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SOCIAL CAPITAL, ECOTOURISM, AND EMPOWERMENT IN SHIRIPUNO,
ECUADOR

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon have struggled for a sustainable, long-term development path since the entrance of large, foreign-owned oil companies to the area in the 1970s. Global interest in ecotourism has increased over the past few decades and may offer a sustainable option for indigenous community development. Ecotourism's attention to economic, social, and environmental facets of community life make it a more attractive alternative for Amazonian communities that have been largely exploited by oil companies and duped by their "trinkets," or who have otherwise witnessed the environmentally destructive potential of these companies. But why would an impoverished community collectively reject a contract with an oil company willing to offer them money, jobs, and infrastructure? This paper describes original ethnographic research carried out in the indigenous Amazonian community of Shiripuno, Ecuador. It argues that social capital, termed by some as the "missing link" to development, was stimulated by the onset of a community-based ecotourism project. Prior scholarship on this form of capital -- that resulting from social relations -- provides a theoretical framework that demonstrates how increased inter and intra-community relationships and communication pathways provided a solid base for future sustainable development of this community. This ecotourism project's roots in a local women's association offers a space for consideration of the connection between social capital and empowerment, and the potential this connection provides to a machismo-dominated area of the globe.

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Chapter 1

Literature Review

Development in the Ecuadorian Amazon

Indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon have struggled for a sustainable, long-term development path since the entrance of large, foreign-owned oil companies. With the boom in oil extraction in the Ecuadorian Amazon beginning in the 1970s, the petroleum industry has had a major impact on the country as a whole. More than two billion barrels of oil have been extracted from the country's lowland rainforests, and oil currently accounts for over 50 per cent of Ecuador's exports (OPEC 2013). Extraction-based development, though, has caused major environmental and social impacts throughout the Ecuadorian Amazon (Finer et al, 2008; Sawyer 2004). Identified as one of the most ecologically diverse parts of the planet (Ceballos and Ehlich, 2006), the Amazon has long suffered deforestation due to the construction of access roads and the installation of pipelines, along with contamination from oil spills and wastewater (Cowell 1991; Finer et al, 2008).

Environmental degradation resulting from petroleum extraction has resulted in significant backlash from local indigenous populations, which comprise a large portion of the Amazon's population. CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador) is described by Sawyer (2004) as "the national umbrella organization [that] has acted as the primary indigenous body that negotiates Indian demands with the Ecuadorian state, and beyond" (pg. 43). CONAIE has opposed old and new oil projects in the Amazon in no small part due to the negative affects of colonization brought in by access roads (Finer, 2008). San Sebastian et al. (2001) also revealed higher exposure to cancer among a village surrounded by oil fields in the Amazon basin. Such

environmental damage and resulting health consequences in Ecuador were dramatically depicted in the 2009 documentary *Crude: The Real Price of Oil*.

Not surprisingly the majority of oil companies working in the Amazon are foreign-owned and include Shell, BP, and Exxon-Mobil (San Sebastian et al, 2001). Consequently, these companies offer virtually no profit-sharing opportunities for local Amazonian populations. This lack of economic benefit from large-scale oil extraction has often led to conflict, such as the protests against Canadian energy company Ivanhoe documented by Smith (2014). In that situation, the company did not follow through on promises to hire 90% of its workers from three local villages in the Amazon. The company instead hired 80% of the project workers from the culturally and geographically remote Andean and coastal regions. Additionally, the promised \$450 a month salary for local residents hired by Ivanhoe was later reduced to a mere \$8 a day.

As the above example illustrates, from the perspective of indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon, oil extraction has offered little in the way of sustainable development. With few long-term economic, environmental, or social benefits for these communities resulting from petroleum extraction activities, many communities are prompted to seek out alternative, more sustainable options.

Ecotourism as an Alternative Development Strategy

Representing the tourism industry's response to Our Common Future's global call for sustainable development, ecotourism is seen as one such alternative, sustainable development option for Amazonian communities (Stronza & Hunt, 2012). Epler Wood (1991, pg. 201) provides a frequently cited definition of ecotourism:

"purposeful travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the

ecosystem while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources financially beneficial to local citizens."

Key to this definition -- and indeed to most definitions of ecotourism (Fennell 2001) -- is its consideration of the economic opportunities provided to local individuals as an incentive to conserve natural resources. Wesche (1996) mentions indigenous ecotourism as a means to insert a rural community into the global economy, especially in response to developed countries' increased environmental awareness in recent decades. He also explains that indigenous ecotourism projects can increase community cohesion by revalidating environmental traditions (pg. 158). In his work also carried out in the Ecuadorian Amazon, Wunder (2000) likewise found that ecotourism's economic benefits could lead to enhanced indigenous stewardship of marketable natural resources. Borman (2008) further highlights ecotourism's capacity to preserve and even revitalize indigenous culture in Cofan communities in Ecuador. Despite these favorable outcomes of ecotourism, skepticism and debate about the outcomes of tourism for indigenous people persists (Johnston 2005).

In theory, the pursuit of an ecotourism project as an alternative to oil development in the Ecuadorian Amazon appears to be an obvious choice. Compared side-by-side, ecotourism theoretically offers the more sustainable option with regards to environmental, social, and economic impacts for indigenous populations. However, as some have noted, ecotourism in practice does not always achieve its lofty objectives. Coria and Calfucura (2012), in an assessment of ecotourism scholarship based in developing countries across the globe, explain that ecotourism does not automatically lead to biodiversity conservation or economic development for indigenous groups. There is a need to compliment ecotourism activities with other development projects due to an unpredictable flow of ecotourists in developing countries. They additionally point out a lack of political voice that is common among indigenous groups, which is a setback for those groups attempting to form or maintain political backings. Negative results of small

ecotourism initiatives can come in the form of increased resource extraction or expanded agriculture from an individual's investment of new ecotourism earnings (Langholz 1999; Stronza 2010). Additionally, ecotourism projects may only supply "modest cash benefits" to just a small proportion of the community (Kiss, 2004, pg. 234). In their evaluation of eight ecotourism initiatives in the Brazilian Amazon, Wallace and Pierce (1996) concluded that efforts to involve locals in decision making and planning -- factors shown to be critical for ecotourism success (Stronza 2008; 2010) -- were entirely unsatisfactory.

