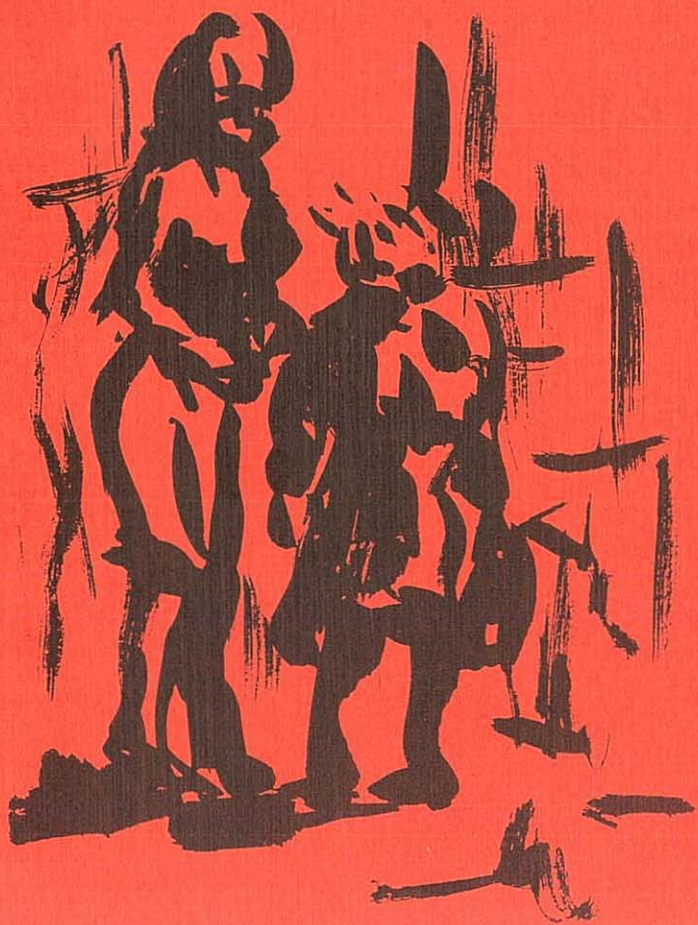
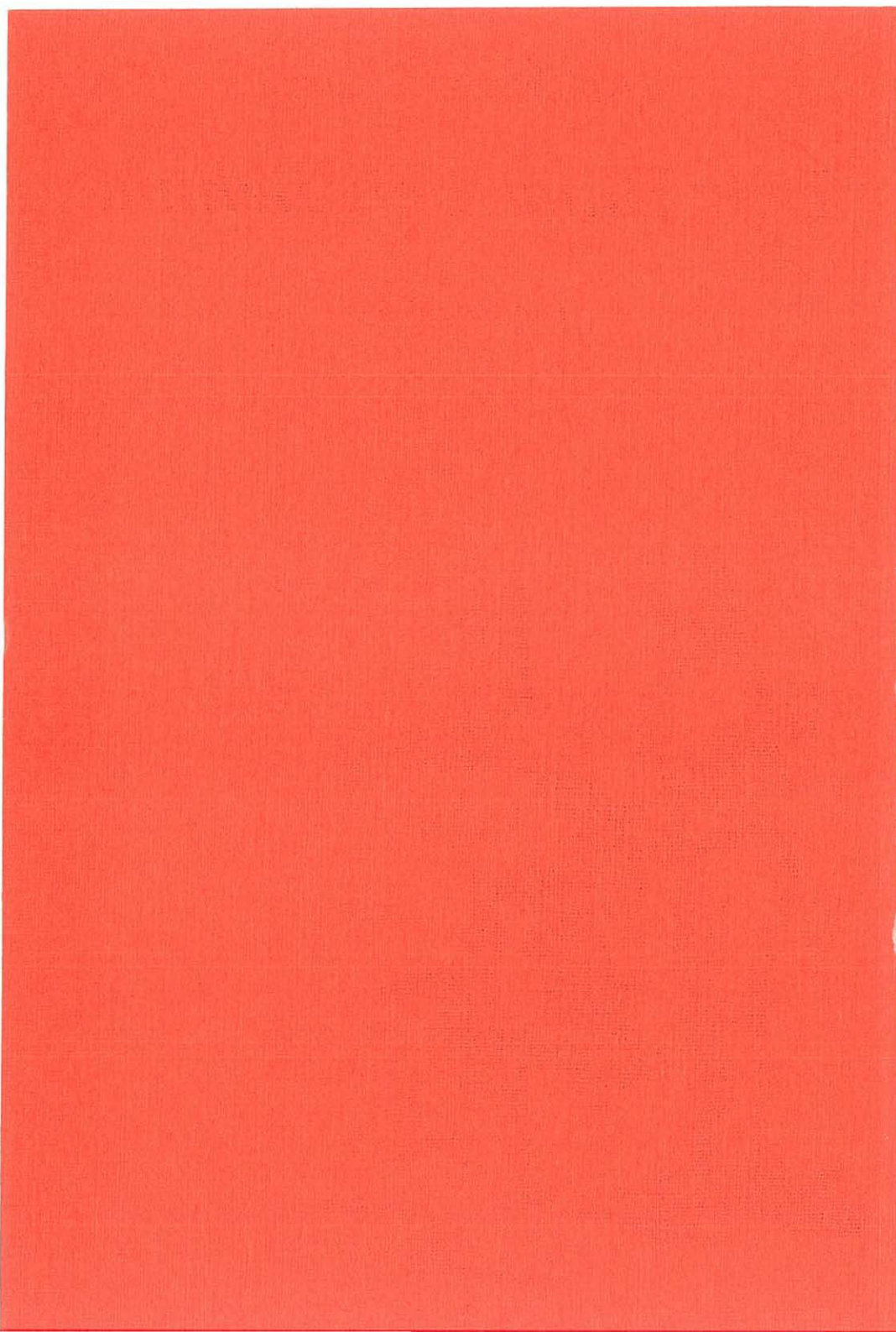


*Britt-Marie Thurén*

# *Left Hand Left Behind*

*The Changing Gender System  
of a Barrio in Valencia, Spain*





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*Britt-Marie Thurén*



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1988

Left Hand Left Behind  
The changing gender system of a barrio in Valencia, Spain.

Doctoral dissertation

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For Jaime and Joaquín





1939 politics:

"The work of women in the revolution was a supporting mission, not a directive mission, because the latter pertains only to men. (...) The most valuable contribution a woman can make to the future is to return to the bosom of the family and avoid discussions in bad taste and the public exhibitions that are not fitting for women."

Pilar Primo de Rivera, director of the Women's Section (Sección Femenina) of the Falange. Quote from Scanlon in García de León 1982. (My translation)

1986 sociology:

"That is why I doubt if the Renaissance really existed: the Humanism and the Modernism of the Golden Century shone scarcely in what its great ideologues thought about women. (...) One could even doubt if the Ancien Régime is over, even today. (...) For many women access to educated reason, the construction of a world to their measure, the freedom to interpret themselves without foreign obediences and all the conquests that the Renaissance symbolizes for men and that never existed for women, are beginning to become possible only now. The Renaissance, with all its promises and discords, begins now."

María Angeles Durán, director of the Seminar for Women's Studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1986b:30. (My translation.)

1980 Valencian progressivity:

"Cross-cutting words, or about communication between progressives: There is only one thing as detestable as the habit of some women to blame hardly-machista males for the things that the very-machistas have done to them. And it is, you guessed it, the masculine habit of blaming feminist women for what non-feminist women do."

Josep-Vicent Marqués, Valencian all-purpose progressive, in the progressive magazine *El Viejo Topo*, nr 10, 1980:12. (My translation.)

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To all those who introduced me to someone else, to all those who brought me documents and anecdotes, to all those who tried to understand what I was doing and commented on my "conclusions"... to all the members of the Women's Group and the Neighborhood Association who accepted me into their midst... to my closest neighbors who got more than their share of my curiosity... to those who became true friends... to so many Benituriens, my gratitude is for ever. José Armenteros agreed to take a couple of rolls of photographs when I had run out of project money and despaired over my own talents as a photographer. Juaco López did a few drawings for the same reason. Julia Arjona and Carmen Pascual gave me everything they thought I needed.

In Valencia but outside Benituria, I would like to mention the Association of Separated Women, the importance of which I hope comes out in the text. Thanks also to Joan B. Llinars for having a very good idea (see Appendix B) and to thirty-four of his students (first year students of psychology at the University of Valencia during the course 1982-83), whose efforts considerably broadened my material. Joan F. Mira, Josep-Vicent Marqués, the Servei de la

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And behind it all is the family, just like in Benitueria. My mother and my sister have a strange faith in me, without which I would never even have dared to start out on the road towards a doctorate, and without their practical help there was no way I could have completed it.

It is impossible to thank my sons for what they have meant to me. Children do not give on purpose, they just happen to be the greatest wonder in life. I hope they will some day be able to forgive me for not having baked as many cookies as other mothers, and that their daughters, if they get any, will not have to choose between self-mutilation and chronic guilt feelings. For these reasons, this book about women is dedicated to two young men who have had to experience directly the fact that patriarchy is not such a good deal for men, either.

Stockholm, November 1988

Britt-Marie Thurén

## PART A: PROBLEMS

### Chapter 1. The changing gender system of Benituria.

#### a. Left hand and other kinds of power.

This book is about gender: what society does with the biological fact of sex. The biological fact is a rather small thing. Men and women are different from each other but "not as different as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else - for instance mountains, kangaroos or coconut palms." (Rubin in Reiter 1975:179) But the small fact has great consequences, not only that of reproduction of the species, but a huge edifice of social and cultural consequences. That edifice is what I call the gender system.

In feminist discussions in Valencia and in other parts of Spain, power is often on the agenda. Some common positions are: a) power is a male invention, an evil we women should know better than to imitate; b) power is necessary and we women have been controlled and abused precisely because we have had no power, so now we must get organized and take part in the power play, like it or not; c) what do you mean, women have no power? Women have always had power and of a much more efficacious kind than men - we have left hand!

Left hand (*mano izquierda*) means illegitimate power, counter-power, the talent to manipulate. It can be attributed to a man, for example defending himself against injustice coming from superiors at work. It can be attributed to women in relation to other women or to children, for example a mother who tries to discipline a difficult child with indirect means. It can be attributed to a man in relation to a woman, but this is a borderline case. A man who has to use left hand to win a confrontation with his wife is a loser, because he should have more

direct means at his disposal, according to the generally accepted view, and he usually does.

Yet most of the time - so often that it is close to a definition - left hand is something women have and use, especially in their relationship with their husbands. Sometimes they use it to get the husband to do something he does not want to do. More commonly the use is defensive; the wife gets out of doing something her husband wants her to do but she does not.

If a young woman from Benituria should read the above two paragraphs, she would exclaim: Wrong! That is the way it used to be but no longer! That is unfair! You talk as if nothing had happened since the time of our mothers!

True enough. However, the mothers are still around. They, too, have changed their view of things, but most of them are deeply ambivalent about the changes they have seen. And the daughters they have educated know all about left hand, even if they feel it is beneath their dignity to use it. Most of the mothers probably call a woman who refuses to use left hand stupid. They might see her as renouncing her one effective weapon for self-defense in a harsh world. But they are probably unsure of the ethics of manipulation in a way they were not some time ago. They listen to the many messages about equality and wonder if it would not be better to be able to act in more direct ways sometimes.

The daughters will use left hand once in a while, since they have learnt how to by seeing it used. But they will use it less than their mothers and they will insist on having more direct means of power. Left hand is not enough, whatever they think of it.

When I asked married Benituran women who took the important decisions in their house, most of them answered, "I do!" Then, many of them added something like, "But watch out what you say to my husband about that, because he does not know it, you see." Others said, "My husband does, but I can usually make him take the decision I want him to." So Benituran men mutter about women's dark powers.

But it is not true, as many women and men say, that these have been equal to or stronger than the legitimate forms of power. For one thing, they do not even operate outside immediate face-to-face contacts; usually they even require strong personal links to be effective. And even in small intimate clashes of wills, there is a limit to what left hand can accomplish. And some men are good at manipulating women, too, and at looking through the manipulations of



women. One should also remember that the extent of illegitimate power is often exaggerated by legitimate power-holders, because they want to make it look even more illegitimate.

There is a limit to any manipulation, however ingenious, in that it can be discovered or ignored, and then it loses all efficacy instantaneously. There is something the manipulated can do: look through manipulation. The point of the latter is to get the decision-maker to make the decision the manipulator wants. The decision-maker, being autonomous, has no need for manipulation.

The women of Benituria are differently addicted to the use of left hand and differently aware of its possibilities and limitations. But the idea is rapidly gaining ground that whatever its advantages, its disadvantages are more important. Perhaps the most strongly felt disadvantage is the lack of autonomy it implies. Dignity, honor, self-affirmation, rebelliousness, autonomy, are stressed values.

The contradiction between the value of autonomy and the imposed left-hand style of self-defense is not new. What is new is the material possibility for women to apply the value of autonomy to their own behavior towards men.

Among the most common phrases when middle aged or older women tell their life stories are "what else was there?", "what could I do?" or "one has to *aguantar*", a verb meaning to take it, to resist without rebelling, to resign oneself to whatever pains come along, a verb which all by itself symbolizes what women's lives used to be about. Now they have a (small) chance to get a job and earn money of their own. There are messages in all mass media about equality between the sexes. The stress on progress is seen to include equality, justice, individual independence and a "new female life-style". Left hand is being left behind. It has always been illicit in the eyes of men; now it is becoming illicit in the eyes of women, too.

So the title of this book refers, first, to the fact that there is a gender hierarchy, and second, to the fact that this is giving way to something else. Male precedence will probably not disappear peacefully and without a trace, but things will never again be what they have been.

## b. Benituran gender: a preview.

The point of departure of this study is the fact that Spain has gone through very deep and rapid changes during the 1960's and 1970's. Gender is a central cultural category in most societies and an important factor of social organization in all known societies. But it is more important in some societies than others. In the Mediterranean area, gender has been made to carry heavy social and cultural loads through the concepts of honor and shame. In a Mediterranean country undergoing drastic change, ideas around gender can easily become central and controversial and perhaps visibly varied, expressing other social fault lines. This is the case in Spain, at least in the big cities. Gender change has become a key symbol for overall social change.

If the social position of women changes, because of various other social change processes, and if ideas around gender are culturally central and controversial, one can suppose that women's possibilities and life styles and opinions will vary a lot and that this will be visible, verbalized and culturally elaborated. I would say that this is going on in Spain as a whole. It definitely was in Benituria when I did fieldwork there from July 1982 to December 1983.

Even after having limited myself spatially to a place as small as Benituria - which one can walk through diagonally in a quarter of an hour, but which houses around 25.000 persons<sup>1</sup> - the task of describing the gender system as a whole was too great. So I decided to concentrate on something smaller but crucial: gender-related events or ideas that were visible and controversial and under conscious cultural elaboration. I thus decided to concentrate on the cultural aspect of the gender system. Social and material aspects must be described, too, but only as necessary background. To focus equally on all three would be too much to handle.

I take it that the most dynamic factor in any system are the contradictions in it, the things that do not quite work. So, if one wants to find the nodal points of genderchange, one should look for contradictions that are important in everyday life situations. It was soon obvious that the striking feature of this gender system is that it is under attack. It is losing its legitimacy. What people usually call "the traditional roles" or similar is conceived of as inappropriate to the present.

Benituriens are aware of clashes between cultural, social and material aspects of life as well as between different parts of culture. They talk about them and usually call them contradictions. A contradiction, to me, is a logical or material clash between elements in a system which forces change in the system. It is a critical point of dynamic charge. It is critical also because it is often experienced as dangerous or difficult or uncomfortable, which is the aspect Benituriens think of.

This means that the total system must be described, at least superficially. I try to do this in the background part of this book, parts B-D. Then, in part E, we come to the real issue, the ideas about the gender system, and in part F I discuss how it all works, or does not work, together.

There are many anomalies in the Beniturian gender system. Some persons, some events, some situations are seen as anomalous by some or all concerned. Anomalies can only exist, by definition, if there is a normality against which they can stand out. But if there are many anomalies, the normality is under strain. Benituriens experience a strain in the gender system and interpret it as an "old mentality" giving way, under protest, to something new and perhaps better.

Some people are for the changes and some against; most are ambivalent. I take all opinions into account, but there is more information in what follows on those that push change rather than slow it down. For one thing, this was imposed on me by Beniturian reality. Given my personal history and opinions, I had better access to and rapport with the so-called progressives than with more conservative Benituriens. But concentrating on the progressives was also theoretically advantageous. The progressives are defined as people who criticize old norms, who see no reason to do things the way they have always been done, who are open to new ideas and willing to experiment with them in their own lives. They are the ones who translate the macrolevel social and material changes into everyday opinions and lifestyles. They are the ones who find the cracks in the system and widen them through their criticism and their innovations. They are many in Benituria, between one tenth and three quarters of the population depending on the issue and on where one wants to draw the line. But they are important far out of proportion to their numbers.

Actually one cannot divide the population into progressives and non-progressives. All Benituriens see themselves as more or less progressive, and many of them use a progressive discourse situationally. Nevertheless, some

people feel that they march in the vanguard and that others are far behind, while others use a different kind of vocabulary and express more doubts and sometimes nostalgia for old certainties. (Cf part D.)

Another limitation of access that the field imposed on me because of my own characteristics was that of gender itself. Daily life in Benituria is quite segregated by sex in practice, although not in ideology. And the people a middle aged mother like myself has most rapport with are married women with children. I could not limit myself to mixed-sex contexts, because there were not all that many, and they were not the most important contexts for either women or men. I could not at all enter all-male contexts.<sup>2</sup>

Thus I got more information on women than on men. And again, there were advantages in this. The women's point of view is underreported in anthropology in general as well as in Spanish social science and journalism. Second, married women with children are the central model for womanhood in this gender system. It is changing, but unmarried women or married women without children are somewhat anomalous.

So I talked to women, participated in women's gatherings, thought more about women's problems than about men's. I have tried to get information about men, but mostly this study is about a gender system from women's point of view.

As to age, my best rapport was with women of active ages, between twenty-five and fifty-five approximately. Older women are also aware of the changes, but their opinions (mostly negative) have few practical consequences, since they are no longer active in practical life and since their views are usually written off as old-fashioned by all other age-groups. Young women do not influence the present gender system all that much either. They are the future, true, but they are not yet able to influence the gender system through the way they educate children or the decisions they take at work or the way they spend their money.

I concentrate then on the women living in the role of Mother-and-Wife, as a woman should according to "the old mentality" and as a majority still do, albeit without the former assurance of doing the right thing. The women of this type whom we will meet in the text are never exceptional, yet all of them are anomalous in some way. Even the most "normal" woman of Benituria is bound to carry some uncertainty, anomaly, contradiction, and she has to do something



about it, and because she does, the gender system changes. The macrolevel social factors that have determined the rate and the direction of gender change for the last two decades are no longer the same, but gender change now has an internal dynamic.

This is not to say that men's life is untouched by the changes. But as things look right now, it is on the whole easier for men than for women to find valid role models and live in a way they find consistent with their view of what a person of their sex should be like.

### c. Why Benituria?

For the purposes of this study, I needed a place where change was not marginal and where many social categories were present. I wanted a place with "ordinary people". The experiences of the 1960's and 1970's affected all parts of Spain, all men and women, all social classes but in varying ways. So it was desirable to describe the expressions of the gender system in a place where they would not be too influenced by local circumstances. I chose a barrio in the city of Valencia.

Valencia is the third largest city of Spain, surrounded by new barrios built for immigrants from the countryside as the country switched from agriculture to industry and services. The immigrants came from all parts of Spain, so these barrios are microcosms of peninsular life. Valencia is not as big and rich as Madrid and Barcelona, nor does its life express as many special circumstances as the next five or six largest cities do.<sup>3</sup>

If one sets the index of income per capita at 100 for all of Spain, Madrid stands over 150 and Seville around 80. Valencia is very close to 100. In many other ways, too, Valencia comes close to a Spanish average - family size and recent demographic developments, numbers of cars and telephones and refrigerators, proportion of women in the labor force, rate of illiteracy, and so forth.

The Valencia region has been strongly agricultural and its economy directed mainly towards exports, like the Andalusian one, but the landholding system has been more minifundian than latifundian. Valencia is a city with old artisan and merchant traditions. When the structural change came - in the late 1960's and early 1970's, somewhat later than to Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao -

the industries that grew up were varied. Many of them were extensions of previous cottage industry traditions: leather, furniture, food processing. Others built on earlier big industry now getting a boost: the port, ship building. Some were located in Valencia or nearby by government decision: the steel works of Sagunto, a commercial airport. Some were transnational: IBM, Ford.

Benituria, the barrio I worked in, is one of at least a dozen barrios around Valencia that could have served my purposes equally well and where I am sure the results would have been very similar.<sup>4</sup> Central Valencia is an old mercantile city with its bourgeoisie and its urban working class. Some of that bourgeoisie and substantial parts of that working class have moved out into the peripheral barrios. Most of the immigrants have also found accommodations there. And as Valencia grew, it encountered villages on its path. The flat land around the city is extremely fertile and the villages are close to each other and to the city.

Because of this, the peripheral barrios now have a mixed population. There are former village inhabitants who now live in a city without having moved. There are villagers from other parts of Spain who have migrated to the city. There are urban working class families who have been ousted from the central parts of the city, as these increased in value, or who moved to the periphery to be able to afford a better dwelling or to be closer to the job in some newly arrived industry. And there is a smattering of doctors, lawyers, social workers, dentists, restaurant owners, store owners and the like who have moved to where business is now.

Certainly there are differences between the barrios, too. A couple of them near the port are poorer than most. Those near a planned industrial area have fewer native Valencians and more immigrants than most. In a couple of barrios near the university, students give street life a special character. But all are mixed. In most European cities, space is socially defined and priced accordingly. Some areas are for one social class, some for another. This tendency is noticeable in Valencia, too, but it is recent. It has shaped the downtown barrios, but the peripheral barrios are still somewhat undefined.

I wanted a barrio where almost all social classes would be present, and I wanted a barrio with new and old buildings, villagers and urbanites, Valencians and immigrants, cottage industries and big enterprises. I found such a barrio in Benituria, but it could have been a number of others. Perhaps in ten years it will be difficult to find any.

## Chapter 2. Changes in Spain.

Before we draw closer to gender in Benituria, it is necessary to say a few words about macrolevel changes. What Beniturians do, say and think must have to do with them.

### a. Francoism.

There is a clear hiatus in recent Spanish history: the civil war, 1936-39. Its consequences cannot be understood separately from its causes, but since we have to start somewhere, let us start with 1939, with a country exhausted in every sense and the victorious "nationalist" troops under Franco marching into Madrid to take power and create a new kind of state.

It is doubtful whether Franco himself had any political ideology. Some say his only ideology was "Francoism" (and this is the currently common label for the regime in everyday speech). What is clear is that the regime started out as fascist, toned down the fascist symbolism as World War II fortunes shifted, sought recognition as an "organic democracy" after the war, and reorganized the economy to a kind of capitalism during the 1950's and managed to ride on the wave of the international economic boom during the 1960's.<sup>5</sup>

For most Spaniards, however, it certainly looked as if there was a fascist ideology steering the reconstruction of the country during the 1940's. The economy was organized as an autarchy: the goal was self-sufficiency, imports should be held to a minimum, the people should be organized in "organic units" as families, vertical unions and communities, the government should plan production. The Church was made responsible for education in the widest sense of the word: schools, social work, moral vigilance. There were several specialized police corps. The youth were organized on the model of Hitlerjugend, with blue shirts, military drills, camping and marches, and with virility as the highest ideal.

Women were not very organized, since it was part of the ideology that they should be responsible for the private sphere, "the warrior's resting place" (*el descanso del guerrero*). But naturally they ought to be taught the right values, to

be able to comply with that duty and to socialize their children into the same values. La Sección Femenina (the Women's Section) of the ruling Falange party organized courses in political ideology, religion, childcare, hygiene and budget cooking all over Spain and all unmarried women were required to do a "social service", attending literacy courses or working for the organization or contributing money for charity. La Sección Femenina expressed the regime view of women: "The essential goal for woman, in her human function, is to serve as a perfect complement for man", and the Women's Section joins "with a clearly feminine meaning and style the virile work of the Falange in order to support, complement and complete that work." (Gallego Méndez 1983:215 ff) Care should always be taken so that the activities for women did not get the undesirable side effect of making women independent-minded.<sup>6</sup>

In the discourse of the regime, Spain was now the Spiritual Reserve of the West and had to be prepared to make Heroic Sacrifices in order to withstand the economic and ideological pressures from decadent, communist, masonic and Jewish enemies. Spain was a Nation, a "unit of destiny in the universal".

This vocabulary was maintained as long the regime lasted, but from the early 1950's and on it was gradually toned down. After the failure of the economic policy of autarchy, the pure Falangists lost power. In the early 1950's, plans were drawn up for a new economic policy. In 1953, president Eisenhower ended Spain's international isolation with the signing of a bilateral treaty which gave the US the right to build military bases in Spain. In 1955, Spain was admitted to the UN and then gradually to other international organs. The hope some Spaniards had had that the Western powers would go on to defeat Franco after World War II was definitely dead. The internal opposition had been practically wiped out, too.

But a new generation was coming of age. The 1960's were not only the decade of economic improvement but also the decade of slow reorganization of the opposition. The civil war was now Daddy's war (the title of a novel by Miguel Delibes from the middle 1960's) and as such less emotionally charged but still present as a factor influencing all members of the active generations. When I was in the field, the civil war had become Grandpa's war and was finally being pushed into history.

Spain in 1940 was a country with a devastated economy, with a demoralized people, internationally isolated, with most of its political and

intellectual elite in exile. Spain in 1983 was a parliamentary democracy of the usual Western European kind, on its way to joining the Common Market, one of the ten or fifteen biggest industrial powers of the world. It had enormous problems, too, above all an unemployment rate of 16-17% and growing (over 21% as I write this). But it was a very different kind of country from 1940.

## **b. Economic change.**

Using statistics on such matters as GNP, economic structure, illiteracy, nutrition, number of telephones or tons of steel consumed per capita, one can show that Spain in 1955 stood at a level of development (in its usual sense) similar to France in 1910. If development is something produced by time, Spain was forty-five years behind its neighbor. But in 1970, only fifteen years later, the differences had almost disappeared. 7

Such figures give an idea of the intensity of what has happened. The growth rate of the value of industrial production between 1963 and 1972 was 160. Of all OECD countries, only Japan had a higher figure. In 1950 over 50% of the active population worked in agriculture, a measure often used in economics to define underdevelopment. During the 1970's the percentage dropped to the "European" figure of 16%. Instead, the sectors of industry and services grew exponentially, as did the cities. As one Spanish sociologist put it, the country moved from Roman plows to post-industrial metropolis in a matter of a decade (de Miguel 1974).

For ordinary Spaniards, what it all meant was that the hunger years of the 1940's turned into a painfully slow improvement during the 1950's and then suddenly visible improvement but at the price of migration, first abroad and then to exploding Spanish cities. There were no schools or housing or medical attention one could afford, but there were jobs, so one could survive and there were hopes of further improvement. And there was not much choice, since the rural job opportunities dwindled with mechanization.

Salaries were low, so most men had to have two jobs to support a family. Many women found employment, too. As nutrition and medical attention improved, people lived longer and had more children. Contraceptives were still forbidden. So the biggest Spanish generation ever was born.

During the second half of the 1960's, the figures on consumption skyrocketed. People could afford meat, eggs and milk. They used electricity and telephones. Around the big cities the initial self-built sheds were replaced by blocks of apartments. In the middle 1960's people started getting butane gas stoves, television sets and hot water heaters.

As could be expected with the kind of capitalism that was being built, private consumption raced far ahead of collective consumption. Madrid suffered water rationing until the early 1970's, some cities still do. But little by little roads were built, trains started running more or less on time, telephone communications improved. Schools, hospitals and housing continue to be deficient.

### c. Political change.

After these economic changes came the political changes. As late as 1974, the regime imposed a state of emergency, shot dissidents and decreed an anti-terrorist law with heavy penalties and wide-ranging definitions of terrorism. The dangers for the opposition were real enough. But the opposition was there. And most people had no doubt that the regime would have to change soon.

After a tense month of agony, Franco died in November 1975. To begin with, there was continuity. But in June 1976, the new king, educated by Franco himself, named a new prime minister, Adolfo Suárez, of Falangist background. Exactly what happened next is not clear and will not be for decades yet. For some reason, Suárez began to dismantle Francoism. A period of "transition" started. In a sense it lasted for six months, until the first democratic elections in June 1977. In another sense the transition is still going on. The elections left a lot to be desired as to democratic procedures. Suárez won and continued on his course of moderate political reformism and economic conservatism.

There are a number of dates between then and now that can be marked as the point of democracy's coming of age: a new constitution, modeled on those common in the rest of Europe, took effect in December 1978; in the first democratic municipal elections in 1979 the socialist party PSOE gained power in most of the big cities; the socialists took over government in the fall of 1982 and the country proved to itself that this could be done without chaos ensuing.<sup>8</sup> There

is no doubt that it is a different country from 1940. And people know it and think about it.

#### **d. Gender change.**

The suddenly expanding labor market had made it possible for women to enter paid employment in large numbers for the first time in history. In 1964, less than 17% of adult Spanish women were economically active, while 60% of the men were. In 1980, 21% of the women were active and only 53% of the men. The total proportion of economically active had diminished, due to increased availability of opportunities to study, old age pensions, etc as well as unemployment. But the women's share of the labor market had increased, even though they, too, study more, get pensions and are laid off.<sup>9</sup> Between 1960 and 1974 the total number of economically active women increased by over a million and a half. (Alcobendas Tirado 1983:104)

It is no mystery that the women entered employment as soon as there was a chance, despite the ideological stress on housewifery. The standard of living was still low, the families were big, city living was new so one had to leave old customs behind in more ways than this. Foreign gender ideas became known via tourists and migration to other countries. Once the women had jobs, they had new needs. Some women discovered social depths to the problems they were experiencing and joined fledgling women's organizations to campaign for daycare homes for children, equal salaries for equal jobs, and better schools and hospitals.

At this juncture, the (underground) leftist parties and unions felt mostly scorn for these claims. They were bourgeois, they would divert attention and energy from the truly important task of revolution. Their reactions were similar to those in other European countries at similar historical moments. The feminist movement began to make its voice heard in wider circles by 1975, partly thanks to the International Women's Year. The leftist parties now started to recognize sexism as a problem.

When I was in the field, the gender policies of the major parties were as follows:

The parties of the center and right had no such policies, unless they were to stop the visible trends. They continued the discourse of the Franco regime, to varying degrees. The family was the pillar of society; women were meant by nature or God to be mothers; and society should see to it that they were protected from everything that could detract them from their holy mission.

PSOE had no feminist policy, but its program included a timid proposal for legalization of some abortions, which they presented to Parliament in early 1983 (creating the outstanding topic of public debate that year and for years to come). The PSOE-dominated government of the autonomous Community of Valencia<sup>10</sup> organized a congress on the situation of Valencian women in May 1983 and set up a "Women's Service" (Servei de la Dona), which came to function mostly as a referral service to social services and emergency assistance (personal communication from two of its employees).

The communist-dominated trade union Comisiones Obreras had a Secretariat for Women, researching women's labor conditions, publishing a bulletin, defending women in labor court, etc.

But the only political organization to have feminist claims in its official program was the Esquerra Unida del País Valencià (United Left of Valencia), a coalition of various small leftist parties. It wanted collective services to take over housewife duties of all kinds, men's equal responsibilities for children, and so on. It permitted its women militants to concentrate on feminist issues if that was their choice.

But Esquerra Unida had little power; it got a little over one half of one percent of the votes in Benituria and a little less in the city as a whole in the general elections in 1982.

The feminist movement was going through a period of disenchantment and internecine warfare in the early 1980's, after a few hopeful years of growth and radicalization and lively congresses and magazines. Perhaps the feminist movement and the legal changes it fought for and, in part, obtained, can be seen as a sign and a symptom of the whole transition process.

The movement can be said to have been born the very same year Franco died, 1975, since its existence before this date could well be called fetal. Many groups were formed during the same years as political parties were legalized and found new shapes to adapt to the new conditions. The first nation-wide feminist congress held legally (and that could therefore gather a significant number<sup>11</sup>)



took place in 1979, the same year as the first democratic municipal elections. Feminists and leftists also entered the period of "disenchantment" (desencanto) and deception at about the same time, the early 1980's, and their organizations had similar difficulties with fragmentation, dwindling membership and pitched ideological battles.

In 1975, however, nothing much had happened yet, in the political system or in the gender system. This was the year zero. Then followed crucial years when the legislative underpinnings of the dictatorship were removed and these were also the years of correction of some of the most glaring injustices in the civil legislation that affected women or the relationships between women and men.

Already in 1975 there was a law permitting married women to sign contracts without the permission of their husband. The most important contract was obviously that of employment; up to that time it had been legally impossible for a woman to work against the will of her husband. It also became possible for married women to open bank accounts, to administer their own inheritances, to obtain passports and so on, without the signed "marital permission" that had been required until then.

In 1979 contraceptives were legalized. 1981 was the year of what came to be known as the divorce law, and of course it was a most important change that divorce now became a legal possibility, even if it was far from socially or economically possible for a majority. But the law was also a whole new law regulating marriage. It established the equal rights and duties of husband and wife, abolishing the old duty of the wife to obey her husband. The law gave both parents equal rights and responsibilities over the children, abolishing the privileges the father had had.

#### **e. Grinding to a halt?**

From 1982 the transition has a different flavor. The elemental corrections have been made. And the parallelism between changes in the political system and in the gender system has ended.

The trajectory of the abortion law can be seen as a paradigm. For some, there are still basic injustices that have not been corrected; the corrections now

being suggested to them appear so incomplete as to be insulting. At the same time for important sectors of the population this law was too much, definitely too much; it was a change from a road towards improvement to a road towards criminality.<sup>12</sup>

The new PSOE government presented a proposal for a law in the spring of 1981. According to this proposal, abortions would be permitted on three indications: a) if the mother's life was in danger; b) if the fetus was seriously malformed; c) if the pregnancy was the result of rape and the rape had been denounced to the police before the pregnancy was discovered. According to the PSOE party, this proposal was in accordance with the general conscience of the population; it could accept this but no more.

According to conservatives, this was a proposal to legalize murder.

According to feminists, the proposal would legalize only about 4% of the abortions actually carried out annually on Spanish women and was therefore unfair.<sup>13</sup>

Since the PSOE had an absolute majority in parliament, the proposal got an affirmative vote. But it did not become a law, because the conservative opposition took it to constitutional court. After two years of deliberations, this court pronounced itself salomonically in the spring of 1985: the law was indeed unconstitutional, but it could be easily amended to make it constitutional. The government quickly wrote a new proposal, which was voted through parliament and went into effect, and in the summer of 1985 the first legal abortions inside Spain were performed.

Since then the worst fears of the feminists have come true. Conservative forces make life uncomfortable for the very few doctors who have the moral courage to admit that they perform abortions. The bureaucratic procedures to obtain permission for an abortion are so complicated that many women who have good reasons for a legal one are still forced to take a quick trip to London or Amsterdam in the twelfth week. Only a few hundred legal abortions are made each year, as compared to some 20.000 illegal ones abroad and an unknown number of illegal ones inside Spain.<sup>14</sup> Most of the legal abortions inside Spain are done in private clinics, since there is a conscience clause that permits medical personnel to refuse, which makes it difficult to do them in public hospitals.

My fieldwork was carried out at this junction, when the abortion law proposal was the constant topic of debate in all contexts and media, when the

transition period had perhaps come to an end but it was still uncertain what the new Spanish state had become, when activists of all kinds accused each other of losing impetus and independence and accused themselves of disenchantment and inability to reach the youth with their message.

Gender change is no longer an appropriate symbol for general change. But for Benituriens the two may still be connected in a deeper way. When I arrived in Valencia, it was summer, and one of the constant themes in the letters to the editors of the local press was the appearance of top-less bathing suits on the beaches of the city. For some writers this was a sign that Valencia had finally reached "normal European" attitudes of seeing the body as something beautiful. For others it meant that they could no longer take their "innocent children and decent wife" to the beach, and naturally they were deeply upset and thought that changing times meant loss of freedom and identity.

But for most people, change was still the foremost positive symbol to rally around. The press was full of comments on change. PSOE campaigned with the slogan "For the change!" and on its posters and leaflets the secretary-general Felipe González was depicted against a background of a hopefully blue sky with friendly little white clouds.

#### **f. Change in Valencia.**

Valencia was the biggest city in Spain in the fifteenth century. Ever since then, it had been a city of artisans and merchants, serving the rich agricultural hinterland. Historians say that it was slow in industrializing, because its agriculture was so rich that it was always the best investment for capital. 15

But the Valencian capitalists started investing in industry on a grand scale in the 1960's. There, as in other cities then, the immigrants started coming. Many told me of the fantastic years of the early 1970's. "You could go out for a walk and come back half an hour later and have a job! There were signs hanging outside the shops everywhere, seamstress wanted, we need two more apprentice carpenters..."

As elsewhere, too, the city was unprepared to receive the migrants. There were no apartments they could pay for, there were not enough living quarters of any kind. A building boom started. The city grew concentrically, adding one

circle after another of hastily built cheap construction. The quality was dismal, often fraudulent, but there were jobs and there were credits, so people bought apartments, and as their family economies improved they started "improving" the apartments.

What was not so quickly remedied was the equally dismal quality of collective equipment: schools, parks, clinics were still inadequate both as to quantity and quality while I was in the field. In the summer of 1982 the last streets of Benituria were asphalted. The older streets were full of pot-holes. The open sewers had just been covered.

### **g. Nuns, Franco, hunger and other old things.**

To understand better the changes as experienced by Benituriens, let us take a look at one rather representative life story. The only thing unusual about Carmen's story is that she chose to tell more about her parents than about herself, and that her parents were not married to each other. Her story gives a view of recent history and an inkling of what it meant not to be able to fit your life to Franco regime definitions.

Carmen was born in the early 1950's, her older brothers and sisters during the 1940's. I calculate that her mother was born around 1920 and her father around 1910.

"My father was a Red, as they used to say then, to simplify, to call them all by the same name. He was married during the Republic and had one daughter, but I did not know that until I was an adult, you see. He separated from her and came to Valencia, and then the Civil War broke out and he joined the army, something to do with administration, but he was promoted little by little and he took part in battles, too, he has told us about that, and he was made captain. Not long ago I found those papers where it said about his being named captain, my mother had saved them, and I think there must not be very many of those papers left, because most people would lose them or burn them, so I made photocopies and sent to my brothers and sisters, one to each, and my mother has kept the originals. A souvenir, right?"

"My father was bitter. He always talked of the loathsome fascists and so on. I don't understand how he got away with it, how come they did not do

anything to him. Well, I guess he was careful in the street, but at home he screamed and carried on. After the war he hid out in Valencia, in the home of a lady who was a rightist, but she was one of those who wanted to save reds, out of charity I suppose." Carmen told about how her father was discovered and taken to the bullring but was saved in the last minute by an influential friend, who happened to walk by and got him out of the line of captives waiting to go inside. In the immediate postwar era soldiers of the Republican army were often executed on the spot, and a captain would have had a small chance of survival once inside the rounding up area.

Soon afterwards Carmen's father fell in love with a maid working for a family in the same building where he lived. She became pregnant. "And they could not get married, of course, since he was already married. They went into hiding, more or less, in a boarding house in the port area, just like that, without anything, just a small suitcase."

They collected cigarette butts from the street and survived by making new cigarettes from them and "selling" them to soldiers for bread. But with the help from some slightly better off relatives, they improved their position little by little. They worked in a bar and in a boarding-house, living in the back rooms of these places, until they had saved a small capital and could set up a stall selling used clothes in a market.

"And that was when I was born, while my father had that stall. My mother did housework in private homes and my sisters took care of me, I have three older sisters and one older brother, I am the fifth one, and then there is my younger brother. Well, in one of those houses where my mother worked, it so happened that the *portería* became vacant, the *portera* retired.<sup>16</sup> So then we went to live there. My father did not want it, it seemed like a degradation to him to go to a *portería*. But my mother insisted, she saw that she had to fight for her six little ones, because by that time my younger brother had been born, too, and she insisted, because that way they had some more money. My father was bitter, like I told you, because of the war, so he did not want to have anything to do with the *portería*, that was my mother's business."

"My father went through so much and he died without seeing Franco die. He always used to say that, that he wanted to see Franco die, because then he would be able to die in peace. But he died almost ten years earlier. Guess what? Last year, when Felipe won, I cried."

"We went to a nuns' school, my brother and I, believe it or not. It seems like a contradiction, but my mother wanted the best for us. My father did not agree, he wanted nothing with the nuns. My father is eight years older than my mother, it was another way of seeing things. She has struggled a lot for us, there were six of us and we had very little - and we arrived without their wanting it, of course, the first one obviously and the rest the same, they did not want any of us. I think he saw everything looking so black, everything without any solution, that he decided to just live, to vegetate as I say. As to the children, the only thing he worried about us was for us not to see any bad examples at home. Many times he said he would like to be rich in order to have a very big refrigerator always full, so that his children could eat whenever they felt like it. And we said, but Dad, we are not hungry. But beyond that, nothing. He never bothered about finding out if we had homework or how we were doing, what grades, nothing. At first we went to a state school, and I remember we got the American milk and that round cheese they sent. There were three categories there, that is what we said: those who brought cocoa powder to mix with the milk, those who had only sugar and those who did not even have a glass! Well, I belonged to the sugar category. Normally. Some days I guess I had no sugar, and that did not matter, but usually I had sugar.

"But the state schools were not what they are now, you know. More than anything, then, it was fooling you. They taught you to read and write, just the bare minimum, and some numbers, something about old history, the Visigoths, and then religion, and that was all.

"My older brother and sisters finished state school. My oldest sister quit at twelve and went to work sewing in a shop, they taught her there. The others finished at fourteen. But as my mother saw that she was able to do a little bit better, she took me and my brother to a nuns' school. And there one thing happened. They had asked me for my Family Book and I said so at home.<sup>17</sup> And my mother went to the school. They began talking in front of me, and I did not understand much, but I am convinced children understand without understanding, because then they got me out of there and did not let me listen to what they said, and they never again asked me for my Family Book. But I knew something was happening. There is some sort of subconscious. I knew there was something wrong with my parents. I don't know... I heard some friends talk about their parents' wedding, that they had seen photos, that there were wedding

pictures in their homes... I remember that one day I came home from school, and my mother was washing in the yard - it was a very old building, you know the ones with a bathroom in the yard and a stone wash-basin where the only faucet was, and there was my mother washing in an aluminum bucket... and then I asked her about her wedding picture and I remember that for a moment she did not know what to say. This must have been in 1958 or so, because I remember that after a while she said very quickly that the flood washed it away, because the flood had just been and we all had it very much in mind, and the idea occurred to her as a solution, and I believed it."

"Then came a day when my second sister whispered to me with that air of mystery, you know: Mom and dad are not married. Dad is married to another lady, she said."

I asked how the sister knew. Carmen laughed and shrugged. "I don't know. I never asked her. I just kept quiet, real quiet, I never said anything to my friends or to my mother, I kept everything inside myself. When the other lady died, my parents got married. They did not tell us anything. I was nine and I remember it perfectly well. I realized it, of course I realized it - and now, when I say that to my mother, she is sort of stunned, she does not know what to say! Because, look, my father's boss was the best man, and he came to our house, and that by itself was unheard of, and then you see that there is a feast prepared in a house where we never held any parties or anything, there was good food, and my parents left with that gentleman, the boss, and well dressed, my mother had bought a new dress, and all of this without money... You see your parents buying things like that, when they have no money, and you know that something is happening here."

Carmen considered herself "clumsy", i.e. not very intelligent, and she hated school. "To send me to the nuns' school was not a favor my mother did me, but a very big disfavor, it was brainwashing, there was a very big contradiction between what you heard in school and what you heard at home. I did not understand, so I was passive, just listening, looking out the window, wanting to go outside. I have always considered myself clumsy, since things went so badly for me in school - now I can tell I am not all that stupid, but in school things just got worse and worse. And that nuns' school cost my mother many sacrifices. You see, in my home, since we had nothing... one thing we always had was the radio, that was never missing, because we have always loved

music. But nothing else, as to furniture just the minimum, do you understand? Well, in that school one had to wear a uniform and a medal of the Virgin. Well, that, for us, was something... My mother went to speak to the nuns to say that we could not buy the medal; I don't know how much it cost, but it was made of silver and quite big. Well, the nuns let me have it and my mother paid it off little by little. That medal, what it cost her!"

The living standard of Carmen's family was the living standard for a majority of urban Spaniards in the 1940's and 1950's; these were the typical worries, and such were the ideological contrasts and consequent personal problems. The story also shows how things improved. The younger children went to better (at least more expensive) schools and stayed in school longer.

In 1983 Carmen was just over thirty. She was married to a gasoline station attendant and they had two children. In 1986 I met her mother, too, an energetic woman nearing retirement, still beautiful, and happy in a new relationship after many years of solitary widowhood. After all her hardships, including many years of factory work in Germany after her husband's death, she had just been awarded the pension due to a widow of an army captain!

Carmen's story also illustrates some aspects of the gender system in the 1940's and 1950's. Her parents were rebels, raising an illegitimate family in those times. They never let themselves be taken in by the regime propaganda, even though they had to be "careful" and even though they considered a nuns' school the best thing for the children as soon as they could afford it. Carmen's parents were unusually frank with their children in not hiding their political views from them. But in spite of all this bravery, they could not bring themselves to tell their children of their civil status, not even when they were finally able to get married. This matter is seen as touching directly on sexuality and that could just not be talked about. Noone did that.

The mother was in charge of the children. It goes without saying - and Carmen did not say it - that she was the one who cooked, cleaned, washed, consoled, and so on. But more than that, she was also the one who had to "struggle for her little ones". The father worked and took his income home. But he was still concerned with social prestige, while the mother had to insist on what was necessary and work extra hard. The father did not want to move to the *portería*, and when he agreed, it was on condition that he would not have to take on the role of *portero*. However, they did move.



I am sure the father saw himself as head of the family and the one who had the last word in disagreements, but when it came to a mother's struggle for her children, that was respected. A woman wins if she can base her arguments on her role as mother, but she has to pay a price, taking on heavy responsibilities and being a mother above all. The father in this case, and in most of the stories I collected, was only interested in giving his children a fair living standard (at whatever level that was defined, according to class, time and place), and not in following his children's development. Carmen also told me about her father's strictness and disciplinary measures. She thought one reason he died early was that her older sister got pregnant and "had to" get married. "That, to him, was a real blow."

It was the mother, not the father, who got the last word again when it came to deciding on a school for the youngest. And it fell on her to meet the extra expenses. Once again, a mother wins and a mother pays. But a father who cannot pay feels bad. He dreamt of being able to buy enough food for his children, even perhaps after the worst was over and lack of food, literally, was no longer the main economic problem. He also felt it his duty to guarantee the morality of his children. They were not to see any bad examples at home - presumably that was one important reason why the parents could not tell their children that they were not married.

### Chapter 3. More food and more adultery.

Beniturians talk a lot about change. And when they talk about change, they choose two kinds of examples above all. They talk of economic change and gender change. These are the aspects of change that stand out in their everyday lives.<sup>18</sup>

People are well aware of the great economic improvements of the 1960's and of the main structural changes that were both cause and effect of the boom. People are also aware of the economic crisis. Even though, in Spain as well as in the rest of Europe, it originated around 1973, it was not noticeable until four or five years later and it was not until the 1980's that it came to look really threatening. There were plenty of beggars in the city and a few beggars made their appearance in Benituria streets while I was there. Unemployment rose steeply. In 1986 no improvement was yet in sight and worry was changing into something that sounded like resignation. In 1983 only about a third of the unemployed had unemployment compensation, and as "the crisis" grows older, that proportion diminishes. "I hope the unemployment will not continue like now when my children reach the age to look for a job," said worried mothers of children of all ages.

When informants talked of economic change, some focused on the years of improvement and some on the years of crisis. Younger people, who knew their chances to get a job were diminishing, were more pessimistic. But most people over thirty or thirty-five could hardly explain anything at all about their lives without talking of the material improvements they had seen, for example the sudden change from washing clothes by hand in the river to having one's own automatic washing machine. Often they chose extreme details of poverty in order to underline the contrasts in their lives. The tone was one of gratefulness for having escaped what noone ought to be forced to suffer.

The details in the examples often concerned food. The typical memories of immigrants from rural Spain, especially the southern parts, who had been children during the forties, were of parents quarreling over a drop of oil, of children stealing hidden bread, of fantastic ingenuities to make food stretch.

Perhaps there were also details about clothing, such as the happiness of getting one's first sandals made of old tires. Then came the difficulties connected with migration and finally slow improvement in Valencia. Lots of worries, lots of work, but final compensation. "Now I can eat anything that strikes my fancy - I feel like a queen!"

Many of these informants also stressed the difference between themselves and their parents in terms of different work load. "My mother worked like an animal all her life, do you hear that - like an animal!"

Those who were children in the 1960's also talk of poverty, but their examples are different. They talk of fathers with two jobs, of mothers going out to clean, of not being able to participate in school excursions. They were just coming to adulthood when I was in Benituria, and most of them were either in school or at university or else unemployed. They had a dark view of the future. Many of them were irritated with their parents' view of economic circumstances. "Sure they have starved and all that, but that does not make them heroes for the rest of their lives!"

Beniturians talk as much of gender change as of economic change. They seldom connect the two, however. Gender change is seen as vaguely produced by changing times in the abstract. Some think it is much too slow, some think it is so fast that it makes people dizzy. But there is approximate agreement about the direction of the change and that it is for the better.

Some typical phrases:

"Women have advanced greatly in society."

"There used to be a much bigger difference between men and women."

"My mother is progressing as much as she can and she feels a little bit freer."

"All that idiotic stuff about sitting at home waiting for little huzzy, I think all of that is dying out."

But a very common idea is also that the gender system has changed "but not as much as people say" or similar qualifiers. These qualifiers can mean that one doubts the extent and speed of the change, or that one doubts the benefits of the change. It is almost impossible to express doubts about the benefits more directly. Even women who lived conservative lives usually spoke as if they were just adapting to special circumstances.

Those who said that the change is small were usually women but included some progressive men. For example, one young man who worked in a pharmacy said:

"Well, I am a pessimist or perhaps a realist. It does not change as much as they say. There are some changes that are very necessary, I won't deny that, there are changes, yes, but very elementary ones. For example, many married women take the pill, and that used not to be so. But that is not enough, it is not just a question of not having heaps of children, but rather the pill ought to be a way of changing your relationships, to change your marriage and your life into something different - and that is not happening. There are still many barriers to be conquered."

The treacherous "still" ended this pessimist's comment on a cautiously optimistic note. Again and again this little word crops up and reinforces the self-evident nature of the idea that change is automatic and for the good, even in the speech of sophisticated informants who may express doubts on a more conscious level of their discourse.

Many informants were well aware of the variations, in Benituria or in Spain as a whole. "Well, here in Valencia everything has developed very much, but you ought to see my village, there we women are the last in everything."

The most common attitude was that "there is a lot left". "I think what happens is that there are still different roles and what is permitted one sex is not permitted the other," said one informant and her comment is representative. She was not a sociologist. "Role" is a sociological word and actually more so in Spanish than in English, because the word used is "rol" -imported, foreign-sounding and used only in the sociological sense.<sup>19</sup> Even so, it has entered everyday language. And there it means not just any sociological role, usually, but role in relation to the sexual division of labor in a wide sense.

Actually, when people talk of "*los roles*", what they refer to is the gender system. But the most progressive, who use it most, also place a negative evaluation on it. They mean approximately "the roles as they have been but as we would want them to stop being." A very common phrase is: "There are still many roles." The implication is that there ought not to be any. The fact of sociological words entering everyday language is also one sign of change so far-reaching that it must be culturally handled in a rather conscious way.

Many women and some men said that one reason for the gender change being slower than one might want, and slower than one might expect, seeing the "changing mentalities" of most women, is that men have not kept up with women in this area of change. And this is harsh criticism, because the usual view of all kinds of change is that it is good and that the intelligent person adapts to it.

Many women also said that equality will only come when women learn to be worthy of it. "We have to work to develop ourselves, for as it is now, education has not prepared us for it." There were many different ideas about what such preparation would entail, but there was little doubt that the effort must be made. Common ideas of things women have to learn were: to drive a car, to stop being so ingratiating to men, to handle bank accounts, to learn skills to be able to get a job, to fix faucets. The most common idea was an all-purpose one, "we must stop being so ignorant."

Most women felt that women oppress women. But they hesitated on where to place the blame. They talked of mothers educating daughters for "purity" and selfishly arranging for them to stay near mother instead of giving them self-confidence and skills to go out and conquer the world. They talked of ever present gossip as something very negative and something only women practice.

Sometimes, not very often, men as a category were blamed. Often individual men were blamed for details. Most of the time it was a matter of the victims themselves blaming the victims. Some women felt this was a contradiction but could find no way out of it; others took it to be one more sign of the well-known fact that women are evil, and sometimes they arrived at the logical conclusion that it is just as well if women are not as free as men, since they would only make matters worse.

On a more substantial level, the two main themes the informants see in the changes in the gender system are the disappearance of the old code of sexual morals and the increase of women's participation in social life. One middle aged woman, asked (by one of the student assistants; cf below on method) if she saw any changes in sex roles, exclaimed, "I do! Lots! I'll explain to you: it used to be the men who decided everything, it used to be a man had a right to go anywhere he felt like, they could go to bed with fifty thousand women, but not a woman, if you went to bed with anyone you were a whore, and in the evening you could not go out except with your parents or an aunt or someone, and today

you young people go where you feel like, when you feel like it, you young women have the same rights as the men, and whatever you do noone condemns you or even comments anything -oh, has it changed!!!"

Some informants stressed the social controls of sexual behavior, others the internalization of controls. "I had a few friends, girls like me, rather well educated, too serious people said of us, but you see it was absolute terror we had of men; any boy looked to us like perversion personified. Now these things have changed a lot, the young people now live much better, people just a bit younger than myself (she was thirty-four), but I did not get to participate in the good things, in my period it was still horrible." The envy this woman felt towards those who got "the good things" was also typical. Middle aged women felt sad thinking of what they had lost. "We missed the train." Some were ambivalent, however, and thought that the youth today were exposed to greater risks and found it more difficult to be happy.

The fact that before" (a common and conveniently vague way of referring to previous conditions) women had to get married was often mentioned as an example of something bad. Some talked of the material need (a woman could not support herself), others of cultural pressure (one was only an adult woman when one was married and had children), but the consensus was that the young women of today have more of a choice and that is a good thing.

The informants gave many examples of old norms, just like they gave examples of the old bad economic conditions. But when it came to gender, the examples were of a different kind. They were often clichés, and they were often chosen, so it seemed, to be as absurd as possible from the point of view of "modern ideas" in order to underline the cultural distance the informants had covered. Many talked of the pressure to be a virgin on the wedding night. Many confessed total ignorance on sexual matters. There were many mentions of the prohibition of going out alone; one extreme case is the woman who, the day before her wedding at the age of twenty-eight (in 1963), was not allowed to go to confession unaccompanied.

In the other main theme, the increased participation of women in public life, the main or almost sole example was work outside the home. Hardly anyone gave examples of political activities (except those few who were politically active themselves) or intellectual or artistic achievement. But it was always implied that employment was just one aspect of a whole new situation, where a woman can



"Village" houses and an old Benituran woman.



A young Benituran woman in her "progressively" furnished home.

now "realize herself" as the fashionable expression had it. For the women of Benituria, employment was the most visible and best comprehended part of that situation. I find that logical. Most of them did not have employment, but most had had it before marriage and most of them were married to men with employment and they and their children depended on that employment. And unemployment was the great social crisis symptom. Employment had become a key symbol of social life.

Most of the women felt quite certain that a woman with employment has more of a say not just in public life but also inside her family. And that is important. Perhaps for most women it was more important than anything else, for family life is the reality they know firsthand and see as central in life for all human beings.

"I would never take what my mother had to take (*aguantar*" said one woman employed in a department store.

"A woman with a job can talk to her husband as an equal and he has to respect her," said another young woman, also with a job.

The question of men sharing household tasks was important to most women and often mentioned as an example of gender change that had started to happen. Most women thought that men do a lot more than they used to. But usually their own husband did not. And they excused him with a variety of special circumstances. (Cf chapter on gender themes.)<sup>20</sup>

The changes mentioned in the area of gender change could be summed up under the heading of "increased justice" and many informants, especially the progressives, talked of it in precisely such abstract terms. I will come back to who the progressives are, but one way of defining them is to say that they are the ones who stress the abstract values of European thought in the tradition of the Enlightenment and do so in a way that implies that these are undoubtable values, translatable into concrete terms, and that society should change accordingly.

The idea of justice and the idea of less strict sexual morals as signs of gender change were sometimes confused in a telling way. One very religious woman who approved of gender changes had some difficulty with her world view as a whole. She said that she thought it was fine that the civil law is no longer the same as the canon law. "So now, if a woman wants to commit adultery or if a man wants to commit adultery, it is up to them to fight with their



consciences, and, if they are not believers, commit as much adultery as they want to..."

In other words, she thought that civil laws and regulations should be separated from religious laws in the name of justice and freedom of belief, and she saw that the important substantial changes around gender had to do with sexual morals, so she found adultery an appropriate symbol for social improvement. She was not being sarcastic. And she herself obviously disapproved of adultery. So she had to draw a moral frontier between herself and others. Yet, precisely choosing the example she chose, she proved that she, too, was on the side of changing times. This kind of subtle contradictions and more or less conscious incoherences are common in the minds of Benituriens.

## Chapter 4. The tools.

For this study of cultural aspects of a changing gender system, we need a definition of gender system, a theory on cultural change and a technique for analyzing data that will illuminate precisely cultural change (and neither the psychological, too deep, level of personality, nor the naïvely empirical, too superficial, level of statements at face value). The purpose of this chapter is to lay this groundwork.

### a. Gender.

Women and men are categories of persons and the criterion for the categorization is biological. But biology, like everything else, has to be interpreted, and interpretation can vary culturally. In Western society, for example, there is a clear though unnamed independent parallel to biological sex, so that a man can be more or less manly and a woman more or less womanly. (Cf Izquierdo 1985.) We need a term for what has to do with sex but is not "objectively" biological. "Sex role" or "social sex" have been used, but in international women's studies and feminist anthropology, the term gender has been in wide use for ten or fifteen years, and I find it preferable, since it does not exclude any aspect of what societies do with the biological fact.<sup>21</sup> Gender includes anything that human beings collectively make of the biological fact that our species has sexual reproduction.<sup>22</sup> To focus on gender is to focus on the division of human beings in (usually) two kinds - what sort of features make up the dividing line, where is it drawn, what political and economic consequences does it have?

The term gender system, as I use it, says nothing in itself of whether the system is egalitarian or hierarchical. Or, if the latter is the case, about who is found where in the hierarchy. It is a term that simply poses that there is such a thing as a gender system that one can ask questions about and that can be described for any society. To illustrate with something better known, we can say

that the concept of gender system is homologous to the concept of mode of production in Marxist theory. Mode of production is a concept that describes the effects of the organization of production of goods on all aspects of society, both base and superstructure. Gender system is a concept that describes how the organization of men and women into two or more categories based on sex likewise penetrates all corners of society.<sup>23</sup>

A mode of production is above all a way of making visible certain power relationships. It shows how the organization of production, especially the social hierarchy produced through it, is present in interactions and situations that are defined as being about totally different matters. Likewise, a gender system is about much more than the reproduction of the species or even the division of labor according to sex. It shows how the organization of human categories based on sexual characteristics is present and influences what happens in all sorts of situations, even those that are ostensibly defined as gender-neutral. Another way of defining gender system would be to say that it consists of the "connections between the sexual division of labor in procreation, the sexual division of labor in the market and the ideological sexism embodied in law, politics, religion, aesthetics and philosophy."<sup>24</sup>

The concept gender system originated in a social context where the problem at hand was a hierarchy where women were placed lower than men, so most of the discussion has centered on that type of hierarchy. In feminist discourse it has come to be called patriarchy.

In anthropology - and etymologically - patriarchy means the rule of fathers. In feminist research it has come to mean the rule of men. Androarchy would probably be a better word, but for now I will continue established usage. Patriarchy in this book, then, means a hierarchical system that places men higher than women in some sense. What is important is not to confuse levels. Patriarchy is one type of gender system.<sup>25</sup> Just as there are in principle infinite possibilities for organizing a mode of production, there are in principle infinite ways to organize a gender system. And just as the dominant mode of production in Western society is capitalism, there is a dominant gender system, patriarchy. Both capitalism and patriarchy are hierarchical systems, and if one does not believe that hierarchies are natural/divine/rational or otherwise legitimate, it is a political as well as a scientific task to describe them in order to denounce their negative effects on human beings.<sup>26</sup>

## b. A theory of practice and change.

"It is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions. (...) But rejection of mechanistic theories in no way implies that, in accordance with another obligatory option, we should bestow on some creative free will the free and wilful power to constitute, on the instant, the meaning of the situation by projecting the ends aiming at its transformation, and that we should reduce the objective intentions and constituted significations of actions and works to the conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors." (Bourdieu 1979:73)

Through this kind of thinking, Bourdieu wants to transcend the old debates between structuralism and interactionism, between subject and object, between materialism and idealism. The tool is a theory of practice and the main concept in that theory is habitus.<sup>27</sup> The central idea is that experience structures thought habits and thought habits structure actions. And other people's actions as well as one's own structure everyone's experience. Thinking in this way, social structure and material conditions are neither negated nor reified. For anthropologists, such thinking may not be new, but it needs to be formalized.

To live is to make decisions. One must continually choose to do one thing rather than another. Decision-making cannot be wholly conscious, that would be exhausting and perhaps logically impossible.<sup>28</sup> Much of it is therefore based on routine, traditions, repetitions, ready-made patterns, culture... "the schemes" (*los esquemas*) as Benituriens often call it.

I take it that the human mind is a multi-layered thing, with complex and continuous but partial communication between the levels. We cannot afford to be aware of everything, but we cannot afford to be totally unaware of what we cannot afford to be aware of. All cultures have techniques to solve this paradox: dreams, art, trance, psychoanalysis, ritual... (Cf Bateson 1978:106-125, 407,414) The layers that we are more or less aware of steer our more practical actions that are not wholly routinized but yet patterned. These layers are usually referred to as "culture", since it is common knowledge that the patterns are more or less collective.

Culture is a vague word, yet we cannot ban it from use; vague terms have advantages. What is necessary is to combine them with more precise terms for certain kinds of descriptions.

### c. **Habitus.**

Bourdieu (1979) says, in my words: what regularity we can discern in social life is neither due to norms being followed, nor due to subconscious universal structures of the human mind, nor improvised out of nothing. To be able to handle an infinite number of different kinds of situations with a minimum amount of success and safety, actors (individuals or groups) use a small number of schemata that are easy to learn because they are few and always applicable because they are vague. They have to be few and vague. But they are better than chance action, because they are the abstracted result of previous experience, both individual and collective.

Because they are the abstracted result of previous experience, the schemata are also inescapable. No human being can act as if she did not possess such schemata. But they are not eternal and they are not immune to even individual and punctual efforts at changing them. They are as a matter of fact constantly changing, because they exist only in human minds, and human minds interpret them differently in each moment, because they always interpret everything in the light of their whole experience. If we have a set-1, in which all experiences up to that moment are included, in the next moment the set will be a different one, set-2, because set-1 is a part of past experience and has now been taken into account.

The schemata are constantly stored by human action in social and material facts. In this sense they exist outside human minds. But to become effective - in learning, as reminders, for sanctions, etc. - they must pass through human thinking again, they must be interpreted. The image of Virgin Mary in the church of Beniturgia is stored human thinking, but it is not interpreted in the same way by Beniturgians today as by those Beniturgians who made it and placed it in the church, nor as by those who tried to burn it during the civil war, nor as by those who placed it in hiding to save it from burning.

The schemata can be called dispositions. They are not habits, they are schemata that determine action - sometimes repeated action, i.e. habits, sometimes original action. What action the disposition actually produce depends on the situation, or the conjuncture as Bourdieu usually calls it.

A set of dispositions typical for an individual or for a category is called habitus. Bourdieu defines habitus in many ways, but central words are always structuring structures or regulated improvisations. And central to all definitions, too, is the thought that habitus produces habitus, like eggs produce eggs, by way of other things that might interest us more, such as structured action or hens.

In other words, social structure reproduces social structure, but it does so via the conditioning it works on the human mind. And this conditioning is complex enough, so that it changes itself. The habitus is never the same. It is itself one of the objective structures in any conjuncture or situation.

This study is an attempt to catch habitus in the making, relating it both to important facts of the situation (Benituria in 1983) and to its own past, its own structure. There are many different kinds of habituses in Benituria, because of its social complexity, but that is not the issue. Instead, what is sought are events and features that influence many situations in non-trivial ways and that thus tend to influence the various habituses, the dispositions of all. .

The objective structures - legislation, climate, language...- influence habitus, but habitus is itself an objective structure. Its most important function as such is to filter other objective structures, including the habitus of other individuals and groups as shown in their actions. Habitus is both inside and outside any given situation. To describe the pieces of habitus that influence the gender system, it is necessary to describe all objective structures, - social, cultural or material, - that are ever referred to in the context of gender. Since this is too great a task, I have limited the description to parts of structures that clash in such a way that one can presume that they must change habitus. They must cause change, because their clashes are difficult for the system to handle, because they are uncomfortable for the individual, and because they make actions in daily life ineffective.

Habitus is something an individual can have. But since individuals of similar background (similar specifications on dimensions like sex, age, class, region) have similar experiences, we can also talk of collective habituses. This double use of the term carries some risk of confusion, but it also has the

advantage that we do not have to reduce in either direction and we might escape an artificial counterposing of the individual and the collectivity. In an individual habitus, there are both such experiences as he has in common with others and experiences that are only his own. As for a collective habitus, no single individual carries, in all probability, all the dispositions it contains, since all have varying experiences, but we can say that the dispositions of a collective habitus are those that are shared by many and related to experiences that have to do with whatever circumstances are used to define the category. For example, women are different among themselves, but they have certain experiences in common, experiences that are related to their gender role, and the dispositions created by these experiences together make up a female habitus. Any woman has this female habitus, but it looks different because it is combined with different other collective habituses in her total individual habitus.

This makes it possible to speak of dispositions on all levels: for example dispositions of one particular woman, of women in Benituria, of women of working class in Benituria, of young Beniturian women, of all men and women in Benituria with paid employment, and so on. It is also possible to speak of dispositions that all Beniturians have in common, but these are very general and abstract and probably shared by almost all urban Spaniards, since there has not been sufficient time for "all Beniturians" to accumulate very much of common experience specific to Benituria as it looks now.

Many of the dispositions that determine actions for Beniturians have been shaped by experiences in other circumstances. Other places and other times and other material conditions. Some of these old dispositions work well in the new context, others do not. Some dispositions that might have worked well in the new context by themselves, do not because they clash with others. When dispositions no longer fit their context, they will change, this follows from the definition of habitus as produced by experience. But it takes some time. For a while we may have dispositions that do not fit. Bourdieu calls this the hysteresis or Don Quijote-effect. In a situation of fast and deep change, Don Quijote dispositions are common. Social and cultural contradictions are produced.

