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The Women Potters of Mata Ortiz: Growing Empowerment through Artistic Work

Kiara Maureen Hughes

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Kiara M. Hughes

Candidate

Anthropology

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality
and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:



, Chairperson

for W Field

Mari Lynn Salvador

Susan B. Harris

**THE WOMEN POTTERS OF MATA ORTIZ: GROWING
EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ARTISTIC WORK**

BY

KIARA MAUREEN HUGHES

B.S., Sociology, The University of Maryland, 1982
M.A., Anthropology, The University of New Mexico, 1993

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Anthropology**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

August, 2009

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary production of pottery for global ethnic art markets set in motion a series of economic and social transformations that completely changed the Chihuahuan community of Mata Ortíz. This dynamic art form has included women and men since its initial stages over thirty-five years ago. Today, there are women of talent and expertise represented at every level of pottery execution and quality along the market continuum. Individual creativity and market recognition work together to create a context in which both men and women are able to capacitate themselves by acquiring the skills and competence needed to gain control over their artistic work, either as independent producers or in cooperation with others.

In this dissertation, I bring together three aspects of their artistic work – aesthetics, production and the market – to argue that women are able to translate resources derived from their pottery work into growing personal and economic empowerment. By infusing new levels of individual expression into this mixed-gender art form, women dramatically expand the creative boundaries of the community's

aesthetic system. Through learning and controlling major aspects of pottery production and the subsequent income from pottery sales, they are changing their social position within the community and the economic position of their families. Women seek to expand their position within the market by actively responding to client taste and market expectation to achieve economic success.

Using an ethnoaesthetic approach, I engaged the women in discussions of their art, and the underpinnings of their agency were revealed as they described their perceptions of learning their art; their artistic choices and judgments; their purposeful action in creating signature styles; controlling production processes; and their interactions within the market. These discussions formed the basis for my argument that artistic work can either enlarge women's capacities to empower themselves or deepen their subordination, depending upon the interaction between these aspects of their artistic work. While some women gained recognition, found new markets for their art and increased their incomes, others produced in response to patriarchal demands to maximize household income, and lacked control over the income derived from their labor.

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GLOSSARY

Glossary of Selected Terms

<i>alambre</i>	a metal wire cage or basket-shaped form that is placed over pottery to be fired
<i>artesanía</i>	handmade crafts; the term is also used in regard to craftsmanship
<i>barrio</i>	a neighborhood or district in a town
<i>barro</i>	clay
<i>buñiga</i>	cow dung or manure used in the firing process
<i>cascara</i>	bark from trees used for fuel and particularly from <i>alamo</i> (cottonwood) trees
<i>chorizo</i>	term used locally to refer to the rope of clay that is joined to the base, or <i>tortilla</i> , within a mold to build the walls of the pot
<i>cuadritos</i>	a term used to refer to small checkered designs
<i>dibujos</i>	drawings, patterns, designs
<i>diseño</i>	design
<i>leña</i>	wood used for firing
<i>lijar</i>	to sand
<i>mezclar</i>	literally means “to mix;” the term is used locally to refer to the technique of mixing various colored clays together to create a marbled effect in the clay body
<i>molde</i>	refers to the shallow bowl-like mold commonly used while forming the base of a pot
<i>negro</i>	black; the term is often used to refer to blackware pottery in general
<i>ollas</i>	often used to describe pottery in jar or vase shapes; in Mata Ortíz, it is used collectively to refer to pottery formed in a variety of shapes, with the exception of plates, some shallow bowls, effigies or figures

<i>polychromio</i>	<p> painted decoration of two or more colors, typically in red, black, or yellow but may include green or blue, on pots formed of various colored clays (e.g. white, black, red, gray). </p>
<i>pulir</i>	<p> to polish, or burnish the clay object's surface </p>
<i>quemar</i>	<p> to fire </p>
<i>tortilla</i>	<p> the term used locally to refer to a flat and usually round piece of clay that is rolled out to a desired thickness and then fitted into a shallow bowl-like mold to form the base of the pot </p>
<i>segete</i>	<p> a small jagged edge knife, usually a discarded saw blade, used to grade the surface of the clay while forming the body of a pot </p>

Note: Throughout this dissertation, I follow the Spanish system of surnames used throughout Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries. The first surname is the person's paternal family name and the second surname is the maternal family name. When a woman marries she does not change her surname, but adds her husband's paternal family name. For example, if Juliana Sifuentes Rodríguez marries Juan Luján Morales, she may change her name to Juliana Sifuentes Rodríguez de Luján.

Glossary for terms used for individuals or to identify organizations

<i>alfarera (o)</i>	potter, one who works with the clay
<i>artesana (o)</i>	artisan, craftswoman or craftsman
<i>comerciante</i>	a trader or commercial buyer
<i>comprador (a)</i>	buyer, purchaser
CONSUPO	<i>Compania Nacional de Subsistencias Populares</i> National Basic Foods Company
<i>ejidatario</i>	ejido member
<i>ejido</i>	a category of land tenure that grants use rights to agrarian reform communities in which there are usually individual and common lands (Barry 1995:291)
FONAES	<i>El Fondo Nacional de Apoyo para las Empresas de Solidaridad</i> National Fund for Support of Solidarity Businesses – alternatively: <i>Fondo Nacional a Empresas Sociales</i> (Bartra 2003) The National Foundation of Collective Enterprises
FONART	<i>Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías</i> National Fund for the Promotion of Arts and Crafts
IMSS	<i>Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social</i> Mexican Institute of Social Security
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
PROCAMPO	<i>Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo</i> Direct Rural Support Program
PRONASOL	<i>Programa Nacional de Solidaridad</i> National Solidarity Program
SEDESOL	<i>Secretaria de Desarrollo Social</i> Secretary of Social Development
Solidaridad	National Solidarity Program

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Juan Mata Ortiz, Chihuahua, emerged as a center of pottery making for the international art market in the late 1970s. Once the contemporary and highly stylized pottery produced in this remote rural village in northwestern Mexico was widely circulated in tourist, ethnic, and fine art markets, it quickly became valued by major personal and institutional collectors around the world (Johnson 2001; Gilbert 2000, 1999, 1995; Lowell et al. 1999; Parks and MacCallum 1999; Parks 1993; MacCallum 1979, 1994).¹ The best pieces of pottery, known as both Mata Ortiz and Casas Grandes pottery after the archaeological culture complex at Paquimé located in Viejo Casas Grandes, (see Figure 1.1), command prices of \$5000 or more and as little as \$10 in souvenir shops. The work of the most accomplished potters moves through art markets of the United States, Mexico, Europe, Japan, and beyond. Artistic production for global art markets has set in motion a series of dynamic economic and social transformations at multiple levels within families and kin networks, which have completely changed the village. These transformations are creating a context conducive to both women and men empowering themselves through their artistic work.

Recognized locally and internationally as the originator of the new pottery tradition in Mata Ortiz,² Juan Quezada Celado indisputably remains the best known potter to this day. From the beginning, Juan actively encouraged relatives, friends, and

¹ A few of the websites offering Mata Ortiz pottery for sale include, but certainly are not limited to: lafuente.com; mora-artefolk.com; mataortizart.com; leonaking.com; alltribes.com; manningsite.com; and tranquilo-imports.com.

² Hereafter, I will refer to the village of Juan Mata Ortiz as Mata Ortiz, as this is the name commonly used by residents of the community.

neighbors to learn pottery making. Juan's first students included two of his sisters, Lydia and Consolación, as well as a friend of the Quezada family, Taurina Baca Tena. Since the mid-1970s, these three women have consistently held positions of prominence as both pioneers and innovators in the development of the pottery tradition. All have earned prestige through their individual and distinctive styles, which they established within the context of Juan Quezada's instruction and influence.

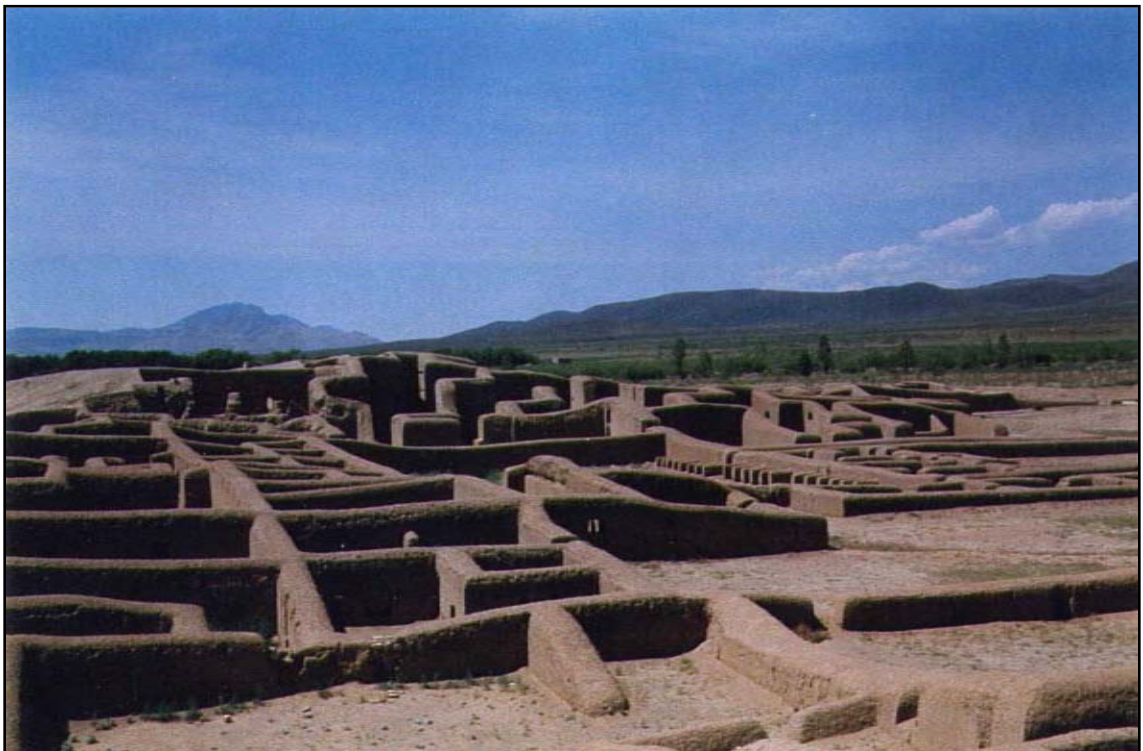


Figure 1.1 Ruins at Paquimé

In this dissertation I examine how women potters in this community, including Lydia, Consolación, and Taurina are expanding their traditional reproductive roles as wives and mothers to incorporate their productive work as potters within the domestic economy of their homes in order to generate much needed income. Women have been at the forefront, contributing to this dynamic art form from its inception. As stated by Lydia

Quezada, “The importance has always been given to the men and that is not the way it is. Women are a very big part of the pottery tradition” (Lydia Quezada, interview, January 12, 1995). Though not as numerous as men, women are positioned among the best known potters. Today, there are women of talent and expertise represented at every level of pottery execution and quality along the market continuum, and many maintain their own aesthetic independence. My research involved women engaged at all levels of production.

By focusing on women’s growing empowerment as a process, I bring together three aspects of their artistic work – aesthetics, production, and the market – to demonstrate how these three interact to create contexts in which women are able to learn skills, develop recognition, and gain control over their productive and economic resources. It is within these contexts that women exercise their agency and enact the potential to empower themselves within their households and community. These are the subjects of my three data chapters. First, I argue that women are making substantial and innovative contributions to the dynamic development of local artistic standards and criteria of excellence within this mixed-gender aesthetic tradition. Second, learning and controlling major aspects of pottery production and subsequent income from pottery sales offer the potential for their empowerment in and beyond Mata Ortiz. Women are changing their social position within the community as wage earners, and advancing the economic position of their families through the sale of their pottery on the international art market. Third, women are actively responding to market forces and expanding their position within the market in order to achieve economic success. Their interactions within both the local and international marketplace are not passive. Whether in setting

their own prices or in negotiating with customers, many of these women are taking decisive and proactive roles in producing and marketing their pottery.

Throughout this dissertation, I use the concept of empowerment to mean the gradual “process by which the powerless obtain greater control over both resources and ideologies in order to act in their own self-interests, gaining control over the circumstances of their lives,” (Sen and Batliwala 2000:5) thereby having the “capacity to transform their world in desired ways” (Montoya 1999:371). Following Anne Yeatman, I use “empowering” as interchangeable with the concepts of “capacitating” or “enabling” to make it clear that women are actively engaged in the process of empowering themselves, rather than empowerment as a process being done *to* them or *for* them. I do this to emphasize women’s active roles in their development as artists and move the discussion of empowerment away from its programmatic use in development. My focus is on the agency women exercise in making decisions and taking actions to “challenge and subvert their marginalization and subordination” (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007:11) within the constraints of the structural and cultural conditions of both the local patriarchal system and the global market.

Empowerment for women comes through women’s action within specific cultural contexts and socioeconomic settings – in the public arena, at work and at home, and in the world of cultural production. There is no single recipe, there is no magic bullet. Dependent on local conditions, the meanings of and the means toward empowerment vary from society to society (Smith et al. 2004:2).

The women I interviewed all began making pottery as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers. The majority were subject to male authority in their families and households – the primary sites of patriarchal relations in Mata Ortíz. While the women were aware of feminism through media and popular culture, I rarely heard mention of

feminist discourse or ideology. The women did not use the concept of empowerment as it is used in academic discourse, so few of our discussions centered on notions of *empoderamiento de mujeres* (women's empowerment). However, examples of autonomous agency recurred as they spoke of their artistic work. They proudly described their intentional choices in developing their distinctive designs, forms, and styles. Their self-determination was evident in numerous stories of confronting unfair market practices. They spoke of making decisions in the interest of improving their household economics, and attributed the rise in their standard of living to their productive artistic work. After hearing similar stories from one woman after another, I could not ignore how they framed their experiences in terms of being competent artists able to produce beautiful and marketable pottery. These stories of women making choices and taking purposeful action became the basis for my argument that artistic work can enlarge women's capacities to empower themselves.

Pottery making by both women and men in Mata Ortiz is embedded in a system of gender relations that in its most basic form, subordinates women to men on the basis of gender (Tiano 1994:34).³ While these accounts may run the risk of erasing or masking the effects of power relations that underlie the subordination of women within this system (Dahl 2007:108), these are valuable articulations of the women's perspectives as they negotiate the effects of globalization in their daily lives. In this chapter and those which follow, I rely upon these accounts to demonstrate how the "situated knowledges and specific actions of men and women" exercised as agency (Anglin and Lamphere

³ Gender is a socially constructed category of difference, one of several around which power is defined, determined and distributed, and "is a primary way of signifying relations of power" (Alonso 1995:76 citing Scott 1986:1067). Gender is always historically situated and culturally variable, and its meaning is "always relative to particular constructions in specific contexts" (Scott 1994:368).

2007:279) within “historically contingent set of processes,” can mitigate their marginalization and subordination (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007:11).

In Mata Ortíz, individual creativity and recognition work together to create a context in which it is possible for both men and women to capacitate themselves by acquiring the skills and competence needed to gain control over their production, as either independent producers or in co-production with others. Women and men alike strive for distinction through innovation by developing their own unique signature styles and in so doing, gain recognition as individual artists. Here, the notion of signature style refers not only to the name inscribed upon the pot, but specifically to the potters’ desire to create innovative designs and forms that will be recognized as their own “hallmarks” or signature styles. As discussed by Nancy Parezo, ethnic art buyers seek “the original, one-of-a-kind piece that expresses a special vision of the creator, conveying emotions and truths to the viewer” (Parezo 1990:570; Graburn 1976).

Theorists have duly noted the significance of signature as a critical link to individuation as individual expression within the transformation of local art traditions into commercialized art forms (Greenfield 2004; Chibnik 2003:57; Naranjo 1992; García Canclini 1993:63). Personal signature allows an artist to construct and distinguish his or her identity as the maker of an original work, versus that of an anonymous producer of an unsigned regional craft. Signature ensures the object can be identified as the work of a certain artist, or at least of a certain household, whose style and unique talents are distinguishable from that of all others (Barbash 1993; Graburn 1976). The historical trajectory of pottery making in Mata Ortíz did not involve the transformation of a long-standing art tradition. Instead, its development involved the revival of a previously

existing tradition as a conscious and deliberate invention of a new tradition. Soon after Juan Quezada's pottery began selling in the United States in the mid-1970s and potters began producing for specific markets, the focus was on the individual artist and individual creative expression became integral to the ethnoaesthetic system.

I found that there are important and essential links between the role of aesthetic development and artistic success. The "fit," first between one's own personal aesthetics and those of the rest of the community and second, with the aesthetics of the marketplace are both key factors in the process of growing empowerment. These mutually reinforcing relationships between the economic and aesthetic components reflect the degree to which potters' aesthetic choices and decisions are in sync with the market. These are often the deciding factors determining potters' economic viability and success in a competitive international ethnic art market. Potters' decisions and choices are guided by their own personal aesthetics, as well as their understanding of the culturally significant ethnoaesthetic principles prevailing within the wider community of artists in Mata Ortiz.

Potters constantly strive to improve their skill and technique and to create a pot more beautiful and more unique than the last one they made. Both women and men are making substantial contributions to the dynamic aesthetic tradition. As much as men, women have become outstanding exemplars by developing their own unique styles, techniques, and designs. In doing so, they have secured a place within this thriving art tradition and its market.

The Community

Mata Ortíz is a rural *ejido*⁴ community located approximately 135 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border in the northwestern corner of the state of Chihuahua, Mexico's largest state.⁵ The village is located along the Palanganas River, at the foothills of the Sierra San Joaquin to the east and the Sierra Madre Occidental range on the west. It is located southwest of the modern city of Nuevo Casas Grandes (see Figure 1.2) and is one of several small communities comprising the larger municipality of Casas Grandes, 15 miles away. The residents of the community are farmers, ranchers, agricultural wage workers, and potters who identify themselves as *norteños* – people of the north. Many residents are just as likely to identify themselves as *rancheros*. Similar to other Mexican *ranchero* communities, independence, individualism, autonomy, entrepreneurship, and working one's own land are highly valued in Mata Ortíz. I emphasize these distinguishing characteristics as indicative of both *norteño* and *ranchero* communities in the northern states of Mexico, and particularly those in northwestern Chihuahua (Farr 2006; Alonso 1995; Nugent 1993; 1988; Nájera-Ramírez 1994). My description of regional identity is consistent with other scholars of northwestern Mexico who have analyzed the construction of *norteño* identity and gender ideals as having developed locally and organically, and result from the historical experience specific to northwestern Mexico (Katz 1986; Knight 1986; Lloyd 1988; Nugent 1988, 1993; Alonso 1995).

The regional gender ideal valorizes the autonomous, self-made man who provides for his family (Nugent 1993) and the conservative, modest, family-and-household-

⁴ An *ejido* is a category of land tenure that grants use rights to agrarian reform communities in which there are usually individual and common lands (Barry 1995:291, see also Stephen 1994).

⁵ The state of Chihuahua is comprised of some 245,612 square kilometers (Nugent 1993:8).

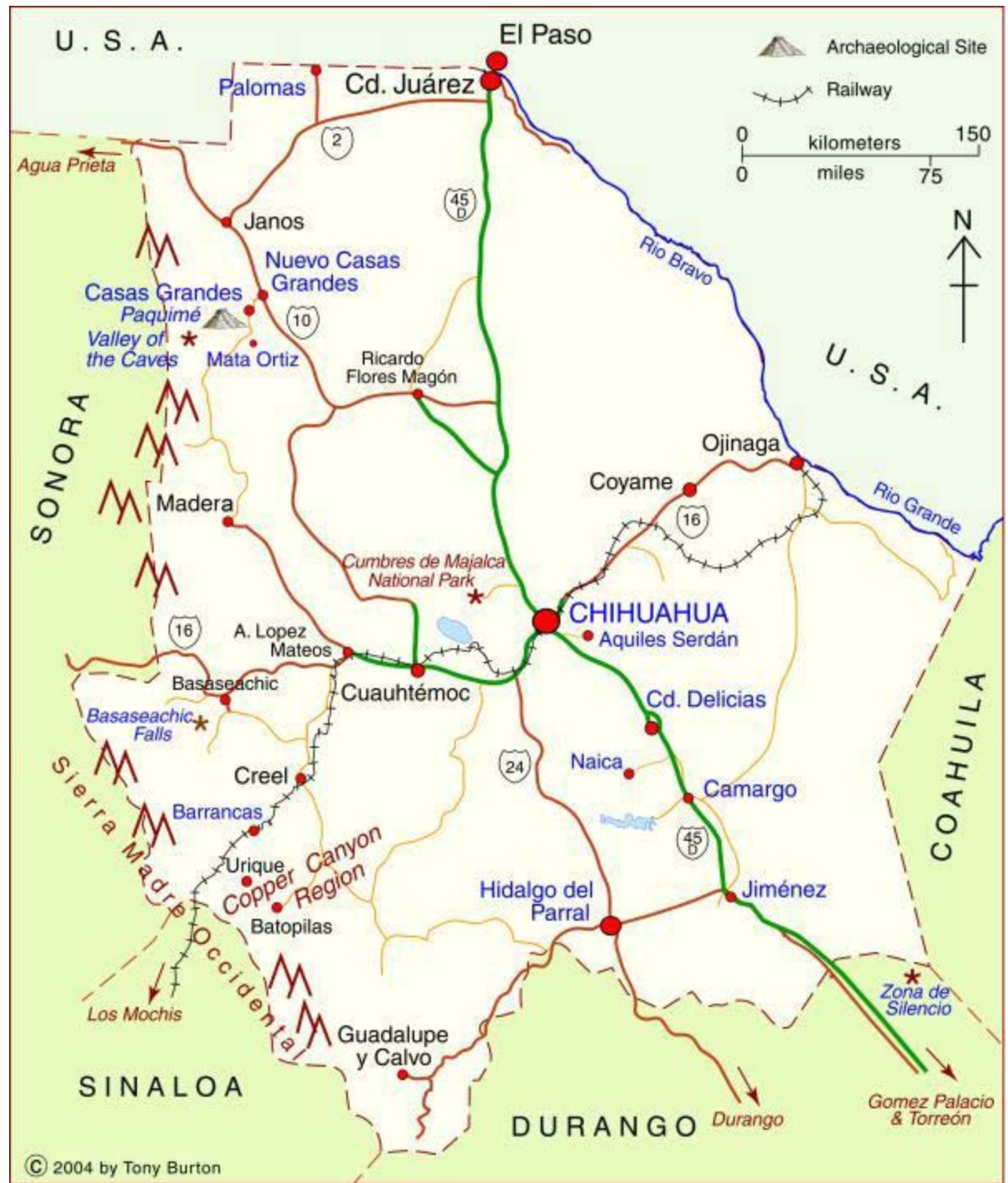


Figure 1.2 Map of U.S.-Mexico Border Region.

Reprinted by permission from Tony Burton, copyright 2004.

oriented woman who is respectful of “traditional” male dominance (Alonso 1995). In general, this construction continues to be consistent with gender roles for men and women in northwestern Mexico, as well as in other parts of Mexico. What I observed in Mata Ortíz, however, is that successful participation in pottery production offers the possibility for individual men and women to elaborate, transform, and accomplish the romanticized gender ideal as it has long existed in northwestern México. Rather than simply a reification of these ideals, women and men are experiencing a subtle, but ongoing transformation of gender relations. Both are expanding their traditional roles to encompass home-based work as potters. Men are able to provide for their families as self-sufficient producers and many invest the capital accumulated through pottery sales into traditional subsistence strategies of land and cattle. Women continue to privilege their traditional roles as wives and mothers while accessing an income. Paradoxically, some women selectively maintain certain elements within the traditional *norteño* gender ideology and transform others, reformulating the old identity of *ama de casa* (housewife) by gaining control over part or all of their income, thereby increasing their decision making power and in some cases, influencing egalitarian relations within their families.

Small-scale farmers in rural communities such as Mata Ortíz have rarely been able to realize this *norteño* ideal, primarily for economic and social reasons. The decline of the agrarian sector coupled with a general lack of economic and employment growth in the region, government cutbacks in agricultural subsidies and services previously provided by the Mexican state, and persistent drought conditions have brought

considerable stress to rural households in northwestern Chihuahua.⁶ Nonetheless, identity as a *norteño* has integrity and meaning for its bearers in northwestern Chihuahua because it is based on both everyday experience and social memory (Nugent 1993). The actual experience of agriculture and ranching is still a central part of the lives of rural people in Chihuahua. Yet, *norteño* is more than an identity that locates them geographically (Nugent 1993:32-33). It also speaks to the histories and ideologies of communities like Mata Ortiz that have been shaped by a particular aggregate of ecological, geographical, political, and ideological factors specific to northwestern Chihuahua.

Until the 21st century, getting to Mata Ortiz from Nuevo Casas Grandes required an adventurous spirit and a reliable vehicle. After leaving Colonia Juárez, the last 14 miles were traveled on a dirt road, which was likely to be washed out during the rainy season. In 2004, a paved road was completed between Viejo Casas Grandes and Mata Ortiz, making access to the village much easier for tourists, commercial buyers, collectors, and anthropologists. The village is made up of five *barrios*, or neighborhoods: Centro, de la Iglesia, Americano, López, and El Porvenir (see Figure 1.3). The paved road ends just before reaching Barrio Centro, the central neighborhood. To the immediate left is Barrio Americano, where single-story adobe houses line the main road and dot the hillside above the village. To the far right and across an arroyo is Barrio El Porvenir. The neighborhoods of El Porvenir, Centro, and de la Iglesia are laid out along

⁶ Over the course of the past two decades, Mexico has favored agricultural policies that serve the interests of large-scale capitalist producers over rural agrarian policies which would maintain the productivity and survival of small independent farmers (Barry 1995:12). An example of this bias in policy implementation can be readily recognized in the government's vested interests in agribusinesses that are able to meet the requirements for favored status in the international agriculture markets and participate in NAFTA (Barry 1995:12-13, 66-68).

the green corridor paralleling the Palanganas River. Barrio de la Iglésia is located just north of Barrio Centro, across from where the railroad tracks make a sharp turn away from the river and head south. A dirt road passes through Barrio de la Iglésia and heads out to Barrio Adobe, more frequently referred to as Barrio López, the neighborhood farthest from the center of town. This road eventually loops around to meet the primary road leading back into Mata Ortiz.

An historic railroad station no longer in use is located directly in front of Barrio Centro along the railroad tracks. The station building dates back to the early years of the 20th century, when the village enjoyed its “glory days” as a lumber processing hub. Barrio Americano acquired its name during those same years, due to the fact that Americans associated with the sawmill and the railroad built homes in that neighborhood. During the years of 1998-1999 while I lived in the village, the covered porch area surrounding the station was a popular rendezvous point during the weekend *paseos*. In the evenings, young people would cruise the length of Barrio Centro by horse, car, and truck. In 2005, the building was transformed into a gallery space for a group of local potters, *Artisanos Unidos de Chihuahua*. This group was organized locally, without any government support. Its membership is comprised of 26 households who share the responsibility for the maintenance of the historic building.

The streets are unpaved throughout the village, and are laid out more or less along linear grids in Barrio Centro and El Porvenir. In the other three neighborhoods, houses are clustered along the main roads with a few houses scattered behind them. Most homes built since the early 1990s started as a single room, to which other rooms were added in

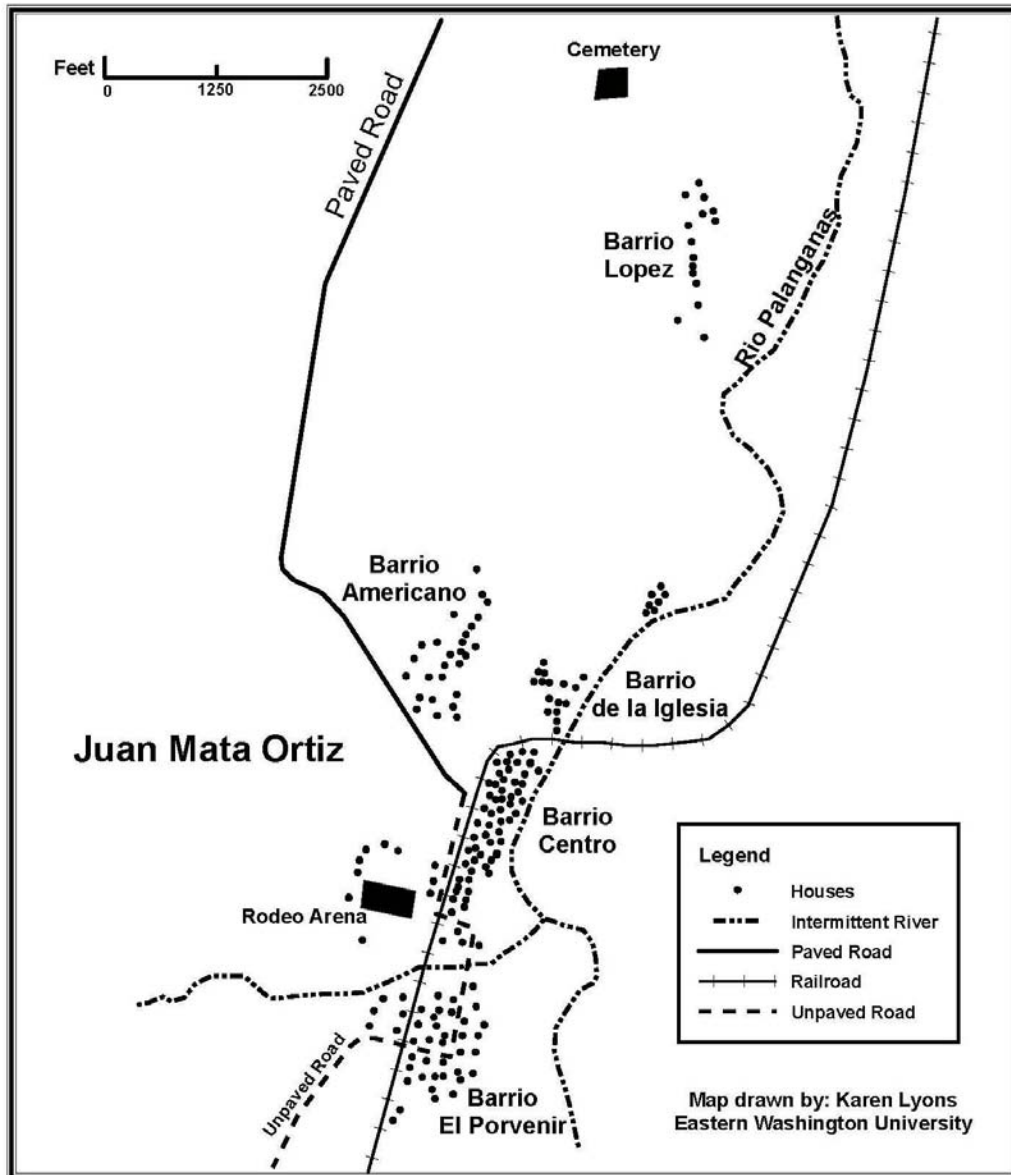


Figure 1.3 Barrios of Mata Ortiz, Chihuahua, Mexico.

(Map drawn by Karen Lyons 2009)

time. Houses in the village are generally constructed with adobe, though houses built of cinder block and stucco have become more common. The architecture of the buildings, particularly those in Barrio Centro, conforms to the traditional colonial style found throughout Mexico and the southwestern United States. A few of the houses are painted

but most are the natural color of the earth, the same color as the basic clay material used in producing the pottery.

Typically, the village is fairly quiet. Most activity takes place either in or around households, or outside the village in the agricultural fields or grazing ranges. The village is located in a wide valley bordered by both sierra and desert environments, and is principally considered a rainfall or temporal agricultural zone. Flood irrigation is practiced to cultivate the various seasonal crops: wheat, alfalfa, beans, sorghum, corn, and oats. Fields located close to the village can rely on some irrigation from the river. However, because the region has sustained persistent drought conditions since the 1990s, the men cooperate in hauling water out to the agricultural fields and to grazing areas for cattle. Some households also raise lambs, goats, pigs, turkeys, and chickens.

Of the approximately 650 adults in Mata Ortíz, more than 350 were potters with named recognition who engraved their signatures into the ceramics.⁷ Conservatively estimated, another 100 residents are engaged in the work of gathering clay, processing paints, forming, sanding, and polishing the pottery. Most activities seen throughout the village centered on pottery tasks. Homes producing pottery were likely to have buckets of clay soaking by the front door. Trays constructed of wooden frames bottomed with wire-mesh screening were common fixtures outside homes as well. Supported on carpenters' sawhorses, these are filled with clay to be strained or dried in the sun. Drifts of smoke indicate which households are firing pottery on any given day.

⁷ My calculations for the number of people involved in the pottery industry are based on a household survey which I conducted, along with local assistants. This tally includes those individuals who were the primary artists associated with the pottery produced in a given household, as well as individuals who were engaged in work contributing to the production of pottery such as mining clay, processing clay, processing paints, and producing molds and blank pottery forms ready for painting.

The homes and businesses situated around the four sides of the plaza in Barrio Centro are connected as long continuous structures. Historically, this regularized configuration around a central plaza was a defense against outside attacks (Pratt 1988:11). More likely, Mata Ortíz's configuration reflects the survival of this practice from the colonial period. In the late 1990s, the plaza functioned as a central space for the community. It was used mainly for fiestas or as a place to retreat from the crowded dances held in the nearby *Salon de Actos*, the town meeting hall. In addition to dances and weddings, the meeting hall was used for community events such as graduations, *ejido*⁸ meetings, and functions for other community groups. A billiards hall was located next door and directly across from the plaza.

The village is too small to support a central marketplace. The largest, though limited, selection of groceries was available at the *Mercado Pearson* during the years I was in Mata Ortíz (1998-1999). There was also the CONSUPO,⁹ a smaller government-sponsored market cooperative in Barrio Centro. Smaller *tiendas de abarrotes* were scattered throughout the village, and offered a limited selection of vegetables, dry goods, sodas, and candies. Alcohol sales were still prohibited in late 1990s, so there were no bars nor were there any restaurants. There were, however, a few small stands where one could buy hamburgers or burritos. There was also a small *tortilleria* owned and operated by the Ortíz Ortega family in Barrio Centro.

The church for the Catholic parish of San José is located in Barrio de la Iglésia (see Figure 1.4). There is also a small chapel located in Barrio El Porvenir. Its use is

⁸ The *ejido* membership has since built a new building and rodeo grounds west of the railroad tracks.

⁹ *Compania Nacional de Subsistencias Populares* (National Basic Foods Company)

limited to special novenas, Lent, and for those fiestas when the *matachines*¹⁰ dance in observance of local patron saints (see Figure 1.5). There is also an Assembly of God church in Barrio Centro. There was one *secundaria* (middle school), one *primaria* (elementary school) and two kindergartens in the village. The few students attending high school either carpooled or took the bus to Colonia Juárez for their classes. Baseball games and rodeo activities took place in the large circular sports field, enclosed by a six foot high stone wall.



Figure 1.4 San José Catholic Church.

¹⁰ As described by Sylvia Rodriguez, matachines are ritual dances likely derived “from a genre of medieval European folk dramas ... used by the Spaniards as a vehicle for Christianizing the Indians” (Rodriguez 1996:1-2). While analysis of the local meaning of these dances as performed in Mata Ortiz was beyond the scope of my research, I did observe many of the “choreographic, dramatic and symbolic elements” documented by Rodriguez among Pueblo Indian and Mexicano/Hispano communities she studied in the Upper Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico (1996:3).



Figure 1.5 Matachines dancing in honor of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, December 12, 1998 in Barrio El Porvenir.

Services at the government-sponsored *Instituto de Seguridad Social y Servicios para los Trabajadores* (ISSTE) clinic are fairly limited as there was rarely a medical doctor in residence in the village. The clinic was staffed with a registered nurse from Nuevo Casas Grandes and two local women who are licensed nurses. Their responsibilities include immunizations and providing health and sanitation education. The enhanced health and well being of residents is due in part to the availability of medical services at this clinic. While the influx of income derived from pottery makes it possible for most people to pay for prescriptions at the pharmacy, there continued to be a sector of the community lacking the income to afford medical care. Despite improved

overall health, residents related a higher incidence of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart conditions, as well as increased alcoholism and illicit drug use.

As a whole, the town of Mata Ortiz has persisted despite the economic decline of the 1960s, and many households have experienced an economic resurgence. Although living conditions in Mata Ortiz have improved markedly over the past twenty years as a result of the pottery, they still remain below Mexican standards.

Thesis Overview

In chapter four, the first of my data chapters, I look at the aesthetic development of individual women over time, beginning with work produced by Lydia Quezada Celado, Consolación Quezada Celado, and Taurina Baca Tena during the first phase of pottery making during the mid-1970s through the early 1980s. Together with Juan Quezada's other initial students, these women not only adopted his key design principles,¹¹ but infused and contributed to his work by developing their own identifiable styles. Their acclaim and success in marketing provided inspiring examples for others throughout the village. As teachers, these women were responsible for some of the successive male and female potters who entered this aesthetic tradition during the second phase of expansion in the pottery industry, during the mid-1980s.

Juan Quezada's influence and that of his initial students radiated outward, spreading through family and neighborhood networks in a florescence of creative aesthetic expression. Juan's students were instrumental in bringing about the transformation from what began largely as a family tradition in its first phase, to the village-wide pottery tradition of today. Throughout the village, women and men began

¹¹ The key design principles are those described and documented by Spencer H. MacCallum (MacCallum 1979:64).

embellishing and expanding upon Juan's work to generate new interpretations and innovative contributions. During this second phase, many women were producing independently as well as in collaboration with their husbands, children, and siblings. Women's work is well represented within the second, and more recently, third generation of potters and is the subject of the second half of the chapter on aesthetics. Five key aesthetic features of design, or guiding principles, emerged from conversations I had with these women about their work. These are *movimiento*, (or movement), complexity, naturalism, filled space, and surface treatment. In this chapter I explore the complex ways in which women are developing these key aesthetic features, moving the aesthetic tradition forward in new directions.

In chapter five, the second data chapter, I introduce the range of production strategies women utilize in pottery making. These include working as independent artists or in collaboration with husbands or partners, parents, children, or siblings. Collaborative strategies include: 1) couples who co-produce two styles with separate signatures; 2) couples who co-produce one style with one signature; and 3) women who co-produce with a family member other than their husbands or partners. There is no normative model of how labor is divided in pottery making households. Their strategies are indicative of both the variability of household structures and the differences existing among women in Mata Ortiz (Moore 1988:80).

I use four specific criteria as measures or indices to assess a woman's possibilities for empowerment. The first criterion is learning and acquiring the skill to make and paint pottery. The second criterion involves moving from learning to the successful development of a distinct signature style, and attaining recognition within the market and

art worlds. The third criterion is the degree to which one has gained control over all or some important aspects of the productive process, specifically the responsibility for manufacture and design. The fourth criterion has two parts, the degree of control over both the marketing of her pottery and the resulting income.

These criteria are specific to home-based commodity or craft production. The criteria embody two aspects of production: one addressing the aesthetic components of production and the other addressing the material components of production – the work process itself. My argument for the usefulness of these criteria is based upon the integral relationship between skill and aesthetic sensibility, since being able to do something well is intimately tied to both competence and confidence. It is equally based upon the notion that control over production processes and resources have the potential to empower in profound ways.

I examine twelve individual cases in order to assess how women do or do not exploit the range of potentialities for empowerment possible within each of the four strategies. In certain cases, I highlight how learning and acquiring skills (i.e. the effect of the talent and prestige of one's teacher), works together with the development of personal aesthetics to enhance the potential for empowering individual women and men. The potentially empowering effects of signature style expressed as both aesthetic success and economic success for individuals, or as shared style in the case of couples who produce pottery together, have very concrete and material consequences. I found signature style to be a critical element directly correlated with women's processual aesthetic development and growing empowerment.

In chapter six, I focus on the market and address my inquiry to the triangulated relationship among potters' artistic and economic intentions, buyers' expectations and demands, and the dynamic nature of the aesthetic standards and principles prevailing within this artistic community. Relying upon literature concerned with artists as agents actively locating and securing their places within local and transcultural market systems, I examine the empowering dimensions of their engagements with client tastes and market forces. Though I look at the practices and strategies both male and female potters utilize in their efforts, I pay particular attention to how women are managing their market relations, either as independent entrepreneurs, in cooperation with family, or through the local women's micro-enterprise project.

The potters in Mata Ortíz as well as their consumers are all participants in transnational networks of cultural production and consumption within a global ethnic art market (Wherry 2008; Grimes and Milgram 2000; Phillips and Steiner 1999; Nash 1993). The local market relies heavily on tourists and serious collectors, as well as on art intermediaries such as commercial traders, museum professionals, and gallery owners who make the trip to the village to buy directly from the potters. The potters participate in market systems and art worlds which are often characterized by asymmetrical relations. Artists, particularly makers of ethnic or tourist art, often have little control over the sale of their work in external global markets, where it is purchased by "members of politically and economically dominant cultures" (Parezo 1990:565 citing Graburn 1976). In terms of these external markets, potters have come to rely upon individuals who "make art" – the traders, the gallery owners, the collectors, and the museum professionals who

“enhance reputations” and create an audience for the pottery (Parezo 1990:563 citing Becker 1982).

Within the market and art worlds, determination of value as accrued economic, cultural, and symbolic capital is dependent upon a perception of, and a yearning for, authenticity. In his classic work on Fourth World art, Nelson Graburn was the first to give serious anthropological attention to the myriad of problems that ensue in satisfying the First World’s desire for “authentic” native handicrafts commodified as souvenirs, decoration, and “tourist art” (Graburn 1976). In Mata Ortíz, signs of progress (kilns, commercial paints, etc.) are often rejected as reflecting a loss of “tradition,” and are perceived as detracting from the aesthetic appeal of the object as well as its authenticity (Steiner 1994; Cohodus 1999; Errington 1998; García Canclini 1995). The demands for authentic pottery manufactured with “natural” materials and with “natural” technology limit the kinds of works recognized as authentic. For example, when potters adopt advancements in technology such as the use of kilns and commercially produced materials, their choices are critiqued within the community of outside patrons as debasing, contaminating, or degrading practices (Cohodus 1999:146; Moeran 1984:201). Hence, depending upon market response to potters’ innovations, patron taste has the potential to either facilitate or constrain creativity (Kinsella 2005; Steiner 1994; Jules-Rosette 1984; Bernstein 1993; Silver 1981; Bohannon 1971; Sieber 1971).

The contemporary potters are expressing an aesthetic that is very different from the aesthetic expressed in the prehistoric examples. While the influence of the prehistoric forms and designs played a significant role in the nascent development of local aesthetics, that is not the case with the pottery produced today. Today’s potters are deconstructing

the prehistoric designs, forms, and motifs and are reconfiguring these through their own interpretations. I return to the discussion of local ethnoaesthetics in chapter four.

Literature and Theoretical Review

In the analysis that follows I draw upon and expand three diverse bodies of literature. The first is art and anthropology, specifically the literature pertaining to ethnoaesthetics. I maintain that its emphasis on documenting artistic traditions from the perspective of the artists themselves is conducive to accessing their agency. The second is the feminist scholarship on women, work, and empowerment, which offers the most promise in addressing how women's productive labor has the potential to transform their power in the household and community. The third addresses transcultural art and market worlds as these develop in tandem with artistic traditions, as is the case with Mata Ortíz pottery. I go beyond these as discrete bodies of literature and bring them together to demonstrate how some women in Mata Ortíz are able to translate resources derived from their pottery work into personal and economic empowerment.

The three key issues of this dissertation – aesthetics, production, and market – are interconnected and therefore, need to be examined together in order to facilitate a clear view of the relationship between the artistic work of these women and their empowerment. For example, agency can be accessed through ethnoaesthetic elicitation and analysis, and through agency we can see how women have empowered themselves through their artistic work. Unlike many studies of women and work, and in particular, studies of women as artists, this dissertation examines both the aesthetic and productive components of their work to delineate the potential each one offers for empowerment. In the following pages, I will demonstrate how many women in Mata Ortíz are making

choices and taking purposeful action, thereby enlarging their capacities to empower themselves.

An Ethnoaesthetic Approach to Women's Agency

Ethnoaesthetics is particularly well-suited as a portal to agency and empowerment as it treats artists as agents, both revealing and recovering their agency by focusing on the kinds of meanings through which the artists themselves interpret and evaluate their work (Salvador 1997:xxii; 2003:59; Price and Price 1999:9). Because the focus is on the artists' purposeful action from the beginning, the ethnoaesthetic approach is an appropriate and effective way to access the underpinnings of their agency and understand their potential for empowerment. My insights into the importance of ethnoaesthetics as an approach to both agency and empowerment are based upon my readings of earlier studies in anthropology and art, and their significance to the development of ethnoaesthetics as method and theory. An empowerment quality is implicit within this approach not only because it treats artists as agents, (Graburn 1976; Salvador 1997, 2003; Price 2003; Babcock 1993), but also because it "raises possibilities for interpretations, not through the voice of the anthropologist, but through the production of artistic knowledge and practice by the artists themselves" (Kinsella 2005:81).

The Beginning of an Approach

My approach to agency and empowerment through ethnoaesthetics can be best understood by first recognizing its nascent form in the studies of Ruth Bunzel (1929), Lila O'Neale (1932), and Gladys Reichard (1936) which focused on the importance of artistry and the role of the individual artist within culture. I use examples within the literature of anthropology and art to demonstrate how the ongoing concern with human

action as agency can be traced through the development of ethnoaesthetic theory and practice (Graburn 1999:346).

Ruth Bunzel carried out a study of pottery at several pueblos in the Southwest United States and predominantly at Zuni Pueblo in the summers of 1924 and 1925 (Bunzel 1929:2). Bunzel's was the first formal study conducted by a woman ethnographer in the American Southwest, preceded only by Carl Guthe (1925) at San Idelfonso and A.L. Kroeber (1916) at Zuni. She pioneered the methodology of eliciting native aesthetic standards directly from the artists through discussion of art objects they had produced (Berlo 1992:11).

Consistent with his interests in the late 1920s, Franz Boas advised many of his students to focus their research on "investigating the attitude of the artist toward his work" (Haeberlin et al. 1925:131), or as in the case of Pueblo potters, the potter in relation to her work (Hardin 1993:260). Bunzel was one of the first to attempt a study of the individual in culture; important to this discussion, she was the first to provide major examples of how individual artists work within established artistic traditions and standardized conventions (Hardin 1993:259). In her pursuit to understand the "personal element in design," Bunzel asked the potters directly about their individual creativity and agency as expressed in technique, design, criticism, and learning (Bunzel 1929). She describes her research design as follows:

This is a study especially of the manner in which an individual operates within the limits of an established style, or finding that impossible, creates new values and wins for them social recognition. It is an attempt to enter fully into the mind of primitive artists; to see their technique and style, not as they appear objectively to students of museum collections, but as they appear to the artists themselves, who are seeking in this field of behavior a satisfactory and intelligible technique of individual expression (Bunzel 1929:1-2).

In addition to extensive interviews which yielded meticulous delineation of the distinct design principles and aesthetic systems of the various Pueblo people with whom she studied, Bunzel learned to make pottery as well (Bunzel 1929:2). Despite in-depth descriptions of individual agency and documentation of the variability among women's work, Bunzel concluded that traditional Pueblo potters worked unconsciously within a limited range of culturally determined choices (1929:87).¹² Though Bunzel acknowledged Nampeyo and Maria and Julian Martinez as innovators, she made it clear she considered them to be exceptional among the traditional Pueblo potters she interviewed (1929:88). Hardin points out Bunzel's findings "followed from the definition of the problem with which she, under Boas' guidance, began her study" (Hardin 1993:269). However, as noted by Harry R. Silver, "Bunzel stressed that the limits of acceptability in style are constantly shifting" (Silver 1979:273). She recognized these shifts resulted from agency on the part of the potters, saying "[t]he emphasis on originality and individualism in design is general in all villages and among all potters" (Bunzel 1929).

Lila O'Neale, a scholar from the University of California, Berkeley who was influenced by the work of both Franz Boas¹³ and her professor, A.L. Kroeber, decided in the early 1930s to speak directly with 47 Native American women basket weavers along the Klamath and Trinity rivers of northwestern California. Following Boas' model,

¹² Bunzel concluded "[o]f the principles of design which produce these characteristic forms the makers are, with but a few exceptions, entirely unconscious. Everything, including the terminology of design, leads to the conclusion that decorative style is the product of unconscious and nonrational mental processes" (Bunzel 1929:87).

¹³ O'Neale states that her research developed out of her reading of Boas' research aims in a paper published under his direction, "Coiled Basketry in British Columbia and Surrounding Region," BAE-R 1919-1924:131-615; 1928 (O'Neale 1932:5).

O'Neale focused her research on "the problem of investigating the subjective attitude of the weaver" towards her work (O'Neale 1932:5). Until Bunzel's and O'Neale's work, few scholars were talking to artists, and especially not with Native American women, about why they made the artistic choices they did.

Kroeber's earlier analysis of Yurok, Karok, and Hupa basketry (1905) focused on the objects and not the artists in order to derive lists of cultural traits for the purpose of cross-cultural studies. While Kroeber noted no significant differences in the basketry of these three communities and concluded there was a "tremendous predominance of unmotivated custom and habit over conscious utilitarian, artistic, or religious purpose" (Schevill 1992:164 citing Kroeber 1909:249), O'Neale found just the opposite.

Responding to photographs¹⁴ of museum materials, the weavers elaborated upon their formal discriminations of local style, technique, and form as distinct from other communities, as well as their criteria of excellence and local standards for aesthetic evaluation (O'Neale 1932). O'Neale's pioneering method of photo elicitation proved to have "obvious advantages" and as she noted: "I found no woman so inarticulate that she could not indicate conformance to or violation of the traditionally correct expression" (O'Neale 1932:5-6). She continues:

Much detailed information on phases no one but a weaver could have known to exist, came out during the handling of the prints: technical details, special uses, facts about other weavers in connection with this or that design, incidental remarks leading to important distinctions, and casual phrases corroboratory of other opinions. . . . The Yurok-Karok basket maker of any age is an enthusiast on the subject of her craft (O'Neale 1932:8).

¹⁴ O'Neale used photographs of baskets in the University of California Museum of Anthropology collection, some from the former collection of the California Academy of Sciences and "a number taken by Pliny E. Goddard" (O'Neale 1932:8). Traditionally, baskets were often destroyed at the time of a weaver's death. O'Neale's interviewees recognized many of the baskets and were surprised these had survived (O'Neale 1932:8).

Unlike Kroeber, O'Neale found that the individual artist could and did speak eloquently about the range of conscious choices she made and the "motivated care" given in the creation of each basket regardless of its purpose (Schevill 1992:164). The agency of individual weavers is revealed over and over again in O'Neale's data, as each woman described her competence, her calculated choices of one material over another, the meticulous preparation of her materials, and her skill at weaving particularly difficult design motifs. Women also spoke of earning income by marketing their baskets and the prestige and recognition attained among peers and community. O'Neale found that while "[t]ribal standardization begins with her learning her craft," a weaver is not limited to these; "[t]here are choices, to be sure" (O'Neale 1932:16).

In the mid-1930s, Gladys Reichard initiated research among Navajo weavers, and like O'Neale and Bunzel, gave priority to the individual artist. Her fieldwork situation was unique since she lived with a Navajo family, she was afforded intimate access to the "internal dynamics of extended family life in a matrilineal society" (Lamphere 1993:170). This facilitated her "careful participant observation" while learning the Navajo language, kinship patterns, and weaving, and thereby establishing standards of research methodology for future practitioners.

Reichard's works were distinctive and innovative for their time, not only for her focus on women as named individuals with personality and voice, but for her detailed descriptions of their work at weaving, providing the reader a sense of the kinds of decisions women make as they weave. By focusing on individual weavers within two families living in different communities, Reichard was able to convey the individuality of

each weaver, contrasting their learning and teaching experiences as well as the variations among their techniques and styles of weaving.

Her intimate portrayals emphasized women's artistic intent and interest in their work was not limited to economic gain. She writes: "[t]here is something about making a beautiful object which cannot be measured tangibly" (Reichard 1936:187). Reichard acknowledged the weavers strove to get good prices for their blankets, yet she perceived that their economic interest "... is a matter distinct from their aesthetic reward" (Reichard 1936:187). Unlike Bunzel's and O'Neale's emphasis on artistic choices and judgments, Reichard's work was more about actual weaving techniques, the intensive labor experience, and the frustrations of learning which she experienced in her role as "neophyte participant-observer" (Berlo 1992:12).

