

Tyler S. Schafer, David R. Dickens
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, U.S.A.

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Social Marking in Memory Entrepreneurship: The Battle Over Zapata's Legacy

Abstract Disputes over historical representations often revolve around competing narratives about the past, but the processes through which these narratives are constructed are often neglected. In this paper, we extend the concept of *collective memory* using Brekhus' notion of *social marking* to investigate the creation and maintenance of collective representations of the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata. We analyze the claims made in speeches and communiqués produced by two opposing groups—the Mexican government and the Zapatista movement—in a decades-long dispute over land and indigenous rights. Moreover, we argue that processes of social marking can further explain the selective nature of collective memory, that is, how certain parts of the past are remembered and emphasized while others are de-emphasized and forgotten. Also, in our analysis of social marking, we identify a naturalization process that is utilized by actors in mnemonic battles to recast their constructed representations of the past as natural, pure, and true. We close with a discussion of how understanding the naturalization process as outlined here can shed light on current political and historical disputes.

Keywords Social Marking; Memory Entrepreneurship; Naturalization Process; Collective Memory; Emiliano Zapata

Tyler S. Schafer is a PhD candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (U.S.A.). His principal areas of expertise include cultural sociology, space and place, community formation, and urban sustainability. His dissertation research explores how collective actors at a Las Vegas community garden appropriate the broad cultural trend of community gardening in a local context known for its harsh natural and cultural environments.

email address: schafe19@unlv.nevada.edu

David R. Dickens is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (U.S.A.). His principal areas of expertise include critical and interpretive social theory, media culture, and qualitative research methods. His current research projects include a study of commodification in the electronic dance music industry (with Christopher Conner) and one of representations of Italian culture in Las Vegas (with Marta Soligo).

email address: david.dickens@unlv.edu

Historical representations exist in a state of perpetual vulnerability. They illuminate the ways in which memory is an ongoing process in need of periodic maintenance, alterations, updates, and erasure. They also frequently serve as fodder for contemporary political debates. In this paper, we extend the concept of *collective memory* using Brekhus' notion of *social marking* to investigate the creation and maintenance of collective representations of the Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata. We focus on documents produced by two opposing groups—the Mexican government and the Zapatista movement—in a decades-long dispute over land and indigenous rights. Moreover, we argue that processes of social marking can further explain the selective nature of collective memory, that is, how certain parts of the past are remembered and emphasized while others are de-emphasized and forgotten. While the social marking of identity helps us understand how identities are assigned and maintained (Brekhus 1996), we hope to show how the social marking of the past can help us understand how memories can be (re)created and (re)constructed for contemporary purposes.

The mnemonic battle over the legacy of the (in)famous Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata is among the most contentious current disputes over historical representation. The process began immediately following Zapata's murder in 1919 and has continued up to the present. In recent decades, the dispute has garnered increased attention and inspired militant action. Significantly, following Zapata's death, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party or PRI) formed and began a more than 70-year occupation

of the national palace where they strove to institutionalize Zapata's legacy. The Zapatista movement of the twentieth century emerged in large part as a response to the PRI's attempts at claiming Zapata. The PRI were eventually voted out of office in 2000, but after twelve years, Enrique Peña Nieto, the PRI candidate, won the 2012 Mexican presidential election, which could potentially intensify the dispute over Zapata's legacy. We begin with a brief history of the Zapatista movement.

Zapatista Emergence

The Zapatistas, or the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN is the acronym in Spanish), are a radical social movement organization that emerged from the jungles of Chiapas, Mexico, on January 01, 1994 (see: Freeman and Johnson 1999). The timing was strategic and symbolic as it was the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was intended to unite Canada, the United States, and Mexico in a free-trade union, was set to go into effect. NAFTA, however, was seen by the Zapatistas as simply the most recent in a century-long series of federal actions threatening indigenous Mexican farmers' ways of life. They officially declared war on the Mexican government in response to former Mexican President Carlos Salinas' modifications to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution—an agrarian reform plan passed in 1917 that promised a redistribution of land to the indigenous Mayan people and peasants throughout Mexico—and the subsequent passing of a new regulatory agrarian law, both of which eliminated the possibility of land redistribution (Harvey 1998). Donning ski masks and wielding firearms (many of which were actually

wooden sticks made to resemble guns), the Zapatistas took control of seven townships in the Mexican state of Chiapas, including several presidential palaces (Ramírez 2008). A twelve-day shootout ensued in which prisoners were taken by each side. At the same time, a protest involving more than 100,000 people took place in the Mexico City Zócalo (main plaza), and aerial bombings were carried out by the Mexican government, eventually resulting in a cease-fire with them agreeing to negotiate with the rebels (Chiapas Support Committee 2007).

The Zapatistas' spokesperson, Subcommander Marcos, called Salinas' modifications to Article 27 and the implementation of NAFTA "nothing more than a death sentence to the indigenous ethnicities of Mexico, who are perfectly dispensable in the modernization program of Salinas de Gortari" (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional [EZLN] 1995a:57). Meanwhile, NAFTA led to lower prices, and lower profits, for the corn the farmers produced (Chiapas Support Committee 2007). In an attempt to resolve this dispute, the Zapatistas scheduled a conference in January of 1996 to write what came to be known as the San Andres Accords. In attendance were 500 delegates from 32 indigenous ethnic groups, with the intention of writing up a list of demands for the Mexican government (Higgins 2001; Ramírez 2008).

Since the government's policies concerning the Zapatistas also affected other non-Chiapan groups, the Zapatistas invited these groups as well in an attempt to provide an open forum for all indigenous Mexicans to voice their concerns. The fundamental demands coming out of the meeting were for the right to self-determination through autonomy, rec-

ognition of the community as a public entity with political representation, and the restoration of Article 27 to redistribute land and resources to indigenous farmers (see: Higgins 2001; Chiapas Support Committee 2007).

Repeated failed negotiation attempts ultimately resulted in the Zapatistas withdrawing from talks in January of 1997. At around the same time, the Zapatistas encountered sporadic fits of violence from pro-government, armed civilians, culminating in the death of 45 unarmed Zapatista soldiers on December 22, 1997 (Human Rights Watch 1999; Higgins 2001). Also in 1997, Zapatista delegations visited Madrid, Spain, and Venice, Italy, addressing audiences of 3,000 and 30,000 respectively (Higgins 2001). International exposure led to an increase in human rights groups visiting and reporting on the conflict zone in Chiapas, as well as support from the United Nations, Pope John Paul II, French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, and the European Union (Higgins 2001; Ramírez 2008). Despite global attention, however, the Mexican government failed to provide the Zapatistas with protection against the paramilitary groups.

