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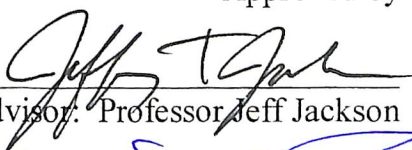
ASSIMILATION VERSUS AUTONOMY: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION IN MEXICO

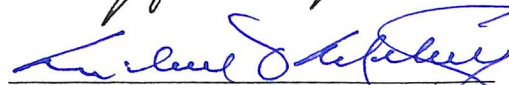
by
Gordon Lee Gent

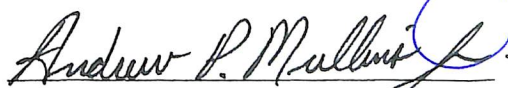
A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College
and Croft Institute for International Studies.

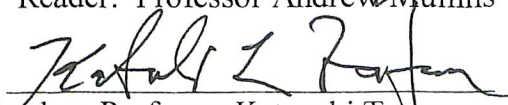
Oxford
May 2003

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To my family who supported me
and
To my teachers who guided me

Acknowledgements

Being a full-time student and writing a thesis was no easy task. It took long hours of dedication on my part as well as the instruction and advice of professors here on campus. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Jeff Jackson for his central role in helping me develop and write this thesis as my advisor. Without him picking my brain and offering suggestions on different schools of thought, I may have never completed my work. His critiques helped strengthen my arguments and fulfill this great task.

Dr. Mark Healey provided great advice and expertise in my study of southern Mexico and indigenous people. He was always willing to offer suggestions and listen to the research I had gathered. Dr. Edward Sisson and Dr. Douglas Sullivan-Gonzalez offered advice and starting points for developing the idea behind this thesis.

The Croft Institute for International Studies and McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College also served to aid my work by creating a structure and timeline to follow. Dr. Samonds, Dr. Metcalf, and Dr. Terasawa all had interest in my work and my completion of it.

I would also like to thank all my Spanish teachers throughout the years, because without them this thesis would not be possible. A majority of my research was done in Spanish and without my skill in that language I would not have been able to explore this theme. I would also like to thank the children from the Puente de Esperanza in Queretaro, Mexico for serving as an inspiration for this work.

Abstract

Gordon Lee Gent: Assimilation versus Autonomy: Indigenous Education in Mexico
(Under the direction of Dr. Jeff Jackson)

Indigenous education became prevalent in the ideology of the Mexican government after the Revolution on 1911. The leading school of thought about how to integrate Mexico's indigenous population was led by anthropologists. Through *indigenismo*, the government adopted policies that would explore indigenous communities and promote them into the national identity. Bilingual education became one of the most important instruments of the movement under the direction of the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista*.

I collected my data from a wealth of resources. One source of information was the historical texts written on Mexican history. Anthropological texts also aided in the discussion of indigenous people and the people studying them in English and Spanish. I used governmental texts and reports that were written in Spanish. Sociological texts on the subject of bilingual education were integral in my research, in Spanish and English. One of the most important resources was the internet and the information the governmental agencies advertise, which was in Spanish as well.

The Mexican government led the charge of *indigenismo* which led to the development of the INI. The motive of the organization was to assimilate Mexico's indigenous population. However, there was much discussion on how this should take place. One of the underlying debates was the idea of assimilation versus autonomy. While there were disagreements among those who wanted assimilation on how to go

about it, there was also a movement for autonomy of indigenous communities.

Nevertheless, contact was made and there were successes and failures.

Through the development of bilingual education, it seemed as though assimilation would be an eventual reality. However, the quality of schools varied as the program saw its ups and downs. Eventually better funding was made available, and the number of bilingual indigenous people increased. It seemed as though the program was achieving the goals of the INI. However, bilingual education also lent itself to bicultural education that reaffirms and stresses the importance the indigenous identity. The program is succeeding in its quest to castilianize the indigenous population, but opens the indigenous population to reaffirm their identity.

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List of Abbreviations

ANPIBAC	Alianza Nacional de Profesionales Indígenas Bilingües, A.C. (National Alliance of Indigenous Bilingual Professionals)
COCEI	Coalición Obrero Campesino Estudiantil del Istmo (Coalition of Workers, Peasants, and Students of the Isthmus)
DGAI	Dirección General de Asuntos Indígenas (General Directorate of Indigenous Affairs)
DGEI	Dirección General de Educación Indígena (General Directorate of Indigenous Education)
EZLN	Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation)
III	Instituto Interamericano Indigenista (Interamerican Indigenist Institute)
INI	Instituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenist Institute)
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party)
SEP	Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Education)

Introduction

On January 1, 1994, the entire world awakened to find that there was a struggle for an indigenous identity in Mexico. The neo-Zapatista movement (EZLN) placed this issue in the forefront of the international community and the urban Mexican society. The melting pot of indigenous and Spanish culture in Mexico seemingly had cracks in it. However, the struggle between the maintenance of an indigenous identity and the government's program of assimilation had been battling since the Revolution.

The neo-Zapatista movement has been the most visible political struggle of indigenous people in Mexico, but this movement has been greatly influenced by the world outside of the indigenous communities. Leftist mestizo intellectuals educated at the country's top universities were the spark of this seemingly sudden uprising in the state of Chiapas. These socialist leaders came to the region to address what they saw as the destruction of the indigenous communities. However, they were not the first individuals to enter these communities. The Mexican government entered indigenous communities as early as the 1950s.

The focus of the EZLN movement was the recognition of the problems faced by the indigenous population and the realization of the ideals of the Revolution. However, they also had to combat new ideologies forged from the new nationalism of the 1920s and 1930s. The major mechanism of this new nationalism and the

persistence of indigenous problems stemmed from the existence of a political system run by one party, the PRI. Although the EZLN pushed for political reform, recognition of indigenous autonomy also became a focus for the indigenous army.

The EZLN seemed to appear overnight. However, there has been a history of indigenous political activity in Mexico. The COCEI was a precursor to this movement of indigenous recognition. This was the political mobilization of the isthmus Zapotec in the southern state of Oaxaca. This indigenous group is the third largest in the nation and the largest in Oaxaca. This movement, however, came from within the Zapotec community and has continued to define itself as such. Its leaders come from an intellectual population created within its community, although educated in Mexico City. Autonomy and Zapotec identity are major focuses of the group founded under socialist ideology.

In 1981, the COCEI shocked the entire nation of Mexico by winning the mayoral race in Juchitan, a major city on the Tehuantepec Isthmus. This was the first time since the creation of the PRI that a leftist party had won an election in the entire nation. Promotion of Zapotec art, literature, and language were all focal points of the communal development of the People's Government it created. But there was also a focus on political reform and recognition of the Zapotec population. The Mexican army officially ended the People's Government in 1983 by forcibly removing the COCEI from power, but the party continues to promote its interests in the region. They have stayed active and focus on preserving and advancing the Zapotec identity.

These two examples show an indigenous population in Mexico that feel marginalized and deprived of cultural rights and autonomy. These movements would probably shock the early intellectuals who created the *indigenismo* movement of the post-revolutionary period. Through the creation and policies of the INI, indigenous communities should have been fully incorporated into the Mexican national identity. This great project of assimilation would be a defining part of the promotion of the nation out of the shadow of the third world and into a modern and prosperous Mexico. By incorporating indigenous communities into the mestizo model of the new nation, modernization should create a homogenized society benefiting from the success of the unified nation.

The INI has clearly not fully succeeded in the actualization of this assimilation policy. The indigenous population continues to be marginalized politically, economically, and socially. The promotion of indigenous communities to become more “Mexican” has ignored most aspects of a current indigenous identity. The aspects of indigenous culture used by the INI are seen as tools of assimilation. This does not mean that indigenous communities are not being influenced by the Mexican government and society. Obviously the INI has become a part of indigenous communities through many of its programs and policies, but this does not necessarily equate to an assimilated community.

Methodology and Research

I explored the creation of the nationalist identity of Mexico and its affects on indigenous communities. The ideology of *indigenismo* put the assimilation of the indigenous population into the mestizaje as the major focus of post-revolutionary Mexico. By conducting a thorough study of this movement and the individuals involved in it, I have been able to understand the basis on which the government will become involved in indigenous communities. Historical texts from both Mexican and American scholars allowed me to understand the main issues involved in *indigenismo* and the key players involved. I was also able to explore the opponents of the movement and understand their perspective of indigenous and Mexican identities.

Once this historical basis was created on the ideology of the government, I was able to research the actual government agency, the INI. Its role was the actualization of assimilation. Mexican sources were best in conducting this research. I was able to read literature put out by the INI itself through their official webpage. I also used publications of the Mexican government and Mexican anthropologists to find the critics of the INI. This institution was the government's mechanism for *indigenismo* and put the ideology in action.

The main focus of my thesis was indigenous education. This was a policy of the INI that would help in achieving a national identity. Historical and sociological studies were used to tackle this large task. Sociologists' studies showed the theoretical implications of bilingual education from both Mexican and American observers. Historical texts, from both Mexican and American scholars as well, provided a basis for showing how the policy was implemented. These studies showed

both sides of the debate on the program. The Mexican government was also a valuable source of information to gain the official perspective of the policy.

Assimilation versus Autonomy

My thesis is a historical analysis of assimilation of ethnic (indigenous) minorities into a national identity, and in particular the creation and practice of a governmental institution in carrying out this goal. There has been a struggle between assimilation and autonomy in the government and academic arenas in Mexico since the inception of Mexican nationalism following the Revolution. Throughout this process the definition of indigenous identity came principally from outside indigenous communities.