Over the next 30 years, continued attention to the individual as active agent resulted in more theoretically refined understandings of the dynamic nature of art systems. These resulted in large part from the analysis of the dialectic interaction between processes of continuity and change within societal structures (Leach 1954; Gluckman 1955; Turner 1957). A particularly rich body of ethnoaesthetic work was generated by theorists working in such geographically diverse locations as Africa and Latin America from the late 1950s through the 1980s (d'Azevedo 1958; Silver 1971; Dark 1967; Salvador 1975; Tedlock and Tedlock 1985; Price and Price 1980). The predominant object-centered analysis, which often resulted in the erasure of artists' agency, came under increasing critique. By the 1960s, the key concerns of ethnoaesthetics coalesced around the individual artist within a meaningful sociocultural context. Local systems of meaning, artistic critique, and processes of innovation became

central to understanding the particular dynamics of artful expression and art forms within specific communities.

This new ethnoaesthetic approach has certain important themes in common with practice theory as formulated by Sherry Ortner (1984). Like practice theory, the ethnoaesthetic approach attends to how “cultural categories, or historical subjects, or forms of subjectivity are “made,” or constructed, within specific sociocultural contexts to “see subjects as constructed by, and subjected to the cultural and historical discourses within which they must operate” (Ortner 1996:1). At the same time, as in Ortner’s model, the ethnoaesthetic approach seeks to understand “making” from the artist’s point of view, attending to how actors and active agents “enact,” “resist,” or “negotiate” the world as given, and in so doing “make” the world (Ortner 1996:1). In a similar way, attending to artists’ intention, flexibility, and innovation, their “making” may result in “reproduction” of the same “old social and cultural thing” or it may “produce something new” (Ortner 1996:1). Ortner explains “the anthropological project” must account for both, as neither on its own is sufficient to yield a full analysis.

Similarly, studies of the way people resist, negotiate or appropriate some feature of their world are also inadequate and misleading without careful analysis of the cultural meanings and structural arrangements that construct and constrain their “agency,” and that limit the transformative potential of all such intentionalized activity (Ortner 1996:2).

From the 1960s on, the thread of “being made” and “making” is woven through ethnoaesthetic studies, as the focus is now on the dynamic interaction between the individual artist as agentic actor and the specific sociocultural context.

The Expansion and Refinement of an Approach

Warren d'Azevedo was among the first to return the focus of analysis to “the actor in the role of artist making use of artistic means in the pursuit of artistic ends” (d'Azevedo 1958:711). His seminal work defined a systematic approach that begins with working directly with the artists as intentional actors firmly embedded within the sociocultural contexts of their communities, making meaningful choices, taking purposeful actions, and articulating artistic criteria and judgments. His particular approach to ethnoaesthetics is significant in a number of ways, but critical to this discussion are his contributions to accessing and revealing the artist's agency and the possibility for more inclusive studies of art as a dynamic process.

In his approach, d'Azevedo stressed the importance of recognizing art and other aspects of expressive culture as embellished activity that is pleasurable and appreciated, enjoyed by both artists and their audiences. His approach expanded analysis beyond the objects to clearly demonstrate that “[a]rt is a process manifested in human behavior and its results are no more the locus of art than edifices are the locus of architecture” (d'Azevedo 1958:712). In other words, one cannot simply look at the art object in order to access and understand any given aesthetic system. Meaning is not intrinsic to objects, and “can be ascertained only with reference to the esthetic values of the members of a given sociocultural system for whom it functions esthetically” (d'Azevedo 1958:707). In order to ascertain the meaning of aesthetic activity in a given sociocultural context, d'Azevedo proposed turning the focus of analysis on the interactive relationship between social context, artistic action, and evaluation as dynamic process.

Similar studies in the field of anthropology and art by Roy Sieber (1971), Paul Bohannon (1971), Phillip Dark (1967), Harry R. Silver (1981), and Robert Farris Thompson (1968; 1973) challenged notions of “frozen” cultures by demonstrating the dynamic nature of African artistic traditions and the creativity of individual artists. Sieber warned that a failure to fully investigate the dynamics of innovation which result from the exchange of information and relations with traders and consumers risks reducing societies to tradition-bound, cultural isolates (Sieber 1971). Based upon his work among the Nigerian Tiv, Bohannon also stressed the need to inquire into the artistic criticism of those who use, collect, or market the objects within the community (Bohannon 1971:173).¹⁵

Dark emphasized that “a full ethnographic enquiry, with particular attention to the linguistic and visual contexts” is required to understand how art is integrated into culture (Dark 1967:144). He proposed that researchers investigate the vocabulary of form used by the artist in order to delineate the “grammar,” or the rules by which artistic decisions are made (Dark 1967:143).¹⁶ Contrary to long held assumptions about established traditions and continuity, Silver found that innovation was encouraged among the Ashanti and the emergence of successful innovations often led to new style patterns through copying. He found motivations for innovating varied from economic survival to the

¹⁵ James W. Fernandez found that among the Fang, not only did a dynamic system of art criticism exist, art actually “comes into being in the relationship between creation and criticism – the artist and his [*sic*] critics” (Fernandez 1971:359-360). While the vitality represented in wooden carvings of *bieri* statues is the basic component being judged, his essay deals with how art criticism serves to balance the tension of opposition between carvers and their critics while acting as a means of generating vitality in Fang social structure and aesthetic life (1971: 359-360; 373).

¹⁶ Along a similar line of inquiry, Anthony Forge concluded that “style” among the Sepik of Lowland New Guinea is a system of meaning (Forge 1973:191). Artists manipulate style elements in the interest of effectively communicating “sentiments charged with ritual, secrecy and power” that are recognized by those who are socialized to receive it” (Forge 1973:182, 191).

pursuit of prestige, and that the role of the artist is a viable economic option among the Ashanti (Silver 1981). Thompson found that even the role of critic is a recognized specialization (Thompson 1973). Thompson also emphasized that people can carve any way they want, either realistically or in the abstract, but when they do, they are selecting a path that pleases them and this path has aesthetic criteria (Thompson 1973).

The “New” Ethnoaesthetic Approach

With renewed interest in artist-centered research and analysis, the studies of art within differing African societal structures were instrumental in bringing about a reemergence of ethnoaesthetic investigations. Building upon the developments discussed above and drawing from within the wider discipline of anthropology, each of the following ethnographic studies in Latin America takes a distinct approach. All reiterate the importance in taking account of the relationship between artists and the objects they make within a specific sociocultural context (Salvador 1975; Tedlock and Tedlock 1985; Price and Price 1984). Ethnohistorical analyses of the larger political and economic forces that create the sociocultural context in the first place are now a critical component of the approach, shedding light on the larger processes of globalization at work. Developed in response to critiques of “supposedly civilized” and “real” history (Wolf 1982:19), ethnohistory seeks to reassess how local populations are articulated within larger political economies and thus, enhance our ability to “understand their mutual encounter and confrontation” (Wolf 1982:7). Increasingly, issues of appropriation, commodification, and representation of non-western art (Stocking 1985; Clifford 1988; Appadurai 1986; Price 1989; Errington 1998) brought the lack of attention to the

sociocultural complexity of production in colonial and neocolonial trade context into glaring realization (Graburn 1999:345).

Fred Myers reminds us how David Harvey's characterization of globalization as "time-space compression" undermines any notions of autonomous "local cultural worlds," and that thorough investigation of the "social embeddedness or institutional location" of small scale societies within the processes of larger, global societies often clarifies the "historical projects through which "ethnoaesthetic practices" themselves came into being and/or dissolved" (Myers 2003:2-3). Graburn's work on "transitional arts" of small scale societies opened the way for studies of the production of expressive culture resulting from what Wolf calls the "interstitial spaces" of mutual encounter within global processes (Graburn 1976). The "reintegration" of external ideas, images, and techniques were now understood as processes of innovation and hybridity, as well as agency on the part of the artists (Graburn 1999:347).

Barbara Tedlock and Dennis Tedlock provided an expansive analysis of Quiche Mayan weaving to demonstrate the connections joining the study of language and communication to art and anthropology. They discerned how the brocaded designs woven into Mayan textiles are "not the end products of events that took place in the murky colonial past," but instead result from the "continuing creative process" of these designs as "intercultural intertexts" (Tedlock and Tedlock 1985:141-142). Joining ethnoaesthetic and linguistic theories, their sophisticated analysis explained how creativity, as the inclusion of foreign material is made possible through the Quiche aesthetic principles of syncopation and variability of sequencing which "declare independence in formal and material imaginations" (Tedlock and Tedlock 1985:142).

Extensive discussions with practitioners of differing Mayan arts¹⁷ informed their analyses, and located these designs within the underlying aesthetic framework of Mayan cosmology.

In this case, the creation of “intercultural intertexts” involved the incorporation of European letters (e.g. Spanish words), with indigenous figures of animals which “entails a deliberate crossing of cultural boundaries” (Tedlock and Tedlock 1985:141).¹⁸ The designs incorporated within contemporary textiles produced for both Quiche and tourist consumption are intercultural “intertexts” in that these continue to communicate knowledge to contemporary Mayan people while communicating Mayan culture to consumers. Through their discussions with individuals about why they weave as they do, Tedlock and Tedlock provide a full ethnographic interpretation of these intertexts within an analysis of Quiche Mayan world view.

Spanning over thirty years of ethnographic research and collaborative projects with Kuna women, Mari Lyn Salvador’s research has yielded a succinct understanding of the Kuna aesthetic system through the dynamic and expressive art of mola making. With the availability of new materials such as cloth, scissors, and needles in the late 19th century, Kuna women combined designs from their traditional art of body painting with new processes of cutting and sewing to create colorful panels worn as blouses in their traditional dress (Salvador 1997:152). More recently, Kuna women have drawn inspiration for their designs from objects and patterns observed in their everyday life as

¹⁷ In many Quiche households, both men and women are often proficient in more than one craft specialization. Pottery making, weaving, crocheting and divination are practiced by both men and women and they often collaborate in a single production or performance (Tedlock and Tedlock 1985:123).

¹⁸ Intertextuality is defined as the creation of a “new text” in which “other texts (that) speak within it” (Tedlock and Tedlock 1985:122).

well as from such diverse sources as religious and political themes, books, magazines, advertising, and labels on imported goods (Salvador 1997:74-83).¹⁹ Regarding the Kuna notion of borrowing and incorporating imported goods, ideas, images, and techniques, Salvador writes: “Kuna are eclectic; they are not opposed to outside influence” (Salvador 1978:10). Instead, integration from the outside is part of an ongoing creative process and “[t]hese women have created an art form that is uniquely Kuna and have established corresponding criteria for artistic criticism” (Salvador 1997:152).

Typically, Kuna women sell molas they have used and worn, and also produce molas specifically for the tourist market. Advised by other Kuna women who act as market mediators, mola makers adjust their designs and styles of products to meet consumers’ tastes (Salvador 2003:68). Kuna women express their agency through intentional articulation of their artistic criteria and judgments of their own work and that of others. Their active participation in the economy has led Kuna women to raise issues regarding their increased involvement in community decision-making, and to gain a stronger voice in politics (Salvador 2003:70).

As Salvador observes with Kuna society (Salvador 1997), Maroon arts provide “an inexhaustible source of natural exegesis, spontaneous evaluative remarks, and unsolicited commentary on both aesthetic principles and technical details” (Price and Price 1999:44; 1980). Sally Price writes of the Saramaka culture, one of the six groups making up the Maroon population, that the configuration of gender roles as well as “daily life is strongly shaped by cultural ideas about men and women” and the kinds of art they

¹⁹ Everyday images may include objects such as household utensils, elements of house construction, or naturally occurring patterns in their immediate environment. Kuna women also are inspired by memorable events such as circuses, boxing matches, and their interpretations of experiences described to them (such as space travel) (Salvador 1978:67-75).

make. Within Saramakan aesthetic expression, she writes, “it seems more “natural” for men to produce geometric designs with well-executed symmetry and for women to produce free-form designs with imperfectly realized symmetry” (Price 2003:19).

Historically, women have been associated with textiles – weaving, embroidery, and patchwork – while wood carving has been seen as a male domain (Price and Price 1999). Over time, however, Saramakan women have gradually taken over calabash carving from the men (Price 2003:29-30). Expressing purposeful agency from an incredibly subordinate position, women ingeniously create their own tools with available resources (e.g. glass bottles, umbrella spokes) and are “creating works of incredible beauty in the margins” (Price 2003:30-31). Price concludes Maroon women have been empowered through their artistic work and have begun to “challenge the traditional gender constructs of their societies” (Price 2003:31). Both Salvador and Price provide examples which demonstrate the ways in which artistic work has the potential to empower women and as such, inform my own analysis.

My intent in reviewing the anthropology and art literature, and specifically the literature pertaining to ethnoaesthetics, is to make clear how these have informed the central concerns of this dissertation. As discussed above, ethnoaesthetics seeks to engage artists in discussions of their art in order to access the artistic knowledge, practice, and local aesthetic standards which become a primary interpretive and organizational framework. This approach yielded strong conversations and documentation of an emerging art form that has involved both women and men since its inception. I am able to write about the women I met in Mata Ortíz in the pages that follow because this research was carried out with the idea of understanding the agency of these women

through what they say and do (Ahearn 2001:109). The underpinnings of women's agency are revealed as they describe their own perceptions of learning their art, the artistic choices and judgments they make, their purposeful action in creating signature styles, controlling the process of production and interacting with the market, and their resistance to unfair market practices. As home-based artists both women and men have a greater degree of control over the factors which can allow them to create the conditions for their empowerment.

In striving for recognition and distinction through innovation, certain potters are making deliberate and individual choices to incorporate designs, forms, and techniques from other pottery traditions. Combining non-traditional colors and employing the technique of sgraffito²⁰ were two examples of incorporating methods and techniques from other pottery traditions that became increasingly popular during the period of my fieldwork. The notion of borrowing and incorporating ideas and techniques is as much a part of the ongoing creative process (Salvador 1978) as are the choices made in the interest of increasing production and profit and effectiveness in the marketplace. The implications of these choices in terms of the link between artistic signature style and empowerment will be discussed in more detail in chapter five.

Ethnoaesthetics redresses those approaches that would reduce artists to makers of cultural commodities who solely produce whatever will sell, and are willing to do whatever the audience wants them to do. To not think about the work from the perspective of the artist ignores their (albeit) non-material aesthetic considerations and

²⁰ The sgraffito technique involves carving away portions of the surface of polished and fired pottery to reveal contrasting colors beneath the surface. Among Pueblo potters, Joseph Lonewolf and his sister Grace Medicine Flower are known for using this technique since the early 1970s.

denies the agency of the artist, by reducing their artistic work to the basic rules of supply and demand in commodity production. By doing so, one fails to acknowledge the essential importance of the concern for beauty from the perspective of the artists themselves (the local ethnoaesthetics). Likewise, it does not reveal the artist's own sense of development and agency, and how she feels her life has been transformed by the practice of her art. Through this link between ethnoaesthetics and agency I gained an understanding of how women access and develop the skills that lead to their successes, and the levels of competence that are the underpinnings of their confidence as artists, and their potential empowerment within the market and art worlds.

Women's Productive Artistic Work

A second window on women's agency and empowerment is through the literature on women and work in Latin America generated by feminist scholars from a number of diverse fields. Within this larger picture of production, two issues are central to this dissertation. The first is to examine how women are empowered through their participation in productive work. The second is to explore how access to income impacts their relationships as daughters, wives, and mothers (Chant and Craske 2003; Blumberg 1995a; Tiano 1994; Lamphere et al. 1993, 1987; Benería and Feldman 1992; Nash 1990, 1993; Tinker 1990; Fernández-Kelly 1984, 1983; Benería and Roldán 1987). I use this literature to frame my argument that women's artistic work in Mata Ortiz holds the potentiality for their empowerment. Women are changing their social position within this community as income earners, advancing the economic position of their families through the sale of their pottery within the international art market. Their increased participation in productive work is consistent with the contributions of other women throughout Latin

America who have increased their labor force participation in response to the demands of expanding capitalism, rising national debt, and globalized poverty (Chant 2003:xvi; Tiano 1994; Nash 1990, 1993; Benería and Roldán 1987; Tinker 1990).

During the 1980s, structural adjustment neoliberal policies caused a “profound restructuring” of everyday life, with women bearing a disproportionate burden for ensuring household survival (García, B. 2000:278; Benería and Feldman 1992).²¹ The implementation of NAFTA in January of 1994 was soon followed by the devaluation of the peso, causing Mexican wages to decline by 40% while food prices and the cost of living rose by as much as 80% (García, A. 1996). In recent years, potters in Mata Ortiz relate how they directly experience global economic shifts through their marketing ties to international ethnic art markets, largely as declines in market activity. As agriculturalists, they experience liberalized trade reform policies by way of cutbacks in agricultural subsidies and in the tension between rising costs of agricultural production and declining prices received for crops²² (Kingsolver 2007:243; Barry 1995). Characterized by June Nash as symptoms of a “world capitalist crisis,” these measures exacerbate inequities in any society (Nash 1990:338). Among key factors identified by numerous scholars to account for the rise in women’s increased productive work in Latin America are the erosion of household incomes, cutbacks in food and social service subsidies, and rural-urban migration (Chant and Craske 2003:207; García, B. 2000; Blumberg 1995a; Tiano 1994; Benería and Feldman 1992).

²¹ Many theorists assert that “failure by the adjustment programs to take into account what happens in the reproductive sphere indirectly reinforces the mechanisms of female subordination, thereby preventing women from achieving greater well-being, power and autonomy” (García 2000:265; also see Benería 1982, Elson 1992; et al).

²² The decline of the agrarian sector coupled with a general lack of economic and employment growth in the region and persistent drought conditions have brought considerable stress to rural agricultural households in northwestern Chihuahua (Barry 1995:66-68).

Recent research has provided an analysis of “economic globalization as a gendered process” which often disrupts and exacerbates women’s “social and economic vulnerabilities” (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007:3). Sylvia Chant concurs with others that class and gender continue to create a nexus of inequality for women and their children, as the gendered effects of economic crisis often have differential impacts on various sectors of the population (Chant and Craske 2003). Whether as heads of households or as members of households without a reliable male income, women in Latin America and elsewhere need to work (Williams, M. 2003; Sweetman 2000; Tiano 1994:54, 167; Nash 1990, 1993; Benería and Roldán 1987:138; Fernández-Kelly 1983).

Women’s Paid Productive Work

Women’s paid productive work in Latin America, both inside and outside the home, has drawn considerable attention among feminist scholars. In keeping with my emphasis on women’s agency, I view productive work as entailing a set of strategies women employ in response to deteriorating economic situations (Chant 1991; González de la Roche 2003; Benería and Roldán 1987). In Mexico, these strategies can take several forms. The first is paid labor in the formal economy outside the home, as in the case of *maquila* work (Tiano 1994; Enloe 1990; Fernández-Kelly 1983), or employment within the “pink-collar” service sector, including the teaching and nursing professions. A second area is women’s paid labor in the informal sector, which encompasses: 1) women earning wages in the informal economy outside the home; 2) women earning wages doing factory piecework (subcontracting) inside the home; and 3) women earning an income from independent commodity and craft production.

The nature of women's circumstances, that is, whether or not they are integrated into, exploited by, or marginalized in the processes of capitalist development (Tiano 1991:77-79) is a critical debate in feminist scholarship on development²³ (Tiano 1994; di Leonardo 1991:78; Tinker 1990; Warren and Borque 1991:304; Nash and Safa 1985; Eisenstein 1979; Boserup 1970). In her analysis of *maquila* workers in northern Mexican border cities, Susan Tiano demonstrates how each of these three alternative perspectives "contributes a view through a particular prism," to inform an understanding of "the forces that lead women to enter and remain in the labor force" (Tiano 1994:226). Tiano also uses these perspectives as possible ways to understand and analyze the costs and benefits of women's increased productive labor participation. I am using her model as a way of thinking about the nature of women's work and as a framework through which to examine the various strategies of productive work employed by women in Latin America, both inside and outside the home, and relate these to empowerment.

Proponents of the exploitation thesis maintain that increased participation in the global economy's export processing sector has placed greater burdens on women, making them more vulnerable to the oppression of capitalism and patriarchy. In this view, capitalism's need to maximize profits compounds the inequities women face within the international labor force. The marginalization thesis maintains women are marginalized

²³ By the 1980s, "gender" had replaced "women" in feminist approaches and theorizing (Tiano 2001). Within interdisciplinary feminist studies, the gender perspective provides the potential for rephrasing problems of gender and modernity. Gender "as a category of analysis" extends beyond "recovering women's experiences," to encompass the "interrelations between women and men" (Moore 1988:6). The gender perspective in development has its theoretical roots in socialist feminism (Eisenstein 1979). Analysis in gender and development combines the radical feminism view of the impact of patriarchy with aspects of traditional Marxist approach (Rathgeber 1989:11). Often, the social construction of what is defined as reproductive activity is taken as the source or basis of women's oppression within a given society (Stephen 1991; Ehlers 1990; Babb 1989; Rathgeber 1989; Benería and Roldán 1987; Deere and Leon 1987; Jaggar and Rothenberg 1984). Rather than compartmentalize women's productive and reproductive labor, these are taken to be linked in the GAD approach.

within the labor market by conservative perceptions of their domestic roles, and these are reflected in gendered recruitment practices in the workplace (Tiano 1994:41). Developed as a feminist critique of modernization theory, this perspective holds that capitalist development has eroded women's productive roles and increased their economic and social marginality, resulting in women being more easily exploitable than men (Tiano 1994:38-41). Both exploitation and marginalization theorists agree on the negative impact of capitalist development on women's welfare and their symbolic relegation to the domestic mode (Tiano 1994:41).²⁴ Where the "exploitation thesis describes the centrifugal forces that pull women into capitalist labor," the marginalization thesis describes those that push them away (Tiano 1994:41).²⁵

Integrationists argue that earning an income, whether through waged labor participation, self employment, or independent production is liberating and has the potential to enhance women's status and resource access, increase their bargaining power in the household, and offer alternatives to financial dependence on a male partner (Tiano 1994:38,52; Blumberg 1995a, 1995b; Safa 1995:31; Tinker 1990; Tinker et al. 1976:31). Integrationists view women's marginalization as a waste of human resources and value labor force participation for its potential to integrate women into the political economy.

²⁴ Tiano suggests that because marginalization and exploitation each describe a particular aspect of women's experience, it can be argued that they are the "twin faces" of women's subordination (Tiano 1994:41).

²⁵ The push/pull model is often used to explain women's presence or absence within the labor force. Pull factors refer to advantages offered by participation in the economy that will benefit women such as increased "bargaining power," and provide an income that will facilitate their economic autonomy and general well-being (Sen and Batliwala 2000; Tinker 1976). Push factors are those from economic conditions outside of the household resulting in limited resources, thus "squeezing" the household. Gender relations are brought into the analysis in that the nature of patriarchal relations often dictates whether the woman will enter the labor force. As the economic squeeze increases, women are pushed into the labor force by the combined force of economic need and their submission to patriarchal relations in the household (Nash 1993; Elson 1992:40).

This view accounts for women as agents, recognizing that they weigh the benefits of formal employment (e.g. medical and retirement benefits, steady wages) against its “economic, social and personal costs” (e.g. lack of child care, transportation expenses, reduced autonomy) (Tiano 1994:51).

Wage Work in the Formal Economy

The overall message derived from studies of export processing work within the “one world framework” of globalization (Dhruvarajan and Vickers 2002:8) and its new forms of work, is that women are constructed and targeted by the multi-national corporations as a flexible, inexpensive, and gendered work force²⁶ and this is particularly true for women in developing economies (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007; Sweetman 2000:4; Williams, M. 2003:23; Rai 2002:7; Dhruvarajan and Vickers 2002; Tiano 1994:53, 1987; Enloe 1990:160; Moore 1988:114; Nash and Safa 1985; Fernández-Kelly 1984, 1983; Fuentes and Ehrenreich 1983). This suggests there are structurally similar patterns for recruiting women to the workplace in both developed and developing economies. In Mexico, women’s employment in *maquila* wage work is seen by most analysts through the lens of exploitation and marginalization.

In her classic study of *maquiladoras*, Patricia Fernández-Kelly takes the position that multinational export processing intensifies and exploits gendered inequalities by taking advantage of the preexisting inequalities in divisions of labor (Fernández-Kelly 1983). As a gendered labor force, women are exploited by capitalist relations of

²⁶ Advances in technologies and communication make flexible production possible as corporations move from one country to another, setting up shop until some other location becomes more profitable - the equivalent of what David Harvey has termed capitalism’s “spatial fix” with geographical reorganization (Harvey 2000:54). The emergence of unrestricted worldwide capital markets (e.g. stocks, bonds, currencies) makes possible “massive international investment in a climate of minimal government interference.”

production because their marginalization forces them to accept unsatisfying working conditions and low pay due to the lack of other options (Fernández-Kelly 1983). Wives and daughters may be obligated to work under the subordination of patriarchal familial relations (Tiano 1991:79; Lamphere 1987; Fernández-Kelly 1983:174). Despite oppressive work conditions, Fernández-Kelly found women often chose the demanding but low paying jobs to promote the economic well-being of their households. *Maquila* work was often the first paid job for these women, who considered it the best employment alternative available due to steady wages and benefits (Fernández-Kelly 1983:54). Many entered the labor market just as they had ended a relationship, were in severe economic need and therefore “too economically marginal to translate their goals of gender equality and autonomy into socially powerful arrangements” (Fernández-Kelly 1984:194). The downside of the expansion of export processing is while women have more opportunities to be employed, they are employed in unstable jobs and often are without benefits (medical, retirement, social security), or safety regulation of working conditions. Women employed in export processing are often disconnected from union representation that could enhance their bargaining power (Williams, M. 2003:23; Rai 2002; 119-120; Pearson 2000:1).

In contrast, Tiano sees both integrative and exploitative potentialities in *maquila* work. Her contextualization of the women’s lives provides an account of the multiplicity of factors at play that influence the decisions women make regarding their work in the *maquilas*. While *maquila* work allows some women to confront private patriarchy, in making the choice to work a woman must be willing to confront public patriarchy – on the shop floor. Tiano points out that earning an income either in the formal or informal

economy is often the “only way a woman can acquire the financial resources to confront private patriarchy” (Tiano 1994:223). She warns, however, women’s integration and “increasing immersion in capitalist relations of production” is not enough to transform the “patriarchal relations with which capitalism is so closely intertwined” (Tiano 1994:223).

The *maquilas* are exploitive and since women are participating from a disadvantaged position within the labor force, it is unlikely their participation will “make the system more egalitarian” (Tiano 1994:224). “Neither the optimistic propositions of the integration thesis nor the pessimistic scenarios of the exploitative thesis are sufficient to account for women’s creative struggles against the oppressive forces they confront daily” (Tiano 1994:221). Working within the structure of a maquila system which has the potential to both benefit and exploit them, women are actively exercising agency and making choices for public patriarchy over private patriarchy.²⁷ Tiano found that many women recognize non-economic advantages to their work and though most women enter the work force due to economic need, many women in her study stated that they would continue to work even if their circumstances improved. Consistent with the integrationist perspective, personal growth was an important incentive for these women and “[t]hey were willing to “exchange their autonomy in relation to their employers for increased independence and self-confidence in other aspects of their lives” (Tiano 1994:225). In contrast, for women who worked solely out of economic necessity, employment did little to increase their “autonomy over private patriarchy” or personal independence. These

²⁷ Tiano concludes that whether women’s increased participation in *maquila* labor is empowering has to be evaluated individually. The trend for young women to choose to work intermittently, for example, resulted in labor shortages which then influenced companies to relax their recruiting criteria and open the door for older women to enter the *maquila* force (Tiano 1994:228).

women worked for wages to avoid destitution, and the exploitation thesis best explained the conditions of their employment (Tiano 1994:225).

Tiano's attention to women as active agents within the parameters of specific structural and cultural conditions (Tiano 1994:221), is consistent with both Sherry Ortner's practice theory (1984) and Louise Lamphere's emphasis on women as strategists. In her study of textile mill workers in Central Falls, Rhode Island, Lamphere insists that women "must be viewed as active strategists, weighing possibilities and devising means to realize goals, and not as passive acceptors of their situations" (Lamphere 1987:29). Regarding the agency of women within the structural conditions and social relations in the workplace, Tiano writes "[a]lthough these structures constrain women's options, they do not entirely determine them" (Tiano 1994:221). The work of these theorists demonstrate it is important to view women as agents, examine and account for the structural and contextual circumstances in which women can exercise that agency, and recognize when women's agency results in changes in their household status.

Paid Work in the Informal Economy

As described above, productive work in the informal sector may occur either outside or inside the home, and may involve earning an income from the production of commodities and crafts, or their distribution and sale. Within the unregulated informal sector, alternative strategies to formal wage work can include petty commerce on the streets, domestic work as servants, providing services, subcontracted assembly work, and craft and commodity production. These forms of work are often characterized by a "reliance on self-employment, unpaid family labor, or wage labor below the official minimum with no security protection" (Babb 1997:9; Novelo 1993:68; Wilkinson-Weber

1999). By 1995, 42% of the female labor force was disproportionately concentrated within Mexico's informal sector (Chant 2003:218 citing Secretaría de Gobernación 1996:27-8). Numerous analysts emphasize participation in the informal sector as an individual or "collective survival strategy" in the face of growing poverty, but one that is exploitative relative to the formal sector and lacks the promise of economic accumulation (Grasmuck and Espinal 2000:234; Nash 1993; Benería and Roldán 1987; Tinker 1990).

Income Earning in the Informal Economy

Within informal economy work outside the home, women are often resorting to what June Nash calls "self-created jobs" (Nash 1990:350) as in the case of entrepreneurial market women (Seligmann 2001; Babb 1997, 1989; Nelson 1992; Ehlers 1990; Bunster and Chaney 1988) and self-employed service providers such as healers (*curanderas*), beauticians, and seamstresses. Women also earn income in the informal economy as either "live-in" or day work domestic workers (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Romero 1992). The "personalistic relationships" that can develop between domestic workers and their employers often rely upon emotional resources to mask the intersection of power inequities resulting from the differentiating effects of class, gender, and race, which hold the possibilities for exploitation and dependence (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Romero 1992; Rollins 1985). One common exploitative practice is to deduct food, board, and clothing expenses, further reducing the low income received by domestics.

Responding to the economic crisis of 1985, many Guatemalan women studied by Tracy Ehlers left home-based independent production of textiles to enter the market trade, resulting in a competitive and overcrowded local commerce sector (Ehlers

1990:48). Together with other theorists, Ehlers attributes the predominance of women in informal productive work to an assumed complementary “fit” between women’s productive work and their domestic “reproductive” responsibilities (Seligmann 2001:12; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994:12; Ehlers 1990:109). Rather than “compartmentalizing” domestic and market tasks, or subsuming one directly under the other owing to similarities between the two, Florence Babb demonstrates how the productive and reproductive work roles of Andean market women in Huarez, Peru are dynamic and integrated social processes that are “fundamentally linked” (Babb 1989). Studies of market women and street vendors document that some produce goods at home to sell on the street such as clothing, baskets, textiles, food and snack items, condiments, and specialized fermented drinks. Others depend upon middlemen for goods such as food staples, fruits, vegetables, and breads purchased in bulk and then sold at a higher price (Babb 1989; Ehlers 1990; Seligmann 2001). Babb argues that because the work market women do to transport, process, and prepare products for sale adds value to the products they sell, it is clearly productive work (Babb 1989:125). Nonetheless, operating as petty commodity producers and sellers, market women are often limited in their ability to accumulate capital by their reliance upon suppliers. They often find themselves working as dependent commission sellers, vulnerable to becoming “wage slaves” by virtue of the credit they owe to wholesalers (Babb 1989:44).

Nancy Nelson offers an alternative perspective in which she delineates how street vendors in Lima, Peru are able to “gain certain economic advantages” through their work in the informal sector. In her analysis of numerous cases, Nelson reveals that street vendors are not always victims of economic pressures but instead, are making deliberate

decisions in the interest of appropriating the full value of their labor to themselves and reducing market expenses (Nelson 1992:9). Advantages realized through informal work include expanded work options, having more control over one's labor and its returns, and in some cases, the potential for a better income and the increased potential to accumulate capital by avoiding paying rent or taxes (Nelson 1992:9). Among the vendors Nelson interviewed, there was a high variability in incomes owing not only to the kinds of goods they sold (e.g. electronics, used books, jewelry, trinkets), but also their varying circumstances and degree of access to a "strategic vending site and a license" (Nelson 1992:263-264).

Both the marginalization and integration perspective inform an understanding of the nature of women's productive work in the analysis of market work. In Guatemala, Ehlers found women are marginalized to the lowest levels of internal marketing, where they have little opportunity for the accumulation of capital. Without capital, women are unable to enter more prosperous commercial transport and large-scale trade systems (Ehlers 1990:48). Ehlers attributes women's marginalization to the gender-based expectations of women's traditional roles, which limit their productive work to either the home or the marketplace (Ehlers 1990:2). The market women who produce what they sell have the advantage of controlling their supply of goods relative to those who have to depend upon a middleman. As discussed above, these women are marginalized by their reliance upon suppliers. In those contexts where vending and certain service sector jobs offer work options and positive advantages which can enhance vendors' potential to control their work conditions and increase their income, productive work is more in line with the integrationist position.

Productive Work for Wages within the Home

One recurring theme in the literature is that women choose to do productive work in the home because due to its compatibility with their roles as wives and mothers (Benería and Roldán 1987:149; Wilkinson-Weber 1999; Prügl 1996a; Tinker 1990; Mies 1988; Babb 1989). Theorists in Latin America and beyond, who focus on the connections and fluidity between women's reproductive work within the home and their productive work for income, emphasize that women's increased participation in productive work does not always necessitate a separation between home and workplace (Wilkinsen-Weber 1999; Prügl 1996a; Mies 1988; Benería and Roldán 1987; Moore 1985:85).

In their study of industrial subcontract homeworkers in Mexico City, Lourdes Benería and Martha Roldán focused on the active recruitment of Mexico City women into low paid factory piecework, assembling such things as toys, electronic parts, and plastic goods (Benería and Roldán 1987:22).²⁸ While the work is generally unskilled and requires no start-up expenses, it is labor-intensive. Diminishing household funds and women's willingness to work for low wages and accept intermittent work has resulted in a "growing concentration" of women in subcontracting within the informal sector (Benería and Roldán 1987). Ehlers observed the rise in a similar form of "debt removal contract labor" among the Guatemalan women she studied, who were unable to develop reliable cottage industries to replace the declining traditional production of traditional textiles in the town of San Pedro Sacatepéquez (Ehlers 1990:109).

²⁸ For examples of home-based subcontract work outside of Latin America, see Wilkinson-Weber (1999), Prügl (1996a), and Mies (1988).

In addition to assembly, another aspect of home-based piecework is the segmentation of tasks in the completion of finished products. Similar to the women in Benería and Roldán's study of home-based workers in Mexico City, Marta Turok found that families working in artisanal commodity production often sold their unfinished production to other small capitalist workshops. Doing piecework, they were only able to earn the lowest prices, as they were transferring their earnings to those who did the finishing work and sold the commodities (Turok 1988:112).

Elisabeth Prügl's findings concur that the widespread practice of piecework systems of production among Yucatan weavers, Chiapas potters, and Ecuadorian knitters result in similar alienating and disempowering effects (Prügl 1996a). Often sporadically employed and without access to regular wages or worker benefits, homeworkers earning wages through either subcontracted factory work or artisan piecework experience the double-edge of the informal sector. Because they are selling their labor cheaply without accessing a reasonable portion of the income derived from their labor, subcontracted homeworkers are often the most vulnerable and exploited among home-based workers within informal economy work. Additionally, they are "precariously dependent" upon a jobber or middleman who acts as the link between the informal and often illicit underground sector and the factory within the formal sector (Benería and Roldán 1987:35, 64). Subcontracted homework tends to be both marginalizing and exploitative due to the low pay and the lack of control workers have over the terms of their work.

In Mata Ortiz there are households in which men, women, and children sell formed blank pots which are left unfired for other potters to paint. Producing paint or sanding other people's pots are additional segmented tasks. As their productive work

consists of atomized or segmented tasks which are hidden within the larger production process, they experience the same kind of alienation from their labor and its returns as the women who work for subcontracted factory wages within the informal sector.

Income Earned through Independent Production in the Home

The third literature dealing with the informal economy addresses home-based independent producers who earn income producing various commodities which they sell. Within this body of literature, I am specifically interested in studies addressing women as artists (Greenfield 2004; Salvador 2003, 1976; Price 2003; Wasserspring 2000; Grasmuck and Espinal 2000; Grimes and Milgram 2000; Field 1999; Novelo 1993; Babcock 1993; Nash 1993; Stephen 1991; Turok 1988). The women I worked with in Mata Ortiz clearly fit within this category. It is noteworthy that many of these women also engage in marketing, trading, petty commerce, and providing services such as food preparation or sewing in combination with their pottery work.

Barbara Babcock's work with Pueblo women potters, and specifically with Helen Cordero, is unique among studies of women as artists in that she provides an analysis of both gender and empowerment through artistic work. Through numerous articles and books, Babcock documents Cordero's life as a woman artist within a mixed-gender tradition whose independent artistic expression enabled her to gain control over economic resources while maintaining control over the production and marketing of her art. Babcock writes that because of the market acceptance and widespread popularity of her distinct signature storytellers, Cordero "realized a very nontraditional career and sense of self" (Babcock 1993:225). Cordero not only empowered herself, but ignited an aesthetic tradition within her own and other Pueblo communities.

Through traditional Pueblo women's work in pottery, Cordero has "rewritten the traditional Pueblo women's script" inasmuch as other Pueblo women have since created their own interpretations of clay figures depicting humans in various roles and activities (Babcock 1993:224). "But more than simply reshaping traditional roles, pottery making has enabled Pueblo women who were "muted" and discouraged from putting themselves forward to be articulate and to call attention to themselves" (Babcock 1993:225). When men challenged the women's right to demonstrate and exhibit their pottery and attempted to disrupt the sale of the storytellers, the women prevailed. Babcock's work is informative for my own because of the ways in which she presents the "political, economic as well as aesthetic consequences in present-day Pueblo life" that have resulted from these women asserting and maintaining their right to make and sell their pottery (Babcock 1993:206).

Les Field's study of potters in the Nicaraguan community of San Juan de Oriente²⁹ offers a counter-example to Cordero's experience. The bulk of production in San Juan took place within a mixed-gender cooperative organized in 1978 by the Ministry of Culture on the heels of the Sandinista triumph (Field 1999:88-89). Field describes that before the Co-op, women produced pottery in their homes as another task among many in their daily domestic work (Field 1999:137-138). However, once men were involved in pottery making within the Co-op setting, women were marginalized to less creative and less interesting production tasks and prevented from learning to make the more prestigious "*vasos maya*" pottery.

²⁹ Field also worked with *cerámica negra* women in the towns of Jinotega and Matagalpa; however, I am limiting this discussion to the women involved in the Co-op in San Juan.

Field attributed this gendered division of labor to “a preexisting structure of discrimination against women built into the foundations of the “technical advance” of ceramics production in San Juan” (Field 1999:137-139). The Co-op offered women “opportunities to learn advanced production techniques and technologies and the possibility of economic empowerment within their families through the wages they earned” (Field 1999:156-157). It also provided a space in which women had opportunities to challenge and confront the power of the men (Field 1999:157).

As I find in Mata Ortiz, the empowering effects of their labor participation are not shared equally by all women in San Juan. Field presents the stories of seven women in the Co-op, to give voice to their various experiences through his descriptions of their individual and disparate histories as these developed over the years of political upheaval in Nicaragua. His emphasis is on the kinds of information that came out in his discussions with the women regarding power and oppression and empowerment (Field 1999:143-145, 157). Field tells us that the main area of “de facto inequality in the Co-op is the refusal to recognize women’s creative capacities,” both by the women who were unwilling to assert their voice and men’s inability to “see” this inequality (Field 1999:144). Women described how they were “subtly discouraged” from developing the skills that would allow them to gain control over the process of producing the more prestigious “*vasos mayas*” (Field 1999:141). Despite the “male only” work areas, (e.g. the *vaso maya* design and production table) heavy work tasks such as loading the pottery into kilns, fueling the kilns, and mixing the clay were not off limits to women (Field 1999:143).

Eventually, through struggle and conflict, certain women challenged the status quo and asserted their right to learn. By the early 1990s, production in the Co-op had dropped off and two of the Co-op women had pioneered a new kind of domestic production influenced by the techniques and technologies of the Co-op that spread through the community (Field 1999:152). In time, through their earlier experiences in the Co-op, the women came to expect more for their lives. In Field's assessment, none of the women he had spoken with "experienced a reassertion or strengthening of patriarchal family relations or male control over ceramics production" (Field 1999:156). Field concludes that "[t]he processes of learning and struggling in the workplace, especially as the ceramics production workplace has extended into the home during the past ten years, thus shaped the ways these women have navigated and conceptualized the contradictions and limitations of domestic life" (Field 1999:157).

In the case of the San Juaneros, it was the Co-op that provided a space in which the women "shaped a complex understanding of themselves, their creativity, and the range of choices available to them," making clear the need for an analysis of these women that "combines the vector of gender with other identity factors" (Field 1999:164). The connection between Field's study and my own in Mata Ortiz is the potentially marginalizing effect of women being denied access to learning and acquiring the skills necessary to gain control over the production process. The agency on the part of the women who confronted the power of male dominance in the Co-op and did learn how to make the more desirable and prestigious pottery, supports my argument regarding the critical link between gaining control over the production process and growing empowerment.

In her article, “Kuna Women’s Arts, Molas, Meaning, and Markets,” Mari Lyn Salvador describes how the restructuring of Panama’s economy has resulted in a loss of jobs for many men, and women have responded by “expanding their strategies for marketing their artwork” (Salvador 2003:67). Salvador makes it clear that through their economic contributions to their households and communities, women are moving from a marginalized position to one which enhances their status within the Kuna political economy. Kuna women are “currently raising issues regarding an increased participation in the decision-making process and are expressing their desire to gain a stronger voice in politics” (Salvador 2003:70). As discussed above, Sally Price correlates certain empowering aspects of Maroon women’s artistic work with transformations of traditional gender constructs (Price 2003:31). A number of the collected essays in Kimberly Grimes and Lynne Milgram’s work on artisans and cooperatives argue that despite the economic risks of artisan work, artisan production offers distinct advantages over multinational factory work and is more likely to lead to self-reliance and independence (Grimes and Milgram 2000:5).

Like the women in the studies by Salvador, Price, and Field, women in Mata Ortiz enter their home-based production of pottery in response to pressures resulting from economic decline and crisis. All three studies link women’s increased economic activity and labor force participation to shifts in the wider political economy. These authors also account for historical contingencies and sociocultural processes in their analyses of the effects of gender transformations on expanding possibilities for women to strengthen their participation in wider economic and political space. Though Babcock’s Pueblo example fits well with the integration perspective, she also illustrates a situation in which

men challenge women's traditional control over pottery production by attempting to take over and control the marketing system.

June Nash documents a similar case of men attempting to control pottery making, distribution, and sales when their control over women's earnings from their pottery was challenged by women's cooperatives taking over the commercialization of pottery (Nash 1993:16-17). Despite the severity of the repressive response documented in 1993,³⁰ by 2001 Nash reports that women in Amatenango del Valle were using political organization, cooperatives, and gathering collectively as women to resist the sexual division of labor biased in favor of men (Nash 2001).

Field's analysis of the Nicaraguan case indicates that when women do not have access to learning and developing the skills which would allow them to become competent and gain control over the process of artisan production, the potential for marginalization increases. The women in Nicaragua were making pottery according to the cooperative's specifications and requirements, while production involving independent expression was limited to the men. In contrast, the possibilities exist for both men and women in Mata Ortiz to access skills and develop the competence needed to gain control over their production, either as independent producers or in cooperation with others.

I found that women potters in Mata Ortiz can indeed access capital while working in the home and are not necessarily disempowered, as has been described for many

³⁰ Due to their increased contributions to their household economies through the sale of their pottery, women in Amatenango del Valle, Chiapas experienced increased autonomy. June Nash documents that their increased autonomy did not go unchallenged. Perceived as a challenge to male authority serious enough to evoke violence and murder, the repressive response resulted in a woman in a leadership position being killed (Nash 1993:16).

women involved in home-based work (Mies 1988, Benería and Roldán 1987; Wilkinsen-Weber 1999; Prügl 1996a). Within the literature on women as artists, the situation in Mata Ortiz is unique in that women can be innovators, and be empowered in this mixed-gender artistic community. The fact that women are able to be independent artists is another contributing factor to the significance of the art system in Mata Ortiz in which women have the opportunity and potential for empowerment.

Impact of Income and Wage Labor on Women in Families

I examine the literature dealing with the impact of income earning upon women in families in order to build a framework that shifts the focus to the impact of women's productive work on relationships within their families, and the potential to raise their status and empower women within their households. This literature deals more specifically with the concept of empowerment than the literature on women in work in general. It is used more liberally to provide a framework more conducive to a closer examination of the production process for potters, in order to understand what the sources of that empowerment might be for various women in this study.

There are a number of theorists who focus on the impact of women's increased labor participation and income generation on their position within their families, and ask under what conditions these have the potential to translate into growing empowerment (Smith, Troutner, and Hunefeldt 2004; Chant and Craske 2003; Tiano 1994; Nash 1993; Benería and Roldán 1987). Rae Lesser Blumberg concludes the "single most important (although not the only) factor affecting the degree of gender equality" is the extent to which women have control of resources such as income or property (Blumberg 1995a:3; Chant 2003; Tiano 1994; Benería and Roldán 1987). She adds that regardless of how

little or how much women are earning, or however “stressful the conditions under which it is generated,” the key factor is “to the extent that women control that income it typically has multiple positive consequences, starting with the women’s greater self-esteem and stronger voice in household decision making” (Blumberg 1995a:3).

Lourdes Benería and Martha Roldán found women’s contributions to their family income offered the potential for increased power over household decision making and for the renegotiation of gender relations (Benería and Roldán 1987:165). However, they stressed that male control over female income continued in varying degrees. None of the women they interviewed had complete control over household money and all depended at least in part upon male contributions to the household budget (1987:161). So while “their work did impart a degree of independence leading to a more egalitarian power balance in their households,” it was not sufficient to “transcend the patriarchal relations structuring their households,” (Tiano 1994: citing Benería and Roldán 1987:149).

Home-based income generation is not without its contradictions. Benería and Roldán also acknowledged that subcontracted work reconciles the definition of “proper” motherhood with paid work inside the home and defies any criticism of “abandoning” their children for the “selfish reasons” of working outside the home. Nonetheless, many of the women they interviewed expressed feeling ambiguity over the ideological contradictions between their roles as mothers and workers (Benería and Roldán 1987:149). Among the women I interviewed, some spoke of the “competing urgencies” (Hochschild 1989:239) of balancing domestic responsibilities with the pressures of production deadlines necessitated certain compromises (Grasmuck and Espinal

2000:235). One mother of three expressed her contradictory feelings about her pottery work as follows:

Well, it has changed my life a lot because it is much work. When I didn't make *ollas*, I dedicated all of my time to the house and to my children and now – no. What I want to say is that when my children were little, I did not make the pottery. I tended to them better, (I had) their meals on time – when they wanted to eat. And now in order to keep the pottery going, they have to wait a while longer. Well, it is good because I am working. Sometimes though, I am not able to give them much attention ... but if we don't make *ollas* like we do, how are we going to live? (Selena Jiménez, (pseudonym), interview, March 17, 1999)

Even though economic empowerment is sometimes assumed to be “an entry point and a road map towards overall empowerment,” (Burra, Deshmukh-Ranadive and Murthy 2005:161) the literature consistently cautions against assuming a direct correlation between access to money and empowerment (Burra et al. 2005; Smith et al. 2004; Narasimhan 1999; Blumberg 1995a). Hence, the outcome in each case must be evaluated relative to the articulation between the existing gender relations and structural conditions in which women “operate when they formulate their lines of action” (Tiano 1994:221).

Feminist research in line with Helen Safa's Caribbean work documents that workforce participation has been associated with rising female autonomy, increased capacity for negotiation between men and women, and female resistance to patterns of patriarchal authority (González de la Roche 2003:xix; Safa 1995:76; Blumberg 1995a, Tiano 1994, Chant and Craske 2003 and Burra et al. 2005). One trajectory of difference lies in whether individual women view these empowering effects as a direct benefit to themselves or to their families. Women in Mata Ortiz continue to consider their roles as wives and mothers to be organizing principles in their lives (Garcia, B. 2000:279). The women I met in Mata Ortiz are confident that their work is essential to the survival and

the well-being of their families. Their views are consistent with the observation that “a growing number of Latin American women see themselves as indispensable providers or co-providers” in their households (González de la Roche 2003:xix). However, while their productive labor in pottery is bringing money into their households, not all women potters in Mata Ortiz maintain complete or even partial control over that income.

Compared to the more individualized notion of empowerment prevalent in the United States, it may seem these women are more interested in empowering their families over advancing their own self-interests, but these often encompass (but are not necessarily limited to), their concern for the well-being of their families. Within the literature there is an important discussion on how the dominance of two key symbols of the South – the gaze of machismo and the gaze of motherhood – contribute to and shape Northern constructions of Latin American women. These are often used as a basis for comparison of Latin American women’s lives and politics with those of women in the North. One negative implication is that Latin American women are perceived as disabled by their privileging motherhood over other interests, and are in need of being enabled (Phillips 1995:23-27).

Earlier in this chapter I related how women spoke of the empowering aspects of their work in pottery in terms of contributing to the economic well-being of their families. I am cautious in describing women’s empowerment solely in terms of their interests as mothers and wives as this aligns with and contributes to an essentializing stereotype of *abnegada* (self-sacrificing). I do not think this provides a complete picture of the women’s attitudes and perceptions of what they are doing. The situation is

complex and it is not an “either/or” situation. Women’s lives are fluid and so are their interests, changing over time and throughout their lives.

Empowerment cannot be assumed to be egalitarian in its effects; instead, empowerment is often partial and selective in its early stages (Smith et al. 2004:10). Some households have benefited more than others.³¹ Hence, empowerment as either capacitating or as a “patronizing fix” cannot be assumed to be a cure-all for women’s inequity. Numerous studies have focused on the ways women’s increased access to economic resources has produced the unexpected effects of disempowering women (Burra et al. 2005; Smith et al. 2004:5; Narasimhan 1999). In other instances, the results are mixed, showing that women’s increased economic activity can be either empowering or disempowering (Field 1999; Nash 1993; Stephen 1991; Babb 1989; Ehlers 1990). In some cases, the socioeconomic gains achieved by women through earning income “are overshadowed by exploitative practices” (Zaman 1999:169).

The literature evaluating women’s micro-enterprise and credit programs highlights the ways in which women’s increased labor force participation and wage earning can be disempowering. Some cautionary indicators that inform the situation in Mata Ortiz include the tendency for women to be limited to “low investment or low-return activities” that do not empower them (Mayoux 2001). Other potentially disempowering factors arise when the number of women competing for shares of the same narrow market is increased or when a household comes to rely exclusively on the woman’s income, causing her to work even harder and longer. Benería and Roldán

³¹ This point is important in light of how certain families have benefited from the pottery industry over others, and of the increasing emergence of signs of internal differentiation based on wealth among the residents of Mata Ortiz.

(1987) and Blumberg (1995a) caution, without control of their income, the possibility exists for the monies women earn to go exclusively to household expenditures, while the males' income is free to be utilized for their own personal expenditures at their own discretion.

Ideological norms and cultural values also operate to constrain behaviors and expectations of women and other subordinate groups. Culturally prevalent ideologies that define women primarily in terms of their reproductive roles can act autonomously to blunt the impact of women's increased economic power (Smith, et al. 2004:241; Benería and Roldán 1987; Fernández-Kelly 1983, 1984; Tiano 1994). A woman may be working not out of her own desire, but in response to a household strategy to maximize income; the income women earn may be regulated according to patriarchal household norms (Tiano 1994:53; Bennholdt-Thomsen 1988:161). When women's artistic work reifies their roles as wives, mothers, and daughters, it potentially "deepens women's subordination to patriarchal figures" in the household and the workplace," or in the case of Mata Ortiz, in the marketplace (Tiano 1994:222).

My argument is consistent with the integrationist perspective in that I assert women benefit from their participation in pottery production because it increases their economic and social well-being. However, like Tiano and Field, I recognize the potential for marginalization and exploitation persists because women must still deal with the effects, however subtle or overt, of preexisting patriarchal relations within their homes, community, and the market (Tiano 1994:222; Field 1999:136;). As noted by Cathy A. Rakowski, "economic change may be linked ... to greater autonomy and decision-making power within the household and community" or it "may contribute to greater inequality

and subordination” (Rakowski 1995:287). The outcome is dependent upon the particular conditions and ways in which gender and economic change intersect in the lives of individual women. Therefore, depending upon the varying circumstances in women’s lives (such as overt patriarchy in the home or not earning adequate income), there are some women who are not benefiting from their pottery participation.