After a period of peaceful response to the Mexican government's low-intensity warfare, the Zapatistas reemerged in 2001 to march on Mexico City with the support of 200,000 people. A delegation met with the Mexican Congress to discuss their concerns. One month later the government issued a heavily revised version of the Law for Indigenous Rights and Culture—the first of six San Andreas Accords agreements that was signed in 1996, but never codified—which the Zapatistas denounced as more restrictive

than their current situation (Higgins 2001). For the next four years the Zapatistas remained relatively inactive, while occasionally releasing communiqués voicing their discontent with the political climate in Mexico and the lack of difference between the major political parties' positions on indigenous rights.

In 2005, the Zapatistas released a statement outlining a plan to rally other groups similarly affected by globalization and neoliberal policies. Their goal was to alter the political process, but not start a new political party. They called this new initiative "the Other Campaign." Comprised primarily of Zapatista delegates, the Other Campaign went on a tour of Mexico that lasted for most of 2006 and representatives met with nearly every group of indigenous peoples living in the country (Ramírez 2008). Since the close of the tour, the Zapatistas have focused their energy on sharing their experiences of exploitation and oppression with other communities around the globe. Their strong opposition to neoliberal politics and globalization led them to look in new directions for help in their struggle, hosting the International Indigenous Encounter in Northwestern Mexico in late 2007. They argued that, "just as there is a neoliberal globalization, there is a globalization of rebellion" (Ramírez 2008:322). Accordingly, they have become increasingly active in voicing their opinions regarding indigenous struggles internationally, most recently expressing support for the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation.

In recent years, the government and the Zapatistas have settled nearly nothing in their negotiations. There were several attempts in 2010 to codify laws that the government proposed and the Zapatistas

rejected, but the two sides have not reached a mutual agreement on any of the issues regarding indigenous rights or land reform. The future of the dispute is unclear, and the recent election of Enrique Peña Nieto (from the PRI) casts even more uncertainty on its outcome.

Collective Memory

Since studies of collective memory have addressed a variety of issues in different ways, we begin here by articulating what we mean by collective memory. We adopt a collectivist approach, focusing on public discourses about the past, instead of examining what individuals remember and view as significant or how they put publically available symbols and rituals to use (Olick 1999). Additionally, our approach is informed by an instrumentalist understanding of presentism. Presentism refers to the general notion that the past is largely a social construction shaped by concerns for the present (Mead 1929; 1959; Schwartz 1991; 1996; Halbwachs 1992; Schudson 1992; Olick and Robbins 1998; Polletta 1998). Instrumentalist presentists emphasize "memory entrepreneurship" as a *purposeful* manipulation of the past in order to support present issues, narratives, and ideologies (Olick and Robbins 1998). From this perspective collective memories must be simultaneously malleable and persistent, consistent yet changeable.

In this paper, we focus on a subfield of collective memory interested in how groups commemorate pasts that are sources of controversy (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991; Fine 2001). We are concerned with a specific "mnemonic battle" over how

to commemorate a difficult past, and the tactics employed by the “memory entrepreneurs” from opposing “mnemonic communities” (Zerubavel 1996). Groups engage in mnemonic battles, but individual actors are the memory entrepreneurs. For the Mexican government, the president and the speechwriters are behind the entrepreneurial actions. On the Zapatista side, Subcommander Marcos, the movement's spokesperson—and arguably most well-known member to outsiders—guides the entrepreneurship. The Zapatistas wear ski masks and bandanas over their faces, both for anonymity and as symbols of egalitarianism, so Marcos' identity is unclear. The Mexican government, however, insists that Marcos is really Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, a college professor educated in liberation theology and Marxism. If the Mexican government is right about his identity, unlike most other Zapatistas, Marcos is of Spanish, not Mayan, descent.

While we recognize that all memories are selective, the Zapatistas and the Mexican government's conflicting representations are not merely the unbiased, inevitable result of their different cultural frameworks. Rather, the two groups are actively, and consciously, engaged in memory entrepreneurship in an attempt to establish their respective positions as the rightful heir to Zapata's legacy, thereby justifying their current position on agrarian reform. Drawing selectively from historical facts, both sides construct competing versions of Zapata's reputation (Fine 2001) and then pose the question, “What would Zapata do?” While some argue the malleability of the past is limited by historical “facts” (Bromberg and Fine 2002), that the past resists reconstruction

at will (Schudson 1992), the Zapatista movement is challenging a century of this very sort of revisionary history work by the Mexican government.

Collective Imagination and Knowledge Bases

Collective imagination is part fantasy and part investment (Borer 2010). While the notion of reputation is inherently past oriented, situated in the realm of collective memory, a legacy is something that combines past, present, and future—the realm of collective imagination. With both the Mexican government and the Zapatista movement seeking to situate themselves as the true heirs of Zapata's legacy, they are competing not only over how to remember Zapata but also over how to handle agrarian reform right now, and both of these debates are rooted, we argue, in differing visions or collective imaginations of the future. While both sides of the debate in Mexico have different “fantasies” about the future, they also have a lot invested in their respective visions of that future. The indigenous people supported by the Zapatista movement have their entire way of life on the line, and the Mexican government is facing a potential restructuring of their agrarian policies in particular, and a radical change in their relationship with the indigenous population in general.

Building on a line of research in the sociology of culture and the sociology of knowledge, we also examine how this battle to define Zapata's legacy, and as a result what is seen as the best course of action in agrarian reform, is mediated by the two groups' relationships to knowledge and power. More specifically, we explore how having less social authority

than the Mexican government affects the memory entrepreneurship of the Zapatista movement. Scholars in the sociology of knowledge have called attention to not just elite knowledge producers but also to claims made and acted upon by laypersons—informal or subjugated knowledge (Foucault 1972; Swidler and Ardit 1994). We examine how the Zapatista movement's distance from formal institutions affects its members' ability to use their “organic” knowledge (Gramsci 1971) to reject and counter the claims made by the traditional, elite knowledge producers inside the Mexican government.

