

7-1-2011

Borders, Bridges, and Beer: Performances of Cultural Identities in the Washington Birthday Celebration

Diana Carolina Ramos

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**BORDERS, BRIDGES, AND BEER: PERFORMANCES OF
CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN THE WASHINGTON
BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

by

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**B.A., COMMUNICATION & SPANISH
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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Communication

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 2011

DEDICATION

Quiero dedicar esta tesis a las personas mas importantes que ayudaron a lograr un sueño mas en mi vida. Gracias por siempre apoyarme, guiarme, y por su amor sin condiciones ni medidas. Para mis padres, Hugo y Diana, y mis hermanos, Hugo, Daniela, y Gabriela.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Patricia Covarrubias, or as I have always referred to her, “Profesora.” As my advisor and thesis chair she encouraged me to pursue a career in academia and has always believed in my ideas, sometimes even more so than I have. I had the privilege of being her student, co-teaching with her, and being her advisee. For the lessons learned in the classroom I am grateful, but those I learned sitting at her kitchen table are the ones I will remember most. It was there that I was challenged as a writer and learned to create my own academic voice. Profesora, thank you for your guidance, patience, and for teaching me how powerful our words can be.

I also thank my committee members, Dr. Iliia Rodríguez and Dr. Christina Getrich, for their recommendations and insights. Their questions helped me see familiar scenes through different lenses and their suggestions always inspired me to ask more questions. Having them on my committee made my thesis that more special and meaningful and I will always be thankful for having their expertise available during the research process.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Julia Johnson, my undergraduate professor at Southwestern University who first suggested I attend graduate school. She has inspired me in ways that extend from inside the academic walls to how I care for others and maintain my relationships. I do not think I would have pursued a graduate career without her mentoring. Her kind words and encouragement will always take me one step further than I believe I can go.

And finally to my colleague and dearest friend, Marleah Dean, working with her and sharing ideas, concerns, and triumphs during our graduate studies has made this experience particularly special. I remember meeting her when we first visited Albuquerque in May of 2009 and I would have never imagined that we would have become such close friends. I am most appreciative of the opportunity I had at UNM because I have made a life long friend and I know that friendship was not offered in the graduate “package.” It was a blessing. I would like to thank her for her consistent support, encouragement, and for being a teacher for me as well.

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ABSTRACT

In this study I describe how individuals living in Laredo, Texas, a city situated in the U.S.-Mexico border region, make sense of their identities through their experiences in the Washington Birthday Celebration (WBC). By focusing on communication as means for creating cultural identities, this study provides insight into how communication is used in the construction and performance of cultural identities. Specifically, I focus on The Society of Martha Washington, one of the several affiliate organizations that participates in the WBC, in order to answer the following research questions about the enactment of cultural identities in the WBC: (1) What cultural identities are enacted at the WBC and how do participants use communication to enact these expressed identities? (2) How do participants enact their cultural identities beyond the WBC? I argue that although the WBC is intended to foster a collective identity, it poses a problematic contradiction since it implicates the enactment of various identities wherein status differentials are enhanced.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Some would say that patriotic celebrations are intended to foster a sense of communal spirit and to offer a stage for the enactment of a collective identity (Waldstreicher, 1997).

However, the Washington Birthday Celebration (WBC) that has occurred annually on the U.S.-Mexico border city of Laredo, Texas since 1898, reveals that these types of celebrations can and do pose an interactional contradiction. They not only fail to achieve their idealized shared sense of personhood, but, in fact, implicate the enactment of various identities wherein differences are enacted and even clash. This geographic space also implicates a relational space that serves as a theatre for the expression of identities in both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication.

The WBC was founded in 1898 and has remained one of the most important citywide celebrations for both U.S. and Mexican citizens living right across the U.S.-Mexico border in the city of Nuevo Laredo, in the state of Tamaulipas, in the country of Mexico. When what was once a part of Mexico became a part of the United States, the Texas-Mexico border could not simply be converted to Anglo American culture given the history, geography, and demographics of an area that was, and continues to be, heavily influenced by Mexican culture. Despite legal annexation, a Mexican culture was dominant in Laredo and Anglo Americans faced the challenge of a community that did not yet identify with U.S. American ideals. As a means of instituting a U.S. American identity in Laredo, a celebration honoring George Washington was created by the Improved Order of Red Men, a group of prominent Anglo American men.

Despite the introduction of this celebration and its popularity, many residents of both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo continue to consider the two cities as one. Laredo and Nuevo Laredo are often referred to as *Los Dos Laredos*, a label used to exemplify the strong connection

between the two cities, rather than the borders that separate them. Individuals residing in both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo participate in the WBC and, although, all WBC events currently take place in Laredo, in past years, several events took place in Nuevo Laredo as well. This fostered a communal spirit between the two cities and attending WBC events on both sides of this border was simple since The Gateway to the Americas International Bridge spans a little over 1,000 feet and is used daily by pedestrians. WBC events that took place in Nuevo Laredo included a block party also referred to as a “street” party, in which various blocks in the *mercado* area located right next to the bridge were closed so that attendees could walk around, shop, dine, and drink, without worrying about traffic. Other popular events have been the bullfights, but because travel to Nuevo Laredo has decreased, so too has attendance at these events. Eventually, the events have been eliminated from the WBC schedule, although it is always up to organizers to reinstate these events taking place in Nuevo Laredo.

In fact, to promote an environment of collective identity through the WBC, Mexican citizens were, at one point, allowed to cross this bridge to Laredo without documentation of citizenship the day of the WBC parade. However, because of increased U.S. border security due to the terrorist attacks on New York City on September 11, 2001, the open two-way crossing is no longer an option. Nonetheless, the WBC has fostered a communal spirit between the United States and Mexico by having individuals from both sides of the border participate in the celebration, although this may not be evident in all aspects of the WBC as the annual event also serves to define differences.

To explore this celebration, the collective identity it is intended to foster, and the differences it defines in doing so, I examine the social construction of cultural identities by focusing on the communicative resources participants utilize to construct their expressed

personhoods. In this study, cultural identity is defined as “identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meaning as well as norms/rules for conduct” (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 113), and is utilized to discuss how participants define themselves as a member of a group and to explain what it means to be a person in a particular group. Thus, cultural identity is manifested through shared symbols, meanings, and values (Carbaugh, 1990; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Covarrubias, 2002; Hecht, 1993; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Katriel, 1986; 1997; Philipsen, 1975; Weider & Pratt, 1990). The symbols, markers, metaphors, and other communicative resources participants utilize provide a locus for distinguishing these enactments, and performance theory, as proposed by Goffman (1959), serves as a theoretical frame for examining cultural identities as performances.

Theoretically, I take a social constructionist approach (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) as a means of understanding the ways in which individuals make meaning of their social worlds through relationships, language use, and other social artifacts. Thus, identities are formed within participants’ communication (Basso, 1996; Carbaugh, 1996; Covarrubias, 2002, 2009a, 2009b; Hall, 2005; Hymes, 1972; Philipsen, 1975; Wieder & Pratt, 1990.) Rather than simply conceptualizing identity as something innate, I assume that communication constructs personhood alongside other influences, such as nationality and social class. This means that there are various dimensions of identity and that participation in the WBC is only one dimension that shapes a person. Additionally, identity is also constructed through a negotiation of various factors with identity negotiation defined as “a process of giving, taking, maintaining, or exchanging worldviews or portions thereof in an effort to coordinate relationships with others” (Hecht, Jackson, and Ribeau, 2003, p. 31). Although Hecht et al.’s study focuses on African-American individuals, their definition for identity negotiation is useful in the present study

because it underscores the social construction of cultural identities and implies that this negotiation is not a private act, rather it is a process in which identities are constructed when we come into contact with other people. This latter point serves as a key assumption for this study as it focuses on the construction of personhood through communication.

Moreover, border life poses a unique site for studying identity construction, being that it combines various cultural symbols, meanings, and values. Lindsley (1999) argues that border life is distinctive and that the lives of individuals residing on the border may be very different from those who do not experience the negotiation of U.S. and Mexican cultural systems. Living within these two culturally infused belief and value systems requires individuals to negotiate multiple identities. However, such negotiation is not a simple process since life on the border is fluid, indicating that collective identities are not easily established, despite the integration of patriotic celebrations. One 53 year old woman in this study exemplifies the difficulty of uniting two diverse cultural systems when she asked, “What are a community of 98% Hispanic, Latinos, doing celebrating Washington’s Birthday in such a big way?” Although patriotic celebrations may foster a sense of communal identity, because life on the U.S.-Mexico border incorporates two diverse and often oppositional cultural systems, constructing a collective identity through a patriotic celebration that fails to acknowledge both systems can be challenging. Additionally, constructing a collective identity proves to be a complicated task in a city where people reside in more than one culture (Kim, 2003) given that many people residing in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo spend time in both cities on a daily basis, composing a transnational lifestyle common to the U.S.-Mexico border.

Rationale

To understand how individuals make sense of who they are and their experiences in the WBC, focusing on the particular communication of WBC participants provides insight into how cultural identities are constructed and performed. In this study, I explore how such identities are created through participation in and communication about the WBC. Also critical to this exploration is a discussion about how these communicatively shaped identities can be complicated and contradictory. Specifically, this study explores (1) how individuals who participate in the WBC's The Society of Martha Washington enact and communicate their particular identities in select WBC events, and (2) how those who are not involved in the Society enact their own identities especially when contrasted with those of Society members. It is through studying participants' performances within and communication about a traditional, historical, and perhaps most valued celebration that the cultural identities of participants are recognized and understood at the WBC.

To better understand the content wherein the WBC occurs, I offer the following information. Laredo is a site where individuals continually construct their identities as a result of the social, cultural, and geographical similarities and differences that are infused in this border city. In sharing a border with the city of Nuevo Laredo, Laredo's population has remained largely Latinoⁱ, 94% as of 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau). Understanding the complexities of living in a city situated at the edge of where the United States and Mexico meet is not a task in which one can reach a static or full understanding that captures the many nuances characteristic of life on a geographic border. Borders and borderlands are difficult to define and conceptualize without reconciling the conflicting definitions and conceptualizations that describe the same area of study. History and literature on the U.S.-Mexico border (Bustamante & Francisco, 1980; Falk,

1988; Martínez, 1989, 1994; Stoddard, 1975, 1986, 1989; Stoddard, Nostrand, & West, 1982) provide a foundation for the study of the border and address the particularities of this region by discussing topics such as changing economic patterns, law enforcement, and demography, being that the U.S.-Mexico border is a site of constant change regarding immigration reform and other border control policies.

It is clear that an understanding of the lives of individuals inhabiting the U.S.-Mexico border is necessary to interpret the significance and meanings of social life in this area. Rather than imposing interpretations of participants' experiences, attention to the communication of participants acknowledges the significance of each individual's perspective, language use, and cultural identity since it is individuals who enact and negotiate different identities. This study goes beyond understanding history and facts by focusing on the WBC as a site for the exploration of social life, culture, and identity. Through a communication perspective, participants' experiences are conveyed in their own words and their identities defined in their own terms.

Because identity is constructed, preserved, and modified in and through communication (Basso, 1996; Carbaugh, 1996; Covarrubias, 2002, 2009a, 2009b; Hall, 2005; Hymes, 1972; Philipsen, 1975; Wieder & Pratt, 1990), communication must be at the center of analysis. By focusing on what individuals say and do, such as what events they participate in or do not participate in, the complexities of border life are explained, at least in part, by those who live there and who experience the contradictions and nuances characteristic of life on the U.S.-Mexico border. Gleaning understandings from this study yield contributions to the theories about cultural identities and how they are performed. Moreover, work advancing border relations is particularly critical in the United States today, following the passage of Arizona Senate Bill

1070ⁱⁱ; a bill that has influenced a national discourse concerning the U.S.-Mexico border. Studies such as the present one are important to better understand transnational relationships and lifestyles affected by increased border security and stricter immigration policies that followed September 11, 2001.

Thus, in undertaking this study, my aim is to contribute to literature on cultural identity and identity performance, as well as to provide insight into border life. Also, as someone who was born and raised in Laredo, I embarked on this study with background knowledge that enhances my understanding of the WBC and social life in Laredo. My personal experiences with the WBC contribute to my study because my lifelong experience in Laredo enable me to identify with the way people “do life” in this city. My own background poises me to understand the WBC, as I have attended it almost every year of my life, even though the events I attend vary from year to year. Although I situate this study in specific WBC events that involve the Society of Martha Washington, my own experiences in other WBC events and in Laredo in general, offered an opportunity for this study to be undertaken by someone who is both an insider, as a Laredoan, but also an outsider, as a researcher. This perspective will be further explained when discussing how my positionality shapes the study’s methodology.

Researcher’s Key Assumptions

Identity as socially constructed.

I assume that as a social construction, identity is dynamic, adaptive, and continually reconstructed, meaning that identity is not an innate characteristic. I assume, rather, that individuals can perform numerous identities throughout their lives and even at the same time. Depending on the type of interaction and context, different identities may be assumed (Covarrubias, 2002, 2009a 2009b; Philipsen, 1975; Fuller, 2007). In other words, whether it is

during spontaneous conversation or in the midst of a scripted celebration, identities are continually negotiated and constructed as a means of adjusting to diverse contexts and to other persons. Who one may be in the privacy of their home may not be the same as who one might choose to be in public. Factors such as relationships, context, and expectations contribute to the shifts identities may experience and critical to this study is the connection between communication and identity since communication, verbal and nonverbal, convey and construct these ways of being. Although I am aware of the diversity of the components that shape identity such as gender, age, and religious background in this study I am focusing on identity within the WBC.

Identity as performance.

Identity is not only socially constructed, but also is performed to display and convey to others particular identities (Goffman, 1959). By conceptualizing identity as a performance and utilizing language typical in traditional theatre as a means of describing these performances, this study establishes that in communication there are actors, numerous parts any one actor can play and not play, an audience who responds to these performances, stages, and drama that compose daily performances all individuals participate in as a way of communicating with each other. Utilizing performance theory (Goffman's, 1959; Turner, 1957, 1995; Turner & Schechner, 1988), I assume that because the WBC presents a diverse range of events and available identities, individuals are strategic selectors of the various symbolic means for constructing their identities and the manner in which they enact them.

Overview of the WBC Events

In order to fully convey the complexity of the WBC, an event that attracts approximately 400,000 attendees each year (WBCA Laredo, 2010), and the numerous possible contexts for

expressing identities, I provide a complete list of the events that compose the broader WBC. However, for the purposes of the present study I focus only on The Society of Martha Washington Pageant and Ball as it is at these events that the roles of George and Martha Washington are assumed. Because Latinos portray George and Martha Washington most years, it is communication about them and others that reveals some of the similarities and contradictions central to this study. Following the list of events, The Society of Martha Washington and its events are described. These descriptions of the organization and its events are based on personal experiences as a participant observer of these events in which Hymes's (1972) SPEAKING framework was utilized, and on descriptions outlined by The Washington Birthday Celebration Association (WBCA Laredo, 2010).