#### d. Doxa.

When the schemata or patterns we have learnt well work well, we learn them even better. They are reinforced. To use an image from Bateson (1978), they sink to ever deeper layers of the mind. Instead of speaking of conscious and unconscious, Bateson visualizes a stepless whole of degrees of consciousness. The things we can trust well, we can afford to let sink out of sight, while things that might have to be revised have to stay closer to or above the surface of consciousness, perhaps at the level of verbalizability, perhaps even at the level of formalized thinking.

What is well tried and true, becomes less visible. The things that are never contradicted in practice, the things that always work, become invisible. This is what Bourdieu calls doxa.

This concept is important when we analyze situations of change, because in all probability, the new objective circumstances will clash with some parts of doxa and thus make it visible. And this is a deep and painful kind of contradiction, very different in quality from the one produced by clashes between opinions in what Bourdieu calls the universe of discourse, i.e. the areas of culture where everyone knows that people are of different opinions. Doxa is invisible. It is not there, subjectively, and yet it is everywhere. It should be trusted, but suddenly it cannot be trusted. One feels stupid. What has been deeply sunk must be retrieved and modified.

As we will see, Beniturians talk a lot about progress. Some Beniturians define themselves as progressives and by this they mean that they adapt to changing times. We could say that they have found ways of modifying doxa, or that they have a habitus where what needs changing, in the light of present circumstances, is less deeply sunk. Many of the progressives refer to a point in the past when they "woke up" or "opened their eyes". The metaphors they choose fit well with the image of doxa as ever-present but invisible. Suddenly it becomes visible; it is a matter of looking at the world in a new way.

However, in the Beniturian case, where different kinds of doxas have come together in one space and are making each other visible, it is not useful to speak of doxa as either-or. The adjective, doxic, is preferable. What is very doxic is deeply sunk, a little further up but still far below the surface of consciousness are other things that are also doxic, but less so.



I will also use the term floating doxa.<sup>29</sup> This is an ideology, so it is above the surface of the conscious, but it is not well-elaborated, and it is extended and often vaguely referred to. Being vague, common and easy to refer to, it is seldom contradicted and often confirmed. So it becomes a firm belief, like doxa, and difficult to define, like doxa, even though, unlike doxa, it is visibly present. Barthes described it as "the public opinion, the majority Spirit, the petit bourgeois Consensus, the Voice of the Natural, the Violence of Prejudice." (Imbert 1982:85) There are several floating doxas in Benituria, as we shall see. They are easy to find and describe; what is difficult is to measure their strength and their impact on habitus.

#### e. How to find contradictions and doxas.

As we all know, there is often a difference between what people say and what they do. There can be another difference between what people say and what they think. We need techniques to squeeze information out of what people say in order not to take their utterances too literally. Life stories, for example, contain some information about what people really do. But above all they contain information about what people think people do and about what people think it is convenient to say about it.<sup>30</sup>

First, it is this semi-collective view of things, not what one individual "really" thinks deep down, but what people say to each other in social contexts, that is interesting for a description of the semi-conscious cultural aspects of life. Second, we must try to look through this presentable surface, to some degree, in order to describe dispositions and doxas.

My point of departure is that people select, organize and filter what they say. By select I refer to the unavoidable fact that one cannot talk about everything, so there is a process of decision as to what to talk about and what not. By organize I refer to the implicit rule of any verbal communication that what one says has to make sense, so there is a process of decision as to what to mention when and what to mention as cause or effect, etc. This decision has to take into account the probable organization of things in the mind of the listener. By filter I refer to what I take to be the fact that anything one talks about has to be related to something else one knows or thinks, so that there is a process of

contamination or staining, because of which what one says cannot be adequately understood unless something is known of the filter of other thoughts through which it has passed before being pronounced. The three processes take place at a rather low level of consciousness.

People select, organize and filter because they cannot do otherwise. It is not a question of cunning calculation. But to varying degrees, according to capacity and according to the requirements of the situation, they do so taking into account what they - on any level of consciousness - consider advantageous for themselves in the given situation. And the criteria for judging what is advantageous are in the habitus. So through analysis of what people say, one can get a view of habitus.

There is information in the ways people select, organize and filter. What follows is a list of items I looked for in what people said, items that served as windows on habitus.

There are for example accounts, on or between the lines. They can be analyzed for what they appeal to<sup>31</sup> and they can be analyzed for what things seem to require excuses, what things seem to require justifications and what things that may seem to require an account from the listener's point of view are not accounted for at all. The vocabulary of the accounts can also be analyzed; one and the same kind of account can be differently expressed.<sup>32</sup>

Accounts cannot be freely invented, they must connect with the actor's own dispositions for her to be able to imagine them at all, and they must connect with the audience's habitus in order to be understood and accepted. Therefore, in the same degree that there is variation in habitus, the bridging effort necessary to give a good account stretches the habituses of all concerned. So accounts are places where the constructed nature of social reality shows through.

Metaphors and jokes are others. They are used in contexts where an extra effort is needed to make sense of something, and they work only if they connect the thought worlds of the speaker and listeners to each other.<sup>33</sup>

Most interesting are such places in a text where the outsider feels something is missing. Anyone who has tried to read a novel or listen to music from a foreign culture has had the experience. A link, an account, a reference to the effective agent... an expectation is not fulfilled. Something is missing. There are "holes" in any utterance, because of the need to select. Doxic ideas cover them. Where no explanation is seen as necessary, where the context and the

links between the parts are seen to be so obvious that nobody could miss anything, in such places there must exist a strong and widespread idea of some kind. It is not necessarily accepted by all, it may be controversial. But there is a reference to cultural schemata, structuring structures. Without them the narrative hole would be a trap, the joke would fall flat, the friendly insult would be misunderstood as a true insult and the metaphor would be a riddle.<sup>34</sup>

A different but related phenomenon are the places one could call semi-holes or marked holes. They are places where the explanation is not given but clearly hinted at, as something everyone knows. It is not elaborated but its presence is marked, somehow. One can say "as we all know" or "you can imagine the rest" or one can make telling gestures or expressive voice modulations.

At other times the explanation is given but the giving of it is felt to require a justification or an excuse in itself. The feeling is that it should really be unnecessary to give it. The markers are then expressions like "of course", "naturally", "thus", "inevitably", "as I am sure you realize", "as always", etc - expressions I will call expressions of self-evidence.

The semi-holes or marked holes, taken literally, could be signs of something very similar to true holes, something quite doxic. But with the difference that it has become slightly visible, at least visible enough to make it possible to realize it exists and that the outsider may not be aware of it and may need an explanation.

The semi-holes could, however, also be something very different. At least it was my experience in Benituria that such places were often signs of the very opposite of the self-evident. I will comment in chapter 18, on the Benituran dispositions to view conversation as an opportunity to persuade others of your own views, and the disposition to consider emotional charge as one effective rhetorical device. Expressions of self-evidence can be one of the tools in such an effort. They can shore up your own convictions, or cover up your own uncertainty. They can help give the appearance of established fact to something that is not yet firm cultural interpretation. They are perhaps especially tempting to use where things are quite the opposite of self-evident, namely controversial. Expressions of self-evidence can therefore be indications of contradictions or conflicts or on-going debates.

People are often conscious of the most common differences of opinion within a society, especially those that find expression in open conflict. In a society undergoing rapid change there can certainly be differences of opinion as to where the differences of opinion are located, and in all societies the more powerful categories of the population have a tendency to see more consensus than the less powerful, who cannot so easily be blind to what hurts them because they are the losers. But apart from such partial exceptions, I think points of conflict are by their nature interesting to the people involved and therefore usually visible; they will be referred to in verbal exchanges. In communication across the dividing line of any given conflict, they may be played down or treated with humor, to make the exchange possible, but they will in all probability be referred to in one way or another, since serious social complications could ensue if there were misunderstandings as to where each party stands on issues that divide them.

If this is placed in conjunction with the disposition for considering it an obligation in friendly communication to make it clear where one stands and make a persuasive case for this stand, it will be clear that there are many reasons for Beniturians to be defensive and/or emphatic around well-known points of conflict or current debates. These emphatically marked non-holes are then also special data with their specific load of information.

Marked non-holes can indicate other things than conflict, too. For example, I had found it intriguing that very many of my informants adopted a didactic attitude, saying things like, "you may not know about this, but you see..." or "this may be hard for you to believe, but really..." This could indicate that changes were so fast and radical that even persons who were not very old had to make efforts to make past events and thoughts credible. But it could also be that they were being nicely explicative with an outsider. However, I found that these expressions were as frequent in the students' material as in my own. The students were young, but they were all Spanish by birth. And the didactic attitude seemed to intrude in various dimensions: from older to younger, from more educated to less and also from less to more, from workers to students, from village-bred to city-bred and vice versa, etc.

I felt safe to conclude: the frequency of didactic attitudes is one more indication of the liminality-like social phase. Cultural categories that used to be firm and well-known are being partially dissolved so that as soon as there is any

dimensional difference between two conversants, it is necessary to take steps to avoid misunderstandings. Explanations are in order much more often than they would be under more settled circumstances.

Even though there may be differences of opinion as to where the differences of opinion are located, there could also be another level where, for the majority of differences, there was agreement as to what these differences are, what they are about and who usually stands where. References to such a level of agreement about disagreement can come in many shapes, among others that of expressions of self-evidence. So these expressions have to be very carefully classified. The agreement as to disagreement can also take the shape of some kind of labeling of people or sets of ideas. The most generally applicable construction of this kind in Benituria was the dichotomy progressives/non-progressives.

To sum up this section: the goal is to discover and describe cultural schemata, the structuring structures in a complex society where there are many different sets of them, complexly overlapping. There are certain places in speech - converted into text - that give good indications. But they have to be carefully analyzed.<sup>35</sup> I do not think it is possible in any mechanical way; the interpretation must be made against the background of general knowledge of the culture in question.<sup>36</sup> The method of analysis outlined here is just a small part of the total effort of understanding.

When we have found the most important cultural structures, it will become possible to describe the contradictions, both logical and material, and it will become possible to describe the important parts of doxa that influence action. To arrive at the conclusions about contradictions found in part F, Process, I first used the kind of analysis I have explained here to find the generalizations about the gender system presented in part E, Words. For details of this phase of the work, see chapter 16.

We can now take this tool box with us to Benituria and apply it to the events and situations we find there. Parts B, C, D and E are descriptions of various aspects of life in Benituria, always related to gender. There are generalizing descriptions and there are illustrative scenes or tales. The latter should be read as pieces of context to make the generalizing description more vivid and coherent. Together, the two kinds of descriptions will hopefully give both facts and feelings, both conditions and strategies, both things and ideas.

## PART B: PEOPLE

### Chapter 5. Dimensions of experience.

In complex societies, people are different because they have different experiences. And the differences are not arbitrary, experience is produced by certain important dimensions to a greater degree than by other life circumstances. Let us see who the women of Benituria are in terms of such things as relationship to production, civil status, schooling, regional origin, age and family size.

#### a. Class.

Let us start with class. Women's class membership is often understood to be derivative, depending on that of a man - her father if she is unmarried, her husband if she is married. The first anomaly, then, is that civil status influences class for women (and not for men). The second anomaly is that father's and husband's class are not necessarily the same. The third anomaly is that some women have a relationship to production in their own right, as capitalists or workers, and this is sometimes taken into account, sometimes not, so that the class system of a whole society can be manipulated statistically

In Benituria, on the basis of usual definitions, I calculate that around 65% of the population can be described as working class and no more than 15% as middle class. Between 15 and 20% belong to a diffuse category usually called lower middle class (lower-echelon administrative employees, owners of family businesses with no employees, foremen and qualified technical workers, etc.). The rest are agricultural families, students not living with their families, persons without a known occupation, and other unclassifiables.<sup>37</sup>

From the point of view of daily life, what counts is income. It is emically significant that employees of transnational companies or big banks, self-employed professionals and some businessmen earn enough to have one or two good cars, a well-equipped apartment with at least one bedroom per family

member, and a well-dressed housewife. They can eat out regularly and visit fancy social events. Such people seldom live in Benituria, but there are a few, and there are more in nearby barrios, so their lifestyle is visible as a model, a goal to dream of.

Small businessmen abound in Benituria. There are many bars, restaurants, newspaper kiosks, and food stores, and these are almost always family businesses with no employees. The families involved do not have a better living standard than qualified workers, perhaps rather the contrary. They and the employees in the sectors of transportation, construction, hotels and restaurants, administrative employees of small private companies as well as most non-university-educated state and municipal employees and factory workers usually have one car per family, send their children to state schools if they can, and go to the corner bar or at most to the movies when they go out. The wife is either a housewife or works in order to buy better clothes for herself and the children.

In other words, there is a visible and significant dividing line as to life style according to income. There is little social interaction across this line. Marriages occur, especially among university students who come from both sides of the line. But the income line is a divider and is seen as such. When I was in the field, the critical borderline income was around 100.000 pesetas net per family and month.

There are very few destitutes or beggars in Benituria. There are unemployed workers without unemployment compensation<sup>38</sup> but in 1983 they were usually not destitute. The extended nuclear family could handle the problem in most cases. A young person with an income does not get married if the father is unemployed; siblings can take on equal shares of supporting their parents or the family of one of them; unemployed youth just continue to live with their parents, and so on.

#### **b. Having a job or not.**

Excepting children and students, practically all male Beniturians have paid employment or live on benefits earned through paid employment, such as unemployment benefits or old age pensions. The men who farm or run

businesses live on the income from their own labor force, too, with hardly any exceptions.

Women do not relate to the labor market in the same self-evident way. Most women had a job before getting married. Young unmarried women usually either have a job or are unemployed or students. Most married women had given up their job when they got married or when the first or second child was born. They often commented that this was self-evident "before" but that now it was no longer so; it had become a decision and a difficult one.

To give up employment today is running the risk of never getting another job. This is especially true for women of fertile age, the kind of employee least wanted by the employers.

But to continue working is difficult or impossible for a woman with small children. First of all she has to take on a double work day, and the way the households are organized the chores are still time-consuming, in spite of the ubiquitous refrigerators and washing machines. Second, she must find someone to take care of the children while she is at work. This is no easy task, since there are few daycare centers with reasonable prices and hours, and even fewer of such a quality that a woman can feel she does not hurt her children by her choice to work. As we shall see, the most common solution is to leave the children with their grandmother. The woman's job then depends on this older woman's health, and other grandchildren and obligations. There are also many conflicts around the education of the children. Because of the rapid cultural change, most younger women feel that their mothers have unacceptable ideas about child rearing, so grandmother may not be a good solution to the babysitting problem.

Third, a woman knows her position at work is insecure. Spanish women are unemployed in a much higher proportion than men<sup>39</sup> and any "unjustified" absence is liable to arouse the prejudices of both employers and coworkers against "unreliable" women workers. And unjustified absences are hard to avoid, since there are no legal provisions for staying at home with a sick child, and since staying at home with a sick child (or accompanying mother to the hospital or any of the many other family care chores women have) is the duty of women, whether or not they are employed. Even a woman's legal absence, for instance maternity leave, is often resented by coworkers, because of the common employers' policy of not hiring substitutes but distributing the tasks among other employees.



Fourth, there is a high probability that her husband will complain about the way the household is run. He will feel cheated in comparison to his friends who get better service at home. Fifth, unless the family budget is under severe strain, a woman's choosing to work is seen precisely as a choice, and a rather frivolous one. She will be criticized for egotism, and family and friends may keep up a constant campaign asking her if she is sure the children do not suffer.

A progressively inclined woman in Benituria today has ready answers to all these accusations and dilemmas. Feminist arguments about independence and human dignity have filtered out through practically the whole population, albeit in distorted forms. She will feel she has a right to do as she chooses, and that the obstacles she encounters are old-fashioned and unjustified.

But they are there, and they are formidable. The majority of women quit their jobs in order to take care of their families. In 1983, only about one in five of all Benituran women between fourteen and sixty-five was "economically active" as the official phrase goes. Nationwide statistics show that the great drop in female economic activity sets in around the age of twenty-four and becomes pronounced after thirty, when most married women have had at least one child. Thereafter the curve is a straight but not quite as steep downward slope. The women do not go back to work after the children have grown. It used to be that they were too old by that time, or too worn out. Now, they take care of grandchildren. In other European countries there is a characteristic hump on the curve, as women go back to work after a number of years at home. This hump has not existed on the Spanish curve. Some statisticians say that it is now beginning to become visible.<sup>40</sup>

The nationwide statistics and the municipal statistics of Valencia on Benituria are similar on this point. 21% of women between fifteen and sixty-five are economically active and my estimate is that, discounting a few who are studying and a few who are farmers' wives, self-employed professionals or have their own business, about 18% have legal employment. To this number one should add an unknown number with black market jobs. For Benituran women, this means part time cleaning, in all probability.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless one must conclude that at least four fifths of all adult women in Benituria are housewives. The ones with illegal part time jobs work to shore up the family budget and are responsible for all household tasks. So are most of the married women with legal jobs and also all women over sixty-five, so in a

sense all adult women are housewives. Housewives do not retire until they are totally physically disabled. Girls who study sometimes help their mothers, boys who study hardly ever. If a housewife dies or becomes disabled the oldest daughter will usually become the housewife and also call herself *ama de casa*. As a matter of fact, most working women with a family will also say that they are *amas de casa*. In the concept of *ama de casa* lies part of the same connotations as in the English "housewife": that it is a woman, that she is married, that she has no paid employment. But there is a stronger connotation of carrying out household chores, so if one does that, one is an *ama de casa* even if one also has another job and even if one is not married but gives this service to father and siblings.<sup>42</sup>

What about the women who have paid employment, then? What sort of work do they have?

The most common jobs women have are "family help" and "doing a few hours". These jobs are as informal as their designations imply. "Family help" is work that wives (and sometimes children) do in a family business, e.g. agriculture or a small store. Adult men do not work as "family help", since they are registered as the owners of the business. There is of course no salary. The family help personnel lives on the benefits of the business, distributed according to the good will of the legal owner and the informal power relationships in the family. In the case of separation or divorce, the law says that a woman who has worked as family help should get some compensation, but this is difficult to work out in practice. Usually such a woman is suddenly without her husband, without her job and without even any proof of her experience that could help her to get a new job.

"To do a few hours" refers to cleaning. Domestic workers are seldom registered as employees and do not want to be. They have husbands who are employed, so they get the social security benefits anyway (except the old age pension, but they will get "points" added to the husband's pension and a widow's pension if he dies first). If they do not, they can choose to register as self-employed and pay their own social security dues. Few do. The main idea with a job like this is to earn as much cash as possible.

It is general knowledge that employers prefer men for most jobs, so women are limited to "women's jobs". And they are few. Women can compete for all jobs, since discrimination by sex is now illegal, but there are a million

ways for an employer to avoid them. Women have a better chance in state and municipal administration and are consequently overrepresented there in relation to their participation in the labor market generally. There are reasonably objective procedures of appointment for such jobs. There is also protection against arbitrary lay-off and, so far anyway, a great tolerance when it comes to fulfilling working hours requirements, so these jobs are both attractive and accessible for women.

The opposition on part of the employers against women having paid employment shows up clearly in the results (more women than men laid off, the *dote* practices, etc.) and have a "rational" basis in that women are less reliable, as long as there are no legal ways for them to stay at home when family care chores so require, as long as contraceptives are not generally used, as long as husbands will try to get their wives to stop working, etc.<sup>43</sup>

As to the feelings of the men around a prospective female worker - her father, brothers, novio, husband - it is impossible for a female researcher to know what they say among themselves.

To me, the men I interviewed all said that women are just as good as men and have the same rights to earn a living. But, some added, there is no doubt that women bear children and men do not, right? The implication was that men therefore have a duty to take care of women and children, and women ought to realize that work in your own home with your own children is not only a duty of love and a necessity for the species, but also a privilege.

Today the opposition is mainly against mothers working. When today's middle aged women were young, they say, there was also opposition against young unmarried girls working. This has varied greatly according to region and class. In Valencia it was reasonably common for young women to work and save money for their future home. But even many of my Valencian middle aged informants told of how they spent their youth, between school and marriage, helping their mother at home. Women from all regions and most social classes usually took sewing lessons during these years, too, whether or not they had a job.

The economic boom changed it all. There were jobs to be had and there were things to be bought with the money, and the large families needed extra incomes. There were jobs even for persons with only minimal skills.

Fathers are still worried about their daughters' exposure to "dangers" at work. But I never heard of any young woman meeting strong opposition at home today when she wanted to get a job. Informants whom I asked about this laughed and said that on the contrary, the fathers want the money! And anyone who can find a job is considered lucky! Most young people of both sexes turn their salaries over to their parents in exchange for board and room and some pocket money, and some substantial gift when they get married.

The main opposition comes from husbands. Parents are also likely to feel that it is a disgrace if their daughter "has to" work "even though" she is married. And the husband may feel ridiculed, as if the wife's wish to work was a remark on his capacity as a provider. A working woman's husband gets a lower quality service at home. Perhaps he is expected to do part of the household chores, too. He may be worried about losing control over his wife. Informants alluded to sexual control. As far as I could see there was little awareness of the loss of control that comes with loss of monopoly over incomes. (Cf part E)

Up to 1975 there was a law that required a wife to obtain her husband's permission to get employment. The law also said that a married woman's income, whatever its source, was to be administered by the husband. This law had more serious effects on middle and upper class women than on working class women. Most of my informants did not know it had existed. Many women still consider it necessary to obtain their husband's permission, whatever the law says, or it will be impossible in practice to keep the job (or the marriage). I knew of no woman who turned her salary over to her husband for him to control. There was either pooling (of all of hers plus all or part of his salary) or else she kept her salary for her "caprices". Since a married woman's salary must be defined as an extra, for the husband to be defined as the provider, it is difficult for the men to see any danger in her control over that extra. But of course there can be fights over the uses of it.

When I mentioned the old law, many informants said that on the contrary it is the men who turn over their salaries to their wives. This is not quite true. The men usually give a part of their salary to their wives for household expenses. The wives administer this money, but they are responsible to the husbands for the way they spend it, and for making it stretch if it is scarce. The hierarchy of responsibility is clear: the woman takes on the practical work of administration,

the man is in charge of overseeing that work and sanction abuses. The men keep part of the salary to pay major bills and "for their vices", i.e. as pocket money.

Since money is a sensitive subject, it is difficult to ascertain, but it seems that most wives do not know how much their husbands earn. Many complained. "He has pocket money and I don't." "He wants to buy good quality things, but I would rather have some more money for food, since I am the one who knows what food costs." Other women wanted to prove by non-conflict in this area that they had a good relationship with their husbands. "If the money he gives me is not enough towards the end of the month, I just ask him for more and he gives it to me."

The decision is still his. For progressives, it is a must to get away from this hierarchy of economic responsibility and find alternatives. Many women tried to demonstrate their "modern mentality" precisely by insisting that their husbands turned their whole salary over to them and they then administered it all, including large bills, or else the two of them took "the big decisions" after common deliberations.

Practical obstacles and ideological opposition combine to give the clear statistical result: most women have no income of their own. For women, then, there are two major ways of earning a living. One is through paid employment or its equivalents. The other is in an indirect relationship with production, as a housewife. These two ways are fundamentally different. The difference between them is much greater than any differences within each. <sup>44, 45</sup>

### **c. Being married or not.**

Being married or not is the other great divide for women.

Most women are educated to be married. Their mothers got married in a period when it was the only culturally and almost the only economically viable life style for a woman (except very special cases such as the aristocracy, the gypsies and a few others). The salient alternative to marriage was the convent. The role of the older unmarried woman was indeed not enviable. She would seldom have a home of her own. She would take care of her parents until they died and then join a brother or sister. Even today, it takes an above average income for an unmarried woman to have her own household. And an even

greater burden than the economic one was probably the cultural one: an unmarried woman was not a real woman. She had been judged unworthy.

So the message daughters receive from their mothers is that marriage is a prize. Their mothers had won it and were proud of it, whatever their conjugal happiness. (Their mothers would be married. Unmarried mothers sought solutions of one kind or another so that the children would not grow up as illegitimate.) And their message is also that the daughters ought to get married, because it confirms their womanliness, because it is their social destiny, because it is the best way to secure a living. It is "a solution" (*una salida*).

The messages from the mothers may be somewhat mixed, however. And all other messages are definitely mixed: from friends, teachers, neighbors, mass media... The reigning discourse is full of references to the equality of all human beings, the changing roles of women, the right and even duty for women, too, to choose.

The non-progressive press is still full of portraits of brides and beauty queens, however, and most so called entertainment programs on TV include comedians who make people laugh about bossy wives and incompetent secretaries who would much rather flirt than do their job. Daytime radio programs address housewives and do not question the coincidence of the female role and the housewife role. Above all the advertisements, in the press, on radio and TV, on boards and buildings, use seductive female bodies to sell anything connected to luxury, from perfume to brandy and cars, and sturdy women with aprons to sell detergents and food products. Obviously, the men are thought to be the consumers of sensuous products and women the consumers of necessities. And the message is that this is right and desirable for both sexes.

Since a majority of adult women are housewives, the experience of women is also that this is the normal state of affairs. But marriage is no longer doxic. It is questioned and debated. Young women usually end up getting married and quitting their jobs, but they will now have to find good arguments for this.

There are alternatives and they are not unattractive. To get married or not and under what conditions is a question. Since the sex ratio has evened out (after the imbalance produced by the civil war) and the economic situation improved, more women get married than formerly (del Campo and Navarro 1985:67), but the alternative is an alternative, not just a loser's resignation.

Unfortunately I have no exact statistics for Benituria, but in Spain as a whole only about ten per cent of the population is unmarried after the age of thirty (del Campo and Navarro 1985:24). I see no reason to believe that the figures for Valencia would be very different. City figures of marriage are, if anything, higher than rural ones. In big cities like Valencia one should add an unknown number of couples living together and for all practical purposes functioning like married couples, but who have not been legally married. The average age at marriage for Spanish women is now about twenty-three, having declined continually from 1960 and on (del Campo and Navarro 1985:69). The unmarried woman over thirty is an anomaly, and it is often commented behind her back that she is "too ugly" or has "too difficult a personality" to find a husband. Unmarried men over thirty are anomalies, too, but not denigrated. The typical comment is that noone has "caught him yet" or that he "loves his freedom too much".<sup>46</sup>

#### d. Children.

There is no doubt that family living is the norm. And there is no doubt that life will be very different for a woman if she is married or if she is not.

But perhaps children/no-children is a more crucial difference in her total life experience. Motherhood is a central cultural construction. Women have almost exclusive responsibility for day-to-day childcare and it is constructed as a heavy responsibility, ideologically, and becomes materially exacting because of the high standards.

Today, to have children is a decision.<sup>47</sup> The questions of whether or not, and when and how many, are huge in a young woman's mind. And for adult women, life turns out very differently according to whether she is a mother or not. How many children is a smaller difference; the cultural and practical barrier is between zero and one.

Today there are unmarried mothers. Most of them live with a man in a permanent and ideally monogamous relationship in a common home and pool their resources. They comply with the cultural definitions of marriage, except on one point, that of having the relationship officially registered. This is an important norm, and the unmarried mother is a rebel. To live with a man without marriage is still more of an exception than a rule, but everyone is aware of its occurrence, even if it causes some curiosity among neighbors and some heartache for mother and anger for father. When the children arrive, however, most of these couples get married. The legislation now prohibits discrimination of illegitimate children, they inherit both parents, and so on. But the new laws are little known and the idea of illegitimacy is strong and negatively loaded. Therefore, to remain unmarried when the children arrive is still a marked act of rebellion.

The unmarried mother living alone also exists, but she is even more of an anomaly. I heard of no case of a woman choosing such a situation. A mother living alone with her child is an abandoned woman; that is how it is considered, and it is probably the truth. Therefore, she is a sad figure no matter how much bravery and how many radical phrases she adorns her life with.

Most of my informants agreed that an unmarried mother had little chance of getting married. This may be so among young people. Quite a few of the separated women, who are almost always mothers, do enter new relationships,



however; perhaps the stigma of being separated is still lighter than that of having a child without ever having been married.

For the overwhelming majority of women, the dimension "children or not" is found only on one side of the dimension "married or not". One is either married, in which case one might or might not have children, or one is unmarried and childless. Since most married women do have children, unless they are physically unable to, and since most mothers quit their jobs, there are only two probable combinations: either a woman gets married, has children and earns her living as a housewife, or else she stays unmarried and childless and earns her living in paid employment (or business).

But the exceptions are important, because the numbers are growing. The statistically almost invisible innovations in this field are highly visible culturally. Therefore they are present to some extent in the experience of all women.

Benituria is not average when it comes to family size. It is one of the barrios of Valencia with the highest percentage of children under four, an effect of its being working class and immigrant, and mostly of recent construction. 30% of Beniturians are eighteen years old or younger.

But in Spain generally there is a historical development towards fewer births per woman.<sup>48</sup> And an even more important fact for women is probably that they now invest a much smaller number of years of their lives in having children. They have fewer, and they have them closer together. The nativity will in all probability continue to decrease. In surveys where people are asked how many children they would like to have, the younger give smaller numbers. Desire is not fact, but with the increased use of contraceptives they are coming closer to each other.

The dimensions described so far shape women's experiences in ways very different from those of men. Let us now look at a few dimensions, where the effects on habitus are similar for men and women: amount of schooling, regional origin and rural-versus-urban upbringing.

#### e. **Schooling.**

Men have more schooling than women. This is consistent on all levels in Benituria. For example, about 10% of men older than four are illiterate and 13% of

women. 4,5% of the men have university education and 1,6% of the women. 9% of the men and 5% of the women have finished their secondary education.

The figures on primary and secondary education are as a whole rather good, but say little because of the age structure of the barrio. Only 7% of the total population has finished secondary education, and about 2% have occupational training or middle technical schooling. 3% have university education or similar.

Unfortunately there are no figures on what kinds of schools the adult inhabitants of Benituria have gone to. Seeing that they come from all over Spain, one can only surmise that they must have been of all kinds. The children now growing up in the barrio have a relatively good school situation. The state primary schools can accommodate more than half of the age group, which is above the national average (as politicians always argue when Beniturians petition them). There are also a couple of religious schools that are reasonably well equipped and not too expensive. There are no fancy religious schools in the barrio but some in nearby barrios. Very few Beniturian children go to them, or to the radical experimental private non-religious schools of which there are a few in Valencia. Most of the children who cannot find room in the state schools go to private schools with fees Beniturian parents can pay, and they are of dismal quality.

#### f. City or village.

As to rural or urban origin there are no exact figures, except that about half of the population of Benituria has been born outside the city of Valencia. It is a safe guess that most of these come from villages.

There is some step migration, but the common experience for the small farmer or rural laborer in the 1960's and 1970's was that not only had it become difficult to survive in the home village, but he also knew that his whole region was depressed, so he usually took the train directly to a big city or abroad. After the initial official resistance in the 1950's (which included hunting the migrants down on the railway stations of the big cities, easy to identify as they were then, and sending them back home), there were official government migration programs. Most non-Valencian Beniturians I talked to had come directly from a medium or small village, directly from agricultural work to city work, and in

most cases they had chosen Valencia because they already had kin or friends there who could help them find a job and a place to live.

Since about half of the Benituriens have been born outside Valencia and since they are relatively young and have many children, and these children count in the statistics as Valencians (=born in Valencia), one can conclude that a large majority of Benituriens homes are non-Valencian.

There is a small number of Valencians who have come from other parts of the city, and some who have come from villages in the region of Valencia. Finally there are the native Benituriens, the people for whom it has been a village. They are usually called "the autochthonous ones" (*los autóctonos*). They are now a rather small proportion of the population.

#### g. "Nationality".

This brings us to the dimension of regional origin, more important in Spain than in most European countries. The "historical regions" are perhaps more similar to nations than to regions and they are so called by the new nationalists. In the Constitution from 1978 they are called "nationalities or regions".

What is clear from my material is that there are people in Benituria from all regions.<sup>49</sup> For the individual, the experience of moving from one region to another is similar to changing country. The laws do not change (but there are some exceptions), and the school system changes only a little (but the differences are growing). But often the language changes, or at least the dialect. The climate can change drastically. Daily rhythm changes somewhat, probably. Courting customs probably change even today, and they have been dramatically different. Family size and economic structure can change very much. The landscape changes. Food habits and available food products vary a lot and are culturally significant. The political traditions are different and very noticeable in voting patterns today. What is meant by having a good time can be very unexpected, and there may be very different expectations on friendship. So migrants have some learning to do.

I am often tempted to generalize from my material from Benituria to the total urban reality of Spain. More than half of the Benituriens are non-Valencians and they come from no specific part but from all over. Therefore daily life in

Benituria is daily life, not in Valencia, not in Jaén, not in Cuenca... but in an abstracted, evened-out, generalized, almost imaginary "Spain." It is probably true that it is similar to daily life in other growing cities of Spain. However, obviously all my data are from one specific barrio of Valencia and should not be over-generalized.

#### h. Age.

Finally there is the dimension of age. At any one moment, the age of a person certainly influences her or his experiences. First, the older you are, the more experiences you have had time to accumulate. Second, the age period you are in dominates your present outlook and determines what kinds of experiences are most important to you at the moment. Third, different age cohorts have different experiences of the same historical events.<sup>50</sup> It is not the same thing to be twenty years old when an economic boom happens, and therefore be able to get jobs and a standard of living you had previously never dared to imagine, as it is to be one of the many children born during that boom and who will therefore always have many competitors, first for scarce schooling opportunities, later for scarce jobs.

Of the close to 25,000 Beniturians in 1979, 7% were four years or younger, 16% were between five and thirteen, 7% between fourteen and eighteen, 42% between nineteen and forty-five, 19% were between forty-six and sixty-five and 8% were older. It is quite a typical age structure for the peripheral working class areas of Valencia.

There are, we can see, many kinds of Beniturians. Much of this book is about the consequences of this variation for the gender system. But there are also certain statistical concentrations. This is more so for women, since four fifths of them have the same type of relationship to production, the non-capitalistic one of the housewife. Being a housewife in a capitalistic society is a contradiction in itself, so the similarity of women in this regard constitutes an important shared experience.

The Typical Benituran Woman is a housewife in her early thirties. She is married and has two children and has not yet quite decided if she wants another one. She is a migrant and her husband is not, or vice versa. He is a qualified

industrial worker; she had a job in some service sector before getting married. If she is a migrant, she probably arrived in Benituria between 1970 and 1975. Her schooling has been a bit haphazard but she has primary schooling. Her husband probably has a bit more than she does. I met many women who fit this description almost perfectly. One was Asun, whose life is described below.

If this is typical, however, the dimensions I have discussed here also allow much variation, along each one of them and in their combinations. There are thus many possible life styles, and indeed much real diversity. These differences in lifestyles are culturally prominent; they are noted and talked about and pondered over. Let us look at the variation of experience as it crystallizes into a number of lifestyles.

## **Chapter 6. Ideal types: from self-sacrifice to self-realization.**

When Benitarians try to come to terms with the social variation they live with, they make first of all a very general simplification, dividing people into two broad categories based on their "mentalities", i.e. opinions on issues having to do with change. Narrowing the focus, they distinguish various types, based on different kinds of criteria that often shift situationally. There is no overarching emic typology valid for all and at all times.

Nevertheless, to give the reader an approximate map of what one might encounter in terms of different lifestyles in Benituria, I have made a typology. The differentiating criteria that are important for most Benituran women themselves are: degree of sexual complementarity in daily life, degree of belief in male precedence, relationship to production, religious and political views, kind of family life, and the woman's own role in the latter. I, too, find these criteria culturally relevant and productive of gender-specific social facts. But it would have been impossible to construct a single emic classification, even from just the women's point of view. The typology here is composite rather than strictly logical. It is more mine than it is Benituran but it is based on the criteria Benitarians find most relevant.<sup>51</sup>

The types are: Elena Francis, The Worker's Wife, the Progressive Housewife, the Non-Career Woman, the Double-Load Woman, the Woman Without a Man, the European Woman.

### **a. Elena Francis.**

Elena Francis is the name of a brand of beauty products for women. It used to be announced through a special radio program in which a fictional woman, called Elena Francis just like the products, mixed advertising with advice to the people who wrote to her about personal problems.<sup>52</sup> From 1948 to the

early 1980's the program explained what a "real woman" has to be like, and to judge from its popularity quite a few women tried.

This woman lives according to a vision of sexual complementarity and male precedence. In such a world, a woman's life consists of situations, norms, choices, dramas and activities that pertain to women only; and habits and opinions ought to be as female as possible to fit. The guiding star is Faith. Anything incompatible with her faith she should reject without a doubt, even when it brings her into opposition with parents and husband. But since obedience is her prime virtue, she should in such cases always try to "arrange" things to minimize the conflict. Anti-aggression is a female virtue, and softening conflicts a female talent. In other words, left hand practices are renamed diplomacy and take on cultural legitimacy, but only for women and only for culturally legitimate purposes, which do not include any jockeying for own advantages on the part of a woman.

She goes to church regularly, of course. When young she helps her mother at home and does not go out with boys. It is not clear how she should find a husband, since arranged marriages are not quite recognized even by this type of person, but she should definitely never flirt. She should be "serious" and "well-educated". She guards her "purity" with passion even though she is not supposed to know what it is all about.<sup>53</sup>

She marries a man who is also "serious", which for a man means to have a regular income and preferably some faith. But one has to be pragmatic on the question of faith in men. Once married, her husband is her master, but they live together in order to have children to give to God, so the well-being of the children should be the main goal for both of them.

When her husband does not behave as he should, she should be patient and charming, to try to lead him back onto the Right Path with female persuasion, never with unbecoming rebellion. If he is unfaithful, she is allowed to lament, but she should not scare him even further away by posing ultimatums or being too unpleasant, because then she might risk the well-being of the children. She should continue to comply with her duties in Christian resignation. If she does, he is bound to recognize her great virtue sooner or later and give her back what is hers.

Times have changed since 1948. So has the radio program and certainly the women who listen to it. But as Imbert has shown (1982) the basic message is

the same, just dressed up in a modernized vocabulary, and that it still has listeners. Elena Francis as a type exists. There are some in Benituria, but not many. They are probably much more common in certain fractions of the upper middle classes.

But at some point in the early 1980's the program was discontinued. Opinions like those of Elena Francis are no longer unashamedly pronounced in private and hardly ever undisguised in mass media. When women speak of "great changes," most of the time they have in mind the change away from this type of role model, which may never have been totally victorious but which has influenced all Spanish women.

#### **b. The Worker's Wife.**

There are women who are almost as convinced as Elena Francis of the naturalness of sexual complementarity and male precedence, and whose most important roles in life are those of mother and wife, but who do not share the whole religious and political edifice of Elena Francis. In other words, the symbolic system which legitimates their social existence is slightly different even though that existence is almost the same. They are women who are rather doxically installed in their lifestyle and have little need to legitimize it consciously, even today. They have not chosen it and thus do not see it as a question of values. Their material conditions do not permit them to change very much, substantially, so they may defend themselves against "all these new ideas", seeing them more as attacks on their way of life, on their dignity even, than as criticism that might lead to something good. Let us call them Worker's Wives, because most of them are married to workers, and it is through their husbands that they obtain their living, their social roles and their children, who are the meaning of life to them.

A sub-type of the Worker's Wife would be a Farmer's Wife. Some Beniturian women, around 1%, are farmers' wives literally, and quite a few more have been, either in Benituria when it was a village, or in other villages before moving to Valencia. The overwhelming majority of the working class today are of rural origin. (Cf chapter 2.) Village life is seldom more than a generation away and there is a good probability that a Beniturian woman grew up in a village



herself, so her habitus includes many dispositions shaped by village life, and the changes introduced in it must adapt to those village dispositions.

For women, the village mode of life is based on sexual complementarity and male precedence.<sup>54</sup> The Worker's Wife believes in the sanctity of the family and the duty of women to sacrifice whatever becomes necessary to defend it, just like Elena Francis. She probably combines this with Christian faith, too, and at least some Catholic practice. But she is not politically conservative. Nor radical. She probably thinks politics is for men, while religion is for women. (In some families there are traditions of Communism or Anarchism, and in these families the women too sometimes profess political opinions, and most of the men and some of the women declare themselves atheists.) Her religion includes many little rituals that are frowned on by the Church. And she knows this, so she does not talk much about them. She also practices plenty of more recognized rituals, such as buying candles for images in the churches when asking for favors. This is not shameful, even though the Worker's Wife knows that it is now held in doubt in some quarters.

An important value for the Worker's Wife is "realism." She may be religious, but she does not go to mass if she is tired, and she does not believe in anything she finds impracticable or implausible. She obeys her husband, because she has been taught to, but she does not think men are superior, and she is well versed in left hand practices to make the men around her "make the decisions I want."

The Worker's Wife manages to ignore "modern mentality" most of the time. She thinks it is fine for the people who subscribe to it, if it makes them happy, but she herself can see no reason to change her ways. The Worker's Wife has lived in a man's world for as long as time has existed, so she does not need to make her sense of self and the social world coincide. In other words, her actions do not have to obey formal social norms, as long as it looks as if they do. Progressives find her intolerably hypocritical, she herself calls it realism. Perhaps it is a kind of resistance.<sup>55</sup>

The Worker's Wife has dispositions for submission and dispositions for self-affirmation,<sup>56</sup> but the contradiction between the two seldom becomes visible, because her life does not stray far from the paths where there are recognized signposts showing what is happening and how to deal with it. Above all, there are left hand practices that let her husband or father believe she submits

while she retains the knowledge (or impression, as the case may be) that she gets things her way. Still, the macrolevel social changes make cultural complications unavoidable, and the Worker's Wife also has a disposition for doxa which makes it difficult for her to deal with conflict in other than personal terms, so the conflicts in her life always become personal and often take on a bitter and unforgiving flavor. In relation to the village mode of life, she has lost the social support of the village, so she is more dependent on her husband. Therefore, her submissive ways might turn into true submission. On the other hand, she is not as controlled in her every move as village women are, and especially if she herself has moved from a village she is very much aware of this and will see it as an improvement, and she will verbalize it, so it may also be that her disposition for self-affirmation blossoms.

Amparo (chapter 7)) has touches of Elena Francis but is mostly a Worker's Wife.

### c. The Progressive Housewife.

If the contradiction between submission and self-affirmation becomes impossible to live with, it must be transcended, and in the effort a Worker's Wife will turn into a Progressive Housewife.

A woman who has had a job but has given it up at marriage sometimes calmly forgets about it, but for the occasional woman employment was an important experience. It may have been long-lasting, or she may have been taught skills she became proud of, or she may have been lucky and worked with something enjoyable or in an enjoyable social atmosphere. If having a job was something positive she had to give up, she cannot take as easily to the role of housewife as the Worker's Wife. Other biographical events that might lead to similar role distance are marital separation, economic problems, chance participation in special events, a move from village to city or a period living in another country, and many others.

For other women, again, it is mainly the barrage of messages from the media and perhaps from progressive friends, from the children's teachers, from neighbors and events witnessed in the neighborhood, that make them reject the ideology of sexual complementarity, to some degree, and that of male precedence

totally. This is seen as going together with a less conservative view of politics and religion and child education and kin relations and many other things.

For whatever reason, some women adopt a progressive ideology, more or less purposefully. Within this stance, there are degrees. Some accept their roles as Mother and Wife above all, because they see them as intrinsic to the female sex, but they do not accept "old-fashioned" ways of complying with these roles. They will probably be searching for "realistic" new ways and have a hard time finding them, and this gives their discourse a revolutionary twist, which can be surprising in light of their far from revolutionary lives. (Vicenta is a good example.) Again, the more progressive European Woman finds this hypocritical, because she can see that the Progressive Housewife does not live up to her brave words. In my interpretation, the discourse of the Progressive Housewife is a logical outcome of the contradictions and pressures she experiences, for which she finds a ready vocabulary in the media and among people she meets that do not live like she does. She does not adopt a false banner. She may or may not realize the contradictions between it and her lifestyle and this may then push her in one or the other of the two possible directions of greater coherence, but as long as she is a Progressive Housewife, what she feels is not incoherence but a search, a constant attempt to be up to date.

Some Progressive Housewives would very much like a job. They do not question the housewife role as such, but they are bored or miss the companionship at work. They may plan to have another child "to have more to do." They may be irritated with male attitudes that imply that women are less important because they do not earn money, since they do not see themselves as the kind of human being who cannot or should not earn money; to be a housewife is not destiny, only a good solution to a practical problem, the problem of how to do everything that must be done to raise a family.

A Progressive Housewife does not actually look for a job, however. She would not be able to give the family the service they expect if she worked, and she also knows that the probability for finding a job is very small. She may talk about how nice it would be to have some money of your own. She may say the children could do with more clothes and money for extracurricular activities at school. But she may also shrug and say that all of this is pure daydreaming, better not to think of it.

She may say she is frustrated, but more probably she will exclaim that she is not at all frustrated, and proceed to explain how she has adapted to circumstances in "realistic" ways. She will probably be a good mother and know it and be very proud of it. Some Progressive Housewives do not at all dream of a job, instead they say that they have chosen to be a housewife. To be a wife and mother can be a good choice, not just for practical reasons - it can be her way of "realizing herself." What job could be more important than to educate children to become happy healthy adults? And to be a homemaker is a profession. This is the woman who speaks loudly in the stores about new techniques, new brands, new nutritional ideas.

The Progressive Housewife wants to educate her children in the modern way, which she defines largely as the opposite of what her mother did. She will, for example, make a valiant attempt to explain menstruation to her daughters. But she is not comfortable with the thought of sexuality. She dresses "decently," which means that her female forms should not be too visible. If her daughters act "too liberated" she will try to reason with them (too much emphasis on her authority would also be ideologically wrong), explaining that freedom is fine, but after all they do want to find a husband, don't they, and men do not change, they want a nice woman as the mother for their children.

Some Progressive Housewives take a step further towards cultural integration. If sexuality and freedom are good, then one cannot go on forbidding them to one's daughters, and if male precedence is an old-fashioned prejudice without basis in "scientific facts", then one must try to educate one's sons and daughters in the same fashion. "Realism" may give way to "coherence" as a central value. If this process continues, the Progressive Housewife may become a European Woman.

Time has left the Progressive Housewife suspended between an established and integrated gender system, complete with all legitimations necessary, and a heterodox discourse that pretends to replace that gender system with another one that, the discourse says, would fit better the new social circumstances and "what rationality dictates", i.e. new legitimations.

The Progressive Housewife constantly finds things of the past to denounce, such as male precedence, parental authoritarianism, social injustice, "undemocratic" social practices. She may even denounce left hand practices as undignified and of the past, but she will use them, because she has a need for

them. And she is unsure about sexual complementarity. It is the way things have always been. Now, there is all this talk about men and women being equal, but she sees clear differences and thinks they must be grounded in nature. She will talk of her own maternal instinct, and be proud of it, and of her husband's talent for car-driving or political analysis. She will say that she knows that such things are the effect of differentiated education for girls and boys and that it could all be different if education were different. But as long as nobody has seen any proof, she has her doubts - she has not lost her disposition for "realism" and skepticism - and they are doubts she keeps rather quiet about, because they are uncomfortable for her own sense of coherence and she may be ashamed of them. She does not want to be confused with the Worker's Wife, because she thinks she has "come a long way" from that "phase". But she, too, wants to be "realistic" and the way things are, open rebellion on her part could only hurt the people she loves most. And she finds it very difficult to live up to "all these modern ideas" without open rebellion.

One example is Carmen (in chapter 2), and Asun and Vicenta below (chapter 7) are also mostly Progressive Housewives. There is at least a touch of her in all housewives in Benituria. The discourse she has adopted or is in the process of adopting is one about change as the only solution for social problems and cultural contradictions, and this discourse fits the cultural reality she sees, and it fits her disposition for self-affirmation, so it makes her feel good to use it. But it does not fit her personal material situation, so she must have doubts about the "realism" of its propositions.

At this crossroads, some women choose to stress "realism" and become Worker's Wives. Some oppose the discourse radically and systematically and become Elena Francis. Some "work with themselves" to find ways out of the contradictions, and they become European Women. The Progressive Housewife is my label for women who have not (yet) decided which way they will take out of the dilemma. And they are a majority.

#### **d. The Non-Career Woman.**

To be able to speak of a non-career, a woman must have had an opportunity for a career. In other words, the Non-Career Woman has had some

schooling that prepared her or could have prepared her for a position on the labor market. She did not stay at home helping her mother during the period between school and marriage. Instead she studied for a career. But then she got married and never worked, or worked only for a short time.

There are some Non-Career Women in Benituria. And the image is very much present, at least among more progressive women, for whom it is clearly negative, a key symbol of the wastefulness and unfairness of the present gender system. Progressive men, too, speak of this stereotype as a thing of the past and as an example of whatever they criticize most in society (the hypocritical bourgeoisie, the weak ambition of women, the bourgeois use of the university as a mating ground).

I had an example of this kind of woman in my "typical cases" (cf Appendix C) and all informants agreed that there were many like her. Whether they had personal acquaintance with the type or not, most informants showed a mixture of benevolence and criticism, which shows how the type brings out central problems in the present gender system.

Both men and women said they felt sorry for that kind of woman, she must obviously be very frustrated. Most also realized that her suffering was not of her own making, she had only done what "everyone" in her situation did. But most were a bit impatient with her and said she ought to get out of the house somehow or other. The informants said she ought to try to find a job, at least, perhaps she could take some courses to update her skills, and that way she would automatically get some contacts and more of a chance to find work than if she just walked around the apartment, bored and frustrated. I said that perhaps it would be difficult for her after a decade or so of housewife life. Some women then empathized with her and suggested she could start little by little, joining some association or going to easy courses in gardening or sewing or something, to rebuild some self-confidence. Others reacted with contempt. Sure, housewife life can be limiting, but a woman with an education ought not to let herself be caught in such a silly trap. Perhaps, they suggested, she had really become lazy and preferred the easy life of being supported by her husband, perhaps she was willing to accept a certain amount of boredom rather than risk change.

In the widespread contempt for people afraid of risking change, I sensed the widespread but silent personal combats against contradictory dispositions.

Some of the contempt was also directed at what the informants felt was a woman of another social class.

#### **e. The Double-Load Woman.**

This type is the opposite of the Non-Career Woman on almost every count. Nobody can accuse the Double-Load Woman of being lazy - she is an employed and fulfils her home duties, too. She may be impatient or desperate with her life, but she is not bored.

Unlike all the types so far described, then, this one has a job. But often it is not by choice. (A woman who chooses employment on some reasoned ground is categorized here as a European Woman.) Sometimes she is forced to earn money because her husband does not earn enough, and sometimes it is even the husband who decides how much "enough" ought to be and more or less forces her to get a job; more often she has to put up a fight at home to be allowed to get a job, even though the family needs the money.

The Double Load Woman is always tired. If she is lucky her workload is alleviated by her own mother, who probably does not have a job and no small children any longer. The Double Load Woman is not easy to get to know: too busy for small talk, hardly ever on any public scenes outside the job. She does her shopping at strange hours, very early or very late, or perhaps she does it somewhere near her workplace, not in the barrio. Most of what I know about her life is through the tales of women who had been in her situation but no longer were.

The husbands of Double-Load Women probably help more than they admit. But by definition, the Double-Load Woman has a belief in sexual complementarity and male precedence. She may want her husband to "help," but she feels that as a woman it is her duty to create a functioning home life. And her husband also thinks so and complains if the service he receives is of worse quality than he expects. If he has a chance, he will rather take two jobs himself, so that his wife "can" stay at home.

It is difficult for the Double-Load Woman to stick to her belief in separate male and female duties, since in her case it leads to such a lop-sided distribution. She will probably use a semi-radical vocabulary about justice and progress. She

may insist that having a job gives her "independence," and by this she means that "a woman with a job can speak up to her husband and he must respect her" - the same viewpoint as the Progressive Housewife. But the Double-Load Woman's tired body may also make her say that if she could, she would quit her job and be a housewife, "to be able to feel I am a woman". And she will be proud of her ability to give her family clean clothes and good food, in spite of everything.

There are women of more progressive convictions that are forced by circumstances into the same material situation as the Double-Load Woman. But they will not accept it as a heavy imposition of destiny. They will try to change it. The most urgent change in their lives will be to make the men take on their "fair" share. If the men do not, there will be trouble.

#### **f. The Woman Without a Man.**

So far we have seen only married women. Young women are presumably on their way to marriage and older women are in all probability either married or widowed. Family life is basic, and a family is conceptualized as being based on a couple. But some women have no man. They are anomalies. Their non-couple living is the most visible fact about them, usually mentioned in conversation before any other personal characteristic.

It used to be that a woman without a man was always an abandoned woman, unless she was very ugly and unpleasant, in which case she was seen as collectively abandoned by all men, nobody had ever wanted her. Now, there is more of a choice and some women without men define themselves rather as independent.

The abandoned woman, then, is less progressive than the independent one, since she defines herself in relation to a possible but missing man. She may have been abandoned before marriage, by her one steady boyfriend, and unless she is very young she really did not have much of a chance to find another fiancé. If she has been married, and especially if she has children, she feels more "fulfilled as a woman," but she still feels odd and unfairly treated by life and she will have social difficulties.

Since there is no man to support her, she probably has a job. But there are women who have had to move back in with their parents upon separation,



because they could not support themselves. For the newly separated woman, this move may be a good choice, not just out of economic necessity but because it means company and handy baby-sitting.

In the Association of Separated Women of Valencia, there was a wide spectrum of possible attitudes among abandoned women. Some managed to redefine themselves as independent. But most felt tragic, confused, exposed to danger. They wanted a new protector, and for many the Association served principally as a place to find other women in the same situation with whom to go out man-hunting. These women sensed that their attitude was not quite progressive - it was not until they were out of sight of the feminist leaders that they acquired restless eyes and seductive expressions. Yet, for many of them it was an enormous step "forwards", a show of daring, a break with the idea of purity. One fifty-year old recently separated woman confided to me, in the ladies' room of a discotheque, that this was the first time in her life that she had danced in a public place. She was scared and enthusiastic, ashamed and proud.

An abandoned Elena Francis is supposed to carry her cross in solitary resignation. An abandoned Worker's Wife will continue her old life style, concentrating on the home and the children, only with the added burden of finding an income. She will become something like a Double-Load Woman but without a husband. For many of the separated women, it was only thanks to courage and a "new mentality" that they were now "having a good time" and had hopes of finding a new man, to "remake their lives" as the telling phrase went.

For them, a significant aspect of the new mentality was an acquittal. They were not to carry the blame for their own misfortune, as the old mentality prescribed. In the Association, much energy was spent in combating feelings of guilt and constructing a new idea according to which: a) if there was any blame to be distributed, husband and wife should take equal parts, and b) it is not necessarily bad if a marriage breaks up.

A separation is difficult for a man, too, even though he has fewer practical and economic difficulties. But he is not usually defined as abandoned, so at least his dignity is preserved. "The public opinion" is thought to define the man as the one who decides he has had enough and the woman as the abandoned one who probably got what she deserved. This "public opinion" is thought of as both male and female, and its opinions are the norms and dispositions of the village mode of life, sprinkled with bits of Elena Francis. According to my observations, to the

extent that there is such a mysterious thing as one monolithic public opinion at all, it is quite a bit more progressive than that. But since it is not monolithic but on the contrary fragmented, its voice is one of caution and adaptation to the imagined opinions of the audience, which may make it sound alternatively more conservative or more progressive than it really is.

Some women without men insist that this is their choice. They are not abandoned. Or perhaps it is not a choice, perhaps they would prefer to have a family, but as long as they do not they find satisfaction in independence, too; they do not live the lives of victims. Such attempts at redefinition of the anomaly from negative to positive have always existed. What is new is that such a woman may actually be believed. What is new is also that she has more of a chance to support herself in a dignified way.

But there is always some doubt about what sort of a phenomenon she is. There are many jokes about her "secret vices". A common idea is that she has a bad temper or for other reasons does not know how to seduce a man or how to make a man believe he dominates her.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps she is ugly. Perhaps she does not love children.

So the independent woman is often emphatic about her womanliness and charming manners. She adores children. She dresses with great care. She talks about her wide circles of friends. But now she also has a vocabulary of independence to resort to. She can make her life look very progressive, liberated, self-affirming. She may merge with the European Woman, defining herself according to her progressive opinions instead of according to her civil status. Elvira (chapter 19) has been a Worker's Wife, then an abandoned woman, and she tries hard to redefine herself as a European Woman.

#### **g. The European Woman.**

This type is an ideal type in a double sense. It is a constructed type, like all my categories. It is also a cultural ideal to strive towards.

Elena Francis rejects her as an abomination. Some of the others may feel a bit suspicious of her, even wonder if she really exists, but to some degree most of them envy her and think she is the Woman of Tomorrow, or even the Woman of Today.

Because of this general striving towards her, it is difficult to define her. Perhaps three quarters of the women of Benituria would say that they themselves lived just like her. The women whom I would include in the category will have an idea that they are not many, however, but they will feel confident that everyone has to become like them; it is only a matter of time. Unfortunately it is taking longer than they used to think a few years ago, but it is inevitable, because it is rational.

The vocabulary of the European Woman is sprinkled with "still" and "not yet." She embraces change, she wants it, it defines her. She calls herself progressive or something similar. She talks of "the old mentality" or "the village mentality" or "cultural backwardness" as soon as she encounters lifestyles or opinions she does not approve of. "Nowadays" when there is information to be had, there is no excuse for ignorance, she feels. And she defines as ignorance most opinions that belong to the village mode of life as well as to the ideology of Elena Francis and she lumps the two together, calling it all "tradition". Her life is a life unhooked from the continuity of tradition. Tradition is bad, because tradition is immobility in mobile times. Tradition has been scrutinized and found invalid. Tradition is to refuse to look Change and Truth in the eye, so it is cowardice as well as ignorance. Many European Women are leftists and atheists. If they are religious, they will stress that they are looking for new and progressive forms of faith. Those who have "come farthest" also call themselves "conscious women" and separate themselves from ordinary European Women, seeing them as similar to mere Progressive Housewives.<sup>58</sup>

Judging from some of my closest friends in Benituria, much of their dogmatism was rooted in personal experience of doubt and confusion. They had had to find out the truths they now believed in on their own, or so they felt, against compact fogs of "irrational indoctrination", in church, in school, at home, from manipulated mass media... Their foremost value word is "rationality". The European Woman believes in rationality as an infallible instrument to slash her way out towards open terrain where she can see things for herself, where she can finally escape being manipulated. She believes in "reality" but she does not like arguments about "being realistic", because to her such arguments are a call back to conformity with old things.

"In Europe" - that mythical continent she feels Spain ought to belong to and is now finally beginning to earn its right to belong to - men and women are

"equal" and do not suffer from so many delusions and myths that make them behave towards each other more like stereotypes than persons.<sup>59</sup> "In Spain" things are getting better and that is why she can feel sure of being on the right track herself, but there are "still" many "taboos" and "prejudices."

The European Woman is usually married - since most Benituran women are - and her home life may be "traditional" on the surface, i.e. she may be a housewife and more or less let her husband believe that he is the head of the family. But she classifies sexual complementarity and male precedence clearly with "tradition" and thus opposes them. The European Woman thinks it is necessary for women, too, to have an occupation and preferably a job. If she does not herself, she will try to give the impression that she is looking for one. She thinks men and women are basically the same kind of person. To be a person is the great goal. What is implied is freedom from ascribed roles and from dependence. The differences in gender behavior are due to education, and education ought to change in order to wipe out the remaining differences. She will try to educate her sons and daughters "exactly the same". She will try to make her husband take on a "fair share" of duties in the home and with the children.

Some European Women take part in the struggle to hasten change. They may be active in political parties, pacifist or ecologist groups or a neighborhood or cultural association. For many feminists, the eye-opener was membership in a leftist party. There they learnt the vocabulary of justice and social change and experienced the contradiction of male militants preaching these values and being blind to sexual chauvinism.

Now that we have seen the seven abstract types, it is necessary to return to empirical reality. Let me describe four women from Benituria, real live women, in some detail. I have chosen them to be both different from each other and representative for women in Benituria.

## Chapter 7. Real women: from the village to the nudist beach.

### a. Amparo, Germany and a new apartment.

Amparo was a housewife of conservative opinions, appearance and lifestyle. I would classify her as a Worker's Wife but with more than a touch of Elena Francis, and she did not consider herself progressive at all, but she liked to underline that she had changed, evolved, "made an effort to learn."

She was not very happy. She often complained of boredom but also of having too much to do. Her husband did not understand her work, she felt, and was too exacting. These were common complaints among Benituran housewives. But Amparo always added that a woman has to understand that men cannot manage housework, and if women nowadays work outside the home, this is fine, but it has undesirable consequences: children who do not do their homework, husbands who take lovers because they do not enjoy a good atmosphere in the home, old people packed off to old people's homes, and so on. On the subject of separation and divorce, Amparo was less clearcut. To be consistent, she should be against it, and she sometimes said she was, but she was fascinated by my situation and asked me endless questions about reasons, feelings, practicalities. I suspected in 1983, and at return visits she confirmed it, that her marriage was unhappy and that she experienced the idea of separation as a temptation - but an evil temptation to be resisted for moral and social reasons.

When Amparo moved to a new apartment, she invited me to come and see it. She showed me around and explained the advantages and disadvantages compared to the old one. It was bigger, but it was darker. It was closer to the city center, but not very much, and farther away from where her sister and her two brothers and their families lived. There was a lot of noise in the street, but it was a street of higher social prestige.

Actually I think Amparo did not want to move at all. She explained that her husband had bought the new apartment while she was in the village with the children during the summer. "He said that I always wanted to live closer to the center - but I said, this is still Benituria, after all." Amparo always underlined that

although she was of village background (Castilian) and her husband was a "humble but decent worker", they were "city people". She had probably wanted to move to the downtown area to escape what she saw as the opprobrium of living in a lowly barrio.

Her explanations of the advantages of the apartment were just like the usual ones in the lower middle class. The main point was to pretend that their lifestyle was more middle class than it really was. For example, she made it very clear that she had been against the idea of her two sons having each their own room. "I had wanted to have a small living room. They could have had their bunk beds like in the other apartment, and there was room for two desks, too, in their room, or else they could have continued with the old round table to do their homework like before."

But Amparo had lost the battle and the boys now had one room each, which meant there was only one living room. In Amparo's terminology, the everyday room and the salón had to be combined in one room. "Now, imagine my poor husband, if he comes home for example and some friends of mine are here having coffee, there is no place for him to go and read the newspaper or whatever... Or if a visitor arrives and the kids are playing on the floor or whatever, then there is no place you can show the visitor to sit down, but you have to take him right into the middle of the whole family life... Now, of course, I don't mean I want a salón that is always closed and never used, like some people have."

As far as I could tell, the family had few visitors and Amparo complained at other times of her nearly non-existent social life. What was important to Amparo was to maintain clear classifications. Visitors were not to mix with children - not even imaginary visitors. Daily life was not to happen in the same place as special occasions. On the other hand she knew that these strict classifications are no longer "modern", so she let me know that she disapproved of the "irrational" custom of hardly using the best and biggest room. But that would inevitably have been the result in her case, if she had had such a room.

We sat down, and Amparo got out a half-filled bottle of champagne and showed me how she had cleverly whittled the cork down and replaced it so that the champagne had retained the bubbles. She giggled and forgot her pretensions for a while. "I opened the bottle yesterday, because it was Mother's Day, you know, and I had bought it and some sweets, thinking of having a little

celebration. But my husband went to the football game and I don't remember where the boys went, so then I thought, I am not going to skip the champagne just because I am all alone; on the contrary, now I need it much more!"

Talking about the new street, our conversation turned to street dangers. Amparo never went out alone after dark, she did not even like going out after dark in the company of her husband. She said things get worse all the time and one cannot trust anybody. Then she remembered that I went out alone all the time, and her reaction was, first, to excuse her own fear, which she thought I might interpret as old-fashioned, and, second, to reassert her own opinions in the guise of motherly worry. "Perhaps I am not really afraid... I think the less you go out, the more afraid you become. It is not fear, it is rather a lack of habit. It is different for a person like you, you are so used to it. You are not afraid, are you? But you must be careful! I hope you are. You would not go inside a car with a man you don't know, would you?"

The conversation skipped along several of the usual topics of changing times, and Amparo ended up telling me of her experience as a migrant to Germany before getting married. It had reconfirmed her basic ideas of what is good and bad in life and what is human nature everywhere. Unlike most migrants, she could not see that the experience had changed her life in the least.

She was twenty and lived in the village. Another girl from the village had been to Germany for one year, because she knew two other girls already working there, and now the same restaurant needed one more and the offer went to Amparo.

It was difficult for her to decide, especially because her mother was very much against the idea. "She cried a lot." I asked if she was worried that Amparo might be "lost" as the expression goes, i.e. lose her adherence to strict village norms, especially sexual norms. "No, not at all, she knew me... If I had been one of those frivolous girls who go out a lot with their girlfriends and so, but no, since I was always at home and a good girl and so on... no, it was rather that I was going very far away. And my father was not opposed, he thought it fine, that way I would see the world and learn things."

She herself was mainly attracted by the money. She was offered fifteen times the amount she was earning working as a maid in the village, plus free room and board, plus the trip and insurance. "I had no insurance in the village,

and the money I earned, well, it was enough to go to the hairdresser once in a while and perhaps to a movie, but I could hardly help my parents at all."

Since her parents needed economic help, she decided to go. But she herself was a bit worried because of everything she had heard about foreign countries. She thought: "There are two of us traveling together, and there are two more Spanish girls there, and on the way there everything is arranged, and when we arrive they will meet us, nothing can really happen; and once there, it must be like everywhere in the world: if you stay at home and behave as you should nothing can happen to you."

One day, shortly before she was to leave, a young man who had been working abroad came back to the village, and when he heard she was going to Germany, he said, "You'll see, Amparito, when you have been there for a month or so, you'll be going to bed with someone!" She was shocked and asked him, "But do you mean, if I walk along the street, because they have sent me on an errand, someone will come and drag me into a car or something like that... or what do you mean?" And she said the young man laughed heartily and told her to calm down, "because if you don't want it yourself, of course not - but you will want to, you'll see!" She could not imagine that.

"And nothing happened. In the whole time I was there, one year, nothing happened to me. And things were not the way they say. At least from what I saw. There were two married couples there, the owners, and I never saw anything but that they stayed at their posts, husband with wife and wife with husband and that was all! Just once, a guest at the restaurant asked me to go out with him. He asked me when my workday was over. Not that I understood the language, but things like that you can always understand... But of course I did not go with him! I did not know him at all!"

She was happy in Germany. The pay was good and the food was good and the owners of the restaurant treated them nicely. "We had our rooms on top of the restaurant and a small kitchen for ourselves and a bathroom and heating and everything. Everything, everything, nothing was lacking. And we could eat as much as we wanted. We took it with us up from the restaurant. Well, of course, if some day we wanted an extra egg, we hid it inside the milk, and things like that, you know. There were no set limits, but they knew there were four of us, so we could only take what was reasonable. And there were certain luxury items we were not supposed to touch. And we did not, either, because we were



happy there; they respected us, so we respected them. And we made Spanish omelettes and things like that in our own kitchen for ourselves."