Aesthetics, Empowerment, and Markets

Within the literature addressing market and art worlds, I address my inquiry to the triangulated relationship between potters’ artistic and economic intentions, buyers’ expectations and demands, and the ongoing, dynamic aesthetic standards and principles prevailing within this artist community. Many of the women potters introduced in this dissertation have achieved empowerment and economic success because of their effective interactions within the market. They actively respond to both client tastes and opportunities that allow them to shape rather than pass up opportunities to expand their markets. A broad literature concerns the influence of clients’ tastes, their impact on art forms, and the way artists try to understand what patrons and potential buyers like and are willing to buy (Casteñeda 2005, 1995; Abbing 2002; Jules-Rosette 1984; Salvador 1978; Graburn 1976). This literature is critical to this dissertation for what it brings to the question of whether women artists shape their markets or whether their artistic production is dominated by market forces. My recognition of the value of “culture work” as a key element in potters’ engagement with their markets (Wherry 2008:9) relies in part upon the work of earlier theorists who explored the significance of artists’ performance of authenticity when they demonstrate their art, as well as when they represent themselves

in exhibition (Little 2004; Chibnik 2003; Salvador 1997; Karp and Lavine 1991; Graburn 1976).

More recently, a body of literature has emerged which specifically addresses the empowering dimensions of artists' agency in securing their place in local and transcultural market systems (Wherry 2008; Casteñeda 2005; Little 2004; Chibnik 2003; Grimes and Milgram 2000; Steiner 1994). The potters in Mata Ortiz as well as their consumers are all participants in "transnational networks" of cultural production and consumption within a global ethnic art market which involves and indeed relies upon the flow of "persons, things, values, signs and information" (Kearney 1996:123-24; see also Appadurai 1996). The local market relies heavily on tourists and serious collectors as well as art intermediaries such as museum professionals, gallery owners, commercial buyers, and traders who make the trip to the village to buy directly from the potters. Museum professionals come seeking pottery for specific exhibits or to expand museum collections. Traders, locally referred to as *comerciantes*, and buyers come from such varied locations as France, Switzerland, Japan, Mexico and the United States.

As documented within many studies of Mexican artistic communities, (Greenfield 2004; Chibnik 2003; Wasserspring 2000; Barbash 1993; Novelo 1993; LaDuke 1992; Turok 1988), the artist's home is the primary local marketing venue. Within the village, potters have the advantage of selling directly to tourists and collectors; however, these prices are still well below what the pottery sells for in the United States. In the last ten years, potters have begun to market through numerous galleries opened within potters' homes, a community marketing group, *Artisanos Unidos de Mata Ortiz*, housed in the historic railroad station, and in the *Centro de Acopio* operated by the women's micro-

enterprise group, *Grupo Pearson*.³² I found potters actively pursuing strategies to market pottery, their own and others', in the United States without middlemen; however, their efforts were hindered by border policies and customs requirements. Factors of nationality, class, contacts, and familiarity with market practices or the lack thereof crosscut their efforts as well. However, many male and female potters are actively increasing their efforts to locate new markets by traveling to tourist and urban areas within Mexico.

Traders, gallery owners, collectors, and museum professionals are instrumental in supporting the artistic careers of male and female potters, by creating marketing and exhibition contexts and in creating and increasing market value for the pottery. In particular, exhibitions are critical for validating the pottery as both authentic ethnographic material and in creating its meaning as legitimate art. I relied upon the existing literature documenting the promotion, exhibition, and marketing of Mata Ortiz pottery to explore the critical roles played by art intermediaries (Gilbert 2000, 1999, 1995; Lowell et al. 1999; MacCallum 1994, 1979; Parks 1993). Other published documentation consists largely of photographic essays, exhibit catalogues (Gilbert 2000; 1999; 1995; *Artes de México* 1999; Smith 1997; Cahill 1993), and videos (Gilbert 2000; Goebel 1997; Goffin 1994; Price 1992). Collectively, these play a major role in educating the public as well as in cultivating a group of cognoscenti around the pottery. Male potters often dominate within this literature, usually written by dealers and collectors for specific audiences in the art and market worlds.

³² This group was also known as *El Grupo de Cinquenta Dos Mujeres*. A second group, *Grupo Paquimé* formed a few months later.

Among the few studies that have focused attention on the women potters in Mata Ortíz, (Barta 2003; Estes 2003; Hughes 2001; Williams 1993), Eli Bartra's essay provides a brief but accurate account of the organization of two alternative marketing micro-enterprise groups in May of 1997 by an outside male developer (Bartra 2003:110, 114-15). Modeled on a financial self-sustainability paradigm, the primary short term objective for both *Grupo Pearson* and *Grupo Paquimé* was to provide reliable incomes by marketing the women's pottery through a "company" comprised of women already involved in the existing pottery industry. The long term objective was to encourage and assist the formation of micro-enterprises which would eventually be individually owned and managed by the women. Start-up funds were secured through a loan made to the women as a corporate group from the *Fondo Nacional de Apoyo para las Empresas de Solidaridad* (FONAES).³³

There are two publications specifically addressing the women's micro-enterprise projects. The first focuses on the identity of the women potters in *Grupo Pearson* as rural housewives who possessed a "natural talent" to make pottery. It was compiled as a catalog to accompany exhibits and aid in promoting the women's group (FONAES 1997). The second, an essay by Eli Bartra, provides a gendered analysis of how the particular historical and socioeconomic context shapes women's working conditions and artistic production (Bartra 2003:7). While Bartra asserts that "[m]embership in the Pearson or Paquimé Group alters gender roles" in pottery production, it is unclear just how. Bartra concurs with my review of the literature on Mata Ortíz that there is a tendency to assign women secondary roles. Ultimately, these are her findings as well

³³ FONAES: National Fund for Support of Solidarity Businesses

(Bartra 2002:108). I find this is not the case and indeed, this is the central premise of the argument I present in this dissertation. I argue that while both men and women strive to improve their household income through their artistic work, women's aesthetic and labor contributions have been substantial from the beginning. The women I met in Mata Ortiz were not passive participants in the endeavor, but are fully engaged, active agents (see Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007; Field 1999; Tiano 1994). While much of Bartra's work is consistent with my own findings, there are some fundamental differences in how we view the impact of outside intervention and the implications of women's pottery production on the transformation of gender relations. I will address these more extensively in chapter six, where I focus more specifically on the market.

Quetzil Casteñeda argues for a thorough analysis of the "history of anthropological intervention and interaction with anthropologists" (Casteñeda 2005:93) which "contextualizes and frames the setting" and thus, shapes the socio-economic structures in which artisan markets emerge. From the initial excavations through the nascent development of the pottery tradition, the interests and practices of anthropologists in both Mexico and the United States have been involved in constructing both popular and scholarly discourse about Casas Grandes and Mata Ortiz. Les Field duly notes that anthropological practices of ethnography and textual analysis are every bit as effective as gallery exhibition and museum curation in adding value to objects by way of certification, legitimization, and authentication (Field 2009:517). Recent theoretical shifts in the anthropology of art have advanced recognition of the crucial links between anthropological analyses and issues of cultural politics, discourse, and authenticity in the representation of artisans and their work (Casteñeda 2000; Marcus and Myers 1995:34;

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1992). Field takes this discussion further to suggest that anthropologists, whose work historically has had “particular relevance for certain kinds of authenticities” such as “ethnographic authenticity and authentic high-end art,” will shift as the artisans and artists they work with “migrate ... into the production of the sorts of commodities” for which “engineered and brand-name forms of authenticity” is more applicable (Field 2009:517). Field emphasizes that as the “intent and effects of anthropology” become more involved in these more diverse commodities, the roles anthropologists share with other experts within “a complex, multi-faceted global value-creating and maintaining system” will bring the boundaries of so-called “pure” and “applied” research into question, as well as our “so-called” objectivity (Field 2009:517).

Interactions with art intermediaries extend the concept of social capital beyond the “capacity to mobilize scarce resources based on one’s social relationships” (Wherry 2008:8), to include those essential to market success and access to symbolic capital by way of association with academic and cultural institutions. Potters are aware that certain traders and collectors are better connected than others to galleries and museums, and they seek alignments with these individuals and institutions. Access to exhibition venues, either in galleries or museums, is instrumental in establishing a reputation as an artist rather than a craftsperson (Parezo 1990; Wade 1986). For the reasons discussed above, the role of art intermediaries is of interest to me as they are links in what Renato Rosaldo has characterized as a “syntagmatic chain that extends from the creations to the artist’s studio to the marketplace of private galleries” (Rosaldo 1995:xiii). Information is conveyed along this chain regarding the identity of the maker, the culture of origin, and the place of manufacture with clear intent to enhance the value of the pottery in the

economic exchange (Parezo 1990:563-564). Value is also created within the exchange itself, negotiated by potters who exercise the agency to procure a good price from their consumers (Parezo 1990:565). As a result of economic exchange, the object becomes a commodity with value (Appadurai 1986:3).

Mata Ortíz pottery is a “commodity by destination”³⁴ (Appadurai 1986:16 citing Maquet 1971) as it is produced with clear intention for exchange in the marketplace. The success of the Mata Ortíz market is due in part to the development of the Native American art market and the desire for things handmade and native-made by artists who are members of indigenous communities, or in the very least are members of “authentic” communities (Bernstein 1993:262-263; Wade 1985). This has certainly been the case in the market for Southwest Pueblo pottery where authenticity has long been linked to the value of the object.

Like the Pisté Maya art world documented and analyzed by Quetzil Casteñeda, Mata Ortíz pottery “is embedded within the context of the diverse national, regional, indigenous, folk and popular arts of México” (Casteñeda 2005:103). Mata Ortíz pottery, however, is unique among other Mexican ceramic traditions in that it is also embedded within the Southwest Pueblo market of the United States. It is sold in galleries specializing in Pueblo pottery which extend the market as far away as the eastern United States, Tokyo, and Paris. Mata Ortíz potters are among the select few Mexican ethnic art producers whose work spans the spectrum of art categories from tourist art to fine art.

³⁴ The processes by which objects become commodities, particularly those objects produced by indigenous people or Fourth World societies (Graburn 1976) have been delineated by Jacques Maquet as one of the following: 1) by destination; 2) through metamorphosis; 3.) by diversion; or 4.) through retrieval (Appadurai 1986:16 citing Maquet 1971). Within this model, Mata Ortíz pottery is a “commodity by destination” as it is produced with clear intention for exchange in the marketplace.

Another significant factor distinguishing Mata Ortiz from other artistic communities in Mexico includes its proximity to the southwestern region of the United States, where the largest concentration of markets for this pottery is located. Proximity to this market accounts in part for the number of potters who are consistently invited by traders, gallery owners, and museum professionals to attend exhibitions and give demonstrations in the United States. In the past, this involved a fairly small and select group of potters. More recently, these venues have expanded to include more of the younger, lesser known potters – many of whom are women. As their artistic and economic activity has extended to high-end global art markets, these potters have expanded their opportunities to accrue levels of economic, social, and symbolic capital which are somewhat exceptional when compared to those of other artistic communities in Mexico. Many compete internationally and earn recognition beyond what would be available to them if they were limited to the Casas Grandes region.

To summarize the overall argument I have made in the previous three sections, I take a theoretically innovative approach, combining theories from art and anthropology, and specifically ethnoaesthetics, with feminist theories of women and work in order to build a framework which enables me to examine the processes of women's growing empowerment. The ethnoaesthetic literature provides a window to women's agency through the aesthetic choices they make in creating their art, which contribute to the prevailing aesthetic system of this artistic community. The feminist literature addressing women and work provides a basis for analyzing women's productive work in the home. This leads to a better understanding of not only women's agency, but the ways in which the actual process of empowerment is enacted by individuals. The four criteria I

developed by way of a synthesis of the literature on women and work and women as artists provide the lenses through which I examine and evaluate how women may be empowered through their productive artistic work.

Chapter Summaries

I establish the historical and political conditions, events, and specific contingencies comprising the political economy in which the contemporary pottery industry arose in chapter two. Here I introduce the originator, Juan Quezada and three of his initial and most prominent female students. I then introduce an additional nine women, more or less in the order they entered the pottery tradition. By briefly sketching the role each plays within the history and development of the pottery tradition, I provide portraits which describe these people, how they became involved in pottery, and my relationships with them.

In chapter three, I present the general context of my field experience and describe the various ethnographic methods I used to meet and select the women I interviewed, how I formulated my research questions and interview guides, and conducted these interviews. Observations of women as teachers and students, joined with my own experience of learning to make pottery, presented excellent opportunities for me to access the local criteria of evaluation and judgment. I also provide general information about the community, including an analysis of changes within the political economy due to growth resulting from the influx of income. The most significant shift has been the growing importance of pottery sales to the maintenance of households in the village. This study captures a specific period of time in the history of the pottery tradition in Mata Ortiz and offers a particular view of the lives of women potters.

In chapter four, I elaborate how women's contributions to the aesthetic complexity of this artistic community serve as a window into their agency and empowerment. Throughout this chapter, I use photographic images of the women's pottery to represent their substantial contributions to the living and dynamic aesthetic tradition as both individual and collaborative artists. These images illustrate their descriptions of the development of their aesthetic judgment and artistic criteria. Five key aesthetic features emerged from conversations I had with them about their artistic work; these are *movimiento* (or movement), complexity, naturalism, filled space, and surface treatment. I delineate contributions made by individual women to each of these five key aesthetic features, first through the work of three of Juan Quezada's female students during the initial years from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s. Next, I extend my analysis to work created by a wider range of women who entered this aesthetic tradition during a later phase of expansion in the pottery industry during the mid-1980s.

In chapter five, I use four production strategies as heuristic devices to describe and differentiate the variability found between and among these women. These include: 1) women working as independent artists; 2) couples who co-produce two styles with separate signatures; 3) couples who co-produce one style with one signature; and, 4) women who co-produce with a family member other than their husbands or partners. Understanding empowerment to be a gradual growing process, I use the following criteria as measures or indices within each of the categories, to examine how their interaction either enhances or precludes women's possibilities for empowerment. These criteria are: 1) learning the skill to make and paint pottery; 2) developing a distinct signature style and attaining recognition within the market and art worlds; 3) gaining control over all or some

important aspects of the productive process; and 4) control over marketing one's pottery and maintaining control over the resulting income.

Chapter six focuses on the market and demonstrates the significance of how aesthetics, production and market interaction work together to move women and men toward growing empowerment. This discussion refers back to artistic criteria, guiding principles, and key aesthetic features as presented in chapter four to discuss the interactions between potters and their audience, (i.e. traders, collectors, and those responsible for organizing exhibits and demonstrations). The impact of client taste on artists' practice and art is imperative within any discussion of artists who produce with specific markets in mind. I address how multiple and shifting meanings of authenticity have guided the ways in which male and female potters in Mata Ortiz have innovated and developed a dynamic system of ethnoaesthetics that is contemporary, yet still connected to the authentic as it is understood relative to the artifacts of Paquimé and to Pueblo pottery of the Southwest United States.

In the seventh and final chapter, I draw conclusions, address the theoretical significance of my findings, and propose directions in which future research might move. I conclude this chapter with an epilogue which describes the kinds of changes that have occurred between my research period and the present. I also provide brief updates on certain individuals and developments within the community, including the increasing importance of international tourism and its impact, both positive and negative, upon the lives of people in Mata Ortiz.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORY OF THE RESEARCH SITE

The contemporary pottery tradition was set in motion by one man, Juan Quezada, who was inspired by the designs and forms of prehistoric ceramics found in and around the ruins at Paquimé. Though the Casas Grandes culture collapsed and archaeological evidence indicates the site was deserted by the 15th century (Dean and Ravesloot 1993:98), local farmers regularly unearth potsherds dating from the Medio period of Paquimé's occupation during the 12th through the 14th centuries (Di Peso et al. 1974:4:14; Dean and Ravesloot 1993:96-98), as well as ceramics from other phases of Casas Grandes and Mimbres cultures that once flourished in this region. Juan Quezada's avid interest in prehistoric ceramics fueled the development of his exceptional artistic talent. In order to understand how the artistic endeavors of one man led to the rise of a "new" pottery tradition that now constitutes a significant portion of the economic base for an entire community, it is essential to analyze the history and local economy that gave rise to it and created the conditions for it to flourish. This historical framework becomes a lens for viewing the antecedent events which contributed to the formation of a political economy largely based on the production of pottery for an outside market. The three central tasks of this chapter are: first, to provide an overview of the regional economic context in which the pottery tradition emerged; second, to describe the role of Juan Quezada in establishing this tradition; and third, to describe the development and enlargement of the pottery community.

Following the historic and economic overview, I describe Juan Quezada's initial involvement in pottery making in a way that challenges the assumption that artists do not

share their knowledge, especially male artists with women artists. Through individual portraits, I will introduce three of his initial female students. As these women began to make pottery soon after Juan, they had significant roles in the early development of the pottery tradition not only as members of his family (two are his sisters), but also as his colleagues in those early years. This situation is unique and perhaps even unprecedented, both for the quality of the ceramics they produce and for the prominent roles these women attained early in the development of this mixed-gender artistic tradition. Following the initial three portraits, I will present nine more women selected from among my interviewees to represent the second and third generations of potters who followed the initial Quezada family network. These women will be discussed sequentially in the order they entered pottery work. This will facilitate an understanding about how the pottery making tradition spread beyond Juan and his personal family network to encompass the majority of households in the community.

The region of northwestern Chihuahua where Mata Ortiz is located experienced four distinct historical periods of economic expansion and contraction over the past 130 years or so. These cycles occurring at the local level reflect in part, responses to economic and political shifts initiated at national and international levels. Important to the following discussion, these also reflect agency as exercised by residents of the village, who while embedded in “a regionally specific set of relations, discourses,” (Alonso 1995:17) acted in ways that account for the distinct development of the community. The first period, an expansion, involved the active pursuit of foreign capital and investment during the Porfiriato years (1877-1910). The industrial push toward modernizing the economy brought new people into the region, many of whom had critical

roles in the development of northwestern Chihuahua's cattle, agriculture, and timber, and railroad industries. A confluence of these events and growth ultimately led to the establishment of the town of Pearson, now known as Juan Mata Ortíz. The next cycle was one of contraction, when the Mexican Revolution disrupted the operation of these industries from 1910 through 1920, causing the first of a series of economic declines the village would experience during the 20th century.

The years following the Revolution brought a significant influx of new families to the community, constituting the third cycle, economic expansion. Agrarian reform resulted in the establishment of an *ejido* system of land tenure in the early 1930s, which extended ranching and agricultural opportunities to a wider sector of the village population. Determined by the finite size of the *ejido*, membership was and still is limited by the availability of a fixed number of seats. Compared to the large scale holdings of the haciendas prior to the revolution, cattle ranching and farming were on a small scale for most households. Residents of Mata Ortíz continued to work in Mormon owned agricultural fields and orchards, work with the railroad, and cross the border to seek wage work in the United States.

The fourth economic cycle, contraction or decline, occurred in the 1960s when the Mata Ortíz railroad repair yard was relocated to Nuevo Casas Grandes (Hernández 2008:23; Parks 1993:90). During these same years, scholarly excavations began at the expansive archaeological site at nearby Paquimé. As the defining archaeological site for pottery making in the region, Paquimé and its satellites yielded the artistic material that has inspired the contemporary production of pottery. Within the context of a declining economy, growing poverty, and a rising interest in Paquimé, the invention of a new

pottery tradition opened up possibilities for economic growth and prosperity. Further discussion of Juan Quezada and his role in the aesthetic development of the pottery tradition will follow.

The region around Paquimé was populated by settlers from southern Mexico during the colonial period, particularly during the mid-18th century. Under a specific program of colonization, settlers were encouraged to form and maintain militarized communities that provided a buffer against attacks from indigenous people, thus constituting a northern “frontier of civilization” (Nugent 1989:208-211). In exchange, *serrano* (people of the mountains, or *sierras*) (Alonso 1995:7; Nugent 1993:33) and *norteño* (northern) communities were awarded corporate land grants.³⁵

By the second half of the Porfiriato, (1877-1910), there were few benefits for the “common, country people” in *serrano* communities of northern Chihuahua (Knight 1986:121) and increasing potential for rural revolt (Lloyd 1988). Alan Knight writes that after the Apaches were subdued in the late 1880s, the new threat to *serrano* and *norteño* communities was the *politicos* from Chihuahua City who represented the growing power of Mexico City, as well as the “generals in gold braid, rail-laying gangs, and uncouth gringo prospectors” (Knight 1986:118). In the 1800s, small scale ranching in *serrano* and *norteño* communities was dominated by large landholding *hacendados* like Luis Terrazas, who held much of the land around what is now Mata Ortíz.

At the end of the 19th century, Terrazas, together with his son-in-law, Enrique

³⁵ In 1778, more than 112,000 hectares were awarded to the communities known today as Casas Grandes, Namiquipa, Cruces, Galeana, and Janos in exchange for the settlers’ commitment to fight Apaches and establish viable agricultural communities. These land grants were 60 times the size of parcels which the Spanish Crown normally granted to communities (Nugent and Alonso 1994:215; see also Nugent 1993:43-45). The grants were awarded through a decree issued by Teodoro de Croix, governor of Internal Provinces of New Spain, on November 15, 1778.

Creel,³⁶ effected a “political hegemony” which was complemented by tremendous economic power, and enabled them to dominate politics, government, and the courts in the state of Chihuahua (Knight 1986:15-16; Nugent 1994:286). Both Terrazas and Creel served as governor-generals of the state prior to the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Likewise, both men supported then-President Porfirio Diaz’s agenda to modernize the economy, secure political stability, promote his vision for a unified Mexico, and foster emergent capitalism in the northern states by opening the way for the infusion of foreign capital from the United States and Europe³⁷ (Katz 1986:28-33). With Creel’s “Municipal Land Law” of 1905, lands deemed municipal holdings were subdivided and sold to those with the ability to pay: wealthy ranchers, merchants, and *foráneos* (foreign outsiders). Often, these sales ignored the rights of the descendants of the original colonial settlers (Lloyd 1988:90-95; Nugent and Alonso 1994:217). The implementation of this law resulted in widespread agrarian dispossession and families lost land they had held for generations, in some cases to wealthy North Americans (Lloyd 1988:97-107).

During these same years, communities of Mormons practicing polygamy migrated to Mexico in response to the Edmunds-Tucker act of 1887, which outlawed polygamy in the United States (Young 1967:1). They settled in the Casas Grandes Valley, establishing farms, fruit orchards, flour and lumber mills, and other enterprises which provided services for their own and neighboring communities. The lumber processed at the sawmill in Colonia Juárez was used in mining and building enterprises in Chihuahua and Sonora and exported to El Paso and beyond (Young 1967:4). The Mormons’ desire

³⁶ Enrique Creel was the son of Ruben Creel, a U.S. Consul.

³⁷ See Friedrich Katz 1986 for discussion of the role of foreign investors and their infusion of capital in Porfirio Diaz’s project to develop the northern states into a showcase for the Porfirian economic miracle.

for religious expression and their expertise in developing agriculture in arid lands complemented the Porfiriato's aim to integrate Mexico into world markets (Young 1967:4). Their enterprises quickly became the source of low wage labor for local people and led to the commercialization of agriculture in the region which Mormons continue to dominate to this day (Knight 1988:52).

During the final years of the Porfiriato, Frederick Stark Pearson, an American engineer, joined with Enrique Creel to purchase three small railroads to create the Mexico Northwestern Railroad (Parks 1993:91; Parks n.d.). In 1907, in his role as President of the new corporation, Pearson purchased 300 hectares located at the southern end of Terrazas' Hacienda de San Diego. The railroad was essential to the growing momentum, both national and international, to develop cattle, agricultural, and timber industries in the northwestern region of Mexico (Parks 1993:84-87). Locally, the railroad crossed the Palanganas River on the land purchased by Pearson, and then headed south to the town of Madera. There it connected with Mexico's main north and south-bound rail lines, thus linking it with Mexico City to the south and Chicago to the north (Ryerson 1994:95).

Proximity to the railroad made the 300 hectares an ideal location for Pearson and his partner Creel to build two sawmills in 1907 to process timber from the nearby Sierra Madre Mountains. The town of Pearson developed around the mills and was established by November of 1909 (Ryerson 1994:95; Parks 1993:91). However, the Revolution (1910-1920) forced Pearson and Creel to close their mills. Since Chihuahua was the site of extensive troop movements and a number of battles, the Revolution also

hampered the operation of the railroads. As a result, the Mexico Northwestern Railroad Company went into receivership in 1912 and Pearson left Mexico (Ryerson 1994:96).³⁸

In the years thereafter, non-Mexican owners were dispossessed altogether and the dominant foreign presence in the area shifted from North American lumber barons to the industrious Mormon agriculturalists, many of whom by this time had become Mexican citizens (Ernestine Hatch, interview, August 15, 1995). The Mormons relied on the railway to transport their produce to North American and Mexican markets. Thus, the railway station in Pearson became a central hub for local social and business activity. The railroad reopened under Mexican ownership and a large railroad repair yard built in the 1920s provided employment for many Pearson men. Only one of the sawmills initially in operation prior to the Revolution reopened and this took nearly sixty years³⁹ (Parks 1993:8; Ryerson 1994:96). The town became prosperous enough to support a hospital, a movie theater, a hotel, and various stores and cantinas (Ernestine Hatch, interview, August 15, 1995; Parks 1993:89).

The parents and grandparents of many current residents migrated to Mata Ortiz in the years following the Revolution. Some came from neighboring communities and others from the ranching and agrarian regions of Zacatecas, Morelos, and Sonora. The Ortiz and Silveira families arrived as early as 1917 from Zacatecas. The Quezadas came from Tutuaca in 1941, and the Moras arrived in 1948 from Santa Rosalia. Often newcomers brought cattle and other livestock with the hope of establishing ranches;

³⁸ Though there are various stories of Pearson's demise, I find Ryerson's account that he and his wife died in 1915 as a result of the attack on the *Lusitania* to be the most reliable (Ryerson 1994:96, Parks n.d.).

³⁹ There are discrepancies between published accounts and what people told me regarding working for the sawmill as late as the 1980s. It is my understanding the sawmill reopened more than once before it closed for the final time in the late 1980s.

others came intending to establish stores and other small businesses. Most men relied upon the railroad and the railroad repair yard for wage jobs and both men and women worked in Mormon farms and orchards (Parks 1993:88).

In the wave of nationalism following the formation of the new Mexican state and in repudiation of anything foreign, the town's name was changed from Pearson to Juan Mata Ortíz in 1925 (Parks 1993:89; Parks n.d.). A Mexican military officer, Juan Mata Ortíz had been second in command of the 1880 campaign responsible for the defeat of the Apache leader Victorio (Ryerson 1994:96). Later, he was killed by the Apache leader Juh in retaliation for the massacre of an Apache group including women and children along the Casas Grandes River (Parks n.d., Hernández 2008:22). Though not a hero of the Revolution, Mata Ortíz's "warrior spirit" and bravado were suited to the frontier *norteño* ideology of the region and consistent with the agenda for post-revolutionary Mexican state formation (see Alonso 1995:7).

In the 1930s, then-President Lázaro Cárdenas enacted the *ejido* system of shared communal lands in an effort to realize the Revolution's promise to redistribute land to the poor. Since Mata Ortíz was able to "prove communal ownership prior to the 1860s," its residents reclaimed a portion of the land previously held by the Terrazas family (Nugent and Alonso 1994:209-210 n.1, 212; Parks 1993:89). The redistribution of land through the *ejido* system allowed a wider sector of the village population to expand their agricultural production for the market, and grazing rights allowed them to expand their cattle holdings. As mentioned earlier, however, the number of those able to establish membership within the *ejido* was and still is limited by the finite size of the *ejido* lands. So while there was a shift in the economy toward increased agriculture and

ranching, this was on a small scale for most households, compared to the large scale holdings of the haciendas prior to the revolution.

In the early 1960s, the wage earning sector of Mata Ortiz's economy suffered a major blow when the railway repair yard was relocated to Nuevo Casas Grandes. Employment for men in the village was henceforth limited to working as day laborers on Mormon farms. Some men hired on with the railroad while their families remained in Mata Ortiz. The few jobs women had held gradually disappeared as the restaurant, theatre, hotel, and larger stores closed. Northern migration became a common strategy for many of the men and women, this time for jobs in the United States.

During the same years when residents of Mata Ortiz were experiencing economic deprivation, American archaeologist Charles C. Di Peso initiated excavations of the prehistoric ruins at Paquimé. It is not a coincidence that the beginnings of pottery making in Mata Ortiz coincide with the excavations, which were carried out between 1958 and 1961. Local interest in the excavations peaked and enterprising individuals throughout the region began collecting and selling both genuine and forged prehistoric pottery on a then-active black market in Pre-Columbian Native American antiquities (Brody 2000; Ryerson 1994:96; Cahill 1991:5; MacCallum 1978:45-48).⁴⁰ Ironically,

⁴⁰ MacCallum related a conversation in which Di Peso expressed his gratitude that the production of forgeries actually had the effect of reducing the illegal removal of artifacts from archaeological sites (MacCallum 1978:48; see also Charles. C. Di Peso 1979:21 in MacCallum 1979).

During a panel discussion in conjunction with the exhibit "Crossing Boundaries" at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, J.J. Brody related: "I can still remember the late 1950s and early 1960s, when, and particularly after the work at Paquimé began, there was a kind of flood of smuggled pottery from Casas Grandes coming into the United States and being sold on the market. They were very inexpensive; five, ten, and fifteen dollars a throw back then. And at the very same time ..., there were fakes being made in that same area coming into the United States, modeling the Mata Ortiz tradition. The history can't be separated from that early history. It's all part of it. What I find absolutely fascinating from the perspective of our history is that this belongs smack dab in the tradition of the American Southwest" (Brody 2000).

from this tentative and highly contingent economic activity arose the contemporary Mata Ortiz pottery making industry.

The prehistoric ruins of Paquimé⁴¹ are located in the smaller colonial town of Viejo Casas Grandes just five miles south of the modern city of Nuevo Casas Grandes and approximately fifteen miles from Mata Ortiz (Figure 1.2). Today, these ruins are the key site of archaeological tourism in northern Chihuahua and were declared an UNESCO World Heritage Site in December of 1998. The lowest levels of these ruins, which are over 1 kilometer in diameter, date from the transition period from the Viejo (A.D. 600-1200) to the Medio (A.D. 1200-1450) periods (Harmon 2005:26-31) and are considered by archaeologists to be the largest in the southwest (VanPool 2001:74; Whalen and Minnis 2001; Di Peso 1974:190-193). There are numerous smaller outlying archaeological sites, some extending as far as 60 kilometers away, and beyond the boundaries of Mata Ortiz.

Juan Quezada's fascination with the prehistoric ceramics so plentiful in the region began when he was as young as twelve years old. To help contribute to the household income, he would go to the hills above the village to collect firewood to sell (MacCallum 1979:46-48). Juan has repeatedly told the story of how before heading back to the village, he would let the burros rest while he explored caves where he found ancient pots, both broken and intact. He often describes his intrigue with the precisely painted designs and relates how he reasoned that the same materials used by the ancient potters must still

⁴¹ See VanPool (2003:1) and Di Peso (1974:295) for possible theories on the origins of the name Paquimé. Christine S. VanPool mentions Jesus Narez's suggestion that the name is a derivation of "I don't know" given in answer to Alvar Nunez Caveza de Vaca "when he asked the locals who built the abandoned buildings" VanPool (2003:1). Di Peso offers two possible sources: 1) Hopi clan name Patki combined with Zuni word Caquime and 2) Nahuatl words Pa: big, Ki: house; Me: s.

be available in the area (Gilbert 1995:53). Listening to this story for the first time in 1995, I was impressed with the initiative Juan showed in his determination to rediscover the materials and master the techniques of the ancient potters. Juan emphasized that he had taught himself through careful study and close examination of the artifacts. As there was no ongoing tradition of pottery making in Mata Ortiz at that time, there was no one to teach him. Unlocking the mystery of how these pots were made became a personal challenge which Juan pursued in whatever spare time he could manage (Juan Quezada, personal communication November 1995, July 28, 1997; see also Turok 2004:186).

Juan Quezada and Guillermina Olivas met and married in 1964, (MacCallum 1979:48), soon after Mata Ortiz entered economic decline with the loss of the railroad repair yard. With a young and growing family and the unavailability of wage work locally, Juan and Guillermina left the village and traveled to where Juan could find work in construction or agriculture, and eventually as a laborer for the railroad. All the while, Juan continued to experiment with each of the stages of pottery making: processing the clay, preparing the paints, devising the designs, painting the pots, and developing techniques to fire them (MacCallum 1979:56-60; see also Gilbert 1995b). In the time between Juan's initial interest and experimentation, growing interest in the archaeological site and the objects excavated there motivated others in the area to start making replicas. Traders from both Mexico and the United States began arriving in the region in the late 1960s, attracted by the potential for buying and marketing pottery that resembled the ancient artifacts. To imbue the pottery with more authenticity, these were often "caked in mud or otherwise antiqued" to look "old" by either the potters or the commercial traders (MacCallum 1978:47-48).

By 1971, Juan had a family of six and since work was still scarce in the village, Juan was devoting more and more time to pottery. That same year, Juan achieved his goal of processing vivid and durable red and black paints and made his first successful polychrome pot (MacCallum 1994:6). After years of close examination and experimentation within each stage of production, from processing the clay, formulating paints, and devising firing techniques, Juan had perfected his craft without any formal training (MacCallum 1979:24; Juan Quezada, personal communication, July 28, 1997).

Living back in Mata Ortiz by this time, Juan had developed his artistic talent to a level of sophistication that surpassed anything else being produced in and around Paquimé. Traders quickly recognized the high quality of Juan's pottery and sought him out. Early in his artistic work as a potter, Juan consciously distinguished his work from the prehistoric ceramics through his own individual expression and interpretation of the prehistoric designs. Once he realized there was a market for his work as original and contemporary ceramics, Juan established his identity as a contemporary artist by signing his work. In a later conversation, Juan explained that it is good to be inspired by the people of Paquimé, "to seek their experience," and to learn by practicing with the designs on the old pots, but an artist does not copy their designs. Juan was very clear that he never makes the same design twice (Juan Quezada, personal communication, July 28, 1997; Gilbert 2000a:13; see also Gilbert 2000b).

Similar to the revitalization of Pueblo pottery traditions in the Southwest United States initiated by Nampeyo in the late 19th century and by Maria Martinez during the early years of the 20th century, Juan Quezada ignited a creative movement within his own community. From the beginning, he actively encouraged relatives and neighbors to begin

in pottery making (Lowell et al. 1999:16; Gilbert 1995:8; Parks 1993; MacCallum 1979). He shared his skills and knowledge freely, establishing an atmosphere of reciprocity that characterized the networks of learning and apprenticeship which quickly developed within the community.

Juan taught his brother Nicolás first and then encouraged his other brothers and sisters to join him. Nicolás approached the challenges presented by the clay with the same inquisitive and deductive manner as his brother; he was particularly adept at deciphering the qualities and properties of various clays (Williams 1991:112). Juan taught his older sisters Consolación and Reynalda next, then his younger brother Reynaldo and younger sister Lydia. Rooms in the family home were transformed into workshops where the Quezada siblings not only learned under Juan's tutelage, but contributed new and innovative techniques that furthered the development of the ceramic technology unique to the Quezada family. For example, Reynaldo is credited with the technique of sanding pots prior to firing, and developing the specialized *mezcla* clay. Various shades and hues of clay are blended just enough to accentuate the distinct clay colors. When the pot is sanded, a marbleized, *mezclado*, clay body is revealed. He also developed a process of texturing the surface of a pot in a "tejido" or woven pattern (MacCallum 1994:78). Similarly, Consolación developed her own variation of engraving the clay in elaborate patterned designs, while Reynalda specialized in sculpting animal and reptile figures on the pots.

The 1970s: Establishing a Mixed-Gender Tradition

Soon after learning from Juan, Nicolás, Consolación, and Reynalda were teaching the select group of friends and neighbors who apprenticed with the family and

worked alongside the Quezada siblings to produce the bulk of the first pottery to be marketed from the village. Four of the women interviewed for this research are represented in this initial circle of potters: Lydia Quezada, her friend Taurina Baca Tena, Consolación Quezada, and her student Lupe Cota Delgado. Consolación Quezada named Yolanda López Quezada, Christina Ortega, Chela López, Rose Irene López, Rosa Lucero, and Luz María Gallegos as among other women in the village who learned during those first years. By encouraging women and facilitating their participation from the beginning, Juan Quezada established the basis of what was to become a mixed-gender artistic tradition. Pottery making emerged as an option for generating income for both men and women. Despite the scarcity of gainful employment for men during those years, women were not excluded. Some produced independently while others co-produced with their teachers and family members, as the example of the Quezada workshop illustrates. Indeed, Juan's initial three women students were among the first potters to achieve prominence as both pioneers and innovators in the development of this pottery tradition. These women continue to maintain their reputations as being among the most successful and influential potters today.

During these same years, brothers Felix and Emetario Ortiz – together with their brother-in-law Salvador Ortiz and their younger sister, Teodora Ortiz – independently developed their own style of pottery in neighboring Barrio El Porvenir (Bell 1994:34). Unlike the pottery being produced by the Quezada family, the Ortiz brothers' style lacked emphasis on the key design principles essential to Juan Quezada's style, (e.g. the use of geometric designs and dividing the design field into symmetrical, mirror images

of two or four design repetitions). From the beginning, Juan was concerned that a certain level of quality be maintained throughout the village (MacCallum 1979:52). As explained by Spencer MacCallum, who introduced Juan Quezada to the American market, the two potters differed in how each defined that level of quality. Juan wanted Felix to fall in line and create pots that were consistent in style and quality with what the Quezada family members were producing at the time. However, Felix had a different vision (MacCallum 1994:82). Though he and his brother Emetario had not reached the same level of acclaim as the Quezada family, their pottery was selling.

Despite the difference of artistic vision between Quezada and Ortíz potters, Felix and Emetario were instrumental in establishing the neighborhood of El Porvenir as a simultaneous but alternative pottery hub. This neighborhood gave rise to a number of successful stylistic and technical innovations in the 1980s. Prominent among the innovators of El Porvenir are Pilo Mora, who began working with Emetario Ortíz as a teenager in 1974 and was producing quality work by the end of the 1970s, and Macario Ortíz and his brothers, Nicolás and Eduardo⁴² who were learning with Emetario and Felix by 1982 (Ryerson 1994:111; Hills 1999:91).

Juan Quezada's work first became known to ceramic aficionados in the United States through the efforts of Spencer MacCallum, an anthropologist from San Pedro, California. Captivated by the exceptional quality of three pots he found in a second-hand store in Deming, New Mexico, MacCallum traveled to Chihuahua intent upon locating the potter (MacCallum 1979:28-32). By the time Juan Quezada and

⁴² There are two separate Ortíz families in El Porvenir. The two families became related when Felix's half-sister Eduwiges married Salvador Ortíz, a brother of Macario, Nicolás, and Eduardo "Chevo" Ortíz (see Ryerson 1994:106).

MacCallum met in 1976, Juan was already earning a living from his pottery making. In fact, at the time of his meeting with MacCallum, Juan was working with his brother Nicolás and his sister Consolación on an order of 250 pots for a store in El Paso (Williams 1991:67). After his keen assessment of Juan's talent and artistic vision, MacCallum offered Juan a "stipendiary arrangement," or patronage relationship, in which Juan would devote his energies full time to creative exploration and perfection of his talent in exchange for monthly stipends provided by MacCallum. For his part, MacCallum promised to buy any and all pots Juan produced (MacCallum 1979:42; MacCallum and Johnson 2001:90). Under MacCallum's patronage and promotion, Juan Quezada developed into a first class potter on a par with American, Asian, and European studio potters during this time.

The revival of pottery production in northwestern Chihuahua coincided with a resurgence of national and international interest in the arts of indigenous peoples, and resulted in a flurry of exhibitions in the United States which featured individual Native American artists and – important to this discussion – Pueblo potters of the Southwest. The timing was perfect for MacCallum's promotion of the Mata Ortiz potters and their pottery in the United States. MacCallum introduced Juan and his family members directly into the international market for ethnic "fine art" through careful and intentional promotion by way of exhibitions and demonstrations held in both high-end art galleries and scholarly institutions. The first major exhibition was "The Other Southwest," in May of 1977 at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona. Later that year, Quezada family potters exhibited in "The Winter Show" at the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, Arizona. In 1979 the exhibit "Juan Quezada and the New Tradition" traveled from

Chaffey College in Alta Loma, California, to the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico, moved on to the Robert H. Lowie Museum of Berkeley, California, and then culminated at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, Arizona (MacCallum 1994:9). Thus, within the span of a few short years, Mata Ortíz had gained international attention.

Following are portraits of twelve women potters who are critical to my analysis and discussion. These portraits essentially describe how I first met them as artists and later got to know them personally. Additional discussion of their individual significance within the contexts of aesthetic development and empowerment will be addressed in chapters four and five.

Lydia Quezada Celado de Talavera

Lydia Quezada is the first woman among the potters in Mata Ortíz to have attained international prominence. I was first introduced to Lydia in 1994 by Máyté Luján Soto, who was then the assistant to the director of the *Museo de las Culturas del Norte* at Paquimé,⁴³ which was under construction at the time. Lydia graciously agreed to an interview that evening. I learned that she is the youngest in the Quezada family and began learning to make pottery at fifteen years of age with her older brother Juan. Later, when her friend and neighbor Taurina Baca Tena joined the group of apprentices, the two young women worked in a separate room under the watchful eye of Lydia's mother, Doña Paula, apart from the other family members and apprentices. Working directly with Juan, Lydia developed her skill so quickly that when the family began exhibiting throughout the United States, Lydia's work was second only to her brother's.

⁴³ The Museum of Northern Cultures



Figure 2.1 Lydia Quezada Celado giving a demonstration in January 2000.
Photography by Walter P. Parks.

Her technically precise painting caught the attention of MacCallum, who began purchasing from Lydia soon after he established his stipendiary relationship with Juan in 1976. As a result, Lydia's *ollas*⁴⁴ were sold alongside Juan's in galleries and museum stores throughout the United States. Due to her close association with Juan and through MacCallum's strategic promotion of the potters and their art, Lydia's work quickly attained recognition within a growing market for Mata Ortiz pottery. Just two years after she had begun making *ollas*, two events occurred between 1978 and 1979 which were significant for Lydia's early recognition and the development of her signature style.

First, Lydia attained master potter status as a result of winning the grand prize in her first

⁴⁴ Though, in general the term *olla* is used to describe pottery in jar or vase shapes, in Mata Ortiz it is commonly used to refer to pottery formed in a variety of shapes with the exception of plates, some shallow bowls (i.e., *cazuelas*), effigies or figures.

competition.⁴⁵ The second event followed in 1979 when Lydia, Juan, and other family members accompanied the first major traveling exhibition of Mata Ortiz pottery, “Juan Quezada and the New Tradition,” throughout the southwestern United States. While this opportunity showcased Lydia as Juan’s student, it also distinguished her as the foremost independent female artist at the beginning of this mixed-gender artistic tradition. In conjunction with this exhibition at the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico in 1979, Lydia had the opportunity to meet with leading Pueblo potters, including Maria Martinez of San Idelfonso and Lucy Lewis of Acoma.



Figure 2.2 Effigy by Lydia Quezada Celado, early 1980s.
From the Parks Collection. Photography by Walter P. Parks.

⁴⁵ This competition was sponsored by the Amerind Foundation in Dragoon, Arizona. In addition to the grand prize of 1000 pesos, Lydia won six of the ten cash prizes (MacCallum 1980a:2). This prize was the first of what has become a long list of awards and recognition. Spencer MacCallum defined the criteria for master status in 1978 as one who had exhibited in the United States and sold a pot for over \$200. Prior to Lydia’s designation as master potter, Juan Quezada was the only other potter who met this criteria.

Through my interviews with Lydia, I have come to appreciate the strength of this accomplished potter and her determination to push her talents to their fullest potential. Her strengths lie not only in her creative abilities, but in the spirit with which she combines her artistic work with her domestic relationships and responsibilities. She is a gracious and elegant woman and projects a strong sense of self. She cared very much that I understood the priorities in her life. She related eloquently and in earnest that her family and her Mormon faith come first and foremost. She expressed clearly that her ability to reach her full potential as an artist is dependent upon keeping these priorities in balance. When I asked Lydia what she would want people to know about her in order to better understand her artwork, she replied as follows:

People should understand how Juan struggled to bring this work about. If Juan had not done this, I wonder what I would be doing right now. It is difficult because of the three things I mentioned. But these are elementary for me: the family, the home where we live, and the church that we believe in. If I did not have this work in my house, it would be really difficult to have the time to make my *ollas* (Lydia Quezada, interview, March 30, 1999).

Though she has lived in Nuevo Casas Grandes since 1982, she maintains a strong presence in her natal village of Mata Ortíz. She is respected and admired within the community of potters, both male and female. Nearly all of the women I interviewed named Lydia as the finest woman potter among them. She has consistently been a leader in the development of aesthetic criteria, setting standards other potters strive to attain. As Spencer MacCallum reminded me, I recalled that Juan had once told me that he feels Lydia is the most successful among his students (Spencer MacCallum, personal communication, April 4, 2009).

Her exhibition history is by far the most extensive among the women I interviewed. She has traveled to and exhibited in nearly all the major southwestern cities of the United States as well as in a number of the northeastern states. As an individual artist, her role has been instrumental in attracting world recognition to the entire community of potters. Lydia has consistently maintained her position as the most well-known and distinguished woman within the community of potters.

Consolación Quezada Celado

During my first trip to the village in 1994, I made a point of seeking out Consolación Quezada, the oldest of the ten Quezada siblings. I had heard about her legendary *morada*, purple or wine colored pots and was eager to see one. Consolación is well respected within the community as one of the originators of the pottery industry, having learned from her brothers Juan and Nicolás as early as 1973. She was described to me on more than one occasion by other women potters as a “*valiente mujer*,” a brave woman.

Together, her aesthetic sensibilities and pottery skills represent a considerable knowledge base from which she has generated the income to raise a family of five children, as well as to care and provide for her aging parents. She takes pride in her work and deservedly so. The three generations of women potters in Consolación’s family are represented in Figure 2.3. This photograph was taken approximately the same year I interviewed Consolación in 1998.



Figure 2.3 *Left to right: Zuléma Valenzuela González, Dora Isela González Quezada, and Consolación Quezada Celado.* Photography by Walter P. Parks.

It was not until 1998 that one of Consolación's first students, Lupe Cota, arranged my first interview with Consolación. Lupe had been among the select group of friends and neighbors who apprenticed with the family and worked alongside the Quezada siblings, to learn their craft. I asked Consolación what she thought was the main reason for the rapid development and progression of her family's pottery skills and techniques in the beginning years. She answered that the creativity was alive and vibrant because everyone was working and learning together in those first years. It was when they began working independently to focus on their own individual styles that each developed his/her own creative integrity. She expressed her thoughts about those early years as follows:

Before, the most important thing was we were all united. Then we began to work independently, each of us doing our own work and getting better at it. Now our work is much more beautiful. Our work is very different now because we have distanced our work from one another. There are times though, that we are all together and discuss the *ollas* and give each other our opinions (Consolación Quezada Celado, interview, September 9, 1999).

Consolación traveled with her family members to Albuquerque, New Mexico for the opening of the “Juan Quezada and the New Tradition” exhibit in 1979. In the early 1980s, Consolación gained an advantage that many potters cannot claim. She told me how Spencer MacCallum had helped her to procure a “lifetime border crossing card,” which has enabled her to travel to Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Deming, Las Cruces, and El Paso for various exhibitions over the years. Consolación’s visa allows her to cross into El Paso to sell directly to galleries and museums, and to buyers at the larger retail stores such as MayaTex. She was still traveling to El Paso to sell directly to buyers there in the late 1990s.

Consolación was 66 years old at the time I interviewed her in 1999. She is now 75 years old and still making her “*estrellita*” *ollas*, though one is apt to hear that this will be her last year of making pottery. As a teacher, her legacy continues through the work of four of her five children as well as through the work of a number of potters in Mata Ortiz and the surrounding communities. Among Consolación Quezada’s first students, Lupe Cota continues to make pottery in Barrio Lopéz. Luz María Gallegos is another of Consolación’s first students. Though she is no longer making pottery, her two daughters, Gabriela Almeida de Domínguez and Blanca Almeida de Ponce, are both accomplished potters. Consolación also taught Avelina Corona de Amaya, a niece of her sons.

Taurina Baca Tena

I first met Taurina in September of 1995 at her parents' home in Nuevo Casas Grandes. She and her three daughters often alternated residence between their home and Taurina's house in Mata Ortiz. Taurina was 38 years old when I interviewed her in 1999 and had been making pottery for 24 years. She began her work in pottery in 1975 when she was 15 years old. Taurina is one of the few non-family members to be included in the group of apprentices taught by Juan Quezada. Lydia and Taurina learned together from Juan. When I asked Taurina what was the most important thing she learned during the time she was taught by Juan, she replied "I think that everything is important, from making the *olla*, painting it, right up to the firing. All of it together is important" (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).



Figure 2.4 Taurina Baca Tena, 1999.
Photography by Tito Carrillo

Like Lydia, Taurina demonstrated promising talent and began earning recognition locally and in the United States. Large, well-executed and perfectly balanced pots became Taurina's forte and she continues to be well known for these oversized pieces as well as for her wedding vases and canteens. She is one of Juan's best known students and the first of his students outside of his family to gain international recognition.

Her close association with the Quezada family resulted in numerous opportunities to exhibit and demonstrate in the United States, beginning with the "Juan Quezada and the New Tradition" exhibit in 1979. In 1981, MacCallum arranged for her to exhibit and demonstrate for eighteen straight days with Juan's younger brother Reynaldo Quezada at the Los Angeles County Fair in Pomona, California (Parks 1993:32-34). After seeing Taurina and Reynaldo's exhibition, Tom Fresh of the Idyllwild School of Music and Art (ISOMATA) began working on having Juan and his family members join the list of prestigious potters teaching at the school. To name just a few, these include Maria Martinez and Blue Corn of San Idelfonso, Lucy Lewis of Acoma, Jody Folwell of Santa Clara, and Michael Kabotie of Hopi. Beginning in 1982 and for three consecutive years, Taurina traveled with Juan Quezada, his wife Guillermina, and other Quezada family members to teach at the ISOMATA arts program. These experiences gave Taurina the opportunity to become a competent teacher by the age of 21 years (Parks 1993:39-41).

She remains loyal to the artistic ethos she learned from her teacher. Like Juan, Taurina emphasizes the importance of being skilled and competent in the entire creative process from mining the clay to firing the pot. She has built upon the foundation of Juan's key design principles to develop her own style, and has made unique contributions to the dynamic aesthetic tradition through her individual creativity.

Like Juan's other female students, his sisters Consolación and Lydia, Taurina represents the women who were involved from the inception of the pottery tradition. As active practitioners of the craft, they played vital roles in the continuation of the tradition. Their constant determination to improve and refine their skill made them exemplary role models. I return to the important roles Taurina, Lydia and Consolación played in the 1970s in the discussion of women's contributions to the community's aesthetics in chapter four.

The other women who learned to make pottery during the 1970s often go unmentioned in discussions of those early years. Because these women were taught by Juan's sisters, they did not have direct access to Juan's instruction, nor did they have the same level of access to the market, museum, or gallery venues as did Lydia, Consolación, and Taurina. As mentioned, Consolación Quezada's first students included Lupe Cota Luz, Rosa Lucero, and María Gallegos. Reynalda Quezada taught her daughters Yolanda and Olivia López Quezada, her nieces, Rose Irene López and Gloria Isela López of Barrio López and her sister-in-law, Chela López, who lived in nearby Anchondo. While these women did not reach levels of prestige and acclaim equal to their teachers in those early years, all of them were important links between the primary groups of Quezada family potters in that they shared the knowledge they had acquired by teaching others outside of the primary groups. The role these women played constitutes the beginning of the movement beyond the Quezada family-initiated networks.

Guadalupe "Lupe" Cota de López

In the spring of 1997, I went to the López Cota home to meet Laura Bugarini Cota and to thank her for a beautiful piece of pottery she had made for me. At the time, I had

no idea how fortuitous this visit would be. A friendship quickly developed between me and Laura's mother, Lupe Cota. Her children Laura, Elvira, Luz Angelica, Karla, and three year old Carlitos soon became like a second family for me. It was a rare day that I did not visit the López Cota household, sharing meals, visiting, doing my laundry, and learning. Lupe soon became my local mentor, providing me a valuable education on being a woman in Mata Ortiz. She was my confidante and friend, but most importantly, she was my cultural guide. Questions prompted by what I was observing in the wider community were brought to her table. Together Lupe and I would discuss, clarify, confirm, or correct my hunches about what I thought "was going on." We were often joined by her daughters. Usually one of her neighboring *comadres* would drop by and join in the conversation at hand. Sitting at her table enjoying a *cafecito*, I heard local gossip, jokes, herbal remedies, and folklore, in addition to learning everything I could about the potters and the art they create.