Indigenismo creates the historical context of the ideology proposing the assimilation of the indigenous population. This movement creates a need for a mestizo Mexican identity to be adopted by all members of Mexican society, namely the indigenous. Founders of this movement were willing to explore the cultural reality of the many indigenous groups, but only to aid the assimilation process. By having an integrated indigenous population, the homogenized Mexican nation would become modern and successful.

The leaders of the movement were mainly mestizo anthropologists who had a great interest in indigenous communities, like Gamio and Caso. By studying indigenous groups, these intellectuals would be able to understand how best to promote the new ideal of nationalism. These outsiders worked to define what a Mexican should be and conveying the mestizaje message to the indigenous

population. However, debate did arise as Indianists, such as Beltran, forced the issue of indigenous autonomy. The destruction of indigenous culture through assimilation should not be allowed. He argued that indigenous cultures were the true Mexican culture and should be promoted instead of destroyed.

Social, economic, and political development of indigenous communities was seen as the task of the mestizo intellectual and government. Help from the outside was the only way indigenistas believed indigenous communities could advance. Therefore the mission of *indigenismo* would fall on their shoulders, but indigenous communities would benefit greatly from it. Once a fully assimilated indigenous population was created, all citizens could reap the benefits of modern democracy.

The institutional response to *indigenismo* was the foundation of the INI in 1948. This governmental organization became the mechanism to initiate the large scale assimilation project. The anthropologists and intellectuals of the *indigenismo* movement became the directors of this agency and oversaw its actions. One of the main goals of the INI was the investigation of indigenous communities. Improvement projects would aid the modernization process and bring indigenous communities into closer contact with the national identity.

Discussion over the benefits of INI involvement in indigenous communities sparked debate in 1971. This evaluation of the INI's actions and results came under scrutiny. The INI was perceived by some intellectuals to be the agent of further marginalization of the indigenous population. Growth and improvement of INI programs were seen as the destruction of indigenous culture and identity. The aims of the INI were called into question for not truly realizing the goals of the Revolution.

The call for widespread reform in dealing with indigenous communities shaped newer strategies. Promotion of the indigenous communities became a focus, but assimilationist policy was still retained as the overall goal of the INI. The institution developed its programs to facilitate an easier passage into the national identity, although more attention was placed on indigenous culture.

The case study of the indigenista program in action I researched was the indigenous education system. Education was one of the most important tools of the INI for the promotion of assimilation. Schools would be able to educate the indigenous population while promoting the national identity. Bilingual education became the accepted model for INI schools. This program would serve the policy of castilianization, the creation of a Spanish speaking population. Bilingual education would, however, come under scrutiny by some promoters of assimilation.

Bilingual education was based on the premise that teaching in the native language of students in early education would lead to an easier transition to Spanish – the dominant language of Mexico. Opponents of this program felt that use of indigenous languages detracted from the program of assimilation and that a Spanish speaking indigenous population was what should be strived for, not a bilingual population. The actual practice of bilingual education shows that many teachers did not use indigenous languages to a high extent in the classrooms. However, when applied correctly studies show that Spanish proficiency and literacy is higher than students in non-bilingual programs. Also statistics show that the number of bilingual speakers has increased in indigenous communities.

Bilingual education opened the door for bicultural education. Proponents of indigenous autonomy use bilingual bicultural education to promote and preserve indigenous identities. This program allows indigenous students to explore their indigenous culture and history. Assimilationists feel that this defeats the purpose of the goal of integration into the national identity. For this group, bilingual education on its own best serves assimilation.

Today bilingual education is taught to over one million students in over 70,000 locations. Bicultural bilingual education has become the basis for many of these institutions as the INI moves toward promoting indigenous development. Linguistic assimilation is growing as more indigenous youth are being taught in Spanish, but the existence of bilingual bicultural education assures that their native culture will not be completely destroyed.

The debate over indigenous assimilation, mainly through bilingual education, has been waged in the academic world. Proponents and opponents of assimilation have almost exclusively come from mestizo backgrounds. Criticism from within the indigenous communities themselves has not been made on a large scale. The indigenous perspective is and has been widely ignored throughout the castilianization program of the INI.

Indigenismo

Mexico is a multicultural state. It is composed of many people of distinct ethnic identities living within one sovereign nation. In post-revolutionary Mexico, there was a strong movement to create a strong national identity in the name of progress. In doing so, there was recognition of European (predominately Spanish) and Indian (a racial category encompassing many distinct) identities that helped in forming modern Mexico. This was a direct response to the previous regime's rapid industrialization that relied almost exclusively on European ideals. It is important to note the revolutionary ties that led to the rapid expansion of indigenismo. In a sense, there was a recognition of the participation and causal influences of the indigenous people throughout the Revolution. However, this certainly did not legitimize indigenous claims for autonomy, as will be discussed later.

At the heart of every government that has ruled over Mexico, there has always been a reluctance to fully recognize indigenous culture. From Conquest to colonial times and beyond, the "Indian question" has always loomed large (Knight 1990). There have been many different thoughts on how to approach what has been considered a problem with the indigenous peoples. This ultimately stems from a clash of cultures and the subjugation of one (indigenous) to a conquering force (Spanish) that leads to complicated roles. In order to establish a sense of order within the society, a caste system was created so that exact roles would be understood and

enforced by all. However, this system was repeatedly attacked by the subjugated groups through passive and active revolts against the localized empowered elite. The caste system was ultimately attacked by the ideals of republican democracy that Mexico strived for through the presidency of Benito Juarez and the Revolution of 1910. Although the social structure contrasted greatly with the new doctrine of liberalism, the caste system was deeply ingrained in the Mexican psyche. It is interesting to note that both the social structure and political doctrine that opposed it were Western creations. These conflicting ideas were developed and promulgated by people who were outside of the Mexican indigenous communities they would affect.

De-Indianization was the major goal of movements to create a homogenous society in post-revolutionary Mexico. And, consequently, there was most likely blending of cultures in the daily lives of all inhabitants of certain regions. However, it cannot be overlooked that Spanish culture came to dominate indigenous cultures in that these people became dependent on certain aspects of the Spanish way of life if they lived in close proximity to cities. Assimilation had definitely occurred to some extent over time with the presence of Spanish/Mexicans in indigenous areas. Many indigenous elites quickly adopted the clothing, language, and housing of Europeans. And of course many indigenous workers had to follow the norms of their Spanish/Mexican landowners in order to acquire work and subsistence for their families. Even this system of plantation work was a European construct very different from the communal or individual subsistence farming used by indigenous people for centuries.

The concept of being “Indian” is quite complex when explored. Some believe that even the creation of an “Indian” or “Indian community” is a social construction created by whites to categorize a new group of peoples that were not previously known to them. Montagu states that “the attribution of Indian identity began, of course, with the Conquest: ‘it was the European that created the Indian.’”¹ And thus the conquering elite class assigned all the trappings that came along with being “Indian” such as poor, marginalized, and landless. However, Caso explores the flip side of the issue. Only the indigenous people themselves can define themselves as “Indian”(Bonfil Batalla 1996). Therefore self-definition is a great issue in exploring the concepts of who is indigenous in Mexico, even if outside groups try to assign membership.

Indigenismo: A Theory of Integration

It is made apparent that the basic theory behind indigenismo is the integration of all Mexicans into a collective national identity through the writings of early indigenistas. The ideas behind this new approach at the “Indian question” indeed were responses to former attempts. In the past, the assimilation of indigenous people was felt to be a challenge that must be faced with force. Attacking usurpers among the indigenous ranks and mobilization of a spiritual conquest had previously been seen as the best methods to civilize what many described as savages. Instead, new ideas about the accepting of indigenous people in order to assimilate them seemed more in line with the new democracy created in 1917.

¹ Cited in Knight, 72.

Anthropologists like Alfonso Caso led the new school of thought. They believed that indigenous people could be integrated into the new Mexican society, but only with the assistance of the more educated white upper and middle classes. Indeed, participants in the creation of indigenismo were mostly white or mestizo. They were deeply ingrained in Western society through their language, education, and living style, but showed interest in indigenous people. In fact, the indigenismo movement's main goal was the defense of cultures.

Manuel Gamio is considered the father of indigenismo and he was well versed in the growing school of thought, cultural relativism (Bonfil Batalla 1996). This meant that he felt that the indigenous culture was an essential part of the essence of Mexico. However, this did not mean that he did not agree with the overall goal of creating an integrated Mexican nation.

Gamio, as many other post-revolutionary scholars, felt that integration was a difficult process and direct attacks on indigenous culture would prove unproductive. As an anthropologist, he knew that Mexico had many distinct indigenous groups that differed greatly according to their history and environment. He even recognized that there are differences among different groups. He believed that anthropologists must explore their how indigenous identities are constructed culturally. Once a group is fully understood, a plan to integrate them will be easy to accomplish and members of the indigenous group itself would be able to play key roles.

Idealization of the Mestizaje

The new idealized Mexican of the post-revolutionary period had to be able to distance itself from European elitism that the previous regime abounded in. However, Mexicans did not truly want to associate themselves with the connotations of being an “Indian,” which was to say a poor peasant (Bonfil Batalla 1996). Instead many scholars embraced the mestizo heritage that was borne of both European and indigenous glory. Jose Vasconcelos was the most adamant leader of this movement in the 1920’s. His idea of the “cosmic race” was deeply rooted in a belief the mixed race was superior and “would prevail not only in Mexico but in the world at large” (Knight 1990). The mestizo received the best traits of both groups and therefore was the very ideal of what a Mexican should be.