They had one day off each week. Amparo usually spent it washing clothes and writing to her parents and taking walks with the other girls. "It was a very small village, too small, no place to walk. But as time passed we dared more. Sometimes we went to the city for a whole day. I never learnt the language, not much anyway, but you get used to things, you find out how to ride the buses and ask for things in the stores and so on, oh yes. Sometimes we went to mass in a special church, I think the language there was not German, because sometimes you could understand a little bit..."

She would have liked to go back for another year, but back home in the village for the summer she met her future husband and he did not want her to go back. He was a "jealous" fiancé.

"He said if I wanted to be his girlfriend, I could not go with anyone else. I thought that was a normal thing to say, but it was a bit difficult, because I knew only him, so I had to decide to marry him without going out with anyone else or risk losing him."

She chose security, and a few years later they got married and moved to Valencia. Now she thinks she made a mistake. "It is so easy to let yourself be fooled by good looks and so hard to know what a person is really like, what kind of mentality he has."

But she is happy to have escaped the village. She has the feeling of having learnt what one must learn to be a modern person, and that that was only possible in the city. They go back to the village for a vacation every summer, and even though "things have changed an awful lot there, too," it is still "backward." And poor. Her father died, and her mother and a younger brother have a hard life trying to grow and sell wheat. The city siblings "help" regularly. In exchange they get homemade hams and sausages. Amparo shone with pride when I savored the sausage she gave me. But she was ashamed of her husband when he used "village words" and wondered if perhaps the main reason for their marital troubles was that he was "still mostly a village man."

### b. Asun - the Benituran housewife.

Asun is part Progressive Housewife, but much of her life can be seen as representative for the Worker's Wife, especially her daily routines. She is also representative for a statistical majority, the Typical Benituran Woman. She is unsure of herself in many typical ways, but at the same time she feels socially secure. She lives a life that I think all Benituran women would describe as "normal," whatever evaluation they make of that word. She herself and the women like her place great value on "normality", using that word to describe themselves and criticize others who are not "normal."

Asun is thirty-four years old (in 1983). She came to Benituria fifteen years ago, with her parents, who had been small farmers in Castile. They were mostly self-sufficient with food and sold tomatoes and saffron to get some cash. Repeated years of drought, a sick younger brother, a depressing atmosphere in the village as more and more people left, her father's accident when for once he had managed to get a salaried job at a nearby dam construction... these were some of the factors that made the family decide to move.

They came to Valencia because they had heard there were plenty of jobs there and also because a sister of Asun's mother lived in Benituria; she found an apartment for the newcomers near her own.

Asun's father found a job with a construction company. Asun and her sister and two of her brothers also found jobs right away. Asun worked for a while in a sewing shop and went to night school to get her certificate of primary education. When she had managed that, she thought she was entitled to a better job and applied at one of the big department stores that were just opening in the city. She got a job as a salesgirl.

The department store had mostly female personnel, young unmarried girls. The back door, where the employees came out after closing hours, was a popular place for the young boys of the city. Many couples formed here, and this is where Asun met Antonio.

Antonio was born in the city, in the working class area near the port, where his father worked. He had gone through all eight grades of school and had some occupational training on top of that. He worked in a factory where he had opportunities for further specialization.

Asun and Antonio were novios for five years. During this time they handed over most of their salaries to their fathers, as they took for granted that

unmarried people should. But Antonio kept more of his salary than Asun did of hers, because a man was, and is, thought to need more pocket money. As the two pairs of parents realized that the young couple was seriously planning for marriage, they gave them back some money, so they were able to pay the down payment on a newly built apartment. They also bought some furniture, and the parents gave them some used and some new furniture.

Asun was supposed to be home by nine o'clock, and since the department store closed at eight and she could not usually leave until half an hour later, she and Antonio only saw each other for a short while on weekdays, but on Sundays they would take walks and go to the movies, just the two of them or with other friends. Asun spent the evenings preparing her *ajuar*, the set of household linen a girl was supposed to bring with her to marriage.

She laughs at this now. She showed me a cupboard full of exquisitely embroidered textile wares of good quality and laughed ironically, "I never use them! Just to think of all those hours I spent... but well, I enjoyed it. I felt all the illusion of my marriage, the future, all of that, while I was sewing. But why use it for heaven's sake, when there are sheets of synthetic materials that are lighter weight, faster to wash, faster to dry and that do not need ironing! And they come in all sorts of colors, too; I have mostly light blue ones with different patterns. They are much prettier than all those old embroideries!"

There was one cloud on the otherwise sunny sky of Asun's engagement period. She became pregnant. "All the girls at the department store helped me. They all knew different tricks to get rid of it. I tried gin, I tried jumping from the kitchen table, I even tried parsley... but nothing worked. It seems my girl had decided to live, haha! Finally I had to tell my parents. That was horrible, I wouldn't want to have to go through that again. My father screamed and threatened Antonio, and my mother just cried and cried... but then they calmed down, when they saw that Antonio and I were as decided as ever to get married and that we did not think it was such a bad thing. We just had to change the date of the wedding, but we had the apartment almost ready and we had money saved... the only thing was what our relatives would think, but my daughter was born a bit early, I don't think anyone suspected anything."

They have now been married for ten years and have two daughters, aged nine and eight. Asun continued working for a while after the first girl was born, "because I was used to it and I liked it and... I don't know, it was the natural

thing to do, it seemed to me." I think her mother had something to do with it. Her parents needed money at the time, and Asun continued paying them part of her salary after she was married. The little girl was her mother's first grandchild, and she was delighted to take care of her while Asun was at the store. It is important to point out that the money Asun gave her parents was not payment for childcare. She helped her parents because they needed it, and they helped her with what she needed. It is just coincidence that the two kinds of help went on at the same time.

The second girl was born sickly, the parents' economical situation improved, and Asun's mother had more grandchildren, because Asun's sister had also married. And Antonio got a raise and a chance to work a few extra hours repairing TV sets. So Asun quit her job. It was no longer necessary and it was less practicable. Moreover she was delighted to stay at home and take care of her daughters herself. But she missed the job and especially her colleagues. She tried to go and visit them now and then, but soon she lost contact with most of them. None of her workmates work in the department store today; they all got married and quit.

Asun's daughters are in school now and Asun is bored. She has a rebuilt kitchen and bathroom, and she has an electric oven and an automatic washing machine. Antonio wants to buy her a dishwasher as well. But she does not want it. "It seems to me I have so little to do, I don't mind washing the dishes."

"Sometimes I think I would like another child. But then it would have to be two, because otherwise the third one would be very lonely, since the girls are so big now. I don't know... no, I definitely don't want four, that is too many. Antonio does, but he says it is my decision." (And it looks as if he really respects Asun's wishes, because the only contraceptive technique they use is coitus interruptus.)

Her home is always shiny. The girls are always immaculately dressed. Asun makes their clothes and some of her own. She sews new curtains now and then. She helps her mother a lot. She visits her sister often. She has taken up knitting. She has a driver's licence of which she is very proud even though she hardly ever drives.

The idea of getting a job again makes her ambivalent. The girls still need her at home in the afternoon, and what would happen if they are ill and how would she coordinate vacations with Antonio's vacations... Besides, she could never get a job now, with so much unemployment, and she has really no

qualifications anyway, and whoever heard of a boss dumb enough to employ a married woman with children when there are other candidates to choose from, and besides it would not be fair for one family to have two salaries when there are some families that have none.

The high points in Asun's life are the weekends and the summers in the village. Antonio sometimes works on Saturdays, too, but sometimes they can go shopping together for something for the apartment or for clothes. Antonio hates shopping but comes along for her sake. She prefers to go with him. "He is not the stingy kind, you know, quite the contrary, he wants to spend more than I do." Sometimes they go to the movies, not very often.

The whole family spends Sundays together. "In the summer we often go to the beach. In the winter we take a walk in the Viveros park or around the Plaza de la Virgen (two popular walking and meeting areas in downtown Valencia; on Sunday mornings these places are full of street vendors, street artists, etc. and crowds of married couples with children). Or we have lunch with my parents or with his parents. Then we come home and watch the evening movie on TV!"

When Antonio has his one month summer vacation, they go with his parents to a small village not far from Valencia, where they have bought a village house and spend the summer with their children's families. The house is big and there is not too much overlapping of the different brothers' and sisters' families. But Asun is not happy there. She does not get along with her sisters-in-law. And as to her parents-in-law, "they are all right, I suppose, I know many that are worse... but... nothing like your own mother, you know!"

Asun's parents have kept the old house in their home village. They had no choice, no one wanted to buy it. So they spend the summers there and still do a bit of household gardening. Antonio does not like to go there, it is too dry and hot, he says. But when his vacations are over, there is still a month before school starts, so Asun and the girls go there then. That is the best part of the year for Asun. Other friends from her childhood also come home during the summer. It is like returning to old times.

"Except that all the houses are in pretty bad shape by now. My brothers and sister and I all chipped in and gave our parents some money, so they have repaired our house a bit, but I don't know, it will be difficult in the long run, it is a very old house and now there are so many rats and things, and in the winter the

village is almost empty, and it snows there, you know, and there is no one to take the snow off the roofs..."

Life in the village can be rough even in the summer. They do the cooking outdoors. There is no bathroom. They have to carry water from the river. There is no store in the village any more, not even in the summer, so they have to drive some ten kilometers to another village when they need to buy something. "We try to take with us as much as possible from Valencia."

The apartment in Valencia is comfortable. Apart from the kitchen and the bathroom, there is a fancy living-room and an everyday living-room and two bedrooms. They have installed a polished wooden floor in the elegant room but the rest is the original stone floor, which is cold in winter but refreshing in summer.

The wooden floor and the improvements in the kitchen and bathroom were "the eleventh year of payments." The apartment was bought with a ten year loan, and when Asun and Antonio had paid for it all, they continued setting aside the same amount of money every month in order to be able to improve its quality, which was originally average for Benituria construction around 1970, i.e. rather elementary. With the money of "the twelfth year of payments" they are thinking of buying good sound equipment.

They already have a big color television. It sits in the middle of a bookcase on the wall of the everyday living-room. There is a big round table that fills up most of that room. This is where Asun sews, where the girls do their homework and where the family has all meals. The book case is crammed with school books, telephone books, sewing articles, toys, newspapers and magazines, bills to be paid, etc. Behind doors in the bottom cabinets is the everyday tableware and linen.

In contrast, the elegant room is meant more to be looked at than lived in. In Asun's "salón" there is a big couch with two matching lean chairs and between them a coffee table with metal legs and glass top. There is a bookcase in dark shiny wood all along one wall. It stores fancy tableware in cabinets with wooden doors in the bottom part and fancy glassware, coffee cups and other wedding gifts behind the glass doors in the upper part. There are also some books, including the usual encyclopedia "for the children". In one corner there is a heavy round table, which can be augmented to a long oval one for special occasions. Asun said that they use it mainly for Christmas and sometimes other family

reunions, perhaps a birthday. (But when the girls took their first communion they celebrated that in a restaurant.) Add a few chairs and an old record player, and there is not much free floor space left.

The bedrooms are meant for sleeping. They hold only beds (with Asun's crocheted bedspreads), a chest of drawers, a couple of chairs, night tables. When Asun has made the beds and cleaned the floors in the morning, she closes the wooden shutters and the rooms are dark the rest of the day. Like all Spanish housewives I have met, Asun has a feeling that only a dark bedroom is a clean bedroom. It is closed off, reserved for its one function.

Above the double bed in Asun's and Antonio's bedroom, there is a big crucifix. This too is common, so common that Asun did not quite understand my question about it. I asked about it, because she had told me she did not feel very religious and that Antonio was an atheist.

Asun believes in "something" but does not go to church. A childhood friend of hers converted to Jehova's Witness and for a while Asun was fascinated by her explanations but later rejected both the woman and her ideas because she became "snobbish" and "exclusive".

The fact that Antonio says he is an atheist gives Asun the shudders. But she does not quite believe him. "He says he does not believe in anything, but I think he does, because he does not want anyone to criticize the church. I think he takes out complete insurance, so he'll be safe whichever is the truth!" laughed Asun.

And she laughed about herself, too. "I definitely don't believe in all those old superstitions, you know, praying to saints and all of that. But once when we went to the village in January, the road was like ice all the way, and I was so scared, so scared... so, just imagine (little laughter), I promised the Virgin of the Unprotected Ones (the patron saint of Valencia) six tall candles if we all got home safe!" Asun was so flustered she could hardly stop laughing. "And we did, you know!" I laughed along with her and asked if she kept the promise. Her laughter reached shrieking paroxysms. "Yes, I did! Of course! I bought six tall candles and went there and prayed!!!!"

Obviously, religion for Asun is a strange mixture of something undoubtable and something one should now express some doubt about. The girls go to a nuns' school. I asked about that.

"Well, it is not expensive and it is much better than the state schools, not to speak of the private ones, like the one in the bottom floor of the building next door, have you seen it, isn't it awful? My girls even do sports! And they have Christmas plays and a big assembly hall with a stage and everything. And plenty of room to play outdoors and they can go there in the afternoon, when school is out, too, if they want to, they can even take their friends; the nuns are very generous, they think of all the people of the barrio. And there are never more than thirty-five children in a class. And they are liberal, you know. Religious, well, of course, obviously, but they are not reactionary. There is a parent-teacher-association and they have meetings and also lectures now and then. Like last year, I attended a series of three lectures for the parents which were to explain about sexual education. They were going to have sexual education, but if you did not want it for your children you could say no, and they had those lectures so that we would know what they were going to say in those lessons to the children, so that we would know whether to say yes or no; isn't that fabulous of them, to teach the parents, too? And it was interesting... except... well, to tell you the truth, there were four lectures but I did not go to the last one, I was so upset the third time... it is my own fault, I know, I should have gone, but I just couldn't get up the nerve. They talked about... about... children and that they, too... have those feelings... and... Do you know? Can that be so?"

I asked if they had given the girls permission to attend the sexual education. Asun hesitated and then told me what I think was the truth, because she was visibly ashamed and tried hard to justify her decision, which she suspected was the wrong one from my point of view. Her self-image as a reasonably progressive person also required the opposite decision.

"Well... no. I was so upset... Maybe if there had been more time, but we had to decide that week. And I talked to their teachers and said I did not know and that they were still so young and... and they said, fine, the girls can wait, there will be other opportunities in later courses..."

Politically, too, Asun and Antonio represent the Benituran majority. In 1982 they voted for the socialists (PSOE). Asun said she did not understand politics very well but that Antonio did, and he said that the socialists were the only ones who would be able "to clean up after the franquists." So Asun trusted his judgement. Besides, she felt one can trust Felipe González (the secretary general of the party and prime minister of Spain from December 1982). "He looks



so ordinary, you know, not like a politician; one can really feel that he is one of us."60

A typical day in the life of Asun looks like this:

The alarm goes off at eight o'clock in the morning. In the winter dawn is just breaking. If Antonio is on the morning shift, he has already left, having made coffee for himself. But let us describe a day when he is on the afternoon shift. Then the whole family gets up and has coffee with milk together, perhaps a bun or some fresh bread, too, if one of the girls can be persuaded to dash down to the breadstore.

Antonio leaves on his round to repair TV sets. Asun takes the girls to school. Then she makes the beds and cleans the floors. While they dry, she goes shopping for the day's food. Perhaps she starts the washer, too, so she can hang the laundry to dry when she gets back, as early as possible, because she has morning sun outside the kitchen window, where her laundry line is. If she has sheets or a big table-cloth, she hangs them on the roof terrace. As soon as she comes back from the store, she washes the dishes from dinner the night before and starts making lunch.

Lunch is the main meal of the day in Benituria. In winter, Asun makes pots and stews most of the time and even though she has a pressure cooker, they take time to make. Her morning is busy. The girls come from school at one and have to be back at three, and Antonio starts his afternoon shift at two thirty, so soon after one they sit down for lunch together. If Antonio is on a morning shift, Asun and the girls have a more leisurely lunch and Asun reheats the food for Antonio when he comes home around four.

After lunch, Asun washes the dishes right away, and then perhaps she visits her mother or sister and has coffee with them. They live five or six blocks away. She thinks she is very lucky to have them in Benituria. Sometimes her mother still helps her with some household chores, but nowadays probably Asun helps her mother more. Two younger brothers still live at home, so even though her mother is over sixty, she still has a daily round of chores very similar to Asun's.

Asun wants to be back at five, to be sure to be there when the girls come from school soon afterwards. Sometimes she goes to the school entrance to pick them up. In any case, they get their snack, usually a big piece of bread with cheese and tomatoes or ham or a piece of chocolate inside, and rush back out in

the street to play. Asun does "afternoon work" - folding laundry, ironing, sewing. Perhaps preparing a dessert or cleaning vegetables. But no major cooking, no cleaning, no washing, such chores are for the morning.

At seven the girls are supposed to be back indoors to do their homework. Asun sits down with them to supervise them and help them if she can. She makes them repeat an exercise if it does not look neat, she tries to answer their questions. But like most Benituran mothers she is troubled by the fact that she does not know enough to help them very much. "Already! What will I do in a year or two?"

Around eight Asun starts making dinner and tells the girls to have a bath and get into their pyjamas. The three of them then have dinner around nine, usually watching TV at the same time. Antonio gets home between ten and eleven. The girls are in bed by then but not always asleep, so Antonio gets a chance to say good night to them, a privilege for fathers of the two-jobs-generation.

Asun reheats dinner for Antonio. Or, if she is watching something interesting on TV, it happens that he does it for himself. Asun finds this charming and a proof of how much he loves her. She often has dinner twice. She is afraid of getting fat, "but by the time the girls have their dinner, I am hungry, even if I have had a snack earlier, and then with Antonio, I like to keep him company..." They usually watch TV until the last program finishes around one o'clock.

Asun moves around very little. Her life is centered around the home. Her social life is limited to her mother and sister, at least on weekdays, and perhaps a chat with a neighbor over afternoon coffee once in a long while. And the sociability in the stores, of course, and around the school entrance.

But she objects strongly to such a description. It sounds old-fashioned to her, reminiscent of old norms that told a married woman to stay at home, and Asun feels that such norms are no longer valid. She goes anywhere she wants to, she says. Sometimes she goes downtown on her own, to windowshop. Sometimes she has to walk all over Benituria to find a repairman, or the right size of shoes for the girls. She takes the girls to the doctor and accompanies her mother or father to the hospital when necessary. Antonio takes care of the family banking, which is not much, but it is Asun's job to go downtown for

bureaucratic errands such as paying the yearly tax on the apartment and the garbage tax.

To sum up: Asun's present revolves around the work to keep four people fed and clothed and comfortable, and her future looks towards the future of her daughters. She has high hopes for them. The oldest one seems interested in natural sciences and gets good grades, so Asun has made up her mind to "sacrifice" herself to whatever degree becomes necessary to give her a university education.

Asun finds it exciting that "girls too can study nowadays." She seems to be happy and content with her life, but her one bitterness is this, "I am good for nothing, I don't know how to do anything." That is why she has to be a housewife, she said to me. I asked what she would have liked to be, if she could have chosen. She giggled and said she did not know.

### c. Vicenta's resignation.

Among the many kinds of dramas Benituran women live through, probably the most common is the experience of incompatibility with a husband, and the interpretation of this as being due to the husband's being "behind" and the wife "ahead" on the arrow-like cultural "evolution." And the most common result of this drama is the woman's resignation. The key symbol for a good woman has long been the concept of *aguantar* (to suffer, to take it, to stand it). It has heroic connotations, because it takes strength and determination to be able to *aguantar* a difficult situation, but it is a heroism of survival, not of active effort to remove the cause of suffering. That is considered impossible and perhaps unfitting. A woman can be an active heroine for her children's sake, but not for her own. All of this, of course, according to the "traditional" view of gender. For many progressives, *aguantar* is now a key symbol of what must be "overcome" for women's lives to improve.

Vicenta's opinions are more progressive than those of Asun, and her children will almost certainly be even less traditional. She wants to be a European Woman, but other European Women would not quite accept her as such. She lives a life of *aguantar* and she does it for the children's sake; she has not confronted "the myth of motherhood." Actually her background would normally have shaped her into a Worker's Wife. Perhaps it has been mainly her

progressive children, and her openness towards their ways - a special kind of good-mother-hood - that have pushed her towards opinions that she herself finds on the verge of scandalous. Perhaps her unhappy marriage has also had something to do with it. Or perhaps her marriage is unhappy in part because of her viewpoints.

I ran into her one evening walking back from an interview. I had sometimes met her in some associational contexts, but I had the impression she was not the usual kind of socially active woman but more of a traditional housewife. Her speech betrayed little knowledge of progressive terminology. Her clothes were of the kind that seem chosen to hide a woman's body and personality, the housewife uniform, so different from the colorful enhancement of womanhood of young women's clothes and the individualistic and sometimes elegant appearance of career women. This uniform consists of a straight skirt, neither tight nor loose and neither long nor short, a clean blouse covered with a shapeless sweater or cardigan, nylons, shoes with comfortable heels, short hair, probably a pair of small earrings and a religious medal on a chain around the neck but often underneath the blouse. In winter, a wool jacket is added. In summer the skirt and blouse are replaced by a cotton dress of the same general shape.

Vicenta and I had to walk in the same direction for some distance, so we started talking. She had been to a meeting of the parent-teacher-association of the school where her two youngest children go. She told me of how she had recently begun to attend such meetings and how much it meant to her. She said that her life was suddenly opening up. She talked of how she had spent her twenty-three years of marriage mostly busy with children and heavy household work, sometimes adding cleaning for hourly pay in other homes, and usually afraid of her husband's flaring temper and jealousy. Now the youngest children were in school and the oldest already married. Finally she had "some time for myself" and she spoke as if it was quite by chance she had discovered that this was enjoyable. She felt good participating in non-family affairs, and that was a surprise for her.

Suddenly she giggled and struck me on the shoulder and doubled over with laughter: "And guess what I did today? Another thing I did for the first time in my life! Everyday I do something new, in that way I grow. Well, look, today I have played basketball!" She had gone to pick up her youngest after school, as usual, and they had been playing basketball and asked her to wait while they

finished the game, and suddenly, "it just got into me, why not join the game instead of just standing there!"

We talked of how beautiful it is to see your children grow and to grow with them. But suddenly she said she had spent Sunday crying all day. She said it seemed to her as if her husband were thirty years older, "but in reality he is only five years older than me. But he has stopped, or he is going backwards, and I am going forwards."

At Sunday dinner one child had broken a serving platter, and her husband had started screaming. "He is always saying that he works all day and noone understands that and all we do in the house is break things and make noise.. So my daughter, the married one, said, Dad, you are exaggerating, it was just a platter, now look who is making a noise for nothing... and he screamed at her, if you don't like it the way I run this house, you know where the door is... so they left, my daughter and her husband. They'll be back next week, I know that, because it has happened before, but this has happened too many times..."

I said it seemed to me as if there was some underlying tension. Vicenta nodded. "Yes, there is always tension between me and my husband. And sometimes it is even worse, sometimes there is no tension but just indifference. I arrange my life in my way, nowadays, since he started working the night shift. He cannot control me now. If they switch him back to the day shift, they ruin my life." I asked if he did not know about her new activities. "Yes, he knows a little bit, but not everything, and above all he realizes that he can't control me, so he does not even try, now."

Vicenta was silent for a moment and then went on, slowly and thoughtfully. "I think of it often, this is no life worth living. If it was not for the three youngest ones, I tell you, this gal would not be living here any longer! But what can I do? I can't just walk out the door!" Why not? I asked, as I felt it my ethnographer's duty to ask, but feeling stupid as a person for asking. I already knew the answer. A woman like Vicenta never chooses separation voluntarily. It was unusual for a woman like her even to admit conceiving of it as a dream.

Vicenta tried to explain. She said she had no money and could not earn enough "cleaning stairs" to support the children. Her husband's salary was not big enough to support two homes, and if she left he would feel no obligation to support her or the children, anyway. I said that legally he would be obliged to. Vicenta said she doubted that very much, and in a practical sense she was right.

Vicenta said she would have to resign herself, *aguantar*. "I have to *aguantar* because I can't give my children a home by myself. I have thought of it, I want them to have the feeling they have a mother and a father. I have thought of it a lot; I will *aguantar* until they are big and then we will see. And meanwhile there are many things I can do. I am thinking of learning yoga, they have opened a new gym near here, don't you know. And I have always wanted to be an artist and now I have heard that the neighborhood association is going to have an art teacher give classes on Saturdays, free, and then of course the parent-teacher-association and whatever else I can find. Anything, just to get out of the house. I suffocate in the house. I have to do things, in order to forget as much as possible. And I live for my children. I see that they are intelligent, they are happy, they get good grades in school - that is my satisfaction and my compensation."

One can wonder if Vicenta really meant that or if she was pronouncing a variant of the ideology of heroic motherhood. In any case, she did not subscribe to all its classical consequences. She had looked through the trap of masochism. She was disloyal to her husband, telling me - whom she barely knew - about their marital problems. And she really had broken with the conventions of how a mother should live, going to meetings often and without her husband's permission.

When a child broke a platter and the husband reacted violently, it was another child who tried to calm him down; there were two sequences of interaction between children and father. Yet, when I asked about underlying tension, Vicenta took it for granted that the tension to be described was the one between herself and her husband. And she interpreted it as a case of changing "mentalities." She was changing with the times and he was not. This made him seem older, as if he belonged to another generation. There was a cultural barrier between them.

Vicenta thought her new lifestyle was made possible by two factors: her youngest child had started school, and her husband's schedule had changed so that he was not at home at the crucial times of day when Vicenta wanted to go out. But those changes can hardly be conceived of as causes. I think she herself had changed, and she said so. But she also implied that she had always wanted to do what she was now beginning to do, but that there had been practical obstacles. As soon as they were removed, she had naturally started doing what she had

always wanted. Her view of "going forwards" implied that she had an inner force that moved her, and she was proud of it. It also implied that outer circumstances changed. There was a direction of the movement, of the change, and it was for the better. This conviction of steady improvement gave her strength to *aguantar*.

There were sturdy barriers that kept Vicenta locked in a life that she did not like. But she saw them as something exterior to herself, even though she had been educated to see them as natural and good. She fought against them to the extent it was possible for her. And her children did not accept them at all. One of her daughters had moved out at an early age to get a job and live with a young man. The one who was already married continued studying at university. Both of them were on the Pill and the third daughter wanted to start with it at the tender age of sixteen. When she had told her mother, Vicenta had cried. But she was also proud that her daughters had confidence in her, telling her about these things. She complained that the neighbors gossiped about her "liberated" daughters and thought Vicenta herself was a "whore" for not restraining them more. She was genuinely afflicted, wondering why "these strange things" happened to her and to noone else. But deep down she was convinced they were riding a winning horse.

#### **d. MaryMar - to handle chaos with imagination.**

MaryMar's life is unusual in many ways, but she is a good example of the "European Woman" type. Precisely her originality is representative. Asun was an example of continuity, to the extent that there is continuity. Vicenta was an example of continuity under protest. MaryMar is an example of non-continuity and must therefore be more idiosyncratic.<sup>61</sup> MaryMar has met the changes around her in a way that has made her incomprehensible to her parents and siblings, to her husband and in a sense to herself. She struggles to define her life in new terms. There are no models she can imitate directly, she has to be a bricoleur, building her life out of unrelated pieces and improvising to fit them together.

MaryMar was in her early thirties when I was in Benituria, just like Asun, and like her she was married and had two children. Her daily routines were much

the same, too. Their husbands were both manual workers in big companies with some trade qualifications. There the similarities end.

MaryMar was born a middle daughter in a family with eight children. Her parents were originally small farmers in a village, but it was a village that was overrun by city expansion already when MaryMar was a child. Her father decided to sell his piece of land and invest the money in a small business. He was lucky and could expand his business and was quite well off by the time MaryMar finished grade school. One of her older brothers had been allowed to study and all of her younger brothers and sisters went to university. There was strong pressure on her to study, too, but she hated school and refused.

Her parents felt she had betrayed them. Her siblings look down on her, she thinks. She was the family rebel. The climax came when she got pregnant at nineteen and got married. "I was so much in love, it is hard to believe it now, but I could have gone through fire and water for Miguel. I thought he was beautiful. And I was so ignorant. There came a moment when he wanted to make love to me, and I wanted it too in some general way, but I did not know anything about it, so he explained it, what you are supposed to do, and I said, 'Are you sure?' Yes, it's true! It sounded so absurd to me, I couldn't believe it! So what with one thing and another, no wonder I got pregnant."

They moved to Benituria. "Because I wanted to live far away from my parents! I was pregnant and I did not want them on top of me, the farther away the better! What a scandal! Besides, Miguel belonged to a party (...), and the party had noone in this barrio, and we did not care which barrio as long as it was far away from where my parents lived, so if that was what the party wanted..."

For a while she lived the ordinary life of a young housewife. But with very little money. Miguel was a jack of all trades and often unemployed. MaryMar had to help out, cleaning stairs or collecting used paper to sell. "I have worked a lot. But we have never had two wages coming in at the same time." Her parents did not help, until MaryMar herself asked for it. "We lived in several places, all very bad. In one place, the rain came in through the ceiling from the roof terrace, and we asked the owner to repair, and he said we could put some plastic on the terrace! How about that! And one night when Miguel was not at home - I think he was doing his military service - it was raining heavily and Miguelito woke up in the middle of the night, and I discovered that water was dripping on him from the ceiling, it was leaking in just above the crib, and he



was only a couple of months old, and there he was in the middle of a puddle of water, and all his clothes were wet right through, and I was alone in the middle of the night and so young, I just cried and cried all night... to have to see my son like that..."

So then her father helped out. He paid the down payment on a good apartment, with two bathrooms, a well-appointed modern kitchen, a living-room, three bedrooms. He also promised to pay part of the monthly cost, but later he had financial troubles and could not continue, so now MaryMar and Miguel pay the installments themselves. They both said it costs them blood, sweat and tears, so I asked why they did not sell and move to a slightly less fancy place. MaryMar was offended. "If you had lived the way we used to live, you wouldn't say that."

Today, as soon as one steps inside the door, one realizes that the apartment is the family pride. MaryMar keeps it spotless and has acquired some unusual decorations. Miguel has made improvements himself, all the usual things plus some homemade furniture for the children and Valencian tile decorations in the living-room. There is no "salón" - the biggest room is the living-room, with a TV set, a bookcase with a few books and all sorts of magazines and family gadgets, a folding dining-table, two couches with light-colored coverings which MaryMar has to wash often, a couple of small tables and a big electric heater, which they use when they can afford it. It is a room that combines beauty and comfort. But as a whole the apartment is still rather bare. They have to furnish it little by little.

"In one of those bad places we lived, the neighbors were also bad, really low people, a very low level... I had to wash everything by hand, we did not even have a washing machine, imagine, by then I had two children. Then I had to hang the laundry on the collective roof terrace. And if there was no room, the other women would take your laundry off the line! One woman took my laundry and just left it in a heap on the floor of the staircase, a very dirty staircase, so... I had no rights at all, because I was the last one to move in. That is, until the day I stopped it. (*Hasta el día que me planté.*) One day I took the laundry of all the other women off the lines. And when they discovered that, they went from door to door to ask, and when they came to my door, I asked them to come in, here I have it, your laundry, but nicely folded and clean, and not like what someone did to me, because I have to find out who did it to me. Yes, because I had to wash diapers for two children, I did not have any money to buy the ones you throw

away, and by hand, and I wasn't going to put them on the babies after having been dirtied in the staircase, so I had to wash them all over again... But it so happened that I had taken the laundry of all the women except the one who had done it to me. And the next time she did it, then I knew who she was, and I went to speak to her, to tell her she had better not do that again. I thought she was going to slap me! She did not, but she started screaming and calling me all sorts of names. But after that she did not take my laundry off the line any more."

Things have not been easy for MaryMar. She has had to learn to defend herself. Against gossip and scandal. Against the pressure from her parents. Against scarcity. And against the people around her. MaryMar enjoyed telling anecdotes that showed her self-affirmation. But there came a moment when even Miguel was not her ally. She became pregnant for the third time and Miguel convinced her to have an abortion. She did not want it, and she has not been able to forgive herself for having had it. She sees her motherhood as one of the main reasons for her existence. For example, when I asked for her profession the first time we met, she answered "mother." And she is a dedicated mother, reading literature on child education, going to courses in sexual education "in order not to repeat all the mistakes of my own parents" and so on. It seems as if she is really able to reshape her own dispositions in this area on purpose. When Marita had her first menstruation, MaryMar bought her a gift, made a special dessert and had her photograph taken. I have never heard of anyone else doing anything like that.

So MaryMar is a Mother. But she had an abortion. For a few years afterwards she refused intercourse. "I told him, this won't happen again, or if it does, no abortion for me, so now you know, if you insist we might have another child... And he would say, 'Ugh, you take my desire away...' He attacked me so much and criticized me so much so finally I thought maybe there was something wrong with me, so I went to a psychologist and to a sexologist. But they said Miguel had to come, too, and he refused."

Things got worse. Miguel had other lovers, both male and female, something that shocked MaryMar so much that she fell into a depression that lasted over a year, during which time she hardly left the apartment. The children suffered neglect. (Or so she says; knowing her I am sure it was minimal.)

"He even decided he wanted us to separate. It was horrible, he said goodbye to the children and everything. He bought the newspaper every day and went to see apartments for rent. Then he said he was going to take Marita with

him. But then I said no! I said, on top of everything they have to suffer, we can't do that to them, separate brother and sister, never! In the end Miguel did not leave, but just because he couldn't find an apartment he could pay for, mind you."

Instead they agreed to have "an interior separation." MaryMar bought a bed for herself. "At first that was bad, too. He slept in the big bed and I put this narrow one in the corner and cried every night. But then I realized, what is this - we have a right to half a room each!" So she placed her bed in the middle of the floor, next to an imaginary line across the exact middle. "And Miguel understood. Really, we still understand each other so well it is frightening; I know he can read my thoughts, so I have to be careful with what I think... We have never talked about it, but he makes his own bed and he does not cross over to my half of the room without asking permission."

Slowly, MaryMar climbed out of her depression and back came her old fighting spirit, but now of a different kind. She repudiated politics. "People just laugh at you, and you risk years of prison for nothing, it is ridiculous." She thinks people have to change themselves instead, their souls, their spirits.

When Miguel threatened with separation, she decided to start studying again. She enrolled in a high school correspondence course but has not been able to finish it. But she also took a course organized by the unemployment agency to become a hospital attendant and has been able to work once in a while, substituting a month or two. Her great hope is to be offered permanent employment, because that day she will throw Miguel out of the apartment.

She says that if she has another child now, she will try to register it as illegitimate. "Because Miguel won't be the father!" But now she knows about contraception and is careful. She has had three lovers, short but beautiful experiences. The relationships have not lasted, in one case because the man was married, in the other cases because she was not ready. "I am still growing, I will never stop growing. I am discovering myself and soon I will be ready to meet another human being as a full human being."

Through her visits to the psychologists she became interested in psychology. But she finds fault with academic psychology and has found her way to "alternative" ideas. She has done yoga and massage. She has gone to summer "therapy courses" where she has had strange experiences. She is convinced she can remember having been born and that she now knows why her

parents do not love her - because her mother did not want her to be born, her first feelings in life were of being unwelcome. She says that she has also learnt to foresee certain dramatic events and that she is learning to remember some of her previous incarnations. She has tried a scheme to earn money using psychic energy.

But she is not religious. "I am sorry about all that crap they made us believe about God. I don't believe he exists. My parents go to daily communion. My children are not baptized; it didn't seem fair, it was like signing them up for a political party without asking them."

The relationship with Miguel will probably never improve. MaryMar came out of her shock and depression feeling not hatred but contempt. She now feels mostly sorry for Miguel. She thinks he can never understand what has happened. Indeed, he does not. He spends most of his free time in the bar with his pals. He enjoys going to football games. He loves his children. He "gives" MaryMar household money "even" when she has an income of her own. He has become a skilled worker at a factory, where he has now worked for many years and earns an above average income for his age and schooling. It is outrageous, he feels, that an exemplary father and husband should have a wife who behaves like MaryMar does. He still loves her and tries to show it, among other things taking on certain household tasks. This is very unusual, he says; none of his friends do anything like it, and yet MaryMar is never content. Searching for a solution, he decided to talk to her parents, and they sympathised with him and promised to try to help, and he cannot understand why MaryMar thought this action of his was the ultimate betrayal.

Miguel's criterion for a good marriage is complementary complying with obligations. He does his part, so he cannot see why MaryMar does not do her part. From that point of view, however, MaryMar also complied for many years. She did not tell anyone about their "inner separation"; she kept house and took care of the children; she went with Miguel to family affairs like weddings and first communions. She was a Worker's Wife although with inner reservations.

She still keeps house. But there came a moment when she stopped "keeping up appearances." She wanted to be "true to myself." She now refuses to go anywhere with Miguel. And the neighbors really started to gossip the summer she did not even go camping with him and the children but stayed alone in the city. She told the neighbors she had to paint the apartment, but none

believed that. Now she has problems with gossip and has "had to" switch to new stores because she was too uncomfortable in her habitual ones. She has met her lovers at the courses she has taken and is very discreet and careful with her affairs. But the neighbors are not stupid, as she expresses it.

The summer month alone in the city was important in her personal development. In a letter she said, "It was difficult because for the first time and in a very serious way I came up to that precipice, that emptiness, that chaos where you know that nothing will do and you have to begin from the beginning to build your life on different values, where you have to learn to get rid of everything once more and you have nothing in your hands. Besides, there were comments in the barrio, so my spirit was a bit weak. (...) Even the baker made unpleasant comments about Miguel and things. (...) Besides, Miguel's sister got married and Miguel had to buy clothes and I refused to go with him to buy them, so some friends had to go with him. (...) And I did not make up my mind to explain anything to the neighbors, so I had to take the damn comments, and then in the bar, when Miguel was tipsy, they asked him their respective questions, and the baker told me about what went on in the bar. All in all, unpleasant and feeling tremendously alone. (Her lover) went out of town, too, with his family. (...) I took one course in practical psychology and it helped me quite a bit to understand, and to understand myself. There were old friends to go out with. (...) Or else I went to the beach alone, I learnt to go to the nudist beach alone, which was a great satisfaction; I lost my fear of loneliness in the warm summer nights when I went to take walks along the beach between ten and twelve at night or even until one o'clock, enjoying the marvelous landscape of the sea and the moon. I had some marvelous experiences of expansion with the sea, when I felt infinite like the sea in its immensity. The sea absorbed my depressive situation and returned me to myself all fresh and even at times euphoric, and little by little I came back to harmony with myself. The sea has been a great support for me this summer and another instrument for learning sensitivity. You said something in your letter about lying to Miguel. I want to make it clear that I don't lie to Miguel, what happens is that I do not inform him about my private life, and that is different. He has his private life and I have mine. (...) So that, for you to have an exact idea of my relationship with Miguel, it is limited to practical matters of economic things and things having to do with the children and the household functioning. So I think I can say that it is a true separation in which we share the

same floor and responsibilities; but not Love, nor communication of ideas, nor do we have the same friends, even though we keep the ones we had together before this situation. (...) I am light-years away from considering myself married. (...) What is more, I won't permit my family to ask me about my husband, and if they do, I return the comment to them, I have not had a husband for many years, but if you mean to ask about the father of my children, that is another matter. (...) Anyway, I realize that there are certain legal dangers, as you say, and what I fear even more than those legal dangers is the fact that there might be situations that would hurt or be difficult to understand for my children. (...) Miguelito is doing fine, he is behaving much better in school this year, and he is taking swimming and judo as extracurricular activities, and he is frankly good-looking and rather sensible, and it is much easier for me to handle him than last year, when I had a bad time with him. (...) Marita told me last night that she was very happy (about her first menstruation) and that she had told two of her girlfriends that she was now a WOMAN. She is doing all right in school even though her grades have been worse since I have been working. (...) I know it is too early, but I would like to be able to educate her for a healthy and open sexuality, without barriers when the moment comes, I would like for her to be able to live from the beginning a sexuality like the one I have experienced (lately); I don't know if I will be able to prepare her to live and experience the greatest pleasure of life, which for me, if it is not the greatest it is one of the most important at this moment, I am going through a very visceral stage, do you understand?"

This is the discourse of a person with unusual ideas and values and who knows they are unusual. There are not many like her in Benituria, not in details. But, as I said, there are many who are like MaryMar in feeling unusual, in refusing old habits, in experimenting with new ideas. The wish for a positive sexuality stands out among the new ideas, but few women have been as lucky as MaryMar and actually experienced it. The search for an alternative to established religion is also common. Taking courses, finding new forms for family living, rejecting any pressure to conform to "tradition" - these are some of the ways in which the "European Women" of Benituria adapt to changing times.

## PART C: PLACES

### Chapter 8. The barrio as space.

Some of the women and most of the men of Benituria earn their living outside the barrio; some of the men and most of the women have their daily work inside the barrio. All Beniturians go outside the barrio once in a while for such things as health care or bureaucratic errands, to visit kin and perhaps for entertainment.

Yet, the barrio in itself is a significant space for all Beniturians. One hears the comment "Benituria is just like a village" quite often. Sometimes the comment is negative (too much gossip), sometimes it is positive (atmosphere, good social relationships). I think the comment is correct in a deeper cultural sense. Most Beniturians come from villages and have had to adapt to city life. A unit like Benituria, with its semi-natural borders, partially self-contained social life and village-like center can easily take the place of the village one has lost.

To understand life in Benituria, then, we need to know what it looks like spatially and how people move inside this space and across its borders and what these movements mean. The description in chapters 9 and 10 will be limited to gender-relevant aspects. But let us start with a general overview.<sup>62</sup>

Benituria is shaped like a series of irregular concentric circles. The heart of it all is the old village. Some old houses have been torn down and new tall apartment buildings erected in their place. But in an area of three or four blocks square, there is a village feeling. Most houses are low and chalked white. The streets are not very straight. In the center, there is a small open square which houses a small food market in primitive stalls every morning and a big weekly market with traveling market vendors coming in to sell cheap porcelain figures, clothes, kitchenware, herbs, religious figures, etc. Many of the regular stores also sell from stalls on market day. The church is on the square, of course.

The stores in this old part are mostly mixed grocery stores - the kind that offer sugar, salt, flour, chickpeas, lentils, raisins and the like by weight out of big sacks or wooden bins, and which may have oldfashioned utensils hanging from the ceiling. In all of these stores, including the old pharmacy, one can buy on credit.

But this area is small. Around it is a series of city-like streets, where most of the buildings were erected between the 1920's and the 1960's, which was not an expansive period for the barrio; it grew slowly and solidly. Here, there is a lot of traffic, both vehicles and pedestrians, although these streets, too, are rather narrow. And there are all kinds of stores. People go downtown to shop, especially for clothes and furniture, but it is really not necessary. There are giftshops, jewellers, clothing stores for all ages and tastes including boutiques with disco music and strobe lights, pastry shops, toy stores, textile wares, and so on. There are all kinds of services too: banks, laundries, barber shops, ladies' hairdressers, and some professional services.

In these main streets around the village nucleus, you find the bus stops, a taxi station, a police station, and plenty of bars, because this is where people "walk", even though one cannot say that Benituria has a recognized *paseo* area.<sup>63</sup> And that is something people miss and often mention as a major drawback of the barrio.

The borderline between these main streets and the outermost concentric circle is very clearly defined. It consists of a series of streets where the buildings on one side may be two- or three-story houses from the slow period or even one-story village houses, and on the other side there is a massive wall of eight-story buildings made of cheap brick or stark concrete. They look dismal but at the same time lively, because their minute "terraces" are crowded with plants and drying laundry and orange-colored gas bottles. Sometimes there are bicycles and toys and children and dogs, too. The oldest of these buildings are from the late 1960's. Most of them were built to be as cheap as possible. In the 1980's, building was slowing down to almost nothing, but what little was still being built was of better quality, catering to a somewhat more established working class which had conquered a minimum of well-being, and also to middle class families. On one side, Benituria blends into a barrio of higher standing, and there are a few buildings which fall somewhere in between on the social scale, representing the most luxurious kind of dwelling to be found inside the barrio.<sup>64</sup>





An old "village" house (of high standing - the veterinarian used to live there), now surrounded by apartment buildings.

The outermost circle consists of apartment buildings. But the bottom floors are occupied by stores and shops. There are several car repair shops, some traditional carpenter's shops, some storing facilities. Plus bars and some restaurants and drug stores and ladies' hairdressers, of course. The two supermarkets of the barrio are in this circle. Here, as all over, there are plenty of newspaper kiosks and tobacconists' and candy shops, sometimes combined. There are some specialty stores, e.g. for paperware. But above all there are food stores, dozens of fish stores, meat stores, fruit and vegetable stores, egg and poultry stores, bodegas, groceries and bread stores. There are also many empty store spaces, covered provisionally with a lacework of cheap bricks. The economic crisis came suddenly. The construction companies had difficulties selling the last set of apartments and many stores went unsold.

In the central village part of Benituria, the population consists mostly of "the autochthonous ones" (*los autóctonos*). The average age is higher than in the rest of the barrio and most of the inhabitants are members of the families which used to live on small business or agriculture. For these people, Benituria is a village. They have lived in Benituria for generations. There are a number of last names that "belong" to the village and by which one can often identify the

autochthonous ones. Like the majority of Beniturians, they have had the experience of changing from village life to city life, but they have not moved in physical space. The immigrants find them "closed" (*cerrados*), i.e. snobbish and difficult to get to know. Progressive Beniturians (even autochthonous progressives) say that they are "way behind" and "ignorant".

In the next concentric circle - from the slow period - most of the families belong to the Valencian urban working class. Some of the buildings in this circle have been constructed by village families who tired of the village house, tore it down and replaced it with a tall modern apartment building (as narrow as the old lot, of course), giving one apartment to each child as he or she got married, so that the building as a whole constitutes a sort of bilateral extended family.

There are exceptions, but most of the newcomers live in the outermost circle and hardly any autochthonous Beniturians live there. The apartments from the 1960's and 1970's are little more than boxes. As soon as one can, one makes "improvements." But there are structural problems that individuals can do nothing about. The newest buildings are advertised with coveted features like aluminum carpentry around the windows, extra storage facilities, modern kitchens directly supplied by the builder, and doubtful claims like "excellent quality faucets", "plumbing of generous capacity", "silent elevator machinery" and other items that say a lot about the problems in buildings without them..

We can now turn to what happens in this physical space. First comes a description of the social arenas where women meet women and of the interaction in these arenas. Then, we will look at the most important public contexts of the barrio, even though they are contexts for men mostly.

## Chapter 9. Women's public contexts.

In Western societies, there is a dichotomy between public and private and it is usually made gender relevant, so that women are associated with what is defined as private and men with what is defined as public.<sup>65</sup> Feminist theorizing about this is not universally applicable but it is applicable to Benituria.

In Spain, women of all classes and regions have been more or less strongly associated with the house. The female role above all was that of mother, and a mother is where her children are. A married woman is also a wife and should serve her husband, and that entails taking care of the house, so the house is her place. A wife should also make it clear that she will not under any circumstances be unfaithful and the best way to assure that is for her to stay at home, where no men can look at her. There is no purdah in Spain, but there have been strong norms that a woman should not be seen too much outdoors.

In Benituria today, most women are housewives and the disposition of all is to see a home as the responsibility of a woman and "therefore" -in the special logic of culture - to see any woman as more "of the house" than "of the street."<sup>66</sup> To be "very much a woman of her house" (*muy mujer de su casa*) is a compliment for most women. It implies that she does not run around too much and that she carries out her home duties conscientiously.

But like most elements in this gender system, this one is under doubt or outright attack. Women who want to see themselves as progressive insist that they go out a lot and have a lively social life. Non-progressive women stay indoors a good deal, but they feel a need to justify that. The question of women in public is thus one of the strategic points where we can expect to find crucial contradictions.

In this chapter we will see where women can get together without breaking too openly with the disposition for staying indoors and without breaking any norms and without neglecting their housewifely duties. Women do use the streets; one can even affirm that the street is one of the most important public fora women have, and that the streets of the barrio are more of a female than a male domain. Then there are the stores, almost as public as the streets, but



One of the occasions for women to meet - outside the school, to pick up the children.

with the difference that there are mostly women in most of them. Places of work are, among other things, also places of public conversation. Finally, women visit each other in each other's homes. This is not a very public context, but it is one way for women to get out of their own homes and away from their own families, so it, too, allows information to spread from woman to woman.

#### a. The street.

A basic form of sociability for women in Benituria is "running into" someone. The old norm telling women to stay away from the street was perhaps never well enforced in village life. But it suits urban life even less. There are more strangers in urban streets, so control is difficult.<sup>67</sup> And if a few of the good reasons women in the villages had to go out have now disappeared - going to wash, fetch water, work in the fields - urban life has given women plenty of other tasks that take them through the streets.

Above all shopping. Benituran women usually shop for fresh food every day. Most of them pretend to be in a hurry to get back to their work inside their apartments. But this is pretense. Employed women do hurry, they do not pretend. Housewives may be in a true hurry, and if for a little while they take their time, they must make up for it later by rushing. But I have yet to meet a housewife who does not take her time if something interesting happens on the way to the store; as may be the case simply because the housewives stop and thus create events.<sup>68</sup> The women walk leisurely and when they meet someone they know, they greet each other, always, and if there is any excuse at all they stop and exchange a few words, and when these few words grow into a longer conversation, they place their bags on the ground, perhaps sighing and making gestures to show they needed to rest.

While shopping in the morning in the streets close to home, one can count on meeting acquaintances. Meetings that occur under less probable conditions, in the afternoon or at the opposite end of the barrio or in a specialty store, require a correspondingly greater marking as social encounters. One shows surprise, first of all. Second, one shows delight, cordiality, vivid interest in the other person. Third, one asks pertinent questions, whatever one can quickly think of that connects oneself to the other person. The effort is to strengthen the link. If the other person does not make the same effort, the conclusion is that she is not interested in maintaining any link at all. (And this is a sensitive matter - Benituran conversations are full of criticism of persons who have not shown sufficient interest in someone.)

Two persons may meet seldom and they may feel little personal sympathy, but as long as the effort is made to find reasons to ask questions and perhaps non-burdensome favors, there is a link and it is not fragile. As one informant expressed it, "I want to live in Benituria always, if I can choose. Here I know a lot of people, it is hi, hi, hi all the way to the store!" (The other side of this coin is that newcomers are left out and feel it. Most immigrant women told of nightmarish feelings of loneliness during the first few years in the city.)

Most women know only a small proportion of the population of the barrio. But it is possible to reach almost anyone in Benituria, or even in Valencia, through personal links. If one needs any kind of special contact, one begins by asking around. If one has a network of a dozen or two persons, it is probable that someone will be able to give the next link that may lead onward to the desired

person. This is the established way of doing things. Contacts, recommendations, knowledge of how to get what one needs from the labyrinths of the city, are the products of the links constructed and maintained among the women in the streets.

Usually such contacts do not lead to friendship, but the possibility is there. The problem is that there are few established ways of meeting. If chance does not play into one's hands, there is little one can do. And in the street or in a store one hardly brings up issues that require concentration. Streets and stores are defined as places where conversations should not be too long and not too intimate and where material factors (heavy bags, tired legs, interruptions, weather...) limit possibilities.

One special kind of get-together for women is going to the park - but this is legitimate only for mothers of small children (and for pensioners, perhaps) who try to go to the same place at the same hour in order to meet the same colleagues. This is a conscious effort, and the main excuse for going, the children's welfare, is ironclad. But there is no park in Benituria. One must take a long walk outside the barrio. The lack of playgrounds in Benituria is considered shameful by all. The children usually play on sidewalks and in some out-of-the-way streets with little traffic. Sometimes the mothers bring folding chairs to be able to sit and knit or sew while talking to each other and watching children. Most of the time the mothers just stand around, watching and talking.

The amount of interaction in the streets of Benituria merits some comment. A number of factors combine to make it important. The apartment buildings in the new parts - the biggest parts - are about eight stories high, so the population density is high. The ratio of people to ground surface is high. And the ratio of street space to constructed space is small, because the blocks are big. The result is that street life is dense.

This is a city and the crowds are relatively anonymous, but there is information to be had through mere watching. A housewife taking a one-minute-break in the middle of some strenuous task leans out of her window during that minute. Some women continue the village custom of sitting on chairs on the sidewalk sewing in the afternoon. Shopowners stand in their doors looking out as soon as they have no customers. Old men and women spend hours on balconies or park benches. And all of these watchers are of course also potential actors.

Because a lot of people are always watching, whatever happens in the street becomes known. One can be anonymous but one cannot be invisible. Gossip is rampant. "Benituria is just like a village," Beniturians say, meaning it in this context as a complaint. "People are mean. One cannot move without someone commenting on it right away."

The gossip is mostly just informative; relatively anonymous and relatively benign. As long as it exists, it could change character at any moment. But in view of the variety of lifestyles and opinions, it is not very probable that a strong consensus about anything could ever be produced, and quite impossible for such an unlikely consensus to develop into dangerous action when it disapproves of some behavior, as happens in villages. People know who usually comes and leaves at what hour, they know who lives in what apartment with whom, they know who owns which car and can sometimes even match shopping bags with their owners, they know the approximate range of clothing of most neighbors, etc. But they know the names and professions of only a small proportion of all these people they can identify visually.

It has been said that urban life depends on visual signals. What is usually meant is that in large communities one cannot know more than a small part of the people one meets, and one meets daily many totally anonymous people with whom one nevertheless has to have some sort of understanding. So easily seen, quickly understood symbols become important in urban life. But public life in Benituria is also visual in a stronger sense. Its gossip is visual. Its events are described in visual terms. If someone says "Pilar Martínez", the listeners can probably not place that person, as people in a village would. But if someone says, "The tall darkhaired teenage girl in number 20 who is usually dressed in jeans and rides a red vespa," then one knows who is meant, and one can probably give more information about her and have an opinion about her. If there is a crisis of some kind, her anonymity is only relative. If there is no special trouble ever, she may never know how well the neighbors know her life - but she suspects it, of course, since she knows just as much about a lot of people.

Perhaps the real reason for the so often voiced irritation at gossip lies hereabouts. If most people in a village have enemies, at least they know who they are, and most have friends and allies, too. In the city one does not have a guaranteed set of defenders. One knows a very small portion of the total number of people in one's surroundings, but one knows they watch. And one cannot be

sure of what they say, because such information is not very likely to come back by other routes.

This is not to say that gossip is ineffectual. It upholds norms, and its weight is more felt by women than men. One reason is that according to the old Mediterranean gender systems, women are the ones to be watched and criticized. Furthermore, the women are mostly confined to the barrio and have their networks there. So they know more about one another than men do, and are more interested in what women are doing.

One old norm still upheld by gossip is the one that says that women should not be in places where "they have nothing to do". Women spend time in the street, but it is neither free time nor freely chosen time. When they sew or watch children, their activity justifies their presence. Other roles which permit standing around are less easily accepted for women, e.g. shopowner or teenager. So women have to find errands. And they find them. They go shopping every day. They walk their children to school for a few years longer than would be absolutely necessary. (And to boot they get a reputation as good mothers.) And they come with time to spare to the school entrance to pick up their children and thus get to stand around for five or ten minutes. (And again there are extra points for good motherhood.) They go to see their mother, probably every day if she lives in Benituria.

The women certainly do not invent these errands. They stretch them, but they are probably not conscious of that. What they do know and say is that they feel good when in the street, and they often comment on feeling cooped up and lonely at home. "The walls fall down on me," is a common phrase. "I suffocate in the house."

#### **b. The stores.**

The best errand of all is going shopping. Women do most of the shopping a family needs, for food and for most other consumer goods. But not all shops are women's territory. The gender system classifies the stores.

The food stores are more female than other stores except those for women's and children's clothing. But even among food stores there are differences. Women are reticent about entering bodegas and would rather send



their sons or even their husband. And husbands who would flatly refuse to go to the fishstore, grudgingly but good-naturedly accept going to the bodega<sup>69</sup> and even, in an emergency, to the grocery store.

It seems that included in the gender system is such a strong identification of women with cooking that stores selling foodstuff that requires preparation before it can be put on the table are felt by the men to be beneath their dignity, whereas foodstuff that can be served immediately, like cookies, canned vegetables or bottled wine, do not contaminate masculinity quite as much. There seemed to be a clear scale of sexual composition of the clientele in stores, ranging from nearly 100% women in the meat store, fish store and poultry store, via an only slightly more mixed clientele in the vegetable store, a few more men by the cold cut counter, in the bread store and in the grocery store, via the pharmacy where some food is also sold and where it is about even, to about nine tenths men in the bodega. One reason that the men accept the bodega is probably that the boundary between a bodega and a bar is blurred.

What then about the men who keep house for themselves? They are not very many, but their number is growing. One would hypothesize that they would have some difficulty handling their shopping culturally. I asked a few such men about it. They said that they preferred the supermarkets for all their needs. Their explanation, however, was not one of gender taboo. They said that the supermarket was more efficient, a thoroughly progressive value. "It is much faster." "I can pick what I want and don't have to stand there chatting and explaining what I am going to use it for."

When I asked other informants why men are not seen in the stores where unprepared food products are sold, both men and women answered that this was because men do not know how to do such shopping. "My husband does not mind, he does it to help me, if I ask him. But I prefer to go myself, because one can never know what he might bring home. Once he brought some terribly expensive pears, I think they were imported. 'But you said pears, what do I know,' he said. So, since we can't afford such mistakes very often..." said one woman. One man said, "If my wife asks me to buy a package of pasta, I can ask her what brand, so that is no problem, but I don't like to go for meat or fish, I feel really lost there, and she always finds fault with whatever I buy." One woman observed that the progressive men in the supermarkets are really also

opting for as prepared a form of the food as possible - the meat there is packed in plastic as are some of the vegetables.

Some women commented that the men keep up their ignorance on purpose and that most women prefer it that way, since expertise in shopping is one of the few recognized reasons for professional pride for housewives. These women were highly critical of the present gender system. Their remarks contained contempt for both lazy men and backward housewives.

One young man laughed that there were even fewer men in the drugstores than in the meatstores, and he himself would rather die than be seen in the street with a bottle of bleach! I asked him if he knew how to buy meat. He said no, and he did not think he would have to learn because his girlfriend was a very good cook. One woman said her father, a retired man, did all the shopping since her mother was handicapped, but when the couple went to their home village for the summer, the mother asked help from the neighbors. "My father is too ashamed to go shopping in the village; he says that there everyone knows him."

It used to be that a man in a food store was served without having to wait his turn. This still happens. It might be the owner of the grocery store popping into the meat store next door and shouting above the heads of the waiting women, "Hey, José, cut me six pork chops when you get a chance, OK? I'll be in for them later or when we close." And the man behind the counter might either just nod - if he has a lot of customers and feels that at least some of them cannot be safely ignored -or else he might answer, "Oh, what's the hurry, I'll cut them right away as soon as I finish with this customer; after all, what's a couple of pork chops, that takes no time - does it, ladies?" And the ladies might smile and agree, especially if they are regular customers of the grocery store, too. Sometimes a young man would stand waiting in a corner and some lady would notice him and say in a loud maternal voice, addressing him in grammar but the whole crowd in fact, "What are you going to buy, young man? I bet you are in a hurry. For heaven's sake, we can't keep him waiting, he has to go back to his job, and he probably just wants something for his morning snack, right?"

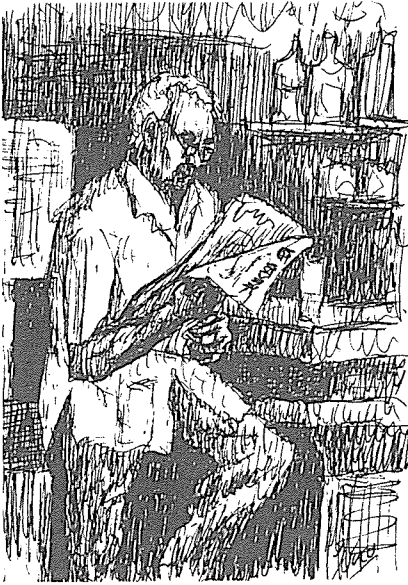
But this is no longer the rule. Some women might protest. It is not safe any longer for a salesman to assume that he can let a man go ahead of the line. The man might even refuse the privilege, in which case everybody is put on the spot and someone has to invent a joke very quickly to dissolve the tension.

When I commented on the behavior of men in food stores with informants, I got three main kinds of comments. "Oh yes, the women are ashamed to see men there, they identify them with their husbands and want them to leave as soon as possible because they think it is not virile for them to be there, that is why the women themselves ask the sales people to attend the man first." Or, "Oh yes, the women want the men out of the way so that they can talk of their things - and if the man does not leave, they'll make him. Two or three women can make any man blush if they set their minds to it, don't you know!" Or, "Oh no, that never happens any more, and let no man try to elbow his way ahead of me!"

In other words, some recognized that it happened, others denied it. The denial was always meant to be a sign of a critical stance towards the old gender system. Of those that recognized the phenomenon, some interpreted it in a gender-critical way, too, as a question of taboos to be overcome, while others took it for granted that there are advantages for women to have all-female fora, which is usually considered a non-progressive opinion in Benituria today.

Most informants agreed, however, that it is "logical" for a man to be served out of turn if he just needs one little thing, and that those few men who shop for their households have learnt how to ask for their turn, nowadays.

Men in Spain, in both urban and rural contexts, have bars. The bars are like clubs: they have their regulars, they serve drinks, but it is not a requirement to spend a lot of money in order to spend a lot of time there. They often have games and newspapers at the disposal of the customers. It is a home away from home. Not all men go to bars regularly, but in Benituria most do. The women have nothing comparable. This is consistent with old norms. Women should not have a home away from home, they should be at home. But it contradicts the equally old disposition for sociability and self-affirmation (cf chapter 18). And old norms usually do not win out in such clashes these days. Women have started going to bars. Not any bars and not usually alone. They go self-consciously and there are many limitations. The men defend their territories, too. The usual reactions to a woman entering a bar are still the classical ones: first surprised silence, then comments on her looks and perhaps licentious addressing of her. I do not think these reactions used to be defensive techniques, since the bars were not contested territory. But now they are, and at least some men are becoming aware that such



Reading the newspaper  
at the bar.

behavior keeps women out.

Women, however, have always had substitutes for bars: places and times where no one could deny a woman her right to be present, and places and times where many women and no men were around for a certain amount of time with a certain predictability. In the villages, the washing places were such places; perhaps the village ovens and the village fountains too. Today, in the cities, there is the daily shopping.

The women explain their daily shopping with their need for fresh good food, and their shopping hours with references to children's hours, husband's hours and cleaning routines. The fact remains that almost all housewives go shopping at the same time and almost every day. The lines are thus long, and one can spend an hour or more shopping every day. Translated into terms I am sure most women would energetically reject, it means that they get around one hour's socializing every day, no matter how much there is to do at home.<sup>70</sup>

Some stores serve this function better than others. The longest lines are usually in the fruit and vegetable stores, and since these sell cheap and everyday goods, it is easy to talk there. Some stores have chairs or benches. In 1986, one meatstore had installed a coffee machine for waiting customers, thus taking a clear step in the direction of becoming a bar for women!

Most stores are owned and attended by men. As they are interested in keeping a steady clientele, they develop a talent for balancing humorously on the thin line between too much male aloofness and too chummy colleague talk. Nevertheless, the most daring store conversations I have heard have always been when there was no man present. Vice versa, one informant claimed that in bars with female personnel there are more women customers. "If there is a woman behind the counter, I know there is a limit to what the men will say or do, so I feel freer to go inside, even if it is a typically all male bar."

The conversations in the stores are public. They can be counted on in most stores every day between ten and one o'clock. One does not need any kind of introduction to participate. The store conversations are defined as friendly occasions, which means that you behave as if you take it for granted that everyone else is friendly and sincere. This means that you cannot openly start a row, you cannot say anything that casts a doubt on anyone present, you cannot spin intrigues. But you can do all of these things and worse if you know how to dress it up as idle chat, witty jokes, sudden ideas, total innocence bordering on stupidity... The store conversation is an arena for weaving friendships and alliances and for getting back at treacherous ex-friends; it is an arena for getting the news and for training in psychological observation and analysis. It is perhaps above all an arena for entertainment. Not all the jokes are something else in disguise, and even those that are usually give good laughs.

Women with other things to do might find the time in the store an irritating waste. But these women with other arenas are also the ones who need the stores less. Such women prefer supermarkets.

The atmosphere in the store is not always one of fun. It can be of solidarity, if there is a woman in some disgrace. It can also, and more frequently, be an atmosphere of rallying around some common complaint. The most common one is that of high and rising prices. World events are usually not discussed, and when it happens it is in rather indirect ways, if possible connecting them to something in barrio life. Most women are diplomatically silent about political opinions, but a general leaning towards right or left can sometimes be read between the lines, quite purposefully placed there for the reading but in such a way that anyone who does not wish to know does not have to recognize it.

One special meeting place for women are the innumerable hairdressers' shops. Some progressive women make it almost a point of honor "never" to go to the hairdresser. But a majority of Benituran women go once a month or more often. Some dye their hair. Most wear it short and have to have it cut or permed often. Many of the shops are just a room in the owner's apartment. Even the ones with regular storefront premises are not very fancy. Often the owner does all the work herself. There are small but significant differences between store talk and hairdresser talk. You spend less time in all at the hairdresser's, and you go there for your own sake, for once, so the atmosphere is a bit more festive. And once there you sit down and spend more uninterrupted time, so the conversation is less fragmented. This is a place where no man will even look inside, so because of this and because of the business at hand, the conversation easily turns to women's bodies: looks, love problems, health problems. The gossip magazines encourage talk about the aspects of life treated there, also often love and health.

The doctor's waiting room is another place for female conversation. If the waiting persons happen to know one another, the spread of gossip and information is similar to that in a store. But since one goes farther to find a doctor, chances are that the waiting persons do not know each other and may never meet again. Yet they are all there because they have a problem. The waiting room is quiet, people do not dash in and out. The waiting time is long, since it is not common to make appointments but rather to have open receiving hours. All of this means that the atmosphere is appropriate for confidences.

Informants asked about possible public arenas for women almost always referred to doctors' waiting rooms. One could object that as many men as women have to visit the doctor. But this is not quite true - in Spain as in the rest of Europe, statistics show that women visit the doctor more often. And even if they did not, a doctor's waiting room would always house several times as many women as men, since few people go alone to the doctor. The accompanying person is almost always a woman (and usually kin).

### c. Work.

Let us now look at work as a public context. A woman working in family business does not usually feel that it affords her a social arena, but it depends on

the business and what her role in it is. The most common kinds of family business are stores, bars and restaurants, and obviously these places are public in that a number of clients come in. If the woman works behind a counter, she meets people all day long. If it is a store with mostly female clients, she participates in their conversations and becomes better informed than anyone else. In a bar or a restaurant she has to be more discreet, more of a servant, and more so the more elegant the place is. However, the women usually work in the kitchen and the men have all the contacts with the clients.

On another level of income and prestige, doctors' and lawyers' wives frequently work as their husbands' receptionists. They too meet a lot of people every day, but the contact is limited. A receptionist cannot take part in the waiting room conversation. There is a social barrier between her and the clients. She may listen, but usually her place is outside the waiting room.