Complete List of Events Held During The Washington Birthday Celebration:

Events Poster Unveiling	Founding Father's 5K Fun Run & Health Fair
Washington D.C. Trip	LCC Family Fun Fest and Musical
IGNC Abrazo Reception	Princess Pocahontas Pageant & Ball
Commander's Reception	WBCA Stars and Stripes Air Show Spectacular
UETA Jamboozie	IBC Youth Parade Under the Stars
Austin Trip	WBCA/La Posada Hotel Welcome Luncheon
U.S. Air Force Band of the West	Caballeros Cocktail Party
WBCA Youth Dance Festival	WBCA Jalapeño Festival
Boys & Girls Club of Laredo Wine Tasting Gala	The Society of Martha Washington Colonial Pageant and Ball
Noche de Cabaret	International Bridge Ceremony Sponsored by La Posada Hotel
American Historical Theatre George Washington Performance	Anheuser-Busch Washington's Birthday Parade
Taste of Laredo	Mr. South Texas Luncheon Hosted by BBVA Compass
WBCA Carnival	The Society of Martha Washington Cocktail Party
Comedy Jam for George	Matinee: Festival del Mariachi
Noche Mexicana: A Presentation of Señor and Señora Internacional	WBCA Membership BBQ
H-E-B Fireworks Extravaganza	
Information on each event is available at www.wbcalaredo.org	

The Society of Martha Washington

The above list composes the larger WBC event. Although these events occur during the celebration, they are distinct and separate. With this list in mind, I will now discuss the Society of Martha Washington Colonial Pageant and Ball, events that are most representative of the WBC's colonial theme. Participants enact a myriad of verbal and nonverbal strategies to portray the various identities available and observable in the WBC. The Society's Colonial Pageant and Ball, established in 1940, constitute the events that most highlight and focus on an Anglo American identity and the historical roots of the celebration, and which offer insight about particular cultural identities available in the border city.

The Society is an exclusive one, and to be a member one must go through an application process, with many individuals remaining on the waitlist for years before actually being invited to join. It is common for the Society's pageant participants to be closely connected and involved in the WBCA and daughters or granddaughters of members of the Society may be presented as colonial debutantes when they are seniors in high school. Debutantes who have familial connections to the Society are recognized as Daughters of the Society and typically Society members choose to invite a guest or two that every year. To invite a guest, a Society member must petition for them and have the invitation approved by other Society members. As the most upscale and elite event of the entire celebration, the Colonial Pageant and Ball are also some the most heavily attended events. Tickets and invitations to attend the Society of Martha Washington's various events are expensive and limited, such as the tickets for the Society Ball and Pageant which usually typically cost \$30-\$60. These events are open to the public, although actors involved in the Society primarily attend them. However, other events like cocktail parties are exclusively for its members.

The pageant and ball are held in the Laredo Civic Center, a large and formal city building. As traditional celebrations of the Society of Martha Washington, these two events inform its audience of historical events that occurred during Washington's time, with a different narrative being incorporated every year and chosen by the president of the Society of Martha Washington. One example of a narrative that has been performed is the President Washington's last night in office. During these performances, the actors on stage, which include George and Martha Washington, debutantes and their escorts, act out the scene while a narrator describes it. The historical events performed are not always accurate depictions, but include historical discrepancies (Young, 1998; Dennis, 1997; Green, 1999), and tend to integrate the imaginary into reality, by utilizing a historical framework and then incorporating fictional elements. For example, the historical figures some debutantes and escorts portray may have never actually met George and Martha Washington. On stage, however, they attend a fictional event together.

The Laredoans chosen to portray George and Martha Washington are members of the Society and the debutantes and their escorts who join them on stage also perform the roles of historical figures. Although the celebration focuses on two Anglo American figures, many of these performers identify themselves as being of Mexican heritage and classify themselves as Mexican-American or Hispanic. At the Society's Pageant and Ball, participants are given temporary identities of colonial figures as they perform their identities through a narrative read by a narrator, with none of the participants on stage having any speaking parts. I was told that every pageant is organized in this way and speaking parts for debutantes have never been a norm in the pageant. Elaborate costumes are designed a year or more in advance and many of them are displayed in the city's local mall after the celebration has ended. With each bead hand sewn they are intricate, extravagant, and key features of the performance since designs are inspired by

traditional colonial gowns, although the cost of the gowns is a well-guarded secret. However, there are estimates that the elaborate gowns cost as much as \$30,000 (Brezosky, 2007) with the gowns becoming increasingly showy and costly each passing year. Indeed, the colonial gowns are so extravagant that they have become key symbols of the Society and many audience members claim to attend the event primarily to see the “debut” of the gowns, rather than the debuts of the young debutantes.

Each debutante is a senior at a local high school, unless she is an invited debutante guest from out of town. As she debutante is introduced at the pageant, classical music plays in the background and she and her escort are called by their real names and then the names of the historical figures they are representing. A short family history of the debutante is included as well, so if her mother, grandmother, or other female family member has been a debutante in the past, or perhaps even played Martha, this is noted in the introduction. If her father, grandfather, or other male family member ever played George Washington, and whether she or her escort was ever an “*abrazo*” child at the International Bridge Ceremonyⁱⁱⁱ, this information is included as well. During these introductions, George and Martha Washington stand at the front of stage, greeting their guests with a head bow as the guests make their debut and walk down a short flight of stairs and onto the front of the stage. At the front of the stage, the debutante makes her formal debut to the audience by bowing slowly until she is kneeling, bowing her head toward the floor, and extending her arms outward at her sides. Audience members follow her bow with enthusiastic cheers and clapping. It is this moment that symbolizes her introduction into society as a young woman and marks a lasting turning point for her as well.

Following the formal introduction, each debutante walks to her assigned space on stage where she remains for the duration of all debutante introductions. Once all debutantes and

escorts have been introduced, all performers on stage enact a ballroom dance that has been carefully choreographed and set to classical music. Rehearsals for these performances begin months prior to the actual event. After the pageant, audience members and performers, still fully dressed in their costumes, continue the celebration at the official Society Ball. The Colonial Ball is a large social event that does not include narrated performances, but still serves as a stage for the performances of George and Martha Washington and debutantes and their escorts being that they are constantly asked to pose for pictures and congratulated. Although the night may continue for the young men and women, all performers arrive at the scheduled parade before sunrise in order to assume their place at the parade. At the parade, each debutante and her escort has their own parade float as do the actors portraying George and Martha Washington. As the floats make their way in the procession, the actors wave and toss candies and other treats to the children watching from the sidewalk.

Research Questions

It is important to contextualize this study in a culturally and geographically unique area, to have a broad scope of the WBC, and to have a sense of what The Society of Martha Washington involves. With this information, the research questions for this study can be presented. The goal of this inquiry is to answer the following research questions about the enactment of cultural identities in the WBC: What cultural identities are enacted at the WBC and how do participants use communication to enact these expressed identities? (2) How do participants enact their cultural identities beyond the WBC?

The following section discusses previous literature on the particularities of life of the U.S.-Mexico border, cultural identity, and identity performance. Following the review of literature, the methods chapter outlines the conceptual framework and methodological

perspectives grounding this study, selection of participants, interview instruments, participant observation, data collection, data coding and analysis, validity and reliability, and concludes with a summary. Finally, the findings of the study are explained and followed by a discussion of the implications of these findings, future research, and a conclusion.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Life On the U.S.-Mexico Border

Unlike other international borders, the U.S.-Mexico border draws a line between two nation-states in which the inequality of power, economics, and the human condition surpasses those of other borders (Alvarez, 1995; Bustamante, 1978; Fernandez, 1977, 1989; Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Herrasi, 1987; Kearney, 1991; Martinez, 1988; Mikus, 1985; Mungarcey & Mungarcey, 1984; Nalven, 1982). Along with a history of conquest and the constant influences the countries experience from each other, the U.S.-Mexico border region is a site of cultural ambiguity because of these inequalities and the complexities that define U.S.-Mexico border cities like Laredo. These complexities are evident in border life since the U.S.-Mexico border is both a geographical and metaphorical area in which differences concerning language, law, and culture, meet, replace each other, are combined, and negotiated, on a daily basis and sometimes with a single step that indicates one has crossed from the United States into Mexico and vice versa. Though many of these changes are evident in geographical divisions defining the United States and Mexico, such as laws that determine who can cross the bridges dividing the two countries and when, others are metaphorical because they also exist within social life and are not directed by these geographical divisions. For example, one does not switch from speaking Spanish to English because they have crossed over from Mexico to the United States. These negotiations are influenced by much more than geographic lines that divide two countries.

Life on the border is defined by multiplicity (Vila, 2003) and individuals constantly negotiate positions related to their identity. Further, although it may not be the majority, many people residing on the border have dual-nationality, legally establishing their official

identification with both the United States and Mexico. In relation to the U.S.-Mexico border, border identity has been described as “a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness” in which individuals living on the border do not identify fully with either culture (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 63). Border identity has also been described by the use of the term “polybian” to describe people who “adapt their being to different modes of existence as they opportunistically move in and out of different life spaces” (Kearney, 1996, p. 141). In other words, individuals on the border adjust to different ways of life that encompass both Mexican and U.S. American cultures. However, individuals residing on the border do not all share a common identity, despite their sharing of certain aspects of a culture (Vila, 2003).

It cannot be assumed that all individuals living in Laredo experience this “in-betweeness” of living on the U.S.-Mexico border. Moreover, the cultural influences of the United States and Mexico are comprehended and adopted or rejected in diverse ways, being that individuals are strategic and purposeful in choosing how to identify themselves. What is important to establish about life in Laredo is that multiple identities based on two culturally different countries are always available and observable, and this is because individuals in Laredo are situated at a geographical meeting point. Vila (2003) addresses this construction of identity but reminds scholars studying the U.S.-Mexico border that, in some instances, borders also reinforce different identities and should not be generalized as geographical spaces of encounter. Regardless of the contrasting and diverse discussions of border identity, the U.S.-Mexico border continues to be a geographical area in which individuals experience the constant ebb and flow of fused values, languages, foods, and emotions that cannot be contained by a geopolitical distinction.

Geographical borders like the international bridges separating Laredo from the city of Nuevo Laredo may be crossed daily by border residents without much recognition of the instant

changes one encounters in crossing to another country. This is not because individuals are not aware of the changes, but because individuals residing in Laredo and Nuevo Laredo may feel they live in both countries, identify with both, and commute from one to the other without much hesitation or difficulty. Furthermore, many individuals have social networks that span the border. In this case, boundaries may be blurred since the border separating the United States and Mexico is not perceived, by some, as an obstacle. Moreover, physical boundaries like the international bridges do not interfere with belonging to a community that encompasses particular ways of life of both countries. Instead, these physical boundaries may be perceived as points of unification. For this reason, defining border life in Laredo without considering the influence of Nuevo Laredo does not provide a thorough conceptualization of this community.

Lareodans consistently experience a binational life and, as a result, live within a binational community. Individuals may shop for fruits and vegetables on the Mexican side of the border, attend school on the U.S. side of the border, and then spend Sundays with family on the Mexican side of the border, making it complicated for border residents to identify with only one country and only one culture. Life on the border is, therefore, a blending of cultures and identities that require shifts on a daily basis. Goldberg (2001) puts it simply when she states that statements about identity on the border “require a definition of community that transcend statistics” (p. 56). In other words, to understand the uniqueness of life in this area, the fluidity of the community cannot be overlooked and this is also why this study is focused on communication by those who live within this community. The term transnationalism encompasses this day-to-day lifestyle that involves the crossing of national boundaries and that connects the lives of individuals across geographical boundaries.

The social networks that tie border communities result in imagined communities (Anderson 1983). These communities are organized but unbound by geographical boundaries, and result in the creation of different interpretations of the same community since individuals cross the U.S.-Mexico bridges for different reasons. The community in Laredo is an example of an imagined community since it is not contained by purely geographical markers, and may be much more symbolic than physical in some instances. However, this conceptualization does not disregard community as a physical construct since borders do, in fact, present a barrier if one is not a citizen of a country or considered “legal” to cross the border. Nonetheless, considering the geographical area in which the WBC occurs is critical in this study since it is the culture and lifestyle of the people living in Laredo that influences the way the celebration is created and recreated year after year. To further our understanding of border identities, the next sections discuss how cultural identity is conceptualized and performed in the WBC.

Cultural Identity

Through its infusion of diversity, history, and style in a festival whose focus is the portrayal of historical figure George Washington, Laredo residents, for the past 114 years, have constructed and continue to construct some of their identities in connection with George Washington and through participation in and communication about the WBC. To fully understand such an event, it is necessary to understand the perspectives of Laredo’s residents, in what ways they participate or do not participate in the WBC, what their experiences have been and how those experiences influence the construction and performances of cultural identities. This section discusses previous literature on identity in the study of communication. Specifically, cultural identity is explored.

In the field of communication, identity has been conceptualized as a social construction from social scientific, interpretive, and recently, from a critical perspective. The contributions social scientists have made to the study of identity provide insight into the various types of identities performed and how they are enacted through communication. Coover and Murphy (2000) stress the role of communication in the construction of identity arguing that communication is, essentially, how identity is formulated, negotiated, expressed, and maintained. It is through interactions that range from direct and indirect forms, mediated and unmediated, that others define individuals and learn to define and redefine themselves (Coover & Murphy, 2000). Previous studies (Gudykunst, 1983, 1994; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1994; Gudykunst, Nishida, & Chua, 1987; Hofstede, 1983; Kim, 1991; Ting-Toomey et. al, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1993) on cultural identity have underscored how identities are performed through communicative behavior. Even though some communicative behaviors are more salient than others, depending on public visibility, for example, others openly communicate to others a particular cultural identity and group memberships through common and identifiable symbols, such as the gowns worn by The Society of Martha Washington debutantes, which indicate group membership in the Society. Identity is not only performed through communicative behavior, but is also negotiated (Ting-Toomey, 1993, 2005) and is a flexible entity (Kim, 1997, 2005). Even though some of these studies have defined identity broadly, this study contextualizes identity more narrowly, focusing on identity markers produced by participants.

Identities may be sociocultural, psychological, or biological (Carbaugh, 1996) and conceptualizing identity as a creative and ongoing process indicates that identity is continually evolving (Fong & Chuang, 2004) and not the result of purely physical characteristics. Rather, it is something that one does (Carbaugh, 1996), and is constructed within interaction. With

interaction as venue for identity construction, the significance of focusing on communication in the study of identity is made evident, being that identity is learned and performed. In the WBC, performing an identity may also indicate a particular social class, for example, and it is in enacting that identity that one embodies it and conveys it to others.

In this study, cultural identity is defined as “identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meanings as well as norms/rules for conduct” (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 113). This definition is consistent with discussions of identity as culturally and communicatively created and manifested (Carbaugh, 1996; Hall, 2005; Wieder & Pratt, 1990). The cultural identities of participants in the WBC connect participants to others who are a part of a certain group and understand what conduct is expected, appropriate, and inappropriate. In other words, those who share a cultural identity understand how a particular identity should and should not be enacted. Further, cultural identity has been discussed as something that is manifested through shared symbols, meanings, and values (Carbaugh, 1990; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Covarrubias, 2002; Hecht, 1993; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Katriel, 1986; 1997; Philipsen, 1975; Weider & Pratt, 1990), and what this means is that because identity functions within shared meanings and values, identity works within a system of communication practices in which some practices are more visible in some contexts than in others (Carbaugh, 1996). The Society of Martha Washington Colonial Pageant and Ball are events that provide public visibility for the symbolic performances of shared meanings and values of this group and for the performances of culturally informed identities.

Performances of these identities, however, does not permanently establish that one belongs to a certain group simply because they are using a particular language code, style of dress, or other symbols. Collier and Thomas (1988) highlight this complex aspect of identity and

refer to it in terms of avowal and ascription. Identity avowal is who one perceives he or she is, while identity ascription is based on who someone else says a person is. What this means is that avowed and ascribed identities may not always be the same and that identity is fluid, changing, and functions within a system of multiple interpretations. This indicates that the assertion of particular identities is dependent on the individual and interactional partners as well (Wieder & Pratt, 1990). Despite this negotiation of identities through communication, some individuals may consider certain identities important enough that they assert them even when facing social disapproval from others (Collier & Thomas, 1988). Such social disapproval may be evident in the reactions by observers of the Pageant and Ball who do not approve of the enactments of certain historical figures or who do not consider certain participants as proper Society debutantes because they fail to accurately perform the role. However, despite social disapproval, these identities may hold significant value for those enacting them.

Carbaugh (1996) suggests individuals perform identity in a certain scene and, through the identification of this identity performance, meanings based on cultural premises may be assigned. Understanding identity as a performance reveals how individuals portray their identity through the use of symbols others can use to affirm or reject an identity (Carbaugh, 1996). As a result, this performance positions the person who performs the identity along with those who see the performance as well (Carbaugh, 1996). Conceptualizing identity as performance positions participants of The Society of Martha Washington in events in which they are, at some points, performing in ways they believe they can achieve group membership even if that means they must act in ways that are not typical of their everyday behavior.

Within this performance of cultural identity, identity is either socially validated or rejected (Carbaugh, 1996). If identity performance receives social validation, the individual

performing is given voice, which Carbaugh explains as occurring when “the speaker was able to speak, spoke, was heard, and was socially validated as such” (p. 146). The denial of voice occurs when others reject the identity. In this case, it is probable that another identity will be ascribed in its place (Carbaugh, 1996, Collier & Thomas, 1998). Wider and Pratt (1990) argue that identities may be contested, and Carbaugh’s (1996) notion of identity denial corresponds to The Society of Martha Washington’s established structure in which identity ascription is a factor in deciding who can belong to The Society of Martha Washington.

In the WBC there are many identities being performed, many of them being theatrical performances on stages and in full costume and makeup. Although the WBC is centered on George Washington, the available cultural identities in the celebration exemplify the diverse cultures coming into contact in Laredo. The following section further discusses how various cultural identities in the WBC can be explained as performances of identity.

Identity Performance

Goffman (1959) uses the term “performance” to refer to the various “roles” an individual enacts for observers (an audience). The term “performance” as Goffman utilizes it, refers to “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (1959, p. 22). Utilizing the imagery of theatre, the cultural identities enacted in the WBC are described as strategic performances that accomplish social goals, such as impression management. As strategic actors, individuals create identities by playing different roles on different stages and to different audiences. These performances are enactments of identity and are a form of communication between the actor and audience members who also play a role in identity construction by confirming and rejecting these performances. Thus, communication is at the

center of analysis being that these performances serve in the social construction of temporarily bounded reality (Bauman, 1977; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Goffman, 1959; Hymes, 1971; Turner, 1957) For this study, performance as a means of constituting identity (Goffman, 1959) is the focus. Individuals, as actors, are aware of their performances and react to others' feedback even. Using Goffman's (1959) conceptualization of identity as performance, this section discusses the elements of Goffman's performance theory, specifically impression management, in order to understand the various cultural identities performed in the WBC.

Goffman (1959) presents impression management as a process in which individuals attempt to establish and maintain impressions that are congruent with the perceptions they want to convey to their audience. In other words, individuals act in a way that will influence the perceptions of other people in order to form a certain image, the image they value and want their audience to believe since perception is considered the reality. In impression management, tradition plays a role in why and how a performance is carried out. Goffman (1959) proposes individuals will express themselves in particular ways primarily because "the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular reason (other than vague acceptance or approval that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression)" (p. 6). In other words, actors perform in ways they believe will fulfill established or perceived expectations. For the maintenance of an appearance, or front, tradition can be a dominant factor in sustaining a particular impression being that individuals feel it is their duty to preserve an image, whether that image is their own, a collective representation, or both. The loyalty, discipline, and circumspection that serve to maintain a desired impression are also key factors in the preservation of traditions. The idea that identity is something one performs strategically and with a purpose reaffirms that identity is a social construction and underscores

that there is a particular way of “doing” identity (Carbaugh, 1996; Collier & Thomas, 1988). Therefore, cultural identities must be examined as performances of identity that provide rich insight into the culture of a group of people.

Summary

Based on this review of the literature and the diverse understandings of the U.S.-Mexico border, cultural identities, and the performances of identities, this study can move forward with a foundation that has been useful for the study of cultural identities, but which can be further enhanced by addressing the research questions proposed in this study. This study seeks to contribute to understanding the nuances of life on the U.S.-Mexico border through a communication approach, focusing on communication as means for creating cultural identities. Further, because The Society of Martha Washington encompasses a U.S. colonial theme and the individuals portraying historical identities may extend their performances of these cultural identities beyond the WBC events, this study also contributes to the study of cultural identities along the U.S.-Mexico border and the complexity and overlapping of identities that may be prevalent in this geographical region.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The WBC is a celebration that leads to many questions about U.S.-Mexico border life and the social construction of identities performed within this area and, in particular, within this celebration. Because most of my life has been lived on the border, I began this project aware that my experiences might influence this study and the way life in Laredo is conceptualized. However, lived experience served of value for this type of endeavor in which qualitative methods, particularly ethnographic work, are the foundational methods for a study that emphasizes the significance of individual experiences and the depth and value of those experiences that ultimately make up social life.

As Rothenbuhler (1998) reminds researchers about our role in examining social life, “Social analysts must unpack the meanings, examine the laminations, and follow the ramifications, for the full meaning of socially important symbols is not clear from their surface” (p. 17). This study seeks to do exactly that, to look beneath the surface of the WBC in order to question how the WBC serves as a site for the enactment of particular cultural identities within an established social structure. Specifically, this study focuses on the function of communication on the U.S.-Mexico border by examining how it serves in shaping cultural identities through identity enactments at the WBC.

In this section, I outline the conceptual framework and methodological perspectives of this study, selection of participants, interview instruments, participant observation, data collection, data coding and analysis, validity and reliability, and a summary of the section before proceeding to the findings and discussion of the study.

Conceptual Framework and Methodological Perspectives

To gain insight about the WBC and its place in Laredo, the voices of those who participate in the celebration were necessary for understanding their cultural values, social roles, and the meanings they assign to their identities. Based on a social constructionist approach, this study focuses on individuals and their worlds, assuming that an objective world does not exist independently from individuals. In keeping with this standpoint, I conducted an ethnography of communication (Covarrubias, 2002; Hymes, 1972; Philipsen, 1992), a qualitative study that focuses, explicitly, on the symbolic resources of WBC participants by utilizing participant observation, interviews, documentation, coding and analyses.

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), Geertz (1973), Hymes (1972), LeCompte and Goetz (1982), Lindlof and Taylor (2002), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) were used as guides to my field work approach. Working from this framework, communication in and about the WBC were placed at the center of this study as a means of uncovering cultural identities, values, and meaning constructed by participants. In other words, human interaction was attended to because it is a form of understanding and enacting cultural identities and the ethnography of communication is a means of uncovering how these processes continually construct social life.

Selection of Participants

I conducted eleven interviews with participants whose ages ranged from 18 to 68 and ten of these eleven participants were native Laredoans. Participants included seven females and four males who identified as Hispanic, Mexican-American, Half-German/Half-Mexican, Caucasian, and White/Latina, and three participants did not identify their race or ethnicity. Four of the participants who did identify their race, did not identify their ethnicity. Besides the two participants who were seniors in high school, all other participants, except one, had college

degrees. A complete list of participant profiles is included in Appendix C. Participants were recruited based on their participation in the WBC and the range of participants selected conveyed differing levels of participation and various memberships in associations and organizations of the WBC, such as The Society of Martha Washington. Some participants were neither members of any affiliate organizations of the WBC nor had family members who are. This indicated that participants engaged in various levels of participation and constructed diverse perspectives. The selection of participants who validated the event and participated in it, as well as those who did not participate in it or refrained from attending particular events, provided a more thorough understanding of the WBC as a site for the construction of cultural identities that do and do not identify with particular WBC events. Further, to include diverse perspectives and levels of involvement in the WBC, participants were chosen by their identification with one of three different groups: Society of Martha Washington organizers, Society of Martha Washington performers, and non-Society attendees.

Although participants could be placed in one of these three groups, all interviews were conducted individually, not in groups. By conducting individual interviews, it was more likely that an individual would speak about their own experiences and in their own words without being influenced by others' perceptions of the same event. Also, three different interview instruments were created and each group had a different interview instrument. Accordingly, the interview instrument used with each participant depended on the group they belonged to. The first group of participants was comprised of four individuals who were closely involved in the Society because they serve as organizers, planners, and hold leadership roles consistently throughout the years. A second group consisted of four individuals affiliated with the Society

who were currently participating or had participated in the Pageant and Ball as a performer. These performers included debutantes, an escort, and the man portraying George Washington.

Participants who were involved in the WBC in past years were also interviewed and included in the study. By having participants from various years, rather than only the year in which the study was conducted, I was able to identify patterns that emerged amongst participants involved in specific organizations or events despite their age or cohort differences. It also allowed me to corroborate and crosscheck the claims I ultimately made. Additionally, since past performers attend WBC events in the years they are not performing, it was important to take into consideration their continual involvement and participation as a means of understanding how cultural identities are performed beyond the WBC.

Finally, a third group included three individuals who had attended various WBC events but had not been and were currently not involved in the Society. What this means is that this latter group of individuals did not have family members who belonged to the Society or who had participated as a debutante, escort, or the figures of George or Martha Washington, amongst other historical figures impersonated in the WBC. Including interviews with participants who did not have these close connections to the Society provided outsider perspectives, as membership in the Society is not accessible to all persons.

Interview Instruments

Qualifications of those eligible to participate included men and women who understood what the WBC is and who had attended the annual event more than once. The reason participants were chosen based on their previous attendance was to ensure that participants had experience with the WBC and were not answering interview questions based on what they had yet to see, had seen only once, or had only heard about. For example, one question asked was, “Do you

think the celebration could occur elsewhere that's not a border town?" In order to answer this particular question, participants had to rely on previous experiences in the WBC. The importance of participants having an understanding of the WBC was also crucial because participants were asked to answer questions regarding the enactments of identities other than their own. In order to have participants evaluate events and the identities of those who participate in those events, it was necessary for them to be familiar with those enactments and to reflect on their own experiences by comparing and contrasting them to others. By interviewing participants who had attended the WBC more than once, even though they may have only attended a few events, the participants had some exposure to the WBC. Further, diversity among participants increased the probability of having contrasting experiences and levels of involvement to inform this study.

Interviews (see Appendix A) were conducted in order to obtain answers to specific questions related to my on site observations and to the specific roles of participants in the WBC. Specifically, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted throughout December and in February. Interview questions were open-ended questions, such as, "What are five things you know about the WBC?" Open-ended questions allowed participants to convey full and detailed stories and each interview usually lasted 30 minutes to an hour depending on the interviewee's time and willingness to share their thoughts and experiences. Although individuals had the option of having the interview conducted in either English or Spanish, all participants chose to have their interview conducted in English.

Semi-structured interviews were used because a set of standardized questions ensure validity and reliability, and also because they allowed me to direct the interview in their preferred direction or ask for further clarification and explanation if the interviewee appeared to be interested in a certain topic that may have not been included in the questionnaire. As a result

of my semi-structured interviews, I could control the interview's direction, but also give the interviewee some control (Fontana & Frey, 1994). This type of interview protocol provided a flexible framework that allowed interviews to be more like free flowing conversation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002), creating a more comfortable environment for the interviewees. Additionally, semi-structured interviews also provided insight into an individual's personal perspectives.

The interview instruments asked for basic demographic information such as age, gender, self-identified race and ethnicity in order to obtain participant profiles. Other questions related to participant profiles asked for the participant's role(s) in the WBC at different points in their lives and membership in any organizations or associations involved with the WBC. The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board approved all interview protocol. Before participating in an interview, each participant was asked to read through and sign a participant consent form. Although the consent form fully informed participants of the background and implications of the study, explanations of the consent form in my own words were included and participants were encouraged to feel free to ask for any clarifications throughout the interview and afterward as well. These semi-structured interviews were conducted at various times and locations depending on what was most convenient for participants. Some interviews took place at public locations such as a coffee shop, but other participants preferred being interviewed in their office or home. All interviews were face-to-face interviews.

After the consent form was explained, participants were given the option of choosing to be identified by their real names if they preferred. Only two participants chose not to be identified by their real names. By including this option, participants' cultural preferences were acknowledged and their words were supported by their real names and in the language of their choice. Most importantly, participants were assured that everything necessary would be done to

guarantee confidentiality and anonymity if they had chosen not to be identified by their real name.

Participant Observation

In addition to the interviews conducted with participants, participant observation was also used to glean understanding of the WBC and participants' experiences within it. Specifically, Hymes's (1972) SPEAKING framework was used as a means of corroborating findings and examining how WBC events are structured and carried out, as well as how participants engage or do not engage in particular WBC events. The SPEAKING framework is comprised of eight components that help organize and explain what is occurring in a situation and the meanings embedded in it. The components of the SPEAKING framework are (S)etting, (P)articipants, (E)nds, (A)cts and (A)ct sequences, (K)eys, (I)nstrumentalities, (N)orms of interactants/interaction, and (G)enres.

The first component of the SPEAKING framework, the (S)etting, refers to the physical setting, including the time and place. (E)nds are defined as the purposes and outcomes of a speech act. Next, (A)ct sequence refers to the form or order of the event. The sequence of a speech event may be indicative of how things are expected to be organized and accomplished. (K)ey describes the tone or manner of the speech act. (I)nstrumentalities are the forms and styles of speech. (N)orms describe the social rules that govern behavior at the event and participants' actions and reactions to these behaviors. The final component of the SPEAKING framework, (G)enre, describes the kind of speech act or event and participants of the act or event may apply their own terminology to describe it. By utilizing this framework, a thorough and detailed description of participants' communication and actions were observed and documented through field notes that followed a descriptive approach known as "thick" description (Geertz, 1973).

Thick description involves detailed note taking of participants' behavior that can then serve as data to identify nuanced communicative patterns and themes. By paying attention to details of interaction, interpretation of participants' behavior and their meanings in a particular culture are more adequate as they are based on descriptions of naturally occurring communication that is unedited and uncensored.

Participant observation gave me the opportunity to understand the events participants explained and also provided an opportunity to observe participants enacting their particular roles. By utilizing the SPEAKING framework at the Society of Martha Washington Colonial Pageant and Ball, the norms and rules Society debutantes and an escort had discussed were confirmed as occurring in a particular manner and within a specific order. For example, as will be further explained in the next chapter of this study, when interviewing Society organizers, they explicitly addressed the importance of U.S. patriotism and the celebration of U.S. history within the WBC. To understand exactly how these actors conceptualized U.S. patriotism and U.S. history, participant observation served to shed light on their words. Society organizers scripted a narrative for the Society pageant that focused on George Washington, historical figures of his time, and celebrated his role in history, but to comprehend how this was done, participant observation was necessary.