In turn, the greater goal of some indigenistas was to create a completely homogenous Mexico based on the mestizaje. This would include the literal blending of indigenous people into society at large, which was the aim of indigenismo and post-revolutionary ideals. It also fit nicely that many of the leaders of the Revolution and many scholars were in fact mestizo. However, there were some consequences to this idealization of the mestizaje. Being mestizo soon became nearly synonymous with being Mexican, and those who did not fit into this category, mainly the indigenous population, were not truly participants of Mexican nationalism and society. And this leads back to the need for integration of these people for the advancement of the nation.

Cuahtemoc and Embracing an Indigenous Past

A major part of the indigenismo movement involved the rediscovery and glorification of the indigenous past. If the new superior Mexican reality was a combination of two cultures, they both had to be magnificent. However, a great hypocrisy arises when there is glorification of an indigenous past and deliberate distance from the indigenous present. Images of the Mexican campesino as a barefoot peasant were not congruent with the ideas of the new Mexico. Therefore, the modern indigenous groups were left out of this view of a modern society.

The post-revolutionary government decided to legitimize the roots of the Mexican culture with new symbols of nationalism. This nationalistic spirit was echoed through the glorification of the Aztecs (or Mexica) and Maya who were the most advanced indigenous groups in Mesoamerica. Murals and museums were dedicated to this great indigenous legacy and sprung all over the capital and country (Bonfil Batalla 1996). The last cacique of the Mexica, Cuahtemoc, became a symbol of the Mexican resistance against oppression. He led the last revolt against the Spanish conquistadors and has become an integral part in the legend of Mexico. A statue was created to immortalize his great resilience in the face of disaster. Homage is paid to his name, as many famous and important Mexicans bear his name, including Cuahtemoc Cardenas, former presidential candidate and founder of the Democratic Revolutionary Party, and Cuahtemoc Blanco, the most famous Mexican soccer player. The National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City pays special homage to the Mexica heritage. The largest exhibit is dedicated to this group, while

artifacts of other groups are put in places where visitors are less like to venture in the museum.

This simplified glorification of only the largest groups of the indigenous past shows that modern indigenous groups are being ignored or perhaps not being recognized as being indigenous. Batalla tries to explore that glorification of only the indigenous past “exalts that dead world as the seed of origin that gave rise to today’s Mexico” (1996). This view could lead to the assumption that anthropologists leading the movement must have known what they were doing, but continued with this path in order to create a connection to the cult of the mestizaje that was popular. This result may have been inadvertent, but the goals of *indigenismo* are decidedly assimilationist. However, they were trying to say that indigenous culture is dead and a thing of the past, although modern indigenous people must be integrated into a new more inclusive society.

Indianists (a Counterview of Indigenismo)

Some scholars believed that integration of indigenous people into a national Mexican identity based upon the mestizaje was wrong. Aguirre Beltran led a movement of Indianism that glorified the indigenous people to a different extent. Indianists felt that indigenous people were superior to Europeans and their culture should not be destroyed by outside influences through assimilation or other means (Knight 1990). This group was seen as having the most radical perspective on indigenous people at the time. They felt that indigenous people could attain a high level of society through autonomous development. Beltran even suggested ridding

Mexico of all Spanish influence in order to reclaim an indigenous tradition. The Indianists believed that indigenous people could achieve autonomy and create their own nations based on their culture.

Detractors of this movement such as Alfonso Caso claimed that the Indianists believed “that we should abandon Spanish and speak Nahuatl” (Knight 1990). This extremism was not logical and seemed to be too ideological in the glorification of the indigenous race. Although this group did not gain overall acceptance in the ranks of indigenismo, it showed a different perspective that the “Indian problem” was really a western creation and that indigenous culture was still important to Mexico.

Concluding Thoughts on Indigenismo

The basic principles of early indigenismo were based in a racial framework that was proposing a new “modern” Mexico. New ideas were created in order to address a large indigenous population that was not fully assimilated into Spanish/Mexican society in the nation. In the process of nation building, recognition of an “Indian” race and ethnicity was vital in creating a plan of integration through assimilation. However, it is important to understand the social constraints placed on these people and the stereotypical views that accompanied them.

Most indigenistas believed that integration was possible only through an intermediary group of whites. Gamio even called the group “a poor and suffering race.”² The intervention of a trained group of Mexicans could ultimately provide the necessary information to achieve their goal. It is important to remember that their methods were in direct contrast to previous attempts to subdue and assimilate

² Cited in Knight, 81.

indigenous groups through fear or religion. Instead the goal was to study and fully understand each indigenous group and formulate an appropriate plan of action. The indigenismo movement would spawn many governmental organizations to carry out these goals and many of its most influential contributors (anthropologists) would run these organizations.

The INI

In 1940 the first Interamerican Indigenous Congress was held in the Mexican state of Michoacán in Pátzcuaro. Anthropologists and intellectuals from across the Americas came to discuss indigenous concerns. The promotion of indigenous people was the focus of this meeting and soon led to the creation of the Interamerican Indigenous Institute. Under the guidelines set by the participating members, each representative country would create a national indigenous institute to achieve their goals according to their country's needs.

On December 4, 1948, the Mexican government formally created the *Instituto Nacional Indígena*, the INI. Mexico took a major step toward fully implementing indigenismo on a national scale. The creation of the INI was the realization of a national entity provided for by the Interamerican Indigenous Institute (III). It is important to look at the legislation itself in order to understand the role which was envisioned for this newly created self-defining governmental agency (<http://www.ini.gob.mx/ini/leyini.html>).

The second article provides the functions that the INI will serve. These include investigating the problems facing the indigenous nucleus of the country and studying the measures needed to improve them. The INI will intervene to realize the endorsed measures, coordinated and organized under the according governmental organisms. The INI will be the consulting body for official and private institutions,

and spread whatever results of their investigations, studies, and promotions that are convenient and fitting to these bodies. Improvement projects for indigenous communities will be undertaken by the INI with coordination with the *Dirección General de Asuntos Indígenas* (DGAI).

The third article covers the acquiring and administering of goods of the INI. It will receive an annual allotment from the federal government. Any revenue from their publications or works can be used. And the organization can receive public or private inheritances, legacies, and donations. The fifth article states that the director of the INI will be designated by the president. The director should have distinguished himself in the organization and will execute the accords of the council. The next article gives the specific membership of the council that will be led by the director. Several government agencies will participate, spanning the gamut from education and anthropology to public works and agriculture. The remaining articles state the specific duties and procedures of the council and director more specifically.

Early INI

By 1948, the INI was officially an existing entity that could fully undertake the goals set before it. The first director of the Interamerican Indigenous Institute, Manuel Gamio, an anthropologist and one of the leaders of *indigenismo*, relished the opportunity. The work he had done through the III now had results in his own country. The efforts of the organization soon were mobilized to fully address the “Indian problem” that had been the focus of the movement. Investigators found themselves infiltrating indigenous areas, mostly in the south where the highest

percentage of indigenous population is found. At this time, population indexes show that there were nearly two and a half million indigenous speakers in Mexico, which was around eleven percent of the population.

The first regional office of the INI was created on September 12, 1952, in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas by presidential decree. This office was designated to serve the Tzeltal and Tzotzil, which are Mayan groups. By the end of the decade there were six regional centers, four of which were in Oaxaca (<http://www.ini.gob.mx/ini/antecedentesini.html>). They continued the major goals of studying indigenous villages and providing education and health opportunities. One of the most important tasks was to promote indigenous culture. The promoters were able to speak the indigenous language and were to serve as a link to the community for the INI. They were able to translate, teach, and spread the ideas of politics of the modern nation to the indigenous villages where they were stationed.

Over the course of the next decade, four new regional centers were established and these benefited eleven groups and inaugurated their headquarters in the capital. The first job for the new regional centers was to establish a system of communication in the communities. They would then begin to promote economic activities and improvements of health and education. But as the 1960's drew to a close, questions began to arise about the real purpose of the INI and the actual benefits. It is true that many of the workers were able to enter indigenous communities and study them, but at what cost. The INI would have to reinvent itself or fold.

Evaluation of the INI

In 1956, Alfonso Caso, director of the INI, had the following to say about *indigenismo* and the role of the INI:

We do not need discussions or sentimental attitudes, what we need is for the country to realize the magnitude of the problem., and that we are placing the necessary resources in money, equipment, and men so we can resolve it; and so, maybe in a slow but scientific method enacted both correctly and generously, Mexico would incorporate those three million Mexicans into the economic, social, political, and cultural life of the nation.³

Caso rebuffs criticism over the slow results seen in the early years of the INI. The path to assimilation and achieving an integrated indigenous community must be followed for success.

However, by 1971, some intellectuals thought that enough time had been given and not enough progress had been made. Therefore, President Echeverría decided to attend the annual council of the INI to answer the question: Has *Indigenismo* failed?

The council meeting took place on September 13, 1971. Sixteen speakers gave their accounts on the progress of the INI and the motives behind *indigenismo*. Dr. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán was director of the INI at the time and gave opening remarks in which he talked about the current situation of the indigenous people in Mexico. He portrayed Mexico as a multicultural land, with indigenous peoples of distinct regions with distinct characteristics. He stressed that many projects were in progress for improving the lives of indigenous people and of the creation of three new

³ Cited in *Ha Fracasado El Indigenismo?* 137. (All Spanish to English translations in this thesis were conducted by the author).

regional centers for the next year and the numerous anthropological works created (SEP 1971).