As in many other contexts where natural resources are under extraction pressure, in the case of indigenous Amazonian communities in Ecuador, it is necessary to consider the alternative livelihood strategies available to local residents. Oil companies, as described by Smith (2014), have a history of making empty promises to these communities. Stretches of pipeline were not maintained after the Ecuadorian government (namely President Correa in 2006) called for oil companies to renegotiate their contracts with the state. Some companies, specifically in the northern Napo province, had to pull out, leaving communities that had previously been benefiting from "trinkets" provided by oil company developers (text books, food, stipends, community buildings) with nothing aside from the negative health effects associated with water contamination, in addition to dried-up croplands and forests. These negative outcomes far overshadow the more modest consequences of tourism highlighted above.

It was the withdrawal of some oil companies from the Napo province that left many local communities looking for an alternative, more sustainable means to develop and support the wellbeing of members. Additionally, the prospective of abandonment illustrated potentialities to those communities considering a contract with an oil company. Ecotourism is one option being pursued (Smith, 2014) by those communities abandoned by the oil companies, in addition to those groups who witnessed the destructive nature of this withdrawal. By moving toward ecotourism initiatives, either because of company abandonment or contract rejection, groups in

the Napo province of the Ecuadorian Amazon have already put environmental considerations near the tops of their agendas.

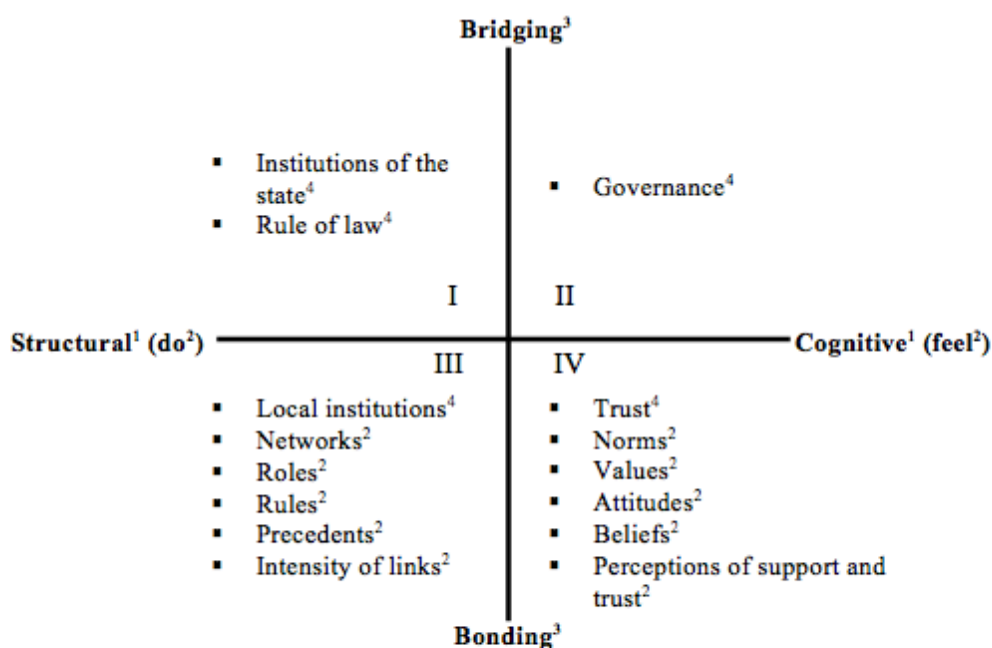
It would be unwise, however, to ignore the attractive economic benefits offered in these rejected contracts. There must be a reason why a community, even after witnessing the destructive capabilities of untrustworthy oil companies within neighboring communities, would turn away valuable assets such as jobs, school books, and community infrastructure in favor of a tourism project. This paper argues that a consideration of the importance of new social capital, and how it functions within a community ecotourism project, reveals possible answers to this question.

Social Capital: the missing link?

Grootaert (1998) explains that social capital refers to the set of norms, networks, and resources through which people gain access to power and resources, and through which decision-making and policy formulation occur. He termed the concept “the missing link” in development, as it takes into account the way in which individuals interact and organize themselves to generate development and growth. This is especially relevant to the means by which future generations reap the same amount or more wealth as the current one -- a key to sustainable development.

Many scholars have attempted to outline the specific characteristics of social capital (see for example Harpham et al, 2002; Jones, 2005; Narayan, 1999; Pretty & Ward, 2001), some with the purpose of applying these frameworks to specific communities (Isham et al, 2002; Jones, 2005; Uphoff et al., 2000). Serra (2011) points out that the implications associated with social capital research, however, often conflict with each other. This results in an unsatisfactory framework that does not give enough weight to context-dependent factors of social networks, norms, roles, and values.

The purpose of this paper, then, is to assemble several different yet related conceptualizations of social capital into a coherent framework, and then to apply that framework to an indigenous community ecotourism project in Shiripuno, Ecuador. Key to this paper is the consideration of how social capital indicators function within the context of an alternative development strategy in Amazonian Ecuador. Figure 1 illustrates this social capital synthesis.



¹ Harpham et al, 2002

² Jones, 2005

³ Harpham et al, 2002; Narayan, 1999

⁴ Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001

Figure 1: A Unified Social Capital Framework

: structural and cognitive manifestations of bonding and bridging social capital (adapted from sources noted in the footnotes)

At its most basic level, social capital can be split into two distinct categories -- structural and cognitive (Harpham et al, 2002). Structural social capital takes into account the networks, roles, and rules present within a specific community. It is what people *do*. Cognitive social

capital includes norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs, in addition to perceptions of support and trust. It is what people *feel* (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001; Jones 2005). A consideration of both the networks-based and norm-dependent measures is important in thinking about social capital because a combination of the two is necessary in order to correctly observe the potential for mutually beneficial collective action (Krishna and Shrader, 2000, Jones, 2005).

Structural and cognitive social capital function both within a community and between communities in a way that has been referred to as bonding and bridging social capital, respectively (Harpham et al, 2002; Narayan, 1999). Warren et al (2001, pg. 8) describe the importance of strong social bonds and effective organizations within a community in providing a foundation for development. The strengthening of intra-community bonds forms a basis for productive “bridging” social capital, which is a key concept when considering small indigenous ecotourism projects (Jones, 2005). Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2001) indicate the potential for communities to “bridge” with third parties, such as NGOs and the government, in order to stimulate social capital within the community. Communities lacking broader connections remain isolated and weak (Warren et al, 2001, pg. 11).