U.S. patriotism was observed in many (s)ettings and one in particular is the parade. Society of Martha Washington (p)articipants in the parade included Society debutantes and their escorts, the individuals chosen to portray George and Martha Washington, as well as Society organizers who helped decorate the parade floats and made sure the floats were equipped with containers filled with necklaces, also referred to as "beads," with red, white, and blue stars, pins with the United States flag, and other U.S. paraphernalia. This was not typical for other non-

Society floats that tossed out candies only instead. It was evident that the (n)orm for Society parade floats was to focus primarily on promoting U.S. patriotism by tossing such paraphernalia. By observing scenes such as the one described, and organizing notes according to the SPEAKING framework (Hymes, 1972), my notes were compared to transcribed interviews and through this coding, patterns were established. Most importantly, through this method I was able to refine my interview questions, construct effective probing questions, being that I understood how WBC events were organized, and further focus my study in events that I myself had attended.

Data Collection

The main events of the WBC are held annually for approximately a month with the last events ending in mid February. I conducted participant observations and interviews during December 2010 and February 2011. To interpret data and identify patterns, observations of naturally occurring behavior were essential. Carbaugh (1996) suggests that in order to learn what identities mean and how they function, it is necessary to allow individuals to explain these meanings and functions in their own words. To access participant's own terms, I conducted observations using Hymes's (1972) SPEAKING framework as a means for organizing observations that provided insight into how cultural identities are performed in WBC events. Notes were taken during and immediately after observation. Using Hymes's (1972) SPEAKING framework as a guide, notes were organized and used to explain in detail how the scene was observed and what was heard and what norms of interaction could be abstracted with the data. Interviews also provided data for the analysis of how the WBC does not necessarily serve as a site for the construction of a single communal identity, but rather provides a stage for the construction of multiple types of identities.

Because this is a qualitative study and the social construction of our relationships and experiences form the foundation of this study, it was clear that I could not completely avoid influencing the interview process. Specifically, for this study, the interview process posed potential obstacles since being born and raised in Laredo and studying a phenomenon that is not foreign to me most likely influenced my own worldview, as well as why and how this study was carried out. Despite these potential biases, my experience with the WBC and the city of Laredo also provided necessary background information and access to many individuals who were very willing to participate and express their opinions *because* of my own connections to Laredo. To benefit from the advantages and minimize the disadvantages of being an insider, full consideration of my position is something that I reflected on throughout this study.

Some of the participants were aware that of my familiarity with the WBC, while others were not. Consequently, many participants understood that, because I was not an outsider, I had my own opinions about the WBC, its events, and the cultural identities performed within in it. Further, they were aware that these personal experiences have influenced why I chose to study the WBC. However, all efforts were made to focus on the participants and their opinions and ideas without interjecting my own stories and opinions and thus generating a more objective data set.

Data Coding and Analysis

I transcribed each interview soon after it had been conducted in order to minimize any recall difficulties. After field notes and interview transcriptions had been completed, I began to formally analyze my materials through an inductive approach, using an open coding scheme as described in Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). In keeping with Emerson et al. (1995), prior to data analysis, no categories were established in order to avoid

imposing categories or interpretations that did not derive from interviews. Interview data was coded to answer how participants enact their expressed cultural identities during and beyond the WBC and how the WBC serves as a site for the performances of these cultural identities.

The coding of data began with open coding, which is described by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), as “the initial and unrestricted coding of data” (p. 219). This first stage of coding lead to the categorization of data (Strauss, 1987; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) and data collection continued until no new patterns or themes emerged from the data. Some examples of the codes I utilized were “type of involvement in the WBC” and “purpose for attending the WBC.” Conducting line-by-line analysis of the transcribed interviews ensured this. An inductive analysis of the data guided the analysis and because data coding and analysis in qualitative methods is an iterative process, a process in which unexamined topics and questions may arise as a study progresses, any new questions that arose during data analysis were considered and explored along with other areas of literature that appeared to be relevant to the study. Once these themes had been established, they were compared. The constant comparative method as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and refined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), was used to construct categories based on these themes. The development of three categories I called the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers* was the result of the relationships between these themes.

Validity and Reliability

Measures of reliability seek to ensure that independent researchers are able to replicate a previous study and produce similar results (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Reliability, for any study, is crucial in establishing credibility and in order to do so, both internal and external reliability must be addressed. Internal reliability refers to whether other researchers would categorize data in the same categories the study they are replicating has, and external reliability pertains to

whether other researchers would also find similar constructs, given that the set of circumstances is the same. Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that in qualitative research reliability is achieved by using the original framework to show how data were collected and how the data informed the analysis. Additionally, keeping notes on the design rationale, procedures, protocols, decisions, and data also aids in ensuring validity (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). To derive consistency in this study, notes and recordings were kept during the interview process in order to explain how the study took place and how it could be replicated.

Validity pertains to the accuracy of the findings in a study (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In other words, measures of validity should convey that the researcher's results do in fact reflect what was being studied and not another phenomenon (Hansen 1979; Pelto & Pelto, 1978). Internal validity addresses whether the instruments and methods used to evaluate a phenomenon actually measure the phenomenon under study and external validity is related to how and whether findings can be compared to others. Kvale (1996) defines validity as craftsmanship, communication, and action to explain that validity requires that the researcher refine the instruments and methods used during the research process in order to ensure accurate conclusions. As a form of validation, "member checks" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) were used to establish credibility and to ensure validity. Feedback from participants was sought after data were collected, coded, and analyzed. Participants' feedback ensured that interpretations and conclusions were reflective of their interview responses and confirmed that abstractions from data are accurate.

Summary

This chapter elaborates the theoretical perspectives and methodology that served as the foundation in conducting research for this study. The work of Emerson et al. (1995), Carbaugh

(1996), Covarrubias (2002), Hymes (1972), Lindlof and Taylor (2002), Strauss and Corbin (1990), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Lincoln and Guba (1985), was used for data collection, interpretation, and analysis. LeCompte & Goetz (1982), Kvale (1996) served as my guides for ensuring the validity and reliability of my research. In Chapter 4, my findings concerning the performances of various cultural identities within the WBC are discussed.

Chapter 4

Findings

Research Question 1

Cultural Identities in the Washington Birthday Celebration

This chapter describes the findings of this study by beginning with the first research question: (1) What cultural identities are enacted at the Washington Birthday Celebration and how do participants use communication to enact these expressed identities? This question asks what cultural identities can be distinguished within the WBC and focuses on participants' communication as a means of describing them. By focusing on the communicative resources participants utilize to construct their expressed selves, the collective identity the WBC is intended to foster and the differences it defines in doing so can be examined. In this study, cultural identity is defined as "identification with and perceived acceptance into a group that has shared systems of symbols and meaning as well as norms/rules for conduct" (Collier & Thomas, 1988, p. 113). In other words, by examining what participants express about how one should and should not participate in the WBC, three distinctive groupings are revealed.

Within each of these groupings particular patterns of symbols reveal an ensemble of characteristics that, both, shape the commonalities within each group and the differentiations across groups. Within each group, WBC participants display the symbols that suggest particularized ways of identifying with a category of person and for experiencing belonging. By contrasting the shared sets of symbols of each group of the three groups of WBC participants, the differences across groupings become more evident. Such examination reveals the multiplicity of selves available at a particular Laredo event that while promoting simplicity of purpose reveals contrasting motives by participants.

To describe and discuss how cultural identity is performed through communicative behavior, performance theory (Goffman, 1959; Turner, 1957, 1995; Turner & Schechner, 1987) serves as theoretical frame. A performance is defined as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). In the spirit of Goffman, individuals can be seen and heard to embrace at least two types of actors, those in everyday life and also actors performing on a traditional theatrical stage. In both cases, actors use communication to reflect and constitute the particular identities that align them with their particular group.

Although Society performers such as debutantes and the individual portraying George Washington are actors involved in a pageant in which a civic center’s theatre stage is the main site for performance, actors in everyday life include participants belonging to all three groups of WBC participants. These three groups will be discussed below. For example, even when the local community individual portraying George Washington is no longer wearing his colonial costume and following a carefully drafted script, he continues, as do all humans, to perform before a particular set of observers that comprise his everyday life. His activity is still a performance even though it may be a more habitual, everyday type of performance that does not stand out the way his portrayal of George Washington does. At the WBC, then, actors involve performers in everyday life and those who take on fictive roles on routine life stages as well as the more traditional theatre stages.

Behaviors will be identified as prescriptions and proscriptions (Philipsen, 1992, p. 8) to discuss the norms and rules learned by Society performers, whether explicitly stated in writing, as in the handbook given to the debutantes by Society organizers, or learned experientially from

observing other Society members and attending Society events. A proscription refers to a rule that describes an unacceptable and inappropriate behavior, and a prescription refers to a rule that describes an acceptable and appropriate behavior. In this chapter, I am going to describe, by using my own labels, three categories of culturally informed personhood. These categories were inspired by the experiences participants shared in interviews as well as by the observation notes organized utilizing the SPEAKING framework (Hymes, 1972) and gathered at WBC events. The Society organizers are identified as the *Patriots*. Society performers, which include George Washington, debutantes, and escorts are categorized as the *Progenists* and, the third group, non-Society attendees are classified as the *Partiers*.

The fourth section of this chapter discusses what these three types of personhood have in common and how their construction is influenced by Laredo's geographical position as a U.S.-Mexico border town. These three categories of participants are all observed at the WBC, implying that there is shared understanding of what the WBC is and is not. By recognizing that there are specific aspects of these cultural identities that coincide, it is clear that the WBC is intelligible and significant to all three groups even though actors experience it and communicate about it in diverse ways. After this section, the divergence of these three categories of WBC participants is explained. Finally, the last section of this chapter addresses the second research question of this study.

I. Society organizers: the *Patriots*.

This section highlights the cultural identities of Society organizers, men and women who are involved in the Society of Martha Washington in numerous ways and who take on different roles in the Society consistently year after year. I label this set of actors as the *Patriots*. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2011), the definition of a patriot is "one who

loves his or her country and supports its authority and interests.” In other words, a patriot is defined by a strong identification with one’s country and by service and support for that country. Moreover, the *Patriots* tend to see themselves as actors engaged in actively promoting U.S. patriotism, U.S. American traditions within the Society, and their country’s heritage. When the *Patriots* are asked what the purpose and significance of the WBC is, their descriptions express a determination to preserve and promote their historical heritage through their involvement in the WBC. Their choice to affirm a U.S. heritage is boldly evident through the portrayals of George and Martha Washington and was also observed through the paraphernalia they use to decorate Society parade floats as well as the lesson on Martha Washington that one debutante mentioned to me as an event she had to attend after our interview.

Melissa, a 54-year-old woman of Mexican heritage, has been a volunteer since 1979, has served on various Washington Birthday Celebration Association committees, and is a current Society of Martha Washington member. Moreover, she will serve as President of the Society of in 2011-2012. She underscores how the celebration began precisely because Laredo is on the U.S. side of the U.S.-Mexican border. She says, “Yeah. Laredo wanted to celebrate something American because we were always celebrating Mexican holidays and never really felt American ‘cuz we never really celebrated *big* 4th of July or things like that.”

Highlighting the early beginnings of the WBC, Melissa explains the need to celebrate “something American” during a time when Mexican culture was dominant in Laredo. Although Mexican culture may still greatly influence the way life is lived there, the desire to create a celebration to facilitate a connection and identification with the United States, which began the celebration honoring George Washington, remains essential for some Laredoans, even those who acknowledge their Mexican heritage. For Melissa, “always celebrating Mexican holidays and

never really [feeling] American” are reasons for introducing the WBC and her various roles in the celebration convey her loyalty to the event, especially to the Society.

Gabriel, a 49 year old Society organizer, has been heavily involved in organizing events in numerous ways that include work in public relations, set design, interior decorating, photography, and organizing the Society’s February ball’s program along with Melissa. His continuous involvement with the event underscores his dedication and service to the Society and its mission. Like Melissa, Gabriel describes the purpose of the celebration as revolving around notions of U.S. patriotism. He states that, “[The WBC] literally, promotes, works to promote, develop, and preserve Americanism and patriotism.”

Utilizing the words “promote,” “develop,” and “preserve,” indicate how Gabriel’s role in the WBC actively engages him as actor in furthering and maintaining a shared way of acting. Gabriel’s emphasis of “Americanism” and “patriotism” as characteristics of the WBC describe what the *Patriots* value and the shared system of symbols they identify with as members of this group. He elaborates on this when asked what he thinks the WBC conveys about Laredo. He states,

I think it says that we’re a community that respects our American traditions and our American history. And I think it says that we, like this nation, will not falter, and we won’t give up, and we won’t, um, will continue to be dedicated to what’s important, to keeping our country alive and our traditions and our patriotism alive.

As a *Patriot*, Gabriel expresses passion and loyalty to his country by directly identifying with the United States. He says, “like this nation, [we] will not falter, and we won’t give up.” By explaining what he believes the United States stands for and then appropriating those characteristics, Gabriel conveys his strong identification with what he believes his country

represents. Other *Patriots* also stress the significance of the WBC as an opportunity, a necessary opportunity, to perform an “American” identity. For Gabriel, “respect[ing] American traditions and our American history,” and “keeping our country alive and our traditions and our patriotism alive,” are “important” and highlight what the *Patriots* most ardently stand for. From Gabriel’s perspective, his views resonate with those of the “community.” Like other *Patriots*, Gabriel respects symbols of Americanism and identifies himself as “American” by continually characterizing the WBC as a U.S. patriotic celebration with which he is actively involved.

Laura Hovel, age 52, is a former debutante, current Society member, and the mother of a 2010-2011 debutante, Laura Garza-Hovel. She echoes Gabriel’s words when she emphasizes that it is “important” to celebrate this “American” identity. She explains,

Being so close to the border, there’s a lot of focus also on Mexico. And we, it’s...I think it’s very important that we educate our, everyone, and celebrate what our Founding Father was for us. And the freedom we gained once he...I mean, because of him, uh, and just the significance of his role in all of our history.

For Laura, “a lot of focus on Mexico” is not representative of an “American” identity. Because of this “focus” on Mexico, she believes more education about the Founding Father of the United States and this particular history is necessary. She appropriates George Washington and what he represents by utilizing the word “us” to express her identification with the Founding Father. In her use of the word “us,” Laura includes herself in a group that seeks to “educate” and “celebrate what our Founding Father was for us,” “the freedom we gained,” and “his role in all of our history.” For the *Patriots*, the WBC serves as a vehicle for the education and celebration of the U.S. Founding Fathers and both Laura and Gabriel convey the characteristics of a *Patriot*

since they both accentuate their identification with “American” values that include honoring “our” Founding Father, George Washington.

Linda, age 68, is a transgenerational *Patriot*, meaning that her mother, sisters, and other female relatives have participated in the WBC. Linda has been a dress designer and creator of many of the colonial style gowns worn by debutantes at the Society Ball and Pageant since the mid 1970’s. Like other *Patriots*, she underscores the role of U.S. history in the formation of the WBC. She says,

So it’s interesting, the history of it and I think we can’t lose what our Founding Fathers set up for us. The way they set up the government was just perfect and then when we try to take God out of everything it’s like direct opposition to what our founding was all about.

Linda expresses a concern for the preservation of “what our Founding Fathers set up for us” by stressing that “we can’t lose” this history and foundation. Although she does not identify who is included in “we,” like other *Patriots*, Linda may consider “we” to include all who participate in the WBC even though she belongs to a small and select elite group. As a *Patriot*, Linda is proud of her country and she conveys her passion for the United States by describing its government as “perfect.” For Linda, in addition to speaking about U.S. history and the role of the Founding Fathers, she also addresses “the government” and “God.” Although other *Patriots* do not include these words in their responses, it is evident that Linda also aligns her religious beliefs with loyalty to her country. This connection portrays a strong identification with her country, the United States, since her love of country also represents her religious beliefs.