Many of the speakers were members of various branches of the government that work with indigenous people through the INI. Statistics on agriculture and livestock showed advances or introductions of certain varieties to indigenous communities. Also noted were the investments and loans secured through efforts of the INI for indigenous farmers. Data on the amount of produce grown and sold was also given, along with the area of land dedicated to its growth. Also, public works that give jobs and wages to indigenous workers were discussed, such as 11, 000 kilometers of roads built during the previous year (SEP 1971). Other departments gave their reports emphasizing the growth over the previous years.

Some of the speakers believed that *indigenismo* and the INI had caused more damage than good, and the indigenous people were worse off than before. Fernando Benítez' argument was that the INI was a corrupt and detrimental organization that needed changing. He, along with other supporters claimed that the INI had done nothing but marginalize the campesinos and make them peons. There was a growing structure of caciqueism, allowing a few influential members of communities to control all the wealth of the region and keep profits for themselves. Also, there were concerns about the castillianization of the indigenous peoples, as they were becoming more reliant on Spanish. Some anthropologists claimed that many of the workers and promoters did not use indigenous languages, and therefore the people that they were trying to help were forced to use Spanish.

Land reform was also a big issue. Benítez echoed the words of former President Cárdenas, “Es esto la Revolución?” (SEP 1971). By this he meant, was the revolution supposed to be about the greater marginalization of indigenous people? He did not understand how the government continually works against its basic principles. Most of the nation’s indigenous were agriculture workers, and their claims to land and resources that had been denied for centuries were still ignored. Caciques, plantation owners, and their hired staffs controlled much of the land, while indigenous people worked them. There seemed to be a system of inequality created by the INI’s inability to resolve the “Indian problem”, as some critics argued it had only made the indigenous population worse off.

The INI Today

The vision of today’s INI is the promotion of self-development in indigenous communities and villages through actions by all levels of government. With this idea, there is an incorporation of the indigenous population into greater citizenship and that development is part of their lawful rights. However, it must be noted that the vision is one of *indigenismo*. Development will come with greater membership in the nation and vice versa. The INI is organized into four priority areas: operation and development, procuring justice, social organization and enablement, and cultural investigation and promotion.

The mission of the INI has six strategic points of interest to mobilize the vision that the organization has created. First there is the formulation and instrumentation of a governing policy for the promotion and defense of rights, as well

as integral development of indigenous villages. The second point calls for the promotion of organized social participation in recognition of the natural plurality of cultures in Mexico. The next mission statement focuses on the promotion of rightful assessment of indigenous cultures by the national society. The fourth point is for the definition and instrumentation of governmental policy towards indigenous villages, with their participation, to strengthen them. The fifth mission calls for the support of organized actions of indigenous villages so the indigenous people can create their own requests of public, private and social sectors. The final point proposes the recognition of indigenous rights and a drive towards a differentiated policy that corresponds to the socio-cultural diversity of Mexico (<http://www.ini.gob.mx/ini/ini.html>).

There are six official strategies of the INI as well. These are plans to specifically address the mission statements of the organization and actively apply them. It will strengthen the organization and participation of communities. There will be a promotion and encouraging of transparency and equality in the application of resources. Attendance at functions of the institution will be promoted. It will strive for decentralization of duties and diffusion of resources. Communication for the diffusion of indigenous cultures will be developed. Finally, there will be an investigation and gathering of information about the indigenous villages in Mexico (<http://www.ini.gob.mx/ini/ini.html>).

Conclusions

The early activities of the INI came into question in the great debate of 1971. Some of the opponents claimed that the INI was committing ethnocide while worsening the position of indigenous peoples. Clearly the INI was created with the ideal of improving the condition of indigenous people. At first it looked at the problem as cultural, as well as social. New members of the movement soon began to think that progress could be made without destroying indigenous culture. They challenged former methods of anthropology and the results they had produced.

Indigenismo seemed to have given false hope to the mestizo intellectuals that conceptualized it. Although some critics attacked the INI quite vehemently, they called for widespread reform of the entire nation. However, the call for improving the lives of indigenous people was quite necessary. The claim that there must be a more complete vision that will end the corruption and malpractice of the workers and individuals benefiting economically from the system was clear. Basically, there was a need for realization of their mission and revamping of their operations to make sure that indigenous rights would be promoted as well as their culture.

Table 1

**Population of Speakers of Indigenous Languages
According to Census Numbers**

Year	Number of Indigenous Speakers	
	Absolute Number	Percentage of Population
1930	2 250 943	16.0
1940	2 490 909	14.8
1950	2 447 609	11.2
1960	3 030 254	10.4
1970	3 111 415	7.8
1980	5 181 038	9.0
1990	5 282 347	7.5
1995	5 483 555	6.8
2000	6 044 547	7.0

Source: <http://www.ini.gob.mx/indica2000/nacional.html>

Table 2

Literacy of the Population Between the Ages of 6 and 14 According to Density of Indigenous Population

	Indigenous Density 2000							
	70% or more	%	30% to 69%	%	1% to 29%	%	National Total	%
Number of Locations	14 906		4 814		31 623		52 343	
Population between ages 6 and 14	1 141 074	100	565 689	100	15 145 055	100	17 851 818	100
Population between ages 6 and 14 that can read and write	812 082	72.1	461 905	81.7	14 467 438	89.6	15 741 425	88.2
Population between ages 6 and 14 that cannot read and write	328 992	28.2	103 784	18.3	1 677 617	10.4	2 110 393	11.8

Source: <http://www.ini.gob.mx/indica2000/indicial02.html>

Table 3

School Attendance of the Population Between the Ages of 6 and 14 According to Density of Indigenous Population

	Indigenous Density 2000							
	70% or more	%	30% to 69%	%	1% to 29%	%	National Total	%
Number of Locations	14 906		4 814		31 623		52 343	
Population between ages 6 and 14	1 141 074	100	565 689	100	15 145 055	100	17 851 818	100
Population between ages 6 and 14 that attend school	968 834	85.0	501 492	88.7	14 986 982	92.9	16 457 308	92.3
Population between ages 6 and 14 that do not attend school	171 184	15.0	63 672	11.3	1 144 236	7.1	1 379 092	7.7

Source: http://www.ini.gob.mx/indica2000/indi_nal05.html

Table 4

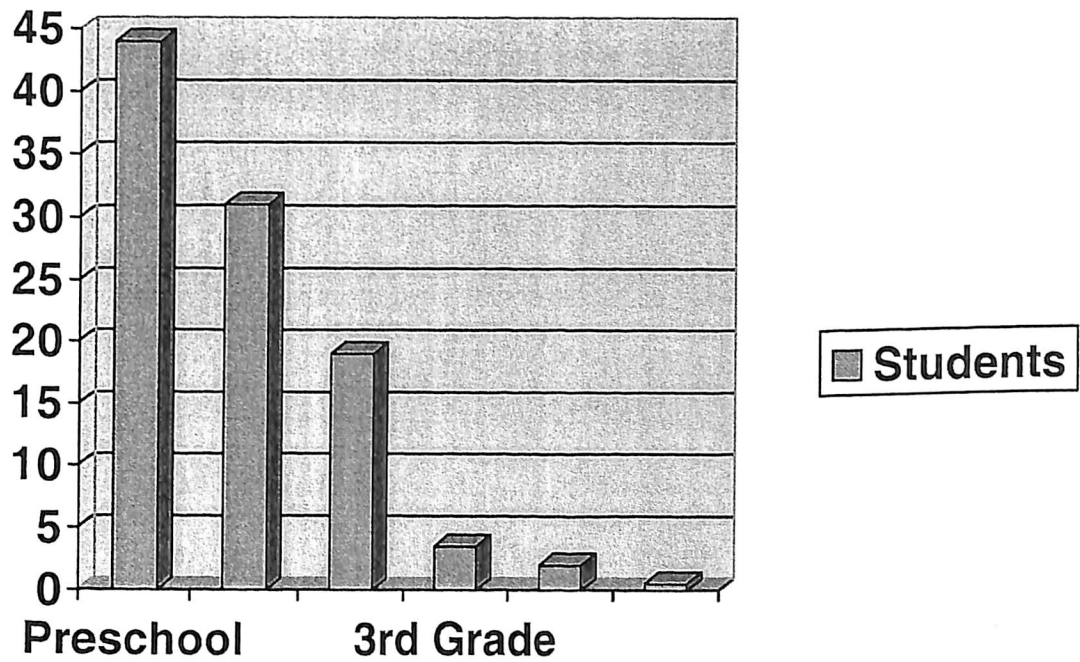
**Indigenous Language Use of the
Population Age 5 or Older
According to Density of Indigenous Population**

	Indigenous Density 2000							
	70% or more	%	30% to 69%	%	1% to 29%	%	National Total	%
Number of Locations	14 906		4 814		31 623		52 343	
Population age 5 or older that speak an indigenous language	3 416 647	100	948 756	100	1 513 799	100	5 879 202	100
Population age 5 or older - Monolingual	944 888	27.7	31 086	3.3	17 643	1.2	993 617	16.9
Population age 5 or older - Bilingual	2 471 759	72.3	917 670	96.7	1 496 156	88.8	4 885 585	83.1

Source: http://www.ini.gob.mx/indica2000/indi_nal06.html

Table 5

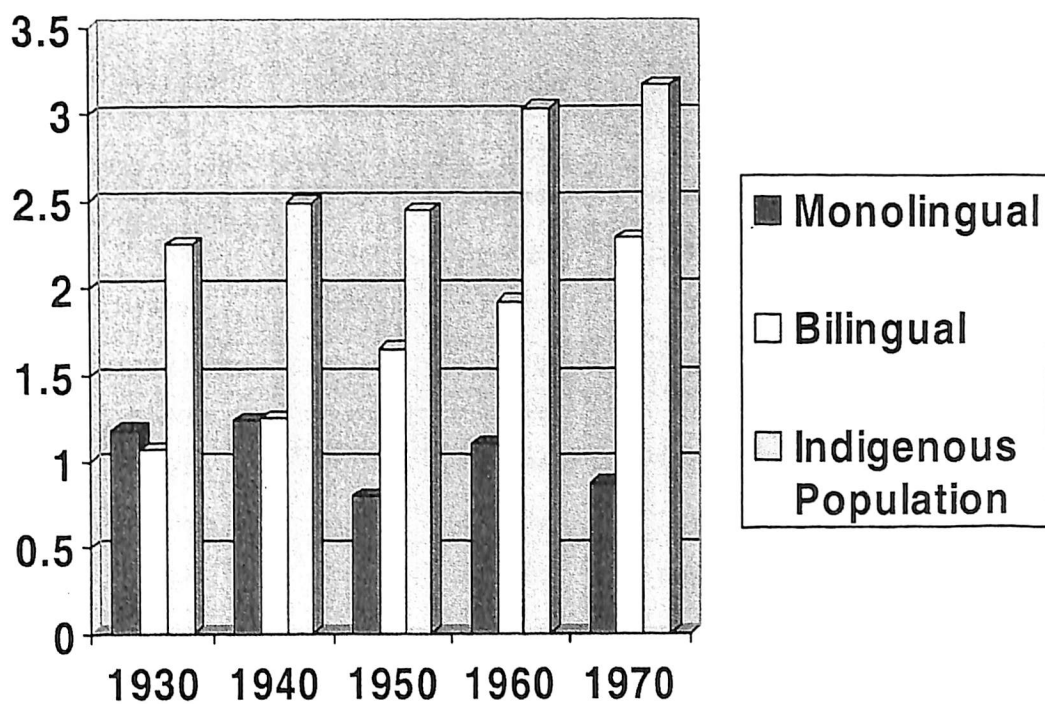
**Percentage of the Distribution
Of Students per Grade
Between 1953 and 1963
In INI Schools**



Source: Sitton, Salomon Nahmed, "The Bilingual Experience in Mexico".

Table 6

Population of Indigenous Mexicans in Millions According to Language Spoken 1930 to 1970



Source: SEP, *Ha Fracasado El Indigenismo?*

Table 7

62 Recognized Indigenous Groups of Mexico						
1999						
Aguateco	chontal-tab	huichol	lacandón	motozintleco	popoluca	tojolabal
Amuzgo	chuj	ixcateco	mame	nahua	purépecha	Totonaca
Cakchiquel	cochimí	ixil	matlatzinca	ocuilteco	quiché	Trique
Chatino	cora	jacalteco	Maya	otomí	seri	Tzeltal
chichimeca-jonaz	cucapá	kanjobal	Mayo	paipai	tarahumara	Tzotzil
Chinanteco	cuicateco	kekchí	mazahua	pame	teco	Yaqui
Chocho	guarijío	kikapú	mazateco	pápago	tepehua	Zapoteco
Chol	huasteco	kiliwa	Mixe	pima	tepehuán	Zoque
chontal-oax.	huave	kumiai	mixteco	popoloca	tlapaneco	

Source: http://168.255.254.44/wb2/sep/sep_4409_antecedentes

Figure 1

24 Mexican States with INI Departments



Source: <http://www.ini.gob.mx/ini/delegaciones.html>

Indigenous Bilingual Education

In order to make a complete and thorough study of this educational policy, I researched the mechanisms of bilingual education and the scholarly work of individuals who have studied it. I used second hand sources of respected researchers in this field to write this chapter. Rodolfo Stavenhagen is a respected Mexican sociologist who wrote “Linguistic Minorities and Language Policy in Latin America: The Case of Mexico.” Professor Salomon Nahmed Sitton gave a presentation called “The Bilingual Experience in Mexico” at a conference at the University of Southern California in 1981. Clare Mar-Molinero is a British scholar who explores bilingualism in *The Politics of Language in the Spanish-speaking World: From Colonisation to Globalisation*. I personally translated the work of Mexican cultural anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, including *Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Indígena* (Theory and Practice of Indigenous Education). Using expert scholarly sources such as these and more, I explore the bilingual education policy and its implementation and evolution in Mexico. The support and critique of this policy follows the same lines of assimilation and autonomy.

Educating the Indigenous Population

The Mexican Revolution ushered in a new era for Mexico. Many democratic reforms were stipulated under the Constitution of 1917. Education was to play an important part in creating a new modern Mexico to becoming an international power. Article three of the Mexican Constitution calls for the creation of a socialist education system that is available to all Mexican youth. Therefore, free education was to be made accessible to the most marginalized people in the most remote regions of the nation. The government would therefore allow for modernization and socioeconomic development (Gutierrez 1999). This was no easy task for the government when dealing with a largely rural indigenous population, which made up about sixteen percent of the country's populace (<http://www.ini.gob.mx/indica2000/nacional.html>).

Through the policy of *indigenismo*, the government wanted to integrate the indigenous population into the greater Mexican identity. Secretary of Education Jose Vasconcelos believed that literacy was the best way to promote the aims of *indigenismo* (Gutierrez 1999). Therefore, the school system was to promote the castilianization of indigenous communities. Once Spanish was made available and used in indigenous communities, greater integration could be made in these rural areas. An integrationist education would also allow for the indoctrination of the mestizo Mexican ideal to permeate throughout the nation. Furthermore, it would be one of the most important vehicles of the government for the realization of a homogenous Mexican identity.

Opponents of *indigenismo* realized the importance of education for indigenous people, but feared the repercussions of the castilianization of indigenous students.

Their hope was that education would help create a greater study of indigenous communities by the members of the community. If indigenous students were able to learn about their own cultural past as well as the national identity, they could participate on a national level without forgoing their cultural heritage.

The creation of a national school system would require great organization, and a discussion on how schools would be operated was the first order of business. Many models were created and experimented with: rural schools, boarding schools, and bilingual schools. A continual effort of trial and error accompanied by new educational theories created a wide spectrum of debate and action in the school systems. However, the most prevalent debate on indigenous education would be focused on the value of bilingual education.

Introduction to Bilingual Education

Bilingual education is the use of two or more languages of instruction in a school system. However, there are many issues that arise when discussing this system of education. The most prevalent issue being which language will be used and which will be taught, as well as the connection between communication and identity (Mar-Molinero 2000). These debates over the idea of bilingual education focus on which language will be seen as the most important and focused upon by the school. Will the native language of the student serve a subordinate role, and how will this affect the individual's sense of identity? Mar-Molinero concludes that the inability to use the mother tongue of the minority speaker in lieu of the national

language has many possible negative consequences: alienation, inferiority, incompetence and marginalization (2000).

Skutnabb-Kangus is an expert on bilingual education and describes the ideology of what a bilingual speaker should be:

A speaker is bilingual who is able to function in two languages, either in monolingual or bilingual communities, in accordance with the individual's communicative and cognitive competence by those communities and by the individual herself, at the same level as native speakers, and who is positively to identify with both language groups or parts of them.⁴

According to this definition, the individual should be able to participate in a larger society that encompasses two cultural identities or participate in each group individually. However, this definition also provides that the individual should be able to identify themselves in some way with both groups. This idea is absent in some forms of bilingual education policy.

There are four main categories of bilingual education: assimilation, maintenance, submersion, and immersion (Mar-Molinero 2000). Each has its own peculiarities and mantras in the quest to create a bilingual population. The assimilation model became most popular in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1951, UNESCO suggested assimilation as the preferable model for countries (Mar-Molinero 2000). This model allows for the use of minorities' languages in the education system to aid the acceptance and learning of the national language. This system would serve the INI well in its pursuit of *indigenismo*, as I will show later. The model clearly diverges from the complete bilingual speaker that Skutnabb-

⁴ Cited in Mar-Molinero, 116.

Kangus describes. The identity that was sought after was of the modern Mexican mestizo.

The Rural School as an Agent of Assimilation

The rural school was the first attempt to reach the most marginalized and isolated people in Mexico for education. Refuge zones in southern Mexico were the last strongholds of underdevelopment and caste systems created by the colonial order. The Revolution promised to remedy this situation for the indigenous people who were trapped at the bottom of the power structure in Mexico (Beltran 1973). These rural schools would be the agents of assimilation and castilianization.

Enrique Corona states he believed the rural schools should promote castilianization. However, these goals could not be achieved without useful and actual teaching of agriculture and industry accompanying Spanish (Beltran 1973). He felt that the school should involve the entire community and that the community should take interest and participate in all aspects of learning. This would allow for the promotion of economic relations and development with outside communities who were Spanish-speaking. This would facilitate the modernization and incorporation of indigenous people into the national community. Education would also teach responsibility to indigenous people and create a love of country.

Many early figures in rural education were explicitly against any form of bilingual education. In an early debate, Torres Quintero argued that if teachers would learn indigenous languages it would only serve to conserve them and this was the work of linguists and anthropologists. The real aim of education, he argued, should

be the expansion of civilization and creation of a national soul. This would only occur if schools used Spanish alone. He went on to claim that the indigenous people would not forget their native language and therefore it is not needed in schools (Beltran 1973). Bilingual education seemed to compromise the goals of *indigenismo* for him. However, he did not deny that the native language would survive.