Lupe was no more than 15 years old when she apprenticed with Juan's older sister Consolación Quezada. Every day, Lupe went to work in what she referred to as the *cuartitos*, or "little rooms," where the Quezada family initiated the beginnings of today's pottery industry. She received instruction from the two Quezada brothers, Juan and Nicolás, as well. At times she collaborated with Lydia Quezada, forming some of the pots Lydia painted. "They would sell the pot for 70 pesos; I would get 35 pesos and Lydia would get 35 pesos. I liked forming the pots, but I never had a mind for painting" (Lupe Cota, interview, July 16, 1998).

Lupe's father Miguel Cota, a widower, made it clear that he had misgivings about his young daughter walking the long road between Barrio López and Barrio Centro alone.

He also told her the pottery was taking too much of her time away from housework. Not long after, he put a stop to her apprenticeship.

So, in all that time between, I got married and I had my children. I did other work, cleaning, washing, and ironing other people's clothes. I did not make *ollas* for all those years until Gerardo [her brother's son] wanted to learn. But I did not really start up again full-time until my daughter Laura wanted to begin (Lupe Cota, interview, September 14, 1998).

As one of Consolación Quezada's first students, Lupe was an excellent teacher herself. With great patience and an abundant sense of humor, Lupe taught me to work with the clay and patiently helped me to acquire the basic skills needed to "*levantar un olla*," literally, "to raise up" or form a pot. Laura and her older sister Elvira patiently taught me how to paint the minute fine lines of the signature designs for which this household is known. I learned through tactile methods as my teachers took my hands and guided them through the motions required to physically sense and know the appropriate texture of the clay, the thickness needed to form the *olla*'s body, and the rudiments of brush stroke technique.



Figure 2.5 Lupe Cota keeping an eye on my sanding technique, 1998.

A man of few words, Lupe's husband Carlos López Hernández taught me more through observation than through direct conversation. Carlos is a hard-working man who was out in his fields before dawn every day. His acceptance of my presence in the household was confirmed by his warm invitations to share in midday meals. These meals were always scheduled around his return from working the morning hours. In addition to his agricultural fields and cattle, Carlos operates a seasonal business with his brothers. In the spring, the family corral is put to use branding calves and dipping cattle for other ranchers in the village. Carlos' brother Miguel lives next door, and two more brothers, Andres and Eugenio, live down the road. Numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins live in the surrounding houses. Fourteen of the twenty households in this neighborhood have a López surname, hence the name Barrio López.

A particularly poignant experience for me was participating in the preparations for the *matachines*⁴⁶ dancing on the feast of San Ysidro in May of 1999. This was the first time in twelve years the dances would be performed in this barrio. Night after night, I sat mesmerized with Lupe and her neighbors María de Jesus Celado, Cayetana Escalante, Ramona López, and Chela López as we watched Ramona's husband, Fabian Hernández, patiently teach the dance steps to a group of twenty or so adolescent girls and boys. On the day of the feast I walked alongside the Quezada family's elderly aunt, María de Jesus Celado who I knew as "Doña Chu." Though she was 86 years old at the time, she was as excited as a young girl as we walked to the field where the fiesta took place.

The 1980s: Artistic Growth and Opportunity

The successful reception of the exhibit "Juan Quezada and the New Tradition," which traveled to five venues in the southwestern United States in 1979, brought unprecedented attention to the village. The extensive traveling, demonstrations, and exhibitions by Juan and the rest of the Quezada family group garnered a great deal of attention for the village internationally. This attention brought more traders and buyers to the village, expanding the market exponentially, thereby enhancing marketing possibilities for the increasing numbers of new potters. The first few years of the 1980s marked a significant expansion of potters developing beyond the original Quezada circle.

As Juan's immediate family and friends taught others, learning networks formed throughout the community. What began as a person-to-person model of learning within the family unit expanded to include many more people within these networks. Juan's

⁴⁶ Matachine dances are performed as part of the observance of three saint's days in Mata Ortiz: San Ysidro on May 15th, San José on March 19th, and Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe on December 12th.

initial students continued to respond with their own interpretation of his innovations which then radiated outward, dramatically expanding the direction of aesthetic development within the entire village. A wave of creative individual expression resulted from the infusion of these new potters who elaborated upon Juan Quezada's style (MacCallum 1994:77-79; Gilbert 1995:12-13; Hills 1999). In writing about this creative rise of new pottery families, Bill Gilbert says: "Juan's powerful example of individual expression," had set precedents but "artists worked to create their own distinct styles that would identify them as artists in their own right, separate from the Quezadas" (Gilbert 1999:16-17).

Many of the new potters (at least forty) were taught by one of the Quezada siblings. However, there were also individuals who took the initiative to try their hand at pottery making independent of direct instruction from someone in either the Quezada or Ortíz families. In turn these people began to teach others, sharing their techniques and knowledge with family and friends from one neighborhood to another. People were coming together from diverse social networks to figure out the basic methods, devise techniques, and learn from one another. These networks formed along lines of neighborhood and kin relations, both actual and fictive, often one crosscutting the other.

These multiple strands of teaching and learning resulted in clusters or aggregates of new potters, which formed in each of the five different neighborhoods of the village. These networks were characterized by both intentional and interactive instruction as well as informal, cooperative, and non-didactic exchanges of knowledge. In many ways, these networks bear similarities to how Juan and his siblings describe their interaction in teaching one another in the initial years, but on a larger scale. The Rodríguez Guillén

brothers, Armando, Manolo, and Oscar, pursued this kind of interactive learning. Like Gerardo Cota Guillén, Manolo was a friend of Juan Jr. and both had opportunities to observe their friend's father, Juan Sr., at work. Both Manolo and Oscar were instrumental in establishing learning networks that spread through the Martínez, Flores, and Ledezma families in Barrio Americano, many of whom are related as cousins or through marriage.

Within the short time span between 1985 and 1990, the number of potters quickly increased from a handful to more than 300. This was attributable to the initial students having taught others, who in turn continued to spread their knowledge to even more people (Parks 1993:81). This florescence of potters may be explained in part by a series of economic crises Mexico experienced beginning in 1985, which resulted in the drastic devaluation of the peso, escalating inflation, and widespread implementation of neoliberal policies. Rural agrarian households experienced these policies as cutbacks in social services and agricultural subsidies added further pressure. Locally, the initiative to learn pottery was spurred on by these dire economic conditions. Many men worked in the Mormon orchards or migrated north for wage labor. Some women left for jobs in the *maquilas* in Nuevo Casas Grandes or Ciudad Juárez for wage work or crossed the border to work as domestics.

Another key characteristic of the 1980s was that some women who were initially independent producers transitioned into co-production with their husbands. As these couples began working together, they often developed a single successful signature style, establishing their own distinctive stylistic family traditions (see Gilbert 1999:19; 2000b). Twenty-one of forty women interviewed for this research project entered pottery making

between 1981 and 1990 and of these, sixteen entered between 1985 and 1990. In eleven of these cases, it was the women who initially began to make pottery on their own. Soon after, their husbands left their wage labor jobs to join them once they saw that their wives' efforts were a profitable endeavor and a good income strategy. For many, these partnerships proved to be successful arrangements. This new pattern of co-production can be explained in part by the fact that jobs were scarce at this time of national economic crisis. I address the strategy of co-production by couples and the potentialities for empowerment more fully by examining particular cases in chapter five.

Socorro Sandoval de Silveira

I met Socorro Sandoval during the first month of my fieldwork in 1998 through her daughter Yadira's godfather, Tito Carrillo and his friend Penny Hyde. Tito had first met Socorro and her late husband José Silveira when he began coming to the village to purchase pottery in the early 1980s. Tito and Penny extended an invitation to me to join them for dinner at the Silveira Sandoval's house. The evening was a lively one, full of talk about pottery and *gringos* and why I was in Mata Ortiz. I left that night with Socorro's promise to tell me whatever I wanted to know about pottery and her work. Before I had a chance to interview them, I was asked to be the *madrina de copas*, the godmother of glasses, for their son Saul's wedding to Luz Angelica López, the daughter of my friend Lupe Cota. As a result, we became better acquainted and were good friends before the interviews.

Like many families in Mata Ortiz, the Silveira Sandoval household is very close knit. At the time of my first interview, Socorro and José's household consisted of their 21 year old daughter Trini and the younger children, Yadira, Gustavo, and Alondra.

Their oldest daughter Lila and her husband Carlos lived next door with their two young daughters. Their son Saul and his young wife lived nearby. Socorro's elderly mother-in-law Soledad had recently moved in with the family so they could care for her more easily. Born in 1917, Doña Soledad "Pancha" Ortíz was a strong presence in the home. Later, she joined in the interviews, relating her family's history and speaking of the days when there were still Americans living in Barrio Americano in the wooden houses.

By the time Socorro began teaching herself in 1982, a handful of potters were already producing in Barrio El Porvenir. Among them were Felix and Emetario Ortíz who had begun in the late 1960s, Pilo Mora, Macario, Nicolás, and Eduardo Ortíz, and Socorro's brother-in-law, Rojelio Silveira.⁴⁷ While other women in El Porvenir neighborhood were beginning in pottery about this same time, Socorro and her sister-in-law Gloria Hernández figured out the process together through trial and error. She described their experiences in trying to teach themselves how to make and fire the pottery:

We were so eager to learn that we made our own molds. The first pot that I made came out like a satellite. I would build it up and it would collapse and I would build it again. So I just left it like that – it was the first one that came out well. I told Gloria not to worry and that it was going to sell – and it did (Socorro Sandoval de Silveira, interview, March 8, 1999).

Socorro's popularity grew among commercial traders during the mid 1980s. She had buyers for her work on both sides of the border from the start. Her work was introduced into lucrative marketplaces associated with prestigious museums such as the Heard Museum in Phoenix, the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, and the San Diego

⁴⁷ Rojelio Silveira is Socorro's brother-in-law. Rojelio was not living in Mata Ortíz during those years. Socorro does acknowledge that after her husband José Silveira joined her in pottery making, they learned a new process for sanding and polishing from Rojelio once he returned from living in Los Cristianos in the late 1980s (see also Hernández 2008:24).

Museum of Man. Her husband José had begun making pottery with his brothers Gregorio “Goyo” and Rojelio and realized that the household could make twice the money by increasing production if he joined his wife full-time in her pottery. Socorro’s popularity increased even more with Rick Cahill’s attention to women potters in his 1991 publication on Mata Ortiz. Photographs of Socorro, her family, and her work provided a virtual “map to her door” for the increasing number of tourists making their way to Mata Ortiz in the early 1990s.

Socorro and José had taught their three oldest children and each was making and signing their own pottery by the time of this research, making a total of five principal potters within the Silveira Sandoval family. They had the expectation that their three youngest would eventually learn to make the pottery as they helped others in the family, and would increase their skills and become motivated to produce their own style of pottery bearing their personal signature. Though the households of their two married children produced their pottery independently, the model of cooperation persisted among family members.

Socorro is a cheerful woman, quick with a smile and laughter. In the face of contention or challenge, she is a formidable force to deal with, as I observed during trading transactions when I accompanied Socorro and José with Elvira Antillón and Damián Escarsega Quezada when they traveled to Tucson, Arizona with Tito Carrillo for a demonstration at the Arizona State Museum in 1999. Whether she was negotiating

pottery prices or confronting death when her husband of over 25 years was fighting his battle with cancer,⁴⁸ Socorro held her ground.

Lucía Mora Sandoval de Bugarini

Lucía was among the initial wave of people in the village who began making pottery in the mid-1980s, following on the heels of the Quezada family's success. She began learning from her mother in 1985, the same year she married Lorenzo Bugarini. Her mother Jesus María Sandoval de Mora had taught herself to make pottery through experimentation without an instructor, like her cousin Socorro Sandoval, and was among the early potters working in Barrio El Porvenir by 1980. Around the same time as Lucía began, her older sister Olivia was co-producing pottery with her husband Armando Rodríguez in Barrio Americano. Olivia and Armando were influential in initiating the learning network that developed in their neighborhood by instructing neighbors and relatives like Armando's cousin Graciela Martínez. Armando's influence extended to neighboring Barrio de la Iglesia through his instruction of his brother, Rubén Rodríguez.

In Barrio El Porvenir, Lucía's brother Juan, his wife Lupe Soto, another brother, Anastacio, and his wife Gloria Isela López who had learned from Reynalda Quezada, were working in pottery by 1987. Their mother is responsible for guiding all eight of her children toward their work as potters. Typically, all of the Mora brothers and sisters would gather at their parents' home on Sundays and these gatherings often included lessons from their mother. Today, her legacy extends the Mora family line of potters throughout all five neighborhoods in the village.

⁴⁸ After a long battle with cancer, José Silveira passed away in December of 1999, a few months after I finished my fieldwork.

Lucía's grandfather, Demetrio Mora came to Mata Ortiz by wagon in the late 1940s from Santa Rosalia de Cueva, near Chihuahua City, with all of the family's belongings and their cattle. Her grandmother Bonifacia Alvidreas was born in Satebo, also in the vicinity of Chihuahua City. Lucía's father, Juan de Dios Mora Alvidreas was sixteen when the family arrived in Mata Ortiz. Among other well known potters in the family are Lucía's cousins, Pilo Mora and Manuel "Profe" Mora, who are the sons of her father's brother Victoriano.

I met Lucía in 1997 through her neighbor and then sister-in-law, Debi Flanigan. Lucía is the primary potter in the household in that she forms, paints, and signs the pottery. Her husband, Lorenzo, better known as "Lencho," was responsible for locating, digging, and processing the clay, and often fired the pots as well. During the time of research, he was not painting the pottery. By the time I met them, Lucía and Lencho were employing a number of strategies in addition to pottery making to bring money into their household. In response to the increased flow of money in the village and the increased consumerism that followed, Lucía and Lencho operated various businesses from their home. Lucía sold clothing and household items and they also operated a video rental business.

As Lucía became more involved with a national political party and *Grupo Pearson*, she found it more convenient and time efficient to purchase blanks of unpainted, unfired pots. Their various businesses provided an additional avenue for acquiring pottery as the Bugarinis accepted pottery in payment for the goods Lucía sold, for video rentals, and as payment on the short term loans she made to neighbors. The technical quality of Lucía's painting was more sophisticated than what the makers of the

blanks would have been able to paint, thus she added value to the unpainted pots and sold them at a high profit. Lucía marketed her pottery to either commercial traders or tourists who came to her home, and later through *Grupo Pearson*.

By the end of the 1990s, she and Lencho had begun taking pottery on consignment from other potters to export to the United States. Competition in trading is daunting as there are numerous Mexican and American traders active along both sides of the border. Lucía explained that traveling across the border into Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico is not always profitable. Dealing with customs and visa issues presents a number of difficulties and often it is a challenge to locate buyers. Nonetheless, they continue to act as their own agents and are considered to be fairly successful traders in Mata Ortiz (Lucía Mora Sandoval, interview, February 6, 1998).

María Gabriela Almeida Gallegos

I was first introduced to Gabriela, “Gaby” Almeida Domínguez by John Davis, a long time friend and patron of Mata Ortiz, in 1995 at the “Transforming a Tradition” exhibition held at the University of New Mexico Art Museum in Albuquerque. At the time, I was struck by the fact that among the twenty-six potters represented, ten were independent potters and among these, there was only one woman, Lydia Quezada. The sixteen other potters were part of eight husband and wife teams. Gaby was one of these sixteen. With the assistance of translators, her husband César Domínguez gave a gallery talk during the exhibition and Gaby interacted with the audience, answering their questions. Despite the hindrance of language differences, Gaby conveyed her confidence and shared her expert knowledge. By the time I met her, Gaby was an experienced hand at teaching students and demonstrating before audiences in the United States.



Figure 2.6 Gaby Almeida and César Domínguez at a wedding in 1999.

A surge of new potters emerged within the village in the mid-1980s on the heels of the growing popularity of Mata Ortiz pottery in the United States, due to the increased exposure of Quezada family members. Many of these new potters came to be known as the “second generation” and Gaby and César are prominent among them (Gilbert 1995:32). In approximately 1984 Gaby learned to make pottery from her mother, Luz María Gallegos. About the same time, César began learning with his brother Jaime who had learned from Jesus Lozano, a student of Oscar González, Consolación Quezada’s son. There is also a tie to the Ortiz brothers through Emeterio Ortiz, who influenced Gaby and César’s development of their large plate and shallow bowl forms.

In Gaby’s partnership with her husband she forms the pots, César paints, and it is his signature on the pot. Gaby and César are consistently named together and recognized as a team. This equal recognition is attributed in part to the fact that Gaby and César

have an extensive history of teaching, demonstrating, and exhibiting in which Gaby has maintained an active role and presence. As a result of continued opportunities to teach through the ISOMATA summer arts program in Idyllwild, in the mountains of southern California, (see Parks 1993) the two acquired a great deal of experience, teaching students both in the United States and in their home in Mexico. They have also worked closely with Bill Gilbert, a fine arts professor at the University of New Mexico, in teaching workshops and exhibitions.

During the research period, Gaby began producing, signing, and successfully selling her own style of pottery. She has since established herself as a commercial buyer for galleries in Mexican tourist areas such as Puerto Vallarta, as well as in Houston, Texas. She represents the art she co-produces with her husband, her own art, and that of other potters. Clearly, her previous experiences in the marketplace factor into the current success she is experiencing as a businesswoman.

María de los Angeles “Angela” López Avalos de Bañuelos

Angela López Avalos and her husband Roberto Bañuelos Guerrero are representative of the many couples who began in pottery in the 1980s in that they work together as a collaborative team. They also initiated an informal learning network in their particular neighborhood of Barrio de la Iglesia. Faced with the challenge of meeting the expenses of a growing family and with few prospects for improving their standard of living on Roberto’s earnings from agricultural wage labor, Angela and Roberto recognized the potential of pottery making and decided to try their hand at it. Together, in 1987, they learned from Angela’s sisters, Rose Irene López of Barrio López and Gloria Isela “Chela” López of El Porvenir. Angela’s maternal cousin and neighbor, Martha

Ponce, learned from Angela's two sisters around this same time as well. Within the next year Angela taught another neighbor, Olga Quezada. All three women can trace their learning network back to Reynalda Quezada of Barrio Centro who taught Angela's two sisters, Gloria Isela and Rosa Irene in the late 1970s.⁴⁹

The three couples live close to one another in Barrio de la Iglesia. Soon after, Martha and Olga's husbands joined their wives in making pottery. The couples began networking to exchange information and techniques, based on what the women had learned from Angela's sisters. Later the men brought what they learned from their brothers and cousins. Martha's husband, Rubén Rodríguez, and Olga's husband, Humberto Ledezma, both observed and experimented with Rubén's cousin, Gerardo Cota Guillén. Influences from Rubén's brothers, Armando, Manuel "Manolo," and Oscar Rodríguez Guillén, factored into this informal and collaborative learning network by way of what they taught to Rubén. This style of cooperative and shared learning is indicative of how the clusters of learning in many neighborhoods reflect multiple strands overlapping from one neighborhood to another. Often, these networks and clusters of learning constituted the basis from which individuals and couples went on to develop their own unique and often innovative styles. By the end of the 1980s, all three couples were established as husband and wife teams using a collaborative co-production strategy. We will see examples of their pottery in chapter four. In chapter five, I will discuss these collaborations in light of how their development of distinctive styles were empowering for both the wives and husbands in these couples.

⁴⁹ Martha's mother Gregoria Avalos de Ponce and Guadalupe Avalos (the mother of Gloria Isela "Chela" López, Rose Irene López, and Angela López) are sisters.



Figure 2.7 Angela López and Roberto Bañuelos in their home in 1998.

I met Angela and Roberto in 1995 on a trip I had taken with another graduate student, Hilary Scothorn,⁵⁰ and again, it was John Davis who introduced me to this couple. Davis had known Angela and Roberto since before they made the decision to become potters. Once they began, he encouraged them to focus on their Mimbres-inspired plates. Later, their work caught the eye of Timothy Kearns, an archaeologist from the Farmington, New Mexico area, who established standing orders for pottery decorated in Mimbres, Hohokam, and Hopi designs. Through Kearns, they acquired J.J. Brody's *Mimbres Painted Pottery* as well as the archaeological site report, *The Galaz Ruin* (Anyon and LeBlanc 1984), and various sources of Hopi and Hohokam designs (López and Bañuelos, interview, September 15, 1998; see also Williams 1991:53).

From the beginning, they moved away from purely Paquimé-influenced style and focused on developing their own interpretations of Mimbres-inspired designs. Angela

⁵⁰ Hilary Scothorn's research was also based in Mata Ortiz and resulted in her Master's thesis, "Crossing the Border: Patronage and the Invention of Tradition in Juan Mata Ortiz, Chihuahua, Mexico."

and Roberto took the initiative and actively consulted with Kearns and Davis in order to learn as much as they could about the tastes and criteria of their potential buyers. They were able to successfully create a particular niche for their work within the Mata Ortíz market at that time, specializing in the production of plates and bowls decorated with Mimbres-inspired designs.

Angela continues to teach others to make pots. Among her students she named Xavier and Blanca Ledezma and of course Olga Quezada, but added that Olga has been making pottery for so long, that Angela no longer had much to teach her.

Many people come and watch and they learn from us. We give them the clay; we do not sell it. Red clay is a mixture of five different clays; white clay is a completely different clay. And when people want paint – the same thing. They come to us and we give them what we have. We all help one another (Angela López and Roberto Bañuelos, interview, September 15, 1998).

While Angela knows how to do all of the steps of pottery production – sanding, polishing, and painting, she prefers to do the forming. Roberto's primary task is painting; he also forms the plates, sands and polishes them. Often, they fire together. It is Roberto's signature on the pots.

Roberto described his frustration at watching a Mexican television program about the history of Paquimé which he felt had misrepresented the idea that the pottery produced in Mata Ortíz was being produced as replicas of the pre-historic ceramics.

In this program, they said that people living around the ruins at Paquimé are making copies of the *ollas*, the artifacts from Paquimé. This is not true! All of this talk and they mention nothing about Mata Ortíz. Nothing. It [the program] showed one of the potters here in the village preparing the clay and painting an *olla*. The person narrating the program said "This is a person who is restoring the antiquities and making copies." But this is not true! It is not correct. Many people saw this program, but they do not know. We are potters and these are the *ollas* we produce. We

make these in Mata Ortiz, or in Casas Grandes, but these are originals. These are not copies. We have seen the designs and we use the designs, but the designs we make are different. They said nothing about our *ollas*, nothing (Angela López and Roberto Bañuelos, interview, March 12, 1999).

Consistent with the prevailing system of aesthetics and artistic criteria as established by Juan Quezada, Roberto executes his own interpretation of the prehistoric designs, and was very clear that he and Angela do not make copies.

The 1990s: Expansion and New Marketing Strategies

As more potters replaced their horses with new trucks, added rooms, and installed bathrooms and modern kitchens, the potential for improving one's economic situation was readily recognized throughout the village. Encouraged by the example of Juan Quezada and numerous other potters throughout the village, nearly three out of every four households in Mata Ortiz had someone trying their hand at pottery in hopes of generating income. With the expanding market of the 1990s, the demand for local production increased and more people became involved in the pottery industry, many full-time. A wider sector of the potter community found increased opportunities to travel for exhibitions and demonstrations, enabling more potters to gain recognition within the market. Increasing numbers of buyers made their way straight to the doorsteps of promising potters. The more accomplished and respected potters often remarked to me that they had more work than they could handle. As these artists specialized in high quality pottery requiring greater time and labor input, the amount of art they were able to produce was limited. Hence, their prices increased as the demand increased.

Prices continued to rise as the popularity of the pottery expanded within the markets of Mexico, the United States, and as far away as Asia and Europe. As might be

expected, competition for artistic recognition and economic gain increased as the number of potters grew in proportion to the growth of the market. The widening range of access to tourist, ethnic, and fine art markets that characterized the 1990s also stimulated higher standards of increased quality, innovation, and creativity. Artistic criteria became more refined and exacting in the 1990s, as new potters entered an existing market with multiple niches and demand for varying levels of quality. Similar to the pattern documented by Willow Powers in the increasing popularity of Navajo jewelry, audiences for the pottery also became more adept at recognizing quality and more discriminating in their desire for increasingly finer pieces (Powers 2001:71).

The opening of the *Museo de las Culturas del Norte* at Paquimé in 1997 and its declaration as an UNESCO World Heritage site in late 1998 brought international attention to the region and increased opportunities for exhibition and competition (Dios Olivas 1998). Juan Quezada was awarded the *Premio Nacional de Ciencias Y Artes* (National Arts and Science Award) during the celebration of this designation in August of 1999. Within the same month, the first major exhibition of Mata Ortiz pottery opened at the Franz Mayer Museum in México City.⁵¹ This exhibition brought long overdue recognition to the potters of Mata Ortiz and Juan Quezada's role in the cultural production of popular and fine arts in Mexico.

⁵¹ This exhibition opened at the *Museo Amparo* in Puebla in May of 1999; traveled to the *Museo Franz Mayer* in July of the same year; then moved to the *Museo de Historia Mexicana* in Monterrey in November of 1999, and its final venue was at the Austin Museum of Art in Austin, Texas and continued through April of 2000 (Artes de México 2000:xvii). The women's micro-enterprise, *Grupo Pearson*, held a smaller exhibition at the *Museo Franz Mayer* in January of the previous year (see Dios Olivas 1998).

The *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (INAH)⁵² is the principal organizer of annual judged competitions or *concursos*, which are alternately held at the museum at Paquimé and at the restored railroad station in Mata Ortiz. These local concursos provide venues for newer and lesser known potters to exhibit their work, and provide opportunities for potters to see one another's work.⁵³ Cultural offices at both the Chihuahuan state level and Mexican national level increased efforts to encourage the potters of Mata Ortiz and Casas Grandes to participate in both and national and international judged competitions during the 1990s. Sponsorship of these events within the museum context by INAH and *Casas de los Artesanías* set in motion powerful processes which authenticate and legitimize the quality of the objects, and ultimately add value. Les Field discusses the importance of these same processes in the production of multiple and shifting definitions of authenticity in his recent analysis of Nicaraguan pottery exhibited within various Scandinavian museum venues (see Field 2009).

During the last few years of the 1990s, new marketing strategies developed among the potters. The first was the women's micro-enterprise group, *Grupo Pearson* which formed in May of 1997. As I was living in the village that summer doing preliminary fieldwork, I quickly arranged for an interview with Lucía Mora who had been named secretary for the group. Her sister-in-law Debi Flanigan agreed to help translate during our meeting as I wanted a clear understanding of the details of the organization. I learned from Lucía that *Grupo Pearson* was initiated by a male developer from Mexico City. Modeled on a financial self-sustainability paradigm, the primary

⁵² The National Institute of Anthropology and History

⁵³ I discuss the issue of people guarding their pottery designs to avoid being copied in chapter four, however, with the increased exposure through concursos and display in various galleries around town, this is unavoidable.

short-term objective was to provide reliable income through membership in a “company” comprised of women already involved in the existing pottery industry. Its long-term objective was to encourage and assist in the formation of individual micro-enterprises which would eventually be owned and managed by individual women. A second women’s group called *Grupo Paquimé* formed soon after, and operated for a few years.

In the 1990s, a large number of daughters and sons who had grown up in households where pottery making was the family’s primary livelihood became potters themselves. Pottery making is the only work many of these young people have known (Lowell et al. 1999; Gilbert 2000a, 2000b, 1995, 1999). They entered the pottery community with a certain market savvy and sophistication that was not feasible for the first generation. Having witnessed their parents’ success, they associated artist identity with the possibility of local, national, and international respect and status (Novelo 1993:73; Garcia Canclini 1995). Many have devoted their energies full time to pottery making since they were adolescents. These young potters represent a new generation who entered the pottery community with the advantage of recognizing the importance of being competent in both the aesthetic and production systems.

Amelia Martínez Flores de Tena

I came to know Amelia Martínez Flores and her husband José Delores Tena Duran when I rented a room in their home during the winter of 1997-1998 and again in the summer of 1998. Their children are grown and all but one have since moved away from the village.⁵⁴ My first lessons in pottery making were at her large family dining table, where I watched as Amelia formed, sanded, and painted her Mimbres-inspired

⁵⁴ One son, José Luis, returned from Juárez to live with his parents during the research period. Another son, Mario, had passed away.

pottery. During the many afternoons spent talking about pottery, children, and family, I learned a great deal about this interesting and industrious woman.



Figure 2.8 Amelia Martínez Flores with examples of her pottery and her awards from the 1998 concurso.

Before she married in 1958, Amelia had been a teacher at the local primary school. At twenty, she married the local pharmacist and began her life as a housewife and mother. The family lived in Ciudad Juárez for a number of years before returning to Mata Ortiz. Encouraged by the success of her sisters Graciela and Martha, Amelia began making pottery in 1991. All eight of Amelia and José's children continued their education beyond high school (Amelia Martínez Flores, interview, August 3, 1997). Don José, who has since passed away, operated a small pharmacy attached to their home. In many ways, the pharmacy was a central gathering place for the entire community. In addition to Don José's pharmaceutical services, groceries, gift items, and other necessities were sold in the pharmacy. There were only three telephones in Mata Ortiz

during the time I lived there, and one was in the pharmacy along with a fax and Xerox machine. On any given evening, people visited while they waited to make or receive their calls. Notices for public events and meetings were often posted near the cash register. Don José kept me informed of local events. The subscription delivery of the Nuevo Casas Grandes newspaper, *El Diario*, increased from four copies to five once my subscription was added to the village total.

During the years I was living in Mata Ortiz Amelia divided her time between working with her husband in the pharmacy, caring for her household, and making her *ollas*. She also had a number of side enterprises which included giving injections, selling clothing, renting videos, and making school uniforms. She was actively involved in the local Catholic parish, teaching catechism classes and serving as a lay person during services. Amelia also served as the first vice president, and then president, of *Grupo Pearson*. Together with two other members of the project, Amelia kept me abreast of news about the micro-enterprise group and helped me to accurately document the development of the project. Amelia has continued to run the store since her husband's passing, and has since added a laundromat, an ice cream shop, and a small hotel.

One afternoon, Amelia told me about how her family came to live in Mata Ortiz (Amelia Martínez Flores, interview, February 8, 1998). Her father's family, the Martínezes, came to the village with cattle, but they lost the herd during the Revolution. She then described her maternal grandfather's hotel, which had been located on the hill just above her own home in Barrio Americano. Her mother's father, Poi Fong, had first worked in the United States after arriving by boat from China. Unable to make a decent wage, he moved on to Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, where he did well enough to buy

a hotel.⁵⁵ During this time, he married her grandmother, Gregoria Ibarra. Later, the two moved to Torreón where they opened a dry goods and clothing store.

Unfortunately, the business burned and the couple lost everything.⁵⁶

Soon after her grandfather, now known as Juan Flores, moved his young family to Pearson, where he became the manager of another hotel. Built by two friends he had met in the United States, the hotel catered to Americans associated with the lumber and train industries in the region. The two investors did not live in the village; however, they came often and had houses located in what is now called Barrio Americano. At this point she began to describe the opulence and grandness of the hotel and how the rooms had been well furnished. Each room had a bath with a porcelain tub and closets. There was a large library which had shelves from floor to ceiling, filled with books. She said that as a little girl, she had been very frightened by the large deer head mounted on the wall in the entrance foyer. She described her grandfather as being very loving and she was grateful that he enjoyed his grandchildren as much he did. He died when she was about nine, but she remembers him well. “Remembering all this now is like a dream.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Amelia said her grandfather had purchased The Cooper Hotel in Ciudad Juárez before the Revolution. Both Amelia and her husband José said they believed her grandfather had bought this hotel with two partners; perhaps the same two men he later went into business with in Pearson.

⁵⁶ Though not confirmed, this incident quite possibly occurred during the anti-Chinese pogroms in Torreón in May of 1911 (Knight 1986:207-208).

⁵⁷ During my interview with Ernestine Hatch of Colonia Juárez in 1996, I realized the extent of interdependence that existed between the communities of Colonia Juárez and Pearson (later Mata Ortíz) had been significant in the past. Ernestine was born in 1919, and was 77 years old when I interviewed her. She described how the people of Colonia Juárez used the train in Pearson for personal transportation as well as for transporting their produce. They also relied on the hospital, the hotel and its restaurant, and the large market located in Pearson at that time. Ernestine spoke of going to the “big fancy” hotel in Pearson with her family on Sundays when she was a young girl. Her descriptions were consistent with how Amelia had described her grandfather’s hotel (Ernestine Hatch, August 15, 1996).

Luz Elva Ramírez Carbajal

Eager to take advantage of the increasing opportunities for expansion into new markets that characterized the 1990s, Luz Elva Ramírez Carbajal actively sought ways to negotiate and strengthen her own identity as an artist. I met Luz Elva during my second trip to Mata Ortiz in August of 1995. Before I met her, Luz Elva was described to me by traders and collectors as an enterprising woman, who supported herself and her four children through her pottery and by selling baked goods and candy. As I came to know her better, I learned that Luz Elva's artistic work had grown out of necessity and her strong desire to improve and ensure the well-being of her children and herself (Luz Elva Ramírez, interview, August 3, 1997).

Her personal work history revealed the challenges she has faced in her efforts to become financially independent. When she was a young wife and mother she went to México City, where among other jobs she worked in a *maquila* sewing clothing. When that relationship ended, Luz Elva returned to Mata Ortiz with her children. She opened a small store soon after in order to support herself and her three sons. Though she spoke of her first entrepreneurial venture with pride she admitted, "It was very hard work and difficult for me to work all day and take care of the boys by myself." The store did not generate enough income to provide for her family. In 1992, Luz Elva learned to make pottery from her new partner Edmundo Lopéz. While the two keep their production separate, they do cooperate in procuring and processing materials and in transporting and selling their pottery directly in markets in Mexican and the United States.



Figure 2.9 Luz Elva Ramírez Carbajal at her work table in August of 1997.

Luz Elva was also one of the original members of the women's micro-enterprise project, *Grupo Pearson*. She was an active member who frequently expressed her opinions within the group. Acting on her own behalf, she sought advice and assistance from influential individuals in Mexico City to address the organizational problems that developed with *Grupo Pearson*. Following the reorganization of the group,⁵⁸ Luz Elva was one of the first women within the membership to successfully establish her own marketing relationships with buyers from *El Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías*, (FONART),⁵⁹ various museums throughout Mexico, and the *Casas de los Artesanías* for the state of Chihuahua. She not only expanded her marketing strategies

⁵⁸ The reorganization of the women's micro-enterprise group will be discussed in more detail in chapter six.

⁵⁹ National Fund for the Promotion of Arts and Crafts

within the village, she took advantage of the exposure to new markets and later accessed these on her own initiative.

Luz Elva often spoke of her desire to take advantage of the heightened attention and publicity that had recently focused on Mata Ortíz in Mexico and Europe. Using the benefit of her previous marketing experiences with commercial traders and the experience she gained from her membership within *Grupo Pearson*, Luz Elva developed effective strategies that allowed her to bypass the local market and place herself within the international market arena. Luz Elva gained recognition as an independent artist by entering her work in judged competitions in other regions of Mexico and international competitions.

Luz Elva spoke many times of how she wanted to market her pottery without relying upon the traders. On one occasion, Luz Elva went to her bed and lifted the mattress to find a copy of a well known ethnic art magazine. She flipped through it to find an advertisement that featured her work in a prestigious gallery in the United States. While she was proud, her point in showing the advertisement to me was to emphasize that she and Edmundo are both aware of the discrepancy between the prices they receive in the village and what their pottery is selling for in the United States. By the late 1990s Edmundo had begun crossing into the United States to market pottery on his own, but they were often disappointed in their profits.

In a related conversation, Luz Elva expressed her frustration over her attempts to maintain control of the sale of her pottery when she went north to give demonstrations. She explained that the way the system worked at that time, the trader who sponsored the demonstration would buy all her pottery to be sold during the demonstration before she

crossed the border. What was frustrating to her was that regardless of the prices the trader received in the U.S. marketplace, she still ended up with only the amount she had originally been paid for the pottery. In other words, she was no longer in a position to ask for higher prices or access a percentage of the difference between her original selling price and the price the trader received during the demonstration. Luz Elva explained the problem was that the pottery did not belong to her any longer; it belonged to the trader. She expressed doubt as to whether leaving the village to give demonstrations was worth the time away from her family and her pottery making. Then again, she wondered whether she should simply capitulate to the way the system worked and be thankful for the opportunity for exposure to possible new buyers and collectors (Luz Elva Ramírez, interview, February 8, 1999).

Miriam Isela Gallegos Martínez

Miriam Isela Gallegos Martínez represents the second generation of young potters who have grown up in successful pottery making households. She is the oldest daughter of Graciela Martínez Flores and Héctor Gallegos Esparza. I had first met Miriam at a birthday celebration for her grandfather, José Martínez in 1996. I did not have an opportunity to meet with her again until 1999 as she had been living away from the village for a year and a half. Miriam was 22 years old when we finally had a chance to sit down for the interview. At that time, she was living with her parents, her two brothers, and sister while she made plans to build a home for her daughter Natalia Aurora and herself.

By this point, Miriam had made the successful transition from being a single daughter working under her parents' guidance to becoming a principal potter recognized

for her own distinctive high quality work. As she continued to collaborate with her parents in certain pottery tasks, she was not an independent potter during the research period. Though she had been making pottery for seven years by 1999, she felt it was after she returned to Mata Ortiz that her work had really begun to improve. Often, when I asked potters what they wanted their clients to know about their pottery work, many would hesitate; however, Miriam answered immediately:

I am always working to improve how I make my *ollas*. Every day I work at getting better and every day I paint better than the day before. My mother taught me. She taught me everything (Miriam Gallegos Martínez, interview, March 10, 1999).

Miriam spoke with great affection and respect as she described how she had learned to form and paint pottery from her mother, Graciela. “I started by helping my mother with sanding and polishing while I was in elementary school. I was about 14 years old when I began making my own pottery.” Living with her parents again, she appreciated having the benefit of their experience and daily access to their advice and example. “I talk with my mother every day about ideas and techniques to pass the time.” When I asked Miriam whom she considered to be the best potters among the women, she replied:

Everyone is good because everyone works equally hard, so it is difficult to say who is the best. For me, it is my mother, but there are many good women potters. Consolación is really good, and so is Martha Martínez de Corona Quezada, and Olga Quezada. And my aunt Martha Elena Martínez de Domínguez⁶⁰ because she does all of it by herself. Those are only some of the women (Miriam Gallegos Martínez, interview, March 10, 1999).

⁶⁰ Martha Martínez de Corona Quezada is Miriam’s cousin and Consolación Quezada’s daughter-in-law. Martha Elena Martínez de Domínguez is Miriam’s aunt, her mother Graciela’s sister.

When I asked her who the greatest influence on her work is, she quickly responded:

The buyers, the people who buy my pots – my clients. I think that when all the people see my pots and they say, “Oh, these are really beautiful. These are very well-made.” I think that if they did not think these were well-made, well ..., no one would buy my *ollas* (Miriam Gallegos Martínez, interview, March 10, 1999).

As part of the generation who grew up in pottery-producing households, Miriam is acutely aware of the market criteria for quality, the importance of having an intimate understanding of the aesthetic system, and the competence in production required to create objects of great beauty.

Laura Bugarini Cota

Though she was only sixteen years old at the time I met her, Laura was in the ascent of her popularity as a potter. By the time of my first interview with her in 1997, she had already been to the United States to exhibit her pottery and demonstrate her skills and talent. Laura’s pottery was fetching prices in the range of \$50 to \$300, and as much as \$600 for her exceptional pieces. My friend John Davis strongly urged me to meet Laura as he considered her an exemplary young female potter who had broken into the male-dominated marketplace and was enjoying celebrity in the village and beyond.

Having worked briefly in the Quezada household for Juan’s wife Guillermina, Laura had ample opportunity to recognize the potential pottery offered in terms of financial security. Laura began making pottery with her mother Lupe Cota in 1993, and developed her painting skills under the tutelage of her cousin Gerardo Cota Guillén (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 16, 1997). In a short span of time, Laura became

the principal potter within the Lopéz Cota⁶¹ household. Later, when her older sister Elvira returned home after leaving her job in a *maquila* in Nuevo Casas Grandes, Laura taught Elvira to paint. The two then taught their younger sisters Luz Angelica and Karla.



Figure 2.10 Laura and Elvira Bugarini Cota in July of 1997.

The success of the two young women depended on their mother, who made the pottery for them to paint, and their stepfather, who located the clay and fired their pottery.

Once Laura entered the pottery community, she demonstrated her understanding of the aesthetic system and her competence in creating quality pieces. Unquestionably, Laura's meteoric rise within the transnational market for Mata Ortiz pottery was facilitated by traders who circulated her work within high-end galleries and the prominent

⁶¹ Laura and Elvira Bugarini Cota are Lupe Cota's daughters from her first marriage with Pablo Bugarini. Tragically, Pablo died in 1979. At the time this research began, Laura and Elvira resided with their mother Lupe, their stepfather Carlos Lopéz, their sisters Luz Angelica and Karla, and their younger brother Carlos.

collectors who patronized her work. Likewise, the second generation of respected artists who built upon and enlarged concepts of style and design during the 1980s had opened the way for new potters like Laura. Her innovative style will be discussed in chapter four in terms of her contributions to the prevailing aesthetic system of the community. We will return to Laura in chapter five to examine how the strategy of collaboration with family members holds the potential to both advance and preclude growing empowerment

Summary

My aim in chapter two has been to provide an historical overview, presented in three parts: 1) the economic context of the region, illustrating periods of decline and growth over the last century; 2) the role of Juan Quezada and his unique artistic response to the economic conditions prevailing in the 1960s and beyond; and 3) the development and enlargement of the pottery industry as established by Juan Quezada, his immediate family, and students.

The analysis began with an examination of the four distinct stages of economic expansion and contraction: 1) pursuit of foreign capital and investment (1877-1910); 2) revolution, nationalization, and economic contraction (1910-1920); 3) agrarian reform and expansion under the *ejido* system (1920-1960); and 4) a return to economic decline, contraction, and the consequent development of the pottery industry (1960-1980). This fourth stage further emphasized the transformational role of Juan Quezada in reviving the practice and techniques of Paquimé pottery making, by teaching this new art form to family members and neighbors.

Central to the premise of this dissertation is the realization that Juan Quezada did not discriminate among his family members, but instead, included his sisters as well as

other women from the beginning. By doing so, Juan Quezada facilitated women's participation and pottery making emerged as an option for generating income for both men and women. His initial female students were instrumental in opening up and establishing a new avenue for economic opportunity for women. I presented twelve portraits of women potters, representing the legacy which emerged from the nucleus of the Quezada family. Through these portraits, we saw how growth from within one family continued from the 1970s to the present, broadening the scope of design to include new potters unrelated to the Quezadas. The portraits of the twelve women were not comprehensive introductions; rather, they were intended to construct a context in which to understand the diversity of women's experiences and the varying degrees of success they attained during each of the three decades. My attention to the individual artist as an active agent emphasizes my understanding that women can be innovators and can be empowered within the particular sociocultural context of this dynamic mixed-gender artistic tradition.

We will see how with the passage of time, women took increasingly active roles in production and marketing, in some cases influencing their husbands to shift some of their own labor from agriculture, ranching, and wage labor to pottery making. The aspect of a "new tradition" is illustrated in these portraits by successive generations expanding techniques and elaborating upon the designs learned from their predecessors. In the following chapter, I describe the general context of my field experience, the variability among the women interviewed, and the methodology I used while conducting this artist-centered research.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONTEXT: METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

The twelve portraits presented in the previous chapter provide brief descriptions of how I met individual women and what I learned from them regarding their experiences of becoming potters. In some cases, these portraits give an indication of the close relationships I had with certain women and my interactions with their families. While I have tried to give a sense of each woman's personality together with a bit of her personal history, I struggled with how to fully convey the strength of character, generous spirit, and wonderful sense of humor so many of these women possess. The stories within these portraits also provide glimpses into my fieldwork methodology. Some stories emphasize the importance of certain relationships in terms of the incredibly rich opportunities these yielded for participant observation while I lived in the village.

One particularly memorable and concrete example of participant observation occurred while I was learning to make pottery with Lupe Cota and her daughters. As both participant and observer, the experience gave me a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities between the potter and the clay. When I first learned to sand in the little wooden room next to Lupe's kitchen, I was intent upon achieving a smooth surface. I was so intent that Lupe had to remind me to sand delicately and consistently so as to not remove too much of the clay in one spot, otherwise the pot would be weak in that spot and certain to break. Unhappy with my painting, I had sanded the poor little pot at least three times. When the time finally came to fire my pot, a discussion ensued among Lupe, her daughters, and her nephew Gerardo Cota over the safest way to proceed. A great deal of knowledge was exchanged among the four experienced potters about this specific clay.

All spoke of his or her own process of trial and error in working with this delicate, pink colored clay and the variability involved in each of their prior firings. In what might otherwise be taken as a routine event in a pottery making community, this particular firing had prompted a rich discussion of process, clay properties, instruction, experience, and cooperation within a discourse respectful of artistic autonomy and individuality. Undoubtedly, the extra care and attention given to my pot ensured its perfect firing.

Finding My Way to Mata Ortíz

I first became interested in a study of the women potters in Mata Ortíz in late 1994. After completing my Master's degree in 1993, my intent was to design a research project which would allow me to bring my interests in art and anthropology, particularly ethnoaesthetics, together with my interest in women and sustainable development. With this plan in mind, I continued my coursework in art and anthropology with Mari Lyn Salvador and pursued my interest in women and development through courses with Maria Varela, Claudia Isaac, and later with Susan Tiano. I was particularly interested in Varela's approach to sustainable or "regenerative development" of self-reliant, local economies capable of renewing and sustaining themselves (Sargent, Lusk, Rivera, and Varela 1991). Ideally, I envisioned a research project based in a community similar to Los Ojos in northern New Mexico, working with artists like the weavers of Tierra Wools.

At about this same time my friend and fellow graduate student, Pamela Price Kogler had initiated her doctoral research analyzing status variation within the human osteological sample excavated by Charles C. Di Peso from the ruins at Paquimé between 1958-1961. She had my undivided attention as she described her visit to the neighboring village of Mata Ortíz, a rural community of farmers-turned-potters who were revitalizing

their local economy through the sale of their art. I became especially excited when she showed me pottery made and signed by women. Soon after, I was on the road headed for Nuevo Casas Grandes with Pam. Prior to that first trip, I contacted two people familiar with the village and its residents: John Davis and Mike Williams. I asked the two men as many questions as I could think of regarding the women who produced pottery. With a list of names in hand, I caught the old train from the station in Nuevo Casas Grandes to Mata Ortíz. I made my way from house to house, asking for directions to the homes of various women, including Consolación Quezada, her daughter Dora González Quezada, Luz Elva Ramírez, and Olga Quezada. The next evening I went with Máyté Luján to meet with Nena López, and then Lydia Quezada. I explained my ideas for the research to both women and asked each for her input about the project. Both Nena and Lydia were excited and supportive and encouraged me. Nena spoke of how the pottery made women stronger.

It has not always been this way. Now, the women in Mata Ortíz do not let their men be lazy. They demand much of them and they get it! It became this way with the pottery. We saw that we could make something for ourselves. We saw how some people were making a good living from the *ollas*, so we said we would have that too (Nena López de Ortíz, interview, January 12, 1995).

Nena's husband Macario Ortíz spoke sincerely and emphatically when he told me "Women are indispensable!" Lydia told me it was important to recognize that with the recent influx of money, families were now confronted with problems they had not dealt with previously. She expressed her concern that it was often women who bore the greatest share of responsibility for keeping their families together. She added that no particular attention had been given to the crucial roles women play in the pottery tradition, both in terms of the income they provided to their households and as artists.

They will feel very important and good about this because it will be the first time someone gave any interest to the women of Mata Ortiz. I admire every one of these women because I have seen how they got into the pottery. I see the enthusiasm and determination they have. They go and learn from others, get their own ideas, and struggle every day to get better at what they do (Lydia Quezada, interview, January 12, 1995).

Over the course of the next three years, I conducted preliminary research for two weeks in the summer of 1995 and during several shorter trips lasting three or four days. Preliminary research aimed specifically at formulating my dissertation proposal was carried out over an extended period of two months in the summer of 1997. Héctor Gallegos and Graciela Martínez arranged for me to rent a house owned by Héctor's brother Francisco and his wife Yolanda Terrazas, by the river in Barrio de la Iglesia. I returned later that year to spend four more months over the winter of 1997-1998. During that research period, I boarded with Amelia Martínez Flores and her husband, José Delores Tena Duran in Barrio Americano.

As this turned out to be a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all of us, I returned to stay in the Tena Martínez household the first three months, June, July, and August, of my 1998 through 1999 fieldwork. For the rest of the research period I lived in Barrio El Porvenir in a house I rented from Tito Carrillo, a commercial trader from Tucson, Arizona. A bit removed from the center of town, El Porvenir could have been isolating without the relationships I had established previously with women living in this barrio and other neighborhoods in the village and in Nuevo Casas Grandes. Living in three different neighborhoods and visiting numerous households within each, as well as my nearly daily visits to the López Cota household in Barrio López, helped me to become familiar with all five neighborhoods of the village.

I carried out the largest portion of the fieldwork for this dissertation between June 1998 and October 1999. The ethnographic research upon which this dissertation is based documents and explores the relationship between the potentially empowering effects of aesthetic development and the concrete, material consequences of women's artistic and market success. I met many of the women I interviewed for this research by going directly to their homes, introducing myself, describing my project, and asking if they would be willing to talk with me about their work. In Mata Ortiz, sales typically take place in the potters' homes, so they are accustomed to having strangers at their doors, asking to see what is for sale. I found, as May Diaz noted during her work with potters in Tonalá, Jalisco, that potters "are interested in talking about their skills and selling their wares" (Diaz 1970:6). Due to my repeated visits to Mata Ortiz during the three previous years, I had established working relationships with a number of women, many of whom introduced me to other women potters. This technique of snowball sampling was equally effective with traders from Mexico and the United States (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). Many were eager to share the names of the women whom they considered to be "up and coming," promising potters. At times, I was approached by women who asked me to interview them.

My daily presence in the village over a long period of time and the generous hospitality of my neighbors drew me into the life of the community. I participated in village *fiestas* and savored delicious *barbacoa* at baptisms, birthdays, weddings, and *quincineras*. I shared in the joy of births, worried through illnesses, avoided arguments, and sat in on neighborhood gossip circles. My *trocquita* (a small Mazda truck) served me well as the means with which I could repay neighbors for numerous favors rendered. I

rarely traveled to Casas Grandes alone or without a list of items to pick up for someone. While I lived with Amelia Martínez and her husband Don José Tena, (who I came to know as Don Ernesto), I gained practical insight into the conventional and prevailing gender rules as these applied to me. As an unmarried (albeit divorced) woman living in their home, there was a decorum of behavior I was expected to uphold. They quickly but politely let me know whenever I was approaching the boundaries of gender-appropriate behavior.

My experiences with local gendered discourses and practices were not limited to my encounters and discussions with village residents, but also occurred in my interactions with Americans visiting the village. At times, I realized I had begun to internalize the local gender discourses and found myself accommodating them, treating them as “natural.” Actually, it is more likely I was remembering, or re-internalizing, the gender ideologies learned during my Irish-American-Catholic childhood. Two decades as a *gringa* wife in a Mexican-American family undoubtedly contributed years of knowledge and practice, which greatly informed my understanding of local gender ideology. Life experiences had laid a template which despite my own personal feminist beliefs, elicited more or less appropriate responses from a deeper, more subtle level of my consciousness which was in line with local ideologies.

Over the fifteen month formal research period, I used the following ethnographic methods: 1) formal and informal, semi-structured interviews with female and male potters; 2) informal interviews with individuals not involved with the pottery; 3) photographic documentation of the women’s activities as they engaged in pottery making, marketing interactions, and exhibitions; 4) participant observation of daily life

and pottery production processes, including my own experience in learning how to make pottery; 5) a census survey of the five barrios; 6) a collection of family histories and genealogies; 7) exhibitions in museums and galleries in Mexico and the United States; 8) analysis of published (secondary) materials; and 9) reviews of internet websites marketing the pottery.