For the sake of visualization (Figure 1), bridging and bonding social capital manifest along vertical and horizontal lines (Coleman, 1990; Harpham et al, 2002; Serra, 2011). This reinforces the differing yet equally valuable roles that both intra and inter-community relationships and connections play toward the stimulation of social capital within a community utilizing a small ecotourism project as a development strategy.

Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2001) indicate in the Social Capital Initiative (SCI) that the ideal approach to measuring social capital would represent all four of the above quadrants outlined in Figure 1. According to these researchers, it is more common for studies within the SCI to focus on only one or two of the quadrants, with a further tendency to situate that focus at the micro level (bonding level) of social capital. In an attempt to give more context to social

capital indicators at the micro level (Serra, 2011), the present assessment of social capital stemming from community-based ecotourism in Shiripuno accounts all four of the quadrants in Figure 1. This ensures consideration of the specific indicators, and the function of those indicators, at the micro (bonding) and macro (bridging) levels of social capital. Consequently, a well-rounded picture of the indicators and function of social capital within Shiripuno, Ecuador is achieved.

Social Capital and Empowerment

In an influential writing, Scheyvens (1999) outlines a comprehensive framework for assessing empowerment resulting from community involvement in ecotourism. According to that framework, communities involved in ecotourism can become empowered in four primary arenas: economic, psychological, socially and politically. The implications of this influential framework are that any measure of the "success" of ecotourism projects must account for the nature of community control over the economic, psychological, social and political impacts of ecotourism.

Scheyvens (2010) later explores local Third World community involvement in ecotourism ventures as a space for the consideration of gender roles, gender relations, and access to resources. As she indicates, although most projects contain socioeconomic involvement of the host community, "the ways in which they have been drawn into [ecotourism] have not always been in the best interests of all" (2010, pg. 233). Additionally, the term "community" does not necessarily refer to a homogenous group of people with shared goals. Scheyvens calls a gender-focused research project on community involvement in ecotourism "long overdue in light of other studies which demonstrate how elites, particularly men, often coopt and come to dominate community-based development efforts" (2010; pg. 234).

The lack of homogeneity across a local community is especially prevalent in Latin America, where machismo is a “widespread, deep-rooted psychological problem” (Stevens, 1973, pg. 58). Along with Scheyvens’ (2010) call for active involvement of women in ecotourism initiatives, the pertinence of gender-related issues among communities in Ecuador, and social capital’s consideration of specific norms, attitudes, and networks within a community, it would be interesting to use social capital as an evaluation tool of levels of female empowerment within a specific community. As Scheyvens (2010, pg. 232) points out, the implications of this type of research will be able to guide agencies in facilitating productive empowerment of women through ecotourism in the future.

Chapter 2

Methods

Study Site

Napo Province

Ecuador's Napo Province (population of over 100,000) is located entirely within the country's section of the Amazon Rainforest. According to 2010 census data, the area's 56.8% self-identified indigenous portion makes it the only majority-indigenous province of Ecuador (INAC, 2010). Kichwa-speaking communities make up the majority of the province's indigenous population, and groups of Achuar, Shuar, and Waorani peoples, all representing a separate set of cultural and linguistic characteristics, border to the north, east, and south.

Tena, the capital of Napo, is the region's principle urban zone and commerce hub. It also serves as the conduit for adventure tourists looking to explore the region's globally significant biological diversity (Ceballos and Ehlich, 2006). A regional airport and bus terminal in Tena make it the ideal jumping-off point for tourists before they travel further into the jungle for pursuits such as zip lining, white water rafting, and guided jungle hikes.

The laying of oil pipeline through Napo in the 1980s by foreign-owned oil companies came with the promise of "trinkets" for those communities present on the land. Broken promises from these companies have been the main catalyst for backlash from local indigenous communities, and have been the driving reason for pursuits of alternative development strategies in the form of ecotourism in the area (Smith, 2014)

Shiripuno, Amukishmi, and the Community Ecotourism Project

Southeast of Tena, along the shores of the Napo River, lies the small Kichwa community of Shiripuno (population of about 200). The community itself is a rocky dirt road flanked by two rows of tin-roofed cement houses. The tall weeds running along the road's edge are dotted with empty potato chip bags and roaming chickens. There is a small cluster of communal buildings, including the school, a nursery, and an activities pavilion, located between the end of the dirt road and the community soccer field. Situated on the far side of the soccer field is a small wooden sign that reads, "*Bienvenidos a Shiripuno*" [Welcome to Shiripuno], with two symbols indicating that sleeping and eating arrangements are available at the ecolodge located at the end of the well-kept trail flanking the Napo River.

Most of the men from the community work as canoe drivers along the Napo River for both tourism and commercial purposes, and a few travel to Tena each day to work various office jobs. Prior to the establishment of Amukishmi (the local women's association) and the community tourism project in 2005, most women worked their home farm plots, and used crop yields for family consumption and occasionally to sell in the market. The proximity of Shiripuno to Puerto Misahuallí -- a small tourist port town full of restaurants and hostels located at the intersection of the Misahuallí and Napo Rivers -- makes it a convenient location for both the men of the community who work as canoe drivers and for the women who sell crops in local markets for small earnings.

Amukishmi (Association of Kichwa Women of Shiripuno, Misahuallí) was established within Shiripuno in 2005 with the help of the French non-governmental organization (NGO) Planet Heart. Planet Heart's website explains its aim to provide reliable support towards development projects in impoverished areas of the globe. Planet Heart puts childhood education at the top of their list of goals, in addition to the creation and monitoring of funds that directly benefit local impoverished populations (Planet Heart).

The NGO came to Shiripuno after a French tourist met and married a local Kichwa man, who is now the president of the community of Shiripuno. Her father had been involved as a volunteer with Planet Heart in the past, and she realized the necessity of a structured project focused on the betterment of women and children in Shiripuno after spending a few years in the area. Together, volunteers from Planet Heart and the women of Shiripuno interested in joining the association created a statute that was then submitted to Ecuador's Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion and formalized on March 6, 2005 in accordance with Ecuadorian Civil Code, Title XXX (Codigo Civil, Title XXX). This act legally legitimized the community ecotourism project in Shiripuno and established its purpose in the eyes of the Ecuadorian government.