Others shared Torres Quintero's zest for a purely Spanish-based education system in the 1920's. Rafael Ramirez was a pioneer of rural schools. He stated that Spanish should be the first thing taught to indigenous students. Being able to learn and express themselves in Spanish would allow them to understand history and science (Beltran 1973). According to Ramirez, other subjects should be taught in the language that they are written in. Therefore, if the knowledge comes to the teacher in Spanish it must be taught in Spanish to be understood. He later claimed that if Western science is taught in a native language, it is indigenizing it (Beltran 1973). This Eurocentric view appeared to be very prevalent and carried certain racist undertones.

The poor condition and level of the schools showed that they were not of the greatest importance for the government. Racist ideas permeated many other pioneers of the rural school movement. Early teachers were underpaid and did not know the native languages of the students they taught (Beltran 1973). They felt that Spanish was the only language to be used in the classroom and those who did not do so were punished. Therefore, they met resistance in the classroom and were quite unsuccessful in teaching indigenous students with little or no previous exposure to Spanish.

An Experiment in Bilingualism and Language

President Calles created the *Casa del Estudiante Indígena* in 1926 as an experiment in education. Because many of the rural schools had begun to fail in their efforts to integrate and castilianize indigenous students, a new approach was tried. Rural indigenous students from throughout Mexico were brought to the capital to attend a special boarding school (Beltran 1973). These were students who already had a basic grasp of Spanish and were functionally bilingual. This school was different because the students were encouraged to keep their native languages and use them as much as possible. Their integration was to be to urban surroundings and the cultural aspects of the nation's capital and history. This experiment was costly to the government, but continued until 1932 (Beltran 1973). The Casa was to be an agent of socialization for the campesinos. Once accustomed to city life, these rural indigenous students would be able to spread modern ideals to their own communities. Boarding schools for indigenous students also were formed at this time in basically the same mold, serving in regional centers (Guiterez 1999).

Jose Vasconcelos greatly opposed special education for indigenous students. He felt that a national curriculum must be created in order to fully achieve a homogenous Mexican community. Standards of education should be raised across the board with identical programs to assure success (Stavenhagen 1984). All schools should teach the same subjects in the same language. By doing this the "indigenous element" would be fully removed in lieu of the combined image of the mestizo (Guiterez 2000). For Vasconcelos, one Mexico meant one education system. A separate system did not make sense to him, because there was to be one single

identity. I believe that he becomes wrapped up in denying the modern indigenous reality by leaping into a single image of what a Mexican should be. A part of this is the racist stigma that indigenous speaking people were inferior, which made his mission of castilianization all the more important for him.

After the success of the Casa, Mexican academics in the 1930s promoted indigenous languages. The Tarasco Project, for instance, was headed by linguists and anthropologists who wanted to study the indigenous languages in order to determine how to best impose Spanish (Guiterez 1999). The government invited an American-based Protestant group with experience in creating a written format of indigenous languages to carry out much of the work. This group was known as the Summer Institute of Language and established by Townsend (Stavenhagen 1984). However, the group focused almost exclusively on evangelization of the region, and little work was done on research (http://www.sep.gob.mx/wb2/sep/sep_4409_antecedentes). It cannot be dismissed that the main object of this study was to explore how to make castilianization easier. Some work on the project was continued by Mexican linguists, and studies on indigenous languages would continue.

Patzcauro and Bilingualism

The Interamerican Indigenous Congress of 1940 brought the debate of indigenous education to a larger academic populace. The pedagogues, linguists, and anthropologists of the congress discussed the main issues of *indigenismo* and ways to incorporate indigenous people into society at large. Indigenous education was seen as the main instrument of achieving this goal

(http://168.255.254.44/wb2/sep/sep_4409_antecedentes). The extensive work of the previous decades showed successes and failures in rural indigenous education. The leaders of the newly created Interamerican Indigenous Institute mobilized the Mexican school of anthropology to reach the indigenous population.

New ideas about the usefulness of bilingual education and theories supporting it were formulated and shared before the congress. A psychological hypothesis supporting using vernacular languages was presented by Basquari. He claimed that the maternal language was connected to the psyche. Indigenous communities use their native languages for personal use, and therefore the indigenous people think in that language. In learning Spanish, they would simply be translating it in their mind, maintaining the native language as being the most prominent for the speaker. However, Basquari explained that Spanish was important for integration into the business world of Mexico and therefore bilingual education was necessary. Complete castilianization and monolingual education would be detrimental to the students because it would deny a basic aspect of how their minds function.⁵

Early INI and Educating the Indigenous Population

Soon after the debate between anthropologists and educators the INI became the most important player in indigenous education. However, this did not mean that the transition of bilingual education to rural areas would come easily. By 1952, the INI began to open indigenous schools in southern Mexico. Castilianization and assimilation of the indigenous people was first and foremost in the minds of the early

⁵ Basquari is discussed in Aguirre Beltran's *Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Indígena*, 157.

leaders. Bilingual education would serve as a great catalyst for this process, according to their theories.

Pilot schools which taught Spanish as the second language soon began to emerge in indigenous communities. Regular subjects of elementary school were to be in Spanish only after literacy in the native language had been acquired by the indigenous students (Stavenhagen 1984). According to the INI policy, literacy would be successful and meaningful to the children if it was carried out in their native language. However, literacy in the native tongue would only serve as a necessary stepping stone to assimilation.

Between 1953 and 1963 the INI's educational program operated in six indigenous regions in Mexico. There were 350 cultural promoters in 237 schools. These services reached 19,009 students (Sitton 1981). However, seventy-five percent of these students attended the first year of primary school or preschool. These figures showed some success, but were seemingly did not reach most of the indigenous population. During this period, average attendance combined at the schools increased from 1,062 in 1953 to 14, 216 in 1963 (SEP 1971).

In many schools, teachers were quite unprepared to teach the students. Most of these teachers could not speak an indigenous language, and used Spanish exclusively in the classroom (Sitton 1981). The indigenous communities soon rejected these teachers because of their lack of cultural awareness. These teachers came in with biases that permeated their Spanish-only lectures and lack of concern for students. Although, in their defense, few if any texts were available in indigenous languages for educators to use (Stavenhagen 1984). This does not discount the fact

that the early teachers did not understand the indigenous cultures that they were trying to assimilate. Resistance to this group led to poor education and limited success.

The Bicultural Debate

The INI began to consider some new ideas in bilingual education, including “bicultural education.” This program not only emphasizes the linguistic efforts of education, but the cultural importance of the indigenous groups. Bilingual teachers wanted the entire educational system to be bilingual and bicultural (Stavenhagen 1984). They believed that it was important to create indigenous pride in order to promote cultural education of the community. Since students were being exposed to two languages, they argued, two cultures should be explored (Beltran 1973). Bicultural education would also create a better frame of reference for the students who may not be familiar with the urban Mexican experience that makes up much of the national curriculum. Students would be able to identify with a lecture designed specifically for them. This would help children who felt alienated from the curriculum, many of whom dropped out or simply underachieved (Mar-Molinero 2000).

However, some members of the Mexican government did not share this enthusiasm over bicultural education. Gabriela Suzan Coronado works in the Mexican government, and her critique of the program accepts that a bilingual education should allow for the understanding of a lecture or writing as if it were conducted in both languages. However, for her, “the bicultural process implies taking

into account the maternal culture (indigenous philosophy, values, and objectives) of the educated in the education planning so much that the content would be a psychopedagogic method".⁶ Incorporating such a major indigenous influence on the lectures would seem to be too complex for the students to fully understand what the government wanted to teach. This argument is reminiscent of opponents of bilingual education, who opposed it on the grounds that it would not service the goals of assimilation. The opponents of bicultural education felt that the bilingual education system needed maintenance. This was a reaction against a perceived lack of quality teachers and training (Mar-Molinero 2000). Therefore, Coronado implies that the current system was not to be abandoned or amended, but simply better executed.

Expansion and Acceptance

The bilingual education program received greater exposure at the Sixth National Assembly of Education in 1963. At this assembly, the government officially approved bilingual education in intercultural regions (Sitton 1981). Some of the successes seemed to show great promise for a widespread practice of bilingual education. This approval also allowed for the federal government to allocate more resources to the INI in this venture. The INI and SEP officially merged in relation to indigenous education in 1964 (Modiano 1973). Government funding was applied to the program, and an increase in promoters and teachers was seen immediately. By 1968, the Mexican government allotted a budget of 45 million pesos for education, which was about the equivalent of \$3.6 million dollars (Sitton 1981).

⁶ Cited in Mar-Molinero, 135.

Federal support gave bilingual education much needed support to strengthen and expand the existing program. Cultural promoters and bilingual teachers became highly recruited and paid by the national government (Stavenhagen 1984). By 1973 promoters were being paid 700 pesos a month and teachers paid 1000 pesos (Modiano 1973). Training of the teachers and promoters also became one of the highest priorities. Promoters were required to have primary school certification and be at least eighteen years old and would work 200 days a year (Modiano 1973). These promoters came from the indigenous communities and their main objective was to aid the cultural education about the indigenous community. By the end of the decade, there were 11,165 promoters and teachers in 4,221 schools with 326,398 students (Sitton 1981).

INI Boarding Schools

In 1972 the INI began its boarding school program in order to reach some of the most marginalized indigenous youth. The students would usually receive grants to attend these schools which offered special programs to aid in their learning. The schools operated almost exclusively at a primary school level. The INI worked with other governmental entities in running these schools and received aid from private sources as well. Most of their students were extremely poor, and this program offered basic necessities that allowed them to attend and finish primary school.

The students stayed at the school Monday through Friday and lived in dormitories on the premises. Part of their grant allowed them three meals a day during the 200-day school year, as well as school supplies

www.manualciudadano.orgmx.manualciudadano/htmlfolder/inialbergues.html).