Social Marking

We employ Brekhus's (1996) concept of social marking to further investigate how different social actors in Mexico approach the Zapatista-Mexican government dispute. Brekhus borrows the concept of markedness from the structuralist linguists Nikolai Trubetzkoy and Roman Jakobson, who developed it while studying phoneme pairs (Brekhus 1996). In their research, Trubetzkoy and Jakobson discovered that one part of a pair is “actively highlighted with a mark while the other remains passively defined by its absence of a mark” (Brekhus 1998:35). In studying sexual identity construction, Brekhus applies this concept to social interactions by pointing out the ways social actors perceive certain parts of a sexual identity as “significant” or “salient” while ignoring other parts as “mundane,” “natural,” or “epistemologically unproblematic” (Brekhus 1996:500). He goes on to describe the properties of social marking: (1) the unmarked is unarticulated while the marked is heavily articulated; (2) the significance of the marked is exaggerated due to its heavy articulation;

(3) the marked element receives more attention than the unmarked despite the fact that the unmarked may exist in greater size and frequency; (4) in-group differences within the marked are ignored, giving the impression that they are more homogeneous than the unmarked; and (5) attributes of the marked element are seen as homogeneous within the group, but non-existent outside the group, while characteristics of an unmarked element are seen as “idiosyncratic to the individual” or as natural human behavior (Brekhus 1998:36).

Brekhus further articulates the concept of social marking by noting that it is not synonymous with social value, which focuses on distinctions between positive and negative statuses. Instead, markedness focuses on distinctions between marked groups that are given a social value and unmarked groups seen as having no social value (Brekhus 1996). Like Durkheim's (2001) famous dichotomy between the sacred and profane, where the sacred is defined as that which is not profane, the unmarked is defined by its absence of a mark, and of social value, rendering it invisible or eclipsed by the marked.

While our analysis highlights the content of speeches and communiqués, we do so in order to flesh out the *forms* that mnemonic entrepreneurs use to create historical representations. Focusing on the *structure* of remembering (and forgetting) can help us better understand how memory entrepreneurship works *in vivo* (Zerubavel 2003). Instead of assessing the success or failure of the claims made by the Mexican government and the Zapatistas, we instead use their mnemonic battle as a case from which to glean the structure of mnemonic entrepreneurial claims.

By adopting an instrumentalist perspective and acknowledging that entrepreneurship, that is, social marking, is intentional, purposeful, and goal-oriented as opposed to “an inevitable consequence of the fact that we interpret the world—including the past—on the basis of our own experience and within cultural frameworks” (Olick and Robbins 1998:128), we hope to highlight how processes of social marking operate in memory entrepreneurship.

Method

In order to examine how the two groups represented the memory of Zapata, we collected documents commemorating him by both groups. The day of the year on which this most frequently occurs is April 10, the anniversary of Zapata's assassination in 1919. The two groups produce different types of texts for the occasion. While the government is able to hold large commemorations in cities where Zapata grew up, frequented, or died, the Zapatistas do not have that luxury, and instead produce communiqués and letters that flow through a variety of media outlets via an “ever resourceful chain of couriers” (Ross 1994).

We examined three official speeches delivered by Mexican presidents in this window of time and ten, much shorter, documents released by the Zapatista movement to commemorate Zapata's death. While the number of documents we analyzed for each group at first appears lopsided, if one looks at the number of pages, it becomes more balanced: 33 pages of government commemoration and 35 pages of Zapatista commemoration. Many of the Zapatista's documents were published in *La Jornada*, a major

Mexican news outlet, which served a broad and more diverse portion of the national population than other newspapers.¹ *La Jornada* also served as a megaphone to the international community, broadcasting the rebellion, including the Zapatistas' communiqués, to millions worldwide.² The specific documents we chose to analyze were selected because they were either published (in the case of the Zapatistas³) or delivered (in the case of speech transcripts) on April 10 between the years of 1994 and 2000.⁴ We analyzed the only three commemorative speeches delivered by Mexican presidents, and located the transcripts on official Mexican government websites. The fact that the texts were produced in order to commemorate Zapata resulted in what we believe to be the richest data for analyzing how the groups wanted Zapata to be remembered.

We employed aspects of the grounded theory approach to data coding and analysis as outlined by

¹ In the early nineties, *La Jornada* was among the top three Mexican newspapers in terms of number of copies issued (Canclini 2003) and its readership represents the widest range of people than any other in Mexico (Piccini 1991).

² According to *La Jornada's* website, in the early nineties, it was part of World Media, which meant that its stories went to Madrid, Paris, Dublin, Tokyo, Geneva, Vienna, Río de Janeiro, Lisbon, Zurich, Boston, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Montevideo, Munich, Rome, and Cairo (*La Jornada* 2011).

³ The publication date is not always April 10 (see references), but they were all written on April 10, with the meaningfulness of the date in mind.

⁴ These dates mark the emergence of the Zapatista movement in 1994 and the temporary fall of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in 2000. The Zapatistas issued far fewer communiqués beginning in 2000 as well, and none have been disseminated on subsequent anniversaries of Zapata's death. The voting out of the PRI is significant because they had been in power since 1929 and the Zapatista movement's emergence was largely a response to their past, present, and potential future actions. Moreover, due to their explicit claim to being the revolution institutionalized, the reign of the PRI was in part predicated on their continued efforts to claim the revolution as their own and to make decisions *as* revolutionaries (see: Jensen 2007).

Charmaz (2006).⁵ We began with what she calls initial coding, reading each document line by line, taking note of Zapata's identity traits and the revolutionary goals that the Zapatistas and the government highlighted, or marked. We then compiled a list of these traits and goals, and placed them into categories based on the type of person Zapata was according to the two groups and the type of future each claimed he envisioned. For example, the Zapatistas portrayed Zapata as stubborn and unwilling to accept limited reform, whereas the Mexican government highlighted his alleged willingness to compromise in order to achieve meaningful legislation. Another example of the two groups' contrasting representations of Zapata revolved around the contrasting linguistic strategies each employed. While the government used adjectives that focused on abstract qualities of his character, the Zapatistas emphasized verbs to describe him in terms of concrete actions. We then returned to the data and, with the traits and actions both groups marked in mind, engaged in focused coding (Charmaz 2006), examining how each described and framed their own actions. In other words, we compared how the groups marked Zapata with how they marked themselves. Not surprisingly, each attempted to

⁵ Charmaz (2006) outlines a multistage process of data analysis. It starts with initial coding in which processes are described and minimally interpreted in order to avoid projection of preconceived notions onto the data while constantly comparing any codes that emerge. Next, researchers engage in focused coding, which is a sorting process wherein the most commonly occurring codes and those that best represent the data are used to help interpret larger segments of the data. We went a step further and employed what Strauss and Corbin (1998) call axial coding, which entails relating categories to subcategories in the data and exploring how they are related. Thus, initial coding carves distinct codes out of the data, focused coding refines the most salient ones, and axial coding strings them back together into a coherent whole.

highlight the same traits in themselves as those they emphasized in Zapata.

With these and other categorical differences in mind, we then re-read the documents and examined the political positions supported by the two groups. It was during this third, axial, stage of coding (Charmaz 2006) that evidence of what we call a naturalization process emerged, where both groups attempted to recast their constructed representations of Zapata as natural, pure, and true. Once we identified this process, we went back over the data to better understand which features were central to these and how they were related to one another. At this point we also employed Brekhus' social marking technique to identify what parts of Zapata's identity were being explicitly and implicitly marked or left unmarked, or regarded as meaningful or epistemologically unproblematic.

Early Memory Entrepreneurship

On April 10, 1919, Emiliano Zapata met with a colonel from the newly established government, who he thought was considering defection to Zapata's army. As it turned out, the man, Colonel Jesus Guajardo, was taking advantage of Zapata's desperation for new recruits, in the hope of coaxing Zapata out of hiding. Carranza was fed up with Zapata and tasked General Pablo González with stopping the rebel's rabble rousing. González in turn blackmailed Guajardo into orchestrating a fake defection in order to set up the revolutionary. Zapata agreed to a meeting, and upon his arrival was shot multiple times and mortally wounded.

Important for the purposes of this project is the fact that both Zapata and Carranza were generals in the revolution against President Porfirio Diaz. While the two men and their respective followers had different goals for the revolution (especially significant for this study is their differing positions on the aforementioned Article 27 of the constitution), it is crucial to note that they both viewed themselves, and were viewed by others, as revolutionaries.⁶ After Carranza was elected president in 1917, he began to institutionalize his version of the revolution, which downplayed the land reform for which Zapata and the original Zapatistas fought. Subsequent presidents followed in Carranza's footsteps, claiming that the government was carrying out the revolution, thus eliminating the need for any further uprising. By attempting to align itself with the revolutionaries, the government also was arguing that it, too, was a victim of the previous, unjust regime.

Immediately following the murder of Zapata, newspapers that supported Carranza ran headlines celebrating the death of "the famous Attila," and the "bloodthirsty ringleader," at the hand of González, the "prestigious military man," who was deserving of "enthusiastic congratulations" (Womack 1968:327). While at the time of his death Zapata was being framed by the government as a dangerous person who was bad for Mexico, in subsequent years, in order to maintain their position as the torchbearers of the revolution, the government has embraced Zapata as a revolutionary

⁶ For a comprehensive review of the Mexican Revolution, see: Benjamin (2000). For an in-depth examination of Zapata's role and influence on the Revolution, see: Womack (1968).

hero, albeit in ways that stripped him of his radical edge (see: Brunk 2008).

In 1994, when the new Zapatistas emerged from the jungles of Chiapas, it was in reaction to the then President Salinas' agrarian policies, the signing of NAFTA, and the effects of neoliberalism on rural Mexican farmers, but it was also a response to the distorted version of the revolution that had been espoused by the government for over 70 years. In the following, we will demonstrate how the late twentieth century Zapatistas and the Mexican government present different depictions of Zapata, and by extension the revolution, and how those depictions support their respective stances on current policies concerning agrarian reform and indigenous rights.

Who Was Emiliano Zapata?

The mnemonic battle between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government is one in which elite memory and subjugated memory fight for influence over popular memory. Table 1 describes the contrasting strategies used by each group to accomplish essentially the same objective—establishing a dominant conception of the past.

Based on multiple rounds of coding, several themes emerged that signify how the two groups differently approached similar processes. First, they not only focused on different traits of Zapata, but also emphasized different kinds of traits. Specifically, the Mexican government used adjectives to describe character traits of Zapata, while the Zapatistas were much more likely to employ verbs, focusing on Zapata's

Table 1. Methods of Memory Entrepreneurship.

	MEXICAN GOVERNMENT		ZAPATISTAS	
Who was Zapata?	Adjectives / Abstract	Selfless Clear-headed Committed	Verbs / Concrete	Resist Attack Struggle
Rationale for claim to heirship	The Mexican government institutionalized the revolutionary ideals that influenced the Mexican Revolution.		Zapata's revolutionary aims were never seen to fruition. The struggle to achieve his goals has never ended and they are the contemporary torchbearers.	
View of neoliberalism	Neoliberalism is necessary for Mexico's progress. Helps Mexico compete in a global economy and allows rural citizens to participate in the expanding global economy.		Neoliberalism is merely the newest stage in the ongoing exploitation of indigenous people in Mexico. Now, instead of Mexican haciendas, there are foreign companies financing farming and taking land from the indigenous.	
How to carry Zapata's legacy into the future	Zapatistas should align with the Government.		Resist. Do not accept abbreviated reform. Settle only for complete fulfillment of demands.	

Source: Self-elaboration.

actions. Second, while both asserted that their positions on land reform were the logical continuation of Zapata's legacy, they had drastically different notions of what Zapata would have supported at the turn of the twenty first century. Third, both understood neoliberal politics as being at the heart of the dispute, but had drastically different assessments of what these policies mean for Zapata's revolutionary legacy. Finally, both addressed the future in their respective documents, and again had very different ideas about how Zapata would envision agrarian issues moving forward.

"¡Tierra y Libertad!"

The Zapatistas made a point in nearly every communiqué to use Zapata's military title, General, in order to draw attention to the fact that he was not merely a revolutionary, but the leader of a revolutionary army. They also pointedly referred to his death as a "betrayal" and an "assassination." Other characteristics of Zapata such as humility, courage, and determination were emphasized, but more than listing his admirable traits, the Zapatistas told stories of what he did. They referred to his actions

during the Mexican Revolution as “struggling,” and highlighted how Zapata “attacked” cities and “lifted up his armed hand for land and liberty.”

In addition to describing Zapata's character and his actions, the Zapatistas continually referred to what they termed his “warrior cry,” *tierra y libertad* (land and freedom). This phrase became a sort of chorus in Zapatistas' communiqués. While Zapata may have never used this phrase as a rallying cry (Brunk 1998), the Zapatistas have encapsulated his cause in these three short words and used them to define their struggle. The phrase has also been used (posthumously) to describe the demands Zapata made in the Plan of Ayala, a document he signed in 1911 that denounced Francisco Madero, a fellow revolutionary who gained temporary power during the revolution, for not supporting the land reform that the southern revolutionaries demanded. The slogan Zapata himself used to describe the Plan of Ayala was “Liberty, Justice, and Law” (Brunk 2008). The Zapatistas' choice to use a different slogan emphasizes how they refer to specific actions and demands of Zapata like demands for land instead of more abstract goals and guiding principles.

Social Justice

Whereas the Zapatistas used the qualifier “General” to describe Zapata almost every time they used his name (it was even used as a replacement of his name in some instances), the Mexican government used it only once. Similarly, while the Zapatistas repeatedly highlighted Zapata's “betrayal” and “assassination,” the government referred simply to his “death” or how he “offered his life,” when they

mentioned the event for which the day is commemorated. They also focused on more abstract ideas, which they claimed guided his actions, emphasizing his “commitment to social justice,” “clarity” of vision, and overall “commitment,” as *a great man of the Mexican countryside, an exceptional Morelense* [he was from Morelos, Mexico]. These rhetorical moves, as well as their conflation of Zapata with other, less radical players in the Mexican Revolution, may be seen as an attempt to obliterate the memory that Zapata was murdered by people with whom he previously fought alongside. Furthermore, when the government relates Zapata to the more conservative Francisco Madero, they delete, through omission, the fact that Zapata's Plan of Ayala accused Madero of betraying the revolutionary ideals on which Zapata claimed they once agreed:

Like Francisco Madero gave the revolution its democratic and libertarian sense, the agrarian claim of Zapata gave it its deeper social dimension. [Zedillo 1996]

Finally, it is also worth noting that the government did not compare Zapata to Carranza, the revolutionary turned president who was allegedly responsible for arranging a hit on him. Their rhetorical moves reflect an attempt to “purify” the past in two important ways (Bromberg and Fine 2002). First, the Mexican government is downplaying Zapata's radical, and at times violent, leftist political position, a position so radical it led the very revolutionaries who eventually took power to murder him. This purification is an attempt to transform the government's stance on Zapata's reputation “from subversive to saint” (Bromberg and Fine 2002). Second, the

government is attempting to erase from memory the fact that it was responsible for the murder of the man to whom it is claiming allegiance, in an effort to purify its reputation. When a group or nation wants to commemorate a difficult past, it is a common practice to elevate certain individuals while ignoring the causes for which they stood (Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991).

A History of Struggle

We will now examine in detail the methods by which each group claims to be heirs of Zapata's legacy, however they define it, in terms of their respective knowledge bases. In the commemorative communiqués of the Zapatistas, they asserted the continuity between Zapata's struggle and their own in various ways. They claim that they are facing the same problems Zapata and his army faced: “As in 1919, we, Zapatistas, must pay in blood for our cry for land and freedom. As in 1919, the land does not belong to those who work it” (EZLN 1995b:194). In a longer passage, the spokesperson of the Zapatistas, Subcommander Marcos, wrote a letter to the deceased Zapata, referencing a letter he had written to President Woodrow Wilson in 1914:

And then you wrote, “And it is that the large landowners, stripping by stripping, today with one pretext, tomorrow with another, have been absorbing all the properties which legitimately belong and have belonged from time immemorial to the indigenous people, out of whose cultivation they used to get their sustenance and that of their families.” And that was in 1914. Now, in 1997, **the story hasn't changed.** [EZLN 1997, emphasis added]

Marcos and the Zapatistas were arguing that while the context may have changed, the problems are essentially the same. The aforementioned propensity to refer to Zapata as “the General” highlights that he was the leader of a revolutionary army, but it is also used to claim Zapata as the leader of the contemporary Zapatistas. For instance, in one passage, they identify the revolutionary as, “Emiliano Zapata, General-in-Chief of the Liberation Army of the South (**and the EZLN**)” (EZLN 2000, emphasis added).

The Zapatistas also made figurative claims of familial continuity with Zapata: “Emiliano Zapata, our father, gave us his name. Our brother, Emiliano Zapata, set an armed example. Our son Zapata asked us for a new future” (EZLN 1995c:204). They made further claims of *being* Zapata: “Emiliano Zapata has come again to the Zócalo of Mexico City; **he is in you; he walks in you**” (EZLN 1995d:199, emphasis added); “since when all is said and done, **you are us**” (EZLN 1997, emphasis added). This claim of Zapata being *in* them or working *through* them appeared repeatedly, and reflects the Mexican myth of *Vótan-Zapata*.⁷ In short, there were multiple references (one communiqué was titled “*Vótan-Zapata*” [EZLN 1995e]) to *Vótan-Zapata*, which is the belief, either literally or figuratively, that *Vótan*—a shape-shifting Mayan god associated with revolting against the Spanish, reincarnating the dead, and providing early indigenous people with land—had somehow merged with Zapata. This notion solidified Zapata as a true Mexican, an Indian.⁸

⁷ For a detailed discussion of the *Vótan-Zapata* myth, see: Brunk (2008), Stephen (1997; 2002), Taylor (2001).

⁸ Despite the fact that Zapata was actually a mestizo, part Spanish and part Native American.

The Zapatistas assert continuity with Zapata not only in terms of the conditions they face and their figurative common ancestry but also with regard to their actions or responses to these conditions in comments such as: "We are like you, our General, exactly like that, rebellious and struggling" (EZLN 1997). Similarly, in a letter Subcommander Marcos wrote to the deceased Zapata, he compares the situation in Mexico at the end of the twentieth century to that at the beginning of the century:

Like then, those who refuse to accept injustices, are persecuted, jailed, killed. But just like then, our General, **there are righteous men and women who do not keep silent and fight not to be victimized, they organize to demand land and liberty.** [EZLN 1997, emphasis added]

Marcos's use of the phrase "righteous men and women" points to the memory work being done with such communiqués. He is, in this short passage, drawing a line of continuity from Zapata to the Zapatista movement, highlighting the exceptional traits of Zapata's revolt, and suggesting that the movement's actions reflect those traits. He is also suggesting that the claims of the Mexican government to be the rightful heirs of Zapata's legacy are unfounded, and that their actions, moreover, should be marked as profane.

Institutionalizing the Revolution

The Mexican government's emphasis on general and abstract traits of Zapata reflected their ability, as a group positioned in a traditional, elite knowledge base, to have their claims resonate with cultural and

political schemas already in place (Swidler and Ardit 1994). Since they wield more power and legitimacy, the government's claims are better suited to establish continuity via abstract principles. On the other hand, the Zapatistas have far less power and institutional legitimacy, necessitating their concrete claims to direct, specific lineage (they go as far as drawing the line back before Zapata and the Mexican Revolution to the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish). Without power and traditional political legitimacy, the Zapatistas cannot refute the government's claims to heirship using the same abstract rhetorical tools. They instead attempt to use specific historical evidence to argue that they are the direct descendants, as opposed to institutional placeholders, of Zapata's legacy. In doing so, they provide counter-schemas for their own claims to heirship in order to resonate with the people of Mexico.

As mentioned above, almost immediately following the murder of Zapata, the Mexican government began their campaign to institutionalize the revolution and, by extension, Zapata's legacy. After nearly a hundred years, their narrative regarding the revolutionary mission of the party has established a relatively strong cultural schema. It is thus indisputable that the Mexican government has the upper hand in terms of control over existing social and cultural arrangements, in this case, their ability to dramatically change the quality of life of indigenous people, due to the power they hold.

The abstract nature of their appeals to heirship, again, typically took the form of describing themselves as a "revolutionary government." The oxymoronic nature of such a label makes abstract and

seemingly paradoxical claims of being the heirs to Zapata's legacy more plausible, or at least less surprising, despite being the direct descendants of those who arranged his murder. The content of their arguments typically centered on either their previous fulfillment of Zapata's demands or their continued commitment to Zapata's ideals. For example, Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo began a 1995 speech saying:

Fellow farmers: Here at Chinameca [*the village in which Zapata was murdered*] we pay tribute to Emiliano Zapata; here at Chinameca we affirm that the principles, ideals, and the legacy of Zapata remain valid; here at Chinameca today we ratified the commitment of keeping the agricultural reform alive. Liberty, law, and justice were the principles that Zapata defended. Zapata fought for the freedom of those who generation after generation had worked their land to restore their communities and their people. This fight is your fight and in this fight I am and will always be with you. Zapata fought for law so that its respect should be the best guarantee of the rights of the men and women of the countryside. This fight is also for you, I am in this fight and I will always be at your side. Zapata fought for justice so that in the Mexican countryside we could overcome backlogs, fight poverty, and expand opportunities. This fight is also for you, I am in this fight and I will always be at your side. [Zedillo 1995]

Zedillo's statement is vague in three ways: it is unclear as to what the indigenous people needed freedom from; it is unclear what laws would help guarantee the unspecified rights Zedillo refers to; and finally it is unclear what expanding opportunities means.

Other government speeches asserted that Zapata's *commitment to social justice became the constitutional mandate that defines the root and reason that the state arose out of the revolutionary movement.* Zedillo also suggested that *Zapata did not see his aspirations realized, but from his ideals and from his fight new laws arose and new institutions were formed.* Perhaps the most audacious claim suggested *the demand for agricultural justice expressed in the Plan of Ayala was surpassed extensively by the Mexican Agricultural Reform, one of the most extensive and profound in the world.* It is important to reiterate that we are less concerned with the truthfulness of these statements, but more the form in which these claims are made relative to the knowledge base from which they come. The institutional authority and legitimacy enjoyed by the government affords them the ability to make vague, abstract claims to heirship without concrete examples of why Zapata would support their position on land reform, largely because of their position in a traditional or elite knowledge base.

More of the Same

The Zapatistas were much more explicit in suggesting that neoliberal policies were a major issue in the dispute over land. They argued that the signing of NAFTA in particular was the beginning of a process that would destroy the indigenous people's way of life. An entire communiqué in 1994 was dedicated to the topic. In it, a fictitious beetle named Durito discusses the concept with Subcommander Marcos. Durito tells Marcos that he is "studying about neoliberalism and its strategy for dominating Latin America," arguing that:

There are now laws which attack the communal property and the "ejido," which favor the monopolizing of lands, which allow the sale of our riches to the foreigner's monies. And the laws were drafted by the bad Mexican governments, we call them "neoliberal," which rule this country, yours and ours, our General, as if it were in full decadence, a large property which must be advertised for sale with all of its peons, that is to say with all Mexicans, our General, included in the bargain. [EZLN 1994]

This passage suggests that, while the *haciendas* of the past were broken up and some land was given back to indigenous people, due to the implementation of neoliberal policies, the entire country now operates like a *hacienda*. The Zapatistas are suggesting that the struggle remains the same, but on a larger scale, as their exploitation is more comprehensive.

Also in the 1997 communiqué, the Zapatistas point to the transformation of their exploitation from a national problem to an international one, again drawing connections between themselves and Zapata:

Here we are because these governments continue to display a lack of memory towards the Indians and because the rich landowners, with different names, keep on stripping the farmers of their land. Like when you called to fight for land and liberty, today the Mexican lands are turned over to the wealthy foreigners. Like it happened then, today, governments make up laws to legitimize the theft of lands. [EZLN 1997]

This comment suggests that, for the Zapatistas, neoliberalism is not a liberating force, but rather a repackaging of the same old exploitation, a matter of

shifting from exploitation at the hand of their own country to that on a global scale. Furthermore, they argue that they do not intend to allow the exploitation to continue without a fight. In this, they again draw a line of continuity between themselves and Zapata.

New Opportunities

While the government never explicitly uses the term "neoliberalism" or mentions NAFTA specifically, it is apparent that in 1995 when Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo talked about "a truly comprehensive policy that includes alternatives to agricultural production in order to create enough jobs to take root for the population in its places of origin," he was referring to NAFTA, which resulted in produce from the United States being imported into Mexico at cheaper prices than Mexican farmers could offer. It is also clear that when Zedillo, again in 1995, spoke of creating "a new productive culture" and "a profound productive transformation" that will take "advantage of the new legal framework, new support philosophies, and possibilities offered by foreign trade in fair conditions," he is talking about neoliberalism. He further suggests that this "transformation of the Mexican countryside" is "the best way to memorialize Zapata." Instead of being a "strategy for dominating Latin America," neoliberalism would provide "the future Mexico deserves."

"¡Zapata Vive! ¡La Lucha Sigue!"

With statements like, *we will not stop struggling until all the peoples of Mexico have democracy, freedom, justice, independence, decent housing, well-paid work, land, good*

food, health, and education, the Zapatistas were asserting that their future is one of continuous struggle until their demands are met. This sentiment is reflected in their often used cry, *Zapata vive, la lucha sigue* (Zapata lives, the fight continues).

They were not only determined to keep fighting but also not to allow the government to trick them:

As in your time, Don Emiliano, the governments have tried to deceive us. They talk and talk and no promises are kept, except for the killings of farmers. They sign and sign papers and nothing materializes, except for the evictions of Indigenous people and their persecution. And they have also betrayed us, our General. [EZLN 1997]

The Zapatistas had tried cooperation and it did not work. Cooperation was no longer an option.

Though the Zapatistas never explicitly discuss their vision of Mexico's future, it is clear from their communiqués that it would be a land where the country respected the indigenous and the poor. They claimed not to be interested in moving into fancy homes in the cities, but rather wanted to be free to live off the land as their ancestors had.

Help Us Help You

Nowhere in the Mexican government's speeches do they specifically address the Zapatista movement. There are passages, though, directed towards farmers, indigenous people, and rural Mexicans in general that could just as easily have been meant for the Zapatistas:

The best way to honor the memory of Zapata is to work together to build the future Mexico deserves. I know that today, as always, the national unity will count on the men and women of the countryside and with the Mexican farmer organizations. United and preserving in effort we will honor Zapata, we will honor the farmers, we will honor Mexico. [Zedillo 1995]

That the Zapatistas are not explicitly mentioned is not important. What is significant is the call to rural Mexicans not to support rebellion, but to work with the government to achieve its neoliberal version of land reform.

Other passages imply that the government will fight for rural people, but that it needs their help in the struggle:

With the participation of the farmers and its organizations we will continue this fight for justice until the population of the countryside is on equal terms with the population of the cities. With you we are going to build that productive, just, and prosperous field that we all want, so that the rural families do not need to be separated, so that they find opportunities of progress in their places of origin. [Zedillo 1997]

This quote suggests that the government is fighting for the farmers, but missing in statements like this one is an antagonist. If the Zapatistas are wrong, and the government is not the barrier to freedom and justice and land, then who is oppressing the indigenous, rural, and poor people of Mexico? Also significant here is the assertion that equality with urban areas and neoliberal notions of progress are desired by rural, poor, indigenous Mexicans. It seems the

government was suggesting that the people needed saving from themselves; from a nostalgic desire to live in the simpler times of the past. The government's vision of the future of Mexico thus was one where the nation leaves behind its past and becomes immersed in the global economy.

Social Marking in Memory Entrepreneurship

We will now discuss, using social marking (Brekhus 1996), how each group naturalizes different traits of Zapata in order to support its claims. First, the groups selected traits of Zapata that support their position in the mnemonic battle. Next, they attached their own actions or traits to those they emphasized in Zapata in order to establish continuity. Third, they juxtaposed their current action or traits with those of their opponents to show that the opposition contradicts those of Zapata. These last two stages are what we term the naturalization process. Finally, previously extraordinary actions or traits are treated as mundane or normal. This stage is crucial to support the claims of each group that it is *obviously* Zapata's rightful heir or that it is *obviously* interpreting the past correctly.

Marked Traits

The major difference in representing Zapata revolved around his role in the revolution. The Zapatistas presented Zapata as a stubborn, dedicated *warrior* who refused to settle for less than complete fulfillment of his demands, even after other revolutionaries had taken power and wanted to stop the revolt. The Mexican government presented him as

a *humanitarian* who wanted the revolution to contain a social justice component and who strived to improve the lives of the indigenous, rural, and poor Mexicans.

In order to justify their respective representations of Zapata, the groups emphasized events or characteristics that supported their views. They marked these attributes as extraordinary in order to separate them from the rest of Zapata's traits or actions. Differences in the ways in which the groups emphasized traits derived from their distinctive knowledge bases. The Zapatistas provided specific stories describing actions of Zapata, while the government, given their position in a more traditional, elite knowledge base, made more abstract claims concerning Zapata's involvement in the revolution based on their long-standing, institutional power. Their claims took the form of stating that Zapata stood for "Liberty, Justice, and Law" while trumpeting their own dedication to these principles as inscribed in their latest agricultural plans.

The notion of marked and unmarked categories also holds true for the representations both groups select for remembering Zapata. Brekhus (1996:500) points out that "the marked term signals a certain characteristic that is left unmarked in the unmarked term" and that "the 'social mind' actively perceives one side of a contrast while ignoring the other side as epistemologically unproblematic." Thus, when Zapata is marked as being a warrior or humanitarian, and examples are provided to serve as marked traits amidst many other traits that are left unmarked, those traits are highlighted as exceptional, as reasons for being commemorated, while

the other unmentioned, unexceptional traits are left unmarked. In marking certain aspects of Zapata's memory, the groups were suggesting that the highlighted traits were not present among Zapata's historical peers. Additionally, when the groups marked certain traits or actions of his as exceptional, their inattention to his other traits or actions implicitly left them unmarked, as unexceptional, or as traits or actions not unique to Zapata. The first characteristic of markedness, that the marked element is more narrowly specified and heavily articulated than the unmarked, holds true as the traits highlighted by both groups were the only ones discussed; all others were left out.

The second characteristic of markedness, that "the unmarked feature appears to represent the nonspecialized whole, while the marked appears to represent a specialized subset of the whole" (Brekhus 1996:500), is again true in this case, as the traits or actions marked by each group as exceptional are those they describe as fit to commemorate Zapata. In other words, the other, unmentioned traits and actions of Zapata were unexceptional or characteristic of many other people. Unmentioned traits are those that made him like everyone else, while those the groups marked set him outside or above the average person. The third characteristic, that the unmarked is often more common than the marked, ties into the previous point and again fits the case at hand. Zapata's exceptional traits were marked as such because they were what made him worthy of commemoration.

The final characteristic, that marked elements comprise a "master status," trumping distinctions that

are relevant in the unmarked, fits the case of Zapata's memory, as well. This characteristic points to the fact that once, for example, the Zapatistas presented Zapata as a stubborn, armed, warrior, the fact that he was willing at times to entertain the idea of compromise with the government, a part of his unmarked traits, was trumped by his determination to achieve complete fulfillment of his demands. Similarly, once the government presented Zapata as a humanitarian, his many violent and aggressive actions during the revolution, a part of his unmarked traits, were trumped by his determination to improve the living conditions in rural Mexico.

Connecting Present Action to a Marked Past

In addition to marking certain traits and actions of Zapata as exceptional or extraordinary, the opposing groups also connected their actions to particular marked traits or actions. This is the second stage of the naturalization process. In claiming continuity or heirship of Zapata's legacy, both groups attempted to establish the relevance or importance of their view. The Zapatistas not only pointed out that the enemy they were facing was similar to the one Zapata faced, they discussed how their methods for combating that enemy were the same as Zapata's. Similarly, the Mexican government suggested that they were facing problems that Zapata opposed, and that they desired to work with rural Mexicans to enact laws that would protect the rights of the indigenous poor. Again they asserted that in working with rural Mexicans they were upholding the principles of "Liberty, Justice, and Law" that Zapata supported.

Disconnecting the Opposition's Present Action From a Marked Past

Discrediting the opposition to strengthen one's own viewpoint is the third stage of the naturalization process. This occurs in our case, for instance, when the government asserts that cooperation to enact laws is the key to land reform, while implicitly discounting armed rebellion as an ineffective means to achieve that goal. Similarly, the Zapatistas claimed to have tried the government's approach and that it did not work. Speaking of the government, the Zapatistas argued that, "they sign and sign papers and nothing materializes, except for the evictions of Indigenous people and their persecution." This was an attempt not only to criticize the government's method as ineffective but also to discredit its claims to sharing Zapata's goals. In turn, their assertions as to the ineffectiveness of the government's methods were an attempt to bolster their own claims to heirship, thus further strengthening the image of Zapata they wished to promote.

Treating the Marked as Unmarked

In the fourth stage of the naturalization process, traits that were previously treated as exceptional or extraordinary are represented as mundane, common, or natural. What is important to note here is that the shift from marked to unmarked is not a demotion, or a devaluing of the trait or action, but rather a change in emphasis (Brekhus 1996). As Brekhus (1996) points out:

Social markedness creates the illusion that marked categories represent deviations from a generic pop-

ulation while unmarked categories simply represent the generic population. [p. 519]

As such, the shift in emphasis in our case was one in which the opposing groups marked Zapata's alleged traits or actions as exceptional, as positive deviations from a generic population (both from his other common traits or actions and from those of other people who engaged in undistinguished behaviors). Then, after attaching their own actions to the marked traits or actions while simultaneously detaching the actions of their opponents from those same traits or actions, the opposing groups recast certain traits from marked to unmarked. When the same traits that were marked in Zapata's legacy show up in one of the groups' discussions of their own behavior, they are not treated as exceptional, but rather as natural. For example:

Today Zapata lives in us and he lives in the struggle of millions of Mexicans who know that the defense of national sovereignty is loose in the countryside and in the city, in the indigenous municipalities and communities, in the unions and social organizations, in the non-governmental and the political organizations, in the grass roots church communities and in the honest clergy, in students and teachers, in neighbors and housewives, in homosexuals and lesbians, in boys and girls, in women, in young people, in old ones. [EZLN 1999]

In this passage, the Zapatistas were suggesting that their response to governmental oppression is not an isolated experience, but rather one shared by many people in Mexico, suggesting that their rebellious sentiment was becoming increasingly ubiquitous, or normal.

The Mexican government tried to do the same thing:

With the participation of the farmers and its organizations we will continue this fight for justice until the population of the countryside is on equal terms with the population of the cities. With you we are going to build that productive, just, and prosperous field that we all want, so that the rural families do not need to be separated, so that they find opportunities of progress in their places of origin. In this manner we will honor Zapata; in this manner we will honor those who followed him; in this manner we will honor all who have fought and continue fighting for justice in the countryside; thus we will build a better future for our children. [Zedillo 1997]

Through these words Zedillo proposed not only that the government was concerned with the same issues as rural Mexicans but also that the determination and clear thinking so revered in Zapata were universally accepted as the only way to fix their problems. By promoting cooperation as the means to justice, liberty, and the law, Zedillo was suggesting that, since so many people are determined, everyone could do their small part, and together they could create change.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have extended the concept of collective memory by demonstrating how the dynamics of social marking (Brekhus 1998) help illuminate a naturalization process that is used by those engaged in mnemonic battles to recast constructed representations of the past as natural, pure, and true. We have shown that the Zapatistas and the

Mexican government provide decidedly different representations of the revolutionary Emiliano Zapata in ways that support their positions in a century-long agrarian dispute. The Zapatistas focus on Zapata's radical revolutionary behavior and his demand for ownership of the land to those who work it, while the government emphasizes Zapata's passion for social justice and his dedication to making Mexico a better place. Put simply, the two groups exemplified what Olick and Robbins (1998) call instrumentalist collective memory or, more specifically, memory entrepreneurship.

The rhetorical strategies employed by the Zapatistas were correspondingly different from those of the Mexican government. That is, their attempts at asserting continuity and rightful heirship of Zapata's legacy were more concrete as opposed to abstract. These differences also reflected the two groups' different knowledge bases, that is, their divergent relationships to authority structures.

While we used social marking to analyze the data, we also employed it as an interpretive device to make sense of how the groups discussed Zapata's characteristics.⁹ In the process of examining the narratives of both groups, a pattern emerged regarding the naturalization of Zapata's traits. Analysis of social marking can thus help scholars

⁹ Zerubavel (2004) has emphasized the ways in which social marking can help understand which parts of the past are considered memorable to particular "mnemonic communities." Zerubavel's focus is more on the social marking of time, however, emphasizing how particular stretches in a group's past come to be understood as "sacred" periods. Our focus is instead on instances where the contents of those sacred spans of time are contested and the ways in which groups employ processes of social marking in these disputes.

interested not only in studying the narratives of groups participating in mnemonic battles but also in understanding how these struggles take place. Previous research that examined mnemonic battles approached the process as though the mechanics involved were obvious. Conceiving of these disputes in terms of the naturalization process, what we presented here can further illuminate their internal dynamic. The more disputes over historical representations are dissected and their mechanics made visible, the better suited we will be to identify memory entrepreneurship when it takes place. Additionally, if we come to better understand how representations are crafted to reflect current interests, we can more effectively identify which, if any, side of a representational dispute we wish to support.

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Focusing research on the manipulation of the past is becoming more important in the increasingly polarized atmosphere of contemporary American life. Current disputes over the legacies of prominent personalities in recent American history, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Polletta 1998; Dewan 2008; Cupp 2012) and former president Ronald Reagan (Drum 2011; Dellinger 2013), as well as broader ideological offensives by reactionary political groups such as the Tea Party movement (see: Lepore 2010) and the Texas Board of Education, who have proposed replacing the phrase "trans-Atlantic slave trade" with "Atlantic triangular trade" (Mangan 2010; McGreal 2010), have greatly intensified in recent years. Analysis of the naturalization process as outlined here can serve as a vital tool for understanding these contentious debates.

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