Each of the methods described above yielded valuable data, which were necessary to my identifying and understanding the complexity of factors which contribute to the successes or failures women experience as they enter pottery production within their households. Exploring the integral relationship between technical skill and aesthetic competence was a central aim of my research. I sought to learn about both the aesthetics of pottery making and the production process itself - that is, the actual knowledge and techniques required to build and paint a pot well, and the ability to create pieces of original art. However, it was only in retrospect that I realized the critical link between these competencies and artists' empowerment. In a discussion with Mari Lyn Salvador regarding my work, she pointed out that being competent in both the aesthetic and production systems enables an artist to exercise creative choices. "This competence and confidence has to do with finesse and with having an intimate understanding of both the aesthetic system and the production system, so that an artist can do as they wish within each of those systems" (Salvador, personal communication, 2007). Looking back over my experiences in Mata Ortiz I realized that my methodology, as an attempt to learn about both the aesthetics of pottery making and the practicalities of production, had led me to investigating the ways in which artistic work holds the potential for empowerment.

Within the interviews, I was interested in the ways women were changing their daily practices in order to engage in marketing practices alongside their male peers. I wanted to learn about the relation of women to their work. I was not only interested in the actual objects the women were creating, but I also wanted to hear their own views regarding their work and the development of their own styles.

Interviews

The core sample for this research consists of 40 women potters whom I interviewed at length. Within this sample, ten of the women were interviewed jointly with their husbands. The interviews with these couples will be discussed in more depth in chapter five. I arrived in the field with protocols for formal and informal interviews I had developed, based on information gathered during the three periods of preliminary research in Mata Ortiz. In the interviews, I had four objectives: 1) to learn about the networks women use to learn their craft, exchange knowledge of manufacturing techniques, locate sources of materials, and market their goods; 2) to investigate whether a woman's success⁶² depends on her access to and incorporation within these networks; 3) to determine whether the existing gender ideology reinforces and sustains the entry of women into pottery production; and 4) to learn whether women potters are moving toward growing empowerment as a result of their participation in artistic work.

I audio recorded the majority of the interviews, although there were three women who were not comfortable with my using a tape recorder. In these instances, I reconstructed the content of these conversations as soon as possible after the interview. I

⁶² Success is defined in this case as the ability to subsist on the earnings derived from pottery production and having gained recognition within both the community and the art and market worlds as an accomplished potter.

used this same technique to document those unanticipated situations when information “just flowed.” I found in some cases, informal interview formats were effective. These usually involved multiple interviews, conducted over time to achieve in-depth responses to questions generated from my interview protocols. Using principles of grounded theory, I generated new questions based upon data from the previous meeting, allowing these to inform the direction of the next meeting (Strauss and Corbin 1989). I hired a young woman in the village to help me transcribe and translate the audiotaped interviews. I reviewed the content of interviews in order to continually compare new interviews with previous ones.

The interviews were structured around open-ended questions designed to elicit information concerning both the practical and creative aspects of pottery production and marketing. Oftentimes I used pieces of pottery women were in the process of making or had at hand, to encourage them to elaborate on formal discriminations of their artistic criteria of excellence and aesthetic evaluation in their own words (Salvador 1978; O’Neale 1932). I asked specifically how the system of community aesthetics guides their pottery practice, their individual artistic intention, expression, and innovation (Salvador 1995:2). Key questions I asked regarding the practical components of production and marketing included, but were not limited to:

- 1) the factors that motivated her to become a potter
- 2) the people she considers to have influenced her work
- 3) her personal history as a potter, i.e. who taught her and whether she continues to discuss technique and design with this person
- 4) whether she accesses and processes her raw materials or purchases them
- 5) her market interactions, i.e. access to buyers, traders, pricing

Questions focused on the creative and aesthetic components were designed to delineate individual women's personal aesthetic principles and criteria of artistic criticism and evaluation from the perspective of the potters themselves (Salvador 1995:xi-xiii). Following Salvador's ethnoaesthetic interpretive approach, I gathered information from each woman potter regarding:

- 1) whether she considers herself to have a distinct style of her own
- 2) the development of this style
- 3) her description of this style
- 4) her description and classification of the aesthetic design principles she employs

The interview data gathered jointly from the ten couples⁶³ in which the woman and man are both potters are included with the core sample data. These ten couples collaborate to co-produce either two styles with separate signatures or one style with one signature. In these interviews I explored aspects of their work together, as well as changes in their lifestyle and household income that have resulted from their work as potters. By extending interviews to couples during this phase, I was able to gather data specifically about the household division of labor and other sources of income. Since every household does not make decisions concerning the allocation of income in the same way, it is necessary to understand each household as a diverse structure with its own system of allocation. With this in mind, the practical processes of work and income were investigated through questions aimed at ascertaining:

- 1) the predominate income strategy, and if strategies other than pottery making were used to bring income into the household, what these entailed
- 2) how pottery making tasks are divided and organized within the household
- 3) the economic organization of the household income, i.e. whether individuals control the income they make or whether household incomes are pooled

⁶³ I use couples to refer to both individuals who are married or in long standing consensual relationships.

- 4) the decision making processes regarding allocation of income derived from pottery
- 5) the impact of participation in the pottery industry on the quality of life and standard of living of those in the household

I found that couples varied in how willing they were to discuss their finances.

Even though Mata Ortíz is an agricultural and ranching community, I encountered a certain amount of wariness when I asked questions regarding wealth held in the form of cattle or land. In his study of the community of Cucurpe, Sonora, Tom Sheridan found it difficult to ascertain accurate income levels for households because so few individuals enjoy steady wage work (Sheridan 1988:121). I encountered a similar measurement problem within the community of Mata Ortíz, but I believe an additional factor contributed to a generalized wariness. The issue was people's reluctance to admit the amount of income derived from pottery sales because of income tax disclosure issues. During the time I was conducting the field research, I was told by residents the increased revenue flowing into the community had drawn the attention of tax officials. There is also a tendency to downplay conspicuous displays of wealth as both measures against incurring jealousy or theft.

Reluctance to disclose income information became increasingly common during the years of my field research. Even among the few households which I knew kept detailed earnings records, questions regarding income were sidestepped when I broached the subject. For these reasons, I asked couples to compare their earnings from one year to the next. This approach proved more productive and turned out to be a surprising opening for discussing livestock, land ownership,⁶⁴ and other aspects of the couples'

⁶⁴ As in Mata Ortíz, economic status in Cucurpe is "tied much more directly to control over the basic means of production, especially land and livestock" (Sheridan 1988:122). Since these households rely on some of

economic situations. For couples who were reticent about their income, household income was indexed by the observation of household material holdings (i.e. number of livestock) and by estimates of expenditures such as house additions or renovations.

Towards the end of my research, I asked one of the traders to accompany me on four occasions while interviewing couples. This strategy came about after Tito Carrillo's chance arrival while I was interviewing his *compadre*, José Silveira. I found this to be an effective strategy, as the men were at ease with him and willing to talk more directly and openly about their earnings when he was present. I believe there were two reasons his presence enhanced the situation: the men had known and worked with this trader for over fifteen years, and they knew he had a good idea of how much he and the other traders were paying them.

Photography

Through photography, I documented situations in which women were engaged in their craft and involved in market activities such as selling interactions. This visual data contributed to the systematic knowledge necessary to my understanding of the pottery production process, including labor expenditure, material expense, and market practice (Collier and Collier 1986). In addition to documenting practice and process, I used photographic documentation to stimulate discussion and encourage women to elaborate on their formal discriminations of style, technique, design, and form (Salvador 1978; O'Neale 1932). In those instances where I had photographic images of a woman's earlier

their subsistence needs from their land and animals, "monetary income would be an inadequate measure of prosperity" (Sheridan 1988:122). Sheridan points out that the mean index of total wealth does not represent the economic reality of most households in Cucurpe (1988:124). He suggests that a better indication of economic status is the median index of total wealth, to include cattle, land and agricultural surpluses.

work, these were used to discuss the progression and development of her art over time, beginning with her learning experience (Salvador 1995:2).

Census

I compiled a detailed census of 340 households and mapped the five neighborhoods with the help of local residents Amelia Martínez and her husband José Tena (the local pharmacist and postmaster), Lupe Cota, her daughter Elvira Bugarini Cota, Socorro Sandoval and her daughter Trini Silveira. Together we identified each of the households, listed the number of residents in each household, and noted whether or not the occupants were involved in pottery production. We distinguished unoccupied structures from households and identified how each of these structures was being used (e.g. business, storage, unoccupied house). The locations of historic buildings, community services, and pottery making households, as well as services and businesses that support or contribute labor to other potters were identified in the mapping. I also had access to demographic information on the village which had been collected by nurses at the local ISSTE⁶⁵ clinic.

Using the maps as templates, I was able to characterize sectors of the population by various factors such as which households were female-headed, elderly individuals living alone, nuclear families, landowners, *ejido* members, and so forth. After compiling a master list of potters, I provided these lists to various potters throughout the village, male and female, and asked them to review the lists. I specifically asked them to tell me if there were names that should be added or deleted and why.

⁶⁵ ISSTE is the acronym for the *Instituto de Seguridad Social y Servicios para los Trabajadores*.

Family Histories and Genealogies

I collected information from my informants regarding their family histories and genealogies. Together with the mapping of the five neighborhoods, this information helped me to understand that both existing networks between households and those that have developed in conjunction with pottery making, were essential links in the expansion of the pottery tradition from one neighborhood to another. My discussion of the initial learning experiences in the Ledezma, Rodríguez, and Bañuelos households of Barrio de la Iglesia illustrates how my interviews with these couples extended my knowledge of the ways learning networks crosscut family and neighborhood relations.

Information gleaned from family histories illuminated the strong connections reflected among family alliances and pottery production, design and execution, and marketing strategies. Family histories were equally informative in terms of understanding the historical and economic development of the village. In some cases, families had existing relationships prior to coming to the village and had migrated to Mata Ortiz from the same regions in Mexico. As part of gathering information for family histories and genealogies, I interviewed four residents who were not potters.

Grupo Pearson

Another significant line of inquiry was to document the early development of *Grupo Pearson*,⁶⁶ the women's micro-enterprise development program which initially formed in the summer of 1997. As discussed in chapter one, the primary objective of this project was to provide a reliable income for women in Mata Ortiz. Its long term objective was to encourage and assist in the formation of micro-enterprises to be owned

⁶⁶ The micro-enterprise group was also known as *Grupo Artesanal Pearson*.

and managed by the individual women. The parent organization is *Solidaridad*,⁶⁷ with specific assistance provided through representatives of the *Fondo Nacional de Apoyo para las Empresas de Solidaridad* (FONAES). Financial backing for the women's program was provided through a FONAES loan. The development of this project and its operation as an alternative marketing strategy for women is discussed more thoroughly within the wider context of marketing in chapter six.

Exhibitions

I extended the research to multiple sites beyond the village to investigate various marketing venues, regional judged competitions, and to attend gallery and museum exhibitions in major southwestern cities in the United States including but not limited to Albuquerque, Santa Fe, El Paso, Los Angeles, and San Diego. As mentioned earlier, I accompanied Elvira Antillón and Damián Escarsega Quezada and Socorro Sandoval and José Silveira when they traveled to Tucson to participate in an exhibition at the Arizona State Museum. The exhibit, "Behind the Scenes with the Collections and Curators," brought together examples from the museum's collection of prehistoric ceramics of the Casas Grandes region with contemporary examples of Mata Ortiz pottery. During the open house exhibition, the potters provided educational demonstrations of their techniques of forming, painting, and firing to large audiences.

My initial intent was simply to "observe" the event; however, within a few minutes I was directly participating, assisting them with their sales. Typically, potters sell their art in the village to commercial traders who transport the pottery to galleries and stores throughout Mexico and the United States. However, during this exhibit the potters

⁶⁷ National Solidarity Program

were interacting directly with their museum audience, many of whom were also their collectors and buyers. This event presented valuable insight into the potters' interactions within the international marketplace where they are typically represented by others. I was also able to observe how potters challenge notions of who has the right to represent them, define their communities, and construct their identities by participating in the exhibition process (Karp and Lavine 1991:6, 12).

Published Secondary Sources

I collected, reviewed, categorized, and analyzed published materials which describe Mata Ortiz, its residents, their art, and local politics. Published resources included newspaper accounts in English and Spanish, journal articles, exhibit catalogues, and film documentaries about Mata Ortiz potters. In particular I reviewed newspaper articles and other published accounts of the potters' participation in exhibitions held in major metropolitan cities of Mexico, Latin America, Europe, and the United States. Likewise, I focused on the discourse and media coverage used to establish the importance of the pottery tradition to the touristic development of the northern Chihuahua region, and reviewed numerous websites on the Internet that pertain to marketing Mata Ortiz pottery.

Characteristics of the Women in the Sample

I intentionally selected women from the following categories: 1) independent potters, 2) co-producers with their husbands or family members; and 3) members of a government sponsored micro-enterprise project. I sought a diverse group of women who represented a cross-section of artistic skill, peer recognition, market success, class, age, and marital status; therefore, I included well known potters as well as makers of lower priced, *corriente*, or what is considered to be average ware. In my conscious effort to

include a diverse representation, I was able to open up issues of variability within and among the women I interviewed. Four women potters who had moved to the nearby city of Nuevo Casas Grandes were included in the core sample of potters. The numbers reflected in the tables that follow are based upon this same core sample of forty women potters, unless otherwise specified.

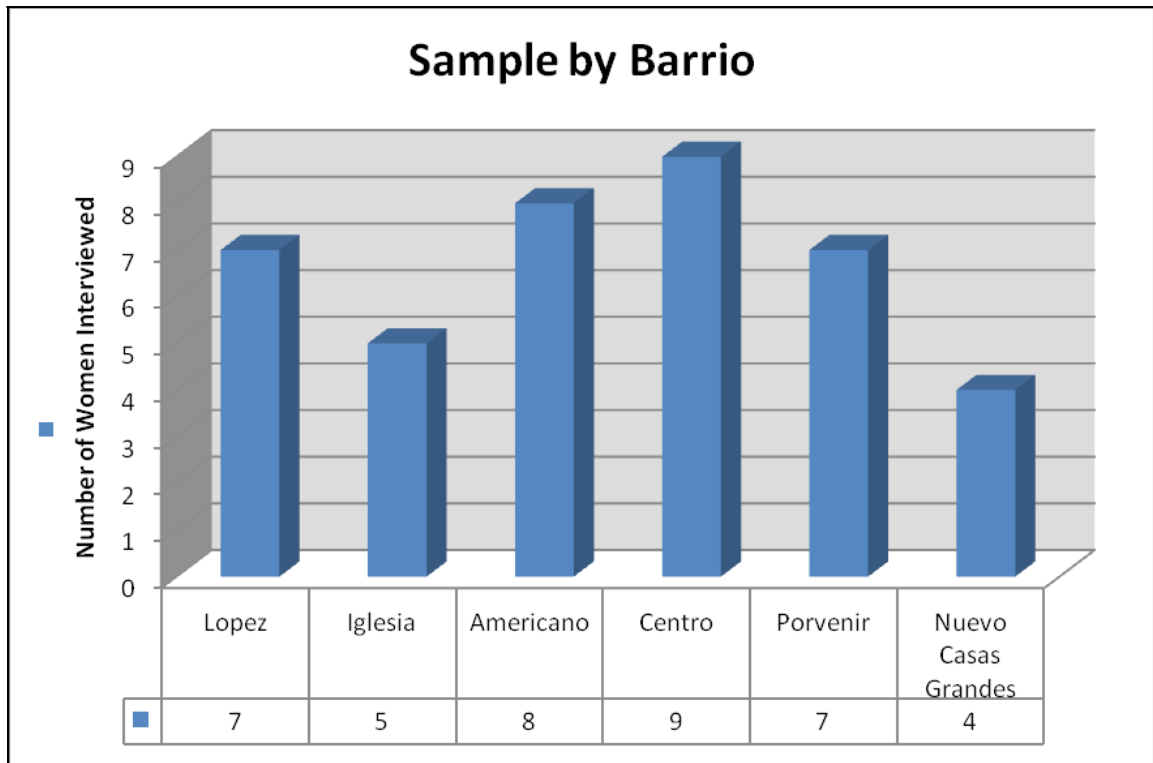


Figure 3.1 Sample by Barrios; n = 40

The 40 women potters I interviewed were representative of all five barrios in the village and Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of the sample within the community: 7 (17.5%) lived in Barrio López, 5 (12.5%) lived in Barrio de la Iglesia, 8 (20%) lived in Barrio Americano, 9 (22.5%), the highest percentage, lived in Barrio Centro, 7 (17.5%) lived in Barrio El Porvenir and 4 (10%) lived in Nuevo Casas Grandes.

Among the women I interviewed, 4 (10%) were under 18 years of age and 5 (12.5%) were over 50 years of age, including one who was 86 years old (see Figure 3.2). In most cases, women in both of these groups had begun making pottery within a few years of the research period. There were 9 (22.5%) women between the ages of 20 to 29 years old. The largest proportion, 13 (32.5%), was concentrated in the range of 30-39 years of age. There were also 9 women (22.5%) 40 to 49 years old within the sample.

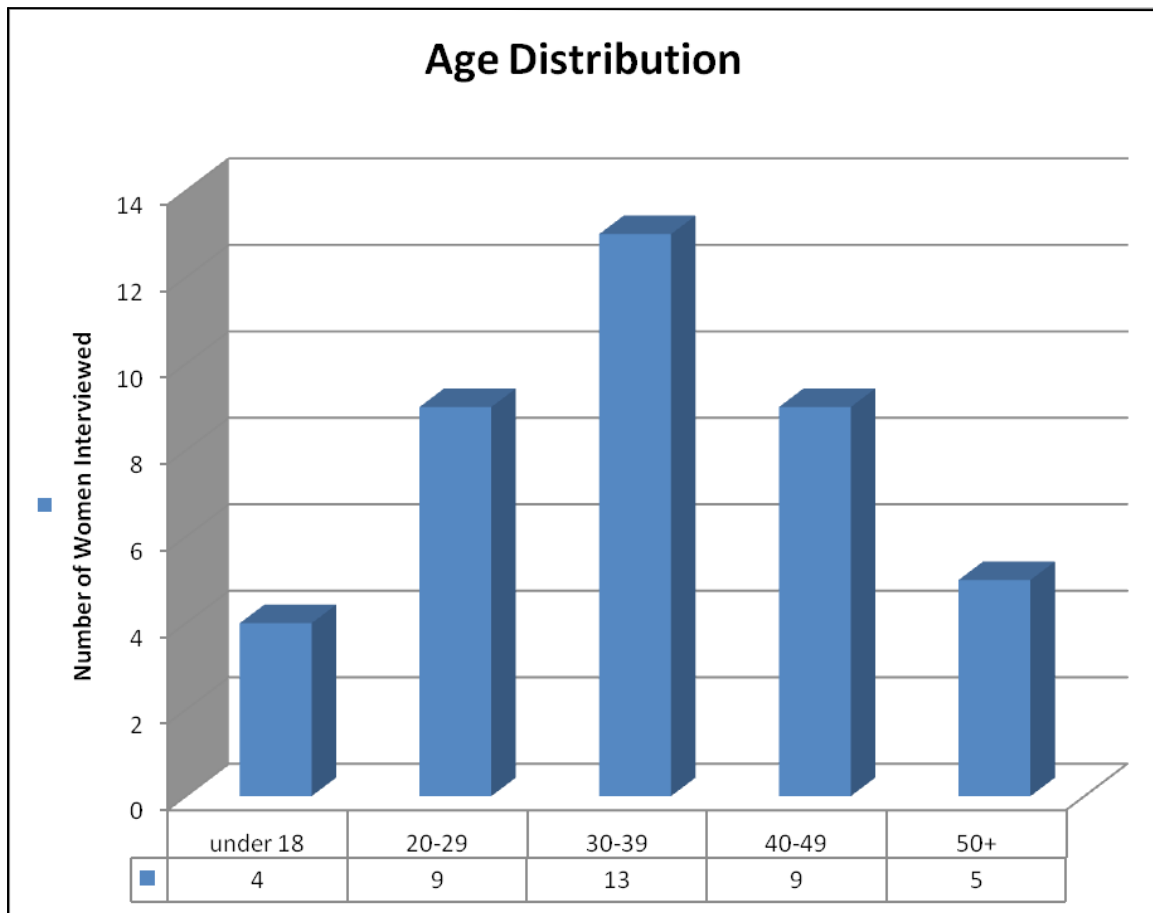


Figure 3.2 Sample by Age Distribution; n = 40

The household status of the women I interviewed is illustrated in Figure 3.3. The majority of women, 28 (70%), were partnered and lived in nuclear households; 4 (10%) of the women headed their households; and 8 (20%) were single daughters within nuclear

households. Nuclear households are defined as either a couple with dependent children, or one parent with dependent children.

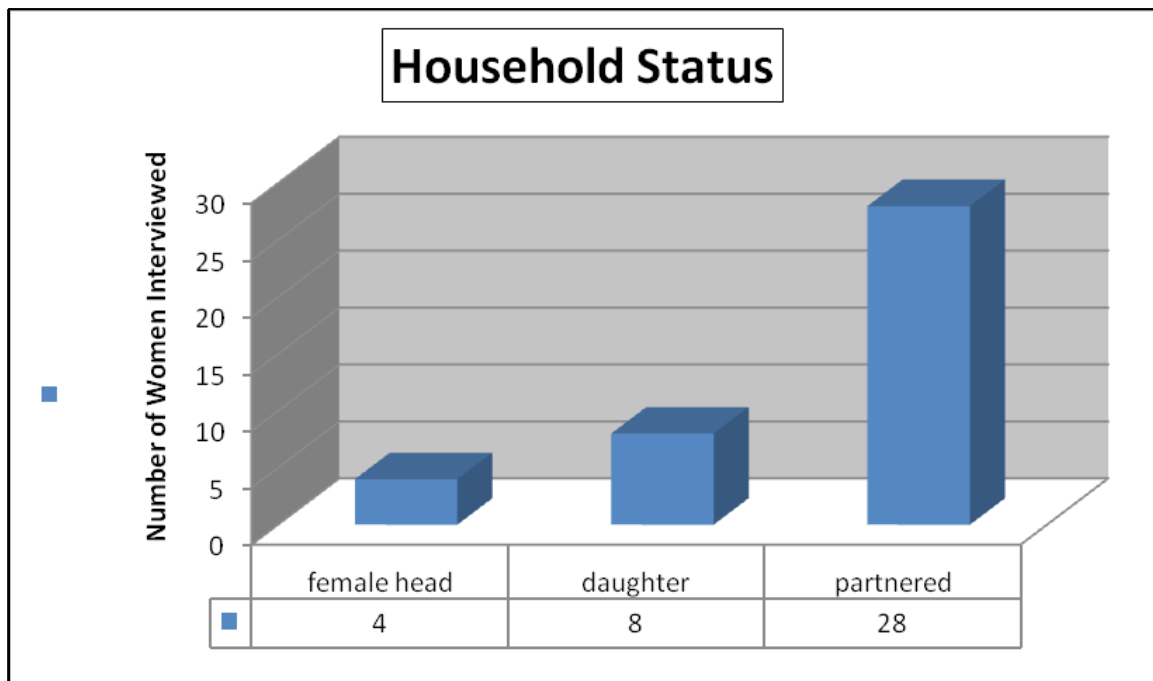


Figure 3.3 Sample by Household Status n = 40

The average number of members in the households I sampled was 4 people. Of the 34 households⁶⁸ represented among my core sample population, 29 were nuclear households. Of these, 25 households were couples with dependent children, 1 household was headed by a widower with dependent children, and 3 households were headed by a female with dependent children.⁶⁹ There were 4 households composed of couples with no dependents and 1 household with a single female.

⁶⁸ The reason there is a difference between the total in the core sample of 40 women and the total of 34 households is because there are 6 women within the total of 40 who live in the same household with another woman in the sample.

⁶⁹ In one of the female headed households, the woman firmly identified herself as the head of the household though she lived with a male partner. Among the partnered women, one young woman chose to end her marriage and returned to her parents' home during the research period.

Table 3.1 Household Composition n = 34

Couples with dependent children	Single male head of household with dependents	Female head with dependent children	Couples	Single female head of household
25	1	3	4	1

Table 3.2 Household Type n = 34

Nuclear	Single	Couple
29	1	4

From the census data I collected, approximately 250 of 340 households (74%) I surveyed in Mata Ortíz were involved in the pottery industry, to greater or lesser extents.⁷⁰ Pottery production has proven to be lucrative enough that households have expanded their participation beyond the point where it is simply supplementary income. Pottery sales have become the primary income for a significant number of households in Mata Ortíz. This trend is consistent with June Nash's 1990 observation that an increasing number of rural Latin American households shifted to craft production when faced with the decreasing ability to rely upon subsistence farming for their survival (Nash 1994; 1993; 1990). More recently, Rudy Colloredo-Mansfeld and Les Field have both addressed the unexpected persistence and surge of artisanal commodity production within economies that have "embraced promarket reforms" and are directly experiencing the hardships of globalization (Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002:115). Such hardships as the collapse of subsistence systems and the "failure of industrial modernization to incorporate the entire workforce" have driven many into artisan trades (Colloredo-

⁷⁰ While pottery has proved to be a viable option for some, an estimated 90 households (26%) were not involved in this industry in 1999.

Mansfeld 2002:115). Field points out that artisanal production has surprisingly “proliferated in Third World economies not in spite of the spread of capitalist relations of production but because of it” (Field 2002:127).

Among the 34 households represented in my core sample of 40 women potters, the majority, 28 (82%) of the 34 households relied upon mixed, or multiple, strategies for generating income and the remaining 6 households (18%) relied on pottery sales as the sole source of household income. As is the case in many of Mexico’s rural communities,

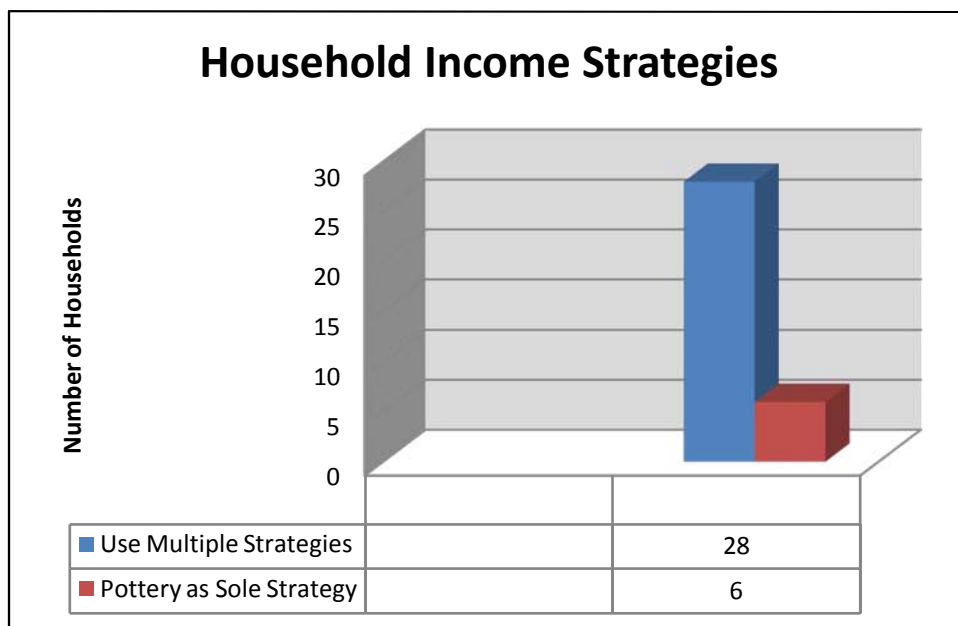


Figure 3.4 Household Income Strategies n = 34

most households in Mata Ortiz are no longer solely dependent on subsistence farming. The earlier period of economic decline which began in the early 1960s with the loss of the railroad yard was exacerbated by Mexico’s deepening economic crisis of the mid-1980s. Rising inflation and reduced government subsidies, drought conditions of the last decade, and new and ever-expanding consumer practices have compelled Mata Ortiz households to rely upon a combination of multiple income strategies, including

subsistence farming and small scale ranching in addition to pottery making. Other household survival strategies include migration to urban centers, and between Mexico and the United States. By the 1990s, the pottery expansion had begun to fill the local economic void. The various kinds of strategies being utilized in combination with pottery making in 28 of the 34 households I interviewed in the late 1990s are represented in Figure 3.5.

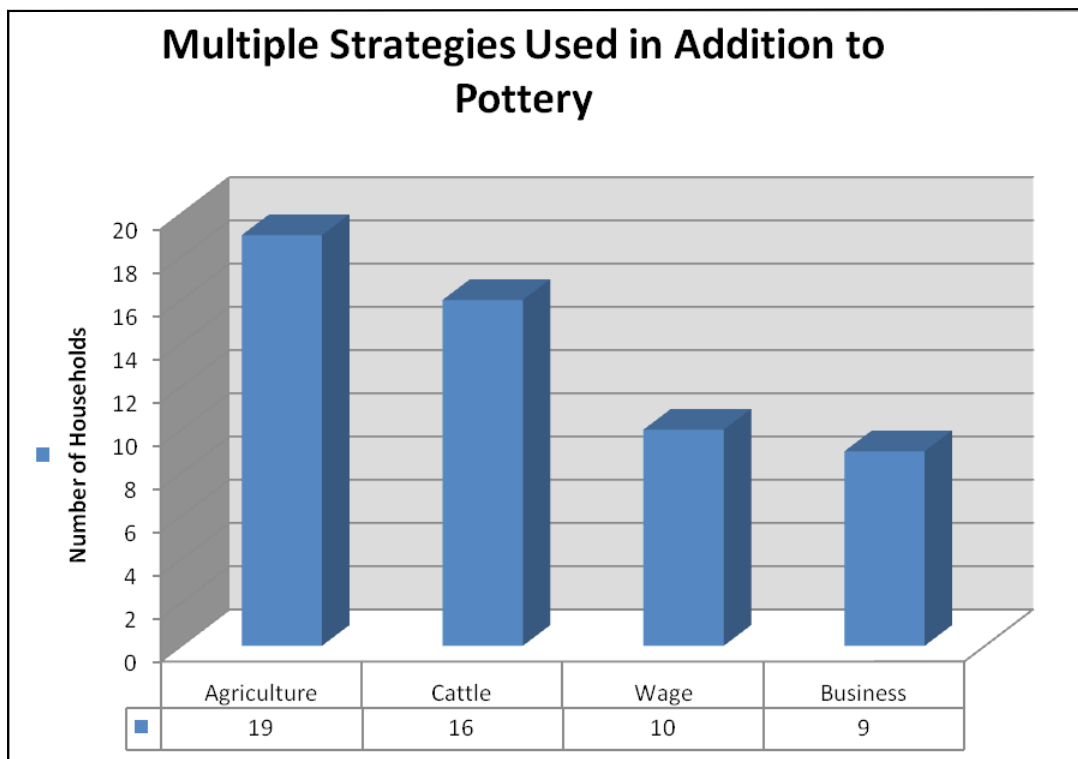


Figure 3.5 Multiple Strategies for Income

Within 28 (82%) of the 34 total households, two or more of these strategies were often combined, and in some cases all four strategies were used to augment the household income. Of these, 26 (76%) partnered women were in households that employed multiple income strategies such as working agricultural fields, cattle, wage labor, and operating a small business to make up the income gap. There were 19 (56%) partnered

households in the total 34 households that relied upon pottery sales as the primary source of income, however, not as the sole source of income. Another 7 (21%) of these partnered women were in households where one or more of the four strategies in Figure 3.5 provided the primary source of income over pottery sales. These numbers indicate that partnered women are more likely to be in a household with access to secondary sources of income.

Among the 28 households of partnered women, 2 (6%) of the 28 partnered women I interviewed were in households that relied on pottery sales as the sole source of income. These 2 households were young couples who had not experienced a level of success that would allow them to acquire land or cattle, or to accumulate capital to start a business. The other 4 women of the 6 in households which relied upon pottery sales as the sole source of income are the 4 single heads of households (see Figure 3.4).

All 8 of the single daughters were in households where other family members made pottery as well. Of the 34 households, 7 (21%) relied upon pottery as the primary source of income and in the eighth household, agriculture was the primary source of income. Among the households with single daughters producing pottery, in 4 (12%) households, the single daughters turned over the bulk of their income to the household while in the other 4 (12%) households, the single daughters maintained control over their income. By generating income, single daughters bolstered the resource base and income potential for the household.

Impact: The Interaction between the Pottery Industry and the Local Economy

The impact of the pottery industry on the local economy can be discussed in relation to three key themes: the privatization of previously communal lands, rising

inequality in wealth, and the influx of American newcomers on local real estate. As described in the review of the village's history in chapter two, the railroad repair yard and sawmills supported the local economy in the past; however, none of these are currently in operation. Mata Ortíz's economy today is based largely on the pottery industry.

Demand for the pottery, both nationally and internationally, has fostered a strong and vital market. To date, pottery prices have not declined since the industry's inception, but rather have increased in tandem with the rising demand resulting from increased market and media exposure. Cattle, agriculture, and more recently, small scale agricultural production for the national market contribute to the local economy as well. I was told that in the years prior to the pottery industry, ranching was practiced only by a few of the wealthiest residents in Mata Ortíz. Today, most of the successful male potters are among the wealthiest residents, and their involvement in ranching reflects one of the most significant impacts of the pottery industry on the local economy. All of the men I interviewed jointly with their wives had worked as day laborers at some point in their work histories, prior to becoming involved in pottery. None of these men were *ejido* members prior to becoming potters (though a few of their fathers were); however, of these ten men, six are now *ejido* members and landholders. *Ejido* membership is a crucial dividing factor within the village, as membership determines whether one has access to land for ranching and agriculture. Increased income from pottery sales has enhanced the accumulation of capital for some individuals and has structured a differentiation by wealth within the community. For the majority of those who have it, this new capital is going back into the traditional subsistence sources: land and cattle.

Privatization of Previously Communal Lands and Rising Inequality in Wealth

The *ejido* of Mata Ortiz was formed by the federal government in the late 1930s. It is comprised in part, of lands which had previously belonged to the lumber company and to the railroad (Parks 1993:89). Not everyone in the village is an *ejido* member nor does everyone own land. *Ejido* membership had grown from the original forty members to roughly two hundred members in 1999.⁷¹ With the assumption that each member represents at least one household, 200 (59%) of the 340 households of the community have access to *ejido* lands and approximately 140 (41%) of households do not. Estes notes that the *ejido* was enlarged in 1972 and again in 1997, but by 1999 there was no land available for new allocations (personal communication with *ejido* members, 1999; Estes 2003:74). There were no women within the *ejido* membership during the years I spent in Mata Ortiz, and to my knowledge, there never have been.⁷² Many women and men continue to work in the nearby Mormon agricultural fields and in general, their earnings are not sufficient to accumulate the capital that would allow them to purchase land. Others leave the village to go north to the United States to earn an income.

I do not mean to imply that *ejido* membership ensures economic security. As discussed in the previous section, a number of factors (e.g. drought, cutbacks in government subsidies) have caused many households to employ multiple strategies to make ends meet. Also, the farmers I spoke with explained that since the majority of Mata Ortiz farmers are involved in government-sponsored subsidy programs, they are

⁷¹ In discussions with *ejiditarios*, (*ejido* members), I was told the membership in 1998-1999 was (more or less) 200.

⁷² Women do own non-*ejido* land and four young single women among my informants purchased land with the intent of building a home during this research period.

obligated to sell a portion of their crops back to the government (Procampo)⁷³ at rates that tend to be substantially lower than the current market value. Any surplus is sold on the commercial market and because crop yields tend to be fairly small, little remains for household use. In the winter of 1999, one housewife lamented that she was paying considerably more for beans in the local market than her husband had been paid for his crop by the government subsidy agency.

Amendments made in 1994 to Article 27 of Mexico's Constitution allowed for the privatization of *ejido*, or communally owned lands, and some residents had begun the process of certifying their ownership of property in 1999.⁷⁴ Gaining property titles for what had previously been *ejido* land turned out to be a lengthy process and I was told that some people were still in the process of gaining titles as late as 2006. As might be expected, the more successful pottery making households are increasing their land holdings. With the possibility of private ownership of land, the likelihood of wealth disparities has become more apparent. With land privatization, owners now are required to pay taxes and this has caused hardships for certain households. It is likely that poorer members who are unable to pay their taxes may lose control over their holdings and opt to sell or lease their holdings to wealthier residents. The wealthier individuals in the community are ending up with more land and more resources while the poor, less empowered individuals in the community are becoming poorer.

⁷³ Procampo, (Program of Direct Support Payments to the Countryside) is a farm policy, direct subsidy program "designed to be more compatible with the principles of free trade" initiated by President Salinas in 1993 (Barry 1995:47, 106).

⁷⁴ See Barry (1995:123) for discussion of the implications of these amendments on the privatization of communally held *ejido* lands.

An important point to note is that even though the previously communal lands have come under private ownership, the *ejido* organization persists. The membership continues to work cooperatively in controlling the water and grazing rights among its members. *Ejido* membership and land ownership are key factors in determining who has open access to the land surrounding the village for gathering the raw materials essential to pottery making: clay, minerals, and wood and cow dung for fuel. Determination of who will have access to specific areas and resources has become an increasingly important issue in Mata Ortíz. Wood is scarce and even collecting *buñiga*, or cow dung, may be restricted at times by those who control the grazing lands. Again, the *ejido* members and cattlemen have an advantage in this respect. I was told there have been contentions over access to particular areas favored for mining clay and minerals for pigments. As a result, potters have become increasingly territorial regarding the areas they rely upon to gather clay, pigments, wood, and dung.

Pottery making, though labor intensive, continues to make good sense economically for those with access to the raw materials needed. Its most obvious advantage is the low capital investment required to get started. While I was living in Mata Ortíz in 1999, many people were still gathering the clay, pigments, and cow dung needed for their own pottery production. However, as wood was becoming increasingly scarce in the immediate area around the village, it became common practice for potters to purchase fuel from individuals who came to Mata Ortíz from Nuevo Casas Grandes to sell wood. When I asked potters why they were not gathering the fuel themselves, they often gave two reasons: first, it made more sense economically to use their time to make pottery rather than taking a full day to go to the countryside to gather fuel. The second

reason was that access to areas where wood, clay, and minerals for pigment could be gathered was becoming increasingly restricted. Since the privatization of *ejido* lands and the increased concentration of land ownership by fewer households, more small scale producers of low-end, inexpensive pottery were forced to pay for raw materials that had once been readily available. Rising production costs made it increasingly difficult for smaller producers to see profits from their pottery production and caused some to give up pottery making altogether. While scarcity and competition over local resources have encouraged the development of “spin off” businesses, so has the practice of paying others to do atomized or segmented tasks such as making blank pots, producing paint, or sanding other people’s pots.

The ability to complete the pottery process from start to finish was still recognized locally as the distinguishing criterion of a “true potter” during the time of my research. Many of the potters in Mata Ortiz continue to meet this criterion; however, within certain pottery making households, labor organization in practice often involves members cooperating in the production process, segmenting tasks and dividing these among themselves. As mentioned, it has become increasingly common over the past twelve years or so for some households to concentrate on forming blanks, i.e., forming pots for other potters to buy, paint, sign, and fire. It was difficult to ascertain which households are involved in these segmented production tasks because potters are often reluctant to admit they have not formed the pots they are painting and signing. In an art market where signature often signals an art object produced solely by one individual – or at least by the members of a particular household – there was reluctance on the part of

some potters to admit that pots were made by someone from outside their own households.

Other “spin-off” businesses include households that specialize in processing minerals into pigments to be used in making paint. One of my neighbors in Barrio El Porvenir earned a meager income by sanding unfired pottery for other potters. Making *aros*, the clay rings used to display the pots, requires basic pottery making skills and has become a source of income for some individuals. In 1997 one widow in Barrio Americano became known for crocheting a yarn covering over the clay display rings, which prevents the pottery from being scratched. Other women and young girls copied her innovation and were maintaining a small niche within the wider market.

Despite the development of “spin-off” businesses, the positive economic effects of the pottery industry have not trickled down to improve the lives of those most vulnerable in Mata Ortíz: the unskilled, poor, unemployed, and elderly. Any trickle-down effect on those residents living at the lower rungs of the economy is limited to menial labor jobs which have been created in the wake of infused capital. The result is that potters who are better off are increasingly hiring others to do certain low skill tasks. Hence, the prosperity experienced by some may be masking the effects of economic crisis on other households. Certain individuals and households have benefited but not all, indicating a hierarchy of social relations and a stratification of inequalities within the overall political economy (Roseberry 1989).

Similar to George Foster’s findings in Tzintzuntzan (1988), a significant sector of the population in Mata Ortíz has not moved beyond the bare subsistence level. Foster attributed this trend to a lack of innovation or willingness to take risks among some

individuals. In the case of the artists in Mata Ortíz, I maintain the reasons have more to do with the cumulative and cross-cutting effects of existing inequalities in wealth, access to opportunities, and individual talent.

Potters understand the market exists because of their labor and because of the international consumer demand for their goods. Many potters continue to improve their craft and try their hand at innovative forms and designs while earning a modest profit from their work. The experiences of the fortunate few cannot be assumed to be indicative of widespread prosperity or signal a village-wide improvement in the general economic welfare of Mata Ortíz.

Tourism, Newcomers and Real Estate

The residents of the village are dealing not only with the social upheaval that came with the rapid influx of cash and the ability to accumulate capital, but also with the unanticipated consequences of tourism. The pottery market developed in response to desires and tastes of an outside market, and tourism followed on its heels. A sizeable portion of the income derived from tourism goes into the pockets of tour directors before the tourists ever cross the international border. The local economy relies largely on the direct sale of pottery for its share of profits from tourism. The fact that tourism was neither initiated locally nor managed by locals⁷⁵ raises certain questions about its direct benefits to the village.

The first *pension* or lodging with meals to open in the village was built in the early 1990s by Mike Williams from Phoenix, Arizona. His intent was to meet the needs of tourists coming to the village to purchase pottery directly from the potters. Williams

⁷⁵ By local, I am referring specifically to residents of Mata Ortíz. There are tourism specialists working in Nuevo Casas Grandes who do benefit from the touristification of the region.

shared ownership of *La Posada de las Ollas* with a local man, to whom sole ownership of the pension has since been transferred. In the late 1990s a U.S. trader, Jerry Boyd expanded his home in Mata Ortiz into a hotel large enough to accommodate sizeable tourist groups. Jointly owned and operated with his Mexican partner Jorje Quintana, who is also a prominent potter, the Adobe Inn is the largest, most comfortable and therefore most popular place to stay in the village. While this hotel posed competition to the existing lodgings in the village, which are modest in comparison, it provided employment opportunities for local residents. In addition to the regular staff of two women, others are employed temporarily to cook and clean when large groups are staying at the hotel.

When this research began in 1998, there were ten houses owned by Americans. Most of these houses were owned by traders, who used them as part-time residences while they were in the village for business. By the end of the research period in 1999, two traders had built homes and had made the village their primary residence. In the years since my research, there has been a significant increase in real estate sales to Americans. The number of Americans establishing part-time residences, particularly after retirement, has more than tripled. Typically, people buy existing houses in poor condition and then remodel them into homes that approach and often meet contemporary housing standards in the United States. More recently, the trend has shifted to building new homes. This trend raises questions about what impact this influx of wealthier newcomers will have on local residents within the village economy.

The inflation of real estate prices has serious implications for small scale farmers, agricultural wage laborers, and those who work on the fringes of the pottery industry, as well as their children. While I was living in the village, young couples often rented

rooms, typically in older homes, for the equivalent of about \$100 a month. Some of these older buildings have been purchased by Americans. It is unlikely that young local families will be able to compete with buyers who are willing and able to pay higher prices, \$15,000 or more, for homes that were available as recently as 1998 for \$1000 to \$1500. Occasionally, sales of local houses to Americans have precipitated conflicts among Mexican family members over the rights of ownership claimed by American buyers.⁷⁶

With few options, people living at the lower rungs of the economy may be forced to leave the village when the cost of renting and owning a house increases to the point they can no longer afford to stay on (Rodríguez 1990:542). Dislocation of the local population, particularly the younger generation, may well result from this disruption in the local economy. As needs for services increase, (e.g. sanitation, water, police) so will demands on the local infrastructure. One likely possibility is that the governing municipality in Viejo Casas Grandes will demand a greater share of Mata Ortiz's revenue.

Summary

In this chapter I have related my experience of becoming involved in the community of Mata Ortiz and have described the issues that first sparked my interest. This chapter illustrates how data were gathered through the various ethnographic methods I employed while in the field. These included systematic interviews, which incorporated a standard group of questions designed to elicit each woman's personal

⁷⁶ The laws regarding real estate and ownership by foreigners in Mexico are complicated and beyond the scope of this discussion. Local interpretation of these laws – right or wrong, has led to complicated confrontations between Americans and Mexicans, over who really holds the lawful title to properties.

history and particular approach to her art, as well as through open-ended conversations. I sought to engage the women in discussions of their art in order to access the artistic knowledge, practice, and local aesthetic standards which became the primary interpretive and organizational framework. In chapter two, I outlined the history of the pottery tradition through introductions to Juan Quezada, his initial students, and individual women, using portraits which featured the women who entered pottery making during those decades. This chapter concluded with a summary of how the growth of the pottery industry by the end of the 1990s, had led to an increase in tourism which has in turn brought about an inflation of real estate values in the village. I discussed these issues in light of the privatization of previously communal lands to consider how these have affected local economic conditions and prospects for the future. Thus far, the first three chapters have provided the theoretical, historical, and methodological backgrounds for chapters four, five, and six, which follow.

This dissertation is organized around three central questions. One is the impact of women's contributions to the community's aesthetic tradition, which is the subject of the fourth chapter. The second question addresses how three aspects of women's artistic work: aesthetics, production, and the market interact to create contexts which offer potential for their growing empowerment. This is the subject of the fifth chapter. How women have actively responded to market forces and expanded their position within the market to achieve economic success is the focus of the sixth chapter. My methodology was aimed at discovering the means by which the aesthetics of pottery making and the practicalities of production hold the potential for women to become empowered through

their artistic work. In-depth interviews and abundant opportunities for participant observation yielded the rich data that form the basis of the next three chapters.

I begin the fourth chapter by first discussing Juan Quezada's role as the prime innovator of the pottery industry, examining how major shifts in his work are reflected in the work of his first students. Juan, his brothers Nicolás and Reynaldo, his two sisters Lydia and Consolación, and a third student, Taurina Baca Tena were among the first in the village to begin making pottery. Juan Quezada provided the initial impetus and his work continues to be the standard to which most potters aspire. As Juan diverged and initiated one innovation or another, these aesthetic decisions effected changes in his students' work. His immediate family and students responded with their individual interpretations of his innovations and these radiated outward, influencing the direction of aesthetic development for the entire village. I introduce more of the women who participated in this study in chapters four and five. I expand the portraits of those introduced so far by discussing the women and their contributions through examples of their work. I use photographic images throughout the following chapter as both illustrations and visual data to demonstrate points of aesthetic development and distinction.

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHNOAESTHETICS

The contemporary production of pottery in Mata Ortiz is inspired by visual images coming from the archaeological past through prehistoric ceramics of the archaeological site at nearby Paquimé (see Figure 4.1). Although the pottery tradition was initiated by one man, Juan Quezada (see Figure 4.2), it quickly emerged as an aesthetic⁷⁷ system which is neither male nor female. In this chapter, I argue that women are making substantial and important contributions to the ongoing development of local artistic standards and criteria of excellence within this mixed-gender aesthetic tradition. Women have been at the forefront of this dynamic art form since its inception. Though outnumbered by men, women are positioned among the best known potters. The art of



Figure 4.1 Prehistoric Casas Grandes pot.
Courtesy of El Paso Museum of Archaeology.
Photography by Pamela Price Kogler.

⁷⁷ Aesthetics, as I am using it in this instance refers to a set of principles, defined from the perspective of the artists themselves, which guide their individual artistic endeavors and expression.

Juan Quezada Celado, his sister Lydia Quezada Celado, and their siblings brought international attention to this rural Chihuahuan community.

Rarely is it possible to document the emergence of an art form and its aesthetic system in such detail as in the case of Mata Ortíz. The extensive collections of prehistoric Casas Grandes ceramics housed in museum and university collections throughout the United States, Canada, and beyond embody the archaeological reference and inspiration for the structure, form, and design of the contemporary pottery.

Beginning in the early 1970s, pottery made by Juan Quezada and the women and men he taught began to be collected, forming the basis of major institutional and personal collections throughout the world. Since the mid-1980s, these collections have expanded to include work by potters throughout the wider community. These collections, both prehistoric and contemporary, provide rich documentation of this art form.



Figure 4.2 Olla made by Juan Quezada and purchased in February 1978.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter P. Parks.

In this chapter, I focus on women's innovations and contributions as processual, analyzing their participation over time. There are three sections to this chapter. First, I preface the discussion of women's contributions and innovations with a *précis*, or synopsis, of the aesthetic and technical principles involved in making a beautiful pot as conveyed by the women themselves in their interviews. Second, I present photographic images of the early work of three of Juan Quezada's female students: his two sisters, Lydia Quezada Celado and Consolación Quezada Celado, and a third student, Taurina Baca Tena. Their work during the initial years from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s demonstrates how they not only adopted Juan's key design principles,⁷⁸ but also infused and contributed to his work by developing their own styles.

In addition to the work of these first three women, in the third section I draw upon a wider range of examples to include women who entered pottery making in the second phase of expansion in the early 1980s. Again, I use photographic images of women's work to support my argument that individual women, as well as those who co-produce with their husbands/partners, have expanded upon Juan's work to generate new interpretations and innovative contributions. I discuss their work within a framework of five key aesthetic design features, or guiding principles that came out of conversations with these women about their work. These are *movimiento*, (or movement), complexity, naturalism, filled space, and surface treatment.

Within the local aesthetic system in Mata Ortiz, emphasis is placed on beautiful shapes that are technically well-executed with thin walls, balanced in proportion, form, and symmetry. Potters strive to achieve balance between the form of the pot and the

⁷⁸ The key design principles are those described and documented by Spencer H. MacCallum (MacCallum 1979:64).

visual organization of its decorated surface. Dominant principles emphasized within painted designs include abstraction as well as naturalism, reversals of positive and negative spaces, and the repetition of angular, geometric motifs. Curvilinear, swirling lines within diagonal layouts are often employed to achieve fluidity, rhythm, and movement in the overall design. Visual appeal is accomplished through the choice of specific colors and balancing the degree of contrast between them.

I am in agreement with both Spencer MacCallum (MacCallum 1979:52-61) and Bill Gilbert about the importance of Juan Quezada's role in determining the direction that has led to a community aesthetic based on "individual experimentation and innovations, and away from rigid adherence to tradition" (Gilbert 1995a:52). It was clear from the beginning that Juan was using the prehistoric designs on the Casas Grandes artifacts to create his own original designs and painting style (MacCallum 1979:62; Gilbert 2000a:13). From Juan Quezada's initial revival of pottery making to the present, the emphasis remains on expression of individual creativity rather than on copying or mass production. Over time, the artistic criteria and evaluation of this aesthetic tradition have become more exacting and demanding. The quality of the pottery continues to become finer, with increasing complexity.

In discussions centered on what women are striving for as they make their pottery, three themes emerged consistently in the interviews: innovation, distinction, and the pursuit of technical excellence. Innovation is tied to distinction inasmuch as potters, male and female, strive to develop their own unique signature styles and be recognized as individual artists.

As Gaby Almeida's husband, César Domínguez, eloquently explained:

Today, the designs of Paquimé seem very simple in comparison to the pots being made now. Every day, we are trying to get better at making more complicated designs. For this reason, now there is no longer much relation to Paquimé. All of the designs are in the manner of doing something similar to the designs of Juan Quezada. The majority of the artists are doing this. But each artist is adding their own particular special touch.

Today, all of the artists are continuing to invent their own new designs and new forms. To me, the magnificent and fabulous thing about Mata Ortíz is that new things and new designs keep coming out of it. With more time, things become even more complicated, more intricate. For us, it is almost like a kind of competition to discover how to create more intricate designs on the pots (César Domínguez, interview, May 1, 1999).

Women were well represented within the initial circle of students Juan Quezada apprenticed in the 1970s.⁷⁹ His sisters, Lydia Quezada Celado and Consolación Quezada Celado, and family friend, Taurina Baca Tena are prominent among these women. All three women, as well as others who were among his early students were interviewed during this research. By including women from the beginning, Juan Quezada facilitated women's participation and pottery making emerged as an option to generate income for both women and men. Considering the scarcity of gainful employment for men during those years, one might expect women to have been excluded. Instead, women contribute as fully engaged active participants, distinguishing themselves within this mixed-gender aesthetic tradition while working as independents, in collaboration with family or in partnerships with men.