For the *Patriots*, communicating the purpose and significance of the WBC as “Americanism,” U.S. history, and the Founding Fathers constructs a distinctive cultural identity.

A *Patriot* embraces an ideology that honors, preserves, and celebrates a particular history. Ultimately, the *Patriots* utilize the multiple stages available in the WBC for the performances of an “American” cultural identity. These enactments are observable in the Society Ball and Pageant, the parade, and many other public appearances. The cultural identities of the *Patriots* are highlighted by norms that include involvement in the Society itself and participation in its events that most encompass a United States colonial theme. Many of these events, however, are exclusive and require membership for one to participate. For that reason, the performance of “Americanism” as described by the *Patriots* is available for a select group only, making it impossible for this cultural identity to be enacted by non-Society attendees.

II. Society performers: the *Progenists*.

Society performers in this study consist of the debutantes and their escorts, all of whom are seniors in high school. The performances of the historical figures of George and Martha Washington. Debutantes whose families have been involved in the Society for many generations are recognized as “Daughters of the Society,” a label that is contrasted with “guests,” which pertains to the few hand-chosen women who are invited by *Patriots* to be debutantes for the duration of one year. I label this group of WBC actors as the *Progenists*. The word “progenist” is derived from the word “progeny,” which means “descendant” or “children” (Merriam-Dictionary, 2011). Characterizing Society performers as the *Progenists* highlights the familial network that structures Society membership and indicates that most of these actors are the children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews of the *Patriots*. This characterization also highlights the roles these actors have in learning the myriad norms and rules of the Society from the *Patriots* and also implies that is the responsibility of the *Progenists* to continue and to preserve these learned traditions through their own activity in the celebration.

As key figures in the Society they are also the most visible performers of the WBC and are involved in a more traditional and formal type of theatrical setting. Taking on the roles of the *Progenists* includes wearing extravagant costumes and expensive colonial attire that are estimated to cost between \$10,000 to \$30,000, appearing on numerous stages, following various carefully-worded scripts on stage and for interviews with non-Society attendees, and having an audience who has purchased \$30-\$60 tickets to watch rehearsed performances. To examine the cultural identities of the *Progenists*, this section focuses on these actors' perceptions of what it means to perform their group membership appropriately by highlighting the norms and rules for conduct of the *Progenists*. These standards are also addressed through the *Progenists'* evaluations of performances by debutantes who are guests, performances depicted as being inconsistent with the enactments that gain one acceptance into this particular group.

Angel, now 23 years old, participated as an escort from 2009-2010 when he was 18. He explains that it is prior relationships with other *Patriots* and *Progenists* that determine debutante and escort pairings. When talking about his own experience as an escort, he mentions that he knew other *Progenists* before participating as an escort because "a lot of [their] dads go to the ranch together" and because he played tee ball with them. Moreover, Angel describes the Society as an organization in which "everybody somehow knows everybody." His descriptions of the relationships in the Society convey a tight social network that extends beyond the Society since the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* take part in similar activities such as the leisure activity of going to ranch together.

Looking beyond debutante and escort pairings and into their possible implications, Linda, provides some insight as a past debutante when she notes that she and two of her sisters and herself are still married to the men who served as their WBC Ball escorts. She says,

Cuz in one of the magazines they refer to it as a mating ritual or something and I thought that's ridiculous! But when I look back on it, you know, I don't know! Maybe it had something to do with us going on and getting married to these guys because they saw the style of life that we lived and what we enjoyed and they were willing to go along with it because we're still together!

Linda says that the Society's debutante and escort pairings have been referred to as "a mating ritual," and although at one point she found the concept to be "ridiculous," she acknowledges that because her marriage and her sisters' marriages have endured several decades (she was married at 23), the concept may not be as unbelievable as she once considered it to be. Linda's and her sisters' marriages to their WBC escorts are examples of the "mating ritual" Linda describes. Additionally, these marriages also convey how the Society is maintained through carefully selected debutante and escort pairings since there is a particular "style of life" individuals must be "willing to go along with" if they are to achieve group membership and expand their familial network within the Society. Although she does not elaborate on what this particular "style of life" includes, based on observations at Society events, it is evident that this "style of life" is an expensive and lavish one. These pairings indicate a manifestation of group membership and reveal how the *Patriots* prepare the *Progenists* to take on roles and leadership positions to ensure that everyone continues to "somehow know everybody."

Prior to more formal and heavily attended Society events such as the November debutante presentation and the Society Ball and Pageant in February, there are numerous cocktail parties held in honor of one or several debutantes and weekly meetings and rehearsals for the debutantes and escorts. Isabella recalls the importance of these meetings for the preparation of her role as a debutante when she explains,

Well, basically they teach you like that you have to have really good etiquette, like in the beginning they give us like this handbook and how like on our Facebook we have to be careful. They don't want like anything public about, like, Marthas, and basically like our behavior, like that. We're representing the Society so they're very strict about that.

The Society explicitly instructs Isabella on how she should and should not act in “representing the Society.” To perform the role of a debutante adequately, she must have “really good etiquette” and “be careful” with her use of Facebook, a social networking site. When the Society of Martha Washington was formed in 1939 social networking sites were not a concern. However, Isabella mentions being “careful” on Facebook, revealing how the Society accommodates to changing times as means of ensuring the preservation of a particular image. Although this study does not focus on ritual per se, using Turner's (1995) paradigm about rituals is useful in explaining what is occurring in this context. Turner argues that the purpose of a ritual is to teach one how to behave and what it means to be a member of a group and this is precisely what the *Progenists* are taught through their participation in Society events. To emphasize the ritualistic nature of this performance is the existence of a prescribed handbook that lists and expounds on the behaviors Isabella is obligated to enact. For Isabella, being the daughter of a *Patriot* means she has grown up knowing about and attending Society events. With this knowledge, Isabella can then perpetuate the familial network that her mother has set up for her by performing as a debutante. Her connection to the Society has provided her with knowledge about the ideology and the rules for enacting that ideology. In addition, the rehearsals the *Progenists* attend prepare them for their performances' ritualized behavior and at events I attended, it was evident that her behavior was instructed by her mother and sisters who would

say things like, “Smile,” and, “Sit up straight,” as Isabella’s parade float was about to join the procession line.

These ritualized behaviors include specific communicative enactments. In explaining how the experience of being a debutante has changed her, Isabella says that her mannerisms, specifically a particular way of greeting others, are what have changed the most. The mannerism Isabella highlights not only conveys the Society’s approval and disapproval of particular behaviors, but also emphasizes the role a Mexican culture has in the WBC. In some Mexican communities, not knowing how to greet somebody not only casts a bad light on the individual, but on the individual’s family as well (Covarrubias, 2005, p. 39), underscoring how greeting people serves as a baseline of politeness in this U.S.-Mexico border city. Further, Isabella’s recognition of the Society’s influence on her behavior also suggests that the Society has certain expectations of the *Progenists*. Isabella describes an example of a prescription for the role of a debutante is greeting every person in attendance at Society events in the following quote.

Like when I go out to eat having to be like so proper all the time and like saying, “Hi,” to every single person you see. You can’t, I don’t know, like that’s what everyone tells you. When you go to a tea or something, never skip a person even if you don’t know them.

Being “so proper all the time” and “saying, ‘Hi,’ to every single person you see” are ways Isabella can perform her cultural upbringing appropriately. Isabella’s performance is not only an individual performance, but is also a representation of her family and of the Society at large. Representing the Society has distinct implications as Isabella corroborated earlier when she said, “they [the Society] are very strict about that [representations].” As a debutante, Isabella is attentive to acknowledging and greeting everyone she meets, even if she does not know them.

The values the Society seeks to protect and instill in the young debutantes are made visible through debutantes' ritualized communication. It is clear that Isabella is aware of how she must act and not act because of her connection to the Society. To further ensure that the *Progenists* are thoroughly aware of what is expected of them, the Society also provides a handbook that includes information on the *Progenists*' responsibilities.

Isabella's explanation of these prescribed behaviors parallels what another debutante, Laura, discusses when she explains how she feels she must act because she is representing the Society. She says, "But, yeah, you definitely have to, like, I guess some people maybe have to censor themselves in different ways sometimes. Just because, obviously, you need to look, like, polite and appropriate for everything." In using the word "censor," Laura echoes Isabella's explanation about having to carefully observe the prescriptions for an acceptable communicative behavior. Laura's words exemplify how debutantes and escorts are expected to perform in a specified way, especially since they are representing the Society. Further, Laura explains that when participants are not around the *Patriots* or at Society events, not all participants behave the way the Society expects them to. For this particular role, however, Laura identifies there are specific ways to act and not act. To perform this role correctly, one must "look polite and appropriate for everything," and this behavior is something Laura identifies as "obvious."

Laura's description of these behaviors as "obvious" reinforces her familiarity with the norms for conduct the *Progenists* adhere to. Her use of the word "obvious" also draws attention to the importance of the learned behaviors that construct cultural identities. Her memories of attending the Society's ball and pageant are moments in her life that she can recall vividly and she also mentions she thought she was fully prepared for the role of debutantes, a role she knew

she would perform ever since she was a little girl. Laura explains that behaving in certain ways is “appropriate,” which indicates there are behaviors she has learned to deem inappropriate.

Like Isabella, Laura addresses the role the *Progenists* have in ensuring the continuation of their family networks in this select organization. She says, “I always thought like, ‘Oh, I’m super prepared for it,’ you know? ‘I know the presentation like backwards and forwards.’” For Laura, her family’s consistent involvement in the Society has offered rich background knowledge on what is expected of the *Progenists*, making the role of debutante something she felt “prepared for” since it is a performance of behaviors she considers “obvious.” For other participants, however, a lack of both prior involvement in the Society and a strong family affiliation with the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*, are indicative of inaccurate, even failed, debutante performances. Addressing what is not an appropriate performance also signifies what is.

Although the majority of the debutantes are daughters of members of the Society, there are usually one or two high school senior women invited by the *Patriots* as guests to participate as debutantes every year. The number of guests invited varies annually and depends on the number of Society members’ daughters and granddaughters presented. To further explain the cultural features of the *Progenists* and the behaviors they may internalize as “obvious,” one can look at how debutante guests miss performance cues that are “obvious” to Daughters of the Society. In response to my question, “Do you think that it’s a different experience for the debutantes who are invited by [Society] members?” Isabella responded, “Yeah because I feel like they don’t really know...like, a lot of the stuff. They’re not used to like...For example, like the ads [advertisements]. There’s a lot of stuff that they don’t know when they’re guests.”

Isabella repeats that guests don't know "a lot of stuff" to differentiate between herself, a Daughter of the Society, and debutantes who are only guests. Like it is for Laura, the performance of a *Progenist* may seem "obvious" to Isabella as well, and what is considered "obvious" can be difficult to explain, especially since the *Progenists* grow up observing and learning from the *Patriots*. Isabella mentions advertisements as a site for a possible miscue when asked to describe the experience of debutantes who are invited guests. In referencing the advertisements, Isabella refers to the advertisements placed in a hefty book similar to a school yearbook published annually by the Society. This book is distributed to every attendee of the Society's ball as a keepsake. Local and statewide organizations and merchants take advantage of this annual book to place their advertisements. Also, the book features myriad congratulatory messages to all WBC participants from fellow participants, past participants, relatives, and friends. The planning and designing of these pages is done months prior to the event, but unless one has attended Society events, it is unlikely for a debutante guest to be familiar with these books as they are not sold or distributed at any other WBC events. The book, then, serves as one more tool the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* have to document the symbols and artifacts that reflect collectively held values of the Society. In referencing the book, Isabella invokes the idea that some WBC knowledge is for the purview of only those who are insiders.

Isabella offers additional explanation of the required behaviors of the *Progenists* that guests are not aware of, further underscoring the Society's exclusivity. She explains, "Like for the parties. Your escort's mom should throw you a party thanking [the] deb[utante] and stuff. And when they're not in it [the Society] they're, like, clueless." Classifying guests as "clueless" reaffirms that acceptance into the Society is exclusive, being that some knowledge is shared primarily among the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*. Further, it underscores how simply

participating as a debutante does not indicate one can achieve group membership. Rather, acceptance must be gained through shared understanding of norms and enactments of behaviors that are considered “obvious,” and that usually can be obtained only via information handed down within familial networks. Isabella demonstrates her knowledge of prescribed behavior for the *Progenists*, but this behavior is not stated in the handbook or said by *Patriots* and the *Progenists*. In other words, an escort’s mom organizing a party “thanking” her son’s debutante is an act considered to be common knowledge amongst the *Progenists*. Also, invited guests lack this knowledge because they are not as connected or involved in the Society. As a result, these guests appear to be “clueless” as to what “should” be done. From observations at the Society’s Colonial Ball, it was also obvious that debutante guests did not socialize with Daughters of the Society as much as Daughters of the Society socialized with each other. In other words, even at an event in which all debutantes were in attendance and wearing debutante gowns, there were observable distinctions between those who belonged to the Society, the *Progenists*, and those who were only guests.

Like debutante guests may fail to perform the role of Society debutante correctly, escorts are also subject to certain expectations. These expectations, however, are learned within a familial network. Isabella explains the importance of a common social background in which this information is common knowledge. She says,

They say that they [escorts] should pick up their deb[utante] and make sure to attend all the parties. To where some of the escorts think, “Oh, no, it’s fine,” and are missing a lot of the parties. It’s usually the ones whose parents aren’t involved in Marthas and don’t know that you should attend as many parties as you can.

Involvement in the Society implies that one is familiar with what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior for a *Progenist*. In order to ensure this familiarity, choosing an escort whose parents are involved in the Society is critical, being that it is “usually the ones whose parents aren’t involved in the Marthas” that “don’t know.” For an individual to perform the *Progenist* role accurately, it is evident that one must have connections to the Society since many norms and rules are passed down from the *Patriots* to the *Progenists*. Understanding the early development of these relationships and maintenance of group membership provides insight into how the performances of guests are usually unsuccessful if they do not have a parent who is a *Patriot*. To more fully understand the available types of cultural identities at the WBC, the cultural identities of the *Partiers* are explored in the following section.

III. Non-Society attendees: the *Partiers*.

This section focuses on the third cultural identity enacted in the WBC. Non-Society attendees consist of a majority group of individuals who are neither involved in the Society of Martha Washington nor have family members who are involved in the Society of Martha Washington. I identify these individuals as the *Partiers*. The *Partiers* are participants whose primary roles in the WBC are characterized by the purpose of sensory pleasure and building social currency. Whereas the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* focus on the WBC events that directly involve the Society, the *Partiers* describe other WBC events such as the Jalapeño Festival and the Youth Parade, events that the Society of Martha Washington neither organizes nor funds, and many of which are free of charge. In the following quote, P2A, age 43, explains how she takes part in some of these events because she’s “out to have a good time.”

I guess the common part would be everybody wants to go out to have a good time.

Entertainment. Cuz it’s [the WBC] entertaining. I mean it’s entertainment all the way

around. The parade is entertainment, the Jalapeño Festival you go for the entertainment.

So I think it's mostly the entertainment and the camaraderie, the friendship. You know all the people gathering together and having a good time.

P2A describes the WBC as “entertainment all the way around” and, positioning herself within “the people gathering together and having a good time,” she identifies her role as actor in the WBC with words that describe pleasure and enjoyment. For the *Partiers*, the WBC provides a means for accruing social capital; for creating human bonds. The WBC offers a stage for “camaraderie” and “friendship” in similar ways as it does for the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* to preserve relationships in their select networks. However, the *Partiers* convey a clear focus on the entertainment the WBC makes available and they are neither concerned with the Founding Father the celebration has been named after nor with U.S. patriotism nor within raising family members to achieve the status of a debutante or escort at a ball and pageant.

Similarly, when asked what he thinks should remain the same in the WBC, José, age 25, recognizes that it is the parties that most attract him to the WBC. He says, “The parties. (laughter) Don't get rid of the parties! The parties are great. I get to see a lot of my friends that's why. And that's always good. If they're not there [the parties] then I won't go. (laughter).” José sees the WBC festivities as opportunities to enhance his social currency and interpersonal bonds. He expresses this by saying that the parties are “great” and they should not be “rid of” because “if they're not there [the parties]” he won't go. Corroborating what P2A says about camaraderie and friendship, José says that the WBC offers a chance to see a lot of friends. Focusing on the parties instead of U.S. patriotism and family traditions, concepts that define the cultural identities of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*, José conveys his involvement in the WBC by explaining his liking of the parties, not his love of country. P3A, age 50, identifies with the *Partiers* when she

describes the WBC's purpose. "It's kind of this time when everybody has fun. So I think it's a time to have fun and let loose." Describing the WBC as a "time when everybody has fun" and "let[s] loose," P3A departs from the norms of the *Patriots*, who focus on preserving and supporting U.S. history and Society traditions, and the *Progenists*, who learn these traditions and maintain them through their own enactments.

Even though the Society of Martha Washington may be a prominent and major affiliate organization of the larger WBC, the celebration includes other events that the *Partiers* enjoy and look forward to. P2A expresses the significance of the celebration in Laredo and what it means to the public when she says that the WBC is a "show" they expect and, she says, "If it's not done I think it would be *very* missed, *very, very* missed." By describing the WBC as a "show," P2A calls attention to how the WBC serves as a vehicle for extravagant, even exaggerated, performances that comport an audience response. She also expresses how much the celebration would be missed, expressing that the WBC does, in fact, attract and offer something for the *Partiers*. In a noteworthy move, P2A explicitly references social class factors and she points out relationships undergirding WBC activities and particular groups of interactants. P2A expresses her enjoyment in the celebration but also acknowledges the social class boundaries, which will be addressed below in this chapter, that are established through the WBC. She elaborates,

Because the parade is free! So, you know, if they [non-Society attendees] can't go to the Jalapeño [Festival] but at least they took their kids to the parade. So they were able to participate in something. The carnival. I forgot about the carnival. There's one day where you buy a bracelet and you can ride all day for one price, so it [the WBC] would be missed...very missed.

To be “able to participate in something” is something the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* do not address. However, for P2A it is clear that it is not only the exclusivity of these events, but also the cost of attending them that determines how and when she participates in the celebration. For example, since the parade is free and the carnival offers a day where the purchase of a bracelet grants access to rides for a full day, P2A highlights how expenses shape how one can and cannot participate. In explaining her participation and that of other *Partiers*, P2A expresses her involvement and enjoyment of WBC events and explains that even though the WBC includes events that can be expensive, at least the parade is free so it offers an opportunity for parents to take their kids to at least one WBC event.

When comparing the manner in which cultural identities are constructed in relation to the WBC, it is clear that the performances of the *Partiers* do not correspond with those of other groups. One of the key factors in shaping these cultural identities is social class and P2A makes explicit how this factor separates groups and influences the manner in which they are able to participate in the WBC. For the *Partiers*, enjoying WBC events such as the Jalapeño Festival, the carnival, and the parades, is indicative of what it means to be a member of this shared personhood since it is the festivities, parties, and “letting loose” that best characterize their behaviors and motives for attending.

Despite clear differences between the three groups, such as the social class barrier dividing the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* from the *Partiers*, one key dimension these actors have in common is the constant influence of a Mexican culture in their WBC experiences. Despite diverse reasons for attending WBC events all three categories of actors distinguish a particular Mexican influence that shapes how the WBC is celebrated. The next section describes how the cultural identities of the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers*, overlap when it comes to

understanding how a particular Mexican custom is infused into the WBC, making it a culturally diverse celebration despite the enactment of various identities wherein status differentials are enhanced. Following this section, the divergence of these cultural identities is explored by elaborating on social class as a factor that shapes experiences in the WBC and emphasizes differences between these three groups.

Convergence of Cultural Identities: “*Echar la casa por la ventana.*”

The three distinct sets of actors described above represent different types of participation that are influenced by the shared understandings these actors have of what their group membership entails. However, all of these distinct cultural identities are performed within the same site, indicating that despite differences between the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers*, the WBC, as a cultural experience, is intelligible to all three groups since they all can and do participate in the celebration in some way. As expressed by participants, the convergence of cultural identities is evident in how a particular Mexican culture is infused into the WBC, influencing the ways in which performances are enacted and how events are celebrated.

Unlike the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*, the *Partiers* neither perceive the celebration’s purpose as being patriotic nor identify the WBC as a site in which “Americanism” is celebrated, however, like the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* the *Partiers* describe the celebration as “Mexican.” Even though the *Partiers* did not initially describe the WBC as a celebration advancing U.S. patriotism, because the *Patriots* identified the WBC as a site in which patriotism and U.S. American traditions are celebrated, the *Partiers* were asked if they felt more patriotic because they participate in the WBC. P3A responds to this question in the following:

I don’t think it’s about that. That’s interesting because I know it’s supposed to symbolize George Washington and Martha Washington, but I don’t think it’s that. I think it’s like

it's own...it's almost like they're symbolic names, that don't really- I mean, I know that they're portraying the people, but I don't see it as making people more patriotic toward the United States because...Since it is a binational celebration, a border celebration between the two sister cities, I see a lot of, again, Mexican culture infused into it.

P3A's description of George and Martha Washington as "symbolic names" who the celebration is "supposed" to be about conveys her group membership as a *Partier*. Additionally, she also says that she does not think the WBC is about patriotism, departing further from what the *Patriots* believe is the purpose of the WBC. Describing the celebration as a "binational celebration," "a border celebration between the two sister cities," and as a celebration with "Mexican culture infused into it," P3A does not perceive the celebration as an event "making people more patriotic toward the United States." Instead, P3A elaborates on how she understands the WBC as something much more characteristic of Mexican culture than U.S. patriotism. She says,

I see that maybe the grandness of it and the festivity of it more like a Hispanic cultural or Latino cultural thing to take a celebration and make it into a huge celebration. I see more, that's what I see and I don't know if it makes people more patriotic. I don't see that, but possibly.

As a native of California, P3A describes her first impressions of the WBC when she says that she asked herself, "What are a community of 98% Hispanic, Latinos, doing celebrating Washington's Birthday in such a big way?" For P3A, this initial reaction to the WBC was answered after she became more familiar with this border region. She describes "the grandness" and "the festivity" of the WBC as being more representative of "a Hispanic or Latino cultural thing." For her, celebrating George Washington in such an extravagant way is explained by the

influence a particular Mexican culture has in the construction of social life in Laredo. P3A distinguishes events in Laredo and the Latino community as “always over the top” and Melissa, a *Patriot*, shares ideas that directly correspond with P3A’s thoughts on how George and Martha Washington serve as “symbolic names.” Melissa says, “Really if you think about [it], George Washington is...an excuse for a celebration, you know. It’s turned into more than just Washington’s Birthday.”

Melissa addresses what P3A describes as “symbolic names” that are part of a celebration but not necessarily the focus of the celebration. Although Melissa is a *Patriot* and she says that George Washington is the reason for the celebration, she also emphasizes how the WBC has become much more than a celebration honoring George Washington. The cultural identities of the *Partiers* and the *Patriots* differ in that they do not attend the same WBC events or belong to the same social class, but they converge, however, when speaking about a Mexican culture in the WBC. Another *Patriot*, Gabriel, also discusses the role of a Mexican culture in the WBC stating,

IGNC, which is the International Good Neighbor Council handles the *abrazo*ⁱⁱⁱ children on this side [United States] and the counterpart, which is an organization in Nuevo Laredo with Nuevo Laredo citizens, um, works- They come over here and they pick up their part of the celebration and they show up to all the events and, quite frankly, they’re probably more festive than we are. You know that’s the one thing about the Mexican culture. It’s all about parties. It’s all about celebration.

In his explanation of the IGNC in Nuevo Laredo, Gabriel describes the individuals in this organization as “more festive,” and though Gabriel identifies as Mexican-American, he distinguishes between those who live on the Mexican side of the border and those who live on the United States side of the border. Because Mexican citizens living across the border heavily

attend the celebration, the WBC is noticeably influenced by their attendance and by the many living on the U.S. side who celebrate Mexican traditions daily. Additionally, Gabriel describes “Mexican culture” as being “all about parties” and “all about celebration” to distinguish between peoples living on the two sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Gabriel’s descriptions of the Mexican culture as being about “parties” and “celebration,” echo what P3A, who identifies as White/Latina, expresses in her descriptions of the *mexicanos* and Latinos she has worked with.

She explains,

And same thing with all the *mexicanos* and Latinos that I work with here in the community. They’ll go out of their way, I mean, even if they don’t have money, they’ll go out of their way to make this event, or make it wonderful...

P3A also recognizes that it is a Mexican culture that influences the way people “go out of their way” whether they have money or not, to participate in events and make them “wonderful.” When P3A said this during our interview, I told her that her response reminded me of the Spanish saying, “*Echar la casa por la ventana.*” (Throw the house out of the window), a saying that suggests some Mexicans will spare no expense and, even “throw the house out of the window,” in order to host an extravagant party and entertain their guests. P3A’s response to my suggestion was, “Exactly!” affirming that a performance commonly associated with a particular Mexican custom, organizing and participating in celebrations that are “over the top,” and which may even require spending money one does not have, is evident in the WBC. Furthermore, it is this custom that the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers*, all recognize as being a part of how the WBC is celebrated. For P3A who was neither born in Laredo nor in a Latino

community, this behavior is what has most stood out to her in the border city of Laredo. In addition, individuals that belong to all three distinct sets of characters support this idea.

Debutante Laura Garza-Hovel alludes to this idea when asked about the Mexican influences she sees in the WBC. She says,

And also just a lot of, like, the parties, especially the after parties and stuff, like that, there's a lot of like Mexican tradition and stuff and different, like, Mexican dances that, I guess, all come together in celebration. But I think yeah, everywhere you're gonna find something because especially in Laredo, it's more like Mexico than the U.S.

By establishing her perception of Laredo being “more like Mexico than the U.S.” and saying the Mexican influences in the WBC are “parties,” “after parties, and dances,” Laura, like other participants, confirms that the saying, “*Echar la casa por la ventana*,” is representative of what the WBC is for all participants regardless of their group membership. Similarly, her mother, Laura Garza, also told me about the prevalence of a Mexican culture in Laredo and the WBC by describing the Mexican breakfast her out of town guests would enjoy the morning of the parade. In explaining this she said that she wanted her guests to enjoy “that part” of Laredo as well. Based on the words of participants, the infusion of a particular Mexican custom in the WBC, whether obvious or not, is clearly taking a celebration and making it “over the top,” even if it means one must *echar la casa por la ventana*. Most importantly, this concept is intelligible to the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers*, which is indicative of the convergence of the cultural identities of all three groups, even though they participate in the WBC differently.

Divergence of Cultural Identities

Although the cultural identities of the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers* coincide when it comes to understanding how the WBC takes a U.S. historical figure and celebrates it by

echando la casa por la ventana, it is obvious that status differentials are enhanced through his celebration. The three categories of actors within the WBC can be distinguished by their social class. Consequently, it is class status that results in the divergence of these cultural identities. Even though the exclusivity of the Society of Martha Washington is made apparent by the *Patriots'* and the *Progenists'* descriptions of their families' consistent involvement in the Society that spans many generations, these actors never acknowledge how their social class plays a role in their identification with and acceptance into their particular groups. Instead, their group membership was described as being a part of their love of U.S. heritage. On the other hand, the *Partiers'* involvement in particular WBC events illustrate their awareness of how they can and cannot take part in the celebration because of their social class. Through their participation, they recognize what makes them different from the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*, individuals they identify as being involved in "the Marthas," a phrase commonly used to reference the Society of Martha Washington.

In response to my question, "How are you like other attendees at the WBC as well as different from them?" P2A responded with the following:

Different...I guess in the sense that, maybe different in...we don't get to participate in the Marthas [The Society of Martha Washington] or the Pocahontas because it's just like an *elite*. They're, you know, I don't know, the higher-class people. You know, the people with, you know, are more wealthier and they can afford things like that. I think other than that, that would probably be just the only thing that's any different between them and us.

P2A quickly identifies binaries that exist between those who participate in affiliate organizations and those who do not. She explains that, "We [*Partiers*] don't get to participate in the Marthas." She contrasts differences by using the terms "them"—individuals who are involved in the

“Marthas” and “Pocahontas,” and “us”—the group of individuals who are outside of these organizations and the group with which she identifies. Those involved in the “Marthas” and the “Pocahontas” are described as belonging to an “elite” group of “higher-class” and “wealthier” individuals that can afford to be in these organizations. For P2A, a clear distinction between “them” and her group fundamentally is based on socio-economic variances. She also states that other than the division between those who are able to participate in the “Marthas” and the “Pocahontas” and those who are not involved, there aren’t any differences between “them” and “us.” Utilizing the words “them” and “us” to differentiate between these groups sheds light on the social class distinctions that are carried out within the WBC. Yet, although P2A alludes to extant differences between groups, she nonetheless continues to perceive the WBC as a celebration that does create a sense of community or unity through other events open to the public.

Another *Partier*, José, also addresses these class delineations that differentiate between groups, not only by agreeing with what P2A describes, but also by noting that extant stratifications should be changed to enhance equity among WBC participants. He explains, “I think that there should be more access to the “Marthas” itself. Uh...instead of just being this hierarchical, descendant idea that all...Your grandma, your mom came out, then you can come out. Give everybody a chance.” José exposes what the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* never address. Without a familial connection to the Society, the *Partiers* do not have access to group membership. In his description of the “Marthas” as “hierachiachal” and involving a “descendant idea,” José alludes to the exclusiveness of the Society manifested through the passing on of roles from the *Patriots* to the *Progenists*. José echoes P2A’s understanding of only some individuals having access to the Society since the Society revolves around a “descendant idea.” Therefore,

some can participate and others cannot, further verifying the distinction between “them” and “us” that P2A explains. The cultural identities of the *Partiers* are distinguished from those of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* because to perform the cultural identity of a *Partier* means participating in events open to the public and enjoying accessible aspects of the celebration. P2A provides insight into what the norms are for the *Partiers*, the group she identifies as “us,” when she describes her group membership. She states,

With the people that don't participate [in the Marthas], you know, there's no-It's the same. Because middle class people can go and enjoy it, as well as lower class people, as well as high class people, you know, so I think it's- The good thing is it's for everybody whether you have money, you don't have money, you're known, well-known, you know nobody.

Descriptions of the *Partiers*, those who do not participate in the “Marthas,” extend across social class differences. In her interview, P2A discusses her favorite events, which include the Jalapeño Festival, the Youth Parade, the Grand Parade, and the Taste of Laredo event, and, in describing the group she belongs to, she clarifies the accessibility of these events by stating that “middle class people,” “lower class people,” and “high class people” can attend non-Society events. P2A conveys the idea that “everybody” includes those who have money, “don't have money,” “are known,” “well-known,” or “know nobody.” In other words, the *Partiers* are a much larger group and are not distinguished by their high social class status or public visibility the way Society members are. This group is neither influenced nor shaped by income the same way the other cultural identities described are and does not center around relationships and enactments that convey whether one is “known” or “well-known.” Even though the performances of these three groups of actors all occur during the WBC, the *Patriots*' and the

Progenists' roles in the Society have lasting implications that extend beyond formal WBC events and into other aspects of their social lives.

Summary

The previous section includes descriptions of three cultural identities visible in the WBC: the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers*. “Americanism,” U.S. patriotism, and our Founding Fathers distinguish the cultural identities of the *Patriots*. However, because elite group membership is a factor in whether one is a *Patriot* or not, celebrating Americanism in this way is only available to a select group. For the *Progenists*, learning what behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate representations of the Society characterizes their performances. This becomes even more apparent when the *Progenists* evaluate the enactments of invited guests who miss performance cues because they lack knowledge the *Progenists* consider “obvious.” Also, it is the *Progenists* who preserve and maintain the traditions the *Patriots* have established. Finally, the *Partiers* greatly differ from the previous two groups because they lack the social capital the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* possess. As a result, *Partiers* do not attend Society events and their involvement in the WBC includes attending events, such as the Jalapeño Festival, for fun, enjoyment and “letting loose.”

These three sets of characters differ in how and when they participate in the WBC, but it is also evident that there are specific aspects of these group memberships that coincide since all participants acknowledge the influence of a Mexican culture in the way the WBC is celebrated. For all three groups, creating an “over the top” celebration that is “more festive” is indicative of the cultural influence the Mexican side of the border has on social life in Laredo. What this suggests is that the WBC is intelligible and significant to all three groups even though they experience it and communicate about it in diverse ways. Finally, despite this common factor

between the three groups, it is also obvious that differences in social class have distinct implications. The experiences of the *Patriots* and the *Progenies* are characterized by extravagant events, costumes, and relationships amongst an elite group. On the other hand, the *Partiers* express how social class distinguishes “them,” the *Patriots* and the *Partiers* from “us,” the *Partiers*, and these terms are used to discuss differences made visible in the WBC. The next chapter explains how social class constructs elite group membership for the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* and what the implications of belonging to this group are after the WBC has come to an end.

Research Question 2

Performances of Cultural Identities Beyond the Washington Birthday Celebration

This section answers the second research question of this study: (2) How do participants enact their cultural identities beyond the WBC? The response to this question is important since the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* ultimately benefit from their involvement in the WBC and preserve a select group. After the WBC has come to an end each year, actors continue their performances in the Society of Martha Washington through other roles and leadership positions. As a result, the cultural identities of these actors are ongoing and enduring since they do not cease to exist once the curtains of the pageant and ball come down.

Once the WBC comes to an end in mid-February, it is only a few weeks before organizations resume their meetings to plan for the following year’s celebration. Behind the scenes, the *Patriots* are busy planning for the next pageant’s theme, preparing invitations to invite the next year’s *Progenists*, and once again organizing an annual celebration. Although, literally speaking, the curtain may come down in February, in a metaphorical sense, the curtain never drops since there is always a stage for the performances of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*.

The *Patriots* and the *Progenists* continue to attend the Society's events year after year as other family members or close family friends are given their turns to participate with them. The transgenerational pairings and their roles illustrate the exclusivity of the Society. For example, Laura Hovel, whose daughter Laura Garza-Hovel was a debutante in the 2010-2011 celebration, has a second daughter who will be a debutante in five years. It is clear to Society members that participation by all family members is expected and necessary in order to secure a position within the organization and also to demonstrate loyalty to her family, her extended family, the organization, and even her future family or *Progenist*. Laura Hovel explains this ongoing involvement when she recalls the help she was offered by one of her friends who was a Society debutante the same year Laura was a debutante. She says,

And say I saw someone else that I was presented with, "Oh, remember when we did this?" and "What are you doing for that? What can I help you with? Here, what can I do?" You know, everyone wants to get in on the beading or, "Let me just do a little part so that that special friendship is a part of the dress."

Laura discusses the friendships formed in the Society and the "bonds that last forever" by recalling a typical occurrence between *Patriots* who are very willing to continue their involvement in the Society by helping out with young debutantes and Society events. In this example it is evident that the performances of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* do not end the year they portray Martha Washington, make their debut as a debutante, or take on a leadership role. Rather, year after year, as soon as the WBC has come to an end, the performances of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* continue in other life stages. Moreover, there is concurrence as to what it means to be involved in the Society before, during, and after the celebration. Laura explains the importance of her group membership and alludes to this ongoing performance in the following:

Just how we keep the tradition of the Society going on forever and ever and I'll probably become a member after I'm presented later. Um...just that keeps going on and on. It's also like the traditions and like the treasures that we keep from being presented that last forever, I guess.

The "traditions" and "treasures" the *Progenists* keep extend from one generation to the next, or as Laura puts it, "keeps going on and on." One way of "going on and on" is by becoming a Society member. Like her mother, Laura, Laura Garza-Hovel understands that her role in the Society does not end because she is no longer a debutante and she also recognizes that to demonstrate her loyalty to the organization, she must continue her family's involvement in the Society. Moreover, when I saw Laura at the Colonial Ball and asked her how she felt, she said she could not believe the time had finally come for her to represent her family. Through consistent and continuous involvement, the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* perpetuate a Society that includes a particular social class and embraces only particular families. As a result, the process becomes a sort of passing down of roles or a kind of rotation in which the *Progenists* fulfill the *Patriots'* positions by becoming Society members, becoming leaders in the organization, participating as Martha Washington, and having a say when determining who is allowed to be a part of the Society and who is not. In deciding who can be a *Progenist* or a *Patriot*, the Society also determines who is seen and not seen in Laredo. In other words, who is visible and recognizable in this town.

Pancho, the man portraying George Washington in 2010-2011, stresses the importance of "being seen" in the Society when he says,

Laredo has always deemed itself as to try to be very affluent. And I guess they hit the nail on the head, at some point in time during the celebration, years and years and years ago,

when people that wanted to be seen, and that's the-I use that terminology, "wanted to be seen," come to this event. Because they come, they want to be seen, and they want to be seen by others. So if you get enough people that do that, you have a lot of people that want to be seen, a lot of people that want to be seen, all of a sudden everybody wants to be seen, and they're all seeing each other. So that's where it turns out to be a big deal.

Pancho emphasizes how the WBC, specifically Society events, serves as a stage for "being seen." The significance of "being seen" is an obvious value for Society members since they thoroughly understand the *Patriots*, the media, and the *Partiers* are observing them. However, the stage for "being seen" is not available to all, hence, certain individuals are privileged over others and "being seen" is an unattainable luxury for the *Partiers*. Although the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* are instructed not to reveal costs of the events and attire, as well as details about membership, it is apparent that besides the colonial costumes that reportedly cost tens of thousands of dollars, with debutantes' gowns being the most expensive, "being seen" is another luxury that is bought by hosting numerous cocktail parties and events, paying for professional photography, hiring someone to decorate the parade float each performer has, and spending thousands of dollars more for the many other expenses such as the gifts debutantes and escorts exchange once the celebration has ended.

Pancho describes the Society as a conglomeration of people who want to be seen by others and he says that by participating in Society events, "they're all seeing each other." Through the WBC, the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* continue to "be seen" and taking on a new Society role or position are ways of remaining visible being that there are many stages available for these performances. To "be seen," however, is a performance that progresses in a strategic fashion and even the *Partiers* are aware of the passing on or rotation of roles within the exclusive

organization. P3A describes these roles when she explains what it means to represent George or Martha Washington. She states,

I think, I think they consider it a big honor. I think that, I know the small group of elites that do that, I mean, they kinda know who's gonna do it and they kinda, "It's your turn. It's your turn and now it's your turn." It's arranged. It's an arranged thing. I think that they love it and I think that some people vie for it in the year they wanna be that person who's presented.

Identifying the portrayals of George and Martha Washington as "a big honor" that exist within "a small group of elites," P3A underscores the exclusivity in this group and what occurs outside of the WBC. She explains that the roles of George and Martha Washington are performed as "an arranged thing" in which people take "turns." The "arranged thing" P3A explains, echoes "the mating ritual" that occurs in the debutante and escort pairings of *Progenists*, given that both the pairings and the taking of "turns" involve careful arrangements to ensure the preservation of a small group of elites. Although she is not a Society member, P3A understands that it is competitive process the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* take part in since they "vie" for roles. Moreover, it is clear that it is not a selection process that occurs within the outside community. Instead, the *Patriots* and those connected to the Society "know who's gonna do it" and that it might be their "turn" to be seen. As a result, the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* enact their cultural identities through the WBC and continue these performances in other contexts as a means of maintaining their positions within the Society in diverse ways. Moreover, many of these performances gain actors local recognition that continues beyond the WBC. Some of these performers gain advantages by being seen in the WBC given that "real life" stages in political positions and other highly visible roles are more attainable for recognizable actors.

Summary

In the previous section, the WBC was examined as a site for the performances of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* even when the celebration has come to an end. Continuous involvement that extends across generations and into varying roles conveys how these actors preserve and maintain an exclusive Society. The importance of “being seen” and taking “turns” for “being seen” illustrate how *Patriots* determine who can be seen and when. Moreover, “being seen” is available only to a select group and this group can be distinguished by the extravagant show they participate in as a means of “being seen.” Like other luxuries bought by the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* during their performances, “being seen” is a distinctive and fundamental luxury since it is, ultimately, what creates “a big deal.” It is this social capital that allows creates distinct borders between actors at the WBC. Being that roles are passed from the *Patriots* to the *Progenists*, their performances are ongoing and enduring enactments since they do not cease to exist once the curtains drop at the end of the WBC.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The previous two chapters addressed the findings of this study by explaining the cultural identities of three distinct groups observed in the WBC: the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers*. Performances of their cultural identities converge when taking into account *how* these actors perform, but not when and where they do. To address this convergence, the influence of a Mexican culture is explored through the *fiesta*. This discussion is followed by an explanation of how the social class of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* is utilized for impression management and the preservation of the Society of Martha Washington.

Implications

Through participation in and communication about the WBC, the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers* all express the negotiation of U.S. and Mexican cultural systems by participating in an event that honors George Washington and celebrating in an “over the top” way they identify as being “Mexican.” Lindsley (1999) argues that border life is distinctive and that the lives of individuals residing on the border may be very different from those who do not experience the negotiation of U.S. and Mexican cultural systems, and celebrating something “American” in a “Mexican” way serves as an example of this negotiation. This celebration further adds to the ambiguity that is typically experienced in the city of Laredo since individuals live in an area defined by multiplicity (Vila, 2003). This multiplicity is evident in the lifestyles participants describe as taking place on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. Two examples of this are the debutantes having candies bought on the Mexican side of the border to toss to children attending the parade on the U.S. side of the border and *Patriot* Laura Hovel discussing how important she believes it is to educate Laredoans about U.S. history and then having her

describe the “typical Mexican” breakfast her out of town guests would enjoy because she wanted them to experience that part of Laredo as well.

Within the WBC, it is evident that a particular Mexican culture is described in a variety of ways that all indicate excess is standard, appropriate, and valued. The prevalence of a Mexican culture in the WBC, whether observed as food, music, excessiveness, language spoken at most events, or a combination of these, is a culmination of many things being grander and more extravagant. What is most significant about this influence is that all three groups of actors address the importance of celebration in a Mexican culture (Lastra, Sherzer, & Sherzer, 2009) and, more specifically, within the WBC.

Brandes (1988) argues that the *fiesta* [party] is not only a fundamental component of some Mexican cultures, but that it is also used in the organization of the community and how certain roles are performed according to this organization. In his analysis of the Mexican *fiestas* celebrated by the people of Tzintzuntzan, Brandes (1988) suggests that “an over motivation during the Posadas is the desire of neighbor households to show the rest of the villagers how lavishly they can host the occasion” (p. 185). This is done to avoid embarrassment since it is “potentially humiliating” to host a *fiesta* that does not complement those put on by individuals and groups who also participate. Like the people of Tzintzuntzan, Society members must live up to expectations and put on a show that outdoes previous ones. The WBC is not only a celebration in which a specific social order is evident by determining who can participate, who cannot, when, and where, but it is also a celebration in which a Mexican culture is prominent, particularly the act of “*echando la casa por la ventana.*” However, the *fiesta* also functions to mask the social class structure it reproduces since so many participants are focused on the parties and entertainment and do not question why and how the WBC is celebrated. In the process of

echando la casa por la ventana, U.S. patriotism and Mexican traditions are brought together, but significant implications concerning social class divisions are abandoned.

The U.S.-Mexico border plays a critical role in how the WBC unfolds, constructing a distinctive, yet nuanced celebration since it is difficult to point out exactly where a Mexican custom is replaced by U.S. American patriotism and vice versa. Still, the inability to distinguish these exact meeting points is indicative of the ambiguity and the nuances that are characteristic of this particular border community. Regardless of the overlap of these cultural identities, levels of participation are clearly distinguished by social class, producing a celebration wherein differences within the community are made more visible. However, even though the *Partiers* are aware of the social class differences that are highlighted within the WBC, the event is treated primarily as a celebration and social class differences are noticed but ignored since individuals are more invested in “*echando la casa por la ventana*.” In other words, because the WBC presents an opportunity for festivities and entertainment, the *Partiers* continue to participate in the celebration despite separated social implications.

To better understand what social life is like in this particular U.S.-Mexico border city, the significance of celebration cannot be overlooked since it is what Laredoans value and participate in despite the role some celebrations may play in further dividing people. Like other negotiations that occur on the U.S.-Mexico border and which concern social life, how and what is celebrated cannot be easily marked as either U.S. “American” or Mexican since both countries influence life in Laredo. Those who participate in the WBC, specifically the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*, are involved in events that require one to *echar la casa por la ventana*. To further explain how this Mexican custom is directly related to the role social class has in the implication of differences between categories of actors, impression management must be addressed.

Goffman (1959) explains impression management as a process in which actors attempt to establish and maintain impressions that are congruent with the perceptions they want to convey to their audience. In other words, individuals act in a way that will influence the perceptions of other people in order to form a particular image, the image they value and believe will demonstrate to an audience their perceived acceptance into a group. The *Patriots* can deny an individual's membership because an actor may not enact an understanding of what is appropriate to be a member of the group (Wieder & Pratt, 1990). As a result, the *Patriots* decide who can portray George and Martha Washington, what it means to portray these historical figures, and who can "be seen." For the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*, impression management is achieved through their performances of various roles in the WBC, and by "being seen" in the WBC, the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* are able to display their group membership in a high social class. Ultimately, it is these performances that also distinguish them from the *Partiers*.

Although the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* may perform many roles in and outside of the Society of Martha Washington, they recognize their roles within the Society as being important for the maintenance of a certain image. Most importantly, the *Progenists* explain that they are being "seen" and with this visibility comes responsibilities. In recognizing the appropriate way one must perform, *Progenists* fulfill the role of a "disciplined" performer (Goffman, 1959, p. 216), someone who understands his part and performs it correctly by avoiding any unacceptable behaviors. It is this discipline that preserves familial connections and which ultimately leads to their leadership positions as *Patriots*. Additionally, because it is through this elite network that one is invited to be a *Progenist*, the Society also decides who can be members and performers and who cannot be, excluding those they believe will not contribute to the impression that is congruent with the perception they want to convey to their audience. This type of impression

management serves as a “collective representation” (Goffman, 1959) that is constructed and reconstructed year after year through performances that maintain the Society’s front, or appearance. Although the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* understand what the Society’s image is and how impression management can be achieved, the question of why they continue to perform year after year bears asking.