With the statutes in place, Amukishmi developed an ecolodge and related structures capable of accommodating large tourist groups during the day and smaller groups (couples, families) overnight. The 31 active members of Amukishmi run the ecolodge, which in addition to providing rainforest excursions has as a primary purpose the teaching and the preservation of Kichwa customs and values to visiting tourists and project interns. Nearby Puerto Misahuallí, having a lengthy history as a popular adventure tourism hub, ensures a fairly steady flow of visitors to the project at Shiripuno. By upholding traditional ecological knowledge and values, and by providing employment alternatives to extraction-based livelihoods, Amukishmi's ecotourism operations preserves the community of Shiripuno's little area of the rainforest in a sustainable fashion. It is now the main development initiative within the community.

The project in Shiripuno is an ideal location for social capital and ecotourism research for several reasons. The location of Shiripuno within the Napo Province of Ecuador puts it at the forefront of Amazonian oil extraction- the community itself rejected a proposed oil pipeline through their land in 2012 in favor of further developing their ecotourism project. Amukishmi is an association focused on employing a normally marginalized section of an indigenous Ecuadorian community's population. Highlighting and understanding the efforts put forth by

these women to become an organized and successful project could lead to more successful projects elsewhere.

Research Design and Data Collection

The author, along with 14 other students, traveled to the ecolodge compound each morning for three weeks in June of 2013 as part of an ethnographic field school program. The author, along with a team of two other researchers, engaged in semi-structured group interviews with the local women, and also partook in participant observation, which included participation in daily Kichwa lessons from four of the Amukishmi women.

Participant Observation

Participant observation took place on a daily basis, and began during the daily morning walk from Misahuallí on through the community of Shiripuno. These trips allowed for observation of the community itself, in addition to a general understanding of the population and their lifestyle. Once on the tourism compound, the author was given the opportunity to witness the complete function of the ecolodge- those activities including the tourists were supplemented by a “back-stage” look into the organization and implementation of these happenings (MacCannell, 1976). The relatively small size of the tourism compound facilitated observations of the tourist/employee interactions, and also allowed for the author to interact with tourists and talk to them about their travels and their experience at the ecolodge.

Access to the kitchen, which functioned as a common space of sorts for the women throughout the day, provided a space for more intimate, personal conversations during the slower parts of the day. Often, the conversations here were more lighthearted and less focused on their jobs. Occasionally, organizational issues were discussed in this space.

Staying throughout the afternoon and leaving the compound right before dinner allowed the author to accompany women and their children (who would finish school and walk to the compound's kitchen area around 2 or 3 o'clock) back into the community. This offered a look into the bridging of work and home-life that each woman of Amukishmi experienced. In terms of the social capital dynamic of Shiripuno, these more intimate relationships with the women of Amukishmi informed much of the discussion and conclusions of this paper. Participant observations were recorded in a jot book throughout the day, and were then elaborated into full journal entries each evening.

Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured group format. The author was accompanied by two additional student researchers during each interview. One researcher functioned as the interviewer, one as the translator, and one as the "techie" in charge of an audio recorder. Interviews took place at various locations around the ecolodge: inside of the shaman's hut, on a bench on the river beach, in the cacao hut, on top of the "piedra sagrada" [sacred rock], and inside of the lodge's open-air dining room. Locations were chosen because of their non-use for tourism activities at the time of the interview and were largely free of distractions. Interviews took place in the morning -- before any day travelers arrived -- while the women were getting themselves and the lodge organized for the day. Usually, a break was taken from food preparations or jewelry-making in order to converse with the research team. As they had already clocked in for the day, they were compensated via their normal hourly pay during the interview.

Frequently, other women on their way to attend to tourism-related affairs passed by the interviews, but these greetings only momentarily interrupted the interviews. The unpredictable weather of the rainforest occasionally led to a change of location while an interview was in progress. Although a bit disruptive to more structured interviewing, this break from formal

questioning allowed for relaxed back-and-forth between the interviewee and research team while another location was sought out and thus facilitated rapport between the interviewers and the community members being interviewed.

Respondents

Interviewees were initially purposively sampled as members of the local women's association (Bernard, 2011). As the women of Amukishmi run the ecotourism project itself, each interviewee also functioned as a tourism employee informant. Over the course of the research project, the research team was tipped by other women to talk to specific people based on their possible insight into the questions that had been asked. This later chain referral method -- or snowball sampling -- allowed for more enriched and informed conversations as the research progressed.

Lengthy interviews were ultimately carried out with six Amukishmi women. An additional male respondent from a Kichwa community in another Ecuadorian province also participated in one interview. Interviewees ranged in age from 19 to 54 years old. All but one (the youngest) had been a part of the community ecotourism project from its onset in 2005. All of the interviewed women had at least one child, and at least one child still lived in her household at the time of the interview. Each woman had finished grade school, with one, the current president of the association, having gone on to pursue a higher education. Only one interviewee had Kichwa as her first language and Spanish as her second, but this did not encumber interview progress. The then-current president of the association was key to informing the research team of the logistical workings of the association and ecolodge. Additionally, her higher education led her to travel to other parts of the country, which offered a different outlook from other interviewees.

Interviewing was structured around a few principle themes: a) the founding of the community of Shiripuno, b) the way ancestors and grandparents lived their lives in comparison to

today, especially after oil extraction entered the region, c) the role of Amukishmi within the community of Shiripuno and within the ecolodge itself, d) each woman's specific jobs within the ecolodge, and e) thoughts about difficulties that women face within the community and throughout Ecuador as a whole. Although these six themes were the primary emphasis of the interview, each interviewee offered a unique response that led every interview in a different direction, which the author also recorded. With varying degrees of elaboration, interviewees also touch on several subjects including household dynamics, organization of Amukishmi and the ecolodge, education, life stories, and thoughts on Kichwa youth in today's society. Average interview length was 100 minutes, the shortest lasting 75 minutes and the longest lasting 123 minutes.

Interviews were recorded both with an audio recording device and in jot notes taken by each individual researcher during the interviews. These interview jot notes were elaborated into more detailed journal entries each evening. After the three weeks in the field, recorded interviews were translated and transcribed into English by the author for the purpose of data analysis. Both interview journal entries and fully transcribed forms of interviews were consulted for final discussions and conclusions.

Archival Data

Interviews and participant observation data were amended by additional archival data. The principle resource was the author's access to Amukishmi's written statute, provided by the president of the association. Photographs were taken of each page for future, off-site reference. The statute formalizes the ecotourism project and the women's association in Shiripuno through the Ecuadorian government (MIES; Title XXX). It provides an outline of goals of the ecotourism project, and roles and responsibilities of each woman involved. The statute explains the purposes of Amukishmi's communal fund as a contribution to the social, economic, and cultural betterment

of the members of Shiripuno. It details the rights that women have being a part of Amukishmi, which include federal protection and backing in the case of abusive domestic disputes. There are detailed explanations of required weekly and monthly meetings, and how these meetings are to be run. The role and term details of the president, vice president, and treasurer are also outlined. There is a detailed description of the “Asamblea General” (General Assembly) and the “Directiva” (the Board), and their associated roles and expectations. Regarding the Board, nomination and election procedures are outlined. There are thorough explanations of requirements and procedures for joining and leaving the association.

Additional archival information was gathered from Planet Heart’s website, the French NGO that funded the start-up of Amukishmi and the ecolodge project in 2005. Specific interview references to government laws or policies were backed up by official documentation, found on government websites. Noted in the earlier review of literature, existing research and scholarly writing on indigenous communities, ecotourism, and oil extraction in the Ecuadorian Amazon provided additional background information.

Chapter 3

Results and Discussion

The discussion portion of this paper will feature data compiled during the author's time in the community tourism project at Shiripuno, in addition to archival data accessed after the fact, in relation to the social capital theory discussed in the literature review. In terms of organization, each quadrant of figure 1 will have a corresponding discussion section. Both empowerment related to the new forms of social capital resulting from the Amukishmi ecotourism project, as well as potential drawbacks of increasing social capital, are assessed.

Structural Bonding

Warren et al. (2001) establish the necessity of strong social bonds and effective organizations within a community as necessary to achieve a solid basis for development. Without a strong foundation on which to build, the continuing financial and legal support provided to Shiripuno by key actors would be useless and unable to thrive. The establishment of Amukishmi's statute is this community's jumping-off point in terms of increased social capital. Although the circumstances under which the women of Shiripuno were able to connect with Planet Heart were by chance, the subsequent growth of the impoverished indigenous community in terms of social capital has implications for future development initiatives.

Estatuto Amukishmi (the Statute of Amukishmi)

The community tourism project at Shiripuno has its roots in a well-organized local women's association. Amukishmi's strong level of organization is reflected in its written statute,

a manifestation of structural social capital (Harpham et al, 2002), which outlines the association's main purposes, goals, and systematic function.

According to the president of the association, all members of Amukishmi are called into a meeting every two months, during which the current president reads the statute aloud, word for word. This is in addition, she explained, to the monthly meetings where organizational issues are discussed among all group members. At the time of the interview, the current president explained that a recent topic of discussion had been repercussions for women showing up late to work. They had decided as a group that the money she would have made would be docked from her pay, and then put directly into the communal fund. "It's so they learn to be responsible...the [statute] helps me with this," she stated. As Jones (2005) points out, the precedent set by pay docking, and then the sending of that money into a communal fund, facilitates mutually beneficial collective action among the members of Amukishmi's network. Recent creation and enforcement of this rule, as the president stated, will teach responsible habits to a group of people who may have never been exposed to the responsibility of a work schedule before.

The association's statute also functions as a reference for how Amukishmi and the ecolodge are to be organized and run. These roles, rules, and precedents (Jones, 2005) are made clear to each member at her time of joining, and again every two months when the statute is read aloud to the association.

The enhancement of social capital among the women of Shiripuno resulting from the realization of Amukishmi as a local institution (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001) is greatly supported by the clear, detailed, and common-knowledge status of the association's statute. This physical document outlines the rules, roles, and precedents expected from members, and organizes members into even more focused groups and networks (Jones, 2005) so that decisions can be made in a collective, productive, and transparent manner.

The Ecolodge

The community-based ecotourism project developed by the members of Amukishmi is another new institution in the community. Although the women's association is the main body controlling this project, members of the Shiripuno community (men and children) are all encouraged to participate. The author witnessed men present each day on the tourism compound, often working to construct a new "camping" area for tourists. When asked about the male presence, the oldest respondent, a mother of three, explained that the communal fund also pays men from the community to come and work on the compound:

We are women and we need strong men to build these buildings. We are working together to help the community, bit by bit.

The association and ecotourism project are structured in a way that facilitates participation from members of the Shiripuno community regardless of their membership status with Amukishmi. Although it is difficult to quantify the intensity of links and relationships between Amukishmi and those nonmembers from the community who are contributing (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001; Serra, 2011), it is clear that the bond is present and productive. Between the author's arrival and departure, this group of men had (locally) gathered the necessary building materials for and completed construction of the entire frame and roof of the new cabin area. As reported by the current president, this teamwork among the men and women of Shiripuno was not typical before the project came into fruition:

We talked to our spouses. They said the project wouldn't be easy. They wanted the women to stay in their houses with their kids; they didn't want the association...there were lots of conflicts, problems with spouses. There were fights, hits, mistreatment because of the project; they didn't want it.

Over time, with the successful implementation of Amukishmi's organized rules, roles, and precedents, two groups that had literally been fighting each other at the start have formed a successful network that has contributed to the ecolodge's infrastructure and productivity thus

further enhancing social capital in the community (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001; Jones, 2005).

The facilitation of young interns and local youths within the everyday function of the ecolodge is yet another example of a newfound network of relations within Shiripuno, formalized by the implementation of Amukishmi statutes and most notably through the ecotourism project (Jones, 2005). Often, these secondary student interns would sit in on the research team's Kichwa lessons in order to help facilitate the learning process. While experiencing first-hand the inner-workings of an ecotourism project, they were actively working with the women of Amukishmi to contribute to the preservation and passing-along of their cultural knowledge. Again, like with the men hired from the community for ecolodge construction, it seems like quantifying the "amount" of relationship inherent in this bond is not as important as the mere existence of the relationship, present only as a result of Amukishmi's establishment.

Cognitive Bonding

Krishna and Shrader (2000) identify the necessity of a combination of both structural *and* cognitive considerations when assessing the amount of social capital within a community. Having outlined the networks-based measures present within Amukishmi and Shiripuno as a whole, norm-dependent factors of increased social capital within and between these two entities will now be considered in an attempt to give the most comprehensive picture of the developmental foundation within Shiripuno (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001).

The manifestation of cognitive bonding within the women's association in Shiripuno can most accurately be attributed to the shared norms and values of traditional Kichwa culture that all of the women work to preserve and teach to the youth of the community (Fukuyama, 2001). As one woman who had previously served as president of the association explained:

Overall we work to value and honor our project for our children. Everything is to value our ancestral customs. Everything; the dance, the dress, the drinks, the Kichwa language. We will never leave these things behind. These customs, we want to give to [our children].

The youngest interviewee, a mother of one, elaborates on how those values are of utmost importance to Amukishmi's work:

Respect, coexistence; first to nature, then to people, especially the wise folk. These value the Kichwa culture.

In support of this statement, the current president of the association attributed the community's rejection of an oil pipeline on their land to their cultural, and therefore environmental, purpose:

We started this project to rescue, value, and save the environment. [An oil company] came to buy our lands to take the oil. They wanted to give us wells. They wanted to give us food. But the president didn't want this in Shiripuno. He refused. He said he wanted to pursue a different lifestyle for his children. He wanted the community to be rich with cultivated lands.

Had the previous 7 years of Amukishmi's mission to help the children of Shiripuno not been successful, one must wonder whether this same decision, one so crucial to the current and future sustainable development of Shiripuno, would have been made? The shared value and purpose of Amukishmi to aid the children of Shiripuno and maintain traditional Kichwa values has led to mutually beneficial collective action among community members (Jones, 2005; Krishna and Shrader, 2000).

One of the most profound cognitive shifts among the community of Shiripuno brought about by the creation and enforcement of Amukishmi's statute has been the shared sense of diminishing machismo attitude among the men of Shiripuno. One woman, a 26 year old mother of three who has been involved with the project since 2005, praised new willingness of her husband to split household chores, since they both now are out of the house working all day. Additionally, the youngest interviewee explained the attitudes that men now have toward the women working for Amukishmi:

The men understand that the women have a job here. They make decisions together. It's to say that there is more respect...today there is not much violence. The women dedicate themselves to tourism and have an income, and there is far less machismo...The women leave and go to their jobs. They leave at six in the morning and return six at night. There is more love and caring because of this.

As the oldest interviewee explained, there are now rules and laws if something related to domestic abuse happens and thus “everything has changed.” These newfound perceptions of support and trust brought about by Amukishmi’s governmentally legitimized statute (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001; Jones, 2005) represent the potential for empowerment associated with increased social capital.

Structural Bridging

Warren et al. (2001) also mention the need for broad connections outside of a community in order to avoid isolation. Social capital becomes stimulated once communities are able to “bridge” with a third party, like an NGO, due to its crucial role as a social and financial advocate (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001). Figure 1, quadrant I outlines the indicators of “structural bridging.”

As mentioned in the methods section, the connection made between the community of Shiripuno and Planet Heart was somewhat happenstance. With the creation of Amukishmi’s statute as a legitimate legal document, though, the community has been able to gain access to resources and opportunities that have worked to strengthen the social fabric of the community over time (Warren et al, 2001, pg. 11). This strengthening has its roots in Amukishmi’s relationship with both the Ecuadorian government and Planet Heart, and has since worked from the bottom up toward a more successful ecotourism project. Because of the structure of

Amukishmi, more success in tourism is directly related to a larger communal fund to support the betterment of Shiripuno as a whole.

After learning about the existence of Amukishmi's statute from the president of the association, the research team was curious as to how much power the document really has within the community. One woman, who joined the project when it began in 2005 at age 16, detailed the different experience she has had with an abusive spouse from what she witnessed between her parents in the past. Her father once split her mother's head open while he was drunk because she had not prepared food, she explained. Because of incidents and stories such as this one, her children are afraid of their father when he drinks. "I reassure them not to fear because he cannot harm me or them without having to suffer the repercussions," she stated, in reference to the threat of legal involvement offered by Amukishmi's statute. In this case, the rule of law acts as a support system for families with abusive fathers (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001).

This same respondent outlined the chain of events that now takes place within the community after an instance of domestic violence. Word travels either by mouth or by cellphone to the current president of the association. The president then facilitates a meeting between the woman, her husband, and a group of Amukishmi women, wherein the husband is made to apologize to both his wife and the association for violating the protection the document serves. She explained that, in a few cases, multiple occurrences of domestic abuse have taken place between a woman and her husband, and that these men were actually taken to jail by authorities. Amukishmi's legal backing from the Ecuadorian government and authorities not only provides protection to the women of the community, but has also facilitated cooperative interactions between men and the women. This is a clear example of a bridging relationship with a key actor enabling a stronger, more productive social fabric within a community (Warren et al, 2001).

Cognitive Bridging

Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2001) conclude that, through a synthesis of the working papers of the World Bank's Social Capital Initiative, measurements of cognitive bridging remain a far-away goal of research, as they are difficult to identify and quantify. In the case of Shiripuno, the materialization of a dominant form of governance in the community, Amukishmi, has prompted decisions to be made with the betterment of the community in mind.

The association's president took time to tell the research team her story of a trip she took to a Waorani community in another Ecuadorian province. This trip, she explained, was "to know another culture for the tourism project in Shiripuno." She had aspirations of becoming president of the association one day, but felt a need to understand other indigenous communities in Ecuador and how they functioned before pursuing the presidential title. Expecting to travel into primary forest in order to get to the Waorani community, she was shocked by the clear-cut land she found instead, dotted with oil machinery and worker camps. The people of the Waorani community, she explained, had no interest in working. They had grown used to handouts in the form of paychecks and meals offered to them by the private oil company who had built a pipeline on their land. People were growing ill from contamination in the rivers. The community's leader eventually died from cancer in 2011, as the current president explains:

The indigenous people don't die of cancer. If they die, it is from the flu or maybe from age or an accident. But he died from cancer. Why? Because his lands were contaminated.

She went on to elaborate upon the ultimate purpose of her trip, an act of bridging with other indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (Harpham et al, 2002; Narayan, 1999):-

[I returned] to the project to tell this to the people. Because I was a part of this women's association. They needed to know how the oil companies were contaminating the communities. The Waoranis were dying. I needed to tell people.

Not only did the existence of Amukishmi and the ecotourism project in Shiripuno give this woman a reason to travel to another indigenous community in the Amazon, but this act of bridging across different low-income communities (Warren et al, 2001) reinforced the community's decision to reject the construction of an oil pipeline on their land in favor of continued development of their more sustainable tourism project. Additionally, one woman reporting to her community the consequences of rainforest contamination fortified Amukishmi's purpose of maintaining respect and coexistence with the natural world, a Kichwa value and attitude offered by the youngest interviewee (Jones, 2005).

Other Consequences of New Social Capital

As Serra (2011) notes, there is a tendency in the literature to overemphasize the positive results of increased social capital among a specific group. In the interest of maintaining a critical approach to analyzing this research, the author includes a few effects of social capital within the Shiripuno community that indicate a level of uneven distribution of social capital benefits, in addition to a certain degree of harm among members and nonmembers of the project resulting from the indicated increases in social capital.

It was stated by an informant that there are 31 members of Amukishmi. These women work at the ecolodge on a daily basis to earn money for the communal fund, and are also given opportunities to gain individual income through personal artisanal sales or as a forest guide for visiting tourists. The literature suggests that increased social capital, especially regarding membership of a certain group, can lead to a disparity of distribution of benefits (Serra 2011; Collier 2002). When asked about how a women not involved in Amukishmi would make her own money, the oldest respondent said, "They are in their houses, planting in their gardens. I do not know how they live their days. There are about 10 women that do not work for Amukishmi. They

have no way to make money. They only wait for their husbands to come home, and cook food.” Only those 31 women that are members of Amukishmi have the benefit of a personal income, which has been linked to more positive household dynamics and therefore empowerment among this portion of the female population. This described group of about 10 women cannot reap these benefits due to their inability to gain their own steady income, one separate from that of their husbands.

In consideration of newfound group disparities arising from increased social capital, the female-only nature of Amukishmi created initial pushback from the male portion of the population. As one informant described, during the starting months of the project, husbands showed up to the tourism compound, angry that their wives were interacting with male tourists outside of their watch. These women were then forced to return home by their husbands. Earlier in the discussion, the president was described as alluding to this initial pushback in the form of physical fights between spouses.

Bridging to outside communities has brought about some damage to internal cultural identity, a critical resource to a community whose well being is now significantly linked to a form of tourism based on representation of Kichwa ideals. As the shared fund grows for the community of Shiripuno, more youths are given the opportunity to travel outside of the community to high schools. When asked about the life experiences of 16-year-old girls today compared to when she was 16, a 24-year-old mother of two explained:

Now the young ones go to high school in Tena and Misahuallí. They go outside [of the community] and they have lots of friends, and these friends only speak Spanish. The young ones see many things in the cities. Those girls have short hair and lots of make up. They aren't as natural- it's a large change among the young ones.

There was unanimous consent among informants that they remain concerned about the loss of Kichwa identity in the community's emerging generation.

The linking of the Shiripuno community with tourists -- who come mainly from France (due to the Planet Heart influence), the United States, and coastal Ecuador -- has the potential to reinforce inequalities between hosts and guests (deKadt 1976). In terms of this research project, the president of the association explained hesitation on the part of some women of Amukishmi to participate in interviews because of their inability to read and write. Although usually not required for a semi-structured interview, the presence of students with notebooks, pens, and recording devices brought to realization the disparity between the researchers and some women of Amukishmi in terms of education. Visiting tourists and their accouterments similarly bring material disparities in sharp relief.

It is important to address all facets to the outcomes of social capital within a community so as to provide a full picture of the situation at hand. Additionally, these drawbacks offer a space for reflection toward future improvements to be made within the ecolodge and the community of Shiripuno. While acknowledging all issues is important for the sake of objectivity, the advantages of increased social capital still clearly outweigh these important but less significant negative consequences of new forms of social capital. For example, tension that could arise from membership-only benefits is decreased by the bonding opportunity offered to all of the women of Shiripuno to join Amukishmi. Along the same vein, the entire community of Shiripuno benefits from the communal fund that was set up by Planet Heart and is maintained by the income of tourism activities. A child is not refused funding for school supplies if his or her mother is not a member of Amukishmi. Finally, host-guest interactions may also contribute to cultural valuation or perhaps even revitalization as has been seen in other Amazonian communities (Borman 2008; Stronza 2008; Wunder 2000).

Social Capital and Empowerment

With the components of social capital offered in figure 1 and the subsequent discussion of their impacts on the development of Amukishmi and Shiripuno, it is clear that, when a community is drawn into an ecotourism venture with the best interests of an oft-marginalized portion of the population in mind (Scheyvens, 2010), there is great potential for empowerment of that group.

In the case of Shiripuno, Planet Heart entered with the clear purpose of providing work to the women of the community in order to raise them into a position of power in a machismo-dominated culture (Planet Heart). After the organization of Amukishmi's statute, the women of Shiripuno were able to bridge with the Ecuadorian government (Harpham et al, 2002; Narayan, 1999) in order to receive formal approval of their ecotourism venture, in addition to legal backing in terms of domestic violence, which is a widespread result of machismo culture (Stevens, 1973). Bridging to an institution of the state (Grootaert and van Bastelaer, 2001) led to legitimization of the project and its purpose and, as was reported by respondents in the discussion, a marked decrease in instances of spousal mistreatment throughout the community. Within the community, the support of key actors has strengthened the social fabric and provided a solid foundation for future sustainable development (Warren et al, 2001).

Amukishmi's female-focused statute has allowed for the continued participation of the women of Shiripuno in the development effort (Scheyvens, 2010). In her interview, the president of the association quoted the statute in regards to how Amukishmi has helped the women of her community, "we have rights. We have a voice and a vote." Planet Heart's mission to create a development initiative within Shiripuno that directly helps the women of the community has allowed for great strides in terms of community-wide development. Consideration of the norms and networks throughout the community exposes a clear link between increased social capital and

female empowerment in the case of Shiripuno. Scheyvens (2010) makes a point to insist on the implications of gender-focused research in guiding agencies to facilitate productive female empowerment through ecotourism initiatives in the future. Amukishmi and the community tourism project in Shiripuno, and these two networks' ability to stimulate social capital throughout this small indigenous community, wholly support this point.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

The Napo province of the Ecuadorian Amazon provides an appropriate stage for evaluation of the potential for sustainable development in the face of extractive activities that tend not only to damage the environment but also the economic and social fabrics of surrounding communities. The economic status of most indigenous communities in the Amazon make them susceptible to the financial and material bribes offered by foreign oil companies interested in exploiting their lands. To the extent that it contributes to the enhancement of social capital and empowerment for women, ecotourism may offer a more socially and environmentally sustainable alternative to extraction-based livelihoods.

With the help of a French NGO, the women of Shiripuno created a formalized statute in order to legitimize their purpose as Amukishmi and as an ecotourism venture. This act, which stimulated the growth of social capital among the community of Shiripuno, fostered productive and sustainable relationships and decisions among individuals and groups within the community. Most importantly, the community collectively decided to refuse a contract with a foreign oil company in the interest of expanding and improving their already successful ecotourism venture. This paper argues that, without the stimulation and subsequent growth of social capital within Shiripuno, such decisions would likely not have been reached, and the prospect of sustainable development among this indigenous community would most likely have been lost.

Amukishmi's mission to employ women and to sustain and teach Kichwa traditions has led to a marked sense of female empowerment throughout the community. The evaluation of this group's ecotourism venture, which was created and further developed with the best interests of the

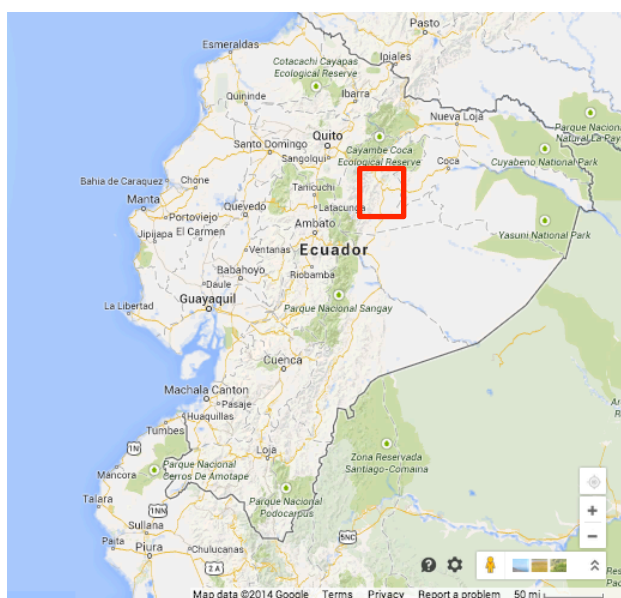
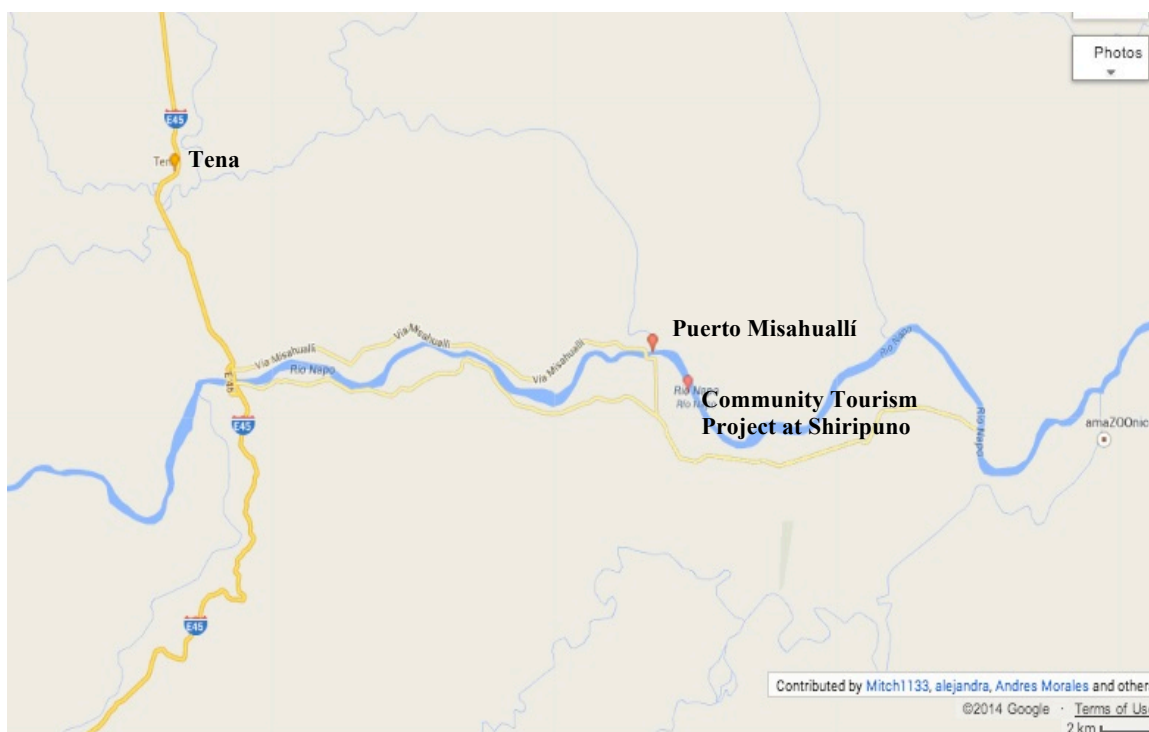
women of Shiripuno as well as those of the broader community in mind, has implications for the future of social capital-inducing sustainable development initiatives, particularly in machismo-dominated contexts.

Appendix A
IRB Protocol

On file at Appalachian State University. Requested on March 3, 2014 for inclusion in this paper. Please contact author with any further questions.

Appendix B

Map of Study Site and Surrounding Area



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EDUCATION

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- Ethnographic and Linguistics Field School located in Shiripuno, Ecuador
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