Throughout this chapter, I use interview data and analysis of photographic images of pottery made by women to demonstrate the extent of their contributions to the aesthetic system of this art form. Through the reciprocal exchange of information and

⁷⁹ As mentioned in chapter two, Consolación Quezada named the following women among those who learned pottery making from the Quezada family in the 1970s: Lupe Cota, Rosa Lucero, Olivia López Quezada, Christina Ortega, Yolanda López, Rose Irene López, Chela López, and Luz María Gallegos.

ideas between women and men, women have participated as both students and teachers. As much as men, women have become outstanding exemplars by developing unique signature styles, techniques, and designs through individual creative expression. In doing so, they secured their place within this thriving and dynamic art tradition and its market.

The earliest pottery produced by Juan Quezada and his first students clearly showed the dominant influence of the prehistoric pottery in the nascent development of aesthetics among these potters. As I discussed in the introduction, contemporary potters in Mata Ortiz work within a modern aesthetic that has developed out of, but distinctively away from, the collective body of prehistoric ware. Production is not limited to replication of these forms; instead, prehistoric design elements and forms are incorporated within contemporary pottery in innovative ways that are distinctly modern and original. It is important to recognize that the aesthetic and technical principles developed by these contemporary potters are specific to their experiences within the 20th and 21st centuries. The system of community aesthetics, or more specifically the contemporary ethnoaesthetics,⁸⁰ has developed in response to the prehistoric objects the potters encounter in their immediate environment,⁸¹ to client tastes, as well as in response to ongoing artistic critique among themselves.

As I emphasized in the description of my methodology, the interviews focused on understanding women's intentions as they made aesthetic choices and decisions while making their pots. My aim was to elicit the guiding principles employed by both female

⁸⁰ Here, ethnoaesthetics refers to the shared collective principles, standards, criteria, and meanings operative within the community of potters in Mata Ortiz as defined from the perspective of the artists themselves.

⁸¹ Since the *Museo de las Culturas del Norte* opened in nearby Viejo Casas Grandes in 1997, potters have opportunities to view the collections of prehistoric artifacts.

and male potters in order to better understand the role of aesthetics within the community of potters from the perspective of the women I spoke with (Salvador 2003:59; 1995:xi; 1997:xxii; 1978).

Male and female potters spoke of constantly striving to improve their skill and technical execution in order to surpass the last pot they made. They also described how they strove to create pottery that met market demand. Maintaining a balance between these goals can result in both creative tensions and constraints on creativity, with various outcomes. The degree to which aesthetic choices and decisions are in sync with the market is often the deciding factor, determining a potter's economic viability and success in a competitive international ethnic art market. First and foremost, pottery making is about women and men making money for their households (Salvador 2003; Chibnik 2003; Field 1999). Within an economic model of artistic production, male and female potters are making aesthetic choices and decisions as they do their economic work.

Potters are constantly seeking ways to make their production more profitable and as entrepreneurs, they value innovation (Greenfield 2004:74). Indeed, competition and the possibility of economic success stimulate the development of this highly specialized system of artistic production. Guided by a demanding system of aesthetics, criticism, and evaluation, pottery production has increased in proportion to the expansion of the market.

Much of what is known about pottery making communities in México is generalized from the predominance of studies in which the potter is the male head of household (Foster 1988; Lackey 1982; Papousek 1981; Diaz 1966). The image emerging from these studies depicts women's roles in pottery making as purely supportive, secondary help. As I have described, this was not what I observed in Mata Ortíz. While

both men and women strive to improve household income through their artistic work, women's aesthetic and labor contributions have been substantial from the beginning. The women I met in Mata Ortiz were not passive participants in the endeavor but were fully engaged, active agents in the development of the art world and marketplace in Mata Ortiz (see Tiano 1994; Field 1999).

There has been scant attention given to the women potters in Mata Ortiz (Barta 2003; Estes 2003; Hughes 2001; Williams 1993), even though an extensive body of literature focuses on male potters and specifically on Juan Quezada and his role in the development of the pottery industry (Hernández 2008; Turok 2004; Gilbert 2004, 1995b; Lowell et al. 1999; MacCallum 1994, 1979; Parks 1993; Cahill 1991). Other published documentation consists largely of photographic essays, exhibit catalogues, and videos (Gilbert 2000a, 2000b; 1999, 1995; *Artes de México* 1999; Smith 1997; Goebel 1997; Goffin 1994; Price 1992).

In the following synopsis, I present the aesthetic and technical principles that guide the way potters deal with the clay as they produce beautiful and saleable objects. A shared understanding of local aesthetic criteria and conventions guides the choice and preparation of materials, methods, and techniques used to form and paint the pottery. Likewise, technical excellence, aesthetic evaluation, and the artists' abilities and talents in making pottery are evaluated by these aesthetic criteria (Salvador 2003:58-60). These principles are based upon my conversations with women and men during the research period.

Patricia Marks Greenfield has aptly noted it is often the case within artistic communities that as design rules become more complex, they can become more

inaccessible or oblique to verbal interview. However, people can readily respond and often do so when they are shown an object that breaks the rules (Greenfield 2004:96; see also Kinsella 2005). For this reason, I draw upon women's individual descriptions, in their own words, to discern their intentions and understand what they were striving for. I also relied upon my own observations and my own experiences in learning to make pottery with my teachers, Lupe Cota and her daughters, Laura and Elvira Bugarini Cota. Assuredly, there were ample opportunities to observe instances when rules were broken within the wider community, particularly during my own learning experiences.

Aesthetic and Technical Principles: Making a Beautiful Pot

The clay and the minerals used to make and decorate the pottery are mined from the hills above Mata Ortiz. Qualities of the clay such as its strength, smoothness, color qualities (i.e. whiteness), and its plasticity or malleability determine individual preferences for certain clays. Potters often mix clays from various locations to achieve the strength and plasticity they desire, as well as to produce a variety of colors.

The area is rich in fine kaolin clays which are highly valued for their whiteness. Though it is more difficult to work with, white clay is the preferred choice of more experienced potters. Early in his experimentation with clays, Juan Quezada recognized the need to add *liga* (literally meaning alloy), (Bell 1994:41) such as sand, crushed rocks, or sherds to serve as a non-plastic temper to control for shrinkage and cracking (MacCallum 1979:56; Brody 1990:58; Scothorn 1996:19). However, these altered the whiteness of the clay. Eventually, he located clays with sufficient volcanic ash or sand content to maintain the brilliant white color of the delicate kaolin clays (Bell 1994:41). Experienced potters continue to seek out deposits of clays with high kaolin content. The

difficulty in working with this more challenging clay renders prestige to the makers, many of whom are represented among the women interviewed.

The clay is processed and refined through a series of steps in which the clay is soaked, the sediment is removed, and the resulting clay slurry is strained to remove debris. There is some variability among potters as to how fine they sieve the clay, depending upon the amount of temper content they desire (Bell 1994:42). Generally the clay is placed to dry in a rectangular wooden drying box called a *secador* that may either be lined with plaster that absorbs the moisture from the clay, or simply lined with a screen bottom. Potters devise their own methods, often making do with what is available.

I do not have a *secador*, so it takes about five or six days. If the climate is bad, it takes more time; less time if the weather is better (María de Jesus “Doña Chu” Celado, interview, March 1, 1999).

Once it is reconstituted, the clay is kneaded to remove air bubbles. Doña Chu cautioned:

When the clay is like *masa* (dough for corn tortillas) then it is ready. Sometimes the pot explodes because there are *globos* (air bubbles). One day, I broke three because I did not knead the clay well and it made air bubbles. I broke some little pots that day too (María de Jesus “Chu” Celado, interview, March 1, 1999).

Another challenging clay is *mezcla*, or mixed, marbled clay developed by Juan’s brother Reynaldo. This clay is made by mixing various shades and hues of clay together and blending just enough to give a marbled appearance to the clay. Potters expressed mixed feelings about this specialized clay and not everyone is willing or able to work with it. Others thought it was “too busy.” These mixed feelings may have to do with the level of skill required in processing it, since it is a popular style that sells well.

The *ollas* are hand-built through a process of pinching thick coils of clay together. The pot begins as a ball of clay rolled out into a flat circular shape referred to as a *tortilla*.

Typically, the thin flat *tortilla* is placed within a concave *molde*⁸² made of plaster of paris. Most potters use this type of base, though there are some variations among potters (MacCallum 1979:58; see Bell 1994:45). Ropes of clay called *chorizos* are added to the base and the two are joined by pinching the rope to the tortilla base. The clay is pinched and pulled upwards, taking shape and fullness in the potter's hands. The walls of the *olla* are built up progressively to the height and shape desired using this method (see Figure 4.3). Additional ropes of clay are added, depending upon the size and fullness desired.

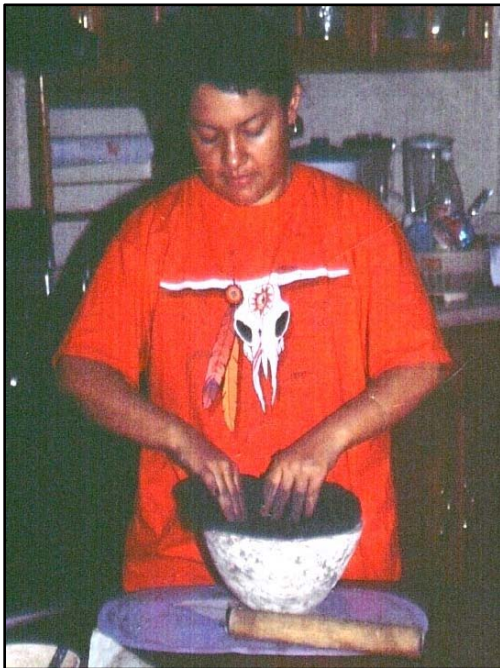


Figure 4.3 Lucía Mora de Bugarini adding the chorizo of clay to the tortilla base in the mold in 1998.

As with other techniques, individuals have their own variations on the coil and pinch method. The Ortíz brothers, Felix and Emeterio, formed the entire pot using only

⁸² After many attempts to form an even base on his pots, Juan Quezada fashioned these shallow bowls after those he saw in prehistoric burials. With his knowledge of the absorbent properties of plaster gained during his work in construction, Juan realized the clay would not stick to the plaster mold and could be easily removed (Bell 1994:45; MacCallum 1979:38-39; 58).

one long continuous coil (MacCallum 1980b:5; see Bell 1994:47-50). While I was interviewing his daughter Rosario, Ramiro Veloz Sr. described to me how instead of coiling and pinching, he and his brother Saul built their *ollas* from a single ball of clay, pulling the walls of the pot upward and pinching the clay into the desired shape (Ramiro Veloz Sr., during interview with Rosario Veloz, September 6, 1999).

All the while, the potter is skilfully forming the symmetrical shape desired. The seams where the coils join are smoothed and excess clay is carefully scraped away from the surface using the serrated edges of a small saw blade called a *seguete* to create delicate thin-walled vessels (see Figure 4.4). Potters take care in the manufacturing process to balance the proportions of the body of the pot.



Figure 4.4 Lucía Mora using a *seguete* to smooth the seams where coils are joined.

In approaching the process of forming an *olla*, Lydia Quezada spoke of the attributes essential for her to create a beautiful pot:

From the moment I have the material in my hands, the clay begins to build up the *olla*. It begins to give its form right then. Once I start to work, the clay begins to

tell me ... how it wants me to make it. First, is the thickness of the *olla*. After that, is *la forma*, the shape. For the *olla* to have a complete form, it has to have a perfect form in the base (Lydia Quezada, interview, March 30, 1999).

She emphasized that an *olla* must have a base of a certain size and explained she did not know this at first, but in time she realized the base dictates the size and shape of the *olla*.

The pot is sanded after it has thoroughly dried to a bone dry stage over a period of a few days or longer, depending upon the weather. The process of sanding eliminates air bubbles, cracks or pores, and pebbles. It is an essential step in preparing a smooth surface on the pot prior to painting. Knowing how to sand is crucial. One must be careful to sand the pot evenly and not too thin, or it will break in firing. An undetected grain of sand or an air bubble may cause the pot to break in the firing as well. To complete this process, potters utilize several grades of sandpaper to achieve an even and smooth surface.

Many potters aim to express their artistry through the symmetry and thinness of the walls of the pot. As Miriam Gallegos Martínez pointed out, “The thinness of the walls makes the *olla* light and this is very fine.” In addition to the individual skill required to form thin walls, Jan Bell proposes that the practice of sanding pots before painting them, as initiated by Reynaldo Quezada around 1978, is the critical step in the process that accounts for the thinness so characteristic of Mata Ortiz pottery (Bell 1994:54).

Polishing is the next step in preparing the clay for the application of paint. Good polishing is an essential step to ensure the paint will adhere. The body of the pot is thoroughly polished or burnished by hand using smooth river-bed stones, bone, or the hard seeds of *chicolote*, or prickly poppy. This process presses the “molecular structure

of the clay surface” (Peterson 1997:46), to provide a lustrous sheen to the surface of the pot (Bell 1994:57). Various lubricants such as “*aciete de comer*,” (cooking oil), or “*aciete de vaquero*,” (“cowboy oil” used to treat and moisturize boot or saddle leather) are used to polish the pots. All this work is done before the firing and must be done well to prevent the paint from peeling away from the pot’s surface. There is some variability as to whether it is best to polish before painting. Some potters do not polish prior to painting, and instead apply shoe polish or soap⁸³ to the surface of the pot after it has been fired.



Figure 4.5 Avelina Corona de Amaya meticulously painting one of her miniature wedding vases in 1998.

At this point, most potters paint their designs on the polished surface of the pot. The quality of the paint used must be high. Its color is evaluated for trueness in that

⁸³ The blend of palm and olive oil contained in Palmolive soap results in a high gloss when applied to the surface of a pot and is favored by many potters who employ this method.

black should be strong and not have a brownish tinge, and reds should not be muted or orangish. Designs are painted free-hand, without the use of stencils or patterns, using handmade brushes. These are typically constructed by either wrapping or taping human or animal hair to a narrow stick or an empty barrel of a ballpoint pen (see Figure 4.5). Commercial paints came into wider use in the late 1990s with the innovative use of multi-colored designs on the pots. Nonetheless, for the majority of potters in the village, paints made from natural mineral pigments continue to be preferred over commercially manufactured paints.

In executing the designs, the painted lines should be defined and precise. The lines should not waver and their width and thickness should be consistent. I return to Miriam Gallegos for her succinct summary of her artistic criteria for a “good pot:”

All the lines must be straight and even. The *olla* must be painted well and be light, not heavy. Its shape is straight, and the sides are equal, and it is well polished. The design must be in balance and placed in proportion and have symmetry in the two or four parts; however I divide it (the design field). It must be equal, smooth, even, and polished well. If the painting is not well polished, it spoils the pot. The paint separates and comes off; it does not adhere to the clay (Miriam Gallegos Martínez, interview, March 10, 1999).

The painted surface of the pot should be smooth and the paint should not be applied too thick or unevenly. Another potter asserted that her painting skills are her “*marca*,” her trademark. “Others paint their lines really thick; mine are pencil thin. No one paints equal to my work” (Ana Trillo, interview, August 1997).

When I asked Lydia Quezada which task in the process she enjoys the most, she emphatically answered: “The peak moment is when I am painting it,” adding that it gives her great pleasure to balance the painted decorative design with the form of the *olla*.

A lot depends upon the color of the clay as to whether you put a lot of black, for example, or very little red. It depends on the colors, on the form – on all of it together (Lydia Quezada, March 30, 1999).

Visual appeal is accomplished by the selection and use of specific colors together.

Balancing the degree of contrast is of key importance. In polychrome pots, the primary emphasis is on color contrast and specific color combinations are favored.

The color has a lot to do with an *olla*. There are two traditional colors: black and red. For example, in a white *olla*, I have to put black and red in the design. It has to have more black than red in order for it to really grab you. And less red designs to make it look really fine, because if you put too much red and less black, for my way, it is not going to look right. The red takes something away from the fineness of the *olla*. A really fine pot must have more black than red (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May, 3, 1999)

The plaster mold provides a base to steady the pot during the painting process and can also be rotated slightly as needed. Rotating surfaces are occasionally devised to aid in painting the repetitive *renglones*, or lines of intricate detail, especially among potters producing in mass quantities (Estes 2001:16).

Potters in the village use open firing methods similar to those used by Pueblo potters. Some potters shape metal wire into cage or basket shapes to hold the fuel away from the pieces of pottery. Dried cow manure or cottonwood is built up in a beehive-like shape around the pots that are to be fired. Others invert different sized terra cotta garden pots over the pottery. Potters vary in the type of fuel they favor. Some prefer *cascara*, the limbs and bark from cottonwood trees while others maintain that the cleanest and hottest firings are achieved with cow dung. This is particularly true for potters working with very white clays.

Some potters use kerosene to initially ignite the firing. These materials burn clean, leaving very little ash debris. The method of dung firing differs from that of Pueblo

potters in that Mata Ortiz potters typically fire only a single pot for twenty minutes to a half an hour rather than six or more pots for two or three hours (Parks 1993:33; MacCallum 1981b:4-5). Though the more experienced makers of high-end pottery continue with single pot firings, in the last decade or more this practice has increasingly moved toward firing more pots in a single firing. This is especially true among potters who make medium to lower price pottery. Electric kilns have also come into use. I will discuss the implications of these changes in chapter six, in the section dealing with aesthetic criteria and market demands.

Black-on-black pottery requires different firing technologies depending upon the end result the potter is after. Various techniques for blackware have been developed among the potters. The reduction firing process is widely practiced throughout the village and was originally developed among Quezada family members as early as 1978 (Bell 1994:65 citing MacCallum 1978). This involves smothering the fire by covering the pots being fired with an inverted *quemador*, which might be a large metal tub or a terra cotta garden pot. The oxygen is cut off, causing the smoke produced to carbonize and darken the clay pots in a process known as “smudging” (Dittert and Plog 1980:24; Bell 1994:65). As mentioned above, Lydia Quezada perfected a double firing process, using a reduction firing to achieve a striking glossy against matte finish by applying black manganese paint to the surface of a highly polished pot. After the second firing, the painted designs leave a silvery black sheen contrasted against the high mirror-like shine of the polished areas (Lydia Quezada, interview, 1998; Parks 1993:27; see also MacCallum 1980b:5).

Macario Ortiz and Rubén Lozano are credited with the innovation of applying commercially powdered graphite mixed with kerosene or water to the surface of their pots

to effect “an extremely lustrous, metallic sheen that cannot be achieved through burnishing alone” (Bell 1994:55). Macario achieves a striking contrast between the matte finish of the painted designs against the graphite-finished surface.

Taurina Baca Tena spoke of the potter’s vulnerability to loss in the final step of firing:

If all goes well in firing the *olla*, it comes out perfect. If it does not and the *olla* is not well-fired, then the painting is a waste. The firing has a lot to do with it. Up until that point, everything is perfect! But if the heat fails and is too low, you lose a little in the thinness, a little of the painting. It is good, but it is not that good (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).

As the simple inclusion of a tiny pebble or an air bubble can cause the pot to explode in the firing process, all of the potter’s labor can be lost in a matter of seconds. In other words, one defect in the firing and the striving for perfection achieved in the earlier steps of the production process has been for naught. Still, the gamble is worth taking as the more labor intensive a pot, the greater the risk and the greater the satisfaction in the finished product. The most discussed criteria for judging quality are concerned with painting and forming. Designs that are difficult to execute and “reflect obvious control of technique” are admired (Salvador 1978:42-43). Continued success with more technically difficult pieces enhances the prestige of women potters as they are seen as more capable and *valiente*, or brave, by their peers, both male and female.

Juan Quezada and His First Female Students

Recognized locally and beyond as the originator of the pottery tradition, Juan Quezada is also recognized as its prime innovator. He provided the initial impetus and his work continues to be the standard of excellence to which the majority of potters strive. Juan was the first to experience economic success and artistic recognition (Lowell

et al. 1999:16; Gilbert 1995:8; Parks 1993). He established artistic standards and criteria of evaluation and advised others to adhere to these in order to ensure the village's reputation as a center for quality ceramics (MacCallum 1994:80; 1979:52). Using photographic images of pottery made by three of Juan's first female students, I demonstrate how major shifts in Juan's work are reflected in his students' work. By looking at work by these three women at certain points in their artistic development, it will be clear how they adopted Juan's key design principles and aesthetic standards to infuse and contribute to the developing pottery tradition through their own styles.

I limit the following discussion to four particular design principles that emerged early in Juan Quezada's painting and were described by Spencer MacCallum (MacCallum 1979:64). While I recognize there are numerous other design principles employed by potters in Mata Ortíz, I focus on those that clearly illustrate Juan's influence upon the work of these three women, as well as the entire community of potters. All four design principles have precedents within the prehistoric Casas Grandes ceramics, and were adopted by Juan Quezada in his initial development of his own key design principles. From the beginning, Juan employed design attributes that are readily delineated and observable on ceramics from the archaeological record, ranging from "the smallest units of design (elements) to the most encompassing (symmetry and design styles)" (Crown 1994:55). Juan drew his inspiration from Casas Grandes ceramics, particularly Ramos polychromes from the Medio period, wherein areas painted in solid red are outlined with black paint (MacCallum 1979:62; Di Peso et al. 1974:6:1). Red and black continue to be the predominant colors used by contemporary potters in Mata Ortíz. Likewise, the prehistoric trait of outlining red designs with black was apparent in Juan's

work from the beginning and is important in terms of his emphasis on color contrast (see Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Prehistoric Casas Grandes pot.
Courtesy of El Paso Museum of Archaeology.
Photography by Pamela Price Kogler.

When discussing the design field, I am using Patricia Crown’s reference “to the general portion of the vessel that was painted, such as bowl interior or jar neck. The design focus is the specific area painted within the design field, for instance, the walls or the center of the bowl” (Crown 1994:55 citing Carlson 1970:84). Within these design foci, I discuss decoration using Hendrickson’s distinctions among motifs as the “composite of elements identified as a distinct entity,” (e.g. stepped triangles, circles, macaw, feather), and layout as the “structural framework on the pot surface that divides it into smaller compartments” (Hendrickson 2001:42).

The first principle is design repetition, an encompassing design attribute in which a “major design element repeats around the jar,” perhaps only once, but it may be repeated several times “to make a three-part, or even four-part composition” (MacCallum

1979:62). As noted by Crown in her comprehensive analysis of Salado polychromes, “[t]he basic motifs making up the design may be repeated two to five times, but two repetitions are most common” (Crown 1994:57). Typically, “[i]f the repeating design elements are directionally oriented,” these will face in the same direction, repeating in progression (MacCallum 1979:62). This principle of design repetition is clearly illustrated by the Casas Grandes artifact in Figure 4.7.



Figure 4.7 Prehistoric Casas Grandes pot.
Courtesy of El Paso Museum of Archaeology.
Photography by Pamela Price Kogler.

This same principle can be observed in Juan Quezada's pot in Figure 4.8. The *olla* is one of three Juan Quezada pots purchased by MacCallum in a second hand store in Deming, New Mexico in January of 1976. MacCallum notes that whoever initially purchased these three pots had "abraded them to simulate antiquity" (MacCallum and Johnson 2001:91).



Figure 4.8 Olla by Juan Quezada illustrating the principle of design repetition.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter P. Parks.

An early example of Lydia Quezada's work (see Figure 4.9) illustrates her use of design repetition to extend the design field over the entire surface of the pot. The example by her sister Consolación Quezada, (see Figure 4.10) shows this same principle of design repetition applied within four sectioned horizontal bands.



Figure 4.9 Olla by Lydia Quezada illustrating the principle of design repetition.
 This *olla* was purchased between 1978 and 1982.
 Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.

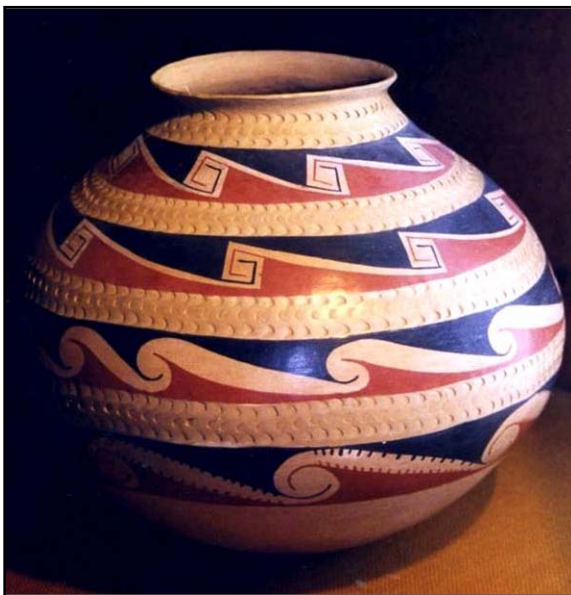


Figure 4.10 Consolación Quezada's application of the principle of design repetition within banded decoration.
 This *olla* was purchased between 1978 and 1982.
 Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection

The second principle is maze construction, in which “unpainted pathways in the complex, overall design that can be traced from a starting point all the way around the jar to a point near the starting place again, without ever crossing a painted line” (MacCallum 1979:64). Juan Quezada calls these uninterrupted maze-ways “*caminos*,” or roads. Often these *caminos* open up into “unexpected negative design elements” (MacCallum 1979:64), as illustrated in Figure 4.11 which MacCallum purchased in February 1977.



Figure 4.11 Juan Quezada’s variations on the principle of maze construction.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter P. Parks.

The two polychromes by Lydia Quezada illustrate early examples of her distinct interpretations of the *camino*, or mazeway principle of maze construction. Both ollas were purchased between 1978 and 1982). In the design Lydia has painted on the first *olla*, the angular *camino* opens up into a geometric mazeway (see Figure 4.12).



Figure 4.12 Lydia Quezada's use of the principle of maze construction.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.

In the second example of Lydia's work, (see Figure 4.13).⁸⁴ she has adapted the principle of maze construction to create a curvilinear *camino* which leads to and frames a design field where the central focus is a naturalistic and finite depiction of a human figure.

⁸⁴ Crown identifies a second way of organizing designs on Salado polychromes that involves structuring the motifs around a central point rather than along a line encircling the vessel and bears similarity to Mimbres design principles (Crown 1994:64).



Figure 4.13 Lydia Quezada's adaptation of maze construction
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.

Juan Quezada's emphasis on the principle of maze construction in the design he painted on the *olla* in Figure 4.14 may well have been the inspiration for Taurina Baca Tena when she created the olla in Figure 4.15. MacCallum purchased Juan's *olla* in June of 1978 and the *olla* by Taurina was purchased between 1978 and 1982.



Figure 4.14 Juan Quezada's principle of maze construction.

Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter P. Parks.



Figure 4.15 Olla by Taurina Baca Tena.

Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.

Taurina Baca Tena's geometric composition on the black on tan polychrome olla shown in Figure 4.15 is composed entirely on the principle of maze construction and is decidedly similar to Juan Quezada's interpretation of the geometric mazeways principle in Figure 4.14.

The third key design principle emphasized by Juan Quezada in his painting is positive/negative reversal. As MacCallum explains, this principle is evident when the “white (negative) design on a black or red ground can be read equally well as a black or red design on a white ground” (MacCallum 1979:64). Negative space also refers to the unpainted space, or “negative blank space” left between the painted spaces (Crown 1994:68; see also 73-74). All of the illustrations of Juan’s work shown so far demonstrate his careful balance of color and proportion in his use of positive and negative space.



Figure 4.16 Juan Quezada’s use of the positive/negative reversal principle.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter Parks.

The *olla* illustrated in Figure 4.16 is significant as both an early and particularly fine example of Juan Quezada’s manipulation of the positive/negative reversal principle. Juan delineates the macaw’s head as unpainted or negative space within a positive

painted ground. This olla is one of the three Juan Quezada pots purchased by Spencer MacCallum in Deming, New Mexico in January of 1976.

Lydia Quezada exhibited an equally deft handling of this same principle in Figure 4.17, delineating the macaw's head within the unpainted or negative space. She achieved balance in combining the macaw motif with repeating line elements, and cross hatching in this small polychrome. This olla was purchased between 1978 and 1982.

The following image (see Figure 4.18) illustrates Taurina Baca Tena's combination of angular elements: interlocking frets, geometric mazes, zigzags, and cross hatching elements, with the use of circular motifs to effectively employ the positive/negative reversal principle. All of these motifs and elements have precedents in the archaeological record.



Figure 4.17 Lydia Quezada Celado's use of unpainted or negative space.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.



Figure 4.18 Taurina Baca Tena's use of positive/negative reversal principle.
Arizona State Museum Collection; purchased 1982.

The fourth principle is the use of banded decoration. In banded designs, Crown explains, “[t]he layout of a design is demarcated by structural lines used to subdivide the decorated area” (Crown 1994:57). Hendrickson notes that “nine basic layouts were identified with each layout containing as many as 26 variations” in Di Peso’s volume on Casas Grandes ceramics (Hendrickson 2001:43 citing Di Peso et al. 1974, vol.6:7-10). Juan Quezada initially adopted two particular design layouts, consistent with examples observed within the archaeological record. Both layouts were key to his expression of individual creativity and to the subsequent community of potters. First is the use of decorated diagonal bands to separate design compositions within the design fields. Second is the use of a horizontal band, usually in the lower quarter of the vessel body, to demarcate design fields from the lip and the bottom of the pot (Gilbert 1999:14; MacCallum 1979:62-64). Both layouts are evident in the design field of the *olla* illustrated in Figure 4.16. This *olla* clearly illustrates Juan Quezada’s early

understanding of the structural value of both diagonal and horizontal bands in design composition.

MacCallum recalled that Juan had already begun experimenting “with painting the bottom as well as the band” by the time MacCallum arrived in Mata Ortiz in March of 1976 (MacCallum 1979:66). This marked a significant shift, as Juan was able to take advantage of the entire surface and shape of the pot by painting below the horizontal band, thereby opening new possibilities within the design field. The olla in Figure 4.19 was purchased by MacCallum in August of 1976.

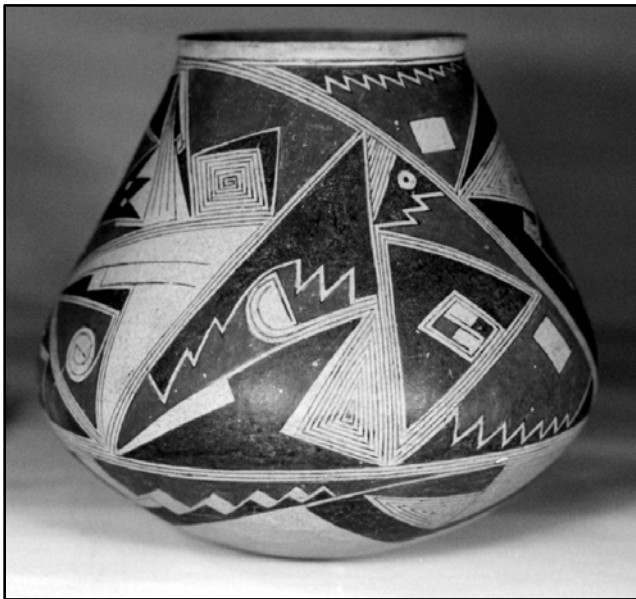


Figure 4.19 Juan Quezada extends the design field below the horizontal band.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter Parks.

Once Juan began eliminating the horizontal band altogether, a dramatic shift in his painting style occurred as can be observed on the *olla* illustrated in Figure 4.20, purchased by MacCallum in August of 1977.

Almost immediately after Juan began painting on a field that was globular, he made a transition into the use of swinging curves in his design. He also began experimenting more with open, negative space (MacCallum 1979:66).



Figure 4.20 Juan Quezada's elimination of the horizontal band.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter Parks.

This shift in Juan Quezada's style was reflected in his students' style of painting, and particularly in the painting styles of his sisters. Consolación's use of the diagonal band became more curvilinear, following the round shape of the pot. She also eliminated the horizontal band and extended the design field over the entire surface of the pot (see Figure 4.21).



Figure 4.21 Consolación Quezada Celado.
Arizona State Museum Collection; purchased 1982.

The effect of this developmental shift is clearly evident on Juan's *olla* in Figure 4.22. MacCallum refers to this piece as the "levitation pot" which he purchased in 1979 (MacCallum and Johnson 2001:95).⁸⁵ Bill Gilbert writes that in retrospect, it is clear this pot is representative of a major transition in Juan's painting that was instrumental in his movement into a *sencillo*, or simple, period. By the mid-1990s, aesthetic principles drawn from prehistoric Mimbres were evident in Juan's work, now "marked by a much more open design field, with increased emphasis on the negative spaces of the exposed clay body" (Gilbert 2000a:14). "Negative spaces, which previously had been reserved

⁸⁵ MacCallum refers to this pot as the "levitation pot" to convey the emotional experience he had when Juan first showed it to him (MacCallum and Johnson 2001:95).

for small areas on the sides and bottoms of his pots, became the focus of the work”
(2000a:14; see Turok 2004:189).⁸⁶



Figure 4.22 MacCallum refers to this olla by Juan Quezada as the “levitation pot”
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter P. Parks.

Key Aesthetic Design Features

The five aesthetic design features emerging from conversations and interviews with women about their work are *movimiento*, or movement, naturalism, complexity, filled space, and surface treatment. I use photographic images of their work to support my argument that women have made substantial and important contributions to the artistic standards and criteria of excellence within the pottery community of Mata Ortíz. As described earlier, Juan’s initial four design principles were design repetition, maze construction, positive/negative reversal, and band decoration (MacCallum 1979:62-66).

⁸⁶ Juan Quezada discusses this shift in his painting style during a 1998 interview with Marta Turok (Turok 2004:189).

I make liberal reference to these images in order to illustrate how Juan's principles constituted the foundation upon which the majority of potters have developed their own styles. Important to my argument, these images illustrate how individual women as well as those who co-produce with their husbands/partners have embellished and expanded upon Juan's initial principles through their signature contributions.

The key aesthetic design features to be discussed pertain to visual organization. Often, it is the precision and exactness resulting from the combinations which account for the fineness of a pot. In the same way that a "small number of grammatical rules can generate an infinite variety of sentences," design rules "seem to generate a potentially infinite number of variations of the same item" (Greenfield 2004:96). As pointed out by Consolación Quezada, there are any number of possibilities for making a pot.

Each pot is unique. They are all different because of the clays and the designs. They cannot be the same. You can change the form of the pot or change the design because there are so many ways to make a pot (Consolación Quezada, interview, September 12, 1999).

By no means are the aesthetic possibilities limited to those presented in the following discussion. However, these five key aesthetic design features provide a framework in which to discuss women's contributions and innovations. These images invariably lead to considerations of features of form and visual appeal.

Movimiento

In retrospect, it is clear that all four of Juan's initial design principles were necessary steps for the development of what would become the signature Quezada family design innovation: *movimiento* (Turok 2004:189). In this first aesthetic design feature, the objective is to strive for balance in painting designs which are fluid and give a sense

of motion. The central aim of the Quezada family painting style is that the eye should be able to follow a singular line throughout the design field and around the body of the pot without interruption, as a singular unbroken line (MacCallum 1979:66). Requiring a high degree of skill, this is one of the most challenging but popular styles of painting among the accomplished potters in the village.

In Juan Quezada's early work, his repetition of design motifs that were "directionally oriented," that is, facing in the same direction and repeating in progressions of two, three, or four fields, was essential to his development of the concept of motion in his painting. The elimination of the horizontal band opened the potential to use the entire surface of the pot. As the aesthetic of movement became more central to his design layout, the diagonal bands transitioned from angular to more curvilinear design bands between design fields. The principle of directionally oriented design repetition, combined with Juan's use of diagonal and then curvilinear bands to demarcate design composition into separate design fields, worked effectively to convey movement (MacCallum 1979:62-66).

These aesthetic design features are readily observed in the various decorative styles used by contemporary potters. The polychrome by Roberto Bañuelos and Angela López (Figure 4.23) incorporates both. These are two of the most prevalent design principles in use throughout the village today, and are now integral components of the classic aesthetic formula for painting polychrome designs in contemporary Mata Ortiz (MacCallum 1979:62).



Figure 4.23 Roberto Bañuelos and María de los Angeles “Angela” López, 1998.

Lydia Quezada’s tall black-on-black ovoid *olla* relies on the successful manipulation and balance between negative and positive space (see Figure 4.24). Complex conceptualization and planning of the design field are essential steps before executing an effective contrast in the design. The concept of movement is clearly expressed in both the shape, that is, how the pot is formed, and in the painted design of Lydia’s piece. Lydia explained her intention in forming and painting this style as follows:

Designs which are fluid and moving are considered very good. The eye should be able to follow the line throughout the design field without interruption, as a singular unbroken line. This is considered very fine (Lydia Quezada, interview, September 10, 1999).



Figure 4.24 Lydia Quezada, 2000.
Parks Collection. Photography by Walter P. Parks.

This pot exhibits two of Lydia's key innovations: the effective combination of black-on-black matte and brilliant surface and her specialized treatment of the lip, or mouth. Here, the form of the vessel itself and in particular, its mouth accentuates the sense of movement that is further conveyed in the style of the painted design.⁸⁷ In describing another pot which she considered to be her finest work and one similar to the

⁸⁷ Note that the design Lydia has used in the central field can also be observed in her brother Juan's olla illustrated in Figure 4.2. Spencer MacCallum describes Juan Quezada's use of the prehistoric "horn" motif as a "standard part of Juan's design vocabulary" (MacCallum and Johnson 2001:93). Among Zuni potters, this motif is referred to as "rainbird." Zuni potter Milford Nahohai told Rodee and Ostler he believes this design motif "represents the rainbearing cumulus clouds seen in profile as they roll into the Zuni Valley. The forward edges of the clouds roll under the main mass, producing a curve similar to that of a bird's beak, hence the term "rainbird" (Rodee and Ostler 1986:57).

pots shown in Figures 4.24 and Figure 4.25, Lydia discussed some of the same attributes which can be observed in this example.

Well, how do I want to say this? The designs were very similar, but at the same time you could see these were totally different. For example, this *olla* had two separate designs. It was like a twister, but the design had a central point and looked as though it had a lot of movement around the edges – a lot of movement with a lot of sharp points. The mouth of the *olla* was like a rib, with an edge creating the mouth of the *olla*. Then, I gave the mouth a curve so that as you look at it, you see the movement in the *olla* and in the design. I really liked this *olla*. I liked it very much. It is as though this *olla* was complete in design and form. It was complete (Lydia Quezada, interview, September 10, 1999).



Figure 4.25 Lydia Quezada Celado 2000.

The pot in Figure 4.25 illustrates the sense of movement Lydia described above and achieved through her specialized treatment of the mouth.

Through the 1990s, Taurina Baca Tena was known for her consistent production of large and distinctive polychromes painted on white, crème, yellow, rose, and black colored clay pots. She also produced polychromes on *mezclado*, or mixed colored, *ollas*. She described to me how she continues to create new shades of clay. She proudly described developing one in particular:

I make *ollas* of color, of mixed clays and the black ones like Juan makes. And though I prefer the pure white, this *olla* was crème colored, more or less. It was a rare color because I made the clay myself. It was white clay with a little red. There is no other like this *olla*; nothing else came out like this *olla*. I am not able to make another *olla* equal to that one. I worked a year on this *olla* and I liked it very much. This *olla* won first prize for its large size and its thinness, and the color of the clay (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).



Figure 4.26 Taurina Baca Tena, 2007.
From the personal collection of James Kemp, M.D.
Photography by Richard O'Connor.

Following Juan's lead, she began experimenting with larger, innovative forms, focusing her production on either full, rounded *ollas* or tall, elongated *ollas*. She continued to be influenced by Juan's experimentation and shifts in his stylistic development. In particular, Taurina favored the increased use of negative space as a bold contrast to her intricate, curvilinear designs painted in the contrasting colors of black and red. Taurina's consistent adherence to the concept of movement as originally developed by Juan Quezada as the guiding principle in her painting style is evident in Figure 4.26.⁸⁸

Elvira Antillon and her husband Damián Escarsega Quezada work together to co-produce pottery with each bringing his and her own aesthetic contribution to the collaborative creative process. Elvira explained that she and Damián will often discuss the design together before she begins forming the pot. She described how as she builds the pot, she is intentionally striving to assure and achieve balance with the designs Damián will paint on the pot. By the early 2000s, Damián had begun painting in the *sencillo*, or simple minimalist style developed and perfected by his uncles Juan and Nicolás and his aunt Lydia (see Figure 4.27). Elvira had adapted her large, classically shaped *ollas*, or pots, to more contemporary shapes that feature the specialized mouth treatment originated by Lydia Quezada.

⁸⁸ Exceptional examples of Taurina Baca Tena's work are also featured in the catalog, "Mata Ortíz," published by the Owings Dewey Fine Art Gallery of Santa Fe, New Mexico in conjunction with an exhibit of the same name (Widmar 2000).



Figure 4.27 Damián Escarsega Quezada and Elvira Antillón, 2002.

Naturalism

The second aesthetic design feature is the naturalistic depiction of subjects such as animals, humans, insects and plants. These design features are inspired by Mimbres artifacts, which are also found in the region and are referred to locally as *Mimbreno*. Naturalistic aesthetic design features are distinct from, yet complementary to those characteristic of the Quezada style, which draw predominantly on design motifs and elements of the artifacts found at the ruins of Paquimé and throughout the region,⁸⁹ and are referred to locally as *Paquimé*. Though these two design traditions are recognized as distinct from one another, a number of potters draw upon the stylistic features and motifs

⁸⁹ These artifacts are also referred to as Casas Grandes ceramics, particularly in the context of archaeological publications and museum collections.

of both Paquimé and Mimbres to create their own unique styles. Geometric designs ranging from bold to more simple, delicate, and detailed lines within the design composition are combined with the figurative Mimbres motifs (Giammattei and Reichert 1975:12). The aesthetic design features of Paquimé and Mimbres, whether used separately or combined, represent some of the most challenging design compositions produced in Mata Ortiz.

The *ollas* formed by Gaby Almeida and painted by her husband César Domínguez (Figure 4.28) have earned them prominence among potters who combine Paquimé with motifs from Mimbres style as well as their own “invented designs” (Gilbert 2000a:33).

As César explained:

Now, Mimbres designs are very simple to us and are not equal compared to those of Paquimé. So we try to use Mimbres designs that are much more complicated. We try to make them more intricate by inventing designs inside the animal, like this rabbit. We take the simpler Mimbres designs and we change them, and add our own more complicated designs within the (traditional) Mimbres style designs. So we try to make a more complicated design in our work. I like the Mimbres design very much. All of our *ollas* have the Mimbres design (Gaby Almeida and César Domínguez, interview, May 1, 1999).

The aesthetic of combining Paquimé designs to create more complicated, invented designs within simpler, naturalistic Mimbres style depictions of subjects, such as the rabbit César mentions above, can be observed in his depiction of the lizard in Figure 4.28.



Figure 4.28 César Domínguez and Gaby Almeida, 1994.
From the personal collection of Richard and Joan O'Connor.
Photography by Richard O'Connor.

Graciela Martínez Gallegos and Héctor Gallegos Esparza are renowned for their precise painting on alabaster-white pottery and their art is regarded in the classical stature of Juan Quezada's. Like Héctor's niece Gaby and her husband César, together Graciela and Héctor have developed a painting style which incorporates Paquimé and Mimbres within their innovative design compositions. They achieved a level of excellence by the early 1990s, each equally exacting in the execution of their work. Graciela and Héctor are consistently named together and recognized as a team. As their daughter Miriam reminded me, Héctor makes a point to tell people that he and his wife work together. "All the people know that my mother makes the pottery and he paints it. My papa tells them."

Graciela's mastery and versatility are evidenced by the incredible range of pottery she creates and her husband Héctor paints. She is equally competent in her consistently innovative creation of graceful contemporary forms as she is in forming wedding vases, tall urns, and canteens, which have come to be recognized as traditional vessels. In addition to co-producing with Héctor, Graciela forms and paints her own style of pottery. The wedding vase in Figure 4.29 is a classic example of their combining design elements from both the Paquimé tradition and those of Mimbres. The central focus of the design field, a turtle framed by two cranes, is a clear example of Mimbres style layout while the mazeways composed within the *cuadritos* (small squares) designs decorating the neck of the double mouths are representative of the Casas Grandes tradition found on ceramic artifacts at Paquimé (Hendrickson 2001:43).



Figure 4.29 Héctor Gallegos and Graciela Martínez, 1998.
From the personal collection of Richard and Joan O'Connor.
Photography by Richard O'Connor.

Graciela's neighbor, Blanca Quezada de Rentería, specializes in precise Mimbres designs painted on highly polished white and crème colored clays fashioned into various shaped pots, plates and lidded boxes. A student of Graciela's, Blanca has perfected her own variation on Graciela's innovative pottery with lids. Blanca is known for her delicate miniatures of rectangular boxes as well as tiny round pots topped with effigy lids. Blanca told me she had thought long and hard to create a form that would be

recognized as uniquely her own. The turtle lid fitted to a round miniature pot shown below in Figure 4.30 is similar only in shape to the white and black contemporary miniature effigy piece from Isleta next to it. In this case, naturalism is expressed in the turtle shape. Blanca's creative pairing of the sculpted lid, also formed naturalistically, with its separate base is painted in a distinctively Mata Ortiz style.



Figure 4.30 Blanca Quezada de Rentería, 1998.

Blanca's plates and wedding vases are typically painted with naturalistic depictions of insects and amphibians (Figure 4.31). Like Graciela and other potters throughout Mata Ortiz, she incorporates the geometric motifs and design elements from the Paquimé tradition into the overall composition. Early in her craft, Blanca had confidence in the quality of her work and expected to be paid well. She spoke of how her work is considered to be too expensive by some of the traders, but she refuses to lower her prices. As her work is in demand, the traders agree to her prices and continue to buy from her.



Figure 4.31 Blanca Quezada de Rentería, 1999.

Amelia Martínez Flores, Graciela's older sister, specializes in Mimbres-inspired designs (see Figure 4.32); however, like the other women featured in this section, she often combines these with Paquimé geometric motifs (see Figure 4.33).



Figure 4.32 Amelia Martínez Flores de Tena, 1997.



Figure 4.33 Amelia Martínez Flores de Tena, 2008.

The final example of naturalism was made by Ana Trillo and is illustrated in Figure 4.34. She also lives in Barrio Americano and was a member of the second women's micro-enterprise project, *Grupo Paquimé*. Ana spoke of how Mimbres designs need to be repeated in certain numbers to be in balance. She specializes in large wedding vases which she paints with Mimbres-inspired designs. Among the women interviewed, other potters whose work combines Mimbres with Paquimé designs include Blanca Almeida de Ponce, Rosario Veloz Casas, Leticia Rodríguez Mora, Lupe Soto de Mora, Lucía Mora de Bugarini, and Gloria Hernández de Silveira.

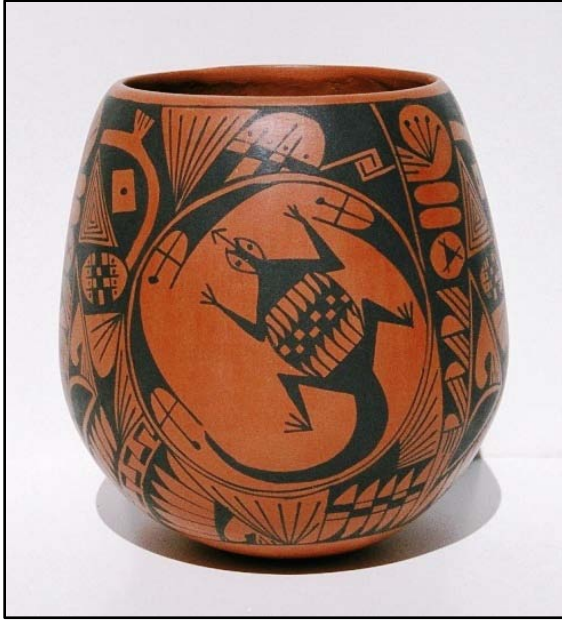


Figure 4.34 Ana Trillo, 1997.

Complexity

The third aesthetic design feature is complexity. Complexity may be expressed within a wide range varying from increased to minimal complexity. Whether a design is expressed as high energy activity covering the entire surface of the pot or is minimally executed (Gilbert 2000a:14; MacCallum 1979:66), a design characterized by its maker as “*muy complicado*,” or very complicated, will be an intricate design composition. The intricacy may involve elements that transform from one motif into another. While decorative bands, mazes, and *caminos* are typically used to divide the composition into discrete smaller design fields, these also move the eye from one area in the design composition to another. The feature of complexity often integrates the seemingly discrete smaller design fields into one complete design composition.

A classic example of *movimiento*, Lydia Quezada’s ovoid black-on-black *olla* (refer to Figure 4.24) is an excellent expression of minimal complexity, a key

characteristic of the *sencillo*, or simple, design composition perfected by Juan and Lydia and adapted by other Quezada family members. Contrasting Lydia's *olla* with another example made by her nephew, Damián Escarsega Quezada and his wife, Elvira Antillón, (see Figure 4.35) emphasizes the possible compositions of complexity that can be achieved by varying the relationship of elements and motifs within the layout, or "structural framework" (Hendrickson 2001:42).

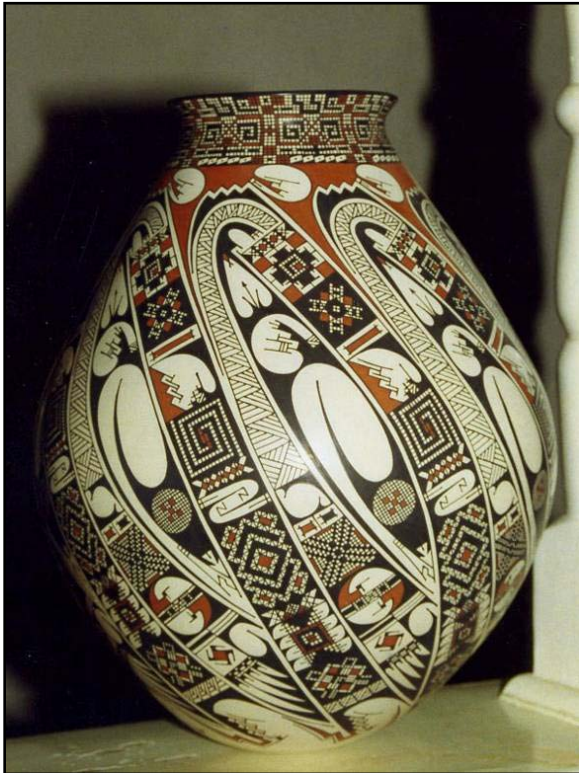


Figure 4.35 Damián Escarsega Quezada and Elvira Antillón, 1999.
Photographed by author in potters' home in Nuevo Casas Grandes.

Elvira and Damián proudly describe their designs as uniquely their own. Elvira considers her extraordinarily large pots her signature style. Damián's signature is his dynamic style of painting within at least a minimum of five and as many as eight design fields. His style of painting in the late 1990s aimed to fill in the entire surface of the pot.

Their large polychrome, (Figure 4.35), effects a level of activity within the multiple design fields and brings together the elements of what Bill Gilbert has described as Juan Quezada's style of "powerful, aggressive energy" (Gilbert 2000a:14) with balance and movement for the eye to follow over the large, graceful forms Elvira builds.

In Héctor Gallegos and Graciela Martínez's *olla* (Figure 4.36), the decorative diagonal bands follow the shape of the *olla*, emphasizing the fullness of the body and narrowing as the bands move upward over the shoulder and around the sculptured neck. The complex play of diverse design motifs in the central design field are oriented upward to create a sense of movement in this design composition. Graciela's stepped treatment of the mouth is complemented by Héctor's painted designs. As with Lydia's intent to maintain consistency between the vessel's form and decorative design, Graciela and Héctor achieve a similar balance in this piece.



Figure 4.36 Héctor Gallegos and Graciela Martínez, 1998.
 From the personal collection of Richard and Joan O'Connor.
 Photography by Richard O'Connor.

Luz Elva Ramírez's black pot is an example that combines increased complexity with movement and filled space (see Figure 4.37). Luz Elva spoke of how she draws upon the repertoire of designs she has developed to creatively combine these with the various pottery forms she considers to be her signature. Compared with Lydia's minimalist use of negative space, Luz Elva's design field, choice of designs, and placement complement the form of the pot just as effectively but with an emphasis on complexity. Luz Elva Ramírez's work is distinguished by the fluid lines she paints on her black-on-black pottery. She has developed a particular set of design elements based upon traditional Paquimé designs. Luz Elva explained that her signature is in the way she

draws upon these same design elements over and over again, but combines these in unique and different ways on each pot she paints. Her combinations rely upon intricate repetitions, balance, and proportion to fit the design elements to the shape of each *olla*. Typically, her *ollas* are shaped in simple but elegant forms. She is firm that her pottery is distinctively contemporary and not at all like the traditional designs and forms of the prehistoric pottery of Paquimé.