Most women in family businesses have no non-kin colleagues. They work long unregulated hours. Their social life is restricted rather than enriched by the job. Much the same goes for domestic helpers. They work for the money. It is not common to imply that this kind of work could give any other kind of satisfaction. So much more significant then, that some informants did say precisely that. "Yes, I go there every Tuesday and Thursday, still. Actually, we don't need the money nowadays. But I have done it for so many years, so... She is more like a friend, by now, and I would hate to quit, and after all, I am used to it, it is not much of an effort, it is like going there to chat with a friend..." It is of course open to doubt whether a *señora* (=lady, Mrs; the usual word for the employer) and her domestic help can become friends. What seemed not all that unusual, however, was a kind of understanding between two women sharing the same profession and one of their places of work. There was communication and this was conceptualised as friendship.<sup>71</sup>

Obviously the work of a domestic helper is not very public. The job of cleaning stairs is probably worse. Like that of the domestic helper it is flexible in hours, almost always a black market job and it requires no skills that one has not already learnt as a housewife. But the work is heavier and more monotonous and there is no semi-colleague *señora*. The inhabitants of the buildings seldom stop to talk to a staircleaner, and the cleaners usually change buildings often, since there are very often conflicts with the residents who employ them.

These jobs are women's jobs. The usual designation for the professional category is simply "woman". For example, "In our building, there have been so many fights over the cleaning of the stairs that we have finally agreed to find a woman." Women who clean stairs try to get jobs cleaning offices or schools, since that means greater job security even though these jobs, too, are almost always black market. And it means, probably, having a colleague or two.

According to official figures, the four most common types of jobs Benituran women have are in the sectors of commerce and hostelry, office work, factory work and teaching, in that order. All other categories are very small in comparison. Most job opportunities lie outside Benituria, so employed women have to travel outside the barrio every day. Such women have a semi-public forum. They have colleagues to chat with every day, sometimes people of other social categories and opinions, sometimes even men. They cross the limits of the barrio, and they cross the limits of women's lives as lived by the majority and as conventionally defined.

Most of the housewives said they would like to get a job, usually to "realize themselves". That was the fashionable expression. Very few women talked of economic independence (and those who did usually just meant an income the husband could not control), and practically noone talked of a career or old age security or any sort of pride in accomplishment. What "self-realization" meant for most women was a chance to communicate with more people than a housewife can. Communication plus money is what created the prestige surrounding the employed woman.

The employed women themselves had a similar view of their job, even though they were "more realistic". Whatever the actual facts, the cultural construction of what it means to be a housewife - sacrifice, concentration on the home and family - creates a polarity between that role and the culturally important satisfaction of communication. To have employment is one solution, and it is seen as a good solution in principle even by women who are disappointed in what their own job offers.



#### d. Visiting.

A home is not a public forum by definition. But visiting is one of the ways in which networks are knit and information and ideas flow.

There is not much private visiting in Benituria, however. Most of it is family visiting. Typically a couple with children will have Sunday lunch with his or her parents. Christmas and New Year's Eve are occasions for larger family gatherings. For some, birthdays or, more commonly, namedays, are also times to get together, but for others such days are not marked off as special in any way.

Many women visit their mothers during weekdays, especially if they live nearby. The mothers expect their young married daughters and their children for lunch any time, and try to have extra supplies so that any dish can be quickly augmented in case of need. Mothers and grown daughters help each other a lot, cleaning, shopping, cooking, baby-sitting. Visiting and problem-solving overlap.

Women who grew up in Benituria usually have some childhood friend nearby. Those who grew up in other parts of Valencia see their friends much less frequently. The combination of bad public transportation and children's and husbands' hours made it just as difficult for women to go outside the barrio for visiting as for work, and less legitimate. Most of the young people of the barrio are not migrants. Even if their parents have been, this is by now a few years ago, and the youngsters have grown up in the barrio and have their friends there. Youngsters as well as adults meet their friends outside their homes for most purposes. Friendship and sociability are defined as things belonging in public, not in the home.

To visit someone at home, then, is a rather intimate act unless one happens to be nextdoor neighbors; then there are so many occasions for small chats and small favors that the neighbor's kitchen loses its definition as someone else's sanctuary. To invite someone for coffee is much more of a decision. The home is not lightly opened to non-kin, and it is a busy place of work that one might not like to show even to a close friend in an untidy state. But women's duties make it difficult for them to be away from their homes for any longer periods of time.

There is a clear contradiction, then, between two cultural constructions. One says that women ought not to run around, and it gets material support from the fact that it is hard for a woman not to neglect her household duties if she

does. The other says that friendship is something that happens outside the home. Neither is very clear as a norm but both are quite thorough in their actual effects.

This is a double bind. Two strong messages contradict each other, and Bateson's third ingredient (1978:242ff) that makes escape impossible is also present: the disposition for sociability is strong and conscious. Almost all of my informants complained that they had few friends and this made them feel lonely and sad. Many of them had plenty of friends, it seemed to me. But the need is strong and the standards are high. (Cf chapter 18) When cultural constructions clash in such a frontal way, the solutions are idiosyncratic and diverse. And for many there is no solution but dissatisfaction.

Private visiting with women friends was not a solution in Benituria. It did not solve the basic problem, because a woman in another woman's home is still a woman not attending her own home. And it was not a clear pattern of behavior. It is a known pattern but it is not widely practiced. Some women in Benituria had a small group of friends, two or three, who had coffee together in the afternoon with some regularity. Some larger groups of friends met more or less regularly to sit on the sidewalks to sew and/or watch children. Most of what private visiting there is, however, consists of two women meeting without any regularity, perhaps inviting each other in for coffee when they run into each other in the street.



Housewives "run into" each other, and stop to chat, in the staircase of their building even more often than in the street. (Photo by José Armenteros.)

## Chapter 10. Associations as public fora.

Like the men, some women take part in the kind of public life that is organized on purpose to be public fora with some specific intent, such as associations. There are quite a few of them in Benituria. But a majority of Beniturians do not take part in them, and women less than men.

Neither men nor women in Benituria see themselves as agents of change. Most of them live under the limiting conditions (of time, health, money, space, schooling, etc.) of the working class in all capitalist countries, with the added fact of the recent historical experience of dictatorship. Most Spaniards emerged from the Franco era with little experience of the practicalities of organization and varying degrees of fear of "declaring standpoints" (*significarse*), which would include anything a repressive regime might take as an excuse for making life difficult for a person: becoming a member of something, signing a petition, getting a reputation for moving in non-conformist circles...

In spite of everything, some Beniturian men belong to parties and associations and a small number are active in them, too. The same goes for some Beniturian women, but the sex ratio of Beniturian associations is usually far from balanced. Let us make a quick inventory. The most important associations catering in principle to all Beniturians were: the fiesta commission of the old (village) parish, the Casino, several Falla commissions, the neighborhood association, and several small cultural associations. Then there were the political parties and the parent-teacher.-associations of the school, and some associations that defined eligible members by age, such as a couple of youth groups and a pensioners' club, or by gender, such as a women's group.

### a. The Parish Fiesta Commission.

Let me proceed in an approximate order from less to more progressive, starting with the church. There were two parishes in the barrio. One was situated in the new part. The priest there was considered progressive and opened the

church for many non-religious activities. This parish organized no fiesta. Its participatory forum was instead some *comunidades de base* or small discussion groups that appeal to people who want to find progressive ways of understanding religion. This form of work as well as their view of religion was personal and private, in stark contrast to traditional Spanish Catholicism which is social and meant to be seen.

The old parish in what used to be the village center was another matter. The active church-goers there were mostly the autochthonous families. The priests were conservative, and the pillars of the parish were the richest among the village families. This parish had a fiesta commission. It was an honor to belong; most of the old village families did. Membership was by family. The women were organized in a separate chapter. That is, the gender organization of the parish was traditional: the family, not the individual, was the unit, and men's and women's activities were separated in space and content.

The fiesta was similar to what has been described for villages all over Spain. It was the great event of the year for the parish and for its leading families, who considered the parish and Benituria as equivalent terms. During the whole year there were bazaars and lotteries and meetings to prepare the fiesta, which included one main procession and a few secondary ones. Perhaps a thousand persons took part in the main one, marching with candles behind religious images, bands and representatives of the authorities. A provisional bullring was erected in which entertainment was offered every evening for two weeks. The church was decorated inside and out, and some central streets sported flags and light bulb designs. The Valencian touch consisted in the lacy aspect of the women's clothes and lots of fireworks.

For progressive Beniturians the fiesta was something to laugh at. "Let's go and look at all the jewels!" One progressive woman from a traditional family said she wished the fiesta would survive as a quaint tradition, but "without all this superstition and brainwashing." Few non-progressive immigrants took any part in the preparations, but they did attend cheap rock concerts, flamenco, traveling vaudeville shows, cow teasing, etc. and perhaps, after a few years of residence, the main procession itself.

For the women of the traditional Benituria families, the fiesta commission was a good excuse to get out of the home to meet the women they knew anyway and were often related to. For all other women living in Benituria it was not a

forum open to them in practice. It goes without saying that it was not a forum for discussion for anyone, not even discussion of religion. The parish was a forum for demonstration of a certain world-view, including both religious and political opinions, presented as equally self-evident.

#### **b. The Casino.**

The Casino (not its real name) had a lot in common with the parish. It, too, was old and continued functioning as if it were still located in a village. Membership was by family, and the member families were to a large extent the same as in the old parish. For the autochthonous families it was another arena for symbolization of village hierarchies.

But the Casino leaders defined it as modern and liberal.<sup>72</sup> They said that it was an association for promoting music, especially the traditional Valencian band music. It offered the band a place to practice, it organized cheap music lessons and lent instruments free of charge to members. This plus the Valencian enthusiasm for music meant that it had many members and of all opinions. Any Benituran family in which someone wants to play an instrument joins. But the autochthonous families dominate, especially in the bar, which is the heart of the Casino. There are only men there during the day time, except perhaps for some girl come to fetch grandpa for lunch. Women are not excluded by any regulation, but by social norm they are. Most of the men are pensioners, but younger men who are unemployed or on vacation or sickleave also spend time there, playing domino and card games. It is a big bar with twenty or thirty tables and many extra chairs. Sometimes there is a concert or a show, and then some women attend.

One sure sign of its being non-progressive: a different category of pensioners have founded their own pensioners' club in a smaller but also bar-like place nearby. There the men also play domino most of the time, and there, too, it is highly unusual to see a woman on the premises. But they define themselves as fundamentally different. They organize "cultural excursions", they participate in municipal district activities, they collaborate with the neighborhood association. That is to say, they stand further to the left. As to gender, the two organizations are identical. They are by men for men.

### c. The Falla World.

There is one organization with a traditional flavor that includes as many women as men. It is usually called "the Falla world" and it is a world by itself. Fallas are the great fiesta of the city of Valencia. The origins are obscure. Some place them as far back as the middle ages. In its present shape the feast is just over a century old. Unlike most similar expressions of popular culture outside the church, Fallas were not prohibited by the Franco regime.

The fiesta is spectacular. It paralyzes Valencia for four days in March and makes all city life unpredictable for over a month. It culminates at midnight on March 19th with the simultaneous burning of hundreds of huge papier maché sculptures. The burning is accompanied by the most select expressions of the Valencian specialty, fireworks, and preceded all day long and at certain hours every day for a couple of weeks by another Valencian specialty called *mascletà* (literally: the male thing to do), fireworks with nothing to see, just rhythmic noise. The smell of gunpowder hangs heavy over Fallas.

Fiesta commissions (some 350 in 1983) work on the preparations all year round. They vary in size, but a minimum would be twenty or thirty families. A smaller size would make it difficult to meet the expenses. There is a lot of work to raise the money to pay for the sculptures, lotteries, bazaars, dinners and so on. There are also activities for children. Most informants stressed the family aspect of Falla activities, and many were members mainly to give the children something to do, or so they said. To dress up in Falla finery and have her photograph taken is a special dream of any Valencian girl.

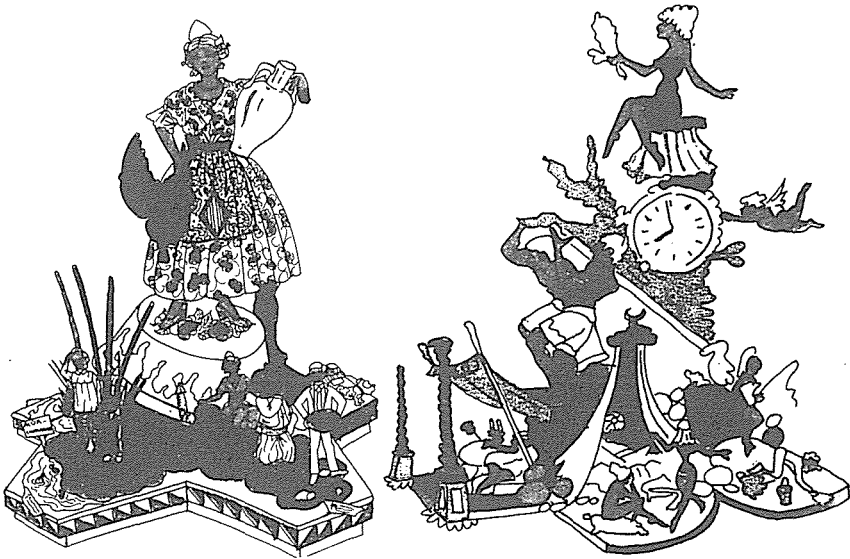
Since membership is by family, many of the same limitations apply to Falla commissions as to the parish and the Casino. Individuals with irregular family circumstances do not take part. This in turn means that progressives do not feel comfortable in the Falla world, even if they live in regular nuclear families. They feel "a heavy atmosphere" of "old taboos". The Falla world is considered non-progressive also because of its "a-political" discourse. According to falleros, the most important aspect of the Falla world is its commitment to criticism and sarcasm, and this has been true, but it was necessarily undermined during the Franco regime.

One reason the regime did not prohibit Fallas may have been that they are almost a corporatist's dream. They are truly places where all social classes meet

in harmony. The Falla queen of the city and her ladies-in-waiting are usually young daughters of prominent local politicians or businessmen, or even of nationally famous men. From these peaks, Fallas spread down and out, throughout the social fabric, excluding noone according to Falla ideology.

The position of women in the Falla world is that prescribed by the conservative gender ideology. The roles of women are supportive, motherly, religious and above all decorative. The men are usually, but not exclusively, in charge of the music, the money and the organizational power. As public contexts, the commissions function very much like bars. For devoted falleros the commission bar is their home away from home, just like other bars are for other men. So, even though as many women as men are members of commissions, the Falla world does not offer much of a context for communication between women. It is a place where women can make friends, but they do not go there without their husbands.

There were four Falla commission in Benituria, all of them of average size for the city and all of them very active. Only one was from "village times"; the other three had been created after 1970.



Two falla sculptures (from the catalogue "El Turista Fallero", 1983). The Good Woman (decorative but decent, often as here in Valencian folklore costume) and the Bad Woman (provocative and dominant) are common falla themes.

#### d. Political Parties.

The political parties are a shade further away from gender conservatism. Three political parties had branches with storefront premises in Benituria in 1983. They were PSOE (the socialists), PCE (the communists) and Esquerra Unida (United Left, a leftist-nationalist coalition with a Maoist tinge). A majority of the persons attending party meetings of the PSOE and the PCE were men of middle age or older, with a definite working class look about them. More women attended PCE meetings but most of them were wives of the men present. For a while the PCE group had a woman president.

Esquerra Unida was different. Its members were younger and well educated, and there were almost as many active women as men. Its program included feminist claims, such as abortions free of charge and on demand. Even mothers with small children attended meetings and did party work. Fathers and mothers took turns taking care of the children and the housework, or so they said. In private, these women too complained that the men had a million tricks to escape their home duties. And when I asked the women how they thought the men looked at the feminist paragraphs of the party program, the usual answer was: They know this is what is progressive, so they try to believe it, but it is hard on them.

In other words, women had little say in shaping the positions of any party. And considered as meeting places, the party groups were not important for more than a very small minority of Beniturians, almost all men.<sup>73</sup>

#### e. The APAs and the Neighborhood Association.

As we continue to move away from gender conservatism, we come next to the parent-teacher associations of the schools, the APAs (*Asociaciones de Padres de Alumnos*). As in other parts of the world, this is the easiest kind of association for women to belong to, because it forms part of the world of children. But, there are two buts: most women do not take part even in this kind of association, and the leaders of the APAs too are often men. Furthermore, to the degree that APA work is seen as an extension of the responsibilities of



motherhood, it is not the kind of arena that forces changes in the gender system. Not in the short run, at least.

For the active women the APAs do function as a forum. Even a conservative husband seldom objects to his wife's going to an APA meeting - as long as she is back in time to get the kids to bed and prepare dinner for him, of course.

In the neighborhood association we encounter almost as many active women as men, and these women are not there in their various roles as women but as Benituriens wanting to work for the good of the barrio. Here, the gender system is often discussed and criticized, mostly by the women but even with men present. And the men do not protest, because the kind of men present do not easily admit to gender conservatism.

The neighborhood associations were originally a creation of the Franco regime. The "three pillars" of the "organic democracy" were the family, the union and the local community. In 1964 came a law on associations to increase popular participation in community life. The territorially defined associations were included in the Falange organization and supervised to prevent infiltration by subversive elements.

Nevertheless the associations were infiltrated, and came to play an important part in the transition to democracy. They were legal, so they attracted a much wider membership than underground organizations. They were practically the only channel for non-religious community activities. It was relatively easy to criticize and irritate the regime in word and deed under the cover of neighborhood associations, since it was legal to "promote the local community" and because living conditions in the peripheral barrios of the big cities were bad and visibly connected to political and economic circumstances promoted by the regime. For the underground parties, the neighborhood associations were a perfect place to become semi-visible. For all participants they were a practical political school.<sup>74</sup>

The neighborhood association in Benituria was founded in 1975 and played an important role as a rallying ground for protest actions until the Francoist mayor stepped down in 1979. In 1983 it was still the main channel through which Benituriens could influence barrio and city politics. Unlike the political parties, the neighborhood association was seen as unpretentious, a place that would welcome even those who were not "doctors in marxism-leninism" as one man put it.

Yet, for most Benituran women it was a male world. It had to do with politics and so was not for them. Except on special occasions. When the association organized demonstrations for better schools, traffic safety or lower bread prices, most of the demonstrators were women.

Membership was supposed to be individual, but in practice family membership had to be accepted, since not all members could understand that the whole family was not automatically affiliated if the husband/father was. The membership was divided between more or less politically interested workers and young radicals with university education or similar. The latter were the most active, the former the larger number. There were all ages. Of the activists, about half were women. The middle sectors of Benituria were absent - the small businessmen and shopowners, the lower echelon administrative employees and the like.

For some women the neighborhood association was an accessible arena for community participation. For the most active ones it was also a comfortable place to socialize. It was a place where the dispositions that lead to discrimination of women were certainly not eradicated but less visible than in most other social arenas. They were partly (not wholly) normatively condemned in this context. Some women had organizational power. It was also a place where the women felt they understood many of the issues better than the men - they knew everyday living conditions of the barrio much better.

But we must not forget that we are talking about a very small number. They are visible and they do things that influence the lives of others; therefore they are disproportionately important, but they are not many. The women activists all had special circumstances that permitted them to participate. One woman stopped being active with the following comment: "I have taken my daughter to so many meetings, she has practically grown up in meetings. She is used to it and very good, you have seen her, she sits down in a corner and starts drawing or something. But the other day we walked past the park and she looked inside and tears came to her eyes and she said, 'Why don't you ever take me to the park like other mothers?' I know it is the old motherhoodtrap, but it is not her fault, and you know my husband, he has no time, so... I have to quit, this is it."

#### f. The Women's Group.

At the extreme progressive point of gender ideology and behavior is feminism. The neighborhood association had had a women's commission but it had died out for lack of support. There had been a very radical feminist group a few years earlier, when feminism was newly discovered in academic circles. The members were all university students, young and radical on all imaginable accounts. After a few months the group had dissolved. In late 1982 a few women decided to try again. The word went out through personal networks and reached mostly married women in their late twenties and early thirties with children of daycare center age.

For a little over a year the group met regularly once a week. (Chapter 11, section b, is a description of a meeting.) There was an address list with over twenty names, but usually six or eight women met each time. The main activity was to "try to clear up our ideas." All the participants rejected the received gender ideas, but they were not sure of what alternatives were available or what to think of them.

The group also had the ambition to "reach out to the barrio." To clear up ideas was thought of as only a necessary first step for that more important activity, to try to influence barrio women away from a gender system defined as negative. The moment seemed to arrive in late fall 1983. The group arranged a slide show about sexuality, contraception and abortion. There was an audience of some thirty women most of whom were not personal friends of the group members, and this was considered a great success. At the next group meeting, the members were euphoric and felt they were now ready: they were capable of defending their ideas, there were things to be done, and there was a potential audience in Benituria.

But soon afterward the group stopped meeting. Perhaps most of the participants were really only interested in sorting out their ideas, and when they felt this had been accomplished they did not care to take the next logical step. I have asked group members about this and they have agreed, but they have also added that women have deep fears of working publicly and more so on this kind of issues. Several of them also said that "all the others" were shaky in their feminist convictions, did not practice what they preached.

It is clear that there was a climate of change and indeterminacy around gender that made feminism fashionable among the most progressive, both women and men. But feminist ideas were far separated from everyday reality. Not even the most convinced women were sure they could live as they thought they ought to. Women's groups formed continuously in Valencia, but like the one in Benituria most dissolved after a while. There was a felt need for group support for the difficult changes many people felt they were undergoing or wanted to undergo. Around certain gender issues, especially sexuality and contraception, there was a wider interest and a lack of information that was experienced as urgent worry in wide sectors of the barrio population. But it was almost impossible to construct bridges between the two stereotypical extremes, "feminist consciousness" and "ordinary barrio women". The efforts failed, either because they became paternalistic, speaking from the heights of sophisticated theory down to ignorant women, or else because of a lack of knowledge and certainty among the activists. Perhaps the Benituria group was as close to a successful compromise as was possible in 1983. But it failed, and it failed because the women involved did not themselves believe it could lead anywhere, not really..

Obviously the women's group was not a permanent forum for Benituran women. And it was defined in a way that excluded a great majority. Feminism had a bad reputation, it was thought of as female chauvinism.

#### **g. Other Associations.**

There were a few associations that were even less of public fora than the ones mentioned so far. There was a football team and a few fan clubs, but they had only male members. There were groups studying the Valencian language, and they were fora for political (nationalist) discussions, too, but they were mainly defined as study groups. There was a film club run by teenage boys with the help of the neighborhood association.

There was a rather interesting cultural association, small but active. It attracted mostly young people of both sexes with leftist and nationalist ideas. Their activities included a folk dancing team, an "alternative" magazine, some research on Benituran history, "recuperated" old festivities such as Carnival. But

most of the activities were short-lived. There was an approximately equal number of women and men in the group, and they were the kind that would not even consider the possibility of dividing tasks according to gender. Such pockets of new gender behavior are important no matter how small. They create a context where new dispositions can grow even while the old ones are in force. A few persons experienced a new kind of gender behavior in practice (even if it fell short of their ideals). And a lot of Beniturians took notice.

In late 1983 a peace group was founded in Benituria, an expression of the rise of a pacifist movement all over Spain. The membership overlapped a good deal with the other progressive associations. There were approximately equal numbers of women and men. It was very active, and the gender behavior was somewhere between that of the neighborhood association and that of the cultural association. In 1987 it collapsed due to conflicts between members of different political parties.

As a whole the associational life of Benituria expresses very clearly the dichotomy progressives/non-progressives. On one side are the parish, the Casino and the Falla world, on the other the political parties (more or less), the neighborhood association and various less permanent groups founded around progressive issues like feminism, Valencian nationalism, pacifism. As I write this, there is a germ for an ecology group.

In the progressive associations some activists disappear and new ones arrive, but there is a core group of about a hundred who are always involved in something. This is why it is easy to create new organizations around issues defined as progressive. But this is also why these organizations easily break up. The activists know each other and so know where conflict is to be expected sooner or later.

In the non-progressive associations, likewise, there is a core group of activists, but the category of passive members around it is much wider. For the "village" families, these are arenas where one meets "those of always" (*los de siempre*). For all, these are arenas of entertainment, so they are easier to go to than to arenas of struggle, like the progressive associations.

One can say that there is public discussion in Benituria, split into two halves as to both issues and participants. People active in associations on either side meet the same people in many contexts. Only the occasional maverick choosing an idiosyncratic combination would cross the dividing line.

#### h. Juntas de vecinos.

For most Benituriens, to belong to an association is to *significarse*, to stand out in a political way, and most have deep-seated misgivings about that. Many Benituriens also have a practical situation that does not permit extra activities. The associational life is not for "ordinary" men and even less for women. But there is one kind of association to which a majority belong, an obligatory membership. Very few buildings in the big cities of Spain belong to one owner who rents the apartments. For a variety of reasons such business is not profitable. A wave of "selling out to the tenants" swept over the country in the 1960's and almost all buildings constructed after 1965 were sold apartment by apartment to the future dwellers themselves.

In such buildings, there is collective ownership over the common features: entrance area, staircase, roof terrace, possibly an elevator, and so on. There is a law prescribing the existence of a "community of owners" for each building to administer it. In everyday conversation they are called *juntas de vecinos*, neighbors' boards. In Benituria the work in these juntas is onerous. Most neighbors do not have schooling enough to manage the books, many feel lost at the meetings and do not understand the procedures or even why they have to comply with some decision they have voted against. The juntas have a reputation of being places of violent discussions.

The elected officers are almost always men, and at the annual meetings the men represent their families even though some wives also attend. Progressive women who insist on attending and speaking think that other neighbors look down on their husbands as being hen-pecked. In some buildings the women have been banned from the "men's meetings", in one case because "they talk too much."

But between one annual meeting and the next, the women are usually in charge in practice. They sometimes have unofficial (=no minutes) meetings to agree on such things as painting the walls of the entrance and who should buy the paint and which day they will all set aside for painting together. Such meetings are often called "women's meetings". It is usually the wife of the president or the treasurer who does the actual work of writing out the monthly receipts and collecting the money for the common expenses. It is to her that the other women

of the building turn when they or their husbands have a complaint, and she is the one who calls a repair man when necessary and pays him.

The housewives carry out all these tasks with the same easy-going competence as they run their households. They do not get nervous about leading those informal meetings, nor, usually, about writing the receipts. But they do feel incapable of presiding over an annual meeting or making an entry in the official book-keeping.

The "women's meetings" are obviously an important forum for the women of a building. They cannot escape getting to know each other and they have to solve practical problems collectively.

#### **i. Women's and men's public contexts.**

Benituria is a place with considerable sex segregation. The men have single sex fora both within the barrio (bars, sports, the Casino) and usually outside it (all-male or nearly all-male places of work, perhaps union activities and similar). The women too have some single sex fora, or nearly single sex contexts, but they are of a different kind. The women need excuses. And practical circumstances limit the usefulness of the fora there are.

One important point to make here is that the norms are ambiguous. Definitions of situations vacillate between old norms and old dispositions and new ideologies and new experiences of what is practical. There are no definite rules and no clear sanctions that keep women away from certain places and indoors at certain hours. But if the norms now say that women can go anywhere, the dispositions of most men are to see women in public as out of place. They need male protection. Feminists liked to tell of adventurous incursions on male territory. A favorite type of anecdote was one about a group of women in a bar/pub/discotheque/football game, where they were approached by a lone man who offered his company/solace/protection with the phrase, "What are you doing here all alone!"

There are no clear norms and many people try to change their dispositions purposefully. But there are clear probabilities as to where and at what hours one can find women doing what. The average Beniturian woman spends a lot of time inside her apartment. If she wants to participate in non-family activities, she must

make sure that this does not impede the smooth running of the household or impinge on the comfort of any family member. No excuse is quite legitimate. It is her exclusive responsibility to find a solution, even if the extra-family activity is imperative, such as earning an income the family needs. Non-family activities are defined as part of the male sphere. Women may enter but only on certain conditions. Some associations are defined as "family-like", e.g. the Falla world, and many women participate there, but they do so as mothers and wives. In other words, such participation does not really remove women from the safety of the family. Some women (the European Women of the typology) enter any kind of context they want to; they have become convinced that there should not be separate female and male spheres in life. But these women, too, must make sure their families do not suffer any drawbacks because of what they do.

The average woman almost always feels that she would like to get out of the house more. Home is equal to work and loneliness. But she does not know where to go on her own. However, women can find some other women in almost all contexts and many other women in most contexts, even contexts where most women would not dream of entering. Segregation by sex is far from clear cut.

Paradoxically, the main conclusions from this look at women's public contexts (associations and other kinds) is this: the women leading "traditional" lives have certain contexts for meeting other women. They can establish a female identity with positive connotations in spite of the men's many expressions of contempt, and they can build a certain power base. Women who challenge the traditional image of women because of its connotations of submissiveness lose this power base and have so far not constructed much of an alternative. For the time being, their alternatives are the supposedly gender-neutral arenas, where the men are in majority and where the women expend much of their energy merely getting accepted. Now, we should not forget that the kinds of power the two kinds of women strive for are different. The average Benituran woman may have a power base, but it is a base for left hand and little else. The progressive women do not want that; they consider it ineffective, denigrating for women and corrupting for all, incompatible with all the key symbols of progressivity.



## Chapter 11. Creating new female contexts.

### a. To change in order not to change.

MaríaJosé was 36 years old, had three children and a husband who worked for a big company in a semi-qualified position; her husband was from a Valencian village and she had come from a Castilian village as a teenager to keep house for a sister-in-law with three small children. In other words, she was a rather average Benituran woman. Perhaps her husband's income was slightly above average. In any case, he and MaríaJosé felt they had come a long way from poverty and ignorance, and they made efforts to "improve themselves" even further.

One of the points of comparison was MaríaJosé's sister MaryPaz, whose husband was a clerical worker. His salary was probably about the same, but they had only one child and MaryPaz had had a better paid job before they got married, so they had wider economic margins. When MaryPaz and her husband decided to move from their typical early 1970's minimum-quality apartment to a recently constructed building with an elegant entrance with marble and a concierge, MaríaJosé and her husband bought an apartment in the same building.

MaríaJosé told me about the Tupperware parties in the new building. I knew that other women in Benituria, in any kind of building, sometimes had Tupperware or Stanhome parties, but MaríaJosé seemed to feel that this was an elegant thing to do when one had moved up a bit. She invited me to one such party at her sister's place. "It is really nice, we have coffee together, and all the women are really educated people; you'll see, you'll enjoy it. And you don't have to buy anything, if you don't want to! The main thing is to get together!" Tupperware is a transnational company which sells its goods only through personal networks. A party is organized, a saleswoman attends, the hostess receives a gift. The merchandise consists of plastic household wares, mostly little boxes for storage.

The party was set for half past four, i.e. for after-lunch coffee time. Eight women plus the saleslady attended. They all knew each other, they all lived in the

new building and had had other Tupperware parties with the same saleslady. Two of the women were over fifty. One was probably just over twenty and another who did not look much older had brought her baby of just a few months who slept quietly the whole afternoon except for the twenty minutes during which the mother dashed off to get her older child from the daycare center.

Everyone was nicely but discreetly dressed. Careful makeup, some small necklace or bracelet, skirts and blouses of quality material, two women wore dresses, all had high heels. The saleslady was around forty. She had a fresh blouse and a flower-pattern pleated skirt. Her long black hair was set in an elegantly nonchalant pony-tail. Her manner was authoritative. Her voice was strong and she spoke quickly and with conviction, leaving no time for others to speak. But they did, all trying to be heard, so even though we were not many, the sound level was high.

There was little time for small talk to start with. The saleslady prepared order sheets for each one of us and explained how to fill them in. Then she explained about the company, about how the goods are not sold in any other way and so on. At a quarter to five she said we ought to start, even though perhaps a few more might show up, but we have to learn to be punctual. She had loaded the diningroom table with plastic items and stood beside it. The rest of us were seated all around the room. She took the items, one by one, to "present" them; she removed the top and put it back, she got out the lattice or any other inner piece and replaced it, she spoke as if the audience had been an unruly school class of at least thirty.

"These platters are new, they are twins, see, they are very useful, there are two of them because in one you put the York ham and the mortadella and anything else that is wet, as I say, because you should never put that together with the dry things, like serrano ham or chorizo sausage, you put them in the other one... in this one you can store a quarter kilo of marinated fish or olives or what have you, whatever you want, people buy it for dried fruit and nuts, too, and sure, but for that I prefer this other one... after all, each one has her taste... and you can take it along to the market and even if you put it upside down in the shopping bag, it won't leak at all...and look at this now, this is a great thing for me at least, because in my building there is never any water, I live on the sixth floor, and if it wasn't for this thing we'd never have lettuce for lunch, because at lunch time there is never any water so one can't wash lettuce, but I wash it

earlier, when there is water, and I put it in here and with the lattice it dries by itself and it does not spoil at all, really, nor does it pick up the taste of anything else in the refrigerator, because of the famous seal of course, I promise you that, well, you know already... How are you doing with the thing to keep the food warm you bought last time?"

The woman she had addressed said something about the food not staying warm.

"Well, I told you two hours, no more; I find it awfully useful, it keeps hot, I give the children their dinner at eight thirty and my husband never gets home before ten, it is an hour and a half, and I don't cook twice, never, eh, and he has his dinner hot, but if you say it is almost four hours, now, that is different of course... Look, for spices! It comes with the colors, for saffron, for paprika... some people use them for salt, because they say if there are a lot of people around the table, a big table, it does not work with only one salt shaker, because it travels all over the table and no one has salt, so they use four of these, and each corner of the table has its own, and fine, why not, but that is not what they are for, eh, but for spice, that is why they have these colors accordingly, and you can take them on a picnic or to the beach apartment or what have you, for example you take these two which are the ones you use most, right... And I bet you can't guess what this is! No? (laughter) It is not for food - it is a sewing basket! Sure, because the sewing baskets - the basket basket ones - are a mess, you know that, you can't find anything, and here, look, for any thingamajig, right? and here on the side for the scissors and so on, don't laugh, you can't imagine how many of these I sell... and it is not expensive, isn't that right, that it is not expensive..."

This was high pressure selling. She did not pause and she pretended not to hear what the other women said, but she listened, and when it fitted her line she took up things they said. It was obvious she had been to courses. But the text was certainly adapted to Valencian housewife life: the two kinds of ham, the problems with unwrapped food in the shopping bag, the unreliable water supply, the different dinner hours, etc. And there were plenty of little subtle references to the kind of things these women consider within reach but still symbols of social prestige and economic success: the beach apartment, dinners for many, saffron as one of the spices used most often (the truth is that it has become so expensive that

noone uses it; the word saffron itself has come to designate a tasteless coloring substitute).

After "presenting" all the items on the table and mentioning quickly a few more, the saleslady walked around the room to look at the order sheets. Some women had questions and she answered them, but she said nothing more to make us buy. When a woman was silent, she said, "So, do you want me to close your list?" To close the list meant to add up the money and extend a receipt.

When all the lists were closed, the saleslady added up the total and it was over nine thousand pesetas. "Let's pretend it's ten thousand," she said then, launching into a new readymade speech, "because I don't suppose you're going to tell on me, so..." She insisted strongly that we decide on a date for a new party. The women said they did not want any, they had already had several. "Yes, but what about something for next year? Someone always wants something, some little thing - for next year, right? And for setting a new date they give more stars than for the sales. Sure, because if not, we run out of parties." But no. MaryPaz said, "I advice you not to insist, because you won't sell anything, all of us have a lot of things." MaryPaz earned nineteen stars, which was equivalent to 420 pesetas. She chose a glass platter from the gift catalogue.

Without further ado, the saleslady gathered her wares in two big bags and left. She was not offered anything to eat or drink. There was an almost audible sigh of relief, as if the teacher had left. MaryPaz went into the kitchen to prepare coffee. The rest of us sat back comfortably and started chatting. Now came the nice part. We had done our duty, fulfilled the requirement of the excuse for getting together.

MaryPaz brought trays with coffee and milk, a plate of cookies, two kinds of sweet liqueur. All the women talked of how nice it is to get together, one ought to do it more often, perhaps it would have been a good idea, after all, to set a date for a new party. MaríaJosé said she felt her life was a stupid life. One of the older women proposed that they could institute a regular evening get-together for the inhabitants of the building. Once a week, always the same day, taking turns to be the hostess. "Some coffee, perhaps a small salad, or some cookies at the most, that ought to be voluntary, but nothing extra, not festive, but real simple, so it wouldn't be a lot of work for whoever had the turn, and... we could play cards, or nothing, just talk, who doesn't feel like that, I think the husbands

do too, right, they hardly know each other..." All seemed to agree and be happy with the idea, but nothing was decided.

While we were waiting for the coffee, MaryPaz placed an ashtray, a box of matches and a pack of cigarettes on the table. MaríaJosé exclaimed, "Ay, are we going to smoke?! - and I who never smoke..." But she reached out to get a cigarette, then changed her mind and offered me first. I had to explain I don't smoke. So MaríaJosé offered the pack to Encarna and Encarna said she did not smoke either, so then MaríaJosé put the cigarettes back without getting one for herself. The oldest lady exclaimed, "Ay, and me, I have never smoked in my life!" When MaryPaz got back from the kitchen, she took a cigarette and lit it, and then MaríaJosé quickly did the same. "I won't leave you alone."

We talked about changing times and about street safety. These women, who were so proud of economic improvements, thought times were getting worse, one never knows what to expect any more. They were afraid of going out alone after dark and they spoke as if they never did and told anecdotes of daytime dangers, too. The conversation touched on many subjects that required the comments, "Today, one can never know" or "These days anything can happen."

As the atmosphere became more relaxed, we came to talk about getting fat. One woman said she spent her days eating. The others said it did not show. She said, "Perhaps not, because I eat food, not sweets. And when I go out with women friends, for example to have a snack at the Corte Inglés<sup>75</sup>, I only have coffee with milk or at the most one little piece of something, the smallest thing they have." Since we had just been talking about boredom, I said that perhaps she ate a lot at home, because she was bored, and when she went out with her friends she did not feel like eating a lot because she was not bored. She said yes, in a low serious voice, "Yes, I am bored at home, you are so right, am I ever bored." MaryPaz said that she too spends her days eating because she is alone all day long in the house. I filled in what she seemed to mean, "Because you are bored." But suddenly MaryPaz looked offended and took on a busy housewife mien, "No dear, oh no, I have the housework, how could I be bored, there are always things to be done!"

After this normative outburst, there was a moment of hesitation, but MaríaJosé recreated the atmosphere of intimate confession, saying that she had weighed 80 kilos. Now she was down to 75, which was not good for her health either, but she was now on the "Ideal" diet, did we know it? It worked fine most

of the time, but for Christmas she had to make a break, because she loves the Christmas candy (*turrón*), the whole family loves it. "Last year we ate twenty-five bars, just the five of us, oh yes, ay." She looked genuinely afflicted, but she was probably doing some impression management at the same time; *turrón* is expensive and most families buy only four or five bars.

The conversation turned to relations between neighbors. They seemed to want to give the impression they all got along very well. But they did not know each other well, since the building was new. MaríaJosé said that sometimes she had thought that the more elegant a building, the less friendly the neighbors. MaryPaz rectified quickly and with emphasis, "That depends! In another building you might just as well end up with neighbors who have a very low level of education, and there you are, nothing to do about it! Here at least you know that, that a minimum level there is..."

MaryPaz said she had invited everyone. Except two women who were teachers. "Knowing it, and knowing they are in class at this hour, why bother?" And except one woman who just moved in and noone knew her yet. All the rest had been invited and those who had not come had without exception given their excuses and explained why they could not come. "But many have not come, and I know why, we have had too many of these parties, the last one was only about three weeks ago."

At seven I had to leave, and this became the signal for everyone to start saying they had to rush to attend to husbands and children, but as I left I heard MaryPaz offering to make another pot of coffee.

#### **b. To change the gender system purposefully - backstage.**

The women's group in Benitueria met every Thursday, starting in December, 1982. The first few months were very tentative. What follows is based on my notes from a meeting in early March, 1983.

The meetings were usually held in the dining-room of a small municipal daycare center where two of the group members worked. We met during the calm midday hours from three to five. Shortly before five, several of the mothers in the group always had to leave to go and pick up their children at other daycare centers or at school, and if the rest of us stayed on, parents of children at the

center started coming to pick them up, the youngest started waking up from their nap... we never stayed beyond a few minutes past five.

The great advantage with this meeting place was that it was free of charge. So was the neighborhood association room, so sometimes we met there, but some of the group members were wary of being too much identified with the neighborhood association. They wanted to be an independent women's group, not the women's section of a mixed-sex-organization.

When I arrived this Thursday, Concha, Ana and Tina were there. Later came MaryAngeles, Sonia and Pepita.<sup>76</sup>

Tina and Concha were looking at the drawings for the new state school. (They were both members of the neighborhood association, too.) Ana was distributing a leaflet with information about the "parents' school" the APA was going to organize at the neighborhood association. Tina complained that the text was impossible. "At least the women of my street won't be able to read this. 'Informative deprivation...' , 'the talent for pedagogy is a gift...' They are going to wonder in what language it is written!" Ana was hurt - I think her husband had written the text - and said she could make a new leaflet. Nothing more was said about that.

Ana went into the kitchen to prepare coffee. Concha said a few words about what we had talked about the previous week for the benefit of those who had not been present then. We started the meeting, discussing once more how to get organized and what we wanted to do, what we wanted to be. The majority seemed to prefer to continue in the same manner as up to now, get together and chat, but choosing specific themes. "To educate ourselves." Concha said we could start right away and make a list of themes.

At that moment MaryAngeles and Pepita started making a list of things to fight for, even though precisely MaryAngeles and Pepita had been the ones to speak out most strongly against having a combative profile. MaryAngeles wanted us to try to get a municipal sports hall. Everyone thought that that would be a very nice thing to have, because the commercial gyms are very expensive, and there are hardly any at all in Benituria, and physical health is very important. Pepita said that we have all received a very deficient physical education, at least as far as she was concerned; in her school there were no sports and what little gymnastics they did, no one paid any attention. Everyone agreed. To feel at home in your body means a lot for your mental health and for daring to be yourself.

Pepita said that anything that entailed physical expression was difficult for her, she did not know how, she did not understand her body, she did not dominate it. Someone else said that a sports hall was for both men and women, but it was appropriate for a women's group to fight for it anyway, because the women needed it more.

Ana said that we needed a library, too. Preferably a place with books to read or perhaps even take home, but at least a place to go and read. "Yes, a silent place with no kids around," said Pepita. "There is nothing like it in the whole barrio." Nor anywhere else in all of Spain, said someone else drily. There were comments on how important this was and how a library could become a center for various activities for the barrio.

Concha: "I have a list of themes I have thought of, and they are of the type, for example, such as... such as, what does the oppression of women consist in? And the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, because we all know, you know, before they used to say that with socialism everything will be solved but then you wonder, let's see, in what countries do they have socialism, and... you don't feel like living in any of them, that's what I mean! Women are not well treated anywhere. I have read Kollontay, for example, about love and the women workers and so on, and you can see that in the Soviet Union they don't get anywhere near those things!" She finished by saying that we had to educate ourselves before we could try to educate others.

I said I had brought a poem I had found in a Swedish magazine and I had translated it because I thought it expressed very nicely the kind of themes women are usually worried about. I read the poem<sup>77</sup> and everyone laughed sadly. "Isn't it funny, the Swedish women have the same problems we do." "They don't seem to be all that much ahead of us."

But then Sonia reminded us of one huge difference: abortion. We have to work with that theme first of all, because the Right is mounting a ferocious campaign and perhaps we have to do something practical before it is too late. Everyone agreed. And I made a mental note. Over and over again, I have seen the same thing: mention abortion and the women (in this type of context) forget everything else and start bubbling with passion.

Someone had seen rightists out gathering signatures on lists against the proposed abortion law. She had seen them around the market the other day, very insistent, she was sure a lot of people had signed just to get rid of them. Or in



order not to look bad in the eyes of neighbors, said someone else. Tina: "Yes, it happened to me the other day, they asked me if I wanted to sign against abortion, and I said no, and they insisted, and I said no, because I am in favor, and they almost fainted from the shock!"

Ana said that they are using small children to take home those lists from school for the parents to sign. We commented on the appearance on television the evening before of a pro-abortion physician. Everyone thought he had spoken very well. Now, one would expect a scream from the rightists, the usual thing about using television for political purposes, because they let him speak uncontested.

Several of the women present now collectively told a story not all of us knew: Right at this moment there was a woman in La Fe (the state hospital), she had a kidney illness, very serious, and she had been told she could have no more children. She had two. But to have another one would be risking her life. Well, now she was pregnant and very ill. She was in the intensive care unit. And the doctors refused to practice an abortion on her.

Tina cried out in shock. "We have to get her out of there, somehow, in any way we can think of, and take her to some other hospital where she can have an abortion!" All of us: "But Tina, can't you see, it's impossible, it's not legal yet, and in a case like this, the people who do it normally could not do it, they would not run the risk, because it would become known." Tina said she thought some doctor ought to take the risk, do the abortion and face the consequences. If there is going to be a law soon, they won't try him, on the contrary, he would become a hero of the Cause. She expressed her bottomless contempt for all doctors if not a single one would do it.

Pepita, who was a nurse before she got married, said that with the legalization there might be more difficulties than before. The ones who do it clandestinely now will not want to do it openly, in the hospitals, because most doctors are against, so it would mean risking their careers. The others nodded and said, yes, we will get the same thing as in Italy, that you won't be able to get an abortion in a public hospital but in the private ones you will; there, the same ones who refuse in the public hospitals will do it for you and charge "generously".

Tina came back to the woman in La Fe. "We have to get her out of there and take her to London! There are airplanes with intensive care units."



A young man shopping for household items; in other words a very progressive young man.

MaryAngeles said that the woman's husband was a taxi-driver, they wouldn't have the money. And perhaps her husband would not allow it, either. But Sonia had heard that he had asked and pleaded with the doctors, and his mother, and her mother, and brothers and sisters, everyone, but the doctors refused.

Tina was almost crying: "And the two kids she has already got, what about them? They are going to be motherless!" There was a suggestion that perhaps we could collect signatures and money. But it would not work if we did it only in Benituria, it would have to be on the level of Valencia, and then we would do better to speak to some city-wide organization. Concha said that she knew there was a meeting in the feminist bar the next day. There were going to be women from the now dissolved Women's Assembly, and from the federation of women's sections of the neighborhood associations and a lot of others. The meeting was going to be precisely about the rightist anti-abortion campaign and what to do. We ought to go there and suggest something. But Concha herself was busy, she could not do it. It turned out noone could, except Tina. She said,

"Yes, I'll go then, but please, someone must come with me, I am scared to death of speaking in public, I turn red, I can't remember what I was going to say... I can't, really, it's pathological." We all insisted she had to do it. Two women said they'd try to go with her, but they could not promise anything. Tina was pale by now, but she stood firm, she'd go, she'd try.

By now it was ten to five and three women had to leave. I exclaimed, "Each day you have to leave earlier!" There were laughs and comments on motherhood. Yes, we are the slaves of our children, how about that, the children, the children, we can't do anything, they've got us tied by our hands and feet. There was a discussion, as usual, about finding a better time. And as always the conclusion was that there was no better time; for some the evening might be better, but for others, a majority, that was even worse, what with snacks and bathtime and dinners and husbands.

The four of us who were not in a hurry cleaned off the tables and took the coffee cups into the kitchen to wash them, stretching our legs and giggling about how stiff we felt after sitting for so long on the pre-school sized benches. The air was damp and cold, our fingers were stiff, too. It was warmer outside than inside the old building. The kitchen window stood open onto the yard, the sun was shining, the kids were making a lot of noise.

Neus, eight months pregnant, came to the window and asked us to hand her a few things she needed for a toddler's scratched knee. "As long as you are in the kitchen, I can't see any reason for me to walk all the way around." There were jokes about her condition and if it might be contagious. MaryAngeles said she had had a scare last month. We all turned on her: "Well, woman, what do you mean, don't you take precautions?" She turned red, laughed and said of course, but all of us got the impression she did not. In the women's group, that would have been an indecent thing to admit.

When she left, there were comments expressing doubts about her mentality. She had lived for several years in a village, someone said in an attempt to excuse her. No, thought someone else, "the problem is her husband, he is an arch-reactionary, he is probably the kind who tries to get her pregnant all the time." Not at all, informed the first commentator, "after all, she has had two abortions, her husband knows about that and has permitted it."

What then could be the matter with her? We walked out into the street and agreed that MaryAngeles probably just needed to "clear up her ideas a bit more."

Without saying so, without probably thinking so clearly, we alluded to mixed dispositions, so common that all women know what it can feel like. In this case, very probably MaryAngeles had religious doubts about using contraceptives but could not admit these doubts since, on a conscious level, she felt she was no longer a Catholic. Probably, too, she felt she ought to stand up to her husband but in actual situations her dispositions would betray her and make her comply with his ideas: perhaps a dislike of contraceptives, perhaps a prohibition for her to mention the word in public, perhaps merely an irregular and/or inefficient use of contraceptives due to inconfessable ignorance.

## PART D: CHANGE

### Chapter 12. Progress as a cultural construction.

#### a. To handle fragmenting doxa.

The fact that the world used to be doxic becomes visible when large parts of doxa change. And the fact that there is always some doxa around may become invisible, incredible or unacceptable.

We have seen that the social and cultural situation in Benituria is very complex. Human communication handles problems of complexity by simplification and generalization. One way the Benituran complexity has been reduced on the level of everyday conversation is through the concept of progressivity. There is a strong awareness among most Beniturians that there are many ways to live and think. Despite this, most people have a strong feeling that their own is the only natural and right and good way. This goes for most areas of life but is perhaps stronger when it comes to such intimately important and culturally central matters as gender. Most of my informants went to some length to explain how all other opinions were absurd inventions, whereas their own occupied a natural, neutral, center ground. Their own position, they thought, was the only one that was not artificially contrived or determined by frivolity or inconfessable interests. This can be seen as a disposition for doxa. If a person has lived most of her or his life in a society with a high degree of doxa, this must have had the effect that the tendency to search for what is the only right and natural thing has become deeply sunk in habitus.

When change accelerates, doxa breaks up. This is disturbing. The world ought to be doxic, according to one's habitus, but it no longer is. In the face of strange opinions, one wants to convey the message: there is only one right point of view. So one showers the opponent with examples and expressions of self-evidence. This happened often in Benituran discussions.

That doxa is breaking up is one explanation of such behavior. There are other possible ones. As we will see, there is a very widespread disposition to define many kinds of situations as ones of friendly exchange and there is a related disposition to define any exchange as something requiring personal affirmation and persuasive efforts. A third partial explanation of the phenomenon of stress on self-evidence could be the general Mediterranean disposition for self-affirmation. Where the syndrome of honor reigns, it is functional to behave as if one were invincible, because it might become a self-fulfilling prophecy, according to the rules of the game, and as a disposition proves functional it becomes ever more deeply sunk.

A fourth possible explanation of the abundance of expressions of self-evidence in Benituran conversation could be that it is a psychological defense in a liminal situation. One tries to paint the world in doxic colors with varying techniques, even in the face of blatant non-evidence and counter-evidence. This explanation is similar to the first one but not identical. According to the first one, the disposition for doxa makes one see only one right point of view; according to this one, the disposition for doxa is felt to be threatened and one therefore wants to see things as self-evident, even when one knows or fears that they are not.

I think all these four explanations apply. And they combine with the need for communicational simplification to produce a very general feeling that there are two big ensembles of opinions that hang together, form wholes. Each ensemble is doxic for its believers and foreign to the others. Beniturians think of them as "mentalities." The whole population is seen to be divided according to their allegiances to basic ideas.

In actual fact, most people hold some opinions from either ensemble. Rather than ideologies with firm outlines, mutually exclusive, they should be seen as special legitimizing vocabularies that can be situationally selected to defend, either one of them, almost any kind of opinion or action. Even so, however, opinions concerning very disparate aspects of life are integrated enough so that most people find most of their opinions/vocabularies in one of the two ensembles.

And this has social effects. For example, we saw that the associations of Benituria can be placed on a continuum of progressivity. It is a social fact that a person active in the parish, the Casino or the Falla world will find many acquaintances from one of these contexts in the other two, but hardly any in the

communist party or the cultural association. For most people, the differences of opinion are translated into a social pattern that ensures a basic homogeneity in any given context. (An empirical example is found in chapter 13)

## **b. Tradition! versus Progress!**

It should not cause any surprise that, in a situation of increasing complexity, the necessary simplification on the cultural level should find its point of departure in the idea of change. And in a country where the change has been mostly positive until recently, it is logical that change is seen as positive and construed as "progress". The two ensembles of ideas could be called "Tradition!" and "Progress!"

The non-progressives do not always see themselves as defenders of tradition. Their opinions are doxic, not orthodox. Their way of life is "the way things have always been". This position is now on the defensive, so it is catching sight of itself, but it cannot quite handle the fact of differences of opinion. Non-progressives have a tendency to get irritated when confronted with such differences. They see discussion as a waste of time or as something that causes a bad unfriendly atmosphere.

The progressive mentality is also construed with doxic dispositions, so it too sees itself as natural and self-evident and good. The progressives describe their coming to progressive standpoints as a question of waking up, opening one's eyes. Very few of them have been brought up as progressives (as progressivity is now defined), so they have had the experience of changing opinions, which makes them less doxically inclined, but they have experienced it as a necessary step from error to knowledge. They imply that non-progressive views can only be held by people who are "asleep", "closed" (to new ideas), stupid or even brainwashed. ("Our generation was made stupid on purpose...")

What then made them see the light? The answer is one only: rationality. (Cf the European Woman, in chapter 6.) The progressives mystify rationality as an infallible tool to cut through mental fogs. This is how they have experienced their own change of view - from emotional non-thinking, living in error, to a waking up to truth thanks to an effort of thinking, usually aided by knowledge (reading

underground literature, meeting some wise person, working abroad, studying...)

The progressives cannot totally despise the non-progressive ideas. They understand them, because they themselves have embraced them in the past and/or people dear to them (often their parents) continue to embrace them. But they see them as survivals. They might have worked fine in the past but are completely inoperative now. So the progressives need to emphasize the distance between the present and the past. For example, they give the past exaggerated names: such and such an idea is Medieval or Stone Age or Celt-Iberian or fit for Cave-Dwellers.

Logically then, for rationality to do its necessary work, central values must be personal development, independence, rebelliousness, education... Everything that makes such things possible, such as good schools, free press, personal economic independence, anti-authoritarian child education, etc. is good, while things that make such things fight uphill are bad, e.g. strong family obligations, social hierarchies, or collective solidary arrangements such as corporativeness and nepotism.<sup>78</sup>

"Tradition!" is the key symbol and rallying cry of one ensemble or mentality, even if its proponents do not defend all sorts of traditions. Both progressives and non-progressives take it to be self-evident what tradition entails. This is surprising in view of the many and varied traditions of the Iberian peninsula, especially for those many progressives who in other contexts like to stress this variety. And persons who had until recently lived submerged in one local tradition have now moved to the city and live next door to people who had also lived submerged in traditions, but different ones. No one can be unaware of the plurality of tradition. One might also think tradition would have gotten a bad name, since the Franco regime used it as a central ideological symbol.

The explanation, I think, is that there is a different meaning of the word tradition, according to which it is indeed common to the whole country and everyone knows what it means, and it means something that has to do with the Franco regime but not only that. In an earlier period of important change and important questioning of what was then doxa, tradition was generalized into an ideology. This period lasted from approximately the middle of the 19th century to the 1930's. It was the period of the privatization of church landholdings, which changed the conditions of life in the villages profoundly and was the first step



away from subsistence towards commercial agriculture, and of the initial steps towards capitalism and industrialization and the resulting strong social tensions of the early 20th century.<sup>79</sup>

The fact that tradition had become an ideology can be seen most clearly from the use of the word in the programmatic declarations, and in at least one case in the name itself, of the various nationalist and fascist parties created in the early 1930's (Payne 1985). The generalization was quite correct, anthropologically speaking. What was seen to be "important traditional Spanish values" were things that were indeed common to most regions and classes, such as the family as the basic feature of social organization and a gender system based on honor and shame and strict division of labor. Because these institutions were seen to be threatened by the incipient changes, they became symbols for the feeling that things ought not to change, i.e. for a "traditional" even though newly invented ideology. And family, honor, gender complementarity, male precedence and village life are still central symbols for the non-progressives and central symbols of what must be made to change for the progressives.

The Franco regime built on and partially congealed the traditionalist ideology. It has been said that the regime had no ideology, only interests. But it managed to present itself as the defender of tradition in a way that was convincing for many, especially for the large categories of believing Catholics and inhabitants of small villages, for whom any attack on "tradition" was an attack on their very life. They could see the regime as a guarantor for the survival of "tradition" even when it perhaps destroyed the example of traditional life most dear to oneself, one's village. But "tradition" is not the same thing as the Franco regime.

If "Tradition!" is then a symbol with a rather clear meaning, change or progress are more ambiguous. Progress and evolution are words that are today firmly included in the conservative discourse, also. For quite a few years, the progressive key word was "Europe!" The feeling was that Spain is part of Europe geographically and historically and culturally, and if Spaniards had to suffer political and economic conditions that were in this discourse often called "third-world-like" (*tercermundistas*), it was because of the imposed regime and its violation of the natural ways of the country and enlightened European ideas. Underground political parties looked to their sister parties in other European countries for solidarity and often got it. Intellectuals tried to find ways of

studying abroad, usually in Europe, and ways of keeping up to date in European debates. As the end of the regime drew close, it became an almost total consensus from the extreme left to what was called "the civilized right" (in contrast to the totalitarian right), that it had to be replaced by something "European".

And this is what has happened. But with the increased direct knowledge of other countries, and with the strong resistance on the part of Europe, first to admit that there really had been a political transition in Spain, and then to admit Spain into the Common Market (which was widely seen as the symbolic *sine qua non*, the true recognition that the country had overcome its status as pariah), there has been disillusionment. Europe can no longer be seen as a mythical continent of Progress. And the achievement of a European-type parliamentary democracy has not solved very many of the old endemic problems of Spanish economy, politics and everyday reality. The most progressive people are now pacifists and ecologists and perhaps feminists as well as leftists, and European enough to be concerned with the worldwide economic injustices. Now Europe is more identified with imperfect democracy and an unjust economic system. (Cf also chapter 6, on the European Woman.)

Traditionalists believe in progress, too, but they speak of it in slightly different terms. Progress, as has often been pointed out, is as difficult to vote against as justice and freedom. So much more noteworthy, then, that the traditional mentality is very cautious in its support for such ideas. Freedom (*libertad*) is good, but what most people think is freedom is really libertinism, depravity (*libertinaje*). Justice is good, of course, but it has to be "correctly understood", it cannot be subscribed to without qualification, it must be administered "responsibly". Likewise, progress is good, but it must be carefully defined and circumscribed. Progress as defined by the progressives themselves is seen as something definitely bad. It is seen as extremism, violence, instability, threats of personal confusion and social breakdown and cultural loss. And since the material changes have, actually, caused a lot of social and cultural uprooting, this argument finds fertile ground among a certain proportion of people in all social categories.

Tradition can only become visible as such when there are things that are not traditional. Thus, an emphasis on tradition and on the self-evident qualities of what one considers right are one more symptom of the very opposite, of the change away from such a state of affairs. And this recent concentrated change has

taken place under circumstances that make it plausible for Progress and Development to install themselves as positive ideas.

Logically, then, the cultural dynamics during the last few decades have tended towards stress both on Tradition and on Progress. This is why people cannot be said to be of one kind or the other. Everyone longs for both tradition and progress. At the same time each person will, on the basis of her personal mix of experiences, feel a stronger need for one or the other.

That this is then construed as being a division of the population in two parts may be explained as an effort of communicational simplification but also on political and historical grounds. There are sharp class divisions and both marxists and anarchists interpret the class structure as mainly dual. There is a long history of civil wars. There is the fact of the long-lasting dictatorship, the sequels of which are far from eradicated but the opposition against which never quite died out. It could also be attributed to a deep dualism in Spanish thinking for which precedents could be found in historical and literary studies. For some people the present situation is a continuation of that old division of the country in "two Spains."<sup>80</sup>

One progressive informant referred to that idea. Since he was a well-educated man, I said that such a view of things was essentialist. "I know. Intellectually I cannot accept it either. But there is something to it. I can't help it, I feel that way. Emotionally I know there are two Spains."

Words like order, discipline, religiousness, respect, obedience, hierarchy, patriotism and family give most Benituriens associations to Tradition, whether they consider these things positive or negative. Likewise words like freedom, development, rationality, tolerance and pluralism are rather unequivocally associated with progressive stands. Progressives accuse traditionalists of "cave mentality", backwardness, immobility, dogmatism, "national-catholicism". Traditionalists accuse progressives of lack of honor, lack of a sense of responsibility, sexual licentiousness, social divisiveness, stupid and useless opposition against given certainties. The word "immoral" is used by both sides and has a strong negative charge for both, but it means different things. Progressives think of political corruption and economic exploitation. Traditionalists constantly accuse progressives of sexual immorality.

Most of these value words are Occidental ideas of old standing. The sorting of them, however, has become specific to Spain because of both old and recent

historical experience. Perhaps one could say that the Franco regime became a catalyst of the present forms of the dualism. A cultural model existed earlier, but the contents were redefined after the civil war on the basis of the experiences of it and the events leading up to it, and modified again on the basis of the experiences of the 1960's and 1970's. All the value words are traditional in the sense of old and well-established. To call some of them traditional and others not is mystification.

Today, the division progressives/non-progressives is not exactly parallel to the division Francoists/opponents of the regime. There is an affinity, and the comparison can hardly be made upside down. But one must remember that a large majority of Benituranians are not interested in politics. And in the general climate of change, the past is devalued and pushed out of sight. Opposition to the past has become more important than opposition to the dictatorship, even if for many it is the same thing, and even if the easy legitimization of opposition to the past certainly must have something to do with the historical moment which sets up a parallel between the past and an unpopular regime.

### c. Even change changes.

As time passes, the meaning of the word progressive changes. In 1988 it may no longer be the appropriate label for what I am describing here, even though the dualism persists. In 1983, the reference to "progressives" was everywhere, but since some people later started to object to my use of it, I decided to ask people systematically about it during the revisit in 1986. It was clear that the meaning of the word was shifting, and some of the most progressive informants underlined that. "I don't like the word. I like what it used to stand for, but now I think we need new words, because things are different."

Change, that is, does not stop. And it requires constant personal effort: "It still means you have to make an effort in order not to fall behind, but this effort is different now, it does not concern the same questions as a few years ago." Some were disappointed and thought nobody would be able to keep up the effort in the long run. "Those of us who lived through the 1970's with everything it meant... most of us don't understand what is happening any longer, we are tired, disappointed . and we still call ourselves progressives. So then it means almost

the opposite of what it used to mean. The progressives now are people who do not do anything, passive ones." She referred to a loss of both political and cultural momentum

The mixture of political and everyday connotations is still there but looks different. "It used to be the people who were against the dictatorship. And it still refers to the same people but now it means their style of living. They are the yuppies now." Up to 1982, the PSOE party was in opposition and counted as progressive. Since it took power, the political map has suffered a change that gives the leftists the impression that progressivism has shrunk: only a small minority now oppose the government from the left while the strong opposition comes from the right.

For the non-progressives, the word is still negatively charged in a very vague way. "I don't know what it means, I don't use that word. I think it is those people who don't care about anything, isn't it? And those people who use all those slang words..." And there are many references to irresponsibility and sexual looseness. "It is a person who lives very much for the day, for the present..." To be progressive is seen as related to changing times, but this is trivialized as a commitment to fashion. "If this year one has to wear a monkey on the shoulder, then all the progressives put a monkey on their shoulder! A short skirt, long hair, whatever... they are very, very liberal people who are not afraid of being talked about."

In spite of all the sliding connotations, the basic meaning is still change, learning, being up to date. "I think to be progressive is to accept the changes in customs, not to be against change." "I still think progressives are people who renew themselves and the opposite is people who stay the way they have always been, who refuse to learn."

Since change and evolution are seen as good, progressivity becomes an idea almost impossible to oppose and therefore difficult to handle for people who feel confused and doubtful about the real life changes they have experienced, whether one feels change is too rapid and risky (conservatives) or one feels that the change one wanted has been betrayed (leftists).

The progressive "mentality" can be seen as the heterodox discourse of a society in which orthodoxy is a small area. Either things are as they have always been and must be, is the feeling, and this is a feeling of doxa; or they are new and

risky, representing the future, defined in opposition to doxa rather than by its substantial contents; thus, it is heterodoxy.

"Progressiveness" can be seen as a kind of metacommunicational message: we will now engage in a special kind of exchange meant to criticize and thus help to dissolve old norms and perceptions. This message is conveyed by certain symbols: certain kinds of clothes, certain places of meeting, certain treatment of certain words. If such symbols are present in a reasonably reassuring number, the person or the gathering or the place is defined as progressive and the exchange can be supposed to be of the critical kind, even though it will abound in expressions of self-evidence, as all Benituran conversations do.

Such critical communication could be seen as analogous to liminal ritual in more stable societies. It is something which helps to delimit and defuse chaos when inevitable changes within the stable structures are carried out. If a whole society - and not just certain individuals at certain moments of the life cycle, or certain classes professionally in charge of the critical viewpoint - can be said to be in a liminal stage, where chaos threatens, then special symbols and rituals will be evolved to make it (seem) manageable.

What happens, then, if a whole country institutes a discourse of heterodoxy as the main opposition to a doxic state that has been made inoperative by the economic, social and political processes? Many things happen, of course. Around all cultural constructions doxic ideas will become visible and less doxic. Heterodoxy will become a value as such, to be defended or attacked as such. Heterodoxic constructions, e.g. of gender, will become a goal to work towards consciously, perhaps an infinitely receding goal. In such a situation, too, it will be much easier to criticize and rebel than to construct new ideas. In opposition to the heterodoxic efforts, doxa will also become a value to be defended. But it cannot be defended as long as it is invisible, i.e. as long as it is doxa. The heterodoxic efforts will convert it to orthodoxy. But the idea of orthodoxy is hazy, the dispositions are for doxa. But such dispositions will change, too, as they come to fit real situations ever less.

### Chapter 13. Divided Benituria - a midsummer night example.

The night of Saint John is celebrated in special ways along most of the east coast of Spain, more or less coinciding with the Catalan-speaking areas. The cultural association in Benituria obtained some money from the city to organize its own Saint John festivity. Julia called me to ask if I knew about it, and we decided to go together. Her husband had offered to babysit.

The time was set for ten o'clock. It was after ten thirty when we arrived at the barrio square, but it was empty except for three or four persons preparing a bonfire and except for some twenty children running around. We went to a nearby bar to have dinner. When we came out again, shortly before midnight, there were between one and two hundred persons in the square. Some wore folk costumes, most - both women and men - wore jeans or shorts and sandals. A small falla (papier maché sculpture), looking more like a scarecrow, had been placed in the center. At that very moment someone set fire to it, to the sound of a cassette player amplified through a megaphone mounted on top of a car. The association members roasted sardines and handed out bread and sangría free and did what they could to blow on the hesitant flames of the atmosphere. Some teenage boys tried to prove their sophistication, making passes at women of all ages. Some "normal" Beniturians watched from the periphery of the square. There were some fireworks. People walked around the square, greeting acquaintances. Some tried dancing but the idea did not catch on.

When it looked as if everyone had finished their sardines, a group of people in folk costumes started dancing. It turned out they were a folk dance group that had been hired to perform. They formed a semi-circle around the falla, which was still burning but now in the shape of a small bonfire, and danced for about fifteen minutes. More people arrived to watch. Around one o'clock a maximum of perhaps 250 persons was reached. They were of all ages; the children still dominated, but there were many young couples, teenagers and young married couples, some with small children in their arms or in baby

carriages. All looked progressive in dress, hairdos and body language. The middle aged persons, too, had t-shirts and beards.

The performance finished, and again noone seemed to know what to do. The cassette-megaphone set-up started blaring modern music again. Some people danced, the younger ones more in groups than in couples. Some jumped jokingly across the smoking ashes of the falla (a common feature of Saint John celebrations is to jump across fires, even walk on burning coals in some areas). Around one thirty the majority had left.

On my way back home I came across another festivity. I had seen the beginnings of it on my way to the square. In front of the local falla commission near my street there had been some two dozen families having dinner at tables in the street. Small children ran around; young people inspected the instruments being arranged on a slightly raised stage. Colored light bulbs and many-colored small flags hung in profusion between the buildings. There had been an air of expectation.

Now, three hours later, the place was alive. Perhaps 300 persons were there. Dinner was finished but the tables were still in the street; people were having drinks. The children kept making a noise and getting into trouble. There were groups of young people standing around, trying out dance steps. Noone looked progressive. The adult men wore grey or beige slacks and white shirts. The women wore high-heeled shoes and light print dresses.

Two couples from my building waved at me from a table, so I sat down with them. They said it was too bad I had arrived just as the orchestra was taking a break. Just a few minutes earlier everyone had been dancing, it was a great atmosphere. "Even I danced a bit!" giggled one of the women making a sarcastic gesture towards her stout figure. Everyone tried to persuade me of the truth of the stereotype: Valencians are people who know how to have fun. "*Somos festeros*" - we are party people.

At the square, the progressive youth and young adults and some not-so-progressive youth getting away from their parents; here, all the rest. At the square the cultural association; here, the falla commission. At the square, sangría and sardines, i.e. "popular food"; here, a sit-down dinner with beer and wine and brandy and liqueurs. At the square, a conscious effort to "recuperate our own traditions"; here, a normal falla commission event which did not even have to be announced to attract a crowd. At the square, European Women and some



Progressive Housewives; here, mostly Worker's Wives and Double-Load Women.

But children everywhere! And the *festero* stereotype as the key symbol to be won as a prize for one's own side. There are two sides but one social field. It is not possible in Benituria today to just be *festero*. It is not self-evident what a "good atmosphere" is. But to create a good festive atmosphere is the best way to prove that one's own interpretation of society is better than the other one.

Two significant asymmetries are illustrated here, too. The non-progressives of the falla commission were greater in number and I think they had more fun. At least they were sure of what to do. But the progressives of the cultural association did not pay any attention to them, whereas the events of the square were silently watched by a peripheral crowd of non-progressives. What is old is known (one thinks); what is new has to be understood (whatever one thinks of it).

One side has the numbers and the certainty, the other side has the impetus of change. One side has the strength of doxic dispositions, the other side the strength of heterodox conviction.

## Chapter 14. Progressivity and gender.

Now that we have seen how progress is construed and its effects on social organization, let us look more closely at the consequences for the gender system. In the eyes of progressives of both sexes, some female lifestyles are more progressive than others, and some opinions on gender-related issues promote change whereas others hinder it. The ideal types described in chapter 6 were placed in an order from less to more progressive. The criteria used to order them were similar to those which progressive Benituranians would use to evaluate them: it is considered more progressive to criticize the church than to go to mass unquestioningly (even if some progressives are religious and criticize "traditional" religion in favor of a new understanding of it), it is considered more progressive to vote than not to vote (even if some progressives think parliamentary democracy is no guarantee for freedom), it is considered more progressive to have leftist than rightist opinions, it is considered more progressive for a woman to have a job than to be a housewife, and so on.

The various scales of progressivity, we have seen, do not always and necessarily match. This also holds true on gender questions. It is also true that most people find most of their opinions on one side of the great divide. However, when it comes to women's lifestyles, this must be modified. Women have experiences in common, as women, and they are important experiences, centered around the reproduction of the species and the production of everyday comforts, and these experiences are culturally construed as central through doxically valued constructions like motherhood, the wonders of children and the importance of a good life. These important shared experiences make women understand each other to some extent across social and ideological barriers. And there is in Benituria a center of gravity in women's opinions and lifestyles. This center of gravity can be described in three ways. There is a statistical average, there is a normative central area of consensus and there is the dominant ideology of progress.

First, the statistical average. None of the ideal types in chapter 6 come anywhere near constituting a majority, but Asun bridges them in a representative

way. Perhaps the salient features of her profile apply to between a third and half of the women in active adult age in Benituria. These women recognize each other as "normal". They can chat relaxedly in the stores with each other and find consensus in conversation even though they disagree on many things. They can discuss their disagreements, because there is a backdrop of common experiences and a few doxic ideas. They reflect on what is happening, and thus participate in cultural creativity. They know that much of their lifestyle is being questioned, and they approve of not a few pieces of the criticism, but they do not see themselves as taking part in it. Their comments usually take the form of "gossip", i.e. evaluations of what other people do.

Those of them who commented on my "typical cases" voted quite unanimously for the "progressive" solutions: the young girl should insist on her right to live where she chooses; the pregnant girl should get an abortion or, if she wants to have the baby, it is her parents' duty to help her, and to throw her out would be criminal; the wife whose husband is unfaithful should leave him and move in with her new love, married or not; and so on.

There were differences between the more progressive and the less progressive in the way they commented on the cases, but the differences were not so much in their actual recommendations as in their motivations and vocabularies. The most important difference was that the women of Asun's type constantly made references to what was best for the children; and if the children would suffer, or just might suffer, then a less radical solution must be preferred. The more progressive women made it a point to say that it usually is best for the children if the mother chooses her own life and happiness, even if it means less to eat, for example.

The progressive women expressed strong skepticism about these findings of mine. They attributed more conservative opinions to the women they considered non-progressive. "Yes, they say all of that, but that is just to impress you, they don't live like that." However, neither do the progressive women, if one is to believe what they say about each other. What is important is that it is clearly the progressive standpoints that can be used to impress a stranger and that are considered worthy of emulation. The less progressive may express less progressive opinions when they are in unmixed company, true. But in a confrontation between a progressive and a non-progressive person, both will try to find a way to show that their own opinion is progressive. Both kinds of

arguments will strive to move the speaker in the same direction, away from the non-progressive extreme the non-progressive suspects that the progressive is imputing to her, towards the progressive end of the scale, where the progressive person will exaggerate her radicality as much as she feels necessary to maintain ideological distance from the non-progressive one.

This brings us to the second center of gravity, which is normative. It is vague and there are several versions, different vocabularies. Hardly any one norm is consensual by itself, but there is some consensus on what norms are most important and what things are absolutely outrageous. There is also an approximate consensus around what norms are on their way to oblivion and what norms are gaining in acceptance. When women of Asun's type want to describe a woman as acceptable, non-controversial, they are likely to use expressions that combine progressive and traditionalist value-words, for example "evolved but decent" or "realist and flexible".

However, the progressive standpoints have more weight, as we saw, perhaps even for women who do not act according to them very often. In this sense, progressivity constitutes a third kind of center of gravity. The persons who consider themselves and are considered by others to be indisputably progressive may not be in numerical majority, but they are visible. They may be a minority but not a small one. They do things that are noticed. They are talked about. They represent the new and what is new is good, or will be good once one has a chance to understand it and mold it to a better fit with old things. Most people make an effort to define the new in such a way that they can feel "identified with it" (common phrase) without personal incoherence.

This means that whatever progressive persons do or whatever event or idea that comes to be defined as new or evolved or advanced has effects far out of proportion with their numbers or frequency. One should also remember that many progressive persons are socially situated in a way that makes them influential beyond their numbers. Not all but many of them are better educated than average Benituriens. They can belong to any social class, but they are probably a larger percentage of the middle class. The university is a stronghold of progressivity and is so considered. In a sense progressivity could be seen as a dominant ideology, as a vehicle for hegemony. But it does not dominate in the most powerful categories of Spanish society, such as high finance, the church or the military. And the progressives themselves stand more or less to the left on the

political scale. Cautious progressive views certainly dominate news media and "serious" TV and radio programs, and much of the mass media discourse centers on change and on criticism - central ideas of progressivity as we have seen. (Non-progressive thinking applauds change but "within an order" and it labels criticism destructive.) But it is part of the progressive discourse to criticize the media for being manipulated by conservative interests, and if we except intellectual debate, the discourse in the media resembles more the one of the statistical center of gravity in Benituria, a discourse that makes a visible effort to sound progressive but is rather ambivalent in fact. Then, also, the various sociological dimensions crosscut in complex ways in Benituria, so that even if some opinions tend to be distributed according to some dimensions, any group will have problems finding common ground on almost any issue.<sup>81</sup>

The progressive discourse on women centers on the idea of "person". The word connotes above all achieved status. Ascribed roles belong to the past. A person is someone who chooses a life path. Women have not been able to do that, they have had their paths assigned to them on the basis of their sex. Now, recent changes are making it possible for women, too, to become persons. This is good, but some women cannot see that. They must try to rid themselves of old habits and prejudices. A woman who resists time is ridiculous and a loser. There are "still" many obstacles on the road to personhood, obviously, but it is a question of time (perhaps a longer time than we thought a few years ago) before they will all cede to the inevitable.

For the non-progressive, too, time produces change and usually good change, but it also produces confusion. One should not throw away what used to be good until one is sure it is really not good any longer. And some things are given by nature. For example - the central example - both men and women live in families and cannot live good lives without a family. Women are central to family life. Therefore, women should be more cautious than men in adopting new ideas. They can do more harm. If women do not continue their work to keep the family happy and stable, confusion will grow geometrically. Good change is only possible if this one thing does not change.

So arguments perforce go past each other. They do not really meet at that central meeting place, the normative center of gravity, but that is where they swirl around each other. In parts E and F this will be described more substantially. There we will see what the common backdrop is, if any, on several empirical

issues, and we will see what issues around gender catch the attention in public debate and in individual grapplings with change. There will also be a discussion on the consequences at the societal level of the many cultural and socio-cultural contradictions in the gender system. The ideology of progressivity functions as a joker in these contradictions - it can be used situationally for almost any purpose by almost anyone, it is unpredictable in any given situation, but its principal social use is as a simplifier, a contextualizer that makes sense out of many things that seem to border on chaos. And the way the simplifications are drawn - what concrete acts are considered progressive or non-progressive - has consequences for social organization.

For an individual woman, to be progressive or not also has its consequences, of course. Within any structural position - "other things being equal" - it makes a difference whether a woman makes a progressive interpretation of it or not. For example, a progressive woman moves around more, since she defines that as desirable. She is more likely than a non-progressive woman of similar characteristics to study or have a job, and she is more likely to choose her activities according to her own tastes, rather than obeying her parents. Because of all this, she is more likely to meet more different kinds of people, so she will probably get a more varied view of society, which in turn might make her more tolerant of new things. Because she meets many kinds of people and because she wants to trust her own judgment and has opportunities to exercise it, she has a better chance to choose a boyfriend and get to know him better before the wedding. If there are difficulties, she is more likely to break the relationship, since she does not think such an act sentences her to celibacy forever. In the same way, she is less afraid of being abandoned, and this makes her stand up for herself more in conflicts, whether in love or in friendship.

There is - because of all this - a certain probability that her husband also subscribes to progressive ideas, and this gives her very good arguments in everyday discussions around such gender-related issues as childcare or housework or the desirability of her getting a job. Whenever he tends towards standpoints rooted in the principles of sexual complementarity and male precedence, she can call him a reactionary, and it will be an effective argument. It is also probable that husband and wife agree that they should not have more than two or three children and that they should use "rational" methods to ensure this, so she will have a greater part of her life free for other pursuits.

Let us not exaggerate the consequences of an ideology, but let us not forget them. And an ideology that seems coherent with social and material circumstances that have become visible because of dramatic historical events is an ideology with unusual force.

There is certainly a lot of ambivalence. For some - the most progressive - a period of exhilaration and great hopes has now changed into a period of deception. Everyone talks of the new gender equality, but there is little change in practice, they think. Yet time ought to produce improvements. So something must have gone wrong. Someone must be to blame.

This ambivalence towards the present can be handled, somehow, usually. But there is a tendency to gloss over totally the ambivalence towards the past and choose one of two possible and opposite attitudes: "It is over and gone forever, thank God!" or "One must make an effort and adapt to the times, but there are important things that are eternal, and they used to be clearer."

The way such attitudes influence opinions on gender issues and how a person acts in critical situations is best explained with examples. The descriptions in part C of the creation of new female contexts can also be read as illustrations of progressive and non-progressive reactions to change. Chapter 15 is about a situation in which different interpretations of a central gender concept, motherhood, compete to determine the actions of a woman whose dispositions have come into contradiction with her present experiences. Inés constructs motherhood in a non-progressive way, but she is separated from her husband, a condition in which a woman can only be a loser according to non-progressive constructions. So the arguments of other separated women, to make her reconstruct her view of motherhood in a progressive way, are effective. She realizes that if she does that, she can redefine her whole life in advantageous ways. Perhaps they are even right in saying that she has no choice, she thinks. Still, the redefinition is difficult, not only because of the intrinsic inertia of dispositions. According to the non-progressive definitions she stands to lose something very important, and as long as she has not made the leap, that loss looks too overwhelming. To give up her definition of motherhood feels like giving up her claims to self-worth, her right to a social existence.

## Chapter 15. The reconstruction of motherhood.

The cultural construction of motherhood is greatly elaborated in Benitua and in Spain generally. Among women activists it is seen as one of the greatest obstacles for an improvement of women's lives, precisely because it is the central column of the "traditional" female role. Progressive women see an opposition between "mother" and "person". The image of the mother is of a person who forgets that she is a person in order to enable others to be persons. This is a "myth", they say. They do not mean that women do not act unselfishly. On the contrary, they mean that the image of self-sacrifice is very strong, has myth-like qualities, shapes behavior in a much deeper way than a mere norm or habit.

The following story shows how the protagonist, Inés, suffered from this myth, which she had internalized completely. It also shows how the other women present looked straight through her attempts to adapt her discourse to the progressive exigencies of the situation. They also castigated her for her attempts to use the myth to her own advantage - that is one kind of left hand practice that has always been effective but is now criticized as undignified and self-defeating.

The situation was a meeting in the Association of Separated Women; I hope the story will show, too, the dynamics of this association.<sup>82</sup> The atmosphere was usually of the kind shown here - a mixture of rude cordiality, sudden outbreaks of "philosophizing" or sarcasm, eager talkativeness - even when the theme of the meeting was not someone's private problem. The leaders always had a more feminist analysis of things, and they did not hide it, but they stopped short of accusing the others of being "behind the times". When they pronounced harsh judgments on "traditions", they took care to explain they did not mean to offend anyone.

Sonia, the association psychologist, opened the meeting by saying that something had just happened and she wondered if we could all agree to make it the theme of the meeting. "One of you told me her problem in the hall, and I thought it was interesting; it has all the typical elements in a separation: the husband abandons his wife, she has no work, she keeps the children and now



one of them wants to go and live with the father and she is desperate. So, now I have said what I think, but I think we can talk about it all of us, because then she - she is here - can hear it and maybe it will be good for her. A bit of group dynamics, which may be better than if it is just me telling her things."

After the formal agreement of all, Sonia explained the case. She began by saying that the boy was eight or perhaps nine years old. Inés, sitting at the back of the room, shouted: "No, eight!" So then everyone knew who the protagonist was, but Sonia continued with the fiction that we did not know. The boy had ambivalent feelings. Sometimes he hated his father, because there had been violence and so on. But the mother realized that the boy also idealized his father, which is normal in these cases, and that he missed him. So, one day, without telling anyone, the boy goes straight from school to his father's place. He wants to live there. The mother does not want to allow it, she is desperate. What should she do?

Isabel, the president, launched a long passionate speech almost before Sonia had finished. She was so vehement that other women tried to calm her down. "Fine, Isabel, that's all right, that's enough" and "You have talked a lot now, let someone else talk." It was easy to read between the lines that Isabel's own case had been similar and that her passion stemmed from it, but she spoke in general terms, unlike all the others. She said that it is a damn lie that the children don't understand what is going on. The woman suffers a lot from the myth of motherhood. "I don't believe in motherhood - I believe in persons!" Sometimes the best mother is the father. One has to tell the children the truth from the time they are small. If they want to live with the father, let them; and that ought not to be a tragedy for the mother. "There are fathers who do a better job than some mothers, and please, I don't say this in order to condemn the women, you know how feminist I am and all that..."

A small dark woman said quietly, "The separation is almost always a tragedy. I had a daughter who wanted to go and live with her father, too. I told her, no, you can't, because daddy is a bad person, so time went by and she stopped insisting and didn't go. But I think now it was a mistake. A long time later finally my daughter went to have lunch with him one day, in his home, which was where we all used to live. And it was no trauma any longer. She came back and said to me, mommy, guess what, I had only two dolls there, so I didn't have to go after all. It seems like she had imagined she had boxes and boxes of

toys there, so she went, and no, there were only two dolls, and so the situation lost its drama. If I had let her go right away, she would have come right back and that would have been it. So the solution in this case I think is: let him go! You have to think, too, what happens if I die? It is sad, noone wants to think of such things, but they can happen, and if there is no mother, who is better for the children than their father, right?"

Rosa, one of the leaders: "I have no children so I can look at these things more coolly. The children have an existence different from the parents. That is why they have their rights. They can make mistakes, sure, but then they have to discover that on their own."

An elegant lady in a shiny white blouse: "You have to let them be free. I wanted to forbid my children to see their father and that was an error."

Rosa: "You have to think of the independence of the mother, too. The extreme woman, the super-mother, always loving, always ready to help, she is nobody. She ties her children with ties that are not healthy. She ties her children and they cannot be free, and she ties herself. The mother, too, needs to be free."

MariLuz: "I understand that woman, even though she is probably a bit younger than me." A glance escaped her, a glance that measured the difference in age, so it was obvious she knew whom we were talking about. "I am 43 now, and I would not do it like that now. We progress, we learn a few things. What Isabel says is certainly true, you always have to tell the children the truth, but it is very difficult, most of us can't do it." Isabel kept trying to interrupt and was stopped by the women around her, "Isabel, please, it will be your turn later..." and Isabel muttered, "But these things make me..." MariLuz continued: "Another solution would be not to have any children. It is very hard to live consistently. You decide one thing, but what happens is that it is then very different from how other people live, from all the others you know. And I think it is more difficult to be a separated mother than to be an unmarried mother, because then at least you decide on your own. I would have loved to be an unmarried mother, I think it would have been better for me, but that too is difficult."

Sonia talked of how a separation is always experienced as a loss. "You lose your husband. Often you did not love him any longer, but after all he was your husband, and now he no longer is, so then it is some kind of loss." And when one loses something, one wants compensation, so most women turn to their children. "It is so common that a woman finds her compensation there. She

has lost one love, so now she concentrates on another love, her love for her children. That is unhealthy. I don't want to hurt anyone, because I know how much one suffers, but that dependence is always dreadful. For the child it is a burden. That example with the boxes of toys is a good one, the children imagine things. Yes, the best thing is to let them decide. They have a right to, they are persons."

By now everyone had realized that Inés was the protagonist and were looking at her, so Sonia decided to abandon the fiction and turned directly to her. "Because of everything you say, that he won't be well treated by his father, because of all of that, he will come back, he will realize that it is not a nice place. But what you can't do is to deny him the right to go there for a few days, for a 'vacation'. That is how the father has explained it to him, and for the boy that is a good thing, like playing, and he will think you are very bad if you don't let him go."

Inés: "If you only knew what my husband is like!...Yes, the boy is anxious for his father, and I can see that, so I have asked his father to have him for a while. It would be better for him. What happens is something else... They have destroyed me!" Her voice broke and her eyes bulged, and I thought she would not be able to continue, but she made an effort by increasing continually the volume of her voice. "They have destroyed me, for ten years now. All I had, all I had left now, was my desire to work for my children and even that they want to take away from me. I can't find work, I am in a very bad state, I can't be a person because I have been trying for over a year and I can't find work, I can't do anything, not anything, and now I just feel like throwing it all out the window..."

She had stood up, shouting, and let the last words float in the air as she suddenly sat down again. The women murmured in chorus: No, not that, oh no, listen, don't do that...

Isabel: "You can have other things: friends, work, fun..."

Inés: "I tell you, I have been trying for a year and I can't manage."

One woman said with cool emphasis: "Well, look at me - for 21 months I did not know anything about my daughter, 21 months without even knowing where she was. I lost her when she was a year and a half and I got her back when she was a little over three. I was shattered, I was, I had to take all sorts of pills, I hit my head against the wall, I didn't sleep for I don't know how long..."

And that is no way. Think of it as a vacation. Just like I say it to you now, that is what people said to me, but I could not, so I know how difficult it is, but there is no other solution. Listen, in my case, I tried to take it to court, but the judge did not accept it, because the girl was with her father!"

Inés: "Fine, if my husband were a normal person!"

The other woman, just as cool: "And what about mine! That marvelous person, that is what everybody said, I have seen that marvelous person with a knife in his hand ready to kill me! Your situation is much better than mine was!"

Sonia: "What you are worried about is the well-being of your child, but I tell you, the boy will not come back in worse condition than he is now."

Inés: "But if his father speaks ill of me! He is going to turn the boy against me!"

Several women said that that is a double-edged weapon, in the long run it will turn against himself. If he says you are bad, and the boy later finds out you are not, he will be certain to accuse his father for having said so.

Inés: "But you don't understand! My husband does not live alone, he lives with his mother and she is to a great extent the cause of it all. Before, the boy hated his father, because he had disappeared, and he knew he did not send any money in ten months and that that was why we had such a bad time. But all of a sudden, there is daddy with a few gifts and he says that I am the bad one - and the boy believes it and he goes off with him, and I am left behind, shattered, which was what the purpose was to start with, because he does not care about the children, what he wants is to hurt me! I live with my mother and she sees this ugly maneuver and she says that if the boy leaves he won't come back."

Now several of the women seemed to feel that Inés was not playing fair with them. They recognized the common story of the mothers-in-law. They told Inés to leave her mother's house, not to pay attention to her, that she was practicing emotional blackmail. There were many comments on how easy it is for the men to buy a few gifts and impress children who have been through a period of poverty. There were comments about different kinds of emotional blackmail, and the discussion threatened to dissolve into several simultaneous discussions, until one of the old-timers, fat and beautiful and good-humored Fina, let her powerful voice boom a long sermon across the room:

"The children do not belong to one or the other, they belong to nature, but nature uses the parents to give the children life. That is why we cannot go against

their will. And: watch out, the children almost always want to live with the one they are not living with! And: the mother has to live and not become obsessed. Almost all of us want to dominate, we have to watch ourselves. And: there are not that many advantages to being married, so there is no reason for the separation to be a tragedy!" Many happy voices: "You can say that again! Fina, you are a philosopher!

Fina continued: "And finally I want to give you a piece of advice: you have to look nice, so that the mirror does not speak badly of you but tells you nice things about yourself. You have to go out every day, and remember all the people who have cancer or a bad heart and are much worse off than we are, because we are not all that badly off!" The whole room broke into laughter and some applauded. There were many comments on how one feels much better with some make-up and nice clothes on.

Cristina: "My case, almost all of you know it - I spent fifteen years under conditions you know about, conditions no one ought to accept." She referred to physical and psychological abuse. "And I didn't leave because I was a mother above all. I certainly mystified myself! Now my six children love going to spend the weekend with him - but it is because they go to what used to be their home and it is in a village where they have their friends and all of that. And I let them go, of course! The other day my nine-year-old daughter told me about how the house has changed; they used to think it was so nice, and that it was because the house in itself was nice, but now they realize that it was because I was there, and now it is dirty and has rats, etcetera. They used to live well, in spite of all the problems they have seen, and they dream of those times, but they can tell they are not going to return. I tell them, if they want to live with their father they can! But they don't want to. When they come back from the weekends there, they are awful, because he spoils them in the most awful way, and we have problems. But they stay with me. And as to me - I tell myself now, what an idiot I have been! Just because I wanted to be only a mother, I went through so much that I should not have had to take. There are other things in life! And I am still a mother, but not exclusively."

A woman of almost seventy, one of the leaders: "What has happened to Inés is very recent, so it hurts, of course. All I can say to you is that there is no other damn way than to go through what you are going through. You did well in letting them go, very well - now, don't make yourself suffer. The wound will

heal. And I speak out of my own experience, too, but I won't tell you about it, because it is ancient, from the war and all of that, so it does not apply."

Inés: "They wanted to go and they did not want to, I don't know, I had to put the suitcase in their hands. Off with you! But my problem is different, and it is that I can't find work, so then, how am I going to dress and go out or anything, if I can't even support my children. Now I have only two promotions, that means two weekends, and after that nothing."

Several voices said that something will turn up. Inés cried angrily that it will not, this has been going on too long... She shook her head from side to side, in anger and resignation and desperation.

Cristina: "When my children come back from a weekend with their father, they are confused. They scream, they ask for gifts... it takes us a couple of days to return to normal. But I have the weekend for myself, I can breathe."

Inés: "My boy lacks love. I can see that he is looking for something he can't find anywhere. And now this on top of everything else - they will hurt him! It's different with the girl, I am not worried about her, she defends herself, but the boy!"

Rosa: "You have an unavoidable duty to yourself. Stop that talk of whether the boy needs this or that; you need a lot of things! You have to rebuild your life, because from what I can tell you have never worried about yourself."

Inés: "Well, yes, I have had something - but I have lost everything because of them! And now I can't find any solutions. The thing is to work. Without that, I can't do anything. Your advice makes me laugh, I can't do anything at all as long as I have no work."

The women were getting restless. It was getting close to the time when the meeting usually adjourned to a nearby bar. And Inés was not being cooperative. And most of them had been in situations similar to hers, and they had found their way out of them. The helpful atmosphere was slipping towards hostility. Even Isabel was getting impatient: "We have all had to learn, we have all had to humiliate ourselves, to work with anything, cleaning stairs or whatever." Two women laughed and said that these days it is not easy even to get a few hours' cleaning job.

One woman: "Look out, don't get depressed, because in my proceedings they turned it against me, that I was having depressions. So take care of yourself, because as soon as you let go, on top of suffering, they punish you for it."

Inés got up, squeezing her handkerchief, and said: "You may not believe it, but I am very grateful to all of you for all of this." The old woman said: "You are not in as bad a state as you think." Sonia, the psychologist, summed it all up: "The woman who is at peace with herself can give something to a child; and the one who is not cannot. And even when you do not feel very well, you have to act as if you did."

We went down to the bar. Inés came too and clowned around with a pocket mirror and a make-up kit, giggling in a slightly forced way as the other women cheered her maternally. Sonia got me into a corner to talk professional talk, wondering what I had "observed". I talked of cultural change and liminality. Sonia talked in clinical terms of the process Inés was going through and about her defenses. We talked past each other. But we agreed on the need to deconstruct motherhood and on how strong the arguments of these women were in that direction. But Sonia was a bit sceptical: "They say all of that, about thinking of themselves, but at bottom they don't feel it." I said that confirmed what I had said about cultural change. But we disagreed again when I said it might be risky for women to lose the myth of motherhood as long as they had nothing to replace it, and Sonia thought that to get rid of the myth was an absolutely necessary first step before anything else could happen.

The waiter came around and helped us rearrange the tables. He was used to us by now, we came every Tuesday, so he flirted and bantered, and several of the women flashed pretty smiles at him. I sat down with a group of women who were saying that we had treated Inés too harshly. Others thought that she deserved it, for lying. "She never put any suitcase in their hands! Don't you know she wants to start new proceedings to get the court to forbid the father to see them!" The others did not know whether to believe that. The consensus was that it was necessary to be harsh, for her own sake, because one cannot take soft advice when one feels like that. "We all know how it feels," they said again and again.

The discussion turned towards their own role in supporting each other. Several said that after the first year or so, when you need the association to survive, it sometimes feels heavy to go. Sometimes it is boring, because it is the same story over and over again. Sometimes it is painful, when some case is very much like your own. They all said it is necessary to live and think of other things. Still, you go, because you have been helped and you want to help others.

That is probably how they felt, sincerely, on one level. It is a fact that the majority come often for about one year, then less assiduously for another year or so, and then they disappear. (The ones who stay are then old-timers, leaders; they stay because they have become feminists and see a wider purpose.) But during the session, the women did not seem to be playing roles of solidarity or duty, nor did they seem bored. They were emotionally affected, and they acted out of their feelings. They screamed and shouted at Inés, living the emotion of their stories, bombarding her with their arguments, as if by sheer force of conviction they could lift her out of what they saw as her blindness.

One could interpret these sessions as instances in a semi-conscious collective process of cultural conversion, not dissimilar to religious conversion. These were not intellectual women coming to conclusions after conscious analysis of events. This was not a fighting group trying to change society. They were trying to change themselves. They had been thrust by events into chaos - social, cultural, material and psychological chaos. The only way out of it, so they thought, was to change their "mentality", i.e. their rational and emotional premises, their doxa. In this, they were not left totally to themselves. The experts - lawyers, psychologists, teachers, feminists - told them about some of the new facts and suggested a new set of premises. There was a pervasive progressive discourse they could draw on. The job they had to do on their own - or help each other with - was to get the new ideas to fit with their everyday way of life and material circumstances, and then to get their new ways to fit with their social surroundings. Inés would have to find a way of becoming a "person" without having the two most basic prerequisites, an income and marketable skills, and she would have to find a way of persuading not only herself but also her mother, her ex-husband and her mother-in-law that she was not a loser if her children lived with their father.



## PART E: WORDS

### Chapter 16. From statements to ideas.

Now we can draw closer to the cultural heart of the matter. What do Beniturians think of their own gender system? What do they say about what men and women are in general, and what do they think men and women think, men and women want, men and women do, or men and women ought to do. Beniturians say a lot about these things. And there was a lot of information on gender to be had from between the lines of what they said about other things, too.

There were a couple of problems, however. One concerns the degree and kind of generalization possible from a very complex material. The other problem has to do with the difficulty of distinguishing between the analyst's ideas and those of the analyzed. In this chapter I will explain how I handled these two problems.

#### a. My interpretations or theirs?

What are gender-related issues? That depends on the gender-system in question. Yet, if we want to compare gender systems, we need some criteria for what is cross-culturally relevant. Different theories of gender, we know, can give different answers.

My plan was to listen for what kinds of issues cropped up in contexts where gender was on the agenda, and make a list of themes considered relevant by feminist anthropology and interview people about them. After that, it would be necessary to compare the two and make decisions about the differences. As it turned out, there was no great difficulty on this point. For both women and men in Benituria, the social organization of reproduction and the cultural

representations of reproduction are seen to be connected to "women's lives" or "women's problems". This is a piece of information about their gender system in itself: that it is represented as including reproduction and that it is represented as having to do with women but not with men. In more sophisticated discourse, "the roles" are seen to determine what men and women do, and what is meant by "roles" are the established gender roles. Feminists discuss sexuality and child education and marriage and divorce, but also the labor market, legislation and the representation of women in religion and in language. Benituran housewives talk about the sexual division of labor both in the home and in the labor market.

There were no parts of the Benituran representations that did not fit the context of gender as construed in the theories of Western women's studies. This type of problem, so common for anthropologists, was absent in this study. And all issues that seem central and important for a description of a gender system were actually mentioned in the context of "roles" or "women's position" in Benituran conversations. In this Western urban field, the anthropological problem was not to come close to what was strange; it was instead to obtain a distance from the familiar in order to extract new information from it.

For this purpose I designed various techniques for distancing myself from the material. I had such techniques for different kinds of materials: observations, written sources, etc. For the interviews I did a special experiment, the details of which are found in Appendix B. The results of these special exercises did not contradict the deductions from my general observations.

In the next two chapters is a summary of all generalizations that could be made from checking the special exercises against my participant observation. They are about what people say, not what they honestly think deep down. They are not about what people say as opposed to what they think and do, but about what they say that seems to reflect that part of what they think that is possible to verbalize. This is a more superficial level than "true thoughts" but no less real.

## **b. Similarity in the midst of complexity.**

What kind of information is it, then, that we get from these generalizations? They are about the gender system, yes, but whose gender ideas?

In the middle of the variety in Benituria, there were two kinds of coincidences of ideas, and this is probably valid everywhere.

One kind is well known and usually called subculture. Some kinds of people have more in common with each other than with other kinds. They have similar experiences, so their habitus becomes similar. Age, class, sex and regional origin are some factors that are so important in determining what happens to a person that they tend to group people in social interaction, because their similar experiences give them similar ideas and thus they find it more satisfactory to interact with each other than with more different people. They become similar because they interact and they interact because they are similar. In all societies there is some general knowledge of what subcultural patterns exist, even if some subcultures are more secretive and more careful with their border maintenance than others.

However, a population cannot be divided up into a number of subcultures with a certain number of persons in each that can be summed up and be equal to the total. This is impossible, since a subculture is usually defined along one social dimension only (there are exceptions, such as some youth cultures that may be defined both according to age and class and perhaps schooling and political opinions, etc.), whereas individuals are defined by many. A woman can, for example, be at the same time middle aged, Andalusian, married to a waiter and a housewife. And she is a woman. Furthermore, in Benituria almost any specification of any dimension can coincide with almost any specification on all the other dimensions. (The great exception here, as in so many ways, is the category of housewives on the dimension of relationship to production. It is close to impossible for a man to have that position.) A middle aged Andalusian housewife in Benituria is likely to be working class, but there are other kinds.

In other words, Beniturians can be grouped into subcultures, but the subcultures overlap. They also change over time. The closest one can get to describing different subcultures around the question of women's lives is probably something like my sketch of ideal types.

There is also another kind of coincidence of ideas. In spite of all the variation, there are certain ideas that are shared - more or less - by all. People of different subcultures have different ways of interacting with each other, and if a person tries to act towards a member of a different subculture in a way appropriate within the subculture, the result is unpredictable. So, in a city, such

behavior is not very practical. When many people meet many unknowns every day, as is the case in all big cities, certain minimally shared dispositions develop. And this backdrop becomes important out of proportion to its scope (the number of ideas shared), because it is called into use so often. Even when two persons of the same culture interact and know that they share many ideas because of their social similarity, they also know that part of what they share is shared by people very different from themselves.

The larger the variation is, the more abstract are those widely shared ideas, the overarching culture. Since people from almost all social categories and all parts of Spain share the public space of Benituria, the abstraction level of what they all share is high. It is probably similar to what is shared in all other big cities in Spain.<sup>83</sup>

However, the overarching culture can include rather substantial ideas on certain themes, especially controversial themes that are debated and thus collectively elaborated. One has different ideas, but they are comparable according to some criterion and one knows about the alternatives. Gender roles is one such theme. Others are for example religion and politics, where it is obvious that there are differences of opinion but that they are grouped into a number of well-known positions.<sup>84</sup>

Because there are messages that reach out quite widely even in a complex society, what is shared is not always as abstract as one would believe if one took only the various subcultural perspectives into consideration. There are in Benituria some very down-to-earth ideas that are so widespread as to be almost doxic.

### c. The interview as a context of overarching culture.

The description in the next chapter of the gender parts of the Benituran total-culture is based mostly on interview material. It is checked, as I said, against my whole knowledge of Benituria, because in no other way could I have interpreted it correctly. But it is based especially on interview material, and all of the quotes are from interviews, and this is because I think interviews more than any other kind of material gives precisely the overarching culture - what everyone knows that everyone knows.<sup>85</sup> Let me explain why I think so.

An interview is a semi-formal context. The exact relationship between the interviewer (myself or student assistants) and the interviewed person varied from total stranger to close friend. But the interview context in itself is nevertheless always a context somewhere in between. It is not like friendship, because even if the interviewer is a friend one must think of another listener, the unknown "general public" for whom the interview is carried out. On the other hand, even if the two persons involved have never met, the context is one of friendly interaction. It is not an overtly formal context (at least my interviews were not) and no important interests are at stake. Furthermore, in these interviews, the visible topic was the informant's own life, a topic nobody finds uninteresting but nobody exposes totally without self-censorship.

What all this means is that the interviewed informants tended to stay within the cultural code marked out by the consensus level. The interview situation is one of courteous communication with a relatively unknown other. The speaker wishes to be defined as normally informed, normally mature, having defensible responsible opinions, and so on.

An informant can certainly say culturally incorrect things in such a situation, too, in order to provoke or insult, or because she or he is upset for some reason, or because of personal proclivities for driving a discussion to its extremes. This happened. But given a minimum knowledge of the overarching culture, such instances are easily identifiable and can be excluded from consideration or interpreted for special information. And most people do not want to appear as culturally inept or unacceptable persons. Thus, what they said is representative, not as for what they truly and deeply think, but for what is publicly and more or less uncontroversially said and therefore culturally digested in Benituria.

However, a culture always defines what is permissible in an approximate way. And even for natives it is not always easy to determine what really belongs to the consensual level, especially in a fluid time and place like Benituria in 1983. Beniturians commit cultural mistakes every so often and this is one rather important fact of their culture.<sup>86</sup>

So not all of what follows is necessarily acceptable to all Beniturians. But it is all part of the possible repertoire for a number of inhabitants of the city of Valencia in 1983. There is sufficient margin of safety for the informants to say what they say without fear of committing any great blunder.

As Briggs (1986) shows, an interview is a special kind of human interaction, and as always the meaning of what is said is a product of that interaction and the whole situation that defines it. And what is said has many functions other than the substantive or referential one. Precisely because of this, there is much information to be had from interviews other than the merely referential.

Interviews ask for conscious models of sociocultural events, which means extracting them from their usual context. The interview is a special context. There is now a growing theoretical awareness that content cannot be separated from context. What I have done, then, is to collect two kinds of data (interviews and observations), then I have analyzed one against the other in the hope of getting at things that are not wholly present in either kind by itself. There are things that are seldom directly said but very often indirectly said and they have to do with doxa. I created a special kind of interview context and analyzed the interview material as such, and then I checked the resulting generalizations against the ones resulting from common participant observation. The final goal is elusive, so I think we need some methodological experimentation. (See also chapter 4, section e)

The interview data are about that same social life I observed. But that is only one level, the surface one. For example, if an informant says that "of course" she is skeptical about what priests say, and I then find out that she goes to mass regularly, I do not conclude that she lies or that she is forced by some social pressure to go to mass. I look for further information about why she goes to mass and about what she thinks of priests. There is probably some further information in the interview itself and even more in other things I know about her life and the lives of persons in similar circumstances. The important thing, however, is that she has said "of course". She may not be as skeptical about priests as she says, or she may be, but what I learn is that she finds it desirable to give me the impression that she is and also that she finds it possible to take this as self-evidently desirable. This is a metacommunicative message that is only in part about priests. It is about what sort of person she is in this interaction. She is managing the impression she wants me to have of her, but that is not lying or even just impression management. She is true to herself and to the communicative event in process. In her interpretation of the combination of the two, she must for some reason be unambiguous about religious ambiguity. This

is the piece of data I derive from such an utterance, and the analysis of it must then depend both on what the same informant says on other matters and what all informants say on religion. In this way, interview data are made to speak about reality while at the same time talking and doing are not confused.

I used the student assistant interviews with caution because I had only the written reports as contextual information, but there was often some contextual information in them, too, that made interpretation possible. Let us look at one example.

The idea of purity crops up in unexpected places, even in the discourse of progressives who insist that all such old "taboos" have been overcome. Sometimes they are aware of the contradiction, sometimes not. It is a difficult one, because the disposition to feel that sex is dirty is almost as strong as the disposition to want to change such ideas. A female student assistant interviewed a young man, not her boyfriend she specified. She asked him if he thought the man or the woman ought to take the initiative for acquaintance. He started saying, very progressively, that they should have the same rights and duties and that it is boring if it has to be the man all the time. But he added a doubt that he did not want to recognize as his own. He said he knew "many" who did not like a woman who takes initiatives. "Because one can easily get the feeling, wow, this girl, she is not bashful, and if she says this to me now, then who knows..." Who knows, that is, if she may not have said so to many. Her lack of bashfulness shows experience, and that is bad. She has been around, she is not pure.

The interviewer then asked him if he thought a woman ought to be a virgin when she gets married. He said, "Absolutely not, that is an old prejudice and a discrimination of the freedom of women." The interviewer then asked if consequently he did not mind if his girlfriend had had previous lovers. His immediate reaction: "That is to distort the question!" Then he realized his own contradiction and laughed, and said he would have to get used to the idea and "if I can choose, I guess I prefer the old way."

We know little about the context of this interview. What the man says gives us little information about how he actually acts in the company of women. But the context of the development of the verbal exchange itself shows that the young man feels an inner contradiction between progressive ideas of equality and freedom and a disposition to interpret such concepts in different ways for men and women. It also shows two techniques he has for handling this contradiction.

He reports some opinions as belonging to others, and he tries to place a conceptual barrier between ideas and practice. "That is to distort the question!" is his automatic reaction when the interviewer crosses the barrier and translates his abstract policy statements into something personal. (The situation must have been one of real friendliness since in the end the young man was able to admit his contradiction and recognize the strength of his non-progressive dispositions.)

Finally, there is important information of the strength of the idea of purity and how it clashes with contradicting ideas. When similar information is extracted from other interviews and from observations, it becomes possible to generalize about the cultural standing of the idea of purity, even though opinions about it vary and even though one can take no statement about it at face value.



## Chapter 17. Gender themes.

This chapter is a summary of the generalizations arrived at through the methods described in the previous chapter, in chapter 4 section e, and in appendix B. In part F we will see their significance. The themes that resulted from the juxtaposition of general gender theory and what Beniturians talk most about in the context of gender are: love and its initial stage noviazgo, marriage, family, children, sexuality and household tasks. But let us start with the views on what men and women are.

### a. Men and women.

What are women like? What are men like? How similar and how different are they and why? I asked directly about differences between men and women. Almost all informants said that men and women are indeed different, but most were emphatic that this is due to education, not to natural differences. Even women who hardly ever read a printed word felt that such ideas are no longer "scientifically" acceptable.

Not a single informant said that men and women are equal, neither in the sense of justice nor in the sense of similarity. The division of labor is too clear, no one can doubt the differences in roles. Yet, equality in the sense of justice is the goal few deny. So I asked about the obstacles. Some informants seemed to think that the ideology of equality meant that they should deny that obstacles exist. Most of the women, however, underlined the obstacles even before I asked about them. One common angle was to psychologize. Men were said to have psychological needs or personality structures that make them create obstacles for women. More sophisticated informants mentioned aspects of social structure, such as women's lower education and lack of marketable job skills. But most of the obstacles mentioned had to do with female nature. Women gossip; mothers educate their daughters in repressive ways; it is women who object to women co-workers and women bosses; women do not get along with women; women say they want to be equal but in fact they want men to dominate; etc. The most

progressive tried to avoid sounding too misogynic but few escaped the pattern altogether. However, education was the explanation and education was the remedy.

A special obstacle is motherhood. It is seen as both a structural and a psychological factor. Women want children, and when they are mothers they have no energy for anything else. As things are now, a child requires attention twenty-four hours a day, every day. So obviously a mother cannot study or work, consequently she cannot have the same opportunities as men.

Many informants were rather optimistic about the possibility of removing the obstacles. Time means improvement, so bad things will disappear by themselves. But precisely the most progressive expressed most pessimism. Yes, things are changing, but much too slowly, they said; most other informants said that an awful lot has happened already and equality is almost here.

A few informants found equality undesirable. One could have expected such opinions to be rooted in the ideology of the Franco regime or related to religion, but if that was the case, informants never said so. What came out in their comments was rather a confusion of similarity with justice.<sup>87</sup> For example, one young man said: "I think it is fine if it can be arranged that women get better lives and all that, but not equality, because if men and women are the same, then love is impossible; there must be a difference, because if some day I find I like a man as much as a woman, that is the end of it!" (Cf also below on the cultural stress on love.)

There were some positive evaluations of women, too. Some thought women are more autonomous than men because they reproduce daily life. The strength or rather stamina of women was a pervasive theme. Both men and women liked to joke about which sex was really the strong sex, and this predilection could be a symptom of an unresolved cultural contradiction.

The dominant note as to women's qualities was one of ambivalence, even though both positive and negative remarks were usually carefully qualified to sound "fair". Much the same goes for what was said about men. The negative comments on men were a majority, although not so strongly emphasized as the women's negative qualities. The positive remarks on men were more wholeheartedly positive. And they came out above all when women talked of their fathers. Daddy is the Wonderful Person of childhood. Both women and men idealize their fathers.

The negative comments often came in connection with negative comments on women, to the effect that men are no better. Women are gossips, yes, but so are men, for example. But two negative themes applied to men only. The women said men are selfish and given to control women. Men are selfish because they want service in the home that they cannot see any reason for giving. However, this selfishness is excused, since it is seen as innate. "It is just that he does not realize that I may be tired, too." Selfishness was also seen in money matters. Since most women do not know how much their husbands earn, they cannot judge if they are fair. Mutual accusations follow: the women think the men are stingy, and the men accuse the women of irresponsibility.

The disposition of men to control women is strongly felt. Older informants gave examples of strict measures of control that would be impossible today,<sup>88</sup> often in order to underline how things have improved. Younger informants often thought that men have the same urge today, but that women have learned to rebel. "I would never take (*aguantar*) what my mother had to take!" The many stories of controlling men and cunning rebellious women must be seen in the light of the disposition for self-affirmation, obviously. (Cf next chapter.) I am sure the women exaggerated their resistance. But the stories can also be read as one more sign of the delegitimization of the old gender system. Men who do not succeed in controlling women have always been ridiculous. Now, men who try to control women are ridiculous (at least in the eyes of the women) whether or not they succeed. If they succeed they are old-fashioned and evil.

When talking about what a man should not be like, most women talked of selfishness and aggressiveness. But some also talked of weakness and stupidity. They meant a weak capacity to confront the world in order to procure for the family. Economically dependent adults have a problem in dealing with the person they are dependent on: they cannot leave him, so they must wish for him to treat them nicely, and they cannot get the necessities for survival except through him, so they must wish for him to be good at procuring them, even if that means that he has to be less than nice in other relationships. A consequence of this is that non-dependent adults will see dependent adults as contradictory. They feel they are asked to be gentle and aggressive at the same time. "Women don't know what they want." They also feel that the dependent ones are always asking for material favors and forget other aspects of life. "Women are much more materialistic than

men." They will also intuit suppressed hostility behind ingratiating behavior - both men and women insist on the unreliability of women. "Men are more noble."

As a whole then, the picture men and women give of each other is highly ambivalent with a tendency towards the negative in both cases.

#### **b. Love.**

Yet despite ambivalence, these two kinds of human beings are usually attracted to each other. And the ideology of love is strong, it is a doxic good. Love is necessary for a good life. It is understood to require efforts and it is taken for granted that there will be difficulties, but it is also taken for granted that most of the time a couple will manage to establish a good and long-lasting relationship, if they are both normally intelligent and moral persons, and that this relationship will lead to marriage and children unless there are special impediments.

The ideology is not taken to be different for men and women. Both are supposed to want love, be unhappy if they cannot find it, be susceptible to it, sometimes even against their own will, etc. But at the same time love is seen to be more important for women than for men. Actually men's discourse was more romantic (with reservations for my limited insights into it). In the women's discourse there were two kinds of skepticism. Some young women and more of the older ones pronounced the words of dependent women of all times and places: they were in love because the man was "good", "had no vices", "had a dependable job", etc. The feminists spoke of men's uneradicable prejudices against women which make them cheat and exploit women. But neither skeptic discourse was meant to be anti-love.

In a society based on complementarity between the sexes, men and women may not understand each other very well, since they live in different universes, but everyone knows what to expect and there are legitimations and explanations for the common kinds of misunderstandings. There are also standard procedures to solve the standard conflicts produced. In Benituria, complementarity is still the social reality for almost all; at the same time the dominant progressive ideology rejects it. The ideology of love preaches deep mutual understanding and the practice of equality. The changing and complex



Girls play rhythm games and take care of each other.



Boys play soccer in the alleys.

social and cultural context make few persons or situations predictable. People are often disappointed in each other, in all basic relationships, and love is especially difficult to practice as the ideology requires. An ideology there is, however, definitely.

What the ideology of love is showed up most clearly in the comments on my "typical cases". The pregnant young girl should not get married to a man she did not love, oh no, "not for anything in the world," "that is absurd". The woman who found out her husband was unfaithful should try to find out whether he still loved her or not, and should also try to make up her mind whether she still loved him or not, and on love depended her decision. The next case, where she found a new love, usually made the informants respond with enthusiasm. "How beautiful!" "Oh yes, wow, yes of course, let them love each other!" In the case of the separated woman in a desperate economic situation, love also came in as an important consideration. The informants usually said she should not accept, because she was not in love with the man, so it would mean she sold affection, and such things are not for sale. Some said she should not accept out of respect for the man's wife or out of respect for that marriage. But most informants also said it was a very difficult case, because we all know how hard it is to find a job these days and that we all do almost anything if we are desperate enough. Some found the solution in some slight brainwashing: she should try to make sure, maybe she loved him after all. And if so, she should ask him to separate from his wife, because if he did not, it was proof that he did not love her. It had to be mutual.

The love the ideology prescribes is not common, as far as I could tell. But in many older marriages there is another feeling. Some informants called it "realistic love". It is not romantic and it has nothing to do with sex or even enjoyment of the other person's company. It has to do with emotional security and freedom from loneliness, to some extent, but the nucleus of the feeling is rather a grateful sensation that the other person is economically reliable - does not cheat, works as hard as she or he can be expected to given health and other circumstances, is a careful spender, etc. Progressive women interpret this as conformity, as giving up on the "self-realization" they think should be the goal. Young people construct it as resignation in the absence of real passionate love.

For younger and more progressive persons, love has come to be almost the only acceptable explanation of continued marriage. Since women are usually

economically dependent on their husbands, they find ways of referring to love even in cases where it looks as if there is none. "Since I found out about my husband's infidelity I feel almost repugnance for him, that is the truth. But I am working with myself to get over it. After all, he has repented, he says he will never do it again, and he is such a good father, and... at bottom I still love him, I just have to find a way of forgiving..."

### c. **Noviazgo.**

The progressives would protest this very word: *Noviazgo*! That is a thing of the past! Young people do not have *noviazgos* any more!

But they do, and some call it that, too. Others have something that looks like *noviazgo*, but no word for it. This logical hole in the language is significant. The phenomenon that is now prevalent could not have a name before, since it did not exist. Couples were formed in order to get married only, whereas now there are couples who do not intend to get married or who have not yet decided or who prefer not to think of the future. Marriage is no longer the doxic goal of a couple relationship. A *noviazgo* was a couple relationship directed purposefully towards marriage, and there existed no other kind.<sup>89</sup> So the old word is inappropriate. But since there is no new word, the old one is often used anyway.

Courting customs have varied strongly between classes and regions. Let me illustrate with a story of a young woman's *noviazgo* as told to a student assistant, a story most Benituriens would find representative of "before". She told of a young boy from a neighboring village, and of how she came to realize that there was mutual attraction without a word having been spoken between the two, until one day at a festivity of her village he stammered that he wanted to speak to her father. She said she had to think about it and with those words they parted. "Because I was so ashamed in front of him, but I was as happy as can be, just imagine!" The next day she said yes, and the young man went and spoke to her father and that same day she went with him for a visit to his village. She described how ashamed she felt entering the bar there. "It was full of his relatives and friends; anywhere I looked, people were looking at me." She was only seventeen years old, but from that day it was unthinkable for her to break the engagement. For urban youth today it sounds medieval, but it happened in 1977.

The explanation lies in regional variation; the young couple were from an isolated and poor area of Andalusia. But at the time of the interview, six years later, they were living in Valencia, married and with one child, running a small bar. And the student assistant, an 18-year-old city-bred university student, was their cousin! The two young women, relatives and neighbors, apparently living in the same world, had experiences as different as ever a northern European from a southern European.

But some aspects of *noviazgo* are, or at least have been until very recently, quite general. All middle-aged women and many of the younger women underlined that their first *noviazgo* just had to work out, because chances of getting a second *novio*<sup>90</sup> were slim, no matter whose "fault" a break had been. You were "used" even if you were still a virgin. Many women told of their great indecision when a man proposed a relationship; they had to decide on the basis of very little information and the decision involved nothing less than their whole future, economic as well as sentimental. They seldom said anything about the parents' role in the decision. They felt they decided on their own, or at least now they think they did, or want to make it appear they did. But as a matter of fact, few would go against the wishes of their parents. The opinions of the parents were often the firmest piece of information they had at this crucial moment.

Younger informants describe a totally different situation. If they mention the parents' intervention at all, it is as something to be overcome and as a struggle which hones their independence from them. They speak of an ample circle of friends, both women and men. In this circle now and then a special attraction is born and a couple is formed. But then quite often it peters out again and the two persons are again unattached and ready to enter a new relationship. And this usually happens. I still heard insults ("whore" and similar) uttered by men or older women to or about young women who had "too many" relationships, but as a whole the women themselves did not seem to worry about their reputation or about any diminished chances for new relationships.

It seems as if the *noviazgo*-like relationships usually include sexual relations. It is hard to say anything about proportions, because this is still sensitive. For some people it can be done but not talked about. For some it is still unthinkable. For many it is something to be talked about, definitely, to prove one is not behind one's times - it is hard to know to what extent such talking is accompanied by doing.



What can be ascertained is that people get married earlier in life and to partners ever close in age. Noviazgos are less hierarchical and much shorter.<sup>91</sup> How all of these changes are perceived by an average progressive couple can be seen in the story of Marisa and Paco, chapter 19.

#### d. Marriage.

The idea and the institution of marriage have been much debated lately, especially in the context of the divorce law of 1981. In vanguard circles even the idea of the couple has come under critical scrutiny. But even there the consensus now reigns again that a good life entails a good couple relationship. In Benituria it is hard for an adult person to live a normal life without it.

Some women, mostly the older but many as young as thirty-five, say they never thought much of marriage when they were younger. Everybody got married, so they took for granted that they would, too. If they dreamed, they dreamed of the pleasures of motherhood. But marriage was the doxic entrance ticket to motherhood.

Comments about the couple were usually meant to be comments on marriage, too, since for most Beniturians there is no difference. Likewise, except for progressives, marriage meant Catholic marriage, in church, religiously indissoluble, still, and even legally indissoluble when most of the informants entered it. The breaking up of marriage is felt to be such a violent thing that physical violence and drama around it are taken for granted.

Nevertheless, many informants spontaneously chose to discuss for and against marriage as an institution. The progressive angle was to attack legal marriage and defend free unions. They are common enough, yet controversial enough to be the most obvious theme for a discussion on marriage.

For most people, marriage is seen as the logical consequence of young love. But when marriage and love come into opposition, love wins easily. If consensual living together is gaining in popularity, it is perhaps because it is conceived of as a way of assuring that love wins over routine and norms and obligations. A few informants took the opposite view, that marriage reinforces love, but for them too love was what should be defended, not marriage in itself.

Again, most of the consensual couples get married sooner or later; a critical moment is when they expect their first child. The reason given is usually one of consideration, sometimes for the child, more often for the parents. The child might suffer from having been born "illegitimate" or there might be a lot of extra paper work and legal confusions; the grandparents-to-be prefer to see their children married. If one is very radical one might demonstrate one's non-conformity with marriage norms in symbolic ways. One woman got married dressed in blue jeans - but in church for the sake of her parents. There were some stories of couples who invented their own wedding ceremonies on the basis of progressive ideas of free choice, mutuality, etc.

Some informants told of their wedding day in the expectable terms of nervousness and expectation. But there was more talk of the period just after the wedding, and that talk was curiously aseptic, not romantic. Very few said they were unhappy in their conjugal relationship. But there was much talk of the difficulties of learning to manage a household on your own, the unhappiness if you had to move far away from mother and childhood friends, and so on. Some women were bitter. Most hide such feelings in an interview, but some women turned the interview into an occasion for telling the world about the unfairness of life in general and their husbands in particular.

Bad marriages do not usually end in divorce. There has been no rush to the divorce courts after 1981, as had been expected. In Benituria, one obvious reason is that most people cannot afford it. The women earn little and the men do not earn enough for two homes. Another reason is probably "realistic love". And certainly the lack of precedents. And already separated couples seldom bother to legalize their situation; they have found a livable arrangement and see no reason to disturb old wounds again.

The cultural status of marriage, then, is of ambivalence towards the institution as a required form. But there are deep dispositions for couple living and no alternative institutional forms except consensual relationships that are marriages in all but legal form. Very few even among the most progressive see the lack of alternatives. The present field of forms is doxic in its outlines despite the debate between the forms.

### e. The family.

The word *familia* refers to all blood and affinal kinship ties, generously extended, and in daily usage one does not distinguish between nuclear family and more distant relatives.

The family as well as the children is a culturally stressed good and they partly overlap in discourse. The family means a lot of work, and the larger it is the more work; but the larger it is, the more happiness, too, as long as one can afford it. (Cf also chapter 18 on the disposition for *philia*, the enjoyment of human company.)

The family is something which is always there, and unlike the children it is not something which enters your life one day and changes it. On the contrary, it is the base for life itself; you have a family from the start and you never quite leave that family even when you create a new one. The united and happy family is *doxa* - the ideal and at the same time the only normal thing. Even though there is awareness that not all families live up to the ideal, the person who does not have a family approximating it feels anomalous. The ideal is translated into practice as much as circumstances permit. Aspects of the ideal are contested by progressives, but even they conform to and approve of most of it. A more serious threat to its reign comes rather from contradictions that are inherent in it and that are becoming stronger or more visible because of the recent social changes.<sup>92</sup>

Love for mother is the most forcefully expressed part of the ideal. "My mother was a saint" is the stereotype expression, used in jokes as well as in great earnestness. All relatives help each other to varying degrees. Sibling loyalty is prescribed but only up to a point. One's own spouse and children come first. The loyalty between generations goes in both directions and lasts throughout life and can compete with conjugal loyalty in practice if not in ideology.

It is taken for granted that a happy nuclear family lives together. The only completely acceptable reason for a young person to move out from the parents' household is to form a new one, to get married. If one must, it can also be legitimate to go to another part of the country in order to study or work. But mothers are said to oppose such plans viscerally, no matter what the advantages. To move out because one wants a home of one's own is a rather new idea, defended by progressives but very controversial still.



A birthday party for the family (plus the anthropologist - second woman from the right). If more people had been present, an adult man would not have taken his shirt off, as one of the two grandfathers has here. But children of both sexes are often dressed in sports clothes all summer long. (Photo by José Díaz.)



The stereotypical image of the family united at home: needlework for mother, TV, the round all-purpose table with its long tablecloth beneath which there is a small heating arrangement lit in winter.

This is why I included such a case (nr. 52) in the questionnaire. Young, progressive, city-bred persons invariably said the girl in the case ought to move out, it was her right as a person. Older, less progressive, village origin persons invariably hesitated, saying she should not hurt her parents. Some thought the reason she wanted to move must be that her parents were unfair to her in some way, so then of course she should move. "They don't make her life with them happy." Only a very few related the case to anything having to do with a young girl's reputation, and most find such considerations reactionary. But the what-will-they-say hurts badly, because the very fact that the girl wants to move implies that the family is not happily united.

Most parents threaten such a child with total rupture, so I included that threat in the case. The progressives reacted with disdain: "Bah! Parents always say that. You just leave and nothing will happen. You can't pay attention to blackmail." But this also implies unbreakable family bonds. The parents will try to stop you by threatening rupture, because that is a real sanction for the young, too. But if you do move out, they will not really cut off the relations, because that would be too hard on themselves.

Quite a few informants mentioned the "dissolution of the family" as the most negative aspect of change. The Franco regime was insistent about the dangers of the dissolution of the family and on this ground it opposed women working, couples separating, family planning, etc. But Benituriens who complained about the dissolution of the family thought of other things, things that were ironically rather consequences of the Franco regime policies. They thought of the lack of time imposed by big city living (long travel to work, etc.), opportunities for study and entertainment that meant differences of interests and tastes, salaries so low that a family cannot live on only one, kin groups split up because of migration.

Family togetherness is an old and pervasive value, so it is easy to construe it as old-fashioned. Furthermore, it clashes with the stress on individual independence and freedom of decision and conscience and the growing variety and contrasts in life styles. Logically, then, it is often construed as non-progressive to insist on family unity, and people who fit the description of progressivity on most counts usually complain about the family as a stifling, limiting, unfair, unbreathable place. "The family? Mine is in Albacete, thank God!"

But the feelings of solidarity and love are strong. The progressives, just as much as everybody else, do take care of the sick and the old, make courtesy visits to old aunts, etc. And they visualize their own life in terms of a harmonious couple relationship, based on attraction for certain personal characteristics, to be sure, but also based on total solidarity. They plan to have children, and if they have them already they stress that they are friends with them and insist that they will try to communicate with them so that the kind of incomprehension they have had with their own parents will not be reproduced. The goal is continued or increased harmony throughout life between parents and children and through them with other kin.

If family life is the ideal for all but also a symbol of the past for some, one way out of the dilemma is to redefine family relationships as something more like friendship. There is choice. There is less hierarchy. There is more stress on communication than on ascribed role. All of this fits with other social changes.<sup>93</sup>



Mothers and children. The state school in the background.

## f. Children.

Children are culturally emphasized. They make mothers out of women, but they are important for fathers, too, and for everyone. A baby is a good excuse for strangers to start talking to each other, much like a dog is in Sweden or England. Children get the center stage in all sorts of gatherings. The attention is not always pleasant, to be sure. Children with a sense of humor and self-affirmation get laughs and praise from all, beautiful children are complimented by all, but naughty children are chided by all and timid children provoke provocations, people try to force them to react.

Informants speak more of their own children than of being children themselves, but those who speak of their childhood do so in very positive tones. Talk of children in the life stories usually begins with comments on how many they have and what sex and perhaps what they wanted. As to sex, there is a weak preference for sons, but the ideal is not many sons or even a son first but rather "the little couple" (*la pareja*): one boy and one girl. There is impressive agreement on this. The exception might be older women who say that daughters are more company. Younger women do not subscribe to the doxa underlying such statements: that men and women are naturally different and that a mother needs to keep her children/daughters close to herself as a defense against loneliness. On the other hand, other older women said they preferred sons; to want daughters is selfishness, a male child has a better life so for the child's sake a mother wants it to be male. Younger women refuse to accept such thinking as natural either.

As to numbers, older women do not talk about how many children they wanted, except perhaps negatively, describing how upset they were each time they found out they were pregnant again. Many younger women hesitate to talk about the matter, too. But women who want to see themselves as progressive use contraceptives and talk freely about it. Women around the middle of the scale, Progressive Housewives and similar, talk of contraceptives but say they do not know enough to dare use them or that they do not know any doctor who will prescribe them.

There are not many discussions for and against having children. For a couple to have children (sooner or later) is doxic. Not to be able to have children is a great tragedy. The pros and cons of having children are often discussed, but

not as a question of deciding whether or not to have them, just as an investigation of what they mean in a person's life. They should be there, of course. But they are a heavy responsibility, so one should not have them lightly. One should definitely not have "too many" in relation to one's economic capacity. Poor people with many children are unmercifully criticized for irresponsibility.

There are few references to the act of giving birth in the life stories. Those there are range from positive to enthusiastic in emotional tone. However, in view of the glorification of motherhood, one could have expected more glorification of the act of giving birth itself. There are many possible explanations: ignorance and bad medical service may make the act difficult, some children are unwanted, etc. But I suspect that the absence of glorification of the act of giving birth also has to do with the construction of motherhood as a practical thing. The focus is on years of dedicated work and sacrifice. Motherhood starts after birth. There is little glorification of fertility or other things that would have placed the act of giving birth itself in focus.

When mothers talk among themselves, they often say they are tired. Sometimes this is a plea for consolation, the women are truly tired, and they get the support they ask for, the other mothers tell them to ask the husband for more help, to take a day off, and so on. But much of the talk of exhaustion is disguised pride. It means: my children are very active and I have several, I am therefore a good mother and a good worker and my children are healthy and alert. There is a never-ending stream of anecdotes of children getting into trouble in imaginative ways.

The idea of parental and especially maternal sacrifice was strongly stressed by the Franco regime. To many, today, it therefore sounds illegitimate. "To sacrifice oneself has no merit" said many progressives and semi-progressives. But the idea and the disposition live on clothed in different vocabularies. One woman commented on case 56: "For the children's sake, I would stay; that is, not if he forgets all about me. But for the children, yes, and if I could see that he would not see that person any more and was being attentive to me, then I would see that it was past and would not get worse." In other words, think twice, for the children's sake, but you do not have to put up with humiliations. Such thinking was hardly acceptable outside vanguard circles ten or fifteen years ago. Now it is seen as timid. The progressive stance is that children cannot be happy if the parents are not.



If progressives do not "sacrifice" themselves, instead they "respect" their children and accuse non-progressives of not doing so. They think non-progressive parents plan too rigidly for their children, have ambitions for them without asking them, do not communicate with their children person-to-person but in hierarchical roles. The non-progressives accuse the progressives of not making enough "efforts" to give their children good schooling, and of not effectuating enough vigilance and discipline to make them study and behave.

Whatever the nuances, all informants had the same basic idea: children are something good and a great responsibility, the meaning of life. Even persons who did not want to have children gave reasons that did not contradict this general idea. And the conceptualization of children is rather down-to-earth. The mother-child tie is mystified, but children themselves are not, they mean work and trouble, worries and ambitions. To exemplify the wonders of having children there was little talk of sensual pleasures or cosmic visions; instead, informants usually mentioned little everyday situations: children coming home from school to show something they had made, children recovering from an illness and returning to their usual spunk, the whole family going for a Sunday walk and feeling pride.

#### **g. Sexuality.**

In Benituria today, this is also a culturally emphasized area, sensitive, difficult, full of fears and taboos but also full of promises of pleasures and change, and replete with symbols of progressivity. More than that: a progressive stand on sexuality is the foremost symbol of progressivity.<sup>94</sup>

Europe has a tradition of repression-cum-salaciousness (cf e.g. Foucault 1984/1976). In the Mediterranean area, this is combined with the honor-and-shame syndrome in varying local gender systems that have two things in common: sex is both highly stressed and highly tabooed, and women are made responsible for what goes wrong. In Spain, this part of "tradition" was systematized and legislated on during the dictatorship. Education was separated by sex. Parks were locked at night. Public behavior was controlled - one could be fined for kissing in public or for wearing too small a bathing suit. The religious teachings concentrated on "purity" = asexuality.

I did not usually ask questions about sex. Feminists thought this was wrong; they told me that sex is the most problematic aspect of women's lives right now in Spain. This may well be true, but since the subject is so sensitive, I feared I might alienate informants of certain types if it became known that I asked questions about sex. There is plenty of material, despite this, however. Some informants brought up the subject voluntarily. Some student assistants thought it was the main focus of my project - a significant misunderstanding in itself. With some informants I felt free to ask. In non-interview situations the topic often came up.

The themes most people bring up in the context of sexuality are: marriage or not, change, improvement, hypocrisy, freedom of choice for women, parental repression, parental love, moral and practical risks for women but not for men, abortion, sexual education, the anti-progressive stand of the church. Common substantial affirmations are: parents do not usually know and are not expected to know about their children's love life; the change is recent; the ideology of women as whores forced some women to become true whores; the question of honor is not completely a thing of the past but it should be; there is not enough sex education, so no wonder abortions are needed, but abortions should not be a solution for irresponsible persons; the church enters into self-contradiction when it requires women to be submissive to their husband and chaste and responsible for the children at the same time, because husbands are not chaste, so if they get their way, there will be too many children.

Many informants told of the excitement they felt as children when they began to realize there was a great mystery around sexual differentiation. Most women told with great tenderness of the exciting whispers with girl-friends in pre-adolescence, the slow putting together of pieces of information, the acceptance and growing expectation of what "life" was like, the first daring lies to the parents in order to go out with a boy...

Most of the student assistants asked their interviewees how they felt upon "becoming a woman" as the phrase goes, i.e. when they had their first menstruation. (I had not instructed them to, so the fact that almost all did is again significant in itself.) The emphasis is on ignorance, fear, bitterness against the parents for lack of support. Many focused on the concept of "purity", mostly negatively. Some said there was nothing to it, that their parents took it "naturally". The majority got neither information nor any strong threats or

mystifications. The typical story is that the mother blushes but gives the girl a package of sanitary napkins and tells her that father must not be told and that from now on this is going to happen once a month and the girl must not go swimming or running or drink cold drinks or eat icecream on those days, and she must be very careful with boys.

Many women said they got a sudden and heavy feeling of having been saddled with an unfair responsibility that would be with them for the rest of their lives. Noone mentioned any excitement at the thought of being able to become a mother, which one might expect in view of the glorification of motherhood. But few parents tell their daughters that they can now become pregnant, or they tell them so with the implication that they had better not. And the girls are scared stiff, not knowing exactly how to avoid it.

Nowadays, a few young people get sexual information in school. But they are a small minority and the information they get is limited. Hardly anyone mentioned learning about sex from books.<sup>95</sup> Most get partial information from friends and piece together the rest on their own. And many young women do not get the whole story until they get it from their novio. The overwhelmingly dominant theme when talking of how one learnt about sex is repression and consequent ignorance and suffering and later change. On the subject of sexual education, the stress on improvement thanks to freedom, rationality and knowledge reaches its maximum.

The problems continue in marriage. Many women talk scornfully about sex as something "obnoxious" husbands insist on. Most women over forty are timid and indirect in their references to sex. A common euphemism is that husbands "want to celebrate". I met no woman over forty who talked of her own sexual desire. At most, women might indicate that they are "lonely".

Usually women are silent on the subject unless they are very progressive or the context is very special. But the subject is culturally stressed, so naturally, when the taboo is disconnected, the reaction is strong. For example, in the Association of Separated Women, there was frequent salacious joking. Another example: once in a store a group of women were in a joking mood. One of them had just told about how she thought she was pregnant and had been disappointed to find out she was not, when it was her turn to order. She asked for spinach, and all the other women broke out in laughter. "Spinach, eh! Like Pop-Eye! Better luck next time, right?!" The implicit reference was to male strength as the

main ingredient of sex and to procreation as the main result, two common semi-doxic ideas that progressives combat. But the important aspect of the situation was that a taboo had been broken; that woman's sexual life had been mentioned in public, and this made the women laugh until they had tears in their eyes, and after a while they had to restore social order by means of excusing, legitimating comments: "Well, a good laugh is good for you once in a while."

The progressives live in constant awareness of changing attitudes to sex and their own innercontradictions, yet they are not aware of all the complexities of these. The following woman is representative in her efforts to be progressive and in her sudden lapse when uncomfortable things hit too close to home:

"I am really upset right now, you come in a bad moment, I am sorry, because.. Well, it did not happen today, it was almost a month ago... I found out about my son, you know... he has a lover!" She explained how she found out. "And I cried and I cried. And I told him, why didn't you have confidence (*confianza*) in me, why didn't you tell me? He is mad at me now, he thinks I want to repress him. But that is not true! I have always tried to give my children a liberal education, in this too, in everything. But that he should hide it from me! And I am thinking of the girl and her parents! I know them, I know they would be so upset if they knew!" I asked: Are you going to tell them? "No, of course not, I could not, but now I don't know where to look or how to behave when I meet them, it is so awful. And what if she should get pregnant, what will they do, what can I say, what are we all going to do? He is still in school!!! No, of course I have not told my husband, and I feel bad about that too, because I think it is the first secret I have from him ever, but I can't, I just can't..."

People who feel that sex is dirty incur fewer contradictions, since such a standpoint is culturally well elaborated. But they are affected by change too. "...the son of some friends of mine, he married a separated<sup>96</sup> woman, and the parents, well, they made all the scandal you can imagine, of course. They don't think it is nice at all. But I say, let them be happy. She is no shameless woman, they did not find each other merely for the sexual thing." That is to say, if they had, that would have been bad. Superficial changes, such as legal divorce, can be accepted much more easily than a deep one, such as a reevaluation of sexual pleasure.

A theme that has to do with sex without really mentioning it, and a theme that brightens people's faces, is the happy years of flirting before marriage. It is

called the "silly age" or a number of synonyms, all tenderly humorous. This is the age from approximately the end of school to the beginning of a serious relationship, *noviazgo*. For most of my informants it had been the time between fifteen and twenty years of age, approximately, and it seems to be the same age for those who are young now, and it seems to have a similar emotional tone, in spite of the substantial changes in actual activities. The girls have/had less freedom than the boys, of course, and they complain about it. Both sexes also complain about the control parents exercise(d). Young men complain of the lack of sexual opportunities, young women of the fear of getting pregnant or of the horrors they went through if they did. There is some talk of the lack of money. But by and large one remembers the freedom and the fun. And the fun consisted of sociability and courting.

It is certainly true that the repression of sexuality has taken a terrible toll. It has created ignorance, fear, frigidity, guilt, marital difficulties. Today, people are still preoccupied by sex, but in a new way which does not wholly replace the old ways. For women, sex is one important thing, perhaps the most important, that the dictatorship robbed them of. It is one more thing one has to accept wholeheartedly if one wants to distance oneself from "reactionary" ideas. It holds a promise of pleasure, so one wants to learn. But in a way it is an imposed lesson, and a difficult one.

Men's views are similar, but they are complicated by the fact that the "traditional" outlook on sex for them was not purely repressive, but a mixture of official repression and unofficial encouragement.<sup>97</sup>

When commenting on sexual frustrations, neither men nor women related their difficulties to any other possible difficulties in their relationships. There seemed to be a strong barrier between talk of sex and talk of love, in type of vocabulary and in context for bringing up the topic. The only explanation that comes to mind is that repression used to be technical or mechanical, so the liberation has been technical, too. Parks were locked, so parks are unlocked, for example. Sex was forbidden, now it is prescribed. Total inversion. But love was prescribed and continues to be prescribed, no change there. So the two themes are not comparable. However, in view of the fact that they are both culturally emphasized, the insistence on positive links between love and sexuality might well be the next signpost on the progressive road.

#### **h. Household tasks.**

The men do not do very much of the work with the reproduction of daily life. Until recently the established division of labor completely excused them. This is no longer doxic, on the contrary, it is very much debatable and debated. And the questions of who should do what of household chores crop up in daily life and close to important values, such as love and children, so they are unavoidable and uncomfortable.

Most of the women spontaneously brought up the subject. Some housewives did it in order to underline positive aspects of their lives. They were defensive. There is a feeling, a floating doxa, that housewives are despised, and for some the response is to insist that they have chosen their work and that they enjoy it. "I am not at all frustrated!" they said, defiantly. To be frustrated implies victimization, and this goes against pride. For women who have no alternative in practice, it is threatening, too.

But most housewives complained - of unending duties, ungrateful husbands and children, the loneliness of their work place... all the complaints that have become topical were there. Some related their situation to general social structure, a few blamed their husband's personality or economic situation, but most complained as one complains of the weather: it is not very nice, but there is nothing to be done about it.

The actual distribution of household chores is approximately as follows: If the woman is a housewife she does it all, except possibly take down the garbage, clean the car and arrange bureaucratic matters and bank affairs, if there are any. A man with a housewife is not usually expected to do anything even on weekends or vacations, except perhaps put the children to bed.

In many cases the woman does all the household chores even if she has a full-time job outside the home. But most women in such a situation feel worn out and find it easy to accept the idea that the husband has to help, even if they think that the chores are beneath the dignity and/or beyond the capacity of men. In a few cases, man and wife talk the matter over and decide on a "rational and just" distribution. In these cases, the men describe the arrangement with a lot of pride, emphasizing for example that they are not ashamed even of hanging out washing to dry, or that they have learned to cook well. They also usually admit that they do not do their full share, even now, and they excuse themselves with lack of

habit and education, but they think they are close to their fare share, at least. Their wives are never of the same opinion.

In answer to question 51, there was practical unanimity that "in principle" the household chores and child rearing are the equal responsibility of man and wife. Even conservative informants said so, but they modified their opinion in various ways. The non-progressive women thought it outrageous for a housewife to ask her husband to help, whereas the progressives usually thought that even a housewife has a right to some leisure. If a woman has a job, progressives of both sexes and many non-progressive women thought that the man should do half or close to half of the job, or that all members of the family should collaborate according to age and ability. But they agree that this is difficult to bring about in practice and that the woman should not insist to the point of risking the harmony of the couple.

A representative progressive story, seen from the man's point of view:

"We planned it so that we would each have to do 50% of each thing. A plan of total equality. 50% inside the home and 50% outside, each one of us. It was problematic, because I had never lifted a finger in my home, they had not educated me for that, and she had not done much in her home either, since she had worked from a very young age. That is, we had all the typical problems derived from the education we had received. (...) Both of us were beginners, but the different education made us have a different view of it. If for example I got home at noon and there was still an hour until lunch time, I figured out how long it would take me to fix lunch and if that was half an hour, I figured, fine, I have half an hour to read first. So I sat down to read or listen to music and I did just exactly what was necessary. She did everything necessary first and sat down to read only if there was time left over. She was more aware of things like if there was washing to be taken in and folded, etc. (...) We had lots of quarrels, I didn't notice things, I read a lot.(...) And one day I stopped to analyze what was happening. I realized we were both obsessed with the chores. I said to her, now, let's see if we are going to fall into the same trap that some women do, so the household fills your life, that is too much. (...) Then the kids came and my wife quit her job. She has spent more time with the kids for this reason, and I helped. Now she does most of the work at home and I do most of the work outside. I try to help as much as possible but the truth is I do very little - our initial idea was not to specialize and now we are specialized. (...) There used to be a lot of

tension, now there is more peace, now we accept the roles more, even though it is something to question."

A more common type of conflict is the housewife who takes on the chores as a matter of course but who thinks her husband could help a little, at least, and who feels hurt by his lack of interest in what she sees not just as a job but as their common life project. One informant gave a long description of what she did around the house and a short list of things her husband did, for example fixing broken things, "he does that, one could say (sarcastic laugh), he does it every six months after I have told him a million times." When I then asked her if there were problems (question 26), she launched into a breathless indignant speech: "The problems in this house are all about that, how to divide the work and how to educate the children. He thinks it is all my business, he does not practice as a father. Right now I swear he does not even know in which grades in school the kids are. We quarrel a lot about how to educate them. He wants a more classical education, I want a more progressive one. And I do what I feel like, because he does not notice, but it means I am cheating him."<sup>98</sup>

Here is a typical story of the normal semi-success women obtain when they get a job: "I think this ought to change completely. But - I can't make my husband change, he has been educated in a certain way, he does not like the household chores one bit. He did not want me to go to work, oh no, nonononono; in the end he gave his permission because he saw it was necessary, but I had to fight a lot for it. (...) He said he was not going to do any chores, and neither did he want anyone from outside to come and do them. He likes to be with me, and he said that if I worked I would spend less time with him. He makes the coffee after lunch, that is all. Not even the bed. (...) He does not even want me to go to gym class once a week, because that night he has to make dinner. At first he tried to go out every time, what a coincidence, each time I had to go to class he had something he had to do and the children were left alone. But I told him I was going to continue to go to gym class anyway. And now he makes dinner... well, bocadillos,<sup>99</sup> but we like bocadillos, so... (...) But I will try to see to it that my son is better prepared; he has to learn everything my daughters learn."

Some women resist the idea that the household tasks should now be shared. It is their area of power and expertise, and not much new in the way of power or competence is available for most women, so they may be right in





Women shopping for fruit and vegetables.



A "semi-improved" kitchen. Many or most Beniturians have by now got rid of the impractical square marble sinks, but not all have installed cabinets. These faucets and this gas stove are of about average standard.

defending what they have. Yet it means work that gives very little compensation, and that imposes limitations and often too much work. Case 55 resulted in long discussions of how to make husbands take on their "fair share."

One very radical woman, active communist and feminist, said: "If you only knew how many times I have risked my marriage for the sake of a dirty window or even a dirty plate. We had agreed we would share everything, and I have always worked full time, except for short periods when the kids were born. But my husband simply does not see what needs to be done. And most of the time it is easier for me to do it than to tell him how to do it. And after all, he does certain things, like taking care of the car, taking the kids to school... so now... well, I know it is not fair and it is really my duty in the service of the Cause (laughter) to insist, but I have stopped. And our marriage is better."

Most women we have seen, still have no income of their own, and cannot afford to think their husbands are not lovable. One solution is to feel the husband has no business in the kitchen. He is not unfair, she is the one who keeps him out. The other solution is to reject the traditional division of work, to adopt the ideology of progress, to do what one can to translate it into practice - but to find good excuses for what does not work out in this effort.

For the men, what counts is that they are the providers, and housework is largely an unknown continent. One kind of habitus then produces the idea that it is perfectly fair and safe for men to expect total ground service from the women around them. This is the traditional package, so it is easy to adopt. For many men it does not even have to be legitimated; it is simply the way things are, it is doxa. Other men adopt it but find it a bit difficult to legitimate. They resort to the floating doxa of the all-pervasive effects of education.

Another kind of habitus produces the idea that things as they are are unfair for women, and a man should make an effort. If not, he will fall behind his times and lose part of his self-esteem on that account. (I heard no man say he might risk his marriage. The fear that one's spouse has a limit to her/his patience is still exclusively female in Benituria, it seems.) This kind of man does try, but he too considers it safe to excuse himself with the education he has received. He cannot be expected to take on full responsibility, and he is entitled to extra praise for what he does do. For even though he requires it of himself, society does not, so it amounts to a gift to his wife.

The atmosphere of store and sidewalk conversation is one of applauding

progress, but only up to a point. The desirability of men doing household work usually does not enter that. The women can talk with loving voices of "considerate" husbands, without specifying, or they can tell anecdotes of something their husband did, but implying then that they tell the story because it is worth telling, it is not a routine event.

On the other hand, in these collective female conversations, full of criticism of others that they are, it is not common to hear sarcasms about *calzonazos* (baggy-pants, the stereotype for a ridiculously submissive husband) or *marimachos* (Mary-Males, the stereotype for an unfeminine, dominating woman). I listened especially for such comments, because fear of being talked of in such terms was one common explanation both women and men gave of why they could not "switch to modern ideas." The progressive standpoints are not openly defended in most female public fora, either. These fora admit controversy and debate, but one can only stray so far from the hazy area of approximate semi-progressive consensus, the image of the Progressive Housewife as the "normal woman".

The majority of men do not even think of the possibility of doing any household chores. Among younger men, especially those who move out from their parents' household, a new habitus is growing; they can be seen discussing the freshness of meat and vegetables in the stores. But they feel they are up against strong male and some female opposition. And most men do not seem to feel addressed by the observable trends and the egalitarian discourse in public media.

The majority of women think the trends are beautiful. Even if they have doubts about the biological limits of it all, they think that as a whole the "evolution" looks good. They feel the new discourse holds a promise of improvement. Somehow, some time.

No wonder then that the area of household chores is the most conflictive one in the social relations between women and men. It is an area of great economic import, of great emotional importance, centrally symbolic for traditional gender roles. It is an area where more working hours are spent than in the rest of the economy taken together (Durán 1986) and where the difference in power between women and men comes clearly into sight. The division of labor in which men are supposed to bring in an income and women do all the rest is no longer doxic for almost any women, even though orthodox for quite a few; it is still doxic for a lot of men, probably a majority.

## Chapter 18. Themes of interaction.

Among the cards with statements from student assistant interviews (cf Appendix B), some themes bulged. Some of them have little to do with this thesis; some of them were about things taken up in other contexts here. But there were two themes that are necessary to explain, even though they have little to do with gender as such, because they are culturally central and crop up in all contexts. A lot of Benituran daily life does not make sense to a stranger who does not know about these themes: self-affirmation and *philia*.

### a. Self-affirmation.

Any society needs inhabitants that know how to cooperate as well as how to protest and criticize; human beings need to integrate themselves in larger wholes as well as to defend their autonomy. In Benituria in 1983, the reigning discourse called the integrative behavior realism and the individualistic behavior strength of personality or will-power. Both were found on all points of the continuum of progressivity, although with different evaluations and nuances.

The stress on self-affirmation links up clearly with the old Mediterranean honor syndrome. The following anecdote illustrates the kind of personality that is desired and valued.

"This was once when the children were small and I had to do without a maid for one month. And I did not mind except for one thing. I did all the housework in a good mood except dusting." The informant explained why she hated dusting. "So during that month I did not dust. You can imagine what the house looked like! One day my husband came home and passed his finger along a piece of furniture in the hall like this (gesture of looking with disgust at the tip of the forefinger) and he said something to me about why I did not dust. Well, if this had happened in another moment something serious might have occurred, but I was in a very serene mood, so I did not say a word, I just went to the kitchen and found a dusting cloth and came back and gave it to him and said,

"Look, if you don't like the dust, you take it off. I am in charge of the household work, but I am not your slave, and if you don't like the dust, you correct it, so it will be the way you like it because I am not going to dust. Just like that. That is the way I am." She shone with pride.

This is not seen as related to honor and the word honor is hardly mentioned. Most progressives consider the concept of honor incompatible with the ideals they strive towards.<sup>100</sup> The disposition for self-affirmation is seen as something else. One can be abrasively contemptuous about honor and jealousy, as usually understood, and still react in very classical ways in non-sexual contexts (for example dusting!) and there is an ample progressive-sounding vocabulary for this: willpower, strength of personality, maturity, self-realization, justice and freedom.

Most informants describe themselves as having strong will-power, and it is not only the progressives who like to say they are rebellious. Those few informants who describe themselves as non-rebellious or timid are not proud of themselves; what they say is a confession, and they find excuses.

Children are trained in self-affirmation. "Oh, this boy," sighed one mother after a verbal fight with a three-year-old, as he, visibly satisfied with himself, ran off to play again, "he drives me crazy! What am I to do! The worst thing is I can't help laughing and he notices that, of course, and it all just gets worse and worse. And his father the same thing, he drives him crazy, too, and he too ends up laughing, and I just don't know what will come out of this boy if he continues like this." In truth she was far from worried. The apparent message to the other mothers present was one of helpless asking for advice, while the true message to was one of proudly showing off the kind of strong child they all wanted. The message the children receive, of course, is that the parents like it when they stand up to them.

Both men and women see it as advantageous and fitting that they themselves be strong-willed and rebellious. From the men's point of view, however, it is not completely legitimate for women to behave accordingly. It depends. A man can be proud of a wife who knows how to come out on top in fights with neighbors or who stands up for her (and his) rights and preferences to her parents. But if she stands up to his parents, she is difficult and unreasonable, and if she stands up to him, she has overstepped the limits of the normal. This can be denied in words. Many men say they are proud of their wife's strong

personality and talk with enthusiasm of the resulting conjugal quarrels, but obviously they are even more proud of their own strong personality and will not let it be restrained.

There is a contradiction, then, between men and women around the idea of willpower. For the women this is an ideal for everybody. For the men, it is an ideal for men which applies with crucial limitations to women. From the women's point of view, there is also a contradiction in what they expect from a husband (and to a lesser degree from other male relatives). He should be strong, to defend his and her interests against the outside world, and he should be strong-willed enough not to let her dominate him, since that would be undignified. But she is also strong-willed and does not like him to dominate her, and it is not easy to know what is the right balance in each situation.

There is also a contradiction for women as to the expectations and social pressures they feel. Young girls are taught to be soft-mannered in appearance, but they are also taught to be cunning and, if necessary, aggressive, especially in all-female contexts. "Before" a woman had to defend herself to find a husband, and now the ideal is to be a good student and strive for a career. Women, too, must be individualistic. They used to put their strength in the service of the nuclear family, and they still do this, but one meaning of the progressive phrase "women are persons, too" is that women as well as men have a right to defend their individual autonomy.

But the family is still the doxic frame for happiness, as we have seen, and in a family crisis there is sometimes something that looks like a game of "chicken", in which the men will not place their pride after family harmony, so the women have to do it. A woman wants, sincerely and for her own sake, to be both self-affirming and self-effacing. The usual solution is situational distribution. Now, those norms are being reevaluated and women have to find individual solutions.

The stress on self-affirmation has always, in the Mediterranean area, been connected to the defense of the family. The strong will is good when directed against the outside world; it is bad if it is allowed to disturb relations inside the family. This goes for both men and women and is still quite doxic in Benituria. The change lies in the women's redefinition of the best balance between self-affirming and self-effacing behavior inside the family, and this is a change the men do not understand. To put it in the terms Beniturians themselves do: the men

understand that a woman may refuse to dust if not asked nicely (self-affirmation within the ascribed female role), but they do not understand a woman who insists on a career of her own or the right to go out with friends of hers that he does not know (self-affirmation that leads out of the ascribed female role).

The concept of honor is related to the concept of shame. Classically, to be the subject of gossip was shameful. The sanctions for wrong behavior were both social and psychological. Women's feelings of shame, especially sexual shame, had the effect that they avoided situations where they could imperil the men's honor. Honor was the positive, shame the negative, factor in the same cultural construction. The men got the medals, the women carried the burdens.

In Benituria this does not hold true today, and I doubt if it does anywhere in Spain in its classical shape. (But disguised or modified versions are easily found.)

Not that people do not refer to shame, for they often do. But the concept is not mainly sexual shame, and it applies to men and women equally. There is a very moralistic language centered around the concept of shame and used in contexts like political debates. "The mayor we had had no shame at all, he distributed business to all his friends." *Sinvergüenza*, literally shameless one, is a common insult. It can be light and humoristic, but if pronounced in earnest it ends a friendship instantly. Another common expression is *vergüenza ajena*, the shame of others. It is used when one has witnessed some act or heard some comment that one thinks so despicable that even though the actor/speaker did not show shame, the onlooker/listener felt ashamed. She or he took on the duty of feeling shame, so to speak, since someone had to feel it.

The fear of ridicule is very much like shame, and in some contexts the two expressions are interchangeable. A stereotypical idea most Spaniards have of themselves is that they are very afraid of making a fool of themselves. But whereas one should have the capacity to feel shame, if needed, and would be an amoral unsociable person otherwise, it is felt that it is a pity that people cannot liberate themselves from the ridiculous fear of ridicule. It is thought of as an irrational feeling, and progressives think it stops people from breaking old-fashioned norms when they should and really want to.

There are two new and very fashionable concepts that are clearly related to self-affirmation and are especially but not exclusive used by progressives. They are "maturity" and "self-realization".

Older people do not refer to maturity, or, if they do, they have a view of it as a biological process that is concluded early and consists in a process of learning that is essentially the same for all. Since the period of accelerating change got under way, this has not been so. It is becoming apparent to everybody that different experiences give different personalities and life-styles. From this it is not farfetched to conclude that some individuals can accumulate more experiences and therefore be more mature than others ever become. And there is a general feeling that people have to learn to adapt to a changing world and that some people do this with greater ease than others and that some people have come "farther" than others. They are said to be more mature (*maduros*).

It is never shameful, whatever one's convictions, to talk of one's errors and confusions at an earlier stage, because it is taken for granted that one could not then be what one is now, since circumstances were so different. It may even happen that the more one underlines the differences between what one is and what one used to be, the stronger is the impression one gives of having "come very far" and "evolved very much". This is strongly positive from the point of view of progressivity, and it is also positive from the point of view of self-affirmation, since it shows strength, intelligence, independence, determination.

To realize oneself (*realizarse*) also implies maturation, a search for circumstances that will permit the full potential of the person to develop. Perhaps maturity stresses inner and self-realization outer conditions. Self-realization is often thought to result from work and studies. But it is also often seen in a rather lax way as the opposite of meaninglessness or simple boredom, so it can be used to explain almost any activity to combat such specters. "When my children started living their own lives and my husband started to be bored with me, because I was always bored, I decided to open this little boutique as a way to realize myself."

Self-realization can be the approximate opposite of oppression. It can also be the fulfilment of any cultural expectation, as for example sociability. For some, it is just a fancier word for happiness, whereas others contrast these two ideas and place self-realization ahead of happiness as a goal.

The abstract ideas of justice and freedom are prominent in the progressive discourse, as we have seen. These two concepts also have a relationship to the disposition for self-affirmation. They are interpreted in the light of self-affirmation, and become prominent in part because of the prominence of self-affirmation.



The disposition for self-affirmation has a special effect on verbal interaction, and on all communication. We must take a quick look at this because of its relevance for the methods of this study as well as because of its prominence as a factor of social life in Benituria.

Expressed as a norm for the sake of clarity, it could be stated as follows: it is important to express your opinions forcefully and persuasively; one should be able to persuade through showing the invincible structure and logic of one's opinions and also through demonstrating their emotional charge, because what is emotionally strong carries its own logic; people must take your feelings into account, not only in that they will at some point refrain from arguing against them, but also in that they cannot avoid being influenced by what someone is so convinced of and committed to.

It is considered insincere to hide a conviction if one wants a friendly relationship with the person one is talking to. Friendly relationships are not necessarily friendships or future friendships; they can be shortlived. And longlived relationships are not necessarily friendly; it is for example natural to hide much of your thoughts from your neighbors, with whom you must be able to maintain everyday peaceful relationships no matter who they are, and from people having power over you, for example at work or when trying to solve bureaucratic matters. But in many very shortlived relationships, for example a conversation while waiting at the bus stop or in a doctor's waiting room, the definition of the situation as friendly takes over easily. It is the definition of any situation unless there is something that makes it otherwise. (Cf below on *philia*.) And the disposition comes into play in all friendly situations: one wants to show-prove-convince others of what one really thinks.

In any more or less sincere personal relationship, there is also a norm that the other person should be allowed space for the same wish to show-prove-convince. But this is only a norm, and when it collides with the strong disposition for self-affirmation, it does not stand much of a chance. A common situation is the one called "dialogue of the deaf". It is a situation where two or more parties talk at the same time on the same theme, with different viewpoints and with the intention of persuading each other of their own opinions, through a convincing display of logical and emotional force, but without anyone spending much energy on the complementary activity of absorbing the reasoning and commitment of the other(s).

Beniturians are no more sincere than any other human beings. Change and cultural uncertainty and social complexity, if anything, rather make for wariness. But the combination of the disposition for self-affirmation, the definition of communicational encounters as enjoyable opportunities for displaying personality and the disposition for *philia* makes for a certain kind of sincerity. We can call it situational sincerity. One displays one's personality but not one's secrets. All due consideration is always taken of context, because one does not want to make a fool of oneself, but with allowance for this, what is on display is the truth. Anything else would be hard for existing dispositions to produce. One wants to show the beauty of one's self.

The relationship between ideology and behavior when it comes to self-affirmation is similar. Beniturians are not especially aggressive or prepotent. They try hard to avoid anyone getting the better of them, but they do not make very big efforts to get the better of each other, usually. The logic of *philia* makes for good behavior, as we will see. So the defensive dispositions can be kept sheathed most of the time. The discourse of aggression is more discourse than behavior. But it is not "empty words". It is partly a purely ideological inheritance, true, but words and ideas have consequences for habitus, and they are produced by dispositions that will also produce a more or less coherent behavior if the situation should call for it.

For all Beniturians, then, the disposition for self-affirmation is important. It feels good. For progressives, who reject everything related to the traditional views on honor, the disposition for self-affirmation has found a new language around the need for autonomy.

## **b. *Philia*.**

Mediterranean cultures perhaps stress self-affirmation unduly. But there could be no such thing as a "society with a culture of honor" as they are usually described in anthropological literature, if there were no dispositions for integrative behavior also. In Benituria, they center on friendly communication.

There is a need for a new term for a cultural principle which produces a special kind of cultural construction of friendship and sociability and alliance. We

can call it *philia*, which means friendship in Greek.<sup>101</sup> I think it may be general in the Mediterranean area, as general as the honor syndrome,<sup>102</sup> but let us limit the discussion here to Benituria.

Friendship is an important cultural construction in Spain. It has caught the attention of most foreign anthropologists working there.<sup>103</sup> My informants certainly talked about it as much as they talked of money and in similar ways: it is something that can explain almost any kind of decision and it is something without which life is not real living. It is something the lack of which is so acutely felt and the need of which is so great that one almost always has cause for complaint. What one is offered is never enough. It is a cultural ideal, and a central focus for cultural pessimism.

This is not friendship in the northern European sense of intimacy, preference for shielded private conversation, etc. It is rather sociability and enjoyment of human presence. It is a principle that makes the differences between various kinds of alliances, such as friendship, kinship, neighborhood, godparenthood, etc. unimportant. In all these cases the alliance tends to be more achieved than ascribed<sup>104</sup> and subject to continuous insecurity and negotiation. Being important and yet not automatically provided, it is subject to cultural emphasis and a constant search for guarantees. It always has an instrumental aspect but cannot be reduced to instrumentality, because in all cases the basis for the alliance is this underlying principle of flexibility, choice and individuality, and therefore also personal sympathy, a feeling of rejoicing in human companionship, an expectation of satisfaction to be had from sociability.

My informants spoke almost exclusively in positive terms about friendship. Certain topics, such as school, youth, and home village, invariably brought many comments about sociability and the joys of having friends. The emphasis is clearly on the joys of having many friends and of getting together, much more than on the pleasures of having intimate friends. The aspect of choice is stressed. "Your family is forced on you, but you can choose your friends," is a well-known and oft-quoted saying. Requirements are high and people are not bashful about saying so. "I am selfish when it comes to friends - well, please don't misunderstand, I don't mean in a material sense, oh no, I think I am as generous as anyone can be, but I mean I want intimacy, fidelity, honesty and above all large amounts of affection."

The requirements are partly material. One should never say no to a friend in need, and to quite a respectable extent this is a rule one lives up to. Money is lent between people with little to spare and without receipts or exact accounts. Housewives exchange all sorts of little daily favors. The constant search for pertinent information and contacts in one's own and one's friends' networks can be seen as one aspect of this, too. But since requirements are high, disappointments are common. And since requirements are high, they can easily become too high and one may want out. But few people can afford, in a cultural-psychological sense, to become aware of setting a limit on their generosity. Friendship is construed as limitless by definition. Instead they sincerely feel they have no reason to do this for a friend, who, they now remember, did not even do that for them some time ago, so... and the friendship ends in mutual recrimination, a common story.

Because associational and similar cooperation is defined as friendship and because of the requirements of friendship, suspicion of corruption in any kind of setup with any amount of power is endemic. Part of the general mistrust of political activity is certainly rooted in this. People do help their friends, and some people are able to help more than others.

From a gender point of view, the emphasis on friendship has ambiguous consequences. In one sense, it is gender neutral. Friends are important for both sexes, and both sexes have them. Men have better chances to establish wide networks, however, and only men are permitted to spend hours in unabashedly socializing contexts such as bars. Women have substitutes, as we saw, and they do have their networks, and for some enterprising women the flexibility of working hours that housework entails is a resource that can be converted into wide and solidary friendship connections. But men are much more likely to have useful connections in their networks, since friendships are intrasexual, and since men are in overwhelming majority in the labor market as a whole, and more so the higher one looks in any hierarchy. So in case of a specific need, a man can find someone in his own network to help, or in the networks of some friends of friends, whereas a woman probably has to go through a man. And depending on what the need is, this is or is not feasible.

People exaggerate a lot about how many friends they have and how much they see them and how important they think this is. Because of the high value placed on friends and contacts, it reflects negatively on a person to admit that he

or she does not know a lot of people. (Unless you have a good excuse, such as being recently arrived or feeling different for some reason.) It may sound as if you were unfriendly yourself. Or it may sound as if you did not know how to present yourself in such a light that people want to be your friends, and this would be negative from the point of view of self-affirmation, too. But Benituria is a friendly place, because people who place such great store on friendly contacts will strive to obtain them and will behave in reasonably friendly ways as often as possible. "I cannot live without people - I need everybody! And since I know what I am like, I am a good girl and behave, so that they will all accept me!" said one perceptive woman. To meet many people you know when you go out, to have people greet you in the street, such things are important to all.

If meeting people is so important, sometimes one does things more for meeting people than for the ostensible reason for the activity. This was for example a rather common reason given for going to church. And the outstanding memory from school was sociability in all its forms, not studying or discipline or planning a future or material difficulties (which were also common).

One has to have a rich social life. Social life is construed as something that happens outside the home. One might expect, then, that the home would not be highly valued. It is, because it is a symbol of the family. But it is also true that staying indoors is construed as something negative and depressing. One of the main reasons why many informants thought the lot of the housewife was a bad one was precisely that a housewife has to spend much time at home and alone.

Not to have friends is to have a problem. And a few informants interpreted my question about their social life as a veiled suspicion and answered with showers of expressions of self-evidence: of course they had plenty of friends, they had no problem, thank you!

Sociability is more of a disposition than a norm. But it has normlike qualities, too, at least for some people. A common comment is, "I get along fine with everybody, no matter what the differences." This is a matter of pride. It shows, first, that one is sociable and tolerant, and second, that one has social skill, knowing how to converse with people of different opinions without becoming enemies. In this way, the disposition for self-affirmation finds an outlet that is the radical opposite of aggressiveness.

Both the norm-like aspect and the enjoyment of *philia* center on verbal communication. The answers to my question of what one does when one sees

friends were unanimous: "We talk, above all we talk and talk, I love to talk to people. I just love to talk in general." "Oh, how we talk! Talk, talk, talk... I could spend the whole day talking!" "Mostly we just talk. I think that is the most important thing about friends, you have to talk and get to know each other." "We go out for a drink or perhaps to have dinner, maybe a movie... but whatever it is we do, we also talk, the whole time!"

Not to be talkative is to be unfriendly. And the need for affection and company is not only a legitimate reference, it is almost a required attitude as soon as there is the slightest shadow of loneliness over a person's life. When the husband goes on a business trip, when the children are away at summer camp, when a son is off to military service, the "victim" is expected to be sad and bored and lonely and to say so early in any conversation. A person who in words or life style clearly shows that he or she prefers a certain distance between his or her person and other people - and they do exist, of course - is called *arisco*, which means surly, shy, unsociable, full of thorns and barbs, a strongly negative word.

The dread of boredom is the reverse side of the medal of joy of company and fun. The concept of *ambiente*, approximately atmosphere, ambience, has rich connotations of plenty of people and friendly vibrations.<sup>105</sup> There are other concepts that could be analyzed to deepen our understanding of the Spanish forms of *philia*. There is no room for such an exercise in this book, but it is necessary to take a quick look at just one of them, *confianza*.

The dictionary meaning of *confianza* is confidence. The word implies trust and shared secrets. But it has a special meaning which the English word lacks, and which might be translated as closeness or a sense of deep familiarity. One could say it is the result of *philia*. If two or more persons have a certain amount of regular contact with each other, *confianza* results. This is so even in relationships where the participants do not have altogether shared interests.

Too much *confianza* can be a bad thing. It is closeness, so if one wants to maintain a certain social distance, one tries to set limits for it. The owner of a small business can say he wants his employees to feel a lot of *confianza* for him, perhaps adding that he wants his firm to be like a family. But another might say that he does not want too much *confianza* with his employees because that only leads to trouble. If there is *confianza*, an employee can ask for favors the employer might not want to concede but would not be able to deny if there was *confianza*. And if people feel *confianza*, they act as equals. This does not deny

social hierarchy, but it converts all interaction to the interaction between individuals more than roles. *Confianza* removes the standardization of roles and reveals personalities.

The example employer-employee is used here as a test case, to show that there can be *confianza* where there is little trust. Vice versa, *confianza* might be lacking in intimate relationships. A daughter who says she feels no *confianza* for her father does not mean that she does not love him or that she fears he might spread her secrets or abuse someone. She means simply that there is a certain distance between the two of them. She does not tell her father very much about herself, because there is no *confianza*, so there is no reason for them to communicate very much. And as long as they do not, of course, *confianza* does not grow.

*Confianza* is a separate concept, then, not the same as friendship or love. It is a style of interaction or communication. It is usually felt to be very positive, for the same reasons as friendship is. It accompanies good friendship and makes life worth living.

Thus, *philia* is more than friendship, its has other ingredients. But friendship is the core concept in *philia*, and the whole complex of feelings and dispositions is usually called friendship (*amistad*) in Benituria. *Philia* includes love of situationally sincere communication in fleeting relationships, as we saw in the previous section. It includes love of sheer human presence, as expressed in the concept of *ambiente*. It includes the special feeling of human closeness called *confianza*, which may or may not coincide with friendship. It includes an appreciation of communicational skill. And so on. There is no emic term or concept to cover all of these things, but I think they are related - just as honor and shame and self-affirmation are related. It is a disposition for certain behavior and for appreciation of certain behavior, and this disposition is a central ingredient in the habitus of most Beniturians of all categories.

Self-affirmation and *philia* cannot be made objects of study in themselves here. The two concepts are introduced only because they are so central in Benituran habituses that it would be impossible to give a correct description of what gender means in context in Benituria without them.

## Chapter 19. Two gender words in context.

The last two chapters have consisted in generalizations from what people say. How these things look in context can be seen in various parts of this book. In addition to previous examples, let me add another two. First a story of a *noviazgo*, a common type of "traditional" *noviazgo* told in a recognizably progressive way by the protagonists some twenty years later. Then a story of an abortion as told by a woman with the background of a Worker's Wife, who retained large parts of that lifestyle and those dispositions. Yet she was separated and had to support herself, and therefore had to make efforts to construct a new kind of coherence in her life. As we have seen, the various forms of *noviazgo* and the pros and cons of abortion are two controversial gender themes.

### a. Marisa's and Paco's *noviazgo*.

Almost all the life stories and questionnaire interviews contain something about a *noviazgo*. There are a number of themes that occur almost every time: how the couple met, the excitement and often the nervousness of the first discovery of mutual attraction, how parents found out and, probably, their opposition, difficulties like forced separations, drastic parental measures and economic problems, the daily routine during the *noviazgo* (usually *paseos*), and how everything worked out in the end.

The experiences - and the way of telling about them - of Marisa and Paco are representative for people who were around forty years old in 1983. Marisa and Paco were just over forty. They had four children, Paco had a rather good job and Marisa was a housewife, and they both spent time and energy trying to arrange a progressive education for the children. They considered themselves very progressive and felt different from their neighbors. Marisa was active in the parent-teacher associations of the two different schools her children were in, and also in the choir all four children sang in, and in a club that arranged weekend excursions with ecological themes for children. They were Valencian nationalists



and made it a point always to speak Valencian at home and as far as possible in public. According to the typology, Marisa would be a European Woman.

Marisa and Paco both grew up in another barrio of Valencia, which was then more of a village near the city than a barrio in the city, just like Benituria. After quitting school at twelve to go to work, she took sewing lessons in his house. His mother was a seamstress who specialized in preparing young girls for "feminine duties". Marisa remembers seeing Paco there, but he does not remember her, "there were so many girls always there." Their real acquaintance began when she was eighteen and he twenty-two. They met at a dancing party. "You know, a group of boys would invite a group of girls, collectively, and someone had a pickup and someone had liberal parents with a big living room, and that is where one could dance."

Marisa and Paco started dancing with each other only at each party. "And I told my parents about it, very naïvely, just to tell them, because I was not at all rebellious, I was used to telling them everything," said Marisa. They were upset, because Paco had no money; his father was an agricultural day laborer, and Marisa's parents owned two bread stores. They wanted to forbid Marisa to see Paco. Marisa then considered it necessary for Paco to talk to her parents. Paco said he thought the whole thing was very stupid, "but if I had to go through it, I would go through it, if that was the only way I would be able to dance with her." He walked around the block three times before he could work up his courage to knock on the door. He was coldly received; he was not admitted into the house, the conversation took place in the doorway. But permission for continued dancing was given. Marisa heard her mother's friends console her saying that the relationship would surely not last.

Then Paco had to go to France. He had little schooling, but he had had the luck of getting a job in an electronics firm, "and that was at the moment, you know, when all of that was very new, so there were hardly any people prepared in it, so thanks to the company I have been able to study and make a career." He now has a lower engineering title. He had to spend eight months in France studying. "And I did not have any money for international telephone calls, so..." Marisa chided him: "But you did not write either!" She had a bad time, seeing her parents' relief; they thought the relationship was definitely over.

But Paco came back and the two continued seeing each other. One day Marisa's grandfather talked to her. "He called me one day and said that now you

are in love, but love will go away. But he will stay, if you are married. So you must realize that what counts is the money. The day you no longer love him, it would be better if he had money." This was a turning point. Marisa's parents did not get along with her grandfather, so since he now opposed her noviazgo, her parents started supporting it. Her mother began the preparations for the wedding.

This was too much for Marisa. "I felt caught in a trap. I was in love and I wanted to go out with Paco, sure, and just with him, with nobody else. But this thing of his talking to my parents and the problems with them and then all of a sudden the preparations for the wedding...it was too much, that was not what I wanted. I did not want to get married yet."

Marisa and Paco saw each other every day but only for a short while. She worked in one of the stores and Paco came for her at closing time. He had to give up his evening language courses to be able to see her every day. They walked together from the store to her home, a long walk from one barrio to another. Some people criticized this, thought it indecent.

After five years of noviazgo they got married. They had sexual problems and their first child was not born until three years later. They had many economic and practical problems, and Paco's mother had been widowed and lived with them from the start, so I asked if they thought those problems were the cause or if the sexual problems were mostly due to ignorance. They both laughed and said that they were both ignorant, but above all Marisa had no idea at all when she got married.

"I thought I knew everything! My mother explained menstruation to me, and very well, so, in contrast with my girlfriends, I was not scared when I got it, I was expecting it and glad that it had come. But that was all. I remember very well on the wedding day, when I was already all dressed and we were waiting for Paco to come to go to the church, I overheard my father - at what a moment he gets the idea to ask, eh! - saying to my mother, listen, have you talked to Marisa, does she know what she has to know? And my mother said, yes, she knows everything. So I felt good: fine, I know everything I have to know. But I did not!"

They both laughed heartily and Paco took over the telling. "So you can imagine how I spent my wedding night, trying to explain to her what it was all about..." With Marisa and Paco, I had talked a lot about politics, language

problems, the economic crisis, etc. But this evening we agreed that sexual ignorance was the national tragedy of the Spanish state.

#### **b. Elvira's abortion.**

Elvira is a separated woman around thirty-five years old, with a son of ten and a daughter of eight. She works full time in an office, but she is not officially employed; she has "contract employment" which means she earns about half of what an officially employed person doing the same job does, and she can be laid off with one day's notice once the contract time is up. And it has been up for years. Sometimes she is out of work for a month or two or six. Then she has to go and live with her parents in her home village, since she gets no unemployment compensation.

Nor does she receive anything from her husband other than the payments on the apartment they own together. The separation settlement gave her the right to live in it, but she cannot sell it without his permission. Her salary has to cover the expenses for herself and the children. Still she thinks she is lucky. She is lucky first of all to have any job at all. She got it only thanks to her mother, who had worked in the same company many years ago and went and talked to the manager and shed a few tears. And she was lucky in getting custody of the children. Her husband wanted it. He had maltreated her, had abandoned the home, had engaged in illegal activities and was on sick leave for bad nerves, but there was still a risk that he could have won, because his mother was prepared to take care of the children, and his lawyer argued that Elvira would not be a good mother because she would have to work.

One day I ran into her in a café. We had not seen each other for a few months, so we sat down to chat. She looked mysterious: "Since I saw you last, things have happened to me." I said that she looked as if she meant sad things. "Sad?! Yes... Do you remember the last time we met, right here in this café? I did not tell you then, but I had gone out to take a walk, because I was so nervous, because the next morning I was going to London." I said: "To London!?" and she nodded and laughed, realizing I had understood. For a Spanish woman of fertile age and scarce means, to leave suddenly for London can only mean one thing - abortion.

She told me of how she contacted the feminist movement. Once one reaches that, the rest is easy. They give you a telephone number in London where you can make reservations in Spanish, both for the clinic and a cheap boarding house. They also give you the medical information you need, and sometimes they can arrange cheap flights.

"But they could not help me with the money. I had to ask my brother. He insisted on knowing what it was for, so I told him, if you don't lend me this money you'll have another nephew. So then he lent it to me. Not very happily but more or less. He more or less understood. And I told my mother - and I found her out! Imagine my mother who has given me this repressive education and everything, well, she said, of course, how could I have another child now and in my circumstances, and she consoled me and understood that I was having a bad time. And then she called me on the telephone to London, to the clinic and everything, to find out how it had gone, if I was all right. Not my father, no. My mother told me, don't say anything to your father, please, because he would not understand."

I asked if she went alone. I knew she knew no foreign language and had never been abroad. "Yes, I went alone -who would have gone with me? Besides, I can't take a vacation. If I am absent just for a day I have to have a doctor's certificate. So just imagine everything I had to do to be able to go. I was gone for four days. I traveled on Thursday, they did the checkup on Friday, on Saturday they did it and on Sunday I traveled back. And Monday I went to work, yes, of course, what could I do! To be able to be absent on Thursday and Friday, I got help from a friend who is a doctor. Rather, he gave me a piece of paper and told me what to write, but he did not want to do it himself, I don't know why."

"But when I went to London I felt like a criminal. Of course! Does it surprise you? Well, dear, the way we have been educated and everything... Really, very bad, and still, believe me, often I wake up in the middle of the night, crying and thinking and everything... I did not want a child now, of course not, but it was a child... what happens is that if I had this one now, I would lose the other two, do you understand?"

"But once there I felt better - seeing what there was there! A whole heap! I felt dissolved like a drop in the ocean. And all were Spanish, eh! And with their husbands, some of them!!!!" She thought it was not necessary to abort if you had a husband. But above all she was shocked that there were so many Spanish

women. I said that Spanish women have a greater need, because of the lack of information about contraceptives.

"I know, but... you see it made such an impression, all Spanish women! Right there, in one day, I think they did sixteen abortions, and all on Spanish women." Elvira went on to give details of her health problems and how nervous she had been that they would not perform the abortion on her, because she had been thirteen or fourteen weeks along but had said twelve, since she had been told that was the limit. I asked her why she waited so long.

"Because of this guy, who cheated me, don't you know!" she spat out. "He is a son of a bitch! And when I came back he had written with a ballpoint pen on my front door that I was a whore! When things like that happen to you, all your feelings die, they kill your dreams, then you see everything clearly, they are SONS OF BITCHES, do you understand what I am saying? And you feel like..."

After a short pause to push her hatred back, she continued. "Yes, he made me think he loved me. I was, well... not exactly in love... but... He told me he was tired of being alone, that he wanted something different. Yes, something stable. He has a son. He is unmarried, but he has a son he has recognized as his, with another woman. With a separated woman. You see, that's his business, cheating separated women. You know, a short while after we met, some friends of mine saw me with him and they know him and later they asked me, are you going with so-and-so, and I said yes, and they said it was not a good idea. And they were right, and I realized that after a while - but by then I was already pregnant!"

I asked if she did not take any precautions. "No, because since lately I had not had anything like that... and besides he told me. He asked me, oh yes, of course he asked me! And I said I did not take anything, so he told me to begin taking the pill right away, but like my friends told me later, what does he think the pill is? Like a laxative that you take and - puff! - a few hours later, all fixed! No, but now I know, and this won't happen to me again, oh no... The son-of-a-bitch did not want to help me at all. Do you know what he said? He said, wonder who the father is! Because he did not think it could be his! How shameless can you be!"

So far Elvira. Her story is full of the common Benituran incongruencies. She had little idea of contraceptives but little trouble arranging a trip to London

and an abortion there. She got a "repressive" education but did not hesitate to have a lover nor, really, to have an abortion when she considered it necessary. Her mother had given her a conservative upbringing, no doubt, but when Elvira became pregnant, she did not think of the fact that she had had a lover but of the fact that she needed to end the pregnancy and that this was a difficult decision. Both women feared that Elvira's father would be less practical and more ideological and therefore disapproving. He would not understand. The brother did, but only "more or less."

Elvira's story shows, too, how a separated woman used to be considered an outcast, but now they are common and have lovers and jobs and equality, people say. But they are vulnerable. The reason Elvira waited so long with her abortion was probably that she hoped her lover would be prepared to set up a new family with her. Possibly she went to bed with him out of the same desire for a new family, a more "normal life", since she said she was not exactly in love. Perhaps she even wanted a child, if only it would have meant that a man took on economic responsibility for all three and for Elvira herself.

In short, this story expresses several of the most important social problems and cultural themes in the world of women in Benituria in the early 1980's: scarce economic means in general and in particular for women; scarce information and less social influence, and a cultural view of one's power in society as even more limited than an "objective" analysis might conclude; contradictory views on sexuality interacting with erratic information; strong contrasts between generations, and even stronger contrasts between men's and women's views.

## PART F: PROCESS

### Chapter 20. Conflicts.

So far we have seen the elements of the gender system in Benituria: the people and the places, how people use places, the main idiom of change and the most common ideas around what is commonly seen as gender-relevant areas of life. In this part, we will see how these elements interact with each other. They interact in two main ways: in conflicts between people and in logico-meaningful contradictions produced by them. This chapter will be about the conflicts and the next one about the contradictions.

#### a. Conflicts between wives and husbands.

Among the conflicts most common between wives and husbands in Benituria the issue of household tasks stands out, and then come the education of children and money management. The fourth important issue is that of freedom of movement, which includes that of women working. Finally, the greatest worry for women is that of conjugal fidelity.

We saw that hardly a single woman thought the responsibilities for the home and the children were distributed the way she would like them to be. The status quo is not accepted as good, even by women who create no stir about the matter. The same goes for child rearing, although the women complained less about this. They could not very well make it look like a heavy imposition, in view of the cultural emphasis on the duties of mothers and the joys of having children. But children are considered a responsibility for both parents, and most women feel that their husbands shirk too great a part of it. I do not have enough information on the men's view of this, but my impression is that they are often unaware that there is a problem. They are interested in their children, but in a non-practical way that the women find unsatisfactory. Some progressive men say

that the responsibility should be "shared equally", but for most of them this does not translate as "the same kind of duties."

Money management is a worldwide cause of marital conflict, but in Benituria it stood out less than the other causes. One reason may be that money matters are culturally very sensitive. People do not reveal their incomes even to close friends and do not talk of their economic planning, so an anthropologist would not get to hear much about it. But one reason why women complained less than I had expected on this issue is probably also that it is still rather doxic that the man's salary is his to dispose of as he sees fit. He should decide to "give" his wife "enough" money for the well-being of the whole family, but if he does not, the wife can only become angry and irritated, not outraged.

Progressive women certainly deny this, and some of them made it a point of pride to underline that in their home they were the administrators. But they saw this as a positive break with tradition. And as far as I could tell, the "tradition" corresponded to actual practice for a majority. The husband gives the wife a set amount each month for household expenses and keeps the rest to pay large bills and for his own expenses. The wife does not usually know how much this is, nor how the husband distributes it. This constitutes a serious danger for women. But because of the doxa of lifelong relationships, not even progressive women seem aware of the danger. They might argue about standards for fairness and they might complain that they have no pocket money while their husbands do. But they do not plan for the eventuality of losing the economic support of a man.

As to the question of freedom of movement, it is quite doxic that men can move around without "giving explanations to anyone" as the common phrase has it. Progressive women do not accept a relationship in which there is not a sense of sharing and sincere communication, so this imposes a certain, but not very well defined, limit on a husband's doings. It is a limit around which there can therefore be conflict. But some sort of compromise is usually worked out.

There is much more conflict around the question of women's freedom of movement. According to female testimonies, the men of Benituria range from those who cannot see the slightest reason to impose anything at all on their wife and who accept having to cook their own dinner because the wife has gone out with a lover, to those who frown on their wife's chatting with the woman next



door and will mount a scandal if she has run down to the store for a quick errand just when he arrives home.

One type of conflict where the issue of money and the issue of freedom of movement both come into play is the one around a wife's employment. The women think most husbands viscerally oppose this, and they attribute the opposition to selfishness: the men do not want to lose any part of the comforts a housewife provides. There were few references to jealousy in this context, and when I asked if a man might not prefer to keep his wife out of the reach of other men, most informants answered with conviction that this was one instance of "old mentality" which had now, luckily, been almost totally "overcome". Some informants thought that husbands want wives to work because they want the money, but if I myself mentioned such a possibility the usual reaction was to accuse me of a reactionary imagination - a woman who works nowadays keeps her own salary, was the idea.

Whatever the true motivations, the issue is sensitive and Beniturians are aware of it as a typical problem "these days", even though it is actualized in practice for only a small minority. A job is a scarce good, and it is a key symbol for modernity for women, but in practice it is very difficult for a woman to arrange her life so as to be able to take employment. One thing she has to obtain, for it to be even remotely possible, is her husband's permission and practical help. It is not clear to what extent the men are aware of a threat in women's having their own income, but they often act as if they were. So conflict is unavoidable.

A touchstone for love, for women, is fidelity. There were exceptions; some independent women laughed the matter out of court when I brought it up. Others believed in "open marriages". They declared that they thought possessiveness incompatible with real love. They also usually said that it is illusory to believe one person can satisfy all the needs of another. This did not mean, however, that they did not subscribe to the ideology of love. They even believed in fidelity in some sense: they talked of the security of being certain that there was now nothing that could break up their marriage.

But for the overwhelming majority of women, sexual fidelity is very important, and I want to make this very clear because of the existing male myth to the contrary. Let me tell an illustrative anecdote. One husband insisted on being present while I interviewed his wife. This was not unusual in itself, but his

attitude was. He snickered through most of the interview. At the end, his wife was very angry and I was irritated, too. We both asked him what was wrong. He said he thought the whole thing smacked of problems of "repented petite bourgeoisie" and that working class women do not have such problems. Both he and his wife were working class and politically radical, but she came from a family slightly better off than his and had studied a bit more than he had, so I interpreted part of his irritation as a scene in an ongoing play of bickering between the two of them about who was more working class and more radical. Another part of it, however, was representative of the reactions anything that might be feminism often provokes in otherwise radical men, and I told him so. This gave rise to the following exchange:

Husband: No, but the working class does not have those problems. For example, that stuff about the unfaithful husband...

Wife: Now! Do you mean to say working class husbands are never unfaithful!

Husband: Sure they are, they have been unfaithful always and will always continue to be, but it is no problem.

The wife and I asked practically simultaneously if he meant that working class wives don't experience it as a problem? I suspect this is what he had intended to say, but seeing our strong reaction, he changed his mind.

Husband: No, I guess they would, but that is not it. What happens is that they don't find out.

The wife and I laughed sadly and admitted that maybe so, often enough that could be the case.

But then the wife recuperated her aggressive tone: And a lot of times they may not know, but a lot of times they do, and I tell you, most women are scared shitless of it.

I: Yes, and from my interviews, I can tell that when they do know, it causes great problems and wounds that never quite heal. Besides, I think the women sometimes know when the men think their wives don't know, because they don't tell the men they know.

Wife: That's right! Because you have to stay with him, no matter what, because you have no money on your own, so you keep quiet, better not stir that which smells bad (common expression), right? and better not risk his getting mad

at you. You have to take it, but that does not mean you like it, that is what happens, and all the time, I tell you!

Husband (ironically): Well, I can't argue with two women! But you are both wrong, I know that.

There is a common misunderstanding in some quarters that working class women do not mind if their husbands are unfaithful. This is more or less a deduction from the perceived fact that working class women do not enjoy sex. The repressive or non-existent sexual education most of them have received really does make sex unappetizing for many of them, but there are other and strong reasons for them to fear infidelity and feel crushed if it strikes them. Any threat to a working class marriage is much more than a threat to emotional satisfaction and self-confidence. Infidelity undercuts the basis for the couple and for the family life. If it leads to a man's leaving his wife, it is also a threat to survival or at least to one's accustomed living standard.<sup>106</sup>

In the Association of Separated Women there was also a discussion on infidelity when I read my cases there. When I read case 56, a heavy silence fell over the usually so talkative group. Finally one woman said in a subdued voice: "This is what has happened to most of us. This is difficult to talk about." But after a while, the dispositions for talk and self-affirmation plus the special consensus in that association on the need to combat taboos won out, and there was a lively discussion.

The main consensus was established along these lines: "I would cut it off in time, before it gets worse. I would remake my life<sup>107</sup>, and if he says he loves me a lot, well, let him go peel onions as they say in my village, because... if he comes and says, oh, I love you so much, after having hurt you... that means, yes, I love you but I hurt you... no, no, no, I would not permit that." But in spite of their bitterness, these women subscribed to the ideology of love. A sizable minority felt in these terms: "I think perhaps you can't judge a person from what happens just once. So, if I were really very much in love with him, I would give him an opportunity."

Only one woman took the "traditional" stand: "As to me, what I think is that if you love a person, you try not to hurt that person. Well, then, my ex-husband, if he had loved me, he could have been more careful and done it so that I would not have had to know about it." All the other women exploded in protest at this. If you love a person, how can you like it if he goes off with someone

else? etc. It looked as if they would have torn her apart if it had not been for respect for her age, close to sixty. "Discreet infidelity" is no longer acceptable to women, if it ever was, that was what they were eager to make clear.

One young woman tried to calm the group down giving a timid and confused defense of open marriage. This led to a heated, but now good-humored, discussion on female infidelity, a topic rather unthinkable in other kinds of groups. One woman expressed what looked like a collective daydream: "I may love my husband a lot and still want to have some fun some time, for example with some friend from work, and that is good, listen and on top of that it is perfectly possible for me to love my husband an awful lot, yes, listen! It has nothing to do with it if I once in a while tacataca with some man..." Lots of laughter and animated comments. "No, listen to me now, if, what I would do is, if this actually happened to me now, I would say: Do you love me? Fine, in that case I forgive you... but I would go to bed with his best friend!" Lots of laughter, some applause.

#### **b. Family ideology and practice.**

Because of the stress on love, the conjugal relationship is focal for gender conflicts. But there are other important conflicts in Benituria. Many of them are produced by the interactions between kinship structure, economic circumstances and the ideology of the family as the natural framework for a good life. Let us look at some conflicts in this area that have been produced by recent changes or come into view because of these changes. Some of those most frequently experienced center on: the pooling of family members' salaries, the obligation of help to kin, grandmothers' babysitting, parental help versus parental repression and, the most salient of them all, the problem of the mother-in-law.

- Pooling of family members' salaries.

It used to be taken for granted that children turned their salaries over to their father (or mother) in return for some pocket money and perhaps the down payment on an apartment when they got married. This seemed still to be the

pattern in a majority of Benituran families. But it is questioned; it is seen to cause conflict.

"My husband worked from the time he was fourteen and he had always given over his salary to his parents. That was the custom then, and his parents are a bit special - they were against us getting married, they thought it was selfishness on his part to get married precisely then, just when he was beginning to earn a little bit more in his profession. They lost his salary." There are many stories of conflicts between family of origin and family of orientation, since economic solidarity with both is the norm. And questions of degree can cause great bitterness.

Even one decidedly non-progressive woman was worried about what would happen when her children started working. The event was still several years off, her children were young, but she could foresee there would be trouble. "His opinions is what he has been accustomed to, always, that the salary is for leaving it at home. On the other hand, as for me, my opinion is that if you have children it is because you wanted to have them, or, well... but anyway, your obligation is to raise them, so then, if they work, that money is theirs, or else you can put it in an account in the bank and buy an apartment for them with that money (...). Not my husband. He is very much behind his times." She explained that she had arrived at her opinion because her husband and her father had fought a lot over her salary when she worked during her noviazgo and the first years of marriage. That experience made her regard the norm as wrong, and she was now prepared to take the fight she did not take to defend her own salary to defend those of her children. She seemed to be brazing for the fight years in advance. She got her determination/legitimation from the ideology of motherhood - a mother defends her children's rights. But she used this ideology in a new way that surprised herself.

- Obligation of help to kin.

In spite of the ideology of generosity with kin, the obligation can also be experienced as a heavy imposition. As we saw in the context of friendship, it is not easy to admit to oneself that one might want to (or have to) set limits to one's solidarity. Usually even the most progressive endorse it. There are many stories

of exacting efforts in emergencies, for example a whole family working around the clock to buy expensive medicines for a sick brother.

Some see the possibilities of personal abuse in the ideology, too. "My father had an uncle who had a bar and he invited my parents to come and live with him and work in the bar. He helped them a lot, but he exploited them, too. I think he is a marvelous person, that is how I have known him, but it is a double-edged weapon, this thing with being related and wanting to help, it makes it possible to abuse people a lot, too." However, clear ideological criticism of the norm is not common. I did not hear of anyone who made the connection between the hated system of *enchufes* (recommendations) and the respected family solidarity. What many progressives do, as we saw, is to criticize family closeness in general.

This amounts to yet another dividing line between the stress on self-affirmation and autonomy and the stress on integration. To choose integration is easier in the context of family closeness than in most other contexts, but it is nevertheless to choose "tradition", and it is non-progressive because it makes it much more difficult to practice non-conformist lifestyles or even to keep up with one's times. One common compromise is to proclaim that parents have to help their children but not vice versa. In this way one salvages the stress on children and nuclear family unity, but also the idea that children should grow to be independent persons and make their own choices.

- Grandmothers' babysitting.

A special case of practical intergenerational family help is that grandmothers often take care of their grandchildren on a regular basis to make it possible for the daughter(s) to work. In Benituria, this is an institution. There are few daycare homes, they are expensive (although prices vary), their hours are insufficient, and, above all, they are seen by many as a cruelty to which one does not want to submit one's children if one can avoid it. The progressives certainly see them as a way for children to obtain more social and intellectual stimulus than a mother alone can give. But to most people they are places where the children will suffer the absence of motherly tenderness, interest and physical care. If the mother "has to" work, grandmother is the solution.

Opinions for the arrangement:

"Older women now have to help raise the grandchildren, all of them, because the young people now, when they get married, they don't quit their jobs, no one quits nowadays. And I think it is fine - who would be better than a grandmother for being with the little ones? Much better than a daycare center, isn't it? Like my mother, she used to help me and now she helps my sister with her children, because otherwise she would not be able to work, and she needs it, too."

Somewhat more modern-sounding: "I think it is a good thing, without obligations or tying the older women down, but it is a good thing for them, and I can see that in a lot of elderly people, with the grandchildren they feel younger."

Opinions against the arrangement:

"Grandparents spoil their grandchildren a lot, they don't know how to say no to them about anything, they give them things they should not.. They should see a lot of them, yes, but not every day. And the older women get tired, too, they are no longer used to what a small child is like. They should help, but they should not spend all their time in their children's home, because they want to have their own life, too."

One young woman with small children laughed and said that the arrangement will come to a natural end, for women of her generation will refuse when they get grandchildren! Modern women will want their own life even after fifty and will not let themselves be shamelessly exploited, which is what happens now.

In other words, the people who think this arrangement is good are people who think, first, that no woman works outside the home if she can help it, so the arrangement is not exploitation but natural solidarity between relatives in an emergency; second, that daycare homes can never provide adequate care; third, that relatives can provide such care. The age difference is not important, the blood tie is. It is a vision of society where opinions and differences in experience count for little and kinship counts for very much.

The people who are against the arrangement think differences of age mean different experiences and "mentalities" and that grandmothers will not give the children the right education, whereas unrelated people with the right opinions and training will be able to give such care. They also think older women have a right to refuse and a need for a life of their own. It is a vision of society where individuals are different from each other and shape their own trajectories through

life. Here family solidarity is not expressed in unquestioning hard work, but rather in understanding and respect for each other's independence and differences, and women are not taken-for-granted always-available unpaid labor.

- Parental help versus parental repression.

Parents have felt an unquestioned right to steer and shape their children's life. More than a right, it was a duty: life was hard, and without parental help the child would not stand a chance. Now, the young often think the parents' efforts are unrelated to their real needs. They even feel that the parents are selfish, that their efforts do not help but repress. The parents, of course, feel misunderstood. Some give up and shrug and say: "I can say nothing to my children," or "The young have lost all respect for older people." For the young, such attitudes just go to prove that the parents live in a different world. People of all ages tend to feel more progressive than their parents, no matter where on the continuum of progressivity they are located, and no matter how wide or narrow the generational gap is.

A special effect of this ideological barrier is that communication is difficult, even when there is no open conflict. Even though the deepest practical loyalty continues to be between parents and children, verbal confidences are rare. In the questionnaire interviews, I asked who the informants would turn to in case they had a serious problem of some kind. They said they would go to parents or siblings or other close relatives for economic help, possibly in order of the relative's economic possibilities. But for "personal" problems - meaning marital trouble or career problems or doubts of any intimate kind - they preferred not to "worry" close relatives, and expected that friends would have a vision of things more similar to their own.

"They have another way of thinking, especially my parents, but the rest of the family, too, so I am not interested in what they might have to say, I already know what they are going to say. (...) It is another mentality and I don't want their advice... (...) They have illogical thoughts, that is how I see it. For example, when my mother had a problem, her husband was unfaithful, she went to my grandmother to tell her about it, and my grandmother said all those classical things about, you know, be patient my daughter, you can *aguantar*, and



she told her she had had the same problem and being patient and being patient everything had ended happily, and my mother did the same thing and she too thinks everything has been solved now, so just imagine, if I go to her and say, look, Alfredo has done this to me, I know what she would say, and I don't want that, can't you see?"

However, some of the most progressive as well as some of the least progressive said they would talk to their parents about personal things. For the progressives, this was an effort of good communication, a part of the ideology of openness and sincerity. They talked of how their parents naturally had opinions very different from their own but how their love for each other made them want to try to explain things to each other. For the least progressive, the contact with the parents is less conflictive because there is continuity. One thirty-year-old woman who lived the life of a Worker's Wife said: "I talk to my mother. Even if it just some small thing, I always talk to her, about everything. She is like a sister for me, we talk a lot all the time and about everything, about any problem. And she does the same with me, she tells me everything about herself."

Consideration for the parents' feelings is the overriding criterion for behavior for all, and it leads to silence and sometimes complicated cover-up maneuvers around anything controversial. Parents are never told of abortions, hardly ever of noviazgos until the wedding draws close, seldom of children's political activities. Parents do not tell their children very much about their personal problems, either.

Sometimes these silences can also be explained as a different kind of consideration. "If my father knew I had gone to bed with my novio, he would feel obliged to do something drastic, that is why I don't tell him; and it is for his own sake, mind you; he would feel forced to do something. As it is, he suspects the truth, but as long as he has not been told, he can pretend not to know and that way he does not have to do anything." This kind of argument refers to the honor syndrome. The father may know about the new ways and more or less accept them, but his disposition is to do something drastic, i.e. defend his daughter's honor as classically defined. "Realism," however, makes him prefer not to face this contradiction. He knows he would make a fool of himself if he did anything. And his daughter knows all of this, so she keeps silent to protect him from himself.

- Mothers-in-law.

Whether progressive or not, the women turn positively venomous when they talk about their mothers-in-law. There were exceptions, but they were few. The tensions between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are so great a phenomenon that it is noticeable as such. Women know not just that their mother-in-law is awful, but also that almost everyone thinks the same of theirs. So some speculate about the reasons for it. People with little schooling usually see it as one more proof that women have an ignoble nature. The well-educated talk of the glorification of motherhood and how therefore women cannot give up even grown sons, and they talk of unresolved Oidipus complexes, and they talk of the powerlessness of women in society and how women therefore hold on to their children as a compensation.

As I see it, a variety of structural factors and cultural constructions combine to make the tie between mothers and sons very strong.<sup>108</sup> They are: the veneration children are taught to feel for their mothers, the value women place on their children, the view of the mother-child tie as lifelong, the economic defenselessness of women in case of an emergency, and the probability that sons but not daughters can step in to help. So mothers love their sons and want to feel that they are close. And love is construed as an exclusivistic feeling, so there is a disposition for jealousy that is hard to overcome with rational arguments.

Other structural factors place mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in rather close contact. Few households consist of extended families, but parents help children to buy apartments (when they get married) and try to get them to live nearby, so there is a great probability that any nuclear family will live near either his parents or hers. On Sundays and during summer vacations, the extended families get together and the women cooperate around the practical chores. That means that sons-in-law can sit down and chat with their fathers-in-law about non-controversial matters and that they have little contact with their mothers-in-law. But daughters-in-law must try to cooperate with mothers-in-law (and with sisters-in-law, another little-loved category). We saw that Asun did not like to spend part of the summer with her parents-in-law but loved to spend it with her own parents, even though life in that village was rougher.

Between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law there are then the following factors that make for tension: They are of different generations, they

are of the same sex, they are defined as belonging to the same family but feel they do not in their deepest loyalty, they are forced to face differences of opinion in practical work, they love the same man and have a disposition to experience this as a competition, and the woman with the strongest feeling (cf above about children being more important than husbands) is normatively defined as the one who should cede first place to the other one.

These are inevitable factors. Furthermore, there are probabilities, due to recent social changes. The two women are likely to have different political and religious opinions and the son/husband is likely to vacillate between the two, since one represents what he was brought up to believe and the other represents the standpoint he chose after rebelling against his parents (if, that is, he has chosen his wife on criteria of similar outlook on life, which is the ideal and usually more or less the case); they are as likely as not to be from different parts of Spain and therefore have different ideas about food, childcare, etc. and may even speak different languages (apart from Castilian); they are likely to have different ideas about what constitutes a good wife - and a good wife is what both want the man they love to have.

The dilemma of self-affirmation versus female submissiveness also comes into play here. The older woman is likely to see the younger one as unfeminine, never knowing when to let her husband have the final word for the sake of peace in the house, as she herself has learnt to do. Naturally she dislikes anyone who argues with her son. The younger woman is likely to find her mother-in-law repressive, wanting only mousy agreement all around her, she herself being the only one who has any right to have the last word, and no wonder then that her son, brave as he may seem in other contexts, never has learnt to speak up against her, or at least - the least one could ask for, isn't it? - to defend his own wife against her!

The feelings are mutual, but the younger women are much more aggressive. The women who are mothers-in-law themselves have sometimes become softer in their opinions of their own. And when they talk of their daughters-in-law, they describe them as unfeminine, inept, selfish, and so forth, but they may say they have had bad luck or that they do not understand their sons, either, any longer, so perhaps it is a question of changing times. Or simply: "As to my two daughters-in-law, the truth is I can't stand them, God forgive me."

## Chapter 21. Contradictions.

Like the previous chapter, this one will discuss tensions in the gender system. But whereas the previous one took up conflicts between people, this one will focus on tensions between ideas and social organization. In other words, the focus will be on system contradictions. They are abstract things. They are experiences, because they produce practical difficulties for human beings. But they are only available for thinking after an analysis.<sup>109</sup>

The system contradictions I will discuss are the ones that are deducible from what has already been said. They occur in the areas of love and marriage, motherhood and family, the ideology of equality, the division of labor, and sociability. There is also an uncomfortable pervasiveness of gender throughout society; and taken together all these contradictions come together in a growing role incompatibility, which will in all probability increase social and cultural unease.

### a. Love, sex and marriage.

Love as a supreme value is perhaps the only piece of ideology that all Beniturians agree on. This is striking in a place where almost anything one can say to describe it has to be immediately modified according to various social differentiations. What is usually meant, if there is no specification, is love between a woman and a man.

Emphasis on love plus emphasis on family means that a couple in love will usually want children, and a couple without children will be suspected of not being really in love (or of being unable to have children). Love plus family also means that a love relationship is automatically translated into a wish for permanency and for a common home. The disposition for *philia* reinforces this. People do not like to live alone. Material conditions have the same effect, since they in themselves make it difficult for a person to live alone; it is too expensive and/or somebody may need one's salary.

This is also reinforced by interactions between these ideas and the ideas around sexuality. We have seen that sex is seen by all except the most conservative as something that it is reactionary to deny and something around which all "taboos" are now melting. Sex is on everybody's mind. But it is incompatible with parents' home. This plus the fact that most young people have strong material reasons to live with their parents means that they have a problem, but this problem is easily resolved by forming a new family.

To form a socially recognized couple also helps to overcome to some degree the contradictions inherent in the views on sex. We saw that sex can be seen as a) good, liberated, progressive; and b) bad, shameful, dirty. The latter viewpoint can reign alone, more or less, in a person's head, but the first cannot, because the latter one was culturally dominant and forcefully imposed in socialization until recently. Benituriens insisted that I had to understand that "a lot of people" still are "caught in contradictions" when it comes to sex. There was a telling gap between the proportion of "others" that ought to believe in the taboos, according to informants, and the small number who actually confessed that they themselves did. This in itself points to unresolved contradictions. The traditional Catholic solution is to enclose sexuality inside marriage. This is not a solution today for all Benituriens, but to have a steady couple relationship helps.

So, several problems build up around Love, but Love is important, the problems must be solved. And an easy, culturally well established solution exists: that of marriage. On the other hand, we saw that love and marriage are often perceived as antagonistic phenomena. This perceived contradiction is not false. Marriage has not been based on love until recently for most people. The systemic tensions between different nuclear families and between men and women make harmonious conjugal relations an elusive goal. Consequently, marriage is often seen as a key symbol of an old and "unfair" gender system that must be altered radically. So the contradiction becomes: marriage must continue to be important, and marriage must continue to be seen as something that should change for other desired changes to come about.

This has many consequences. Above all it makes separation into a charged issue. The most important project of one's life has failed. Since separation is so difficult, it is seldom contemplated, even in deteriorated relationships. It is the very last way out and often more of a suddenly runaway

process than a decision. So tensions in marriage can reach very high levels. And the ideology of lifelong love makes it difficult to admit this.

Men, having more money, contacts, and freedom of movement, have more negotiating power inside the couple, always, and more so when tensions are high and separation threatens. The woman will fear it more than the man.<sup>110</sup> So the women take more, they resign themselves, they "swallow a lot" as the phrase goes. And they "fight for the relationship" as another phrase has it.

And often they hide this from themselves. The disposition for self-affirmation may make it difficult even for a "traditional" woman to *aguantar*. And the ideology of love means that noone should have to. My impression is that there is a lot of self-deception, and even more common are the efforts to put up a brave front. Especially a woman with a job may find it hard to understand why she adjusts more to her husband than he to her. And progressive men with progressive wives cannot see that their wives are disadvantaged in any way.

In fact men may be obtaining more power inside the home while the women do not get very much outside. True, women have entered the labor market in much larger numbers than the men have entered the kitchen. But the important difference is that the men do not want the women in the labor market, while the women welcome the men into household work. So women's moves towards change in the division of labor are resisted, men's moves welcomed and cheered. A man who feels he is losing negotiating power vis-à-vis his wife can quickly recover more than he needs by simply doing more household chores. His mere taking an interest in children and cooking and cleaning is seen as exceptional and marvelous. He might well be given a say in such matters even while his wife gets no say in matters of overall family budget or a chance to earn an income.

Both women and men think that a woman who gets a job increases her vital sphere. Neither men nor women see men's coming into the kitchen as an increase in vital sphere but rather as a loss of privilege. It is something that a man gives without getting anything in return. So men feel they earn more good will. In this way, the power imbalance between wives and husbands increases (in the home) with the very same changes that are seen to decrease it (in larger society). And this second contradiction is related to the first one around the institution of marriage. A marriage is a contract for cooperation. If it changes, love suffers, because the terms of cooperation change unevenly and may not be well

understood. But if it does not change, love may become impossible, because the expectations are for greater "justice".

#### **b. The eye.**

Most Benituran women do not at all feel they ought to stay indoors as much as possible. Most do however, as we saw. They deny it is a norm, they may even deny that it is statistically true, but "it may be more practical for some," or it "feels more comfortable". Whatever the reasons given, the disposition underneath produces the pattern that women tend not to go out as much as men. In a sense, they hide from view.

In Mediterranean culture, to see is to have power, knowledge (Gilmore 1982:197). To see is very similar to touch, and therefore it easily gets tainted with sexuality. Used and seen are conceptually equated. A woman should not be seen because she should not be used. To be seen is to be exposed to the power of others. The classical thing is that men see, women are seen. There are defenses; for example a woman can be beautiful so that the man seeing her becomes bewitched, and the powerlessness becomes mutual. But it is a risky game; to hide is safer. Older informants told many anecdotes of how their boyfriends forbade them to do things that made them visible. Even today a man who permits his novia or wife to dress or act in ways that draw attention can be said to "want to share her".

All uninvited eyes are unwelcome. But men's eyes on women have special power. They are exempted from the courtesy of not looking, they should look, they are the judges. Many women are irritated with how men look at female beauty. "They are like little children who get a package and think the wrapping is so beautiful they don't want to open the package to see what is inside. Well, not even many children are that stupid!" said one woman. Some women feel that men have weak or no criteria for feeling attracted. "Any woman who sets her mind to it can trap any man," was a common opinion. Mostly it was women who said so, and did it in order to criticize another woman for having trapped a man. That was evil. But at the same time, they implied or said, it was stupid to let oneself be trapped. (And according to the disposition for self-affirmation it is worse to be stupid than to be evil.)

There is a contradiction for women around appearance and beauty and being visible. It used to be much clearer. Older women said that when they were young, an unmarried woman should be beautiful, but a married woman should be as invisible as possible, because otherwise people would say: "Is she looking for another man?" Beauty was then one thing only, a woman's tool to get a man, so once she was married it was her duty to hide it. Such ideas are still around, although modified and diminished. But there is also a feeling that a married woman who "lets herself go" (*se descuida*) behaves in an old-fashioned rural way. The modern/urban/progressive thing is to appreciate one's body, take care of it. Men are proud of good-looking wives. But they still do not want their wives to be "seen" in a sexual sense, i.e. almost touched. The difference is subtle and often situational. No wonder that even beautiful women are permanently anxious about their looks and that dressing, hair care and beauty products are favorite topics in conversations among women of all categories.

Feminists campaign against the custom of the *piropo*, the street compliment, which is the visible point of this iceberg of male privilege to judge women's looks. Their stand is logical but not much understood in the rest of society. A woman is usually angered by a *piropo* only if it contains words she feels are immoral, or if it is pronounced by a man she feels is her social inferior. In such instances she will fume about "lack of education". If the compliment is a good one, she feels flattered, especially if it is humorous. She then feels she has been inspiring. (And the disposition for *philia* makes one appreciate any well-turned piece of human interaction.) She has been seen, i.e. almost touched - it is almost a sexual adventure, illicit enough to be exciting. But she can feel innocent, she did nothing actively. (Her husband/novio would have felt provoked if he had been present, because in that case the comment might have been meant more as an anti-compliment on his powers to defend his woman.)

The disposition for self-affirmation and the construction of seeing as power are valid for both sexes, so women judge, too. But they do not tell the men. And they direct their active looking more at women, criticizing or admiring each other, evaluating their own looks in comparison to the others. Only very "liberated" women comment on men's physical advantages. Most women with whom I have gone out dancing, for example, judge the men they meet referring not to their looks but to their "education" (=manners, social status).



Because looking is an act of power, and because seeing is almost touching, to keep women in the role of seen/unseen, with their own eyes averted from men, is one effective way of keeping them passive.

### c. Motherhood.

The contradictions here have to do, first, with the ideology of choice versus the stress on the wonders of motherhood, and, second, with the ideology of self-realization versus the emphasis on the duties of a mother. That is, women are supposed to choose whether to be mothers or not, but the choice is between something culturally valued and something close to an anomaly. And once they have become mothers, they are supposed to live their own lives and limit their own lives at the same time. To be a mother is not a set of duties, it is an endless dedication.

To have or not to have children used to be something one could not choose. One was supposed to "receive with love all the children God wanted to send." If there was a choice, it was not very pleasant. One had to choose between imposing a strict schedule of abstinence on oneself and on one's partner (something that might be feasible for a man but not for a woman), or else find illegal means of buying condoms or procuring abortions. Now contraceptives are legal and knowledge of them is growing fast. And the stress on choice in this matter is completely consistent with the stress on choice and self-realization in general and with the media discourse where "rationality" - and not "morality" - is now the ultimate referent. But there is little habit of actually steering one's life. And even progressives, who try to plan their lives rationally, find it difficult and strange to adopt such attitudes when it comes to children.

The work a mother has to do is endless in principle, because if it does not take all one's time and energy, one is a bad mother. Nothing is really good enough. Only absolute limits of time and strength excuse limitation of effort. And these requirements on mothers last throughout most of adulthood for women.<sup>111</sup> The progressives think a mother, too, has a right to some leisure and "a life of her own." But they often explain this with what is best for the children. A tired/frustrated/ignorant/bored mother is not a good mother. Only in radical

contexts is it possible to speak of the mother's rights in her own name. (Cf chapter 15)

In practice a woman must choose between living her own life and having a family, a choice a man is not forced to make and an impossible choice, since both are prerequisites for a good life, for being a "person." It used to be a non-choice for women - their lives were the lives of mothers. Now it is an unavoidable choice due to cultural changes, and a possible choice due to diminished legal and economic obstacles. Even a woman who wants nothing but a life as wife and mother, or whose circumstances do not admit any choice, is aware that it is supposed to be a choice, so she is forced to reflect on it and try to think up reasons for living as she does.

Certainly many women are hesitant to give up the one really worthwhile thing assigned to them according to the "before" gender system. Motherhood brings real satisfaction and real power. The price is high - nothing less than giving up being a "person." But a woman who tries to do other things also has to pay a high price in both responsibilities and risks, and the rewards are far from guaranteed.

So: a woman must choose, but she must choose to be a mother. And once a mother she must try to be a good mother. If her dedication is less than full time she is a bad mother, but if she has no time for anything else, she is not a "person", as a woman should be and as is also required in order to be a good mother.

#### **d. The family.**

The contradictions of motherhood and those around family are related to each other, inevitably. As we saw, the established views on family are also under strain. There is an especially strong clash between the individualism of the progressive discourse and the stress on family solidarity and togetherness.

In the progressive interpretation, the individualistic side is called progressive and the other side backward. The non-progressive discourse is more ambivalent. It says for example that individualism is good but only on condition that the children, the elderly and the sick do not suffer, and implying always that it is the women who have the duty to curtail their individualistic inclinations to

cater to the needs of the weak. The progressive discourse includes a recognition of the beauties of family life but underlines that it has negative side-effects.

The solution "before" was a complementarity of roles. Women defended the small unit, the nuclear family, both against the requirements of larger society (thus being seen by the men as too particularistic, incapable of understanding "important" social causes) and against the egotism of smaller units, individual members of the family (thus being seen as repressive). Men defended their individual autonomy inside the small unit, in part because the cultural construction of virility made it imperative for them to show they were not contaminated by the feminine atmosphere of the intimate sphere, in part in order to be able to play their role as loyal parts in a larger system.

In this way, the traditional Mediterranean gender system hinged around the family as a sort of interchange of individualistic and cooperative activities.<sup>112</sup> The Benituran family (or families) is undergoing changes that make it ill fit to continue to function in this way.

The ideology of individualism will probably continue to gain ground. The kind of solidarity on village or barrio level that used to balance out the "familism" is not practicable in big cities, nor is it very compatible with an industrial capitalist society. The progressive discourse has it that a state welfare system ought to take over. Fittingly, the progressive discourse combats particularistic solidarity (calling it nepotism and corruption) and sets up universalistic solidarity as a goal. So far, however, few Beniturians have had experiences that have given them reason to trust universalistic solidarity and plenty of occasions where they have had to trust family solidarity.

To express this substantially and from the women's point of view: daycare centers are not very well appointed; state medical services give only the bare minimum of medical attention and the family, i.e. the women, has to supply long term care; unemployed persons get limited compensation and the family has to step in; and so on. So the family, i.e. the women, cannot just stop performing. But the women want to live their own lives.

One could say that the economic system under strain is unloading some of the strain on the family, and this in turn on the women and on the gender system. Frustrated women complain, irritated men long for lost harmony, and sceptics of both sexes and all lifestyles wonder how to find "values" to go by in a world that looks increasingly cold and harsh. They search for love and togetherness, and

some criticize the family as an institution for not providing such things, while others criticize "all these new ideas" for undermining the family, the only place of warmth.

The family will survive, it is much too central a value for all to disappear easily. What may not survive the present tensions is the atmosphere of experimentation, of criticism of authoritarian and hierarchical family organization. And if the legitimacy of hierarchy is reinstated, there is no doubt about which sex will lose.

#### e. Equality.

There is a diminishing acceptance of gender differences. The division of labor is becoming less clearcut. But there are tensions that perhaps make the sexes grow further apart. At the same time the dominant ideology stresses love and communication. The result is a feeling of loss. Things look like they are getting worse. But if there is progress, people think, they should be getting better. One gets the feeling that either someone is lying or else the fault must be one's own. Benituran women would say: "They say there is equality, but I can't see it."

The views on equality in Benituria must be seen against the background of the dominant discourse in mass media, which is one of the welfare state under construction. It is the discourse of European social democracy, with two differences as to its effects on people: it is new and therefore more exciting; and it does not correspond to visible reality, so it is easily suspected of vacuity. This makes it controversial and central, a bag of contradictions in its own right.

This dominant discourse preaches formal equality between the sexes. The legislation has been largely reformed to this end, too. Formal equality is a first necessity, obviously, but several factors make it hollow. There is for example the fact that men arrived first to the labor market, to trade unions, to political parties, as they did in other countries. But in Spain this does not only mean that they are further along in their careers and occupy all important positions. It also means that they have effective means of keeping women out. And they have the dispositions to want to keep women out, as we have seen. This is a social system

where recommendations count. Friends help friends. And women do not have friends in high places, usually.<sup>113</sup>

This disadvantage is shared by working class men. But for women it is worse. The majority of women are working class, of course, and half of the working class consists of women. Not only are women doubly exploited, they are also doubly excluded from vital contacts. Recommendations count among workers, too, and they circulate in the networks of men. And society is changing, so people have to make contacts in new contexts, and this is much more difficult for a woman than for a man of any class.

Men have strong dispositions to see women as non-entities. They also have dispositions to help a woman in need. But there is then also an expectation of sexual favors in return. And even a woman who shows clearly that she is not going to give them is seen as shameless if she accepts help from a man. This is logical. She actually places herself in debt and the only way a woman has had to pay a debt has been with sexual favors. It is her only capital, but she is not supposed to use it. Now, if she makes some sort of a career, she will be able to repay her debts in the same way men do. But it is not at all certain that she will be able to make a career. And even if she does, men's dispositions forbid them to ask non-sexual favors from women. It degrades them.

The women's dispositions are equally unhelpful. They have a strong disposition to be unseen by men (shame). To make an employer (i.e. a man, almost always) see what one is worth is risky. It is unfeminine and it can be interpreted as sexually provocative. The women have a disposition for self-affirmation, too, so they certainly want to be seen and noticed. But not by men and especially not by men more powerful than themselves. The women have to live with the contradictions produced by their two equally strong dispositions: to be unseen (as women) and to be seen (as persons).

There are solutions. One is to become very ideological and determine to "become a person" at whatever price. Another possibility is to exaggerate femininity. To be a competent but submissive woman is an old solution, but it is no recommendation today. One easy way out is to decide that the working world is a man's world, where a woman must be uncomfortable. One had better not enter, and if one is forced to, one adapts to the men's rules. One defends oneself as best one can, shrugs off the inevitable lost battles and gets out as fast as possible. This is common but difficult to legitimate in Benituria today. Another

solution is to seek out all-female or mostly-female work-places. This too is common. Both of these solutions are usually dressed up as something else in discourse, since they would sound "behind."

#### **f. Division of labor.**

Dispositions related to gender reach out to all aspects of life. All sorts of labor, also symbolic labor, is defined according to sex.<sup>114</sup> This is now challenged and there is strong ideological support for reversals, e.g. women in politics and men in teaching. But the dispositions have not yet been shaped by such situations. They are exceptions. So what Beniturians "see" (as they usually express it) is that women who try to go into politics usually withdraw, women in the labor market are disadvantaged, men in the kitchen do a bad job, etc. The discourse of equality and progress makes such observations difficult to interpret.

This is one contradiction. On a more ideological level, we have the practical obstacles to desired changes. For example, women say they want a job but cannot find one because employers have prejudices against women or because they themselves cannot arrange baby-sitting; men say they would like to help more in the home, but their education has not prepared them for it, and their wives will not allow them on their territory. Another example: in Benituria, most men spend their leisure with men and most women with women, but the progressives set up a different model emphasizing couple activities, and sometimes the two models for sociability clash.

On a third level, one could conceivably - although nobody in Benituria did - argue that changes in the direction of less specialization contradict the trend in the opposite direction in society at large. In Benituria today it is definitely more "advanced" if women and men can perform each other's specialties, but in society at large, as everywhere in the Western world, professional specialization is increasing. This is no contradiction, however. The most general trend in the changes in social organization in Spain during the last few decades is not specialization but a change from ascribed to achieved roles. Kin and friends still count, but education and merits count more and more. At least parts of the formerly so rigid class barriers have crumbled. It is only logical that the ascribed consequences of a person's sex should also diminish. And this is one reason to

think that a return to sharply delineated gender roles is not very probable. In the eyes of Benituriens, ascription as such is losing legitimacy.

But a society in which gender is reduced to personal identity and has no consequences at all for social organization is very far off. The most important expression of the sexual division of labor is one huge professional category: that of the housewives.

The institution of the housewife is oppressive for its practitioners, because it is ascribed in a society that values achievement, and because it is a non-capitalist institution in a capitalist society. From the point of view of capitalism, the housewife is an anomaly, but there has been a long history of adaptation, so as things are now, there are advantages: e.g. reserve labor and cheap reproduction of labor.<sup>115</sup> There are powerful reasons for considering housewives as a social category with class-like properties.<sup>116</sup>

Housewives all do the same job (although within material conditions that vary and make the job variously time- and energy-consuming). They have the same relationship to the means of production (i.e. indirect, via their husbands). They have the same salary (none, only sustenance, the standards of which vary). And their relationship to their socially necessary work has a number of peculiar qualities it does not share with any other social category in capitalist societies but that all housewives share: they have no fixed working hours; they have no paid vacations (nor unpaid, most of them); the amount of daily work can vary between housewives and also varies a lot for any one woman over time, and these variations have a little to do with their husband's income, and more to do with their family and its life cycle, but they have nothing at all to do with a woman's own skills or ambitions; she has no way of improving her situation by advancing in her profession; and her professional life is tied to her love life so that she loses both if she loses or rejects one.<sup>117</sup>

Such similarities in vital conditions make for solidarity as well as for gossip, and for *confianza* as well as for competition. But there is no direct competition, as in other trades; no amount of backbiting or intriguing can gain any housewife such advantages over her colleagues as salary raises or promotions or transfers to more appetizing tasks. Neither can solidarity or cooperation, but they can solve millions of little everyday problems. So, in the midst of competitive, specialized capitalist society, the housewives constitute a non-competitive category of generalists, ascribed to their job, suffering the

disadvantages of capitalism indirectly, and having access to its means of survival, money, only indirectly.

In Spain, this ascribed female way of earning a living is a huge category, more than twice the size of all employed women. It is by far the largest professional category of the country (both sexes). It contains between seven and ten million women.<sup>118</sup> No wonder the Housewife has become a key symbol for the old gender system, a key symbol for backwardness, a key symbol for what must be "overcome". But the Spanish labor market cannot even absorb its three million registered unemployed. It will not be able to absorb seven million housewives in their life-time - short of a revolution of some kind. So it looks as if a majority of Spanish women must continue to be symbols of backwardness in the midst of the discourse of progress.

#### **g. Sociability.**

Housewives are bored. That is what they themselves say, and that is what men and economically active women say about them. And this is not a complaint to be taken lightly, because it goes against the disposition for *philia*. I would say that the disposition for *philia* makes the working conditions of a *barrio* housewife intolerable. Old village sociability between women is gone, and little has come in its place in the city.

The specific city sociability above all others, the one between colleagues on the job, is not available for housewives. They can meet in extensions of their working place, (e.g. the stores or the pediatrician's waiting room), but they are alone while making beds and washing floors and hanging and folding laundry and cooking and washing dishes and most of the time while sewing.

The men have carried one important forum with them from village to *barrio* - the bar. The women have not, and they have difficulties conceptualising what has happened as a loss. Their main forum in the village was the washing place, and it was a place of taxing work and often enough a cause of health problems, so to have a washing machine instead must be interpreted as an improvement. The men have a forum for sociability that is unambiguously positive, and they have been able to retain it because they control some money. They have a cultural right to have some pocket money to spend in the bar, no



matter how low the family standard of living is. Therefore, bars are good business, and so people open bars in the city, too. To this material explanation one must add a cultural one: men can gather in the bar for leisure, because the gender system defines men as people with a right to leisure. It has so far defined women as people with non-stop duties, so their leisure had to be combined with work. When work is no longer public but enclosed inside an apartment, so are women.

Certainly they cheat. But they cannot cheat very much or housework will suffer, and that will be noticed and criticized by both husband/boss and friends/colleagues - the results of a housewife's work are still visible.

It is therefore crucial for people who want to change the gender system to insist on women's right to leisure and women's right to "conquer" such places as bars and restaurants and "the night". Such claims are not frivolous. Most Benituran women agree with "all this new talk" about women having a right to have some fun, too. But many of them do nothing about it. It is not clear to them what the alternative could be. And the women fear "gossip", and some fear their husbands' reactions. And men fear women's sociability and often actively erect barriers against it. There are exceptions, and for progressive men such behavior is not legitimate, but sometimes even they cannot be "coherent", so they confess.

I can see two main reasons for this. First, there are leftovers of the honor syndrome, as we have seen. The vocabulary has changed, and the reactions around what used to be the classical "points of honor" even more so.<sup>119</sup> Nevertheless dispositions in accordance with the old honor syndrome are still strong, and they find other channels of expression. For example, a husband can no longer say he does not want his wife running around where other men can see her. Neither can he say that he controls her comings and goings because he cannot trust her. But it is legitimate to say one does not want one's wife to run around gossiping and getting into neighborhood intrigues. It is legitimate, in the eyes of men, for a man to do what he can to stop such frivolity. The disposition behind such male behavior is the same as it used to be: to control women in order to avoid danger or discomfort for oneself. The result is almost the same, not quite. Women "obey" less, having some (varying) access to a discourse that translates their "shamelessness" (bad) to rebellion and self-affirmation (good). But the women usually define it as their duty to maintain "harmony", so the

moment the husband thinks things are getting out of hand and shows his opinion in no uncertain terms, the wife will probably retract.

The second reason for the men's dislike of women's sociability, I believe, lies in the fact that housewives sometimes engage in it across class lines or across social demarcation lines of other kinds. The social complexity of Beniturgia affects men and employed women in such a way that they become aware of it and wish to select their friends among people like themselves. They also have opportunities for doing so. The men experience it as strange that their wives might enjoy the company of women who are not like themselves in any of the social or ideological dimensions. Except that they are housewives.

The housewives certainly also experience the social divisions. But their daily experience is that the differences are less important than the similarities their profession creates. They can give each other practical and emotional support, because they understand each other's working conditions.

A few words on *confianza* are needed here, because *confianza* produces a special kind of tension between men and women. A majority of Beniturgians feel that too much *confianza* with people who live close is risky. One wants many friends, but it is preferable if they do not live in the same building. When living quarters are small and not of good quality, physical proximity threatens autonomy.<sup>120</sup> The forces creating conditions for growth of *confianza* are stronger for housewives than for men and employed women. The main differentiation among women is the fact of being a housewife or not. It is then logical for housewives to feel *confianza* for each other. They understand each other's existential as well as practical problems. They are re colleagues in a positive sense; they are not competitive colleagues. (Cf above.) There are many of them, so it is not too difficult, in spite of the obstacles, to find someone who is more to one's liking than the average, someone who can become a friend. At some periods of the lifecycle it may be difficult to find even five minutes for sociability, but for most it is possible, and all set their own approximate working hours. And they do most of their daily tasks alone, so they long for company. For these reasons, housewife neighbors often have a lot of *confianza* for each other and see a lot of each other and talk about everything.

The men feel threatened by their wives' socializing across important social barriers, perhaps even with people one might consider enemies. They also see their home as a sanctuary, a place to rest, where no stranger should intrude and

no outsider's eyes should look/touch. The women have similar feelings, but the home is above all a woman's workplace, so she asks colleagues for advice. For a man this means that strangers are informed about the most intimate and important part of his life. Thus a combination of structural and cultural factors make for strong tension around the subject of women's sociability. 121

#### **h. Pervasiveness of gender.**

In a culture where sexuality is symbolically emphasized in innumerable ways and thought to determine all important features of gender, men and women are seen as men and women everywhere and at all times. Male employees flirt with female employees; male patients feel flattered by the attentions of female nurses; a male customer is sometimes served ahead of a female customer in a store; small children are praised calling them "little woman" and "little man" and so on.

The pervasiveness of gender affects both women and men, but not symmetrically. In Benituria women are seen as women in almost everything they do. They are the marked sex, to use a linguistic term, whereas men are the unmarked sex, simply human beings, except when they themselves define a situation as being sexually charged. Their activities, especially collective decision-making and economic activities, are seen as "human", not "male", but still better suited to male characteristics precisely because they are "general", not "sexual" activities. Women are defined as sexual beings first of all, and only secondarily as occupied by some unmarked activity. Their main economic activity, housekeeping, is defined as female, connected to their sexuality. And situations where women have to be seen as gender-neutral, unmarked, are usually defined as unfit for women for this very reason.

Such a view of things is more male than female, but to varying degrees the women themselves have been socialized into it. It is also more "before" than valid in the present, but experience continues to confirm it - women are women/housewives, while it is not so easy to generalize about men.

As women enter sexually unmarked situations more and more, however, the fiction that those situations are gender-neutral is destroyed. This makes the men feel uncomfortable, so they do not want the women there. And the women experience intimate contradictions. If they want to be there, they cannot allow

sexuality to come to the fore, whereas men can allow themselves to follow the dictates of their dispositions and see women as sexual beings first. Doing that will not mean that they destroy the definition of the situation for themselves, since men's capacity for unmarked activities is uncontested. But if the assignation of women to the category of unmarked, neutral humans is already precarious, they become definitely out of place if they follow the logic of the culture and see men as men, non-neutral beings. So, paradoxically, what we get is a reversal: in unmarked situations with both women and men present, the women tone down sexuality, men emphasize it. This is culturally uphill for women, easy and fun for men.

Today, there is less reason for a man than for a woman to experience tension between his various roles and situations. He can be a husband and a father and a lover and an electrician and a union member and one of the "parishioners" at the corner bar. He is a man always, in all of these roles. If there are clashes between what he feels is natural to do and what circumstances force him to do, these clashes do not arise from his inner experiences but as impositions from without.

For a woman in Benituria, today, on the other hand, the contradictions arise out of her own most important experiences. It is no longer possible to act as a woman according to old definitions. But the symbolic stress on sexuality keeps sending her back to her role as woman: mother, wife. Anything else creates contradictions. But to be just a wife and a mother also creates contradictions. So the everyday language sets up the concept of "woman" as different from the concept of "person".

The symbolic stress on sexuality, therefore, is an important issue for feminists. No wonder sexuality is so central in their discussions. But they experience a new contradiction most Beniturian women do not. To become "persons", women must be seen as more neutral than now. The pervasiveness of sexuality must decrease. As long as gender is defined as a natural outgrowth of sexual characteristics, it must cease to be an important ingredient in every social situation. Social life must be de-genderized/de-sexualized for women to have a chance to take part in it. But sexuality is an important aspect of life. It is part of personhood. It has been repressed and it is one thing women have been deprived of and should reconquer. It is therefore urgent to redefine sexuality as positive and desirable and accessible. The feminist quest is leading them into the very

heartland of their culture. How should sexuality be lived? How can a woman be a person and a sexual being at the same time?

For that to be possible, the old conflation of sex and gender must be untangled. Meanwhile, for most Beniturians, most of the time, men are men and women are women, and for men this works but for women it is increasingly complicated.

### **i. Role incompatibility.**

Even if most adult women continue to be housewives, many women go outside their old role. Men stay mostly inside their old role of contributing to family welfare exclusively with their income.

Since one sex goes outside the old role (or wants to), and the other does not, the old complementary roles no longer fit each other. The incompatibility may grow. Most women, including the non-progressives, say they think they are changing, personally. Most men do not seem to have discovered that the gender system is changing. Most women say the men are not changing. If one half of a complementary role system changes, and the other does not, the internal system workability must decrease.

The present changes in the gender system got underway in part due to economic changes, in part because of other long term systemic processes. Now, the cultural change is a process in its own right; it is far "ahead" of the social changes (e.g. there are many more women who want jobs than there are women employees or job opportunities), and even further ahead of more basic material changes that would be needed to sustain it in the long run (facilities to take over the work the housewives now do).

The gender system of Benituria is open, flexible. Everything has to be negotiated. That is one advantage of liminality. But the situation is difficult for the protagonists. It is confusing, because things have happened so fast that there are few collective definitions of the situations that occur. Negotiations are everywhere, but everywhere unpredictable, because of a lack of established frames of reference valid for all. The ones that exist -mainly the idiom of progressivity - are very general and vague. And the tensions in the gender system erupt in intimate and sensitive places, inside families, inside couples, in important corners of personality.<sup>122</sup>

## Chapter 22. Conclusions.

### a. To describe a gender system.

In this study I hope to have shown that the concept of gender system is useful as a point of departure in defining the object of study for feminist anthropology. With this concept, the focus moves from women to the division of human beings into categories according to sex.

Certainly women's reality has often been left out of mainstream anthropology, and it was necessary to point this out and fill in some of the glaring holes. This was a major goal for a long time and will remain a valid goal. It is also true that for any anthropologist, it is easier to gain access to the social world of one's own sex, so women anthropologists will probably continue to describe women's worlds, and men anthropologists will continue to see mostly men's point of view. But if we keep in mind that there is a gender system, the partiality of these viewpoints will be recognized.

Since a gender system is by definition a system built around a categorization of human beings, a description of it must start with a description of the cultural construction of gender itself: what "is" a woman, what "is" a man? Then we will need a description of the cultural views of the consequences of this. In turn, the description of the culturally visible part of a gender system must be combined with more "objective" descriptions, and only in the interplay of all discernible factors - from any point of view - can the real consequences be worked out. In this study, the cultural description has been given primacy, against a background of data of a more material nature.

The main concepts used - habitus, dispositions, doxa, contradiction, mentality, ideology - are about degrees of cultural certainty. In times of change, such certainty can be expected to diminish. If the change produces anomalies and contradictions, not only will certainty be diminished, but some degree of cultural unease may result. This in turn may produce either a wish for a return to earlier certainty - to escape the perceived cause of the unease - or a wish for further

change, for the same reason, only in this case a return to previous ways is judged impossible, so the escape has to be effected forwards.

In this way one can understand the polarization around the idea of progress in Benituria. To understand why certain categories of people prefer one or the other of the two extremes on the continuum of progressivity or find some form of compromise (cf the typology in chapter 6), has not been the main purpose here. Beniturians themselves, however, are often interested in attempting such sociocultural maps, and they often use gender as a key criterion in the effort. Gender fulfills all of the requirements, any one of which Ortner finds sufficient to indicate a key symbol: people say that it is important, people are visibly affected by it, it comes up in many different contexts, it is surrounded by great cultural elaboration, and there are important cultural restrictions and sanctions around it. (Ortner 1973:1339) Gender is a key symbol in any honor-and-shame system, as they have been described for Mediterranean societies, so it is no wonder that it continues to be so in times of change - only, in times of change gender becomes a key symbol of change. A progressive Beniturian must have progressive opinions about controversial gender issues such as divorce, abortion, homosexuality. Now, the controversial gender issues have been defined in such a way that it is easier for women to see the advantage of the progressive stands. They appeal to their material interests. But the same progressive stands redefine what has formerly been seen as natural and essential aspects of women's social being, their best claims for dignity and social rights.

Personal contradictions are thus produced for both women and men. A progressive man must have opinions that point to a loss of gender privileges for him. A progressive woman usually finds herself with opinions that make her own daily life seem unworthy.

Cultural contradictions are probably present in any gender system. They certainly were in the Beniturian one(s) in earlier phases. They were then sharper for women than for men, and this is one reason it can be called patriarchal - it was a system that made sense from a man's point of view, and the women had to go through some cultural acrobatics to make it make sense for them. But it was a system that had had time to find social solutions to its central contradictions, and it fitted material circumstances well, so it was largely doxic. That is, the contradictions were largely culturally invisible. Now, these old contradictions are becoming visible at the same time as new contradictions are produced. The result

is that women of all persuasions feel cultural unease. It is easier for men to obtain the foremost social satisfactions.

This description depends for its validity on an assumption of simultaneous change and continuity in cultural premises. It loses credibility if one reads it from the viewpoint of one of the two extreme possible views on culture: that it is an iron cage that determines social process, or that it is purely an epiphenomenon of social process. Much theoretical work to resolve this impasse is currently going on in anthropology. For my purposes, I have found Bourdieu's theory of practice, based on the concept of habitus as a structure of dispositions in continuous change, useful as a theoretical baseline.

The focus of this study has been on the critical characteristics of the gender system. It is assumed that individuals behave according to their own perceptions of their situations, including their own perceptions of what constitutes a gain and what is possible and impossible to do. These perceptions are grounded in experience, and experience of both material, social and cultural realities accumulates in the form of a habitus. Dispositions can also be called cultural premises or schemata. By reading between the lines in Benituran conversations, and by interpreting these readings in the light of observations of Benituran life, it was possible to arrive at a number of cultural premises that influence the gender system. The dichotomy is defined by critical features that can only be perceived and perceived as important because of certain cultural premises. It is conceptualized as a hierarchy because of certain premises, and the hierarchy is delegitimized because of others. It was possible to describe the interaction between some deeply sunk cultural schemata and others of a more superficial nature. It was possible to describe the interaction between some, old or new, cultural schemata and some facts of social organization. The cultural schemata taken into account are both those that are explicitly related to gender - such as the construction of motherhood - and those that are not, but that are so pervasive in social life that they influence all of it, including gender - such as the dispositions for self-affirmation and for philia.

Since one basic feature of Benituria is social and cultural variety, one could well ask whether there is one gender system or several. My conclusion is that there is one system only, and that the variety is a result of the inner contradictions of that system, and the interaction of the system with other social systems, especially the mode of production.



It is one system, culturally, because Beniturians make constant references to the various opinions and lifestyles within it, and because this variety as such is a factor that influences the opinions and lifestyles of all. It is one system, socially, because this is a society with a legislation that (in theory at least) affects all citizens equally, and because Benituria is a part of that society where the relationship to production is essentially the same for all men - some direct or indirect but personal dependence on a salary - and essentially the same for all women - a forced choice between a relationship similar to that of men, but with gender-specific disadvantages, or a relationship exclusive to women, with several non-capitalist features.

The change and the polarization of opinions have placed the gender system under debate - along with a lot of other things, for which the polarization around gender often serves as a metaphor. There is a shifting of ideas between categories of people, between situations and across ideological maps. The shifts produce contradictions and anomalies that further decrease cultural certainty. And the kinds of contradictions and anomalies produced will leave their imprint on the system as they influence further movements in it through their effects on habitus.

The concept of contradiction is only comprehensible within a system. Posing that there is such a thing as a gender system in any society, it becomes possible to describe its major cultural and social structural features and their interaction, always via people in situations.

#### **b. A gender system described.**

If there is a gender system, then we can describe together all the aspects of social life that are consequences of, or that influence, the division of labor, in its widest sense, according to sex. Social facts that may otherwise be invisible or only semi-visible, lost in a variety of theoretical viewpoints, stand out.

The point of departure here was the socialist feminist viewpoint that a gender system has consequences for and is shaped by both the mode of production and the mode of reproduction (Eisenstein 1979, Jaggar 1983). The area of interest was defined as Benituria, including certain structures of Spanish society as a whole that influence life in Benituria, such as labor market conditions or legislation. The daily rhythm, types of networks and associations, use of

space and kinds of inhabitants according to sociological variables were described. The material conditions of life for women were also described in terms of kinds of dwellings, available social services, limits imposed by different time schedules (schools, stores, factories, mealtimes) on possibilities to arrange one's life.

All of these data were given as necessary background for the main focus chosen: the views Benituran women themselves have of the gender system. The first basic fact was that those views are several, and the second basic fact was that Beniturians reduce the variety of opinions to two main "mentalities".

The substantial viewpoints chosen for scrutiny were those that pertain to areas of life that Western women's studies have found relevant for gender systems and that happen to coincide with the ones that Benituran women themselves see as important: relationship to production, sexuality, institutions for procreation (love, *noviazgo*, marriage), and forms for emotional nurturance (sexuality, friendship, family). It was found that there are few opinions on these matters that can be said to be doxic in Benituria, because there are few opinions that are never contrasted. Those there are pertain more to style of interaction (self-affirmation, *philia*) than directly to the gender dichotomy, although they do have consequences for the latter.

There are, however, a number of floating doxas, widely shared semi-visible ideas. The major one is the idea of the two "mentalities", and this is related to the idea that change is for the good and automatically produced by the passage of time. Love is a consensual value. That children are the meaning of life continues to be a highly doxic idea. That motherhood is most important for women is not doxa, since it is questioned by some, but it is a floating doxa, and it is also a floating doxa that this has negative consequences for women "nowadays". That "sacrifice" has lost its noble connotations is "something everyone knows", even though *aguantar* continues to be a key word for women when they describe their own lives. "Freedom" and "justice" are ideologically stressed concepts that are firmly believed to have substantial content. They are as impossible as progress to be against, but some people try to redefine them, in order to be able to use them in a positive way without becoming trapped in personal inconsistency.

Several other floating doxas have been described in the main text. There is one, however, that seems to sum up the moment the gender system is in: the idea of personhood. It says that all human beings should be persons, but not all are.

What it entails to be a person is not well-defined, it is doxic and therefore not verbalized, but it includes being, and being seen as, a social entity with power of decision. It says that women have not been persons but are now on their way to becoming persons. This is an important and positive fact for almost all Benituran women - their opinions part only when it comes to degrees and kinds of obstacles on the road towards personhood and what to do about them.

In each of the areas chosen for closer scrutiny, it was found that these floating doxas shaped the women's comments, so that on one level there seemed to be a high degree of consensus. In two ways, however, the social complexity reasserted itself. First, the women seemed to say the same things, but they said them with different vocabularies. The more progressive women used certain words - rationality, freedom, progress, justice - very often, while the less progressive did not use them and instead used certain words - realism, *aguantar*, duty - that the progressives used more seldom. Second, even if there was consensus around the fact of change and its general goodness and approximate direction, there was no consensus on the interpretation of substantial aspects of life in the light of change. In chapter 17 the degree of consensus and the most common variations were described.

In this way, the cultural aspect of the Benituran gender system from the women's point of view, was substantially described.

### c. A liminal moment.

Because a gender system concerns emotionally sensitive and socially central matters, it tends to be resistant to change. But when it changes, this is a kind of change that will have non-trivial repercussions on the rest of society. Where is the turning point, then?

Benituria is an example of a society perched at that turning point. The gender system stands with one foot in an old integrated system (both economic and symbolic sexual complementarity; complete religious system of symbolic legitimation; social integration between sexual complementarity, male precedence and hierarchies among males) and the other in new social circumstances which have sprouted a heterodox discourse which cannot be integrated and effective as legitimation as long as its propositions do not fit social reality.

Imagine any situation in which the Progressive Housewife finds herself. A good example might be Asun when she had to decide whether to allow her daughters to receive sexual education in school. She talked to a teacher, a progressive and educated man and a Jesuit to boot, i.e. a person with authority in her eyes, a person to be trusted. But what he suggested went against some of her deepest dispositions. And she knew her mother would be against it, and perhaps her husband. What was proposed seemed progressive - but was it too progressive, extreme? If her children had been male, she might have been more prepared to let them run a risk - as it was, according to her definition of the situation - in order for them to learn something important, according to another definition of the situation to which Asun also subscribed. But one does not as lightly let daughters run sexual risks, according to her deepest dispositions.

Another example is the central issue of whether or not a woman with a family to take care of should also have a job. We saw that most women are married, and that most married women are housewives, and that it is very difficult in practice to make other combinations. But to have a job has become a key symbol of "progress" for women, and this is not by chance, since to have a job is the only way for Benituran women to obtain direct access to the basic prerequisite of personhood in their society, money. The job thus becomes one focus for tension in the gender system, a nodal point where dispositions, social change and the cultural construction of social change come together and shape each other.

In part C we saw how material change (the move to the city, washing machines, new opportunities for creating comfortable homes as symbols of family life, etc.) has worked to isolate women from each other, and we saw what opportunities they have now of meeting and how the characteristics of these opportunities (often outdoors, not defined as leisure but as work, limited by individual and family schedules...) combine with certain dispositions (for *philia*, to define sociability as not of the home, for women not to go out too much...) to limit their usefulness in the women's striving for culturally defined satisfactions. We saw also that the men have been able to transfer their most important social forum, the bar, from the village to the city, thanks largely to their control of money. Men in the city also have new fora, such as associations and employment. We saw that no public forum is exclusively male, but that most women do not take part in them. Obviously this has consequences for women's

chances of defending their interests. Old defenses, such as left hand practices, and old satisfactions, such as motherhood, are losing both cultural value and social efficacy.

A contradictory picture results: the change moves in a direction of greater cultural emphasis on gender justice and greater material possibilities to realize some of the substantial claims for justice. At the same time, the checks-and-balances built into a former gender system are undermined and delegitimized. The result is that women sometimes find themselves between two worlds, unable to marshal support according to any sociocultural system. At other times, the opportunities for manipulation are grandiose, thanks to the same situation of liminality.

A Benituran woman can try to turn her back to all of this and live "as women have always done", i.e. be a Worker's Wife or an Elena Francis. Or she can try to "learn" and become a European Woman. But the most common female lifestyle is the Progressive Housewife, intrinsically ambivalent. She too learns, of course, from all the factors of all situations she experiences. But her experiences are very likely to be of such a kind that the degree of integration in her dispositions will decrease. So there will be a cumulative de-legitimation of the old integrated gender system along with everything that legitimated it, such as family and religion.

This does not mean, however, that a new system is necessarily coming into its own. Perhaps it is. Part of a new material base (industrialization, urbanization) is already there, and a new symbolic system that would legitimate it is present and internally rather integrated (the progressive discourse of rationality with its body of "scientific" knowledge as a base). But the material base is recent and incomplete and cannot in its present shape offer that *sine qua non* - a personal income - to more than a very small number of women. Other social prerequisites that make earning an income materially possible are also deficient (childcare, hospitals, nursing homes, stores that are open when factories are closed...). And the symbolic system cannot be convincing as long as its fit with social circumstances is poor. Besides, a symbolic system is not a disembodied system. It exists only as filtered through human beings and their habitus. And in Benituria the progressive discourse, for all its impressive hegemonic appearance, does not reign alone in almost any individual habitus. It is mixed with all sorts of

dispositions rooted in the older systems, dispositions that are necessarily changing, but dispositions that cannot disappear suddenly.

Via the various kinds of contradictions we have seen, they leave a trace in the progressive symbolic system. Therefore this system has to move towards integration, it does not possess integration. And it has to be integrated with the social reality of Benituria. Such elements in it as intellectual flexibility and social tolerance fit well with the social complexity and have been widely adopted as personal creeds. The idea of personhood fits with the disposition for self-affirmation and has also become widespread, but it contradicts basic principles of the old integrated gender system (sexual complementarity and male precedence) so it comes to be a central symbol for change. The idea of rationality also fits well with the disposition for self-affirmation ("think for yourself! do not accept authority!") but contradicts that most institutionalized and integrated symbolic system of legitimation, the religion most Beniturians profess. So some become atheists, others doubt the value of rationality, and a majority work creatively at new more or less idiosyncratic syntheses.

We see a conjuncture of social and cultural liminality. The heterodoxic discourse fits this fact, even if it does not fit many other social and material circumstances. The heterodoxic discourse, defined only by what it opposes, expresses the lack of functional integration, the lack of Durkheimian harmony between the social and the cultural. This in turn gives it a special kind of legitimacy which gives it a social power that heterodoxic discourses seldom have. Such a situation could predispose for deep social change. It could perhaps be called, with some hyperbole, a pre-revolutionary situation.

#### d. Left hand left behind.

Whatever happens, one thing is clear: left hand practices are on their way out and with them, to an unknown extent, the gender system they symbolize in this book and which needed them.

In the old integrated gender system(s) most Beniturians have lived with for most of their lives, left hand was a joker, a culturally illicit but socially necessary practice. It served to transcend the practical contradictions women experienced<sup>d</sup> They experienced personal contradictions, e.g. between their

dispositions for submissiveness and for self-affirmation. They experienced contradictions in their roles as social mediators, for example between the public and the private, between different nuclear families, between generations, and between conflicting cultural pressures. To do what they were supposed to do and wanted to do, women had to be manipulators, diplomats, skilled at sacrificing some cultural goals in order to obtain others, while the men could be "noble", as so many Beniturians continue to say, playing the game by the official rules. Left hand practices also served to transcend the social contradictions between women and men to some extent. They converted the hierarchical arrangement to something closer to equality in practice, without subverting the cultural legitimacy of the hierarchical principle as such.

Now, the discourse of progressivity condemns left hand practices as undignified, irrational and ineffective. This is logical. Left hand would constitute not a mediating joker but an impossible logical breach in a society constructed according to the precepts of that discourse.

Comments on left hand figure prominently in Beniturian debates around gender, whether one defends the old system saying that it was functional and actually almost equal in practice, or whether one attacks it saying that that is not true and would in any case not be enough to call it just. This is why I have chosen left hand as a label for what is being delegitimized. It is a kind of gender system being left behind culturally and weakened socially. It is less legitimate and less necessary and less workable in practice under present social circumstances than it used to be.

As long as the principle of male precedence has any force, women will count for less, by definition, culturally and socially. Therefore they will need cultural and social jokers, like left hand. But as the principle of male precedence loses vigor, so will the countercultural legitimacy of the jokers. In Benituria in 1983 it was a rather even match. But it was not a moment of calm balance. The contradictory social and cultural forces were building up great tensions, causing much personal unhappiness and collective confusion. If one looks at this society as a gender system, one catches sight of social conflicts and cultural contradictions that are otherwise difficult to understand.

## APPENDIX A: Fieldwork.

### a. Contexts.

During my eighteen months in Benituria, I lived in a rented apartment, trying to look as if I lived the life of a normal barrio woman. Having lived for many years in a similar barrio in Madrid<sup>123</sup> I knew the approximate codes, which helped me manage impressions and made it relatively easy to establish contacts. But it also made it awkward for me to ask some basic questions. And I could fool nobody totally. I was not an ordinary barrio woman, because I look more Swedish than Spanish, and my children did not live with me (but they visited once in a while, and that helped, and I talked about them as much as I could), I was separated from my husband, I had a mysterious source of income ("a scholarship" I said) and I was known to be doing some sort of "study on Benituria".

Still, I decided against living with a family, which might have incorporated me more deeply into intimate events of the barrio. I did not feel I needed such close observation of daily life, after my years in Madrid. And I wanted to have independence and freedom of movement and a home of my own, where I could write and receive informants. And this home of my own established me to some shaky degree as an inhabitant of Benituria. It made me more normal in the eyes of my preferred informants than I would have been without it. I shopped for food and household items. I took part in meetings for the inhabitants of the building. I did my share of staircase cleaning. I swapped favors with the other women of the building. I became a *vecina*, a neighbor, at least in the eyes of the two small boys in the next door apartment who to this day know me as "la vecina" when I come back to visit.

The main idea was to do ordinary participant observation. This is not easy in a city, however. The combination of gregariousness and boredom in Benituran housewives helped; the women enjoyed talking to me, since they loved talking in general. But city people live in public places only up to a point. I



had to find ways of getting into the places, usually indoors, where things happened.

My special point of introduction was the neighborhood association. I had been active in such an association in Madrid for several years, so it was a logical place to begin. I also had some credentials in the women's movement. However, it was mostly just walking around, taking care to go shopping when the lines were long, spreading the news about my project, and through a few initial acquaintances that responded positively and decided to help me, that I created an initial network. After a few months of slowly growing into the daily rhythm of Beniturgia, a number of key activities crystallized.

Before I list them, however, I must insist that most of my material and my most valuable material comes from non-arranged situations in daily life: conversations on the sidewalk or in the stores, having coffee with a neighbor, going out for dinner with friends, attending some child's birthday party or first communion, running into acquaintances on the bus, fighting with recalcitrant bureaucrats or inefficient gas delivery men or too-ingenious plumbers, helping or receiving help in everyday matters... in short, living in Beniturgia. There is an urban version of the anthropological "just-being-around", although it is not enough by itself.

So, for special activities, I joined associations and did interviews.

The neighborhood association was a good source for personal contacts. It was also interesting in itself, since the work there was work to improve the barrio. It offered plenty of information on the life of the barrio and also on the shape of interaction between men and women in contexts where men and women are not supposed to act as men and women. This is a problem in this gender system, as this study shows.

The women's group was founded in late fall and I was invited to take part. "We are a group of women who have decided to get together about once a week and talk about our problems, as women you know," said Marga, who invited me and whom I knew to be a feminist. I had been told that there had been a feminist group a few years earlier, but it had split up after personal skirmishes and ideological problems, just like so many women's groups all over Spain. Now a few of them had decided to try again, in an unpretentious and cautious way, "to try to clear up our own ideas", a common phrase. In this way I got the opportunity to follow a women's group from the start, and see what ideas were

treated in what way, and how feminist ideas and events were received at this grass roots level.

There were many other Benituran associations and I tried to visit premises or find out through friends and informants about their activities, but I had neither the time nor the special credentials to become active.

Nor did I want to be associated with any political party, but I accepted invitations to talk about my project in various political contexts - because they were an important kind of context in Benituria - and I had good contacts with the three main party groupings in the barrio: the socialists (PSOE), the communists (PCE) and the leftist Esquerra Unida. There was an AP (Alianza Popular, the conservatives) group in the barrio, but it had no party premises, and as far as I know it was only active during the election campaign.

Surprisingly, I was able to talk to the police. They even provided me with some inoffensive information. As a matter of fact, I did not approach the police, they approached me, but this happened very indirectly, and they did not try to stop my pursuits in any way.

There were two city-wide associations where I found it worthwhile to spend some time. I joined the Association of Separated Women.<sup>124</sup> This was a place where my civil status was all I needed for an introduction and where, as it turned out, the idea was for everybody to be very outspoken about their problems. Separated women are the most outstanding anomaly in this gender system, so the experiences of these women were rich in information.

I also attended many meetings of the city-wide feminist movement. It was fragmented and disorganized, going through a period of disenchantment and exhaustion after a few very active years. There was a women's bookstore with a meeting room in the back, and there was a semi-underground feminist bar. Most of the things that happened in the feminist movement happened in one of these two places. There were various groupings: radicals or independents, party women, union women, independent socialist feminists, lesbians, university women, ad-hoc groups, barrio groups (like the one in Benituria), women's committees of the neighborhood associations, two housewife organizations (one fascist and one communist), etc.

As to interviews, there were three kinds. First, there were life story interviews in which the interviewee was asked to tell about her life, anything she wanted, starting and ending where she wished. Second, a questionnaire

(appendix C) was used in some fifty interviews with people of both sexes and all ages and socio-economic circumstances. However, the interviewees were encouraged to expand on the questions as much as they wanted, so these interviews came to be very similar to the life stories.

To broaden the material further, for purposes of not-verification-but-something-close, I accepted an offer to use university students as assistants. (Cf appendix B.) In this way I obtained 171 extra interviews. In chapter 4 and in appendix B are explanations of how the interview material was analyzed.

## **b. Periods.**

Chronologically, fieldwork was divided into four rather distinct periods.

The first period was the one of arrival and adaptation, from July to Christmas, approximately. I took walks, did household chores, stood around in the stores, tried to establish contacts, joined associations and started attending two courses in the Valencian language,<sup>125</sup> read three daily newspapers and some weekly magazines, watched TV and listened to the radio - immersed myself in Benituria as best I could while building my network.

The second period was the period of most intensive participant observation. It lasted from January to June. It consisted in much the same kind of activities as during the fall months, but in a much more intense and systematic way and with much more access to private groups and homes. I did life story interviews, took a few trips, instructed the student assistants. There was some kind of meeting or sociable event practically every evening. I continued with the newspapers, language courses and association work until about April. Note-typing took several hours each day as did telephoning and baby-sitting and other things I had to do to keep up my friendly relationships with key informants. There was little time to stand around in stores and on sidewalks any more.

Summer was welcome relief. Benituria became quiet and hot, and I settled into an easy rhythm of working with the student assistant interviews (cf Appendix B) in the mornings, sleeping during the hottest hours and seeing friends and informants in the cool hours around midnight.

From September to December, I did a questionnaire interview almost every day, and to type the notes took all the rest of my time, because I wanted to

be sure to get the informant utterances down as fresh and literal as possible. In December I packed, partied and parted.

Then there was a fifth period of fieldwork, a re-visit in September-October 1986. At that time (as well as on many shorter visits for private reasons rather than work) I stayed with a key informant who had become a friend and took part in her daily rounds and her family life. As so many anthropologists have reported, for me, too, coming back to the field was a marvelous occasion for deepening relationships, knowledge and understanding. It was a month of intense visiting, socializing for mixed purposes, friendship and fieldwork, not always possible to separate. There were also some individual and collective interviews. I organized a regular debate on the term "progressive" in a couple of different contexts. I stood around in stores and on sidewalks again, to refresh my memory. I checked a few details with experts. And so on. But above all it was a month of reconfirmation of tentative conclusions reached as I had begun to write this report.

### c. Distortions.

Finally, it is necessary to say a few words about how I presented myself and the project during the main fieldwork. I never tried to hide the fact that I was in Benituria to do a study. I tried to abbreviate explanations whenever possible, saying just that I was doing "a study on Benituria". But if people wanted to know more, I said more. I said that I was doing a study "on the situation of women in a Spanish city" or similar phrases.

My answers were vague, but no doubt they had an effect on my possibilities of contact and information. For example, women who felt strongly anti-feminist did not want to be associated with me for fear of getting a reputation as feminists. "Ordinary" men were also less than enthusiastic about being interviewed. Since the male-female dichotomy is as basic as it is, it was a threat to the maleness of the men to be involved in a project that had to do with women and was carried out by a woman. For progressive men, on the other hand, to be interviewed by me was a chance to show how progressive they were and to prove that "the old male chauvinism" (*machismo*) is now dying out. My contacts

with the traditional associations of Benituria (the parish, the falla commissions, the Casino) were sporadic and superficial.

All informants tried to present their views to me in a way that was meant to be close to my own views. This is a limitation for all anthropologists, but in Benituria there were some factors that limited the limitation.

The first such factor is that I never explained my aims or methods in detail. So people brought me all kinds of information, thinking that it would interest me. The second factor is that interviews were only one part of my data collection work. Not even conversations with only one other person at a time make up most of the material. In collective situations people could not adapt their actions and interactions to this special kind of observer and her possible opinions. In meetings, in stores, at family gatherings, they must first and foremost follow the culturally valid definitions and their own dispositions and adapt to the interaction with all others present.

A third factor is what I have called the disposition for situational sincerity (cf chapter 18). Beniturians talk a lot and they find conversations enjoyable, but only if they can express what they feel (at that moment and with care not to let their sides down) and what they think. It is considered insincere and strange to hide a conviction if one wants a friendly relationship with the person one is talking to. So, in their various ways, most informants wanted to tell me what they really felt; what is more, they wanted to persuade me of the validity of their opinions.

So, in three ways I could get an insight into opinions that did not agree with my own, in spite of inevitable distortions. First, my opinions and aims were not well known; second, I participated in situations that were ruled by other factors than the relationship between the participants and myself; third, there was a set of dispositions around interaction that furthered frankness and partially neutralized other factors that might make tact, diplomacy or outright hypocrisy the best alternative.

## APPENDIX B: Student assistant interviews.

### a. The Background.

Dr Joan B. Llinares, teacher of social anthropology at the University of Valencia, suggested a collaboration. His students had to do a substantial term paper, and it might be of mutual benefit if some of them did it as my assistants, for example doing life story interviews. The students in question were not ideal assistants for me. They were young, 18 or 19 most of them, and in their first university year. Social anthropology was only one subject out of five in the first year course, and they studied to be psychologists. Still, I decided to accept the offer, since it would give me a much broader material than I could ever collect myself.

Three instruction seminars were held with about fifty interested students. In the end, thirty-four students turned in a total of 171 interviews. The quality of their comments and conclusions was on the average no higher than one could expect. But I was happily surprised by the quality of the interviews themselves.

The instructions during the seminars stressed the following points:

- It is very important to make the interviewed persons (IP) understand that their anonymity will be protected. I will only quote out of context, if I quote at all.
- I am interested in all kinds of people in Valencia. The only requirement is that IP be a Spanish citizen and be living in the city of Valencia at the moment. (I was afraid the students would find "picturesque" personalities or "typical Valencians".)
- The criterion of variation is the most important one - I do not want only interviews with 20-year-old students! So only one out of the five interviews can be with such a person, the others have to be with people of different ages and occupations. I am interested in women, but also want interviews with men. (Result: Almost but not all students did the one permitted interview with another student. About one tenth of the interviews were with men.)

- Another important criterion for selection is that you feel that you can carry out a good interview with the IP. It is not enough with questions and answers. You must establish an atmosphere of conversation and make IP feel relaxed. IP should not feel any requirement to be profound, but the more IP feels like telling and commenting, and the less you have to intervene, so much the better. Do not interview people with whom you cannot relax. This may mean avoiding strangers or interviewing strangers only, that is a personal thing for each one to decide. You have to report on the atmosphere during the interview and on what kind of relationship you had to IP before the interview. (Result: Only two interviewed parents or siblings, as far as I know nobody interviewed a novio/novia, only one approached total strangers in a park, and most interviewed neighbors, distant kin, workmates of friends, etc., i.e. persons at a certain distance but whom one could approach through intermediaries.)

- I give you a list of approximate themes to cover in the interview. Please note that it is meant as help and support - it is not a questionnaire! Use it when you or the IP do not know what to say, but try to get IP to talk freely and if IP prefers to talk about completely different issues, let her/him do so. I am interested not only in what they say about certain themes but also in what themes they want to talk about. But there are a few things I want included in all interviews, they are the questions at the end of the theme list. If IP has not talked about them, ask, but only at the end of interview. Please note that this is important, because otherwise the questions might influence what IP has to say on other matters.

- Please make special notes of phrases that IP uses often or with special emphasis, phrases used to motivate important decision, points at which IP seems to hesitate or feel embarrassed, and all expressions of self-evidence.

I did not ask the students to tape the interviews, but about half of them did. Only one typed out the full transcripts, the others quoted and abbreviated and showed how they had edited. Most of the students reported that both they and the IPs had felt awkward in the beginning, whether the interview was taped or not, but that the atmosphere had then improved rapidly, and that in the end the IP had often said that it had been fun. The students also said they had had fun, although some of them complained that they had not understood the anthropological purpose of the exercise.

The theme list included all the obvious things such as basic personal data, family, childhood, youth, work experiences, love experiences, political and

religious ideas, moves, plans for the future. The questions that were to be asked towards the end of the interview were approximately the same as numbers 45-51 in my own questionnaire.

### **b. Special analytic exercises.**

Working with the student interviews, I could analyze what people said, without letting myself be influenced by the situation in which it had been said or what I knew of the speakers as individuals. Such decontextualized analysis, I thought, would be a good check on the results from the heavily contextualized participant observation.

I chose 22 student interviews to work with in detail. I chose them on the following criteria: they had to be "good", i.e. the student should not have forgotten any important information about the characteristics of the interviewed person or the circumstances around the interview, and the transcription had to give the impression of being careful and complete; the interview should have been made under "normal" circumstances, i.e. I excluded the ones where the interviewed person was under the effects of some recent dramatic event, was ill or drunk, etc.; the interviewed person should be the kind of person who could have resided in Benituria, i.e. I excluded persons of extreme social categories or who for special reasons resided in special parts of the city (university area, bohemian area, slums, distant barrios that were almost villages, elegant barrios...); the student should have reported that the atmosphere of the interview was normally relaxed. I also read through all the student interviews several times and chose the 22 interviews in such a way that they seemed representative on an intuitive basis.

I did all of this without searching for the themes I was interested in. This was important. I did not want to choose interviews that were "good" in the sense of being more than usually centered around gender issues or expressing opinions I found interesting because they were close to or far from my own.

Once I had chosen the 22 interviews, I read them through very slowly, marking all phrases that seemed to be statements. Again I tried to do this in an "objective" way, without yet introducing my own ideas about what was interesting or what I thought the interviewed persons meant. In a second reading,



I gave theme labels to each phrase. In a third reading I reduced the number of themes, grouping similar ones together. Then I reread all 171 interviews again, to make sure that the themes I had arrived at were applicable in general.

After this I wrote each phrase on a small card. Some phrases were about two or more themes and were then written on several cards. Each card was marked with a symbol for the theme and a symbol for the interviewed person, so that I could find the interview the phrase came from. That was necessary, of course. But while analyzing, I did not want to be influenced by the contexts of the phrases. There was a total of a little over 600 cards.

Now I sorted the cards according to themes. This in itself was revealing, because there were some themes that people had talked a lot more about than others. I discounted the themes directly related to gender, since the students had been instructed to ask about such things. But there were other themes that bulged and which must thus be considered important Benituran themes. Not surprisingly, one was the contrast village-city. Another was friendship and sociability. Also important was one with which I had to struggle a lot in order to define it. I called it tentatively "rebelliousness" and "strength of self" before I found a label that fitted all the instances: self-affirmation. (Friendship and self-affirmation are the themes of chapter 18.)

But quantity was not the best criterion for judging the information about the themes. I now read through the cards to discover what people referred to as self-evident, or as explanations of decisions. If someone said for example, "I quit school at twelve, even though I liked school, but my mother fell ill and someone had to do the housework," I would have sorted the phrase first under the themes of school and housework, but in the second sorting it would come under female duties. The phrase expressed as doxic that a mother who falls ill must be replaced by a daughter, even if the daughter is in school and does well in school, not by a son or a husband. This sorting was difficult and required much rechecking against the full interviews to avoid mistakes. (In the example given, it would have made a difference if there were no brothers, if the father's job was the only source of income, and so on.)

When this sorting was complete, I wrote out the generalizations that followed, and then filed these notes and tried to forget them. All of this work was done during the summer months of 1983, while still in the field.

In the winter of 1986-87, when I had started writing this report, I repeated the exercise, but now with a dozen of my own best interviews, both questionnaire and life story interviews. I chose them on criteria similar to those with which I chose the student interviews, and I marked the phrases according to similar themes. But by this time I did not have the previous exercise fresh in my memory, and tried not to think of its results. And the new exercise was diametrically opposed as to a couple of details in method. Instead of writing all the phrases on cards, I now just marked them in the margin of the interview transcripts. Instead of trying to depersonalize them, I tried to mobilize all my knowledge about each interviewed person to be sure that I understood the intention of the remarks correctly. The technique was thus similar, but done with the intention of contextualization instead of its opposite.

Then, once again, I wrote out the generalizations that seemed to follow, by theme. And finally, I compared with the first set of generalizations. It was reassuring to find that the two sets were very similar. This is what made chapters 17 and 18 possible.

## APPENDIX C: Questionnaire.

### a. Questionnaire.

#### A. Basic data

1. Age and sex.
2. Civil status. (Have you got a boyfriend/girlfriend? Are you living with someone?...)
3. Father's occupation.
4. Mother's occupation.
5. Your own main occupations.
6. Approximate income (your own and/or that of your family).
7. Education.
8. How many brothers and sisters have you got?
9. How many children have you got? Ages. What kind of school do they go to?
10. Your husband's occupation (or wife's, girlfriend's, etc.)
11. How many persons live in your home and who are they?
12. What kind of home is it? (apartment, house, village house, rented, own property, lent, shared...)

#### B. Benituria

13. Since when do you live in Benituria?
14. Why did you come precisely to this barrio?
15. What do you think of Benituria? Do you like it here or would you like to move to another place. Why? What is good and what is bad about it?
16. For what purposes and with what frequency do you go outside Benituria, to other parts of Valencia? (doctor, movies, shopping (what?), see relatives...) In the company of whom?
17. For what purposes and with what frequency do you go outside the city of Valencia and with whom? (weekends, vacations, to visit the village, business trips, study purposes...)

18. How would you describe Benituria and its people, in a few words?

C. Everyday life

19. What is a typical day like in your life right now? (a normal weekday, hour by hour, who do you see, where do you go, etc.)

20. What is a typical week like? (Are all weekdays alike or do they vary? And what is the weekend usually like?)

21. What is your home like? (what rooms, what are they used for, degree of comfort, if you would like to change something...)

22. If you could, would you move to another home? What would it be like?

23. Who makes the more or less routine decisions in your home? (when and what to eat, what to do on Saturday, who to invite for a child's baptism, whether to change the furniture around...)

24. And the big and important decisions? (what school to send the children to, how many children to have and when, where to live, whether to improve the kitchen or buy a car...)

25. How is housework done? Who does what things? At what times and with what frequency? (E.g. make beds, buy food, prepare food, clean floors, dust, wash clothes, wash dishes, iron and fold, give the small ones their bath, fix broken things, clean the car, clean windows, take out the garbage...)

26. Is there peace in the family around these matters or are there sometimes different opinions?

27. Do you personally think that the distribution of housework is fair in your home? Or would you like to change something and in that case what and why? And why is this not done?

28. Whom do you see most frequently, apart from the people living with you?

29. When you see these other people, what do you usually do? Is this social life important in your life or not?

30. Would you like to change anything about your social life? What and how and why can't it be the way you would like it?

31. And what about your husband (wife, girlfriend...)? Whom does he/she see? Do you know what he/she thinks of his/her social life? And what do you think of it?

32. What do you do together, the two of you? (only to informants in a couple relationship of some kind) And if you have children, what do you do all of you together, the whole family?

33. Do you read regularly any kind of press, daily or weekly. What?<sup>126</sup>

34. What do you usually do for a vacation. With whom, where, etc.

35. If you ever have personal difficulties, to whom do you turn for help and support? In the case of economic problems, for example? Or in the case of marriage problems or other sentimental problems? Or in the case of problems at work or with your studies, etc.

36. Do you belong to any association? (cultural, religious, political...) In that case, what level of activity?

#### D. Economy

37. Is there a budget in your family? How was it planned? And if not, how do you decide on money matters?

38. If several family members have employment, do you put all the money in a common budget or does each one have his or her own money?

39. Are you saving for anything special right now?

40. Which ones of the following have you got in your house? Car, TV (color?), a second home, camera, film camera, washing machine, refrigerator, stereo equipment, dishwasher.

41. What acquisitions have had special importance for you?

#### E. Opinions

42. Do you want to tell me anything about your religious beliefs? If not, it is not necessary.

43. The same thing as to political opinions.

44. If you have children, what plans, dreams or hopes have you got for them? For your sons? And for your daughters? And if you have none, how do you think you would plan their future if you had any?

45. Do you think men and women are very different, as to capacities, emotions, taste, etc? In what ways? Why?

46. Do you think there is a big difference between what men and women can do, today, in Spain? Especially in the city of Valencia? What do you think of the way these things are: good or bad, indifferent, changing...?

47. What do you think a woman ought to do with her life?

48. What do you think a man ought to do with his life?

49. FOR A WOMAN: Do you have employment or other sources of income? Why or why not? Do you wish for the contrary, and why, or are you satisfied, and why?

FOR A MAN: Do you approve of your wife's working outside the home or not? Why? Does she do it right now?

50. FOR A WOMAN: What things in your life or in society would have to change for you to quit your job, if you have one, or for you to get a job, if you do not?

FOR A MAN: If your wife has a job, what things would have to change for her to quit? And if she does not, what things would have to change for her to start working outside your home?

51. Do you think a man has more of an obligation than a woman to support the family? And do you think a woman has more of an obligation than a man to do the housework? What would you think of a family that did it the other way around? WOMAN: Would you do it in case you had a job and your husband did not? MAN: Would you do it in case you had no job and your wife did?

#### F. Examples of problematic situations

Please make a short comment on what you think of each one of the following situations. I believe the majority of them are rather common these days. And there are no solutions; they are dilemmas. Try to think of what you would do in the same situation, or make any kind of comment you feel like.

52. A young woman lives comfortably<sup>127</sup> in her parents' home, but there are some differences of opinion between her and them. She obtains a steady job and becomes economically independent of her parents. Some friends of hers decide to go and live together in an apartment, in a "modern life style". She thinks this is perfectly normal and wants to go and live with her group of friends, but her parents think this is totally scandalous and tell their daughter that if she leaves, she should not come back.<sup>128</sup> What should she do?

53. A young student without any income of her own becomes pregnant. She has been in love, but she no longer feels any love or fancy for the man in question. She has no job. Her parents say that they will help her if she gets married but not otherwise. What should she do?

54. A woman who has finished her university studies, gets married and has children and never practices her profession. After some ten years the youngest child starts school and she is bored at home. But as she has no experience, she cannot find employment in her profession. Economically, it is not necessary for her to work. What should she do?

55. A woman who has worked as a saleslady in a department store before getting married, but who has then stayed at home to take care of her children, receives an offer of employment from a store in her barrio. The money would be welcome, but the family is not very badly off, they could live on what the husband earns.<sup>129</sup> The children go to school, but they would have to manage on their own for a few hours in the afternoon, between the time school is out and the time she would get back from the store. She feels like getting out of the house, but she is afraid that it will be a heavy load to work full time and have the housework on top of that. Her husband says OK, he won't forbid her to work, but he does not think it a very good idea.<sup>130</sup> What should she do?

56. A woman, married and with children, discovers that her husband is unfaithful to her. He admits it, but he says that he has repented. She feels that she still loves him, although less than before, but she doubts very much that he still loves her, even though he says so. She thinks it would be better for the children to continue the marriage, but she does not feel much like it any longer. What should she do?

57. The same case, a few years later. The marriage has continued, with ups and downs, with new infidelities and new repentments on the part of the husband. The woman is now totally disillusioned, but she continues to fight for the marriage, for the sake of the children, even though these have by now noticed perfectly well that their parents do not get along. Suddenly the woman meets a

man who falls in love with her and she with him. He, too, is married, but he says he wants to get a divorce and get married to her. What should she do?

58. An unmarried woman of some forty years, who has never had a job, because her parents have some money and in their family a woman does not work if it is not necessary, loses her parents and discovers that they had big debts. The inheritance is very small, she will not be able to live on it. She has not studied nor does she have any occupational experience. She is not even used to going out alone for a walk. She does not know what to do. What should she do?

59. A woman, separated since several years back, without children, has worked in many things, in a factory, an office, a bar, etc. But always temporarily, and at the moment she is unemployed and has almost lost hope of finding another job. She lives with her mother, the two of them surviving on the mother's small widow's pension. She is desperate, bored, disillusioned... you can imagine. She has just met a man who has fallen in love with her. She is not in love with him, but she thinks he is a nice person, she enjoys his company. He is married; he says his wife does not understand him but they do not get a separation because of the children. He wants a serious and stable relationship with the separated woman and offers her an apartment and a monthly sum, so that she will not have to work. What should she do?

60. A woman of some fifty years has a daughter who is living with a man without being married to him. She, the mother, understands her daughter, up to a point. These are other times, her daughter is happy in this way, and so on. But she comes from a village where people are very traditional and she knows that people there, for example her own parents, would not understand, so there she has said that her daughter is married. Now the daughter and her companion want to make a visit to the village and they say they have no reason to lie about anything. What should they do, mother and daughter?

61. A woman who has worked before getting married, but who has then spent twenty-five years as a housewife, raising a number of children until they have made themselves independent<sup>131</sup>, now finds that she and her husband are living alone in their home, and she has a strong feeling that her life is now meaningless,



since nobody needs her. She thinks of the possibility of getting a job, but she is afraid of it, after so many years, and her husband does not like the idea. Besides, she would not get a job, what with the crisis and her lack of experience, etc. What should she do?

#### **b. Comments.**

The idea of using a questionnaire was born after one year of fieldwork. By that time I had an idea of what I knew already and what I had to know more about. I knew what issues Benituriens considered important in the context of gender, I wanted to broaden my material on precisely these issues, and I had learnt the Beniturian vocabulary around them. So I elaborated a questionnaire, taking care to stay close to a Beniturian vocabulary.

In the interviews, I always encouraged the interviewees to stray as far from the questions asked as they wanted, and I often steered them towards narrating special events they seemed interested in, so in reality the questionnaire material came to be very similar to the life story material. The difference is that, with the questionnaire, I interviewed several persons I did not know beforehand, and whose answers I could therefore not contextualize to the same extent. This was a drawback, but the advantage was that I could go beyond the categories of people who had tended to become my friends and acquaintances automatically, and the interviewees who knew me little were less influenced by my personal characteristics.

I tried to say as little as possible ahead of time of what the interview would be about. I began with the type of questions I thought the informant would expect from a "social scientist", questions on age, family, background, occupation, etc. This also gave me background information for the interviewees I did not know well. If necessary I adapted the order of questions to the logic of the informant's own tale. But as much as possible I followed the progression of the questionnaire from less to more controversial questions, and I always saved for last a few questions touching the gender system directly.

At the end of the interview I presented my ten "typical cases". Let me expand a little on the hows and whys of this technique.

At this point in the fieldwork process, I knew which decisions were the most controversial ones in the lives of Benituran women. So to obtain focused conversations around these decisions, I designed a set of examples, little anecdotes, telling about women who faced each one of them. This fitted the local style of conversation, where anecdotes are continuously and generously used to shore up arguments. It also alleviated some of the built-in contradiction between the relationship "friendly," which I wanted, and the context of "questions and answers," which easily becomes unfriendly according to Beniturians dispositions. The ten dilemmas chosen were burning ones, and the reactions of informants seemed to confirm that. Almost all the informants found that part of the interview enjoyable.

I tried to phrase the "cases" so that, on the one hand they would sound like the kind of conversational anecdote people were familiar with, for example by including set phrases and cliché comments. On the other hand, I was careful not to introduce details that would start the informant off on a track of idiosyncratic associations - I invented no names for the protagonists, nor did I give any geographic locations, class positions or exact ages. Such specifications were of course sometimes suggested by the informants, but they were then additional information, not a limitation of possible reactions. I ended each case with the question: "What should she do?" As expected, this question was hardly ever answered with just one suggestion. Instead, the informants tried out the pros and cons of several alternatives, so that I learnt which alternatives were seen to exist and what sorts of advantages and disadvantages were perceived around each one.

Although as a whole the exercise worked out as planned, there were a few details that surprised me and gave new information. These details surfaced as criticism or as unanticipated taken-for-granted reactions.

The criticism was directed mainly against case 58, about the forty-year-old spinster who had never had employment. Very many informants said that such women do not exist "any longer". Others said they exist, but only in upper classes, or in isolated villages... never in Benituria. After some fifteen interviews, I began to introduce the case with the words, "Now, the next case is one that a lot of people have told me is not very relevant..." This influenced the informant, to be sure, but it took off the tension that was sometimes present in the first interviews, when the informants were surprised to come across an

atypical case when they had enjoyed precisely the personal relevance of the other cases. After I had begun to make this introduction, the case was better received, and informants made an effort to think of whether there were perhaps not such women, after all, somewhere in their personal experience.

I could hardly confess that I wanted their reactions to a situation I considered on the limits of what the present gender ideology can handle. That kind of woman was a logical result of an earlier combination of factors. Those factors have disappeared fairly recently or are still in the phase of disappearing, so such women must still exist, but they fit so ill with the present situation that not only have they got personal problems, but their very existence is a cultural problem for others. I did not expect, however, that my informants would deny their existence outright. Perhaps my example was ill chosen, perhaps it would have been better to choose something slightly less anomalous.

In case 52 I presented the case of a young woman who wants to leave her parental home to go and live with some "friends". This is a common controversy in Benituria today; I heard many real-life episodes. But I made the mistake of saying she wanted to live with some *amigos* which means friends of either sex. I think I should have said *amigas*, girlfriends. I wanted the informants to debate the autonomy of young individuals versus the old doxa of family living. Most informants did focus on this, too, because it is such a burning issue that they associated to it without noticing the -o-ending of *amigos*. But many informants did notice it and reacted in one of three ways. Most asked me: "Are they male or female friends she wants to live with? Because that makes all the difference in the world!" Others took it for granted that it was a mixed-sex apartment and discussed the pros and cons of that, and usually took the easy way out, suggesting that she should find an all-girls-apartment and see if her parents would not find that more acceptable. The third reaction was less common, but still common enough to be a problem and perhaps a piece of information: some informants thought the girl wanted to move into an apartment where she would be the only girl, and these informants always thought that was something the parents should indeed be suspicious of. I find it interesting that such an eventuality was thought to be a possibility at all - it had not occurred to me when I wrote the case!

In case 53, the dilemma presented was that of a young woman who becomes pregnant without wanting to. I sharpened it saying she had no job, no

money, her boyfriend had left her and she was no longer in love with him anyway, etc. I also added that her parents wanted her to get married and refused to help her otherwise. To me, that was just one more added difficulty. I wanted the informants to discuss abortion, but without suggesting it myself - I wanted to see how many would spontaneously think of that as a possible solution. And sure enough, quite a few did suggest it. But too many of the most progressive ones did not. So after a number of such interviews, I began to bring it up myself, if the informant did not. Usually the reaction from progressive informants was then an embarrassed laughter: "Sure, yes, why sure, that's it! That is what she must do, of course! Why didn't I think of that!" And after a few more interviews I began to understand why so many people who approved of abortion had not thought of it at first: it was because I mentioned the parents' reaction. The informants said: "If you say the parents know that she is pregnant, it is because she has told them. And if she is going to abort, she will not tell them."

With regard to case 61, I wanted discussion around the situation of elderly women when the role assigned to them by the traditional gender system, that of mother above all, no longer takes up much of their time. Some of the most progressive informants understood the case the way I had intended it. They took the opportunity to criticize a society that limits women to one role and despises them once that role is no longer applicable. But there were two cultural mistakes in my presentation. The first one was the tone of existential emptiness. This is not a conscious category for most Benituriens. One can be bored, or feel unfairly treated by other family members, and so on. But one does not feel "useless" if one has little to do. Most informants laughed and gave examples of what old women do to make their free time pleasurable: make pillows and tablecloths for married children, visit the doctor often to gossip with other old women, pester their children and neighbors with too many visits and "attentions"...

But above all, and here is my second mistake, informants thought that the old women would not have all that much free time, because they would be busy taking care of grandchildren whose mothers worked. I had overlooked the fact that in Benituria the role of mother is not over for an old woman until she herself abdicates. She will help her daughters and daughters-in-law to look after her grandchildren, to run errands and do household work, if they work or when they are ill or if they have many children. As a wife, she will keep house for her husband until he dies, unless totally disabled herself. A widow will usually move

in with one of her married children. As I phrased the case, quite a few informants thought it no problem at all but rather a welcome opportunity. "Finally she has time for herself! After all those years of hard work raising children, now she can see her friends more often. And perhaps travel a little bit with her husband. Is he still working? In that case she could find some hobby or something and then when he retires, they could try to enjoy life together. Why should she want to work now, when she has worked all her life and now finally she has a chance to have some fun?"

## NOTES

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> Benituria is a *barrio*. This word is difficult to translate into English. It means a part of a village or a town or a city. It can mean any part, but in big cities it usually refers to peripheral residential areas, i.e. suburbs, but the connotations of the word are different. A *barrio* is usually working class or at least not elegant. A *barrio* usually has some sort of agreed-upon borders. The word also has connotations of home, a place where one is known, where one belongs. In this sense, the concept *barrio* is similar to the concept *pueblo*, village.

<sup>2</sup> Some women anthropologists report that they have better access to all contexts in sex-segregated societies than men, because they are defined as some sort of third sex. That was not my case. Perhaps I was not foreign enough, perhaps Benituria was not segregated enough. I could have gone into all-male bars and work-places, but my presence would have changed the situations out of recognition, and after that I would have been a suspicious figure in the eyes of the women. I had to choose.

<sup>3</sup> Bilbao, for example, has Basque nationalism and its violence; Sevilla has Andalusian poverty and Andalusian upper class refinement; Murcia has such a long history of emigration that its present wave of immigrants consists mostly of returning Murcians; Tarragona has grown explosively but almost wholly due to its petrochemical industry; Zaragoza has also become a big city in a short time but it has happened very recently so its immigrants have different reasons and experiences. I believe the gender system in each of these places - all of which I contemplated as possible places for fieldwork - is rather similar to the one in Valencia, in its general tendencies, which were what interested me. But if I had described it the way I describe the Valencian one, the results could have been shrugged off as special cases, not valid anywhere else in Spain.

One sign that what I found in Benituria has a wider application is a study on Basque women by Teresa del Valle and others (del Valle 1985). In spite of rather different methods and in spite of the very different regional circumstances, the findings of del Valle are similar to mine, especially as concerns change and its interpretation.

<sup>4</sup> Following anthropological tradition, I have invented a pseudonym for my field. I do not really think this book contains anything that could hurt anyone. But to call it by a pseudonym reinforces its generality. So I have made it up to sound vaguely Valencian. Beni is an Arab prefix, meaning family or village, and no less than one tenth of all villages, *barrios* and towns in the Community of Valencia begin their names with Ben- or Beni-. Turia is the name of the river that flows through Valencia as well as of its most famous beer and of a weekly progressive magazine. In other words, the name Benituria stands for "a piece of Valencia, almost anywhere in Valencia."

## Chapter 2

<sup>5</sup> My statements on Spanish history here are so abbreviated as to be uncontroversial. But the sources I have consulted are especially Fusi et.al. 1983, Graham 1984, Payne 1985, Pérez Díaz 1974, Tamames 1980a and b, Tuñón de Lara and Viñas 1982 and Vilar 1979.

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent analysis of the Sección Femenina, see Gallego Méndez 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Most of the figures on the changing Spanish economy come from de Miguel 1974 and Tamames 1980b. Some are from Anuario Estadístico de España 1980, Anuario El País 1983 and FOESSA 1975.

<sup>8</sup> Descriptions of the "transition" are found in Gilmour, 1985, and Graham, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Cf article by Espina, in Conde 1982, and *Mujeres ante la contratación y...* 1981, Pérez- Fuentes 1984 and CCOO. 1980.

<sup>10</sup> After the fiercely centralist policies of the Franco regime, the Spanish state is now made up of 17 autonomous entities. Central government is too strong to call it a federation but there are varying degrees of local self-government. The process has been slow and painful. The Community of Valencia got its statutes in 1982. In everyday talk, the 17 entities/communities/countries etc. are called "autonomías" (autonomías).

<sup>11</sup> 3.000 according to one participating group. Cf Borreguero et.al. 1986. Other sources for the history of Spanish feminism are Aubet 1981, Capmany 1971, di Febo 1979, González 1979, González et.al. 1980, Rague-Arias 1982, Scanlon 1976, Uria et.al. 1985.

<sup>12</sup> The present legislation pertaining to women is presented in popular form in Pérez and Trallero (1983) and Ruano Rodríguez (1984). It is a significant sign of the depths of resistance to these reforms that there were outbreaks of violence when the latter was published. Some people did not think that such information as what to do in case of rape should be available to the public.

<sup>13</sup> 96% (or more) are due to the fourth important indication, not contemplated in the proposal, namely the so-called social one: poverty, many previous children, incest, broken relationships. Besides, the three indications contemplated were incomplete as they stood. All of them included complicated bureaucratic controls and unrealistic requirements. For example, it is well-known that Spanish women seldom denounce rape to the police, since this brings on even more humiliation and suffering.

<sup>14</sup> The figure 300.000 has been mentioned over and over again in the debate but it is now becoming a new consensus that it was exaggerated. Perhaps the real number is somewhere around 100.000.

<sup>15</sup> My information on Valencian history and economy comes mostly from Ferrer Ripollés and Zaragoza Rovira 1980, Fuster 1976, Jiménez et.al. 1978, Mira 1980, Mollà 1979a and b, Ninyoles 1982, PREVASA 1982, Sorribes 1978, Teixidor 1982.

<sup>16</sup> There is no good translation into English of the word *portería*. Perhaps *conciergerie*. *Portera* would then be *conciierge*. *Portería* is both a space and a position. It is the small apartment which one obtains as a fringe benefit if one works as *portero* or *portera*, which means *doorkeeper/janitor/general custodian*. Usually the whole family shares the duties of the position. In a sense the whole family is at the disposition of all the inhabitants of the building at all times, it is an ideal-typical servant position. It used to be that almost all apartment buildings had a *portería*; now only elegant buildings do.

<sup>17</sup> The Family Book is the official record of a family. When one gets married, has children or dies, it is reported to a registrar's office and also written into the Family Book, which the family keeps. It is the document one has to show to prove one's civil situation. This is still so, but its uses are more flexible than during the Franco regime. Then, only families that conformed to the regime's definition of a regular family could have the book.

### Chapter 3

<sup>18</sup> Political change was also important, of course, but men talked more of that than women. And for most Benitrians, the political changes were much more abstract. One could have opinions but one could not anchor them in personal experience, usually. There are few qualitative studies on the changes in political views, many quantitative ones, see e.g. López Pintor 1982. One interesting attempt to catch the political mood through a semiological study of political symbols during the election campaign 1977 is Martí and Martí, 1978.

<sup>19</sup> In English *role* can also mean a part in a stage play or a function of something in a context, but these two concepts are expressed with different words in Spanish.

<sup>20</sup> A small but interesting survey was carried out in 1982 by the women's group *Feminario* in Alicante (which is a smaller city than Valencia but in the same region and also industrial; for the purposes here it is comparable to Valencia). They asked 332 teen-agers from the high schools of the city a number of questions about who did what tasks in their homes and who they thought ought to do them now and who they thought ought to do these tasks in their own

homes when they got married. They found large discrepancies in both actual tasks and ideas of future division of work. For example, 59% of the girls but only 43% of the boys thought that all household tasks should be shared by everyone in the family or by the couple; 12% of the girls but 20% of the boys thought that household tasks were the duty of women only. The Feminario women thought that this was proof of continued differential habit formation between boys and girls and in jest told them, at an evaluation meeting: "Fine, you can get all get married - but not to each other please!" (Comment by Nieves Simón, personal communication. The study is a mimeograph, Simón 1983.) Personally I am surprised that the discrepancies were not even larger. They are probably larger in the ages between 30 and 50 (in 1982-83) and again smaller among older people, but then in the direction of an older kind of consensus, that of complementary sexual division of labor.

## Chapter 4

<sup>21</sup> Cf also the discussion in Kulick 1987, a book written to introduce the concept of gender into Swedish social anthropology.

<sup>22</sup> But it does not include the biological fact itself, so discussions of gender are not examples of biological reductionism. There can of course be a debate on whether a given empirical fact belongs to biological sex or to a gender system, i.e. whether it is inevitable or open to variation, - and this is why the word "objectively" has been put in quotation marks above - but the concept of gender does not preclude such discussions; on the contrary, it will make them less prone to illogical switches between levels.

<sup>23</sup> This is something Marxism has seldom been able to analyze or interested in analyzing, but a focus on gender systems is not in itself contradictory to Marxist analysis. My standpoint here is that of socialist feminism as formulated e.g. by Eisenstein 1979 or Jaggar 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Jaggar 1983:142. Jaggar herself does not use the term gender system, but the quote is not inappropriate in that she speaks of what "much feminist theory" is about, and she too compares this study object as a whole with the marxist concept of mode of production.

<sup>25</sup> This statement is not uncontroversial. Some students of the matter contend that all gender systems are hierarchical, placing men higher than women. Gender system and patriarchy would then be equivalent terms. The Swedish historian Hirdman (1988) has made a strong case for the position. Ortner and Whitehead (1981) are unclear on this point. In collaboration with a few colleagues from my department, I have argued the importance of separating the levels. See Gemzöe et.al. forthcoming.

<sup>26</sup> The most important sources for my ideas on women's studies are Amorós 1985, Aniansson et.al. 1983, Chodorow 1978, Delphy 1985, Dinnerstein 1976, Ganetz et.al. 1986, Holter 1973, Izquierdo 1985, Ortner and Whitehead 1981, Reiter 1975, Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974, Sayers 1986.

<sup>27</sup> It is reassuring to find very similar thoughts in very different academic traditions. On the other side of the Channel, Giddens (1979) accomplishes the same thing as Bourdieu going about it in a very different way. And if we jump the Atlantic, Bateson (1978) similarly and differently criticizes sterile barriers to thinking in Western dualism and finds one of his solutions in the concepts of Learning I, II and III; and as far as I can see, Learning II is almost identical to habitus.

<sup>28</sup> Cf Bateson (1978) on levels of conscience and also the short story by Borges (1972) on the tragedy of a perfect memory, "Funes el memorioso."

<sup>29</sup> This term comes from Imbert and through him from Barthes. Imbert (1982) speaks of floating ideologies and says that he means approximately the same thing as Barthes' vague doxa.

<sup>30</sup> I used life story material mostly in the same way as I used material from other interviews. But I also used ideas on the analysis of life stories from Agar 1980, Bertaux 1981, Erikson 1979 and Mandelbaum 1973.



<sup>31</sup> Accidents, defeasability, biological drives, scape-goating, are the suggestions of Scott and Lyman (1968) from whom I got the idea of this particular window. The rest are of my own invention.

<sup>32</sup> Cf Mills 1940. "The differing reasons men give for their actions are not themselves without reasons." (1940:904)

<sup>33</sup> Cf Zijderveld (1968) on jokes. The literature on metaphor is extensive. My principal sources of inspiration have been Basso 1976, Fernandez 1974, Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Ricoeur 1980, Rosaldo and Atkinson 1975, Sacks 1980, Sapir and Crocker 1977. See also Thurén 1981.

<sup>34</sup> Basil Bernstein's concepts of elaborated and restricted codes are related to this. One could say that a restricted code is one which makes many references to structuring structures, has many holes, whereas the purpose of an elaborated code is to eliminate the need for them. If we take it that no human being can live without a culture, and that culture cannot be wholly conscious, we can see why a totally elaborated code is an impossibility but also why a high degree of it can be very illuminating sometimes.

<sup>35</sup> One empirical study along similar lines is Gilligan 1982. Otherwise I have not found many. This is surprising in view of the interest shown in women's studies for the subtle ways language and gender ideas interact. See e.g. Lakoff 1978. In Spain, García Meseguer (1977) is much quoted. Buxó Rey (1978) attempts to ground an anthropology of women in the study of language.

<sup>36</sup> One thorough theoretical inquiry into the possibilities of making the sort of analysis I propose here is Ibáñez 1979. It is mostly philosophical, however, and to the extent it is intended for practical use, it concerns discussion groups.

## Chapter 5

<sup>37</sup> All statistics in this chapter are taken from García-Lliverós 1981 unless otherwise stated.

<sup>38</sup> The major trade unions calculated that in all of Spain only about one third of the unemployed had unemployment benefits in 1983. That proportion has since diminished even further, as the economic problems of the country continue and more and more people have been unemployed for longer than the 18 (or 24 in some cases) months that the benefits last.

<sup>39</sup> In 1983, 21% of the economically active women were unemployed, compared to 16% of the men. The effect is even more serious than it looks, since the highest percentages of female unemployment coincides with the categories of women with the highest participation in the labor market: young women and women with higher education, i.e. the ones who would have the most stable incorporation if it were not for the unemployment, the ones who do not work only when they are forced to by special circumstances. (Sallé and Casas, 1987)

<sup>40</sup> E.g. del Campo and Navarro (1985). According to statistics by Sallé and Casas (1987), it is not visible at all among women in general, but among married women it is there, although only as one percentage point and only for women between forty and forty-four. This is small but may be significant, because this is the age when men and unmarried women begin to lower their rates of activity. According to Espina (in Conde, 1982), who worked with figures from 1977 and 1979, the hump was more visible for women with three or more children (presumably with greater economic needs) and clearly visible for women with higher education. Del Campo and Navarro have made a curve according to time before and after marriage (1985:176) which shows the sharpest drop in activity for women - from over 70% to under 50% - setting in during the year marriage. This could be due to the traditional occupation of a woman just before marriage, to prepare the *ajuar*, but in Benituria at least this was considered totally old-fashioned. Be that as it may, the curve continues dropping almost as sharply during the first six years of marriage, then the slope becomes less abrupt but continues downward without any hump.

<sup>41</sup> There is also an unknown number working clandestinely for a factory but in their homes. This is more common - very common - in villages, but there were many in Benituria, too. Cf Sanchis, 1984.

42 The English word homemaker would have the right denotation but the wrong connotations as a translation for *ama de casa*., I believe. Since housewife contains the morpheme "wife" it sounds strange to use it about an unmarried person. But it is the usual everyday word, as is *ama de casa* for Beniturers

43 Companies with declared (=not dismissable) employees usually offer women a *dote*, a bridal gift, if they quit when they get married. It is very tempting, because it is substantial if the woman has been employed for a few years. It can be the only chance the couple has to pay the down payment on an apartment or to take the classic honeymoon trip to Mallorca. And they will figure that if she does not accept, in a year or two she is going to have to quit anyway, when the children come, so better do it now and get the money. This bridal gift is now outlawed, but it is still legal in those cases where it has been negotiated and written into collective trade agreements. And it can never be effectively outlawed since private agreements can always be made.

44 To be a housewife is officially considered part of a woman's gender role, not a job. This can be seen, among other things, in the bureaucratic designation, which is "*sus labores*", literally "her chores". This is still what is entered in the slot for "profession" on official documents, to the chagrin of feminists and other progressives.

45 Only women can be housewives. There is some talk of *amos de casa*, housemen. And some legislation has been recently changed to make them possible. For example, a working woman will now give her widower a right to a pension when she dies, which was not possible before 1983. But most of the talk is humorous. I did not personally meet any houseman and I am sure a man who tried would have a very hard time. He would be scorned by other men. He might be excluded from important social circles, although in radical circles there might be compensation in the special prestige gained, and he would probably belong to such radical circles to start with. However, he would have practical difficulties, too. The everyday life of a housewife has a number of hurdles that women help each other with. I doubt if a man would establish such mutual help relationships with his neighbor housewives or with his female relatives.

46 Another way of looking at this is to look at the proportion of married, unmarried, separated and widowed persons in the population as a whole. In 1980 (del Campo and Navarro 1985) this was: 66% were married, 0,85% were separated, 9,6% were widowed and 23% unmarried. The latter are of course mostly the young ones. 0,28% of the unmarried ones cohabited with a person of the opposite sex. As a whole the Spanish population lived in a family (as parents or as children) in 92,6% of the cases, while only 5,33% lived alone and the rest were small categories of "mixed groups", "cohabitation" and "other" which would include groups of friends, temporary arrangements, homosexual arrangements, etc. Convents, military quarters and other collective residences were excluded from the survey on which these figures are based.

47 Most abortions are still illegal and all were illegal when I was in the field. Contraceptives are hard to come by. Information and debate about these things are everywhere, however. Among the women I could talk to about such things, most said they had heard of methods but confessed their fear and ignorance. The most common one actually used was by far *coitus interruptus*, usually called "reverse gear" (*marcha atrás*). According to a nationwide survey in 1977 (Encuesta Nacional de la Fecundidad), 40% of all Spanish women said they had never used any contraceptive method. (In the province of Valencia the percentage was 45%, but I am sure it would be lower, and very close to the national average, in the city.) About 10% said they did not even know of any method. But 98% of the young women (aged 15-24) did know of at least one method (including however *coitus interruptus*, and as the most popular one), which means that knowledge was on the increase (del Campo and Navarro 1985:121-127). In a repeat survey in 1985, the percentage of women not using any contraceptive method at all, not even *coitus interruptus*, was over 50%. Among methods used, however, *coitus interruptus* had ceded its first place to the Pill, used by 14% of the surveyed women. (Méndez 1985, Encuesta Nacional de Fecundidad 1985, Avance de Resultados).

<sup>48</sup> "Between 1900 and 1975, the average number of children in the Spanish families has diminished from 4,71 to 2,50, even though the total number of family members has remained substantially the same: 3,87 in 1900 and 3,84 in 1970. The most significant fact, therefore, of our family life in the 20th century is the decrease of nativity, which in 1975 reached a historical minimum and in later years accelerated its rate of fall." (del Campo and Navarro 1985:110) One must add that a most significant fact is that the children who are born seem to survive. The infant mortality during the first year of life was still around 10% in 1945. In 1980 it was below 1%. (del Campo and Navarro 1985:234-235)

<sup>49</sup> I have no figures for Benituria itself, except that 32% of the population there had been born outside the region of Valencia (Junta Municipal dels Trànsits 1985). But some figures for the whole city are illustrative, even though they are from 1975 and a lot of immigrants have arrived since then. According to this study (Cano García 1978), there were three main sending regions, each responsible for between one fourth and one third of the total. They were New Castile (La Mancha), the Valencian region outside the city, and Andalusia. From the rest of Spain came small contingents, but those sending more than 2% of the total were Aragón, Extremadura, Old Castile with León, Murcia, Madrid and Catalonia. See also Teixidor 1974. I think I am justified in saying that Valencians today come from all over Spain.

<sup>50</sup> Cf e.g. Schwartz 1975. See also the references to life story studies - which usually emphasize this point - in note 30 in chapter 4.

## Chapter 6

<sup>51</sup> A simplified version of this typology, described through four women's lives, is found in Thurén 1987.

<sup>52</sup> One of the most telling descriptions of the "traditional mentality" in its Franco era version is Gérard Imbert's (1982) analysis of this radio program.

<sup>53</sup> Cf de Miguel 1979. And Pemán (1957) is a good example of a man's view of women from this ideological point of view. Ramírez (1975) shows how the ideology was expressed in literature for young girls.

<sup>54</sup> It is of course impossible to generalize about villages all over Spain, all those different kinds of villages Benituriens come from. But on this crucial point the variations are in the details, not in the basic principles of social organization. There has been much debate about possible matriarchies in Galicia and Euskadi, but recent studies reject the idea. See e.g. Méndez 1988 and del Valle 1985. The gender system of the kind the Beniturian women of today call "before" or "traditional" can be seen to be similar in monographs from different parts of Spain, e.g. Luque Baena 1974, Pérez Díaz 1972, Campo Alange 1983, Freeman 1970, Harding 1975, Brandes 1980 and 1981. The details vary, but there is ideological stress on sexual complementarity and male precedence and approximately the same symbols and social areas are crucial, especially female "purity" and the nuclear family.

<sup>55</sup> A good example is her attitude to abortion. If asked as a matter of principle, she will say that it is a crime and should never be allowed. But if asked what she would do if she herself or her sister/friend/daughter was in need of an abortion, she would say that one has to take circumstances into account and be realistic and perhaps an abortion would be a good solution. This was my observation, and also one of the findings of a sociological study of attitudes around abortion all over Spain in the early 1980's. (Angel de Lucas, personal communication.) This can be called a cultural preference for particularistic rather than universalistic reasoning. That is correct in so far as it applies to the men, too, but in so far as the women are more given to it - and I think that is the case - it must have to do with their greater disaffection for established norms. As women, they have been defined as of the private, of the particular, of the irregular, rather than of society. Male workers of course have the same disaffection for those norms and values that fit and uphold a society that excludes and/or oppresses them.

<sup>56</sup> Cf chapter 18. Self-affirmation is my term for a disposition related to the Mediterranean honor syndrome. In Benituria, it expresses itself in a psychological emphasis on self and personal strength.

<sup>57</sup> The contradiction between the dispositions for submissiveness and self-affirmation may have something to do with this. Since most women have some difficulty handling it, it is easy for them to imagine that a woman without a man is a woman who has not managed to handle it.

<sup>58</sup> In part D these ideas will be placed in an ideological and historical context.

<sup>59</sup> When I was in the field, "Europe" was still a rather mythical continent, although I met a few women who had traveled abroad and reported with surprised disgust that they had seen many signs of foreign women being just as or even more "ignorant", "irrational" and "unfairly treated" than themselves. As I write this, Spain has been a member of the European Common Market - in Spain almost always referred to only as Europe - for a couple of years, and the euphoria of being accepted into that distinguished club of nations is changing to disappointment and "realism". The vocabulary is changing. But I continue to call this woman European, because she is European in a deep sense: her vocabulary is the vocabulary of the European Enlightenment. It is the vocabulary of the bourgeois revolution (even when pronounced by socialists), a revolution some historians say Spain never had. Perhaps it is happening now.

## Chapter 7

<sup>60</sup> As I wrote this, I could not help wondering if Asun still believed this, or if she, like most people, had been hit by bitter disappointment after four years of increasing unemployment and little visible improvement in other issues. So when I revisited the field in 1986 I asked her. The literal quote out of my notes shocked her. "Did I say that? Are you sure? Felipe, one of us! Why, he is not just one more powerhungry politician, he is one of the worst!" But she still voted for PSOE. Antonio abstained in 1986, out of sheer disgust, and was thinking of voting communist the next time.

<sup>61</sup> One reason to choose MaryMar also has to do with anthropological ethics. She has given me permission to use her story. So have Asun and Vicenta and the others, but in their case it was not so necessary, they are not recognizable because there are many like them. Many women are forced to experiment, too, like MaryMar, but hardly two of them hit on the same combination of bricolage pieces, so even if I change a few unimportant details, their stories might be recognizable. And since they break many norms - even though norms without consensus - this might be uncomfortable. MaryMar, however, feels that her life is interesting and illustrative and has me to tell about her. And I think she knew what she was doing when she asked me, so I am happy to comply.

## Chapter 8

<sup>62</sup> The fruitfulness of the study of space for understanding a gender system has been suggested by Ardener (1981). A similar volume but with Spanish material is García Ballesteros 1986.

<sup>63</sup> Paseo means literally walk, promenade. It is a central institution in most parts of Spain. It is the daily occasion to meet friends and neighbors, show off children, greet everyone. The place and time vary, but in each location they are well specified. The time is usually early evening, before dinner but after the end of the workday. In big cities it is not possible to have one area for everybody. In Valencia, Sunday mornings were popular for families; they usually walked around a downtown square or in the big park Viveros. In both places there were street entertainment, street vendors, etc. at paseo time. On weekday afternoons, different categories of Valencians have different types of bars and cafés where they gather.

<sup>64</sup> In 1986 I was told of a new development. Some of the old abandoned and almost ruinous village houses were being bought by people "with a lot of money" and repaired and luxuriously outfitted. The most elegant kind of dwelling for city people was no longer the downtown apartment or the villa outside the city but a village house, modern on the inside and traditional on the outside. The pattern is recognizable from other European countries, and once again the Spanish pattern is original mostly in its concentration in time. It is hard to predict what it will mean for Benituria as a barrio. There are many repairable old houses, but the barrio is neither picturesque enough nor comfortable enough to be really attractive for people who can afford the expense.

## Chapter 9

<sup>65</sup> In spite of its many local variations and some debate about its historical origins, this dichotomy is so much taken for granted by Westerners that it has been taken by many feminists to be universal and related to the origins of male dominance. Even an anthropologist has suggested it as a central theme to study. (Rosaldo, in Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974) For a criticism of the application of the idea of privacy to Mediterranean societies, see Sciami 1981.

<sup>66</sup> This idea is widespread in the Spanish-speaking world. Bohman (1984:39) says that women in Medellín, Colombia, are defined as "of the house" and men as "of the street." Benituriens use the very same phrases.

<sup>67</sup> And this might make the men increase their efforts to control the women. Cf Press 1975.

<sup>68</sup> To pretend to be in a hurry has another cause, which has been described for Northern Europe and which applies to Benituria as well. Oakley (1977), Melhuus and Borchgrevink (in Rudie 1984) and others have shown that it is in the nature of housework to fill all the time available, and it is in the nature of the status and structural position of a housewife that she must present herself as always busy.

<sup>69</sup> A bodega is a store for alcoholic beverages and related wares, such as vinegar or potato chips. It is an intermediate between grocery store and bar and can be found on any point on a continuum between the two.

<sup>70</sup> From 1985 this pattern has changed in one important way. There is now a morning TV program and the food stores are almost empty until just after 12:30, when the program ends. Even more than before, though, the women can count on meeting their friends in the stores and "having to" stand in line for a while. And now there is also a given topic: the program just watched.

<sup>71</sup> The comment quoted could also be interpreted as a way of dressing up a slightly shameful fact: having to do a job without prestige. Note the phrase, "actually we don't need the money nowadays..." But the fact that this dressing up is possible shows that the idea is culturally possible.

## Chapter 10

<sup>72</sup> In 1986 I was told that the new president was actually a member of the socialist party. My informant laughed derisively, "But I wonder if most of the members know it!" The implication was that they would not be happy if they knew.

<sup>73</sup> Astelarra (1986) gives disheartening figures on the low participation of women in Spanish politics at all levels. De Esteban and López Guerra (1982) mention the problem all political parties have of low membership.

<sup>74</sup> The movement has produced continuous analytical and historical writing on itself. See e.g. CIDUR 1976 and 1977, Martín Palacín 1978, Tamarit and Villasante 1982, Tarragó 1976, Villasante 1976. Studies of the movement from the outside have also been made, e.g. Bier 1979, Borja 1977, Castells 1974 and 1977.

## Chapter 11

<sup>75</sup> The cafeteria of the department store El Corte Inglés was the most acceptable place for women in Valencia, unless one could afford to go to the select upper-class cafés.

<sup>76</sup> The intention here is not to draw a map of who thinks what in Benituria. But perhaps there is a certain interest to describe the members of the women's group. They were all between 28 and 45, most of them just over 30 years old. All had at least one child and most were married. They had at least finished primary education and most had secondary education or some occupational training. But the differences were probably more important than the similarities. I would like to suggest that they represented all major socioeconomic categories in Benituria although not in representative proportions. As an illustration, let me give a short presentation of each of the women present at this meeting. Concha: Leftist, party activist, politically

schooling. Born in the city. Married, one child. Unemployed biologist like her husband. Tina: "Sympathizer" of Concha's party but not a member. Well off parents whose fortune in land had now been lost. Interrupted university education to get married. Housewife, two children, planning to finish her studies and become a teacher "some time". MaryAngeles: Working class parents of religious and conservative convictions. Some training as a draughtsman. Husband sells electric appliances in Valencia. Housewife, three children. Sonia: Unmarried but has been living with the father of her child for five or six years. Castilian. Village parents with medium economic resources managed to give all eight children a university education. Active in the communist underground movement in Franco times. Now working for a municipal daycare center on a black market contract. Pepita: Housewife, three children, planned to go back to nursing as soon as all the children were in school. Father was a rural laborer, family lived in Germany for many years. Her husband was an economist and his father an artisan. Ana: Valencian rural background. Anarchist family traditions. Husband from a Benituran "village" family. Many years in France for both political and economic reasons. Unemployed secretary, husband unemployed teacher. Two children.

<sup>77</sup> So it says in my notes from the meeting, but unfortunately I did not make a note of what poem it was that I read. In any case, it was of a representative kind out of Swedish feminist press, about housewife drudgery, economic injustices, etc.

## Chapter 12

<sup>78</sup> There is a different and positive view of collective solidary arrangements among leftists, of course. But in contrast to the traditional collective ascribed obligations, the ones envisioned by different types of "alternative" ideologies have not so far been very successful in creating functioning practice. And I find this understandable in a situation of opposition to a traditional idea of solidarity and discipline, which requires suspension of criticism, whereas one now feels a strong need of sharpening it.

<sup>79</sup> Cf e.g. Hobsbawm 1974, Brenan 1976, Vilar 1979, Tamames 1980a, Martínez Cuadrado 1980.

<sup>80</sup> Some historians have traced this idea back to Medieval times, which may be doubtful. The idea of "black Spain", however, can be traced back to the days of the counterreformation and has always been used to refer to the military and religious establishment by the social forces that opposed it. Even a Marxist historian like Pierre Vilar sums up the War of Independence in terms of an "instinct of resistance" versus a "will for renewal" and saying that, at that moment, the medieval but popular Spain fought the intellectual progressive Spain. (Vilar 1980:79, 80-84) The most famous expression of the idea is a poem by Antonio Machado from 1912 which warns a newborn Spaniard that one of the two Spains will always freeze his heart.

## Chapter 14

<sup>81</sup> I observed this constantly in associations, where it made for acrimonious debates and sometimes paralysis of action. However, nationwide surveys do find certain constant relationships between opinions and common sociological variables. The variable class is often ambiguous -perhaps because it is ambiguously defined by the researchers themselves - but almost always residents of cities are found to be more progressive than villagers, younger than older, non-practicing Catholics and non-believers than practicing Catholics, persons with more schooling than those with less, etc. See e.g. Jiménez Blanco et al 1977, FOESSA 1975, López Pintor 1982. Whether or not the term "progressivity" is used, the dividing lines on the issues are the same as the ones found in Benituria.

## Chapter 15

<sup>82</sup> And it can be read as a further example of creation of new female contexts, even though it was a citywide, not Benituria, association. Cf part C: Places.

## Chapter 16

<sup>83</sup> Excepting local specialties, obviously. For example, in Valencia there exists a possibility, for all, of throwing in a few words in the Valencian language for special effects in conversations in Castilian. Valencian-speakers do it in both directions and often. Castilian-speakers quickly learn a few common Valencian words and use them for special effects even if they speak no Valencian otherwise. Valencia has diglossia. Not all Spanish cities do and even those that do probably give different meanings to it.

<sup>84</sup> Such themes become well-known and ordered in relationship to each other both through face-to-face interaction and through mass media. Cf Hannerz 1982. My purpose here is not to analyze the communicative channels of equalizing messages nor is it to discuss the processes of hegemony and resistance against hegemony. These are certainly important issues, but this book concentrates on the result of such processes.

<sup>85</sup> The expression is from Hannerz 1983.

<sup>86</sup> Cf for example chapter 11, section a, when MaríaJosé did not know whether or not to smoke, and section b, when MaryAngeles talked of contraceptives in a way that would have been appropriate in a more conservative context but not in the women's group.

## Chapter 17

<sup>87</sup> Gullestad (1984) says that this shifting connotation of the concept of equality is a Scandinavian trait with its roots in the conceptualisation of justice as similarity. The disposition for self-affirmation makes similarity seem undesirable to Benituriens, but the conceptual slippage is nevertheless present in their thinking, too.

<sup>88</sup> To refuse to go out with a novia who dressed in a color the novio did not like; to telephone at irregular hours to check if the novia or wife stayed at home; to refuse the novia the right to dance, even with her novio, so that she would not be seen (while he danced with anyone he felt like -cf below on the concept of being seen);etc. The sanction of the novio was always to break the relationship, which was severe, because it usually meant to condemn the novia to celibacy=no motherhood. The husband had economic sanctions and the threat of infidelity.

<sup>89</sup> For good descriptions of traditional noviazgo, see Ferrándiz and Verdú (1975) and Martín Gaité 1987.

<sup>90</sup> Novia is the female partner in the relationship, novio the male. They are thus called from an indeterminate moment, when their relationship is somehow recognized by someone (even if not their parents), up to and including the wedding day. The words thus also mean bride and groom.

<sup>91</sup> Both the age and the difference of age between the man and the woman have constantly decreased since 1940. In 1979, Spanish men got married at the average age of 25.9 and women at that of 23.3. (Del Campo and Navarro, 1985:69, 86.)

<sup>92</sup> Some of these contradictions have been visible for a long time in Mediterranean family studies. Cf for example Gilmore (1982) for an overview and bibliography. I am thinking of such contradictions as the one between family of origin and family of orientation and the tensions around the borders of nuclear families, expressed around marriages and inheritance, conflictive occasions in most Mediterranean societies.

<sup>93</sup> It also fits well with Mediterranean construction of kinship in general. It has been pointed out that there is almost always a strong element of choice and achievement even in the ascribed roles of kinship in Mediterranean societies. Cf also chapter 18 here on *philia* as a general cultural principle, especially note 104. The references in note 102 are valid for this point, too.

<sup>94</sup> Cf Marqués 1981. For earlier views on sexuality, see Serrano Vicens 1975.

<sup>95</sup> But this may be more due to shame than actual practice. Learning through books may seem like an admission of social defeat. The truth is that bookstores have sold sexual education books ever since the middle 1970's.

<sup>96</sup> Evidently he could not have married her unless she was divorced, not just separated. But the quote is literal, and the mistake is significant - divorce was impossible for over forty years, and towards the end of that period separations had become common, so the word "separation" is the everyday one.

<sup>97</sup> There is an obvious contradiction for men here, produced in the interaction between progressivity and this male outlook on sex. A "real" man should want sex always and go hunting for it. But a progressive man should not look at women as mere game. On the other hand, a progressive man should be against repression of sex. Unfortunately I have no material on how progressive men handle this contradiction nor on how it looks from a less progressive angle.

<sup>98</sup> This particular interview ended with the informant in tears. The contradictions of her situation overwhelmed her; yet she tried valiantly to make me believe she was in charge of it. "In spite of all of this, we get along pretty well. And I am teaching him, trying to put him on the road, in the hope that everything will get better." Many informants discovered more inconsistency in their lives than they had suspected, but most of them said - perhaps bravely - that the interview had been a positive experience, an opportunity to "sort out my ideas."

<sup>99</sup> A bocadillo is a kind of big sandwich.

## Chapter 18

<sup>100</sup> The concept they think of is the one that has caught the attention of practically all students of the Mediterranean area. Cf. Peristiany 1968, Schneider 1971 or Schneider and Schneider 1976. Gilmore 1982 has useful bibliography. For discussion of honor in Spain see Caro Baroja 1968 and Lisón Tolosana 1976a and 1976b.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Aristoteles. My source is Schwimmer, in Leyton 1974.

<sup>102</sup> And there are indications of it in the literature, even though no name has been given as yet to the phenomenon. Cf. e.g. Campbell 1964, DuBoulay 1974, Hildred Geertz in Geertz, Geertz and Rosen, 1979, Schneider and Schneider 1976, some of the articles in Pitt-Rivers 1977, Peristiany 1968 and 1976 and other classical works of Mediterranean anthropology. Let me cite just one example, Schweizer 1988. One might think that a small mountain village, the tenth of the size of Beniturgia, in Sardinia, where shepherd economy and culture are still important, would not have much in common with Beniturgia. If anything it might be expected to be similar to the villages so many Beniturgians come from and contrast their present circumstances with. But much of what Schweizer tells of Basilada could be transferred to Beniturgia with little modification. This goes especially for the importance of politics and the polarization of opinion, for the male bar life and its rituals of reciprocity and friendship circles, for the use young women make of associations to compensate for the fact that they have nothing exactly equivalent to the male forum of bar life, the dressing up of social and economic differences in a vocabulary of "culture", and so on. Most especially it goes for the ideological stress on friendship and for the centrality in everyday life of group conversation.

<sup>103</sup> Again the bibliographical list could be made very long. See for example Brandes 1975 and 1980, Corbin and Corbin 1984, Freeman 1970, Gilmore 1976, 1978, 1980 and especially 1975, Hansen 1977 and the classical if somewhat muddled account of Pitt Rivers 1972. Spanish social scientists take its existence for granted but sometimes investigate various aspects of it, e.g. Emopública 1979.

<sup>104</sup> This is so even for most kinship ties beyond the nuclear family around the Mediterranean, since kinship ties have to be maintained in a friendship-like idiom to be considered active, or "really existing" as more than one of my informants said and as has also been reported in most anthropological monographs from the circum-mediterranean area.

<sup>105</sup> Brandes (1975) arrived at the conclusion that the people of the village where he worked thought it had more ambiente than neighboring villages because it was bigger and had more stores. The concept definitely includes a minimum amount of people and movement and noise. But it also has to refer to friendliness, positive human contacts, or it becomes negative.



## Chapter 20

<sup>106</sup> In case of a separation, both parties will have a difficult time. The man's salary is seldom enough for two homes. According to the new legislation, furthermore, all children have equal rights. This means that illegitimate children or children of later marriages will compete with those of a first marriage. The first wife feels this to be a great injustice. And when a man dies, if he has a right to a pension, it will be divided up among his widows, if there are more than one, in proportion to the years of marriage. In other words, the resources are small and no woman wants to share them. One should also note that housewives have no old age pension of their own.

<sup>107</sup> This is a common phrase and usually refers to finding a new couple relationship after separation.

<sup>108</sup> The tie between mothers and daughters is even stronger, but a man is not placed in the same kind of intimate contact with his mother-in-law, and being a man he can defend himself much better than a woman can against a woman.

## Chapter 21

<sup>109</sup> The application of the notion of system contradiction to gender systems has been tried by Chodorow, 1978. Like this study, hers is a search for a way to describe the strains produced in the gender system by the very same factors that reproduce it. But it refers mostly to contemporary middle class USA, and it is based on psychoanalytical theory as much as on feminist anthropology. It is interesting, nevertheless, to note the commonalities in empirical detail: that women think love is a supreme value, yet are not satisfied by what men can offer; that the relationship mother-daughter is the familial relation most fraught with conflict at the same time as it gives women their emotional complexity and relational capacities; that women need children more than they need husbands, yet depend on husbands; etc. Chodorow sums it up: "In specific historic periods, such as the present, contradictions within the sex-gender system fuse with forces outside it, and lead to a situation in which resistance is widespread and often explicitly political." (1978:211) What is happening in Benituria is one example, not of conscious political resistance, but of a time-space edge in which system contradictions have reached an uncomfortable and therefore visible level.

<sup>110</sup> This does not contradict the fact that more women than men take the legal initiative for separation. The legal initiative is only one - late - step in a long process, and women seem to take it when there has been physical abuse or when the man has abandoned the home and/or left her without money, i.e. when she has lost all hope.

<sup>111</sup> To have fewer children earlier in life and closer together - which is what is happening statistically - helps, but even if a woman's last child is already born when she is twenty-five, she will not be reasonably free from daily chores until around the age of forty-five. Most young people live at home, as we have seen, and it is not seen as natural for boys to help, even if there is now a lot of talk about it. Girls help if they do not work and/or study, but if they do, many mothers excuse them; and girls who neither work nor study have become unusual.

<sup>112</sup> And in this interchange, the key role was played by the mother. It is therefore not wrong to say that the mother is a truly powerful figure in such a system, but it is wrong to imply that this gives her more power than other family members. Her power is crucial, but she has it only on condition that she play by strict rules that give her very little power around matters that have nothing to do with motherhood, even if they affect her personally. And even this power of motherhood often has to be executed with the help of left hand practices in order to be effective - witness any novel, play or film from any Mediterranean society during the last century or so!

<sup>113</sup> My observations on these things were necessarily rather indirect, but my interpretation coincides with that of a number of Spanish sociological studies on related themes. See for example Alberdi 1979:189, Alcobendas Tirado 1983, Benería 1977, Borderías 1986, Calle Fuentes et.al. 1988, Capmany 1971, Conde 1982, CCOO 1980, García Ferrando 1977, García de León 1982, Instituto de la Mujer 1984 and 1987, Sallé and Casas 1987, San José 1986, Servei de la Dona 1984, Weiler 1977.

<sup>114</sup> That this is still so has been shown in many studies, see e.g. Durán (1986a) on "domestic inequality" and Garreta and Careaga (1987) on the treatment of gender in school books.

<sup>115</sup> The bibliographical references here could become endless; especially Marxist feminism has analyzed this relationship in many ways. Let me just mention two general overviews (Barrett 1982 and Jonasdóttir 1984), two well-known arguments for socialist feminism (Foreman 1977 and Eisenstein 1979) and one classic study on housewives (Oakley 1977).

<sup>116</sup> This does not mean that women - all women - are a social class, a proposition made by e.g. the Feminist Party of Spain. I consider this proposition more confusing than helpful. On the other hand, I do not consider it totally erroneous to classify married women in the same social class as their husbands, as sociology usually does. Such classification must, however, be modified for both men and women, if more than very approximate results are desired. Cf Eisenstein, 1979.

<sup>117</sup> Much of this reasoning is inspired by Delphy (1985). I do not subscribe totally to her theory on the "domestic mode of production" (cf the criticism in Uriá et al. 1985). But if her reasoning is not universally applicable, it is based on social conditions for housewives similar to those of Benituria, namely French ones.

<sup>118</sup> There are 14 million adult women in Spain. Three million were employed and one million registered as unemployed in 1983. That leaves ten million. But some of these were old or infirm and a few were studying and not so few had black market jobs. On the other hand, this would include only those women who are only housewives, and we must remember that women with employment also usually perform all the duties of a housewife and derive an important part of their identity from that. If we mean only women without neither a job, nor a pension, nor registered as unemployed, however, seven million is a safe guess, there can hardly be fewer. Alcobendas Tirado (1983) gives the number 7.295.000 for 1983, 71.4% of the non-active female population. See also Durán 1986b and San José 1986.

<sup>119</sup> For example, noone could legitimately throw a daughter out of the house for having an illegitimate child, today. That was legitimate ten or fifteen years ago; today it is strongly condemned. Most informants said they had heard of such cases, that they used to be common, but that they themselves would never, never do it. (These stories cropped up spontaneously around case 53.) Instead, the disposition to do anything for the children has now been construed as the factor that should be allowed to define such a situation.

<sup>120</sup> Gullestad (1986) describes two different ways of managing accessibility. She says that people living in rather homogeneous and static communities tend to manage accessibility in either-or terms, whereas in more heterogeneous communities, such as growing industrial cities and their suburbs, there is a tendency to manage a graded accessibility. A certain amount of inaccessibility seems to be a key value in her Norwegian material. In Benituria, the limelight falls on sociability. But just as Norwegians need some accessibility, too, Beniturians need to limit theirs. And most of them are definitely in the process of adapting from small homogeneous to big heterogeneous communities. Perhaps they, too, have to learn to abandon the either-or approach and just like in Gullestad's material there will be difficulties and exaggerations while learning.

<sup>121</sup> And this translates to interpersonal conflicts around the issue of women's freedom of movement, too, as we saw in the previous chapter.

<sup>122</sup> This is not unique to Spain. Just how similar gender attitudes in Spain and the rest of Europe are comes out in a report from the Service of Information on Women of the Common Market (Comisión de las Comunidades Europeas 1987). The report shows that it is in Italy, Spain and Portugal that the public opinion is most sensitized to the importance of the gender question. Women regard the question as more important than men do in all twelve member countries, but the divergence in sensitization is greatest in Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Spain. When asked about the ideal of equality between spouses in the home, Danes and Britons are the most "advanced" (the report's choice of word!) and Germans and Luxemburgese the least egalitarian-minded. Spaniards and Portuguese are near the European average. On certain items, Spain and Portugal show very "advanced" general figures, but as soon as they are broken down by sex, the differences between radical women and conservative men are among the greatest in Europe. As a whole this report supports my impression: what is happening in Spain is similar

to what has happened all over Europe, but it has happened more quickly and in a more dramatic way in Spain, so the results are greater divergences, polarization, conservatism but also a great enthusiasm for experimentation.

## Appendix A

123 I was married to a Spanish man and brought up my children in Madrid during the late 1960's and most of the 1970's.

124 Renamed in 1981 the Association of Separated and Divorced Women, in view of the new divorce law, but nobody used the new name, and there was little reason, only three of the hundred plus active members in 1983 were divorced.

125 According to linguists it is a variant of Catalan, but because of political circumstances it is now officially known as Valencian. The variant of it spoken in the city of Valencia is strongly influenced by Castilian (Spanish), especially as to pronunciation, so it is not too difficult to understand. I learned enough to read sociological literature but not novels, to follow a debate or a normal conversation but hardly jokes, and I did not really speak it. My work was carried out in Castilian except for a few small exceptions, and except for the intercalation of Valencian words into Castilian sentences that is a constant in everyday conversation in Valencia. The city is bilingual, but the language one hears is Castilian. The immigrants seldom learn Valencian. The upper class has spoken Castilian since the 16th century. Valencian was forbidden during most of the Franco regime. As Valencian was introduced, as a separate subject, in state schools, while I was in the field, there was much opposition and language battles too intricate to report here. Excepting special contexts, such as folkloristic events and nationalist political meetings, the public language of the city is Castilian. Cf Fuster 1976, Mira 1981, Ninyoles 1980 and 1982.

## Appendix C

126 In general Benituriens read very little. Most said so, too, but many probably exaggerated somewhat when answering this question. However, the answers gave good information about political opinions, even about informants who did not want to talk directly about that, and they often gave better information than the direct questions about attained level of education.

127 The word "comfortably" does not awaken connotations of luxury in the minds of Benituriens; it just conveys the information that there is no urgent emotional or economic reason for her to leave.

128 This ultimatum, literally, is often given in these situations, and most informants laughed sadly with recognition upon hearing it.

129 With these phrases I hinted at the kind of economic situation most common in Benituria, as Benituriens expressed it most of the time. These phrases - like most of the phrases in these "cases" - were chosen to sound familiar.

130 I think I had managed to catch a common masculine reaction in just the right words here - the phrase often brought on storms of laughter of recognition. My idea was to convey to the listener that the husband would not help with housework, and this was the message both male and female interviewees received, too.

131 "To make oneself independent" or "emancipated" (*independizarse* or *emanciparse*) is the usual phrase for moving out of the parental home and/or getting married and/or getting a steady job, all of which is seen, from a traditional viewpoint, as approximately simultaneous and mutually causing each other.

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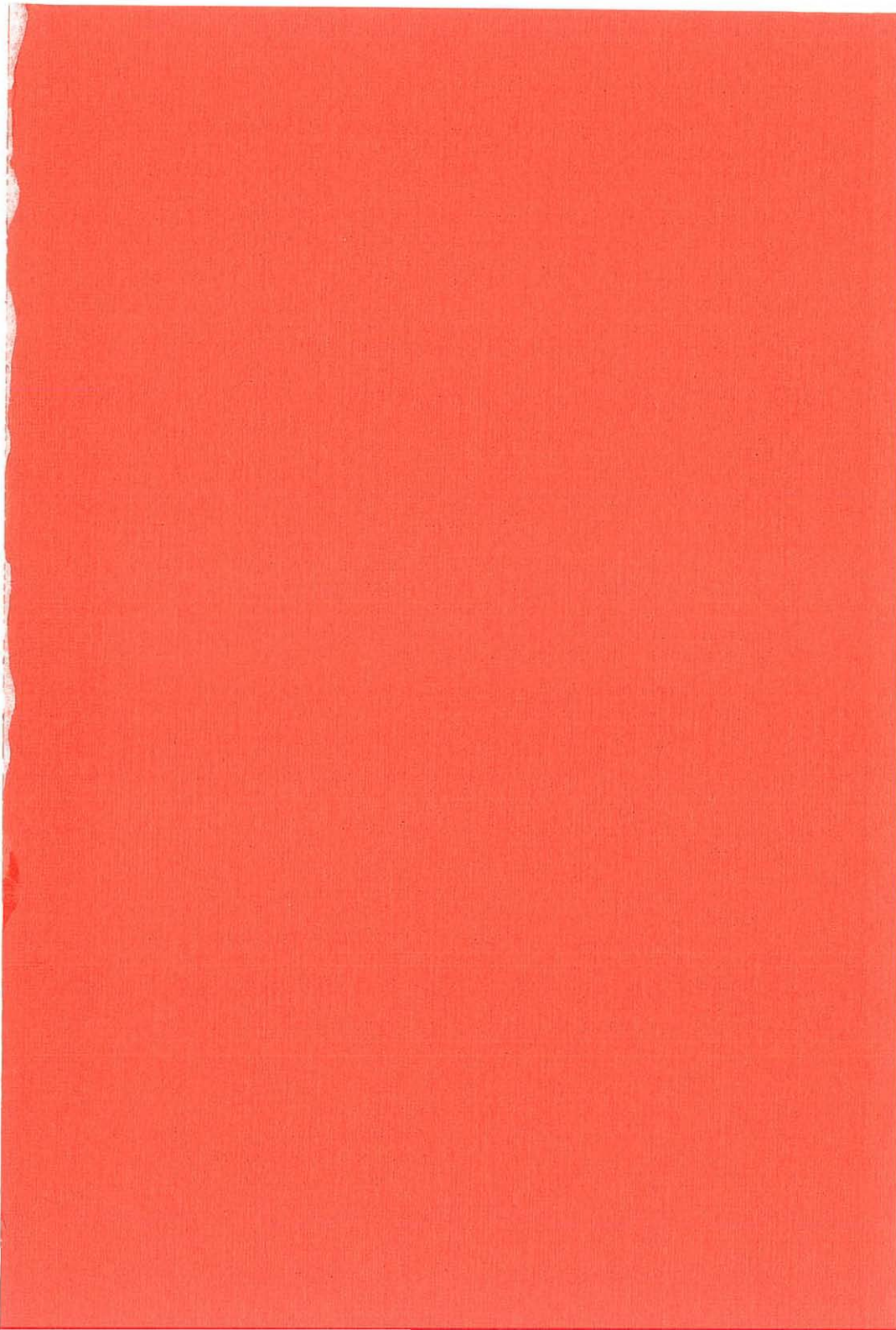
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