However, the boarding schools provided more than just food, supplies, and boarding.

The boarding schools promoted health, extracurricular activities, agrarian and artisan course, and cultural education (<http://www.ini.gob.mx/documentos/alberguesini>).

The boarding schools were run in the same manner as other INI bilingual schools. In

1979, there were 419 teachers in 918 boarding schools servicing 46,900 students.

That year, the INI set aside sixty-one million pesos for scholarships and materials

(Sitton 1981). The program has grown since then, and today there are 60,494

beneficiaries of boarding school grants coming from fifty-two indigenous

communities. There are 1,081 boarding schools in twenty-one states

(<http://www.ini.gob.mx/documentos/alberguesini/>).

The students must be between the ages of six and fourteen and come from an indigenous family in an indigenous community. They must speak an indigenous language and not to have yet completed basic primary education. The students must also be enrolled in state primary schools in order to submit a request for a grant.

Most of the students are extremely poor and the school offers food and education that would not be available in their communities. This service extends the reach of the INI's education program, but the program must be better funded. The schools do not receive sufficient resources, and the schools built in the 1970's are now in need of repair (<http://www.ini.gob.mx/documentos/alberguesini>).

The Bilingual Program in Action

In 1976, a conference on indigenous people was held in Brasilia, Brazil. At this conference, delegates discussed numerous issues regarding the role of the government in relation to the indigenous people of the Americas. Bilingual education was one of these issues. The design for a working bilingual education system was explained in a progressive manner, but still resonated with tones of *indigenismo*. The delegates recognized the right of indigenous people to be taught in their native language, especially during the few years of school. Teaching of the national language as well would insure that a relationship between the indigenous community and the greater society would be established and gradually grow. The promotion of the study of indigenous languages would serve to save and enrich indigenous culture through literary use.

A study of bilingual schools in Highland Chiapas showed that there were some inconsistencies between ideology and action. Most schools had bilingual programs, but only used them up to first grade (Modiano 1973). When bilingual education was available, it was usually limited to oral use of the native language (Mar-Molinero 2000). The schools were overcrowded and had dirt floors. These schools were, however, stocked with more equipment than other state ran schools because of INI backing. The existence of indigenous language in school meant that on paper that bilingual education was attempted by schools, but it was not being functionally enforced through literacy.

In schools that were not enforcing or implementing bilingual education, a language barrier would soon form between teachers and pupils. The confusion that

stemmed from language barriers seemed to stem from this gap in communication (Modiano 1973). This would lead to distrust of non-bilingual teachers and further the alienation process of students. Properly trained INI teachers were able to communicate with students at a closer level in classrooms. However, confusion would arise between teacher and pupil in this situation because the teachers “generally probably had little understanding of the subject matter” (Modiano 1973). Many of the INI’s teachers were not skilled at formal education. Only twenty of all INI teachers were skilled enough to head the Cultural Division of Coordinating Supervisory Centers and of the dozen trained and qualified bilingual anthropologists and pedagogues, only a couple were involved (Sitton 1981). This meant that the most able individuals were not the teachers in the schools.

The level of improvement in indigenous education was slower than urban areas. Many factors led to this fact such as drop outs, low performance, teacher absence, and budget limitations (Sitton 1981). Another factor leading to the disinterest of the students is the ideological bias of the education system. The school curriculum was created in and for the urban school system. Many of the texts (translated or not) were found to be mere replications of the same message and theme. Using indigenous languages as the medium and a subject of instruction created word associations of foreign objects not used in the classroom to recognizable objects of the indigenous rural world, meaning that the relation of Spanish words was devoid of meaning for the student (Modiano 1973; Mar-Molinero 2000). At times native languages were used to teach social studies and science, but this rarely occurred.

In Modiano's study of bilingual education in Chiapas, she explored methodology as well as the actual results. Bilingual education was compared to a phonics oriented program that allows the student to learn sounds first and then isolated words (1973). Groups of students from state-run rural schools and INI schools were given literacy tests in Spanish to see which method seemed to work best. The literacy tests administered to a selected group from each type of school were the Frostig and NYDO (1973). The results of this test showed the "bilingual approach to be significantly more effective in teaching and reading comprehension in Spanish" (1973).

Modiano explains that there has not been extensive research similar to this study, but all previous experiments have shown the same results. Bilingual students score better than students who attend state-run rural schools in literacy. Some of the advantages offered by the bilingual education system are that the students learn to decode potentially meaningful material and have received some aid in learning Spanish (1973). Modiano believes if greater literacy in Spanish is attained by bilingual education, then the INI has begun to succeed in its task of integrating indigenous people into Mexican society.

Indigenous Education Today

Today there are 8,000,000 indigenous people in Mexico according to the 2000 census, although some agencies put the number closer to 12,000,000 (http://168.255.254.44/wb2/sep/sep_4413_informacion_basica_g). The government recognizes sixty-two indigenous groups that speak around eighty languages and

dialects. The census indicates that the indigenous population under the age of fourteen is 2,651,962 and that 43.3% of these youth attend indigenous schools (http://168.255.254.44/wb2/sep/sep_4413_informacion_basica_g). The schools operate in twenty-four of the country's thirty-two states, where there is a representative indigenous presence. There are 138 major zones of supervision that are divided into 815 subdivisions.

Bilingual education is taught in over 70,000 locations and reaches over a million students. The expansion of this program shows that it is a permanent fixture in the Mexican educational system. There are 19,018 bilingual education centers in the country: 1,822 initial education centers, 8,295 preschools, and 8,901 primary education centers. The number of schools is 50,356: 2,031 initial education schools, 14,910 preschools, and 34,135 primary schools. There are 1,145,157 students in the system: 49,675 in initial education, 288,952 in preschool, and 806,530 in primary school. There are also 1,065 boarding schools and twenty-seven centers for social integration (http://168.255.254.44/wb2/sep/sep_4413_informacion_basica_g).

The current ideology and aims of bilingual education are set forth in the nine functions of indigenous education outlined by the General Directorate of Indigenous Education (DGEI), partner of the INI in running indigenous schools. The first two functions cover the proposal and actualization of bicultural bilingual education in forming the basis of education. Also there should be promotion and development of language and custom. The third and fourth functions assure evaluation of the schools to verify application of the educational aims. The fifth and sixth functions ensure that the DGEI will be involved in the developing of new ideas about indigenous education

based on evaluations. The seventh function calls for an expansion of educational material beyond the classroom in other forms of media. The final two functions allow for the opinions of local leaders to have input in any changes or innovations in indigenous education in order to develop and supervise the program (http://168.255.254.44/wb2/sep/sep_4400_funciones).

Bicultural bilingual education is meant to advance science and technology into indigenous regions while giving a basic education that allows the pupil to value and know their own culture. Oral and written proficiency is the goal of the program. Literature is now available for teachers to further their knowledge and skill in bilingual education. There are eleven main books available to teachers in bilingual methodology (http://168.255.254.44/wb2/sep/sep_4413_informacion_basica_g). The Ministry of Education (SEP) also publishes its own bilingual textbooks for students. It produces and distributes 189 free textbooks in fifty-five editions in thirty-three different indigenous languages (<http://www.conaliteg.gob.mx/lenguas.htm>).

The number of indigenous speakers in Mexico has increased numerically but has decreased percentage-wise. In addition, the number of bilingual individuals has increased percentage-wise, while the percentage of monolingual indigenous people declines (Mar-Molinero 2000). For Hidalgo, these patterns show the transition from indigenous languages to Spanish is well underway.

Indigenous View of Indigenismo and Castilianization

The viewpoint of the indigenous communities and intellectuals is a direct response to government treatment and policy. There has been resentment and

mistrust of these entities by professional groups of indigenous cultural educators such as ANPIBAC. Gutiérrez states that from the indigenous point of view, “*indigenismo* was an incompetent policy unable to offer viable alternatives for the development of Indian cultures” (1999). Supporters of this point of view believe that true cultural development comes from within the indigenous community itself. Government administration of these projects was initiated through the racist belief that indigenous people could not carry out such complicated functions in their communities without guidance.

The reaction to castilianization was direct and questioned the ideology of one language, one nation. Former leader of ANPIBAC, Franco Gabriel, responds to the supposed goals of integration through monolingualism of Spanish. He states that indigenous people do not want to assume a national culture when they have had their own unique cultures before the arrival of the Spanish. He also claims that the indigenous population is integrated into Mexican society, but on the lowest economic levels (Gutiérrez 1999). Therefore it is the economic situation that must be addressed and language should not determine marginalization.

The recognition of Mexico as a “multicultural and multilingual nation” was seen as a huge success as it was the basis of Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution, added in 1991 (Gutiérrez 1999). This self-categorization by the government allows for the expansion of indigenous culture and promotion of indigenous education. Bilingual bicultural education now promotes the awareness and reestablishment of indigenous culture. Assimilation leads only to the negation of an indigenous

collective memory. Indigenous education now serves as a method to counter the erasing of culture, while promoting the learning process.

Conclusions

The expansion of bilingual indigenous education has seen successes and setbacks. With it, a great step was taken towards recognition of the cultural diversity of Mexico. Indigenous groups had access to education and an education system that allowed for the use of their native languages. Even if the motive behind the government's implementation of this program was castilianization, intensive studies of bilingual education and indigenous languages became available to academia and the indigenous people. Bilingual education was to be the stepping stone to a fully integrated Spanish speaking population, but in fact it also served as a springboard to bicultural education. Hidalgo argues that bicultural bilingual education attempts to restore a language with limited function as well as confidence in identities, values and oral tradition. This process seems like "de-marginalization" to him (Mar-Molinero 2000). If this is true, then bettering the lives of indigenous people includes an introspective look at their own culture and a rediscovery of themselves. Language is a key indicator of identity and through the use and expansion of indigenous languages greater sense of identity can be established.

Hidalgo is not a proponent of bilingual education as reaffirming an indigenous reality in Mexico. He believes that bilingual education will not maintain indigenous speakers, but rather accelerate castilianization. The current system of bilingual education in the first years of primary school appears to have made a great impact on

the decline of monolingual speakers. However, the number of bilingual speakers fully functional in Spanish could be less than official numbers indicate. Furthermore, the number of bilingual speakers that identify themselves with the mestizo Mexican society would most likely show a greater connection with indigenous culture.

There are opponents of both the bilingual and bicultural education systems. These individuals maintain that indigenous education is not valid and should not be attempted. Castra argues that the goals of bilingual and bicultural education are Eurocentric. They are created by Western thinkers along the lines of Western thinking. He feels that the study of and reappearance of indigenous languages in this manner is a westernization of these native tongues. Bicultural bilingual education has in fact butchered indigenous culture. He states that the "invention of mother tongue literacy is a false device."⁷ If this were true, then all studies by outsiders should be deemed invalid. It is true that these languages were not standardized before the undertakings of the INI and Mexican government during the last century and that standardization leads to the disappearance of certain regional dialects, but this cannot erase the fact that the languages are being taught and then used by members of the indigenous groups.

The great debate and realization of bilingual education shows that there are many differences in opinion on the matter. The differences in theory and reality also have weighed heavily on the program since its inception. But what seems to be true is that bilingual education is successful in Mexico. It is basically an assimilation policy of bilingual education, and the facts show that the number of people being assimilated linguistically is growing. Children in the program seem to have a greater

⁷ Cited in Mar-Molinero, 137.

grasp of Spanish literacy than their indigenous peers who attend state-run schools.

Lack of funding and training of teachers has not affected this. But these same children are also being exposed to elements of their culture that will be passed on to future generations, if only through the schools themselves.

Conclusion

In the process of promoting *indigenismo*, the Mexican government has attempted to create a unified and homogenous national identity. The successes and failures of the movement are the result of federal and indigenous responses to this ideology. There seems to be a constant struggle between assimilation and autonomy in the discussion of indigenous identity in Mexico. The INI became the institution of *indigenismo* and found that this particular issue would come to the forefront time and time again. Debates over the effectiveness of the INI would serve as a catalyst for changes within the ideology and one of its main instruments of assimilation – bilingual education.

The persistence of an assimilation policy shows how deep the roots of *indigenismo* run in Mexico. This official policy has seen many different perspectives on how to promote a Mexican identity. Although the INI was created on the basis of studying and recording indigenous groups, this information was to serve as data for the assimilation project. Education (particularly bilingual education) was a very important topic for assimilationists. Education would serve as a medium for the castilianization of the indigenous population, but reservations were held on the prospect of bilingual education. Main arguments surfaced around the teaching of indigenous languages in schools as actually promoting their use.

Proponents of autonomy have always voiced their concerns over the mistreatment and marginalization of the indigenous population. Recognition of indigenous culture and the authenticity of a plurality of cultures in Mexico were key issues being presented by this group. Mexico was a multicultural state to them, and the existing cultures should not be subordinated or extinguished by national policies of modernization and integration. These voices helped transform the INI into an entity that promotes indigenous cultures and communities. Bilingual education gave way to bicultural education, as indigenous languages and communal histories were taught in schools.

Reality of Assimilation

Although the emergence of a bilingual, bicultural education system seemingly counters the initial aims of *indigenismo* and assimilation, integration has and will continue to occur in indigenous communities. Multi-cultural status is recognized, but this does not refute the fact that Spanish and a national identity still dominate the nation. Bilingual speakers must rely on their skill in Spanish to communicate with members outside their particular indigenous group. This includes governmental organizations that are designed to assist in the cultural preservation process. A pan-indigenous movement would have to be conducted in Spanish, because it is the unifying dominant language.

We must too note the success of the bilingual education program in terms of assimilation. As the study of indigenous education in Chiapas by Modiano showed, bilingual students were able to understand Spanish on a higher level than their peers

in the monolingual system. This demonstrates the effectiveness of learning the national language through the bilingual approach. However, in many instances bilingual education was not fully utilized for creating literacy of the indigenous language. This diminishes the effect of the bilingual education in terms of preserving the indigenous language through literature. The number of indigenous intellectuals creating indigenous language literary work is larger today than in the past, but still makes up a small number in proportion to the indigenous population. Spanish plays a major role in the lives of these indigenous youth, and consequently the percentage of bilingual speakers is rising while the percentage of monolingual speakers is dropping. This means that the number of indigenous people speaking Spanish is higher, and a certain level of assimilation has occurred.

Assimilation versus Autonomy: Who Won?

No clear cut winner can be named in the struggle for assimilation into a national identity and the struggle for autonomy and cultural recognition. Both sides have contributed greatly to the debate of the "Indian question" in Mexico. Governmental organizations were created around integrating the indigenous population into a modern Mexican reality. The creators of this movement were not indigenous themselves, and therefore have applied Western ideology and biases to indigenous programs. This fact has become an issue of debate over the validity of the movement truly serving indigenous promotion. Even if newer policies serve to promote and preserve indigenous culture, it can be argued that this is only under the pretext of Eurocentric ideals.

An analysis of bilingual bicultural education shows that there has been a movement towards the recognition of the importance of modern indigenous people. Indigenous languages have become standardized and used in academic literature as well as early education. Although bilingual education does serve the purpose of teaching Spanish, it also increases exposure to the indigenous language in a manner not used in the past. The presence of the indigenous language in the schools shows the cultural recognition of the many indigenous groups in the nation. Bicultural education reinforces the importance and validity of indigenous culture. New generations are taught and therefore preserve this information for posterity. Organized groups of intellectuals promote and defend indigenous culture and communities. Through their work, indigenous communities are recognized and assisted in creating a more autonomous and self-defined community.

The existence of the redefined indigenous cultures as part of the plurality of Mexico does not signify the collapse of the assimilation project. Indigenous groups organize themselves through the assistance of the government and through Western-style infrastructure. These organized entities do not exist completely outside the realm of modern Mexico. In fact, they work within a system that is based on the existence and creation of an educated Spanish-speaking population. Bilingual education is creating a larger pool of these individuals to work within an integrated environment.

The reality of a bilingual population describes intersection of assimilation and autonomy and how both have succeeded and failed. Indigenous individuals are now more aware of their cultural heritage due to the vast amount of research done and the

education opportunities that teach what has been learned. However, this process is done under the guise of a dominance of Spanish and a national identity. This group of bilingual speakers is able to promote indigenous culture, but must work within a national system. The modernization of indigenous culture serves as grounds to advance cultural identity but through Western designs and functions. The modern bilingual indigenous individual will be able to explore his or her own culture more profoundly, but a greater understanding of the modern Mexican society will be present as well. Promoters of assimilation and promoters of autonomy must accept that their successes do not come as a result of the others' failure. Successes are the result of a symbiotic relationship leading to an integrated, yet, at the same time autonomous, indigenous identity. Clearly, the ethnocide many early autonomists believed would occur has not happened, and, on the same note, full integration proposed by assimilationists has not occurred.

Conclusions

The failures of the INI are the result of an assimilation policy that was destined to fail from the start. The creation of this policy came from outside the indigenous community and failed to gain a true indigenous perspective. Indigenous communities have failed to receive recognition or been fully incorporated in the debate over assimilation. A majority of the promoters of indigenous autonomy have come from mestizo backgrounds. They too have not incorporated indigenous sentiments into their debates.

The programs created through *indigenismo* have one true objective –to assimilate the indigenous population. These programs are created by individuals who are simply observers of indigenous culture, a culture they ultimately are trying to extinguish. The broader issues of community development are not fully addressed by these policies and therefore do not serve to promote much improvement. Indigenous communities are not able to identify with such a foreign policy. The creation of the COCEI and EZLN are examples of indigenous activism due to lack of true reform and development. If the indigenous population were fully integrated into Mexican society, such movements would not exist.

The lack of a large indigenous intellectual population working to promote indigenous identity through education and the INI shows that indigenous people are not being involved in these organizations created to help them. This means that directors of the INI come from western backgrounds that still do not fully incorporate indigenous communities in policy making. Without an indigenous perspective, these policies cannot fully service indigenous communities. There will be reluctance and dissatisfaction of the realization of these policies. The great debate of 1971 shows the concerns over the ideology of the INI and its effectiveness. It was evident to some people then that the INI could not succeed in full assimilation of the indigenous population.

However, it must be noted that the efforts of the INI have increased the number of bilingual indigenous people in Mexico. This means that more and more indigenous people can function in Spanish every year. This also allows for interaction with a mestizo identity. But this does not mean that the indigenous

population is becoming more like the mestizo model. Cultural awareness along with official recognition of indigenous rights ranks high among aims of indigenous communities. That is why the INI has such an important role in Mexico. They are the official bridge between the government and indigenous communities, and their failure affects both sides.

The indigenous voice must be really heard for true autonomy. This may occur through a speech in Zapotec during a rally of the COCEI or through the ski mask of a Zapatista soldier. True assimilation does not seem to be obtainable as long as these groups persist, and these groups will persist until their voices are heard. Therefore the original ideology of *indigenismo* will not come to fruition, but the INI can improve indigenous communities by exploring the multi-cultural identity of Mexico.

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