Figure 4.37 Luz Elva Ramírez Carbajal, 1997.

Luz Elva explained how she plans her designs before she forms the pot.

I think about designs all the time. It keeps me awake at night thinking about designs. I think about the form of the pot before I make it, usually in the morning while I'm making tortillas. I think about different forms and which one is best for the design I want to use (Luz Elva Ramírez, interview, July 30, 1997).

I asked whether she divides her designs into fields. “Yes, I use different separations, sometimes two, three, or four.” She then showed me a beautiful *cazuela*, or

shallow bowl, she was working on. The shallow bowl was divided into eight fields, all working together to create an intricate star pattern.



Figure 4.38 César Domínguez and Gaby Almeida.
From the personal collection of Richard and Joan O'Connor.
Photography by Richard O'Connor.

In painting the *plato* illustrated in Figure 4.38, César has incorporated four of the five aesthetic design features discussed in this section. The aesthetic features of *movimiento*, complexity, naturalism, and filled space (discussion to follow) are effectively integrated within the design composition to convey the same level of activity and “powerful, aggressive energy” (Gilbert 2000a:14) evident in Damián Escarsega

Quezada and Elvira Antillón's *olla* in Figure 4.35. In this example, the four decorative bands composed of Paquimé design elements, create a sense of centrifugal movement revolving around the central field. These bands divide the composition into four design fields, where Paquimé and Mimbres style lizards and macaws are alternated among geometric designs. This *plato* was awarded Honorable Mention in the Second Concurso held at the *Museo de las Culturas del Norte* in May of 1997.

Filled Space

The next design feature is filled space. Similar to complexity, artists employing this feature vary the degree to which the surface of the pot is filled. The following examples illustrate particular treatments of filled space in which potters focus on the repetition of patterns and often rely upon positive and negative reversals for both contrast and to create subtle variations within the design composition.



Figure 4.39 Four cornered bowl by Juan Quezada.
Courtesy of San Diego Museum of Man. Spencer H. MacCallum Collection.
Photography by Walter Parks.

Certain designs demand other complements. In executing *cuadritos*, designs composed of small squares, there are rules that must be followed in order to balance the design and have the squares or diamonds come out evenly over the entire surface of the pot.⁹⁰ This design motif has precedents in the archaeological record and one that Juan Quezada employed early in the 1970s as can be seen on the bowl in Figure 4.39. Purchased in August of 1979, MacCallum described this bowl as an example of the “transition ... from a square mouth to the round bowl shape” that is “precedent in prehistoric Casas Grandes pottery” (MacCallum and Johnson 2001:94 and 123). Juan experimented with this particular combination in the late 1970s.

The *cuadritos* design element began appearing in Juan Quezada’s designs as early as 1976 (see figure 35 in MacCallum and Johnson 2001:104; Figure 4.20 in this chapter). However, Juan credits his daughter, María Elena “Nena” with having devised the technique of playing with various arrangements of the checkered design. The story goes that as a young schoolgirl, Nena used her math notebook of graph paper to play with various combinations of patterns (Guillermina Quezada, personal communication, July 28, 1997; MacCallum 1994:78). She and many potters since have found that any number of patterns can be attained, depending on how the squares are alternated and repeated within the grid.

⁹⁰ Trini Silveira described how she must plan ahead when she paints the *cuadritos*, or checkered designs on a pot. The squares have to be the same size and equal and as she explained, “It is necessary to count for those on top to come out right with the *cuadritos* on the bottom” (Trini Silveira, interview, 1998).



Figure 4.40 Olga Quezada and Humberto Ledezma, 1996.

Though Olga Quezada and her husband Humberto Ledezma were not taught by Juan Quezada and there is no relation between the two families, their signature style echoes aesthetic forms and designs used earlier by Juan Quezada (see Figure 4.39). They developed their signature style by combining low, round bowl shapes with a four cornered mouth or lip decorated with *cuadritos*, or checkered designs. Their *ollas* as well as their wedding vases are formed with deep colored red clay and all of these are consistently decorated with black paint to create a patterned *cuadritos* design over which finely painted black lines are applied to effect an overlay of diamond patterns and intersections which cross within the alternating checkered boxes (see Figure 4.40). They are known for the delicate, thin walls and the light weight of their pots.

Olga and Humberto consider their style to be something new and different and unlike traditional Paquimé pottery because, as Olga put it, “the work from the past was very thick and heavy. Ours are very thin and light and our designs are more complicated.” Humberto agreed, saying:

I like it when I have polished the *olla* well and the *olla* turns out very well-made and it is even and in proportion. I have made a good pot when it is very thin and light (Olga Quezada and Humberto Ledezma, interview, April 29, 1999).

Miriam Gallegos Martínez was taught to form and paint pottery by her mother, Graciela Martínez Flores. Graciela is renowned for her delicate and distinctive interpretations of *cuadritos* patterns. She makes pottery in Paquimé and Mimbres forms, as well as her own invented forms and shapes. In the late 1990s, Graciela had devised an innovative form by adding *tapas*, or lids to her *ollas* (see Figure 4.41). Soon after, Miriam began making pottery with lids in both vase and box forms similar to her mother's.



Figure 4.41 Graciela Martínez Flores, 2008.

The *cajitas*, or little boxes, are formed entirely by hand without the use of a mold or stencil. Beautiful examples of Miriam's Mimbres-inspired work can be seen in the 1999 issue of the Mexican magazine *Artes de México* entitled "*Ceramica de Mata Ortiz*."⁹¹

Like her parents, Miriam Gallegos Martínez works in red and black polychromes painted on a white clay base. The intricacy of detail and her delicate and exacting painting are the primary characteristics of her distinctive style. Her work is graceful and at times, her decorative approach on small vases is reminiscent of a classic Greek decorative style though she is drawing directly from both Mimbres and Paquimé for her designs and motifs (see Figure 4.42).

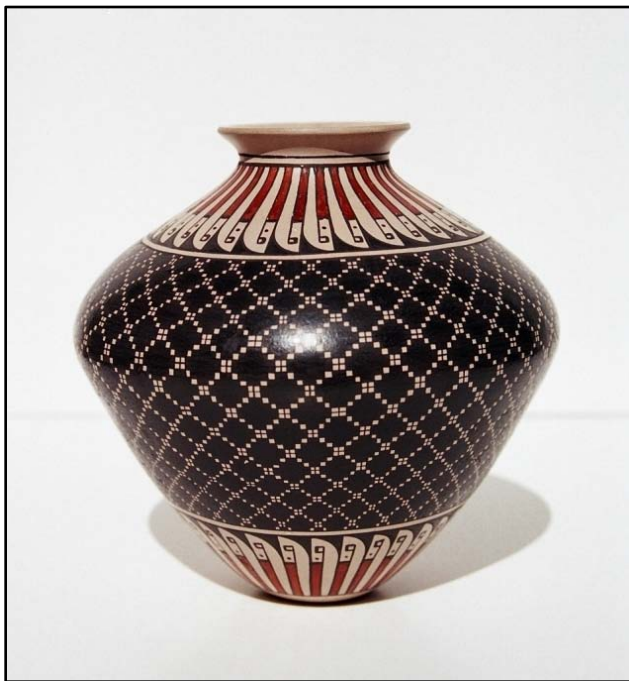


Figure 4.42 Miriam Gallegos Martínez, 1998.

⁹¹ This issue resulted from the 1999-2000 exhibition coordinated by the *Museo Franz Mayer* in México City.

Miriam's favorite aspect of pottery making is painting and she added that the whole time she is forming the pot, she is thinking of all the possible designs she can paint. She is eager to finish forming because as she explained:

I want to see as soon as it is finished so that I can see how it turns out. I paint very tiny *cuadritos*. My lines are very thin and straight, very perfect; very delicate, very fine. I make very light pots that have thin walls. This thinness adds to the lightness of the pottery. I think my work is in the same style as my parents' work. It is a combination of Paquimé and Mimbreno. People know that our work is very distinctive (Miriam Gallegos Martínez, interview, March 10, 1999).

The *cuadritos* continue to be the key design feature in Graciela's and her daughter's Miriam's work and show evidence of the early influences of her teacher Armando Rodríguez and his wife Olivia Mora. Their daughter, Leticia Rodríguez Mora, brings the *cuadritos* pattern together with naturalistic Mimbres-inspired motifs on a unique form she devised. The *olla* in Figure 4.43 and 4.44 present two views of the same piece. Leticia experimented with a traditional seed pot shape by creating a flat surface across the

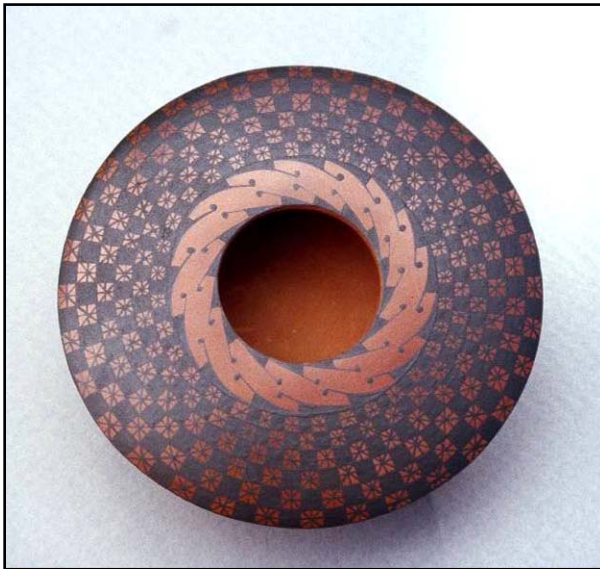


Figure 4.43 Leticia Rodríguez Mora, 1997.

top of the vessel. In her variation on the *cuadritos* pattern, she intersected four lines to create an eight-spoke design within the alternating squares. The rounded bottom of the vessel is painted with her various Mimbres style animals, birds and insects.



Figure 4.44 Leticia Rodríguez Mora, 1997.

Graciela's sister Amelia adapted the idea of adding lids to pieces of pottery she was producing specifically to meet her contract with the women's micro-enterprise program, *Grupo Pearson*. I include the piece in Figure 4.45 to illustrate the similarities in form and design elements, and to show how this idea was adapted to produce pottery pieces to be sold at the moderate end of the market. At the time this piece was purchased, members were limited to selling items priced under \$15. In comparison, in 1998 through 1999, similar pieces with *tapas*, or lids, produced by Graciela Martínez were selling for upwards of \$125 to \$200. Miriam Gallegos was asking between \$125 to \$175 for similar pieces and Blanca Quezada was asking between \$50 to \$75 for her miniature pieces with lids.



Figure 4.45 Amelia Martínez de Tena, 1999.

When they were teaching me their style of painting, Laura and Elvira Bugarini Cota (two sisters) told me their work is based on letters of the Roman alphabet. It was Laura who originated this design, taking her inspiration from written language and creatively combining, inverting, and turning the letter images of “H,” “C,” “W,” and others sideways, backwards, or upside down, often relying upon positive/negative reversals for contrast (see Figure 4.46). Each of the sisters has her own variations on the repetition of the “letter” motifs which at times, they integrate within band layouts of Paquimé motifs such as interlocking scrolls, rectangular scrolls, and hooked triangles (see Di Peso et al. 1974:6:7-10). The minute execution of these designs lends a graceful embroidered appearance of “petit point” to the *olla*. Laura explained her intention as she creates her designs:

Different designs come up in my mind; and the designs must be very tiny, minute, and intricate; otherwise I will not like it. I will not be satisfied with my work (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 22, 1997).



Figure 4.46 Laura Bugarini Cota, 1996.

Elvira and Laura have developed a second signature style they call “*dibujos locos*” (crazy designs). In this style of painting, they combine Paquimé design motifs with their original designs executed in minute detail into separate tightly filled geometric spaces which are juxtaposed like miniature puzzle pieces to create a patchwork effect within the overall design field. Elvira painted the human effigy pot (Figure 4.47) in this unique style of painting. Her mother Lupe Cota Delgado formed the pot.

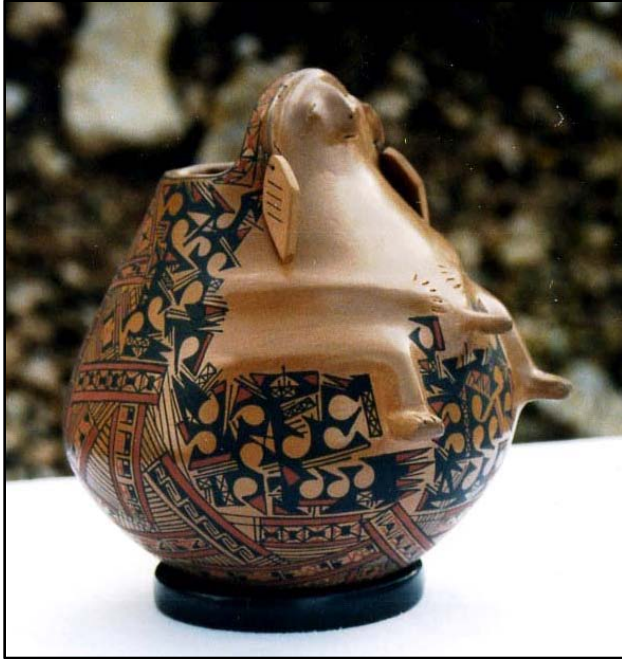


Figure 4.47 Elvira Bugarini Cota and Lupe Cota, 1997.

Working together with her mother, Elvira continues to experiment with new forms for her distinctive painting styles. Excitedly, she related to me how she had dreamed the image of a pot in the form of a traditional *molcajete y mano* (or *tejolote*), a mortar and pestle made from volcanic stone. She went straight to her mother's house the next morning to ask her to make the pot. Together they struggled to create the form. It took more than a few tries. While some ridiculed the form as she painted it, her mother thought it was a great idea and encouraged her. She entered the pot in the annual judged competition in 2004 held at the *Museo de las Culturas del Norte* and won 500 dollars for placing first in the New Design category. The pot was purchased by a Mexico City buyer. Other innovations emerging from this household include Lupe Cota's earrings and pendants and Laura's painted *aros*. Laura originated the concept of painting the *aros*, the clay rings used as stands for the pots and effigies.

No one had ever painted the *aros* before but me. It was my own idea. I thought it would look better if the *aro* matches the *olla*, instead of the *aro* just being plain. It looks very beautiful to paint the *olla* and the *aro* with the same design. A lot of people are painting them now (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 22, 1997).

During the 1990s, the *cuadritos* pattern became ubiquitous throughout the village and especially so in Barrio Americano and Barrio de la Iglesia. As discussed previously in chapter two, a number of women in both barrios began making pottery around the same time, between 1987 and 1988. In Barrio de la Iglesia, Martha Ponce de Rodríguez, Angela López de Bañuelos, and Olga Quezada all began in pottery and *cuadritos* was one of the first design features they tried. In neighboring Barrio Americano, Graciela Martínez Flores learned from her neighbors Olivia Mora and Armando Rodríguez, who were already working with the *cuadritos* feature. Her husband Héctor Gallegos joined her soon after, and together they perfected their distinct style of painting during the wave of creative activity that swept through village in the late 1980s.

Though *cuadritos* is by far one of the most prevalent design features, it has possibly generated the most variations on a single theme.⁹² Both men and women are doing incredibly innovative designs with this feature. Olga Quezada's pottery can easily be considered emblematic of Mata Ortiz style and design. Graciela Martínez Flores and the potters she has either taught or influenced have taken this simple motif to a new level of delicate execution. Though a departure from *cuadritos*, Laura Bugarini Cota's unique painting style also has certain design principles in common with those developed early on by Juan Quezada. Her style emphasizes the aesthetic feature of increased complexity,

⁹² In addition to the women discussed above, at least 10 other women I spoke with are doing variations on the filled space feature using the *cuadritos* pattern. They include Martha Martínez de Domínguez, Amelia Martínez de Tena, Olivia Mora de Rodríguez, Trini Silveira Sandoval, Socorro Sandoval de Silveira, Blanca Quezada de Ponce, Martha Ponce de Rodríguez, Angela López de Bañuelos, Lupe Soto de Mora, and Lucía Mora de Bugarini.

featuring a balance of small and fine detail with repeated patterns in narrow bands, as can be observed throughout Juan's work.

Despite the variations possible within the aesthetic design feature of filled space, potters agree consistency is essential in repetitive, intricate painted designs that cover the entire pot throughout the design field. This is especially true of women whose work is featured in this section.

Surface Treatment

Clearly, painting is the most prevalent surface treatment among the women interviewed. However, there are many other aesthetic decisions that can be made as to how one might manipulate the surface of a pot to produce a desired decorative effect. When asked about her own distinctive designs in 1999, Consolación Quezada described her "*estrellita*" star design as her signature style. In creating her unique surface treatment on these large, (12" high) full, rounded black pots, Consolación combined a technique she calls *engravada*, or engraved, with painted designs. She also referred to this surface treatment as *tejido*, or textured, and called my attention to the variations of "*tejido*," or textured effects she achieved with this technique. The *engravada* technique involves incising designs into the wet (damp) clay with a dull point of a knife. The surface of the pot is first decorated with repeating bands of incised designs which are combined with delicate painted designs, generally executed in crosshatched patterns to create the star patterns (see Figure 4.48). These pots vary in degrees of complexity, ranging from highly ornamented to more simply decorated pots. Consolación's daughter, Dora Isela González Quezada, works with this same technique but uses it to create her own geometric patterns, sometimes around a central fish and animal motif. Dora also

produces beautiful unpainted pottery in white and cream colored clays using the engraved or incised technique.



Figure 4.48 Consolación Quezada Celado, 1996.
Parks Collection.
Photography by Walter P. Parks

Another variation on surface treatment is the *sgraffito* technique. This involves carving away portions of the surface of polished, painted, and fired pottery to reveal contrasting colors beneath the surface. Leonel Lopéz is well known for perfecting this technique, having learned it from his brother-in-law, Oscar Rodríguez (Gilbert 1999:49). Among the women interviewed, Cayetana Escalante de Lopéz and her daughter Mari Cruz Lopéz de Pedregón⁹³ had just begun making pottery using this surface treatment in 1998.

⁹³ Gaby Almeida also makes pottery using this technique, however, I did not become aware of her work produced with this technique until the mid-2000s.

The Silveira Sandoval household is one of the few still applying white, red, light brown, and buff colored slips, locally referred to as *pastas* or *fondo*, to the clay bodies of their pottery before painting their distinctive designs. A slip is a fine slurry of clay and water. Slips provide a contrasting base color to the body of the pot and vary in color as to the clays used in preparing the slips. Socorro's sister-in-law Gloria Hernández de Silveira and Consolación Quezada also work with slips.

Socorro Sandoval de Silveira devised a readily recognizable signature style by leaving a small portion of the neck (shoulder) of the pot unslipped and then embellishing this area with simple indentations resulting in a corrugated appearance. Using a similar incising technique to one used by Consolación Quezada, the unslipped rim creates a break in the design composition, adding a natural element which contrasts and complements the slipped and painted body of the pot. The complementary contrast between the painted design field and the incised neck can be observed in the two unfired pots in Figure 4.49 where black and red paint have been applied on white slip. Her work illustrates complexity and filled space coming together in a design composed largely of variations on *cuadritos*.

This specialized slipping surface treatment combined with the *en fresca*⁹⁴ technique of polishing the slip directly into the damp clay is a distinguishing aesthetic feature for this family of potters.

⁹⁴ This term, "*en fresca*" refers to applying a slip and painted designs while the clay is still damp, or leather-hard. Next, a light film of oil is applied to the surface and a piece of plastic wrap is placed on the pot. The painted designs are burnished into the pot while it is still damp by polishing with a stone through the plastic wrap. This technique was developed by Juan Quezada in the initial years of the 1970s and was the method he and his siblings taught to those they apprenticed during the 1970s. It continued to be the primary manufacturing technique throughout the village into the 1980s, but was replaced as more effective, less risky techniques were developed (MacCallum 1979:38; Bell 1994:53). I first observed Juan Quezada

There are no other people who polish their work *en fresca*. No one else here in Mata Ortíz, but us. This is why when Americans come and they first enter and they see the *ollas*, they always say “Wow, that is really different!” But they do not realize the difference is because of polishing *en fresca* (Socorro Sandoval de Silveira, interview, March 8, 1999).



Figure 4.49 Socorro Sandoval de Silveira, 1998.

When asked whether she felt she had her own style, she responded without hesitation.

Yes, I think that is true. My designs are very different from others. I do not know how to tell you how they came about. It is really difficult to describe. I wanted to be so successful. It was like an emotion rising. I was in such a hurry to improve and do better. That is how I thought of it. I cannot describe just one main thing (Socorro Sandoval de Silveira, interview, March 8, 1999).

In selecting colors to use in her polychrome designs on clay bodies with a slipped white base, Socorro’s daughter Trini Silveira Sandoval explained that she uses the principle of contrast to achieve the effect she wants in her design (Figure 4.50). “On the

demonstrate this technique in 1994. The only potters I knew to be utilizing this method in the 1990s were Consolación Quezada and the Silveira families in Barrio El Porvenir.

white pot, black paint looks better with a little red. It is going to be more beautiful with more black paint than red.”



Figure 4.50 Trini Silveira Sandoval, 1999.

This is consistent with the aesthetic principle of contrast described by other potters interviewed. Trini went on to explain that in the style of pottery she and her family makes, both the color of the clay used to make the pot as well as the color of the slip applied to the body have to be taken into consideration in order to be in balance with the colors of the painted design.

María Elena “Nena” López Aldavaz and her husband Macario Ortíz co-produce, with Nena specifically forming the pots and Macario being responsible for planning and painting the lines of the design. She explained that pottery making is conducive to their working together and attributes the success of their partnership to their dependence upon one another. She described their situation by saying: “Marriage is good. We are busy, but we are working together at something for both of us. If he is gone, I am very sad and

lost. When we are working together, we forget the time” (Nena Lopéz Aldavaz, interview, August 3, 1997).

Though their co-production is focused on the pottery Macario paints in complicated compositions of Mimbres and Paquimé designs, Nena is known for her own unique style of exquisite pots that do not have painted detail. Nena forms her blackware in simple, yet elegant forms that are valued for their contemporary shape (see Figure 4.51). Using the graphite process developed by her husband, Nena’s pottery is distinctive for its high sheen and sleek lines. This is the result of a unique surface treatment whereby powdered graphite is applied to the surface of the pot with either kerosene or water. This is rubbed onto the pot before it is polished to produce a lustrous metallic sheen after a reduction firing process (Nena Lopéz Aldavaz, interview, August 3, 1997; Bell 1994:55). Nena’s criteria of excellence demands that when it is inspected closely, a well executed pot should be flawless, without any scratches on the surface. The form and proportion of the pot should be interesting and unique, as can be observed in the swirled gourd design in Figure 4.51 (Nena Lopéz Aldavaz, interview, August 3, 1997).

Soon after she began producing this unique style of pottery, her forms were widely copied throughout the village. Nena was greatly frustrated by the fact that the potters who produced pots in her signature style were making them in sizes twice as large as her original design and selling them for less than half of what she asked. Despite the popularity of these forms and the variations that have developed from her original designs, Nena maintains her status among the originators of this approach to unpainted pottery, valued for its high sheen and contemporary forms.



Figure 4.51 Nena Lopéz Aldavaz de Ortíz, 1996.

Rosa Quezada Celado, another of Juan Quezada's sisters, and her daughters Patricia and Noelia Hernández Quezada specialize in another variation on surface treatment. They employ both sculpting and appliqué to form their black-on-black pots and effigy figures that often feature a sculpted animal, reptile, or human form (see figures 4.52 and 4.53). The bodies of the pots are painted in Paquimé motifs. Rosa's daughters spent time with their Aunt Lydia learning to make pottery, and in particular, mastering the technique for the matte finish. The young women then taught their mother what they had learned.



Figure 4.52 Rosa Quezada Celado 1996.
From the personal collection of Pamela Price Kogler.
Photography by Pamela Price Kogler.

The *figuras* and anthropomorphic shapes Rosa and her daughters create are built of varying thicknesses of clay, which increase the possibility for breakage during firings. Hence, certain styles are created in subsequent experimentation which may or may not work out. Therefore, Rosa's successful innovations often result from dealing with the consequences of failed forms and shapes, and through an ongoing process of trial and error.



Figure 4.53 Noelia Hernández Quezada 1996.
From the personal collection of Pamela Price Kogler.
Photography by Pamela Price Kogler.

The examples of pottery made by women represented in this section give some idea of the range of diverse approaches available, illustrating how surface treatments can be combined and accentuated. Techniques of sculpting, incising, engraving, slipping, painting, and polishing all contribute distinctive attributes to the pot's surface and vary according to the potter's aesthetic decisions. While achieving a smooth surface on a pot is a primary criterion for potters, works by Consolación Quezada, Socorro Sandoval Silveria, her daughter Trini Silveira, and her sister-in-law Gloria Hernández illustrate that the surface does not have to be smooth. Instead, beautiful detail can result from combining painted decoration with incising the clay in interesting ways. Nena López de Ortíz's lustrous blackware beautifully illustrates that the surface does not always need to be painted.

Summary

In this chapter I have delineated the substantial and important contributions made by women potters to the ongoing development of a mixed-gender aesthetic tradition in the rural pottery making Mexican community of Mata Ortiz, Chihuahua. With the focus on aesthetics as a window into women's agency and empowerment, I developed a framework in which I examined how women have contributed to the aesthetic complexity of this artistic community. The specific examples of women's artistic work presented through photographic images support my argument and illustrate how individual women, as well as those who co-produce with their husbands/partners, have expanded upon Juan Quezada's initial design principles in order to generate new aesthetic features through their original and innovative contributions. In doing so, they also contribute to the artistic standards and criteria of excellence within the pottery community of Mata Ortiz.

I have demonstrated, through an analysis of the early work of three of Juan Quezada's female students during the initial years from the mid-1970s through the early 1980s, how these women adopted Juan's key design principles and infused new styles into the nascent tradition. I then extended the analysis to include a second generation of women who entered this mixed-gender aesthetic tradition during the second phase of pottery industry expansion in the mid-1980s. I discussed the work of these women potters within a framework of five key aesthetic features of design, or guiding principles, that specifically came out of conversations with these women about their work. Through an analysis of these features (movement, naturalism, complexity, filled space, and surface treatment), I have shown that women are making decidedly important contributions, changing the direction of the community aesthetic.

I have taken a processual approach to examine the work of individual women over time to demonstrate how these women have met the aesthetic standards that are embodied within the prevailing aesthetic system, and are impacting upon and “making” the aesthetic standards through their individual artistic contributions. I highlighted the role of aesthetics in the processual development of growing empowerment, in order to demonstrate how the acquisition and development of personal aesthetics – which successfully meet the aesthetic criteria – act to shape the standards of excellence operative within the wider community aesthetic system, and allow men and women to increase their potential for empowerment. Lydia Quezada, Consolación Quezada, Taurina Baca Tena, and Graciela Martínez Flores were consistently named by their peers as the leading women artists in the village. In addition to these women, there are numerous others who have also distinguished themselves within the art world and marketplace of Mata Ortiz pottery.

In the following chapter five I explore the relationship between the potentially empowering effects of aesthetic development and the concrete, material consequences of artistic and market success. The aesthetic contributions made by women will be a part of that discussion in terms of how women’s participation in this pottery movement and the development of their own signature styles has empowered them. As both aesthetic success and economic success have the potential to be empowering, I discuss the mutually reinforcing relationship between these components of increasing empowerment in both chapters five and six. The underpinnings of women’s agency are revealed as the women describe their own perceptions of learning their art; the artistic choices and judgments they make; their purposeful action in creating signature styles; their control

over processes of production and interactions within the market; and their resistance to unfair market practices. As home-based artists, both women and men have a degree of control over the factors that can allow them to create the conditions for their empowerment.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ARTISTIC WORK

In this chapter I examine how women potters in Mata Ortíz are expanding their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and daughters to incorporate their productive work as potters within the domestic economy of their homes in order to generate much needed income. In this analysis, I focus my inquiry on whether women's artistic work has the potential to be empowering, and on the circumstances conducive to translating resources derived from their productive work into personal and economic empowerment.

There is no normative model of how women organize their pottery production within their households. The four strategies of production I isolated are indicative of the diversity of household structures, the fluidity of women's changing statuses, and the differences existing among women in Mata Ortíz. I use these four categories as heuristic devices to describe and differentiate this variability among the women. The four categories include: 1) women working as independent artists; 2) couples who co-produce two styles with separate signatures; 3) couples who co-produce one style with one signature; and, 4) women who co-produce with a family member other than their partner, such as with parents, children, or siblings.

I found that the strategies women use result in a range of different possibilities for growing empowerment. These strategies provide the structural context in which I examine three cases in each of the four categories to illustrate this range. I measure empowerment using four criteria in order to assess how women do or do not exploit their opportunities. At the end of each category, I discuss how the production strategies work for other women in the same category. By no means are these categories fixed, nor do

these reflect deterministic trends. Women move among these categories, and as we will see in the cases of certain women, some actually transitioned from one category to another during the research period.

Understanding empowerment to be a gradual process, I use the following criteria as measures or indices to examine how their interaction either enhances or precludes women's possibilities for empowerment. These criteria are: 1) learning the skill to form and paint pottery in consideration of the effect and prestige of the woman's teacher; 2) developing a distinct signature style and attaining recognition within the market and art worlds as an individual artist; 3) gaining control over all or some important aspects of the productive process, specifically, the degree of responsibility for manufacturing and design; and 4) gaining control over the marketing of her pottery, the resulting income, and assessing whether her role in household economic decision making has increased. By evaluating the processual nature of each woman's development as an artist, we can ascertain the potentialities the four production strategies offer, and how these have variable trajectories for different women.

As stated in the introductory chapter, I define empowerment as the gradual "process by which the powerless obtain greater control over both resources and ideologies in order to act in their own self-interests, gaining control over the circumstances of their lives," (Sen and Batliwala 2000:5). As Montoya adds, they increase their "capacity to transform their world in desired ways" (Montoya 1999:371). I use "empowering" as interchangeable with the concepts of "capacitating" or "enabling" to make clear that it is the women who are actively engaged in the process of empowering themselves, rather than empowerment as a process being done *to* them or *for* them

(Yeatman in Smith et al. 2004:10). My focus is on the agency women exercise, through their decisions and purposeful actions, to challenge and resist their marginalization and subordination (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007:11) within the constraints of the structural and cultural conditions of the local patriarchal system and transnational ethnic art markets.

Women potters are using their economic advances and growing empowerment to expand the role definitions of femininity as these exist in Mata Ortíz. They are not rejecting the existing role definitions to a point that diverges completely from their traditional positions within the division of labor; they are simply expanding the parameters. This reformulation of gender is similar enough to the prevailing gender ideal in that women are still in the home and are still privileging their roles as wives and mothers (see Tiano and Ruiz 1991:234). At the same time, however, they are expanding these traditional roles to encompass their home-based work as potters who are earning income, and are often responsible (in certain households) for overseeing lucrative businesses.

Production Strategies

The first strategy includes six women who have always produced pottery independently. All of these women have benefited from their learning history. Each has established a distinct signature style and is recognized as a named artist. All maintain sole control over their process of production. This does not necessarily mean they live by themselves, but they are producing pottery on their own. Others in the household may provide assistance, but on an “as needed” basis. In other words, no one other than the woman herself is responsible for specific aspects of production. All six of these women

have experienced significant increases in their economic well-being, and maintain control over their marketing and income.

The other three strategies involve collaborative production. In these cases, women collaborate with other household members to produce pottery. Women work with their husbands or partners, parents, children, or siblings. In all three strategies some tasks, such as forming or painting, are consistently carried out by the same person. However, the tasks of processing raw materials, sanding, polishing, and firing tend to be divided and shared among those capable of carrying them out. As their production may be contingent upon the cooperative mobilization of household labor, women working collaboratively are vulnerable to their dependency on others.

Collaboration with male partners or family members has the potential to be empowering or disempowering, and is dependent upon and mediated by the degree of patriarchy in the relationship (Tiano 1994:55), how gender relations are negotiated within individual households, and the extent of a woman's exercise of agency. The diversity of strategies women use to organize their production with either their male partners or family members demonstrates more variability than those used by women who are independent artists. Not all women are solely responsible for forming the pots and not all men paint and sign.

There are two strategies involving collaboration with men. In the first of these, women collaborate with their husbands or partners to co-produce two styles of pottery with two separate signatures. There are twelve women in this category. In four of these couples, the man is considered the principal artist because he is painting and signing the pottery co-produced by the couple. While the woman forms, sands, and polishes the

pottery he is painting, she is also independently forming and painting her own style of pottery which she signs. As the work co-produced by the couple typically brings higher prices, often the woman prioritizes the larger share of her labor for their co-produced pots. Typically, she produces fewer pots independently and tends to sell these at a lower price on the market than pots co-produced by the two potters together. The other eight couples work collaboratively and both the man and woman make their own style of pottery. Each are recognized as principal potters by their separate signatures.

In the second strategy in which women collaborate with men, only one style of pottery is co-produced. It is signed by one individual or the other. There are ten couples in this category. In five of these, the woman signs the co-produced pottery; in the other five, the man signs.

The final category is comprised of women who collaborate with family members other than their husbands or partners to co-produce pottery. Some of these women are principal potters who sign their work while others work in co-production on pots signed by someone else; all rely upon household collaboration in varying degrees to make pottery. There are twelve women in this category: four are mothers who collaborated with their children to produce pottery and eight are single daughters. The daughters were living with their parents and had begun earning income through their pottery production. Their ages ranged from 12 to 21 years old. Four of these young women collaborated with their parents but were approaching independent production; two collaborated with their mothers; one collaborated with her father and her brother; and one with her sisters.

The designation of a particular production strategy reflects the pattern utilized by the woman at the time of her interview. Unless otherwise noted, I give attributes such as

age, marital status, artistic skill, peer recognition, and market success as these applied at the time of the research period from 1998 through 1999. Undoubtedly, the circumstances and personal situations of these women have since changed. Some were operating from subordinate positions while others were successful in challenging the strictures of their particular domestic relations, even if they were dealing with a dominant father or husband, or were still adolescents under their parents' control and direction.

Independent Artists

My three examples of women who are independent potters with their own signature style are Lydia Quezada Celado, Consolación Quezada Celado, and Taurina Baca Tena. The six women in this category illustrate varying levels of empowerment, as the following discussion will elaborate.

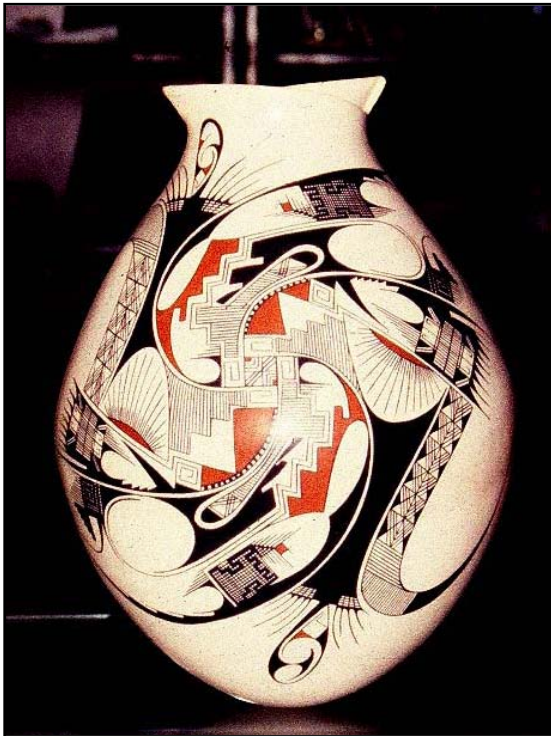


Figure 5.1 Polychrome olla by Lydia Quezada Celado, 1998.
Photographed by author in potter's home in Nuevo Casas Grandes.

Lydia Quezada Celado de Talavera

Lydia learned directly from her brother Juan in 1974 when the family and a handful of apprentices worked together to produce the first pottery to be marketed from the village. The similarity between Lydia's and her older brother Juan's work reflects the constancy of dialogue between the two. The relationship has been an interactive one in which the two have influenced one another's work through the years. She continues to consider her brothers Juan and Nicolás to be her closest advisors and consultants regarding techniques and manufacturing processes.

Lydia is a principal potter and does all the steps of production on her own from processing the clay through the forming, sanding, polishing, and painting of the pot. From the time she began, Lydia signed her *ollas* and *figuras* and quickly developed her own distinctive signature style. Since those early years, Lydia has developed highly stylized and readily recognizable forms and designs. She produces both polychrome and black-on-black pottery. Her polychromes are painted on white, black, and various shades of clay ranging from crème, buff, and red to *mezcla* (mixed). In 1999, Lydia's husband, Rito Talavera, was assisting her with sanding and polishing when needed, and often did the firing. Lydia has consistently been on the leading edge of innovation, introducing new designs, forms, and techniques readily copied and adapted by other potters, both male and female.

In describing her progression as an artist, Lydia began by saying she was very young when she started and the work was new for her in the 1970s. She pointed out that her early *ollas* were made for a specific market of buyers interested in the designs and

forms of the prehistoric pots. Once she achieved a certain level of success in the market, she began to make the *ollas* for herself and was able to express more freedom and creativity in her art. Lydia related how she had made the decision to advance her creativity as a result of a particular conversation she had in 1996 with Maria and Barry King, M.D., prestigious collectors from El Paso, Texas. This couple has been influential in their support of the aesthetic development in the community through numerous long standing artist-patron relationships. Lydia described in detail how this conversation encouraged her to give her art a prominent place among the three things most important to her: family, home, and religious community. During this conversation, she related how the couple cautioned her that she was neglecting her art.

I was dedicating too much time to these three things. In reality, I was leaving my work behind little by little. But for me, these three things are really important, but so is the fourth – my pottery. After this, I organized myself so that I was able to dedicate more time to my art. When Dr. King said these things to me, I was very grateful because it was as though I was sleeping. He spoke as he did because Dr. King has a really good eye. He told me I was able to make much better work. I was not doing exactly the same thing, but I was doing the very similar work over and over again. Still, I was selling as well as before, but I did not have the impulse to do something different or new. The things Dr. King said to me helped me to take the steps upward in my art. I am grateful for the things he told me. What he said was not at all meant to be hurtful; on the contrary, he helped me very much (Lydia Quezada, interview, March 30, 1999).

In the early 1980s, Lydia developed a double firing process which results in stunning shiny black designs on a matte black surface. As described by Walter Parks,

She fires the pot twice. The first results in a plain shiny black surface. She paints designs on this, and then fires the piece again. The final result is a matte black design on the shiny surface (Parks 1993:27).

According to Spencer McCallum, this was one of her most influential technical developments (MacCallum 1994:77). This style was immediately favored among buyers

and its production quickly spread throughout the village. It continues to share favored status with the polychromes produced within the village.

By the late 1990s, Lydia was experimenting with the mouth of the *olla*, shaping it to give a sense of movement to the form. Variations on her innovative “cut-away” mouths as well as her black-on-black matte surface are now ubiquitous in the pottery produced throughout the village. Her technical innovations have become so integral to the pottery of Mata Ortiz, they are no longer attributed to Lydia, but are part of what has come to be recognized as the “tradition.”

At the time of the interviews Lydia was selling from her home, mainly to certain traders and collectors with whom she has established long-term relationships. A significant portion of her sales result from her exhibitions and demonstrations in the United States. Even with the percentage she shares with promoters and gallery owners, her pottery continues to be a lucrative source of income. Lydia’s prices in 1999 were averaging from \$150 to \$350 for her medium sized *ollas* (12 inches high) and \$1000 or more for her very large pots (24 inches).⁹⁵ Rito’s smaller pieces were selling for \$25 to \$50. His *ollas* are black-on-black and often feature a reptile built around the opening of the pot, similar to the pottery made by his sister-in-law Reynalda Quezada.

Clearly, learning from her brother Juan was an empowering factor for Lydia in a number of ways. Through her apprenticeship with her brother, Lydia accessed the highest quality instruction available from the most experienced teacher in the pottery industry. She attained a high level of artistic autonomy from her teacher fairly early in her career. In time, her relationship with Juan transitioned from being his student to

⁹⁵ Lydia's prices in 2009 from her home in Nuevo Casas Grandes start at \$400 and progress upwards from \$600 - \$800, depending on size, to \$1000 - \$1500 and more for the larger *ollas*.

exchanging ideas and techniques with him as her peer. Her mastery of the production process at the beginning of her artistic work enabled her to become an independent producer. Lydia is empowered by both her prestige and her ability to generate an income. Her earnings are pooled with her husband's and are used for family and household expenses. While her relationship with her husband Rito is a traditional one, she has equal input in decision making.

Lydia proved to be an adept teacher as well. Rito was her first student and since teaching him, she has taught her sisters Rosa, Genoveva, and her nieces Noelia and Patricia Hernández Quezada. She and Rito have taught both their children to make pottery. "I have told them I want them to continue with this work and this tradition." Their daughter Paula was making pottery by the time she was twelve. Their teenage son, Moroni, was producing smaller black-on-black ware at the time of the interviews. By the early 2000s, Paula was an accomplished potter and accompanying her mother to give demonstrations.

Consolación Quezada Celado

In 1973 Consolación Quezada Celado was a single mother of three and selling prepared food to passengers from the train during its brief stop in the village. Her earnings were barely enough to offset the expenses of her young family. When she saw her brothers Juan and Nicolás making money with their pottery, she asked them to teach her.

At first, Consolación was only interested in making the pots, but her brother Nicolás encouraged her to learn to paint.

Painting was very difficult, but Nicolás helped me to do the forming. He and Juan had a lot of patience with us. One day he told me: “If you like to make the *ollas* and you like the money, then you have to struggle to learn how to paint them.” It seemed impossible for me to do, but he had the strength. He would come to me and look over my pot and then say, “Do it this way, and here, do it that way,” and so, I learned. And then I began to get the idea of how to paint. When we finished our pots, and these were dry and ready, we took them to our own houses and painted them (Consolación Quezada, interview, September 12, 1999).

I asked Consolación if there were an exhibition of her work, which pieces of her pottery would best demonstrate the development of her different styles and designs.

Referring to photos I had of examples of her earlier pottery that are now in the collections of the San Diego Museum of Man and the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, she described her first ollas as “el color de barro,” the natural color of clay. She painted these with red and black paint (see Figure 4.10). Her work progressed to polychromes on pots made of red or yellow clays, and divided into bands of painted designs that encircled the pots. Consolación explained that like Juan, she did not paint the bottom portion of the pot. She began painting the entire pot after her brother introduced this design change.

In time, Consolación moved away from working in traditional Paquimé design and form, and began combining painted polychrome designs with her technique of incising the clay body. In the early 1980s, she began making wide base pots that tapered upward to a narrow opening. A number of them were acquired by Spencer MacCallum and are now a part of the Spencer H. MacCallum Research Pottery Collection of the San Diego Museum of Man. During this same time, Consolación began slipping her large pots with a dark red, nearly purple-colored paint she called *morada*. She painted these

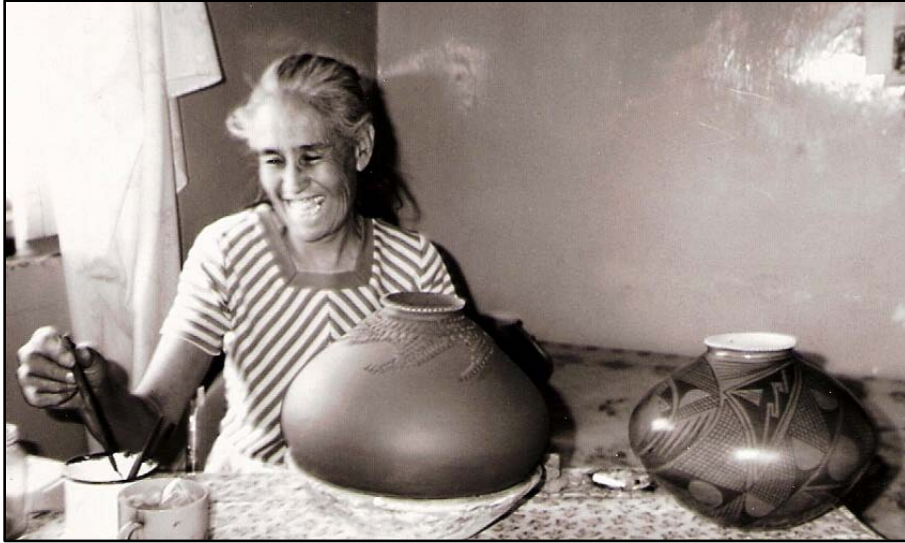


Figure 5.2 Consolación Quezada Celado painting, April 1990.
Photography by Walter P. Parks.

with either geometric designs or naturalistic depictions of animals and birds, using black paint. She prepared the distinctive colored *morada* paint with minerals her son-in-law sent to her by train from La Junta, a village to the south (Williams 1991:66). She had stopped making these pots by 1999 as she no longer had access to this mineral.

Consolación learned the technique of incising the clay from her brother Reynaldo. She learned to make blackware from her daughter, Dora Isela, who learned the reduction firing method from her mother's brothers, Reynaldo and Juan. Dora Isela uses the incising technique on her black and white pottery. While Consolación acknowledges her designs are influenced by the prehistoric pieces, she firmly told me that her work was not the same. "My work is my own." Consolación called my attention to how she combined the incised band encircling the neck and shoulder of her large black-on-black "*estrellita*" (star) *olla* with painted designs, to create the star patterns. She was making this style of pottery as recently as 2007.

In regard to her control over the production process, Consolación began working collaboratively in the early 1970s with her brothers and her sisters. In particular, Nicolás and Consolación were assisting Juan in meeting large commissioned orders. It was Spencer MacCallum who suggested the potters begin to sign their names on the pots. Until this point in 1977, the family's production was collaborative. Once they started signing, each began to focus on his or her own production and work independently (Consolación Quezada, interview, September 12, 1999).

Though Consolación completes the production process on her own, she relies upon her son Mauro Corona Quezada and his wife Martha Martínez Rentería, who live next door, to assist her in procuring her raw materials and firing her pottery (Williams 1991:77). While Consolación handles her own marketing, Martha and Mauro have her pottery for sale in the gallery they have set up in their home as well. As an independent producer, Consolación maintains control over the income she earns selling her pottery.

Taurina Baca Tena

Working alongside her friend and Juan's youngest sister, Lydia Quezada, Taurina Baca Tena had the exceptional opportunity to be personally instructed by Juan himself when she was a teenager in 1975.

At first, I watched how he worked because I knew nothing of this. As he began to make his pot, I began to make mine. It was nothing more than when I made a mistake, he would correct me. He did not interfere in my work with his hands. It was just me doing my work. He was telling me how to do it. I learned to work by watching him (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).

Learning under the disciplined and exacting expectations of her teacher, Taurina experienced success quickly.

As it is with everyone, I started making *ollas* a certain way. And then with time, I got it. I started painting in my own way, coming up with some of my own ideas. From the time I first began, the *ollas* were very beautiful and I started selling them right away. Then I was making the styles and forms even more beautiful. Since then I began to sell better (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).

Looking back, Taurina proudly acknowledges her own talent and effort but has little doubt that her success is due in large part to her initial apprenticeship with her mentor. When I asked if she still considers herself to be part of the ongoing Quezada tradition, she replied:

Well, yes, I think I am because my work is due to him. He tells me to try some way or another. I feel he continues to be my teacher. I have always painted with Juan's paint and I still do (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).

She said this with pride, reminding me that providing paint is a privilege Juan extends only to those he considers worthy among his students.⁹⁶ She has maintained an ongoing dialogue with him regarding techniques, clay types, and designs through the years. When she encounters problems or challenges, she turns to him. "I talk with no one but Juan. I talk with him about painting the most, and he asks me (for my opinion)."

While the progression of her work continues to reflect the stylistic and technical innovations of her teacher, Taurina's work is uniquely her own. Collectively, her body of work expresses her commitment to continue in the tradition of her teacher and maintain her position among those potters identified with the Quezada tradition, a group that continues to be dominated by Quezada family members (see Figure 5.3).

⁹⁶ Since the initial years, Juan advised all his students to adhere to his criteria of excellence in order to maintain the village's nascent reputation for high quality pottery. He maintained quality control by withholding paints from those who did sloppy work (MacCallum 1979:52).

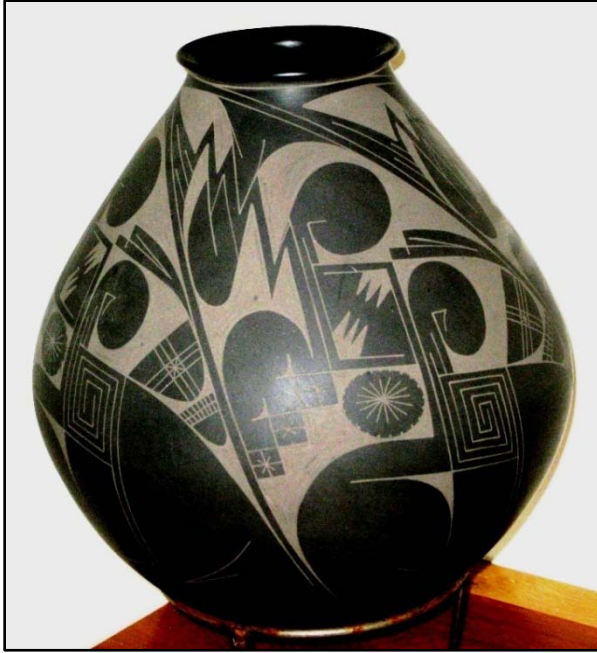


Figure 5.3 Taurina Baca Tena, 2000. Parks Collection
Photography by Walter P. Parks.

Taurina maintains complete control over creating and painting her own designs. As an independent producer, she makes all the decisions in the production process. Even though she uses Juan's paints, she does so because she is able to, not because it is necessary. Juan's paints are considered to be of the highest quality produced in the village and having access to them is an honor. As Taurina emphatically told me,

I do it all. I go to the hills for the clay. I work hard to get it. I wash it. Everything, I do alone. I make the *ollas*, sand, polish, and paint them. After painting them, I fire them with *buñiga*.⁹⁷ *Buñiga* is the best for the white *ollas*. And I sell them too! (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).

Her continued and steady success can be attributed to her competence in carrying out all tasks involved in pottery making. Over the years, a number of potters have related to me the qualities by which Juan Quezada defines a true potter. As quoted by Bill Gilbert, and as Juan once explained to me, a true potter must have "the spirit of potters"

⁹⁷*Buñiga* is the local term for cow dung.

and “be willing to sacrifice the time to locate the materials needed in the sierra, dig your clay, process it, make your own paints” (Gilbert 1995b:57; see Turok 2004:185).

Taurina’s attitude towards her work and her pottery practice is characterized by these qualities. In 1999, her twelve year old daughter Daniella had just begun learning to make pottery with her mother and was producing small pieces. Taurina greatly appreciated Daniella’s assistance in sanding and polishing.

Taurina’s pottery sales are the primary source of income for her extended family. As a single mother of three, Taurina is responsible for her children and herself and maintains control over her income. When I asked how many pots she makes and sells per week, Taurina explained that it is difficult to say because it depends on the size of the *ollas* she has made.

When I make large *ollas*, I make two or three in a week. When I make small ones, I make one or two in a day. But every day is not the same. I do not work on and on. I may make six pots in one week, but the next week I am not going to make six more pots without finishing those that I have begun. I have to prepare them, paint them and do the rest of it. This is why I cannot say how many because there are times I do nothing but make pots, and times I do nothing but paint (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).

Taurina relies upon direct sales to commercial buyers and collectors from her home in Barrio Centro and from her parents’ home in Nuevo Casas Grandes. Taurina markets her pottery consistently, selling pieces as quickly as she makes them.

I do not usually have a lot of *ollas* because as soon as I make them, I sell them. At times there are three or four *ollas*, maybe five. All of my income is from the *ollas*. It has been better in the last few years because my work is much finer now. I am getting paid better now than in the years before (Taurina Baca Tena, interview, May 3, 1999).

At the time of the interview in May of 1999, Taurina was selling her medium sized *ollas* for \$75 to \$150, depending on the size and amount of painting. Her canteens were selling for \$85. In 2007, a 12” high pot was selling for \$400 to \$500.

