually cultivated and achieved within any given lifeworld, we can begin to appreciate the complex ways in which the intersubjective field may extend and expand in culturally specific—and sometimes quite unexpected—directions.

Appendix A. Tzotzil Maya texts

Presented below are transcriptions of the Tzotzil Maya (Chamula dialect) interview excerpts and vignettes presented in the body of the article. Unless otherwise noted, all texts derive from interviews and conversations conducted in Tzotzil, recorded, transcribed, and translated by the author. All native language data are presented in the standardized phonetic orthography currently in use by the Government of the State of Chiapas and *Sna Jtz'ibajom* (“The House of the Writer,” a group of Tzeltal and Tzotzil writers and playwrights promoting indigenous literacy and the establishment of a published indigenous literature). All letters are pronounced as in Spanish, with the following exceptions: ‘= glottal stop/occluded glottalized consonants (p', t', tz', ch', k', and b); and x = silent alveopalatal fricative, “sh”).

[Text 1]—*Ja' no'ox chak k'u cha'al buy chijlabanat chkaltik. K'u k'elantik chijyile, mu'yuk lek bijotik chijyile. Va'un ja' te chik'exav 'o un, k'al ep bu tzobol jente ta jtatik.*

[Text 2]—*Li'ay ta ch'ivit', la jta tal k'exlal, la jta tal apun. Oy ep tzobol jente le'e. Y k'alal li'ech, jeche ta xk'elvan, jeche ta sna'levan. Eh, ta sna'le ta sba li jbek'tale, xichi laj kal ta ko'nton. Ja' ta jtatik 'o k'exlal. Chik'exav 'o jtatik 'o, k'un to ta slabanotik, k'un to ta xk'exliltasotik.*

[Text 3]—*Lik'exav volje. Lik'exav yu'un jun vinik li ay ta jnae. Ta xik'ak'ub. Jeche, chit'el yu'un ti k'exlale, chinik yu'un. “Ke smulan li antz li'e” xi. . . Pere mu xk'opoj, ta snop ta sjol no'ox, ta xyal ta yon'ton no'ox. Jeche sna'le sba jbek'tal. Chik'exav yu'un toj tzotz sch'ich'el la jka'i yu'un xa xjativ lok'el jch'ich'el ta k'exlale. Ja' chijipaj 'o yu'un li k'exlale.*

[Text 4]—*K'alal oy ep jente, komo ta jun jtzoblebal, ta xa'i k'usi amule. Entonces ta xk'ak'ub la asat. Y li'e xk'opoj tal jun li'e y oy li jun le'e oy li yan le'e, “oy smul li jun vinik” xi ta pat li'e. Jun vinik li'e oy smul, le'e oy smul. Mu sna'be smelol, xi. Ep ta xk'opoje! Ora li k'exlale ta xtal ta 'anil. Pere ja' sk'ak'al satik un.*

[Text 5]—*Oy bu jtatik bu xixanav oy bu xijbat, mu jna'tik mi oy bu xislabanotik jun jente k'usi chopol chijyile. Ja' jech ta xk'ot ta jbek'taltik un, ja' jech ta jtatik ti k'exlale, jtatik li apune.*

[Text 6a]—*K'alal chik'exave xka'i jba xkaltik buch'u chislabanun, chislabanun jun jchi'il chkaltik. . . K'alal k'usi ta xyalike, vo'on xa ta jbek'tal xka'i ya'el un, pere mismo jech tey ta jna'le jba jtuk xkaltik 'ne.*

[Text 6b]—*Oyun li k'exlal chkaltike, bu chisk'opon vinik o xa chk'elvanik li mu antz, ja' xa tey lik'exav 'o. Tey xa xk'exav oy chk'elvanik ti antzetik. Va'untorse, tey xa jech chik'exav. Jeche xmayet jsat, ta jnak' xa jsat, ta jmuk xa li jsat, ta xijoyij. Tuk' xa chital 'o. . . mu xa bu jk'el sutel jpat xkaltik un. Ja' ta xk'exav 'o, mi jk'elotjike, ta xyich' 'o k'exlal. . .*

[Text 7a]—*Ta xik'ot ta ch'ulna, chik'ot jk'opon jtotik tey, o chik'ot ilolaj un tey. Oy xa jayib j'iloletik tey, ti buch'un mas bankile, xijoyitkinik un xa tey ta yut ch'ulna. . .*

¹⁴ From a communicative perspective, this culturally constructed “dispositional field” provides the ground across and within which deixis, implicature, and other implicit referential and relational systems play themselves out, in terms of which they must be contextualized (Groark, 2009; see also Silverstein, 2004; Hanks, 2005; Haviland, 2010).

¹⁵ Some readers might object to my characterization of these culturally-specific logics of experience as intersubjective phenomena. After all, the “intersubjective” engagements in both social exposure anxiety (*k'exlal*) and dream experience ostensibly reflect the working of what are, in fact, intrapsychic processes. Indeed, from a psychodynamic perspective, one might understand these cultural forms as substitutes for actual deficits in more fully dimensional intersubjective relations—that is, as attempts to overcome the studied politeness, distance, and dissimulation of everyday life. Deprived of the experience of more authentic forms of interpersonal mutuality, the subject resorts to a solipsistic position of fantasied intersubjectivity, a process shot through with projective dynamics dominated by internal object relating rather than “real-world” interpersonal relations. Seen through this lens, these oblique forms of fantasied intersubjectivity reveal not the other, but the shadow cast by the others' inscrutability upon the self.

[Text 7b]—*Mu'yuk x'ilinik, ch'abal. Pe' no mas ke ja' mu jna' ti k'u selanil ti buy ti jun tzoblebal pwes, porke ja' me ta jch'uleltik mi ti ta xilik 'ne [. . .unintelligible. . .] ta xilbajinvan 'ne. . . Bweno, ta xik'ot ta yut ch'ulna, a veses oy chopol jvayech, a veces ke mu'yuk. Bweno oy ono'ox buch'un chopol ta xa'i un....*

[Text 8a]—*Oy sk'oplal ta 'osile, kechel to komem ti k'op xkaltike. Pere vo'one, livaychinaj ta ak'obaltik. A ti oy jun j-elek', mol xa xkaltike, buch'un ta xelk'an ti tz'ak osil ya'luk. Laj vaychinta, ja' jech elanil sat ya'luk ta jvayech. Bweno. Li staoj yav k'u cha'al ti k'op ta jpastike, xiyaluke.... Ta jkajlebinot, xi. Ta jpasbot montar, xi. . . A bweno xkut. Chakajlebinun xkut.... Tana, xi.... Bweno, lek, kajlebinol! xkut. Va'untonse, vo'one jtzakbe li sk'obe! [Acts out grabbing the man's tunic and arm, then throwing him to the ground] Vo'onun kajalun lik'ot ta spat. Vo'onun kajalun! Jtzakojbe li sk'ob chik kajalun, k'u cha'al jun luchador ta spasiq tal ta jun televisiyon! Eso! Jechuk vo'on, tz'akoj, kajalun ta jmoj. Ah bweno, vo'ot lapas kanal, vo'one mu'yuk xu ku'un porke vo'one molun xa, xi laj yalbun ta jvayech un! Timi yu'un jech ak'ane, ta jpastik a li preva. Vo'on une, kajalun pero vo'ote mu'yuk ta xu avu'un, xkut laj kalbe ta jvayech. Bweno lek oy, xi. Hijole! Solel ta x'ilin laj kil ta jvayech ti mol une! Ok'om, k'u cha'al martes, ora ta smeltzaj k'op, xi. . . Laj kalbe xa kajnile, li'e, laj kil ta jvayech li mol ansyano, li j-elek'e, laj yalbun ta jvayech un, laj skajlebinun xkut. Li'e ta jk'el li buch'un xu ku'untik, xi. . . Bweno, ok'om, ta xtal skotol li jmeltzanvanejetik une. Ora ja' laj jpas kanal. . . Laj jvaychinta, laj kil jech. Ja' yu'un ta xkil skotol ta jvayech—li k'ope, li letoe—persa ta jvaychinta. . .*

[Text 8b]—*Ta jun vinik, pere mas pukuj sch'ulel. Li mol j-elek'e, toj chopol ta xa'i, ta x'ilin! Sch'ulel li ansyano chanav ta ak'ol, pere li mole, li sbek'tale, chk'om ta sna, ta stem, ta xvay. . .*

[Text 9]—*Ese hombre no es j'ilol ("curer"), no fue nombrado [por Dios]. Sabes que? Lo he visto en mis sueños: Jtotik ("Our Father in Heaven") me mostraba un gran libro, como un registro, y su nombre no fue apuntado. Ese cábron no es curandero—es mentiroso, jun jlo'lovanej. . . [*Unrecorded mixed Spanish-Tzotzil conversation captured in fieldnotes]*

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