Individuals sometimes act in a certain manner to give a particular impression to an audience, even when they are unaware of their actions being a way of asking for a specific response from others (Goffman, 1959). In the Society of Martha Washington, the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* continually mention the importance of tradition when asked why they continue celebrating the WBC and how they would describe the event. For some, tradition is reason enough to participate in the event and it appears that because the WBC has been celebrated for over 100 years, some *Patriots* and *Progenists* believe it bears no questioning. However, it is clear that the WBC is much more complex and that this elite group must stand to benefit from “being seen” if maintaining group membership is valued.

As Goffman (1959) proposes, individuals will express themselves in particular ways primarily because “the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular reason (other than vague acceptance or approval that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression)” (p. 6) and it is the “tradition” of performing in the WBC that the Society requires of its members. In other words, some behaviors related to social status are influenced by the norms established by that particular group. In some instances, these behaviors are fulfilled simply because it is what an individual believes is expected of them by their group. It is these expectations and traditions that continue to fuel the Society of Martha Washington. Especially for the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* whose families have been involved in

the Society for many generations, the tradition of participating in the Society becomes a generational activity advancing the perpetuation of the Society. Through membership in the Society, the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* are able to display their social class status, and, in order to maintain this class status, membership within the Society must be preserved as well.

Debutantes affirm the “tradition” of continuous familial involvement in the Society when they address their willingness to perform the role of debutante and say the role is one they knew they would perform since they were little girls, a role that would carry on their family’s tradition. The repetition of the word “tradition” by participants implies that Society involvement is ongoing, carried on generation after generation and that to reject the role of George or Martha Washington, debutante or escort, would be deemed inappropriate by other *Patriots* and *Progenists*. Thus, the performances of the *Progenists* are evoked by those they believe will be impressed by them and because they seek approval from these performances as well. It is the *Patriots* and other *Progenies* that value these performances of class status and, therefore, to reject a position in the WBC implies rejection of social standing within a network of elite individuals.

The findings suggest that social pressure and moral obligations influence actors involved in the Society. Additionally, performing the role of George Washington, like performing the roles of debutantes, escorts, and Martha Washington, is a manifestation of loyalty that serves to establish and secure a position within the Society. As a means of maintaining and preserving relationships with the Society, Society members perform their upward mobility through their performance roles, leadership positions, and, most of all, by being “seen.” Through their portrayals of George and Martha Washington, with George Washington primarily known as the

Founding Father of the United States, the *Patriots*, honor, take part in, and claim “American” culture, but this part of the celebration is not available to all WBC participants.

For the *Patriots* and the *Progenists*, there is a definite recognition of the enactments that are appropriate for and accepted by the audience, an audience that, for the most part, is composed of the Society. To move downward on the social ladder is unacceptable and, because the WBC offers various stages for the performances of social class, it is a consistent platform on which upward mobility can be performed and maintained, even if sacrifices must be made for the maintenance of front (Goffman, 1959, p. 36). Enactments of the cultural identities of the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* both during and after the WBC are forms of impression management, maintaining group membership within an elite organization and, clearly, individuals involved in these performances understand how these roles should be enacted and maintained. The preservation of Society traditions is of utmost importance since it provides a stage for “being seen” and ensures continued familial connections within the Society of Martha Washington, an organization reserved for only the most elite individuals of Laredo.

Limitations of the Study

Although the findings of this study support that there are three distinct cultural identities being performed at the Washington Birthday Celebration and that they occur on a permanent stage available within this celebration, this study also has its limitations and can be expanded into a wider and more in-depth analysis. First of all, because the sample for this study is not random, one of the disadvantages of this type of sample is that participants were chosen based on their availability and also because they attended events the researcher attended. This may be indicative of partiality since I did not attend all WBC events and recruited participants based on their participation in the 2010-2011 WBC. As a result, depictions of these cultural identities may

not be complete or thorough enough, especially for the *Partiers* since it is a group that encompasses a large majority of WBC participants. Because the study consists of a small sample, it is not clear whether the *Partiers* can be divided into smaller categories. For example, future research may categorize the *Partiers* by education level, since all the *Partiers* in this study were college educated.

Also, to make more specific generalizations about these cultural identities and how they have evolved over time, more participants are necessary. Additional participants would make it possible to compare and contrast characteristics of individuals within the same group. For example, generational differences may reveal that older members of the Society consider the Society to be a critical component of their social lives whereas younger Society members may not participate in the Society in the same way because they are involved in other organizations and social clubs. These conclusions can only be made with more participants of various ages and backgrounds in order to discern these differences.

Second, even though it is not the purpose of qualitative studies, generalizations cannot be made from the findings of this study. Because this study focuses on a unique U.S.-Mexico border celebration, these findings are not indicative of how and why other debutante balls occur, and it must also be noted that Laredo is not representative of all U.S.-Mexico border cities. Although other border towns and surrounding cities celebrate bicultural celebrations such as San Antonio, Texas' *Fiesta*, the Washington Birthday Celebration is its own celebration and is not replicated anywhere else.

This section discussed the limitations of this study and considering these limitations can expand this research by making the changes proposed. Although the current study provides an in-depth look at the Washington Birthday Celebration and its role in constructing cultural

identities in Laredo, exploration should continue to gain insight into the lives of those who live in the U.S.-Mexico border region since the geographical area plays a critical role in shaping social life. The following section concludes this study.

Final Conclusions

This study explored the performances of cultural identities within the Washington Birthday Celebration held in Laredo, Texas and explored how the WBC serves as a permanent stage for these performances even when the celebration is not occurring. Data were collected ethnographically through participant observation and interviews. From this data, the cultural identities of the *Patriots*, the *Progenists*, and the *Partiers* were distinguished and their performances described as means of understanding what these groups value and what it means to enact their particular group membership.

The *Patriots* and the *Progenists* included members and organizers of the Society of Martha Washington and individuals who perform in the Society as debutantes, escorts, and George Washington. These actors display knowledge of their cultural identities through their communication about their behaviors and involvement in the organization and, ultimately, the *Progenists* carry on the traditions of the *Patriots*, as a means of perpetuating the Society. By exploring these norms and rules for conduct it can be concluded that the Society is an elite organization in which membership is difficult to come by since roles are inherited, not earned. Moreover, those who are Society members or are related to members, benefit from the cultural capital produced through relationships that are preserved and maintained through the Society since there are many opportunities to “be seen” in the Society. In order to take advantage of these relationships and what they can offer, whether those benefits are financial gains, forms of upward mobility, or upholding a particular image and impression in the community, consistent

involvement in the Society is necessary to gain these rewards. This is done through various forms of participation that require “being seen” and behaving in a fashion that is consistent with the traditions of the Society.

The *Partiers* are not seen in local papers and magazines, parade floats, and event stages, the way the *Patriots* and the *Progenists* are. The *Partiers* attend other WBC events, such as the Jalapeño Festival, and their awareness of how and to what extent they can participate reveals a problematic contradiction in the WBC. The WBC implicates the enactment of various identities wherein status differentials are enhanced but is promoted as a communal event by those involved in the Society. Even though the *Partiers* acknowledge these status differentials, they do not concern them in such a way that causes them to consider another event to replace the WBC or to end the WBC completely. The WBC may be intended to construct a communal identity but it is evident that it serves to define differences and, as its position in social life in Laredo is secure, this celebration bears further exploration.

Because the celebration has been occurring for over 100 years, it may be accepted for the mere reason that it has been a part of Laredo for so long. Moreover, celebrations in Laredo are acceptable and welcomed in such a way that, despite their negative implications, participating in an event where status differentials are performed is not questioned. However, to examine a celebration that stands strong and supported like the WBC is necessary because it is social life that ultimately contributes to the construction of cultural identities. What is celebrated in the WBC, where it is celebrated, and how it is celebrated, makes this event a unique one that exists to benefit the community of Laredo in different ways. Some of these benefits carry status significance while others are centered on entertainment and fun, but setting those benefits aside, this research provides insight into problematic enactments of difference and uncovers how

festivities are utilized to make those differences acceptable. Beyond the WBC, this study also contributes to our understanding of social life in Laredo in general, particularly its position as a U.S.-Mexico border city.

Even though the U.S.-Mexico border may be conceptualized as a binary and although it would be convenient to characterize traditions and norms in this region as either “Mexican or “American,” this study reveals that this is cannot be easily accomplished. Defining these borders is not so simple and the ambiguity that ultimately creates a unique lifestyle in which both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border are intertwined is difficult to define. In other words, looking at what the fusion of diverse cultural systems results in is more beneficial than attempting to create clean cut boundaries. As can be seen in the way actors participate in the WBC and how they explain their enactments, even events focused on U.S. American historical figures are not necessarily identified as “American” by all. Instead, participants bring in their own lived experiences and their traditions and values from other cultures to determine how the celebration will be organized. To enhance understanding of life on the U.S.-Mexico border, theory that acknowledges that life in this region is not simply about boundaries, but about the negotiation of diverse cultural systems and the creation of new ones is necessary.

Besides contributions to border studies, this research also adds to the existing body of research regarding cultural identity and identity performance. As a complex event in which thousands of individuals participate, the WBC is worth exploring again. To further this research, future studies should be conducted with diverse conceptualizations of life on the U.S.-Mexico border, more participants, and should include other WBC affiliate organizations. Finally, individual events should be looked at more closely to uncover how these components contribute

to the construction of cultural identities and which, if any, play a role in creating a communal identity that is more representative of the border city of Laredo, Texas.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Instruments

Interview Instrument: WBC Organizers

Participant Profile

Date of the interview: _____

Place of the interview: _____

Time of the interview: _____

Age: _____

Biological Sex: _____

Race: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Occupation: _____

Education: _____

Religion: _____

1. What do you tell those who have never been to the WBC what it is about?
2. What are 5 things you know about the WBC?
 - 1a. How would you explain it to someone else? (U.S. citizen v. Mexican citizen?)
3. How would you describe changes, if any, in the WBC because of...
 1. AZ SB 1070
 2. Ongoing violence in Nuevo Laredo/Laredo
 3. 2006 protests at the International Bridge
4. How would you describe your role in the WBC and what challenges have you encountered in preparing for the celebration?
5. As an organizer of the event, what would you say the purpose of the WBC is?
 - o WBCA website states: "It attracts approximately 400,000 attendees annually and has a tremendous positive economic impact on the City."
6. What is your most vivid memory/most memorable moment in the WBC?
7. Some people say that the WBC is a mockery and a charade, to use their words.
 - o Why do you think this is?
 - o Would you agree/disagree?
 - o How would you respond to this?
 - o What does this say about the people of Laredo and about who they are?
8. How do you think this celebration looks to people who are not from Laredo?

Interview Instrument: Members of The Society of Martha Washington

Participant Profile

Date of the interview: _____

Place of the interview: _____

Time of the interview: _____

Age: _____

Biological Sex: _____

Race: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Occupation: _____

Education: _____

Religion: _____

1. What are 5 things you know about the WBC?
 - 1a. How would you explain it to someone else? (U.S. citizen v. Mexican citizen?)
2. What is your most vivid memory/most memorable moment in the WBC? (One of the goals with this question is to get at emotions.) You might need to probe with a question such as: "How do you feel when you are here at the _____?" "How do you feel when you are in the character of _____?"
3. What do you tell or how do you explain to others your role as _____?
 - 3a. What are 3 words you use to describe _____ (event and role in it)?
4. What is unique/surprising about your role?
5. Do you feel you must act/speak a certain way because you're portraying _____? Not act / speak a certain way?
6. How are you like or similar to other attendees? Different from?
7. Do you think this celebration could occur elsewhere that's not a border town?
8. How do you think this celebration looks to people who are not from Laredo?
9. Is there anything you would like to say that I have not asked?

Interview Instrument: Attendees Not Involved in the Society

Participant Profile*Date of the interview:* _____*Place of the interview:* _____*Time of the interview:* _____*Age:* _____*Biological Sex:* _____*Race:* _____*Ethnicity:* _____*Occupation:* _____*Education:* _____*Religion:* _____

1. What are 5 things you know about the WBC?
 - 1a. How would you explain it to someone else? (U.S. citizen v. Mexican citizen?)
2. What is your most vivid memory/most memorable moment in the WBC?
3. How are you like or similar to other attendees? Different from?
4. Do you think this celebration could occur elsewhere that's not a border town?
5. How do you think this celebration looks to people who are not from Laredo? especially with recent current events such as
6. Some version of...
 - If you saw yourself on television being interviewed by a reporter as a participant in this celebration, how do you think viewers would see your role here? How would you like them to see you? Would viewers see you in the same way as they see George and Martha Washington? Why/why not?
 - Que significa para ud. el estar aqui en esta celebracion? If you could not be here next year, would that bother you? Do you think you would like to play the role of George/Martha W? One of the debutantes/escorts? Why/why not?
7. Given that this festival involves so many personages and groups of people, why not select people to be a Mexican historical figure, such as Maximiliano and Carlota, or...."

Appendix B

Photographs of WBC Participants



2010-2011 Debutante Laura Garza-Hovel



2010-2011 Debutantes Isabella Ramirez & Laura Garza-Hovel



2010-2011 George Washington portrayed by Pancho Averill



Chocolates and star necklaces tossed from the George & Martha Washington flo

Appendix C

Participant Profiles

Participants Who Chose to Be Identified By Their Real Names	Age	Biological Sex	Race, Ethnicity*	Occupation	Education	Religion
Gabriel Castillo	49	Male	Hispanic, Mexican-American	Executive Director	B.A.	Catholic
Melissa Cigarroa	54	Female	Hispanic	Self-employed	B.A.	Catholic
Laura Hovel	52	Female	Half-German/Half-Mexican	High School Teacher	M.A.	Catholic
Linda Gutierrez	68	Female		Dress Designer	High School	Christian
Pancho Averill	54	Male	Caucasian	Businessman	College	Catholic
Laura Garza-Hovel	18	Female	Mexican-American	Student	High School	Catholic
Angel Laurel	23	Male			B.A.	Catholic
Isabella Ramirez	18	Female	Hispanic	Student	High School	Catholic
José López	25	Male	Hispanic, Mexican	Student	B.A.	Catholic

* I am aware of controversies concerning the term “race.” However, some participants still use the term “race” so as a means of focusing on participants chosen identity labels and terms to self-identify, “race” was used for the table.

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ⁱ Although participants may identify themselves using a variety of terms that are subject to change, as a group, participants will be identified as Latino for matters of consistency and precision. I acknowledge that labels are controversial and problematic, and, therefore, will have participant's racial and ethnic identifications as open ended categories to avoid the imposition of any labels.

ⁱⁱ Also known as The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act and simply referred to as Arizona SB 1070, Arizona Senate Bill 1070 is a legislative act in the U.S. state of Arizona that makes it a state misdemeanor crime for an illegal immigrant to be in Arizona without carrying the required documents, bars state or local officials or agencies from restricting enforcement of federal immigration laws, and imposed penalties on those sheltering, hiring and transporting illegal immigrants. (The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act of 2010, Arizona Senate Bill 1070.)

ⁱⁱⁱ The International Bridge Ceremony is a WBC event in which a young boy and girl from Laredo meet a young boy and girl from Nuevo Laredo at the dividing line on the bridge to exchange hugs. All four children are dressed in traditional attire of the period in which the WBC was introduced and their attire pertains to the country they are representing.