Summary of Independent Producers

The three women who learned directly from Juan Quezada, the most prestigious and experienced potter, have clearly benefited from the quality of training they received under his instruction. Lydia, Consolación, and Taurina continue to be among the most well known and respected potters in the village. The other three women in this category learned from experienced and famous potters as well. Dora Quezada learned first from her mother Consolación Quezada and later from her uncles, Juan and Reynaldo. Martha Martínez Flores learned directly from her sister Graciela Martínez Flores. Another sister, Amelia Martínez Flores, first learned from her niece Celia Martínez, but acknowledges that her sisters Graciela and Martha, both accomplished potters, have played a significant role in the development of her designs. Amelia and Martha are both members of *Grupo Pearson*.

Regarding recognition and signature style, four of these six women do not command the highest prices, but are they are known for their consistent production of medium to high-quality pottery. They make enough to provide a comfortable home and maintain an above-average standard of living for their families. Amelia Martínez welcomed the opportunity to market her less expensive work through the women’s micro-enterprise group. She is one of the founding members of *Grupo Pearson* and was very active in its first years in operation. Amelia was significantly more secure financially than the majority of women in the women’s micro-enterprise project, as she

was able to rely upon income from her husband's pharmacy and store as well as her own small enterprises.

All six of the women in this category are capable of undertaking the entire production process, which allows them to maintain control over their production. These women also stated they maintain control over their income. As with Taurina Baca Tena and Consolación Quezada, Dora Isela González Quezada and Martha Martínez Flores were able to provide for their families through their pottery making when they were temporarily single heads of households. Dora Isela González Quezada had been making pottery prior to her marriage. Upon becoming a single head of household with four children, this became Dora's sole source of income. During a period of time while her husband was gone, Martha's children stayed with her mother while she went to nursing school in San Juanito. However, this was a difficult situation and Martha turned to pottery making as a more workable way to earn an income for her children and herself. Pottery sales were the primary source of income for the household, and Martha managed to use her pottery income to build a small restaurant. She was also a member of *Grupo Pearson*.

Women in Couples Who Co-produce Two Styles

In the following category, women collaborate with their husbands to co-produce two styles of pottery with two separate signatures. Of the twelve women in this category, the three following cases represent couples who work collaboratively, but each member produces and signs their own style of pottery. In the first case, the couple produces two styles of pottery and each is recognized as a principal potter by their separate signatures. The second couple began collaboratively and had since become increasingly independent

in their production. The third case is a woman whose husband is considered the principal artist because he is painting and signing the pottery co-produced by the couple. Due to her husband's absence and her involvement with *Grupo Pearson*, this woman transitioned to forming, painting, and signing her own style of pottery during the research period. In time she came to rely upon a second production strategy, collaboration with extended family.

Socorro Sandoval

Socorro Sandoval was already a mother of three when she began her struggle to learn pottery making in 1982. Encouraged by a trader from Nuevo Casas Grandes who was eager to encourage production to meet the growing demand of his business, Socorro and her sister-in-law Gloria Hernández began the frustrating process of trial and error before they successfully produced their own pottery.

Gloria and I, we started together. We got together at my house the first time and we started comparing ideas. Nobody gave us any ideas and we did not go looking for anyone else's ideas. Each of us did what we could. Ever since then, Gloria has done her designs and I did my own designs. This is the reason our work is so different (Socorro Sandoval de Silveira, interview, March 3, 1999).

The successful reception of the traveling exhibit, "Juan Quezada and the New Tradition" in the southwestern United States in 1979 brought unprecedented attention to the village (Parks 1993). Encouraged by the success of Juan Quezada and his students, nearly every household in Mata Ortiz had someone trying his or her hand at pottery in hopes of generating income through pottery making. At the time Socorro began teaching

herself, a handful of potters were already producing in Barrio El Porvenir. Among them were Felix and Emetario Ortíz, their nephew Macario Ortíz, and Rojelio Silveira.⁹⁸

However, Socorro is adamant she did not learn from anyone else, nor did she learn by watching them. The other two women profiled in this category did have teachers. Maricruz López first learned from her father and then from her husband Fermin Pedregón; Luz Elva Ramírez learned from her partner Edmundo López. Socorro's learning experience is significant in that she successfully established her own artist identity despite not having a teacher. Socorro's distinct signature style was well known to commercial traders who sought out her work before her husband José Silveira Ortíz joined her to co-produce pottery full time.

Socorro had attained recognition as an autonomous artist by the mid 1980s. Black-on-black pottery was becoming the most prevalent available throughout the village, and this was particularly true in Barrio El Porvenir. Socorro's well executed polychromes on red, brown, tan, or white slipped clay bodies were highly sought after. Her designs were representative of the Paquimé tradition but distinctive enough to be recognized as her signature style. Socorro's name was soon associated with high quality pottery at a good price – a desirable combination for commercial traders and collectors alike.

Her husband José quit his job as a laborer at a sawmill two years later, in 1989. They began co-producing pottery full time from that point on and began contributing

⁹⁸ Rojelio Silveira is Socorro's brother-in-law. The Silveira brothers are second cousins to Felix and Emetario Ortíz (Ryerson 1994:107). Rojelio was not living in Mata Ortíz during the time Socorro began making pottery. Socorro does acknowledge that after her husband José joined her in pottery making, they learned a new process for sanding and polishing from Rojelio once he returned from living in Los Cristianitos in the late 1980s.

equally to the household income. By recruiting her husband, Socorro went from being an independent producer to a co-producer. Co-production for Socorro and José meant they worked cooperatively, sharing work space and assisting one another in various tasks, but ultimately each was producing and signing their own pottery independently. As José explained to me,

Look, we work together in our pottery. We no longer have a division from each other. She paints a certain design on the pot and to help us move more quickly, I do the fill-in work for the design. But it is still her work and when I make the pot; it is mine even if she helps me (Socorro Sandoval and José Silveira, interview, March 8, 1999).

Everyone in the family contributed to the heavier work: locating, mining, and processing the clay from the hills, and firing the pottery. The raw materials of clay, fuel, and pigment for paints are shared among all five potters in the household. The more labor intensive but less skilled tasks like sanding and polishing were divided, according to whoever had the time free to complete the task at hand.

When I asked Socorro how the income from pottery sales was managed, she explained:

We all do work in a different style, but we all work together. We are all making money, but using it in different ways, managing it differently. We work more contently, because we are all together. We are each handling our own money. When they [their children] marry, they keep their own money apart from ours. Trini is working now and from what she sells, she contributes to the house. She knows to do this.

Yes, we are very united. This is how we showed them. This is how we taught them to work and because of this, we are even more united. Even though Lila has moved out and Saul has moved out, we are still united. When we go to fire, we go together. They all help us. We all help each other (Socorro Sandoval de Silveira, interview, March 8, 1999).

The fact that Socorro began her work in pottery as an independent producer may account in large part for her success in maintaining control over all aspects of her production process. Co-production has not meant a loss of her creative control over her work, but rather has increased and furthered her artistic production. Working in collaboration with her husband has proved to be empowering for Socorro since José's labor expanded household production and added his creative input to artistic and production decisions. Socorro described how the couple had decided in the late 1980s to continue producing their white and red ware *en fresca*,⁹⁹ that is, polishing the paint while the clay is still wet. By this time, many potters had given up the labor-intensive and riskier *en fresca* method in favor of polishing after the pot had dried. It was José's suggestion that they continue. Socorro considered this technique an essential component of the household's signature style.

Socorro has considerable autonomy over the forms and designs she uses on her pottery. She explained that commercial traders will often ask her for a number of certain sized pots within a given price range, for example, five 12" pots priced at \$75 each. Rather than being restricted to exacting market requests in meeting orders, Socorro is free to work within her own range of creativity. During her initial endeavor into pottery, Socorro pooled her pottery income with José's wages from the sawmill. She spent the first two years producing "minis," tiny pots that sold for 80 centavos, less than a dollar apiece. As her reputation grew and the quality of her work improved, she moved from being a secondary provider to being the mainstay provider in the household. Her

⁹⁹ This term, "*en fresca*" refers to applying a slip and painted designs while the clay is still damp or leather-hard, and is described more fully in chapter four.

successful experience in pottery reinforced her confidence in her capacity to earn a living through her pottery, and in doing so, contribute substantially to her household.

Socorro is fully involved in marketing her own pottery as well as that of her husband and children. Marketing is by direct sales from their home to commercial traders, collectors, and tourists. The bulk of sales are commissioned through orders placed by commercial traders. Socorro and José concentrated on producing single higher-quality labor-intensive pieces selling for over \$100, combined with a steady production of medium sized, good quality pots priced between \$40 and \$80. Socorro estimated each month she sold approximately ten of her larger pots at \$80 each. José estimated he sold twenty pots per month at \$40 each. As co-providers, each was earning an average of \$800 per month.

The primary source of income for this household is pottery; however, it is supplemented by crops grown in the family's fields and the yearly sale of calves from their cattle, both purchased with pottery money. When asked about control over her income, Socorro explained she and José pool all of their income to cover household and family expenses. She firmly stated she shares equally with José in household economic decision making. In Socorro's case, her participation in pottery has translated into empowerment largely because she has maintained control of her production, even while working collaboratively with her husband.

Luz Elva Ramírez Carbajal

At the time she began her relationship with Edmundo Lopéz, Luz Elva Ramírez was not involved in pottery. Edmundo was already an accomplished potter who had learned by watching his brother-in-law, Macario Ortíz, a highly skilled potter in Barrio El

Porvenir. Macario is well known for his innovative approaches to style and technique, and particularly for his part in developing the process of making blackware using graphite. Macario's consistent production of high quality pottery decidedly influenced Edmundo, who aspired to become one of the leading potters of the second generation.

Early in their relationship, Luz had expressed a desire to learn. However, it was not until Edmundo was under the pressure of meeting a large order for a female trader from Tucson for 50 small pots of good quality, that he asked Luz Elva to help him. In exchange for her assistance, he agreed to teach her. Until this point, she had only been helping Edmundo with polishing and sanding. After teaching her the rudiments of building pottery, he made it clear that she had to learn to do everything on her own. He refused to help her when she encountered problems and asked for his advice. She recalled the trouble she had in forming the *picos* (mouths) of the *ollas*. He told her she had to figure it out on her own because she wouldn't learn unless she struggled to teach herself. Now Luz Elva takes pride in telling her buyers that she completes the process from start to finish. Luz Elva related how she and Edmundo reached an agreement to keep their work separate to avoid conflict. Nonetheless, Edmundo's influence as her teacher is apparent in the aesthetic similarities and congruence between their works.

When I met Luz Elva Ramírez Carbajal in 1995, she had been making pottery for four years. As her painting skills improved, she developed a signature style over a fairly short period of time. Luz Elva's work is distinguished by the fluid lines she paints on her black-on-black pottery. She developed a particular set of design elements based upon traditional Paquimé designs. She was consistently selling her distinctive pottery in the price range of \$35 to \$75. Pottery sales were the primary source of income for this

household of six, but with four children to provide for, Luz Elva needs to be resourceful. She continued to augment her income by selling baked goods and candy. When she first began in pottery, her two older sons, Fernando and Miguel, assisted her by selling her pottery to tourists staying at La Posada, a small inn nearby. By 1998, both sons were producing their own styles and signing their work.

Luz Elva relied more upon her sons than her partner Edmundo for help in mining and processing clay, sanding, polishing, and firing. By 1998, Luz Elva had gained complete control over the production process. However, this team approach with her sons distinguishes Luz Elva from the independent producers. Together with her two older sons, Luz Elva did her firing in a tumbling down old adobe structure across the railroad tracks from their home in Barrio Centro. The old adobe walls provide a barrier to the winds that are so often devastating to the pottery during the firing process.

When I interviewed her, Luz Elva maintained complete control over the money she earned through her pottery making. As the house belongs to her, she was responsible for its maintenance and any household-related expenses (utilities, repairs, and the like). Luz Elva is an industrious and ambitious woman whose artistic work has grown out of necessity and her strong desire to improve and ensure the well-being of her children and herself. She was very clear that she worked independently of Edmundo and works as hard as she does to provide for her children. She spoke of the possibility of operating a small gallery, or even a small restaurant. She also hoped to build another house, or to at least fix up the one she had. By 1999, Luz Elva had expanded her marketing to Ciudad Chihuahua and other Mexican cities.

The older sons maintained control of income from their pottery; however, they also contributed to food and household expenses when needed. The younger children were thoroughly involved in the pottery business as well. They knew prices and were adept at keeping track of any orders they took in their mother's absence. During my visits with Luz Elva, her younger sons would often come in to relay information about the make and color of a newly arrived vehicle in town. Identifying U.S. and Mexican states on license plates proved to be crucial information in terms of anticipating whether an expected trader had arrived, or if tourists new to the village would be in need of a guide.

Maricruz López Escalante

Maricruz López Escalante had been working in pottery for seven years when I initially interviewed her in 1998. She co-produces with her husband, Fermin Pedregón. Initially, each learned to make pots within their own families. Maricruz's father encouraged her to learn pottery in 1991.

I was in Juárez for a while, working in the *maquila*. Then I came to visit and my papa had begun making *ollas*. He had learned from my older brother Ramon. My father told me it was easy and asked me if I wanted to learn. But I struggled a lot because I could not place the *tortilla* in the mold the right way. He encouraged me to get better. When I would try it alone, it would fall over, but my father would come and help me. He taught me how to do it (Maricruz López Escalante, interview, August 20, 1998).

After she married Fermin, she learned his family's style of pottery making. The two worked together to produce small, inexpensive *ollas* and figures. Though they made pots of various sizes, their small wedding vases sold best. They produced various forms of pots such as *figuras* of fish which they painted using both Mimbres and Paquimé inspired designs. Neither had the benefit of a prestigious teacher nor had either attained

significant recognition in the marketplace. Nonetheless, they sold their work on a steady basis when they were producing together. However, Fermin was gone from the village to work in wage labor during the research period. His absence caused Maricruz financial strain and personal difficulties. Not only was she left alone with their infant and a three year old toddler, but she no longer had access to the labor and support of her pottery-making partner.

Maricruz's case highlights the vulnerability women potters can experience when they rely solely upon collaborative production and the support of their partner is withdrawn. Her case also illustrates the difficulties involved in pottery production when one lacks experience and has not attained control over the complete process.

It is very difficult for me to build an *olla*. He is much better at making the *ollas*. We both paint, but when he is here, he paints the designs and I do the fill-in work. But now, I am doing all of the work on the *ollas*: the sanding, the polishing, forming and the painting. It is really difficult. Now, I am painting all the pots myself. It is more difficult now because I am alone (Maricruz López Escalante, interview, August 20, 1998).

Maricruz struggled to fit her pottery work into her daily schedule. Her responsibilities for her young children made this more problematic.

I give two hours to my work in the mornings and then I am busy with my housework and the kids. Later in the afternoon, if the baby is sleeping, I try to finish the other things I started in the morning (Maricruz López Escalante, interview, August 20, 1998).

The best solution she found was to take her children to her parents' house so her mother could watch them while she was painting. Still, other issues interfered and prevented Maricruz from keeping a regular schedule. She had to balance issues of child care, the availability of raw materials, unpredictable weather, and the lack of assistance she sorely needed.

I do not have any clay right now for making *ollas*. Yesterday I painted over at my mother's so I could be free to fire today. But now it is really humid, so I cannot fire them. When he [her husband] is here, we work together and we get more work done. I have to buy the pots to paint now because he is gone. When I paint another person's pot, I have to give this person part of the money I get for the *olla* (Maricruz López Escalante, interview, August 20, 1998).

On one occasion, her mother explained to me that Maricruz does not have the tools she needs to do the firing by herself. She also pointed out that it is not safe for Maricruz to fire the pots alone with the children. For these reasons, she would fire the pottery with her father at her parents' house. Her younger sister, Cindy, kept an eye on the infant and toddler, Natalia and Jaime, while the family fired pots.

While Maricruz had sole control of the money she earned from the pottery, the problem was that she was not earning much money at all. Despite her challenges in producing, Maricruz persisted in seeking the best prices for her work. One day I gave Maricruz a ride to her parents' house. She was going there to fire pots to have ready for buyers due in town the next day from FONART.¹⁰⁰ When I asked whether they pay well, she told me they paid very well. She went on to tell me about another group of buyers from Ciudad Chihuahua who had been in the village the day before. She rejected their offers as they were unwilling to meet her price:

They want to give me \$5 for the pots. I should get \$20. They think if they ask over and over, I will let them have it. But the guys from FONART tell me that my work is very good. They say that some potters want them to pay good money for pots with very little work. They tell me that my pots are well made and are worth the money they give me. I do good work and that is why they give me what I ask for (Maricruz López Escalante, interview, August 20, 1998).

The reality of providing for the daily needs for her children and herself was difficult. Though her husband would send money by way of her brothers, Maricruz could

¹⁰⁰ *Fondo Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías* (National Fund for the Promotion of Arts and Crafts)

not count on this money regularly. She joined the women's micro-enterprise project, *Grupo Pearson*, when it first began with the hope it would provide her with additional support in producing and marketing. Her mother and mother-in-law joined the group at the same time.

Summary of Co-producers of Two Styles

There is a range of potentialities within this second category. We see the largest number of women who approach independent production within the category of women who collaborate with their husbands or partners to co-produce two styles of pottery with two separate signatures. All twelve of these women are producing, painting, and signing their own style of pottery. In four of these couples, the man is considered the principal artist because he is painting and signing the pottery co-produced by the couple. While the woman forms, sands, polishes, and may do some painting on the pottery for which he is the principal artist, she is also independently forming and painting her own style of pottery which she signs. There are three women within these four couples who are equally empowered by their artistic work as the women who produce as independent artists. Graciela Martínez, Nena López, and Blanca Almeida are empowered in all four of the criteria. The fourth woman is less empowered even though she co-produces with her partner and also makes and signs her own pottery. Though she was capable of the full production process, her empowerment was diminished by the fact that her husband often signed the pots that she formed and painted. Because she was not signing all of her work and was not developing recognition through signature style, she met only two of the four criteria. Despite the fact that she handled much of the marketing, she did not have control over the pottery she was producing. Her characterization of her relationship with

her husband as traditional and male dominant, combined with her reluctance to discuss household economics, made it difficult to assess her degree of control over income.¹⁰¹

Within the remaining eight couples who work collaboratively, two styles of pottery are produced and both potters are recognized as principal potters by their separate signatures. Of these eight couples, six women met all four criteria and are as empowered by their artistic work as the independent artists. Despite not having teachers, two of these women, Socorro Sandoval and Gloria Hernandez, successfully taught themselves to make pottery; therefore they were neutral in regard to the learning criteria. Both women began as independent producers and transitioned into collaboration after their husbands learned to make pottery. Four other women in this category met the four criteria: Lupe Soto, Lucía Mora, Olivia Mora, and Blanca Quezada. The effects of signature style, recognition, being capable of the entire production process, and having control over income place all six of these women among those empowered by their artistic work in this category.

There were two women among the eight in this category who were not able to form the pottery and purchased unfired blanks. One of these women met three of the four criteria while the other woman in this category became increasingly less empowered by her artistic work, and eventually only met one criterion. Maricruz López's pottery production became complicated when her husband left to work in wage labor and she was unable to do the process on her own, without her partner's assistance. It was also compromised by her responsibilities as a mother with a newborn and toddler. Even

¹⁰¹ For these reasons, she did not meet the criteria of recognition through signature style or having gained control over the production process. As I describe above, it was difficult to assess her control of income.

though she shifted her production strategy from co-production with her husband to collaboration with her parents, she still had difficulty.

Elvira Bugarini and Blanca Quezada are representative of the four women in the two style co-production category who are similarly empowered, but in varying and lesser degrees. As they had recently begun pottery, they were not as well known and did not command high prices. These women began in pottery around the same time as their husbands. Luz Elva Ramírez differed from the others in this category as she was the only woman who kept her production separate from her partner, even though he was also producing pottery. This arrangement spurred her to develop her skills, signature style, and a mastery of the production process which, as she explains, account for her empowerment.

There was variability among the women in this category in terms of the degree to which they control the income from their pottery; some maintain complete control while others pool their incomes. These women make significant economic contributions to their household incomes, stated that they have equal input with their husbands in making economic decisions, and characterized their relationships with their husbands as egalitarian partnerships.

Women in Couples who Co-produce One Style of Pottery

The third category is comprised of women who co-produce one style of pottery with a male partner which is signed by one individual or the other. There are ten couples in this category. In five of these couples, the man signs the co-produced pottery; in the other five couples, the woman signs. My three examples of women who work with their husbands are Olga Quezada, Gaby Almeida, and Martha Ponce. Their experiences

illustrate the possible range of variability in how the division of labor can be configured within couples.

Olga Quezada González and Humberto Ledezma Jacques

Olga Quezada and Humberto Ledezma work in joint production of their pottery. Between the two, it was Olga who first began making pottery. She learned to make *ollas* from her neighbor and *comadre*, Angela López de Bañuelos, and has been making pottery since 1988. She described how Humberto decided to join her.

When I began selling those little *ollitas*, I was working alone. Humberto still had not begun doing this work. I remember when he got the *animo* (spirit, mind) to do this work. It was when he saw that I could sell them and that I was making money. I told him you need to begin and help me. He really struggled trying to form them and to build them up. When he began, they were really thick (Olga Quezada, interview, April 29, 1999).

At this point, Humberto added that he simply threw them out because he was not satisfied with them. He began working with a more experienced potter, Gerardo Cota Guillén.

He taught me more and I was working much better. Then we would go together to look for the clay and we did experiments. When Gera and I were working and doing experiments, I was also making white *ollas*, cremes and grays too for a while. I began to make the pots much thinner and then I began to sell them for more money. I was content when I began to sell because the money really helped out even more. I did not have to do other work – only *ollas* (Humberto Ledezma, interview, April 29, 1999).

Olga and Humberto have worked together to develop a signature style which distinguishes their work from that of others. Their work is consistently praised as some of the finest made in the village in terms of the delicate, thin walls and the light weight of their pots. According to Olga, it was when Humberto began making their pottery that people began to comment on the delicacy and lightness of their pots. Then Humberto

began experimenting with different treatment of the mouths of the pots. “Really, there were four mouths I did: round, squared, one that had ears and some without a mouth.” Olga added, “All of that came from Humberto. He did nothing more than put square mouths on the round pots.” It was around this same time that Olga began painting her *cuadritos* design exclusively. As Olga recalled, “This is when our work increased the most in price and popularity.” They attribute the success of their signature style to Humberto’s delicate treatment of the pots’ mouths, the extremely light and thin-walled pots, and Olga’s delicate and unique geometric designs.

Their organization of production is equally split between the two and each has separate control of certain aspects of production. Humberto forms the pots, sands, and polishes them. Olga paints the pottery, polishes, and signs each *olla*. She does not use any templates or patterns to execute her designs. They mine and process their clay together and they make their own paint. Firing is a joint effort. When I asked Olga how it was that she continued to sign after Humberto joined her, she explained it was simply that in the beginning Humberto was often out in the field when buyers arrived. Therefore, only Olga signed the pots. I then asked if her signing had anything to do with the fact that she was the first to begin making pottery and that she is the one who paints. She nodded in affirmation of both these points.

Olga described their experience of trying to sell directly to stores along the border.

In those first years when we began, we took them to Juárez. We did not do well. They did not want to buy anything and we had to work hard carrying all the boxes of pottery. We went there by bus and then when we got there, it was a real struggle. We walked a lot.” Humberto finished the story: “We did not return to Juárez because of what happened there; the struggle to try to sell was ugly work.

For that reason, we decided to make finer pottery and not have to struggle trying to sell them (Olga Quezada and Humberto Ledezma, interview, April 29, 1999).

Since then, they only sell directly from their home as they have enough business from the traders who transport the pottery to the international market. I then asked if they ever had too many *ollas* in their house. Laughing, Humberto replied, “No. There are people who have too many *ollas*. But us, never. We fire every Saturday and then we sell them as soon as they are ready. We always have orders that we need to fill. We get by on pure orders.”

When asked to describe what aspect of their lives has changed the most from involvement with pottery, Olga quickly responded, “Well, we have been able to build the house and then make it bigger for us and our children. We have bought cattle and fields. All of this is purely from the *ollas*. That is the only work that is here.” However, when asked whether they had earned more money that year in comparison to past years, Olga said it was hard to say. “More or less, the money is the same even though it is more. This year, it has been more expensive to live than before. We make more each year, but it is more and more expensive to live.” Therefore, they did not feel they had really increased their income that year because the difference they made went to cover their increased costs of living.

María Gabriela Almeida Gallegos and César Domínguez Alvarado

Gabriela “Gaby” Almeida’s experience provides an example in which we can follow the processual movement of her growing empowerment along multiple dimensions. Gaby has consistently pushed her artistic development forward, increasing her control over the production process since beginning her co-production with César to

making her own styles of pottery.¹⁰² She has also entered the market as a commercial buyer, evidencing another dimension in which her artistic work has involved a process of growing empowerment.

As mentioned in her portrait in chapter two, there are direct ties within Gaby's learning experience to two of the most prestigious families in the development of the pottery industry: the Quezada and Ortíz families. There are two connections to the Quezada legacy. The first is through Gaby's initial teacher, her mother Luz María Gallegos, who learned from her neighbor Consolación Quezada and Juan Quezada in 1980. The second connection is through her husband César's brother Jaime, who learned from Jesus Lozano, a student of Oscar González, Consolación's son. The tie to the Ortíz family is through Emeterio Ortíz who influenced César and Gaby's development of their large *plato* (plate) and *cazuela* (shallow bowl) forms.

The couple decided to try pottery making together and learned about the same time, about 1984. Gaby first learned to form pots from her mother Luz María when she was 21 years old. Though César taught elementary school at the time, his income was very low. César explained that he soon realized his brother Jaime was earning good money making pottery.

Jaime had been making *ollas* for three years before I began. My brother helped me a great deal, it is true. But apart from my brother Jaime, the one who truly helped me a lot was Telo Ortíz – Emeterio Ortíz.¹⁰³ I would go spend afternoons

¹⁰² During the research period, I became aware that Gaby had begun making and selling her own pottery. When I asked her about her own work during the interviews, Gaby gave priority to her co-production with César. For this reason, I considered her to be in the category of co-production of one style. In more recent conversations, the extent to which Gaby was expanding her control over the production process, learning new techniques, and developing her painting skills during that time has become clearer (personal communication, May 2009). I attribute this changing attitude to Gaby's increasing artistic autonomy and confidence in her work.

¹⁰³ Emeterio Ortíz was the uncle of Macario Ortíz and the brother of Felix Ortíz. Emeterio died about 1996.

with him and he would say “Come, come and watch,” and I would see how he made his plates. I learned a lot from watching him. This man was a really good person with me and he helped me greatly (Gaby Almeida and César Domínguez, interview, April 30, 1999).

When Gaby and César sold their first small eight pots for a profit of \$40 to an American trader, César said, “It was like an injection of energy.” Nonetheless, it was still difficult to make enough to support a family of four on a teacher’s pay and an occasional pottery sale. When there was no money for diapers and baby food, César would go to the trader and get an advance. Gaby and César continued learning all they could in order to perfect their own style of pottery while César continued teaching in the elementary school in Mata Ortiz. Their first sale provided the impetus to improve their skills and develop their own signature style collaboratively. At first they made only black *ollas* and later, influenced by Juan Quezada’s *ollas*, they began producing polychromes on white pots. As he explained, “I have always admired the *ollas* of Juan Quezada. I am inspired by the designs by Juan.” Gaby began forming white *ollas* and César developed his distinctive painting style.

Gaby maintains control of making the particular forms and sizes of pottery which are painted by César. She controls all the steps necessary for priming the pot for César’s painting. In response to market demand, her choice of form is often dictated by orders received for particular commissioned pieces. However, the two discuss and collaborate in developing new styles of pottery forms. Gaby negotiates with César as to his preferences, but ultimately the pottery forms are Gaby’s creations. In a discussion about what time of year is the most optimal for making pottery, an interesting insight into Gaby’s labor investment emerged. As César explained, since the temperatures in early

summer cause the pots to break more often when they are drying, it is better for him to have the pots break before he has painted them.

When it breaks after it has been painted, we lose all of our work. This is what happens in the autumn and in the winter. But right now, they break while they are drying. I do not have much of a problem because I have not painted them, but it makes lots of problems for Gaby because she has made the *olla* the way she wanted. But the *olla* still does not have much economic value because it has not been painted yet. It has only been made (Gaby Almeida and César Domínguez, interview, April 30, 1999).

The combined levels of expertise and experience represented among her teachers provided Gaby the foundation of skills upon which she developed the talent required to produce pottery of the highest quality. Gaby's artistic recognition within the community of potters, as well as her successful partnership with her husband César, places her among the top potters.

As is the case with other prominent co-producing couples interviewed, Gaby and César are consistently named together and recognized as a team. This equal recognition is attributed in part to the fact that Gaby and César have an extensive history of teaching, demonstrating, and exhibiting. Gaby plays a crucial role in these events both in terms of increasing their base of collectors and their sales. The couple consistently linked their success to the efforts they have made to create and maintain a strong artistic and business partnership.

When asked whether their annual income had increased from the year before, Gaby replied:

It is about the same more or less. We went to the United States and gave exhibitions. In the past year, there were two. In this year, there are possibly three or four, so maybe we will make more" César added, "We make more money in exhibitions because our *ollas* sell for double! This is very good for our sales (Gaby Almeida and César Domínguez, interview, April 30, 1999).

Gaby and César estimated they made and sold three pots a week. “Three *ollas* for one week will be about three hundred and ninety dollars. So for the month, it would be about fifteen hundred dollars.” At the time of the interview in 1999, Gaby and César were pooling their income equally for family and household expenses. As César succinctly said: “What is mine is Gaby’s and what is Gaby’s is mine.”

Gaby began making a style of pottery very distinct from the *ollas* César paints and signs. She became known for her polychrome designs of butterflies, hummingbirds, fish, rabbits, and frogs that she paints on red, black, blue, or green *ollas*. It was also during this time Gaby began working as a *compradora* (buyer), supplying *ollas* for galleries on a commission basis in Nuevo Casas Grandes, Puerto Vallarta, and Houston, Texas.

Martha Ponce Avalos and Rubén Rodríguez Guillén

Martha and Rubén learned to make pottery at different times. Martha learned in 1987, around the same time as her neighbor and cousin Angela López de Bañuelos (as described in chapter two). Both women learned from Angela’s sisters, Rose Irene and Gloria “Chela” López who had learned from their aunt, Reynalda Quezada. Later, Martha taught Rubén how to build the pots. As Martha preferred making the pots over painting, Rubén took on the challenge of painting. Rubén emphasized how he developed his own technique of painting:

No one taught me how to do it. In the beginning, I watched. This was during the same time that Beto (Roberto Bañuelos) began, and then Olga. I was paying attention to the *ollas* I saw in different places, but I was painting the designs I saw in my own head. I came here, in my own house and painted these on the *ollas* Martha was making. I designed something of what I saw others doing and my own ideas (Martha Ponce and Rubén Rodríguez, interview, June 8, 1999).

Rubén exchanged ideas and techniques with his brothers, Armando, Manolo, and Oscar Rodríguez, as well as his cousin Gerardo Cota Guillén.¹⁰⁴ Although many of his close neighbors and family were starting in pottery at this same time, Rubén was adamant and proud that the people in this neighborhood developed their own styles of pottery by themselves.

Like us, the people in this barrio did not learn from anyone. There are people who say they taught us, but that is not true. No one taught us. Learning has always been by seeing some neighbor or some friend, and then we figured it out for ourselves (Martha Ponce and Rubén Rodríguez, interview, June 8, 1999).

Through their collaboration, Martha and Rubén produce brilliant, highly polished black-on-black pots. With pride, they describe their style as intricately painted circular designs that complement the shape and form of each pot. Martha is the one who developed the technique of polishing their blackware to the brilliant high gloss that is so integral to their signature style. Martha described how she discovered this technique in the process of developing her skills:

We began with polychromes and made these for about two or three years. We started making the blackware and then I began to see how to do the polishing differently and each piece got better and better. Each time, the pots were blacker, more brilliant. For this reason, I tried to perfect the polishing. I give each *olla* a first polishing and then another and another. We give these extra polishings to make them take the shine. We polish naturally with a stone – we do not use graphite. The buyers came and we knew that they preferred the black. From then, we kept making the black *ollas* (Martha Ponce and Rubén Rodríguez, interview, June 8, 1999).

Rubén's precise designs typically consist of alternating rows which incorporate various traditional and geometric design elements such as angular zigzag "lightning" lines, the "*cuchillos*" or knives motif, and interlocking frets and scrolls. Their most

¹⁰⁴ Rubén's mother Gregoria "Goya" Guillén is the sister of Gerardo Cota Guillén's mother, Avelina Guillén de Cota.

popular pieces are low, small round shaped *ollas* that often feature distinctive square openings (see Figure 5.4).



Figure 5.4 Rubén Rodríguez Guillén and Martha Ponce Avalos, 1999.
From the personal collection of Michael and Moira Palhegyi.
Photography by Michael Palhegyi.

Even though Martha and Rubén have their own specific tasks in the production process, each is able to do all the tasks involved and can assist the other when necessary. Rubén related how he formed the pottery when Martha was unable to do so during a lengthy illness. They work together in locating, mining, and processing the clay and in the firing process. Though both have pursued their individual development as artists, they have worked closely with one another in order to maintain their productive collaboration. Each contributes specialized knowledge and expertise to this partnership.

In regard to control of process, Martha described how the commercial traders and their preferences have had the greatest influence on their production. She explained as follows:

I saw that people were interested in other pottery like polychromes. But the traders always asked for the pure black *ollas*. Sometimes I think I would like to try to do the polychromes again because I get tired with only one color. So I say, "I am going to try the polychromes again." I do it, but these do not sell. Those were long months with only the polychromes because the Americans know our work in black and they want only those. It is easier for our family to sell our work in black. We have a big market. We are able to take orders even when we do not have *ollas* (Martha Ponce and Rubén Rodríguez, interview, June 8, 1999).

When I asked Martha how she organizes her time in order to balance her domestic chores, her responsibilities with her children, and her pottery work, she answered as follows:

My older kids help me with the housework. I make food in the morning and then they go to school until about two in the afternoon. Regularly in the morning, I do nothing but attend to the children and the house and get the youngest girl to school. And I still have to make breakfast in the mornings. My older daughters help me. Then I give the *ollas* the first polishing and when the *ollas* are dry and ready, I give them a second polishing, and then I paint them. I have to have the food ready before two when they come home from school in the afternoon. And then from the lunch hour on, I am only working with my *ollas* from about 3:00 in the afternoon until about 6:00 in the afternoon. At times, I make about two or three *ollas* and sometimes, I make no more than one. This is how we distribute and share the work. I tell him I have to do the *ollas* in the morning. I set them aside to dry, and then I polish them in the afternoon so they will be ready in the morning. When he gets up in the morning, he begins painting (Martha Ponce and Rubén Rodríguez, interview, June 8, 1999).

They have a well-furnished and spacious home they share with their three daughters, Janette, Yvonne, and Guadalupe. They attribute their ability to expand their home to their earnings from the pottery. Although they are co-producing the pottery, the income derived from sales is not divided between Martha and Rubén. Instead, each has equal input in making decisions as to how the money is spent. Rubén's input is evidenced by increasing his herd of cattle and the couple's landholdings. Martha's input is evidenced by her investment in modern appliances, which ease some of her workload

in the household. Other indications of her input include the expansion of additional rooms, upgrades to the house's plumbing, and other finishing details.

They sell their work directly to traders and tourists from their home in Barrio de la Iglesia. I asked if there was a specific time when they raised their prices, for example, when they changed from polychrome pots to purely black. Rubén described the following scenario to explain how he came to realize the potential for greater earnings:

Three buyers came at once who all wanted my *ollas*. They gave me the idea because they each said "I want 30 *ollas*." So I thought, "Well, fine. If you want my *ollas*, then ...," (Rubén shrugged his shoulders as if to ask "Why not?") So, I changed our prices right then. I asked for more money. For example, if the pot cost \$5, well now, it cost \$10. And they all accepted my price of \$10. The following month when they asked for my *ollas*, again I told them "They do not cost \$10. Now these cost \$15!" This happened about five or six years ago (Martha Ponce and Rubén Rodríguez, interview, June 8, 1999).

By the time of our interview in 1999, their average asking price for these same small to medium sized *ollas* had gone up from \$10 or \$15 to \$50 or \$75. Rubén and Martha gave a modest estimation of their average monthly income derived from pottery at \$800 to \$900. Their two oldest daughters make pottery as well and the income from their sales is used to cover the girls' school expenses. The household also relies upon additional income from cattle; however, Rubén was reluctant to give an estimate as his profits from livestock vary depending upon factors such as drought and fluctuations in the market.

Summary of Co-producers of One Style

Among the ten women in the category of co-producers of one style, five of these women are forming, painting, and signing the pottery they produce collaboratively with their husbands. They also maintain control over their marketing and hence, meet all four

criteria. In the various arrangements of collaboration represented among these couples, the husbands have control over key aspects of production which often encompass responsibility for processing materials, forming, sanding, polishing, and doing fill-in work on painting designs. Like the women in the two style category, Olga Quezada, Lucía Mora, Ana Trillo, and Rosa Quezada are capable of the entire production process and also approach independent status. María de Jesus “Doña Chu” Celado¹⁰⁵ was also capable of making her pots from start to finish. Her recognition was owed in part to who her teacher was – her nephew, Juan Quezada. Doña Chu began making pottery when her husband Cristobal, “Don Toval,” became ill and could no longer work and cultivate his fields. She was 82 years old in 1994 when Juan taught both Doña Chu and her husband Cristobal to make pottery as a means of augmenting their limited and fixed income. She explained she was empowered by her pottery work as it gave her access to an income and prestige within the community (interview, February 28, 1999).

The husband paints and signs the co-produced pottery in the other five couples. Co-production with their husbands has been empowering for Gaby Almeida, Angela López, and Elvira Antillón. They attributed their explicit collaboration in production, pooling of income, and equal participation in economic decisions to the equitable partnerships they have with their husbands. The cases of these three women demonstrate that it is possible for women to be empowered through their artistic work, even when they are co-producing with their husbands and the men are signing the pottery. All three women have control over their production and are equally involved in exhibition,

¹⁰⁵ María de Jesus “Doña Chu” Celado passed away February 15, 2006 (MacCallum 2006).

demonstration, and teaching workshops with their husbands.¹⁰⁶ Because these couples represent themselves as partnerships within the market and art worlds, the woman's role as an essential partner in the production of the pottery is clear to their audience and this recognition is empowering. I consider these three women to be as equally empowered by their artistic work as the women who are producing and signing their own styles of pottery in the other two categories.

These couples have distinct advantages over couples who have not had exposure within the market and art worlds. Exhibition and demonstration provide opportunities for potters to meet their audiences who have intentionally “come to see the art, and they come to meet the artists: it is their show” (Bernstein 1993:306). These encounters often lay the ground work for establishing long-term, embedded personalized relationships (to be discussed in chapter six). Clearly these events enhance market recognition for the potter whose name is engraved on the pottery, but they provide critical opportunities for the non-signing partner to demonstrate the importance of his or her role within the collaborative context of production. Potentially, both potters can become equally well known to their buying public and facilitate their named recognition as a partnership. For co-producing couples without this kind of exposure, the collaborative effort is not always recognized or even discernible in the marketplace, where signature is often the only link between a potter and her art.

In cases where couples have not had opportunities to travel outside the village for demonstrations or exhibitions, the non-signing partner may not have recognition. In

¹⁰⁶ Extensive exposure in the market and art worlds has also benefited women in the other categories of production strategies. These include Graciela Martínez and her husband Héctor Gallegos, Socorro Sandoval and José Silveira, as well as single daughters like Laura Bugarini Cota, Miriam Gallegos Martínez, and Trini Silveira Sandoval.

those co-producing partnerships where the man is signing and is recognized as the primary potter, the woman's labor is often hidden in the production process and the level of her empowerment is more difficult to assess (Turok 1988:113). The importance of the woman's artistic and productive role may be overshadowed or even obliterated by the priority given to her husband's recognition as the artist/painter. This was the case for one woman who, despite the strength of her learning history, competence, and control over various aspects of production and equal control over income, lacked recognition within the market.

Among the one style co-producers, the woman least empowered by her artistic work was a young woman who had just begun in pottery when she married. During the period of research, she transitioned from single daughter, to young wife, to divorced single mother. With these changes in her status, she moved from the category of family collaborative production in her parents' household to the one style co-production category with her husband, then back to the family collaborative category once she returned to her family's home. This young woman was the least able to benefit from her pottery making largely because of her subordinate status; first as a younger daughter in her parents' household, and then as a young wife. As she had just begun making pottery, she was in a subordinate position first to her parents, then to her husband as well as her in-laws. Interestingly, her experience had empowering aspects in that she acquired new skills and knowledge while making pottery in her in-laws' household. Her personal style of painting during that time evidenced a blending of the two household styles.

Women in Co-production with Family Other Than a Partner

The final group is comprised of women who co-produced pottery with family other than a partner. There are twelve women in this category: four are mothers who collaborate with their children to produce pottery, and eight are single daughters who collaborate with family members. There is more variability of empowerment within this category than within the other three. These are collaborations between parent-child, (e.g. mother/daughter and father/daughter) and between brother and sister. In these collaborations the dynamics of age and generation interacted with an individual's subordinate status and lack of experience, skill, and control over the production process to influence the degree of empowerment experienced by women in this category.

The four mothers in this category were less empowered by their artistic work because they had the least control over the conditions that offer the potential for empowerment. These women lacked recognition within the art worlds or marketplace either because they had not yet developed a unique signature style, or as in the case of one woman, because the pottery she formed was signed by another potter, her daughter. Three of these women had limited control over the process of production because they relied upon their children either to form or paint their pottery. The vulnerability of their pottery participation became most apparent when they were no longer able to rely upon their children to collaborate with them. Typically, this occurred when their children left to find other work or established their own households.

The single daughters in this category were young women still living with their parents who had begun earning income through their pottery production. Despite their dependent status, the single daughters played an important role in bolstering the resource

base and income potential for the household. Different transitions to adulthood were evident among these cases, with each having variable circumstances affecting the potential for empowerment. These differences will become clear in the following discussion.

Among the eight single daughters, four are recognized in the art and market worlds as being principal potters, and nearly qualify as independent potters. However, because they lacked complete control over the production process (e.g. processing raw materials, forming, or firing), marketing, and income, these single daughters did not fit within the category of independents as I have defined it. The criteria these young women had in common with independent producers were that each had the benefit of learning from a prestigious teacher,¹⁰⁷ and each developed her own signature work which she paints and signs. However, as all eight young women relied upon and collaborated with other household members to a greater or lesser degree, they did not have complete control over the process of producing their pottery. One relied upon her mother to build the pottery she painted, and her father to fire it. One used her brother's designs and another used her sister's designs. The remainder relied upon their parents to assist them in processing the clay and firing their pottery.

All eight single daughters came from households where one or both of their parents were established potters with varying levels of expertise and recognition. In

¹⁰⁷ All eight of these young women were either taught directly by a prestigious teacher or they learned from someone who had been taught by one. For example, Laura Bugarini Cota and Karla Lopéz Cota learned from their mother Lupe Cota Delgado who learned from Consolación Quezada; Miriam Gallegos Martínez from her parents, Graciela Martínez and Héctor Gallegos; Aide González from Jorge Quintana; Leticia Rodríguez Mora from her parents Olivia Mora and Armando Rodríguez; Trini Silveira Sandoval from her mother Socorro Sandoval; Noelia Hernández Quezada who learned from her aunt Lydia Quezada and her mother Rosa Quezada; and Rosario Veloz Casas who learned from her brother Ramiro Veloz Jr. and her father Ramiro Veloz, both experienced and well known potters.

order to access buyers and market their work, five of the single daughters relied upon the reputations and existing trading networks established by their parents. In two cases, the young women were directly responsible for developing their households' reputations. The eighth single daughter relied upon her older sister's reputation. The single daughters differed in the amount of income they turned over to their parents' households. Five of the single daughters remitted the bulk of their income to their parents' households, while only three maintained control over their pottery income. The two examples of single daughters who co-produced in family collaboration were Laura Bugarini Cota and Rosario Veloz Casas.

Laura Bugarini Cota

In 1999, seventeen-year old Laura Bugarini Cota was the most empowered single daughter in this category in terms of aesthetic autonomy and was consistently recognized among the leading potters in the village, once she established her signature style. Laura's first job was working in the Quezada household assisting Juan's wife, Guillermina, with household chores. After she left this job, she began learning to make pottery with her mother, Lupe Cota. Undoubtedly, her experience in the successful pottery making household of Juan Quezada provided the incentive for Laura to begin producing pottery. Her upcoming *quinceañera* celebration was another incentive.

To appreciate the empowering aspects of Laura's learning experiences, it is worth reviewing some key factors. As discussed previously in her mother Lupe's portrait, apprenticeship between the Cota and Quezada families had begun years before in the mid-1970s, when at fifteen years old, Laura's mother, Lupe Cota joined the original group working with Juan Quezada. This was just prior to Spencer MacCallum's first trip

to Mata Ortíz in 1976.

Laura refined her painting skills under the guidance of her cousin, Lupe's brother's son, Gerardo Cota Guillén.¹⁰⁸ Once Laura began painting, her cousin Gerardo brought her work to the attention of prominent commercial buyers and collectors from the United States.¹⁰⁹ Recognizing her potential, he was eager to see Laura succeed and brought his American buyers to the López Cota¹¹⁰ household to see her work.

Since she first began learning to work with pottery in 1993, mother and daughter worked out a collaborative division of labor wherein Lupe made the pots and Laura painted them. As the painter, Laura began signing the pottery from the beginning, consistent with the predominant pattern within the village. This collaboration proved to be significant in terms of Laura developing her signature style and attaining recognition as the principal potter in the household.

Her intricate and tiny linear patterns in concentric bands over the entire surface of full rounded pots represented one of the most innovative design treatments in the village at the time.

I do not get my ideas from anyone. These are from my own imagination. I began painting the Paquimé designs, but I did not like doing what everyone else was doing. I began doing my own designs and I like these better. I am the only one doing these designs (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 16, 1997).

¹⁰⁸ Gerardo had also learned to form pots in the 1970s from Lupe when he was a teenager. Once he had mastered the rudiments of pottery making, he learned by watching Juan Quezada alongside his friends Noé and Juan Jr., Juan's older sons. At the time, Juan Quezada's family lived next door to Gerardo's family along the Palanganas River, north of Barrio de la Iglesia.

¹⁰⁹ John Davis, a collector from Deming, New Mexico, often promoted young, "up and coming" potters. As I mentioned earlier, he encouraged me to meet Laura. At one point, he held a raffle to help Laura buy a car so she could drive to Barrio Centro to sell her work.

¹¹⁰ The López Cota household includes Laura Bugarini Cota and her sister Elvira Bugarini Cota who are Lupe Cota de López's children from her first marriage with Pablo Bugarini. Lupe is now married to Carlos López and has three more children: Luz Angelica López Cota, Karla López Cota, and Carlos Jr. López Cota.

Once traders began promoting and circulating her work throughout galleries in the Southwest United States, the time until her recognition as a fine potter was amazingly brief. In the short span of a year and a half, her work was sought after by commercial traders and collectors. Her rising status among the leading potters in the village was both validated and bolstered when she was invited to accompany the Quezada family to Silver City, New Mexico, in 1996. By this time, her pottery was selling in the range of \$50 to \$300.

Subsequently, a number of leading potters¹¹¹ were commissioned by Maria and Barry King from El Paso. Laura was among this select group. These prestigious collectors challenged the potters to make something unique that would represent their best work thus far. They were encouraged to explore intricate designs, creative forms, and make as large a pot as possible. Laura worked for months on her piece, experimenting with incorporating *cuadritos*, small square designs, within her own distinctive linear painting style.

Dr. King told me to make something different, and better. He told me to make my best pot and to make it different, something unique. I used the same designs I usually paint, but I tried to give the *olla* another look (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 16, 1997).

Laura spoke of this experience as marking a significant transition in her development as a potter. Meeting the challenge of the commissioned piece provided Laura with the incentive, as well as a time and space, in which she could explore her own skills. In meeting her patrons' expectations, she gained confidence in the originality of her designs and became determined to maintain her ability to ask higher prices. Not long

¹¹¹ Among potters commissioned by the Kings are César Domínguez and Gaby Almeida, Lydia Quezada, Taurina Baca, Juan Quezada, Laura Bugarini Cota, Miriam Gallegos, Manolo Rodríguez, and Oscar Rodríguez.

after Laura received her highest price to date, \$600, for an exceptional *grandote*, a large pot similar to the commissioned piece.

During the research period, the López Cota household relied upon three sources of income: small scale agricultural production and cattle ranching, earning wages, and producing pottery collaboratively. In the organization of production in this household, Laura's mother prepared the clay and formed the pottery. Locating and digging the clay was Laura's stepfather Carlos' responsibility, and though her mother Lupe knew how to fire the pottery, typically Carlos fired the bulk of their *ollas* in the corral.

My mother is in charge of making and shaping the *ollas* for us to paint. She chooses the size and how she wants to form them. It is my job to paint. My older sister Elvira paints also. My other two sisters, their jobs are to sand and polish. Everyone has a step to do from the start until the end. We all work together until the end when we have made the pots. Then we share the money for the family's needs (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 16, 1997).

Although Laura was recognized as the principal potter in the household, her participation and to some extent, her success depended upon her mother to make the pottery for her to paint. Indeed, both Laura's and her sister Elvira's participation in pottery depended upon the cooperation of everyone else in the household. Nonetheless, the young women were well aware that their skill in painting added critical value to the pottery produced by the household.

Right now, my sister and I, we are the ones making the money supporting the house. The pottery is really good for us because it allows the family to make it. Many people from families in Mata Ortiz worked in the Colonia before the pottery. The men make about 200 pesos a week. The money in the Colonia is very little and it is a lot of work. Now it is possible to not have to work in the Colonia if you make pottery. With the pottery, we make enough for all of us (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 16, 1997).

During the first few months of the research period in 1998, Laura left Mata Ortíz to find work in wage labor. Laura's mother explained to me that Laura was discouraged by the number of other potters who were copying her designs and selling their pots for much less than she asked for her pieces. Laura had spoken to me about her concerns in an earlier interview:

Some people copy and then add some of their ideas to what they copy from mine. They do this because they cannot come up with their own style, so they are using mine. They do not try and struggle. It is a big problem for me. They just copy and they practice until they get it. A lot of people are painting these (designs) now. The first time I saw Juan after he saw these, he told me that the other people are doing the same thing – painting the same. He said it was not right. Don Juanito is angry. He says not to buy *ollas* that are not perfect and that are not originals. These are mine and my designs are originals (Laura Bugarini Cota, interview, July 16, 1997).

In retrospect, Laura explained her decision to leave for wage labor was also due to her desire to explore other opportunities and to experience life outside of the village.

At that time, I was really young and I wanted to know other places and cities. I wanted to leave because I wanted new life experiences. That was not possible in the village (personal communication June 24, 2009).

Her choice was consistent with an historical pattern of out-migration for wage labor by the women and men in the village. For women, this often begins when they are young and unmarried. I heard similar accounts from many of the women I interviewed, including Laura's mother, as they described their work histories. For some this signaled their transition to adulthood and establishing their personal and economic autonomy from their parents.

With Laura's departure, the household experienced a significant drop in income. The family increased production of smaller, lower priced pottery. Though the quality of Elvira's painting was very similar to Laura's, the older sister had not yet developed the

capital of signature style and recognition equal to her younger sister's. Laura sent money home to her parents; however, these earnings did not equal the amount she had been previously contributing to the household through her pottery. Within a few months, another of Lupe Cota's daughters left to marry and a third daughter left to move in with her partner. In an attempt to make up for the loss of household income, Lupe increased her production of blank pots to sell to her sons-in-law, nephews, and neighbors. With Laura gone, marketing was a problem because fewer buyers came to the house located in Barrio López, the neighborhood located the farthest from the center of the village. Lupe also made earrings, pendants, and *aros* (ceramic rings used as pottery stands), but these sales also declined. Lupe decided against joining *Grupo Pearson*, saying she really could not join because she did not paint her pottery.

Laura's learning experience had been empowering. She had social capital by virtue of her teachers, particularly through her mother Lupe's connections to the Quezada lineage. She developed her signature style and had attained the most recognition among the single daughters as an individual artist, solely responsible for creating and painting her own designs. As she was unable to process the clay, build the pots, or fire them, she lacked control over key aspects of the production process. Likewise, she was minimally empowered economically by her artistic work because she had little if any control over her pottery income, and in this sense was subordinate to her parents. However, she excelled at the important task of painting. While she only met two of the four criteria, it was her excellence in painting that accounted for her meteoric rise in recognition and prestige, and her ability to command high prices.

Despite the cultural capital accrued by learning from Consolación Quezada in the early 1970s, Laura's mother Lupe had little recognition for her labor contribