



Introduction

This site was designed as a resource for researchers and students interested in gender in contemporary Mesoamerican cultures. The focus of this site is on the lives of indigenous women in [the Huasteca](#) region in northeastern Mexico. Several topics pertaining to the Huasteca are addressed through textual materials, images, video, and sounds, including gender complementarity, gender and religion, curing practices, gender and nature, gender and development, and gender and material culture, among others. The material presented is not exhaustive and will be expanded over time.

This site attempts to contribute to a larger discussion about the anthropological categories of ethnic identity, culture, and cultural difference in Latin America. As we understand them, the concepts of ethnic identity and culture are dynamic, fluid, contingent, and heteroglossic concepts that change through time and differ depending on local contexts, the political economy, and cultural histories of a people. The Huasteca region is a pluri-cultural region characterized by a dynamic flow on a continuum between diversity and cultural hegemony. Common Mesoamerican origins and ongoing regional cultural flows, *métissage*, patchwork and/or new creations lead to similarities as well as differences among contemporary Huastecan cultures.

It is the objective of this site to find answers to the following questions:

General question: How does gender influence the reproduction, renovation, or construction of cultural difference and ethnic identity?

1. What are the roles of Huastec indigenous women in ethnic identity construction (innovation, reproduction, creation)?
2. Where is ethnic identity constructed in the Huasteca?
3. What are women's domains, roles, and other gender aspects that influence the construction of cultural difference? (e.g. local and regional cultural practices and beliefs in relation to perception of 'nature,' women's work, kinship, material culture, religion, ritual, sacred stories, healing, and women's organizations.)

This site can be used to explore overriding themes in feminist anthropology that concern women's lives, such as women's visibility, voices, diversity, mobility, power agency (women's activism and mobilizing), and power.

Particular areas addressed by the material on this site are: sacred stories, religion, ritual, women's work, and curing. The material on this site will offer some insights into the lives of indigenous women in the Huasteca. We attempt to guide your attention to women's agency and power in the reproduction, creation, and "renovation" of ethnic difference. Indigenous women in the Huasteca are not a unified category. For personal or political reasons, women sometimes use strategic essentialism to self-identify as indigenous Nahua, Tenek or other. Or, they may choose to identify as *mestiza* and conceal their indigenous heritage for political or personal reasons. The concept of Indianness is a relational and contingent concept. In addition to these lived and imagined ethnic and linguistic differences, social and age hierarchies and race relations add to the complexity of women's lives in the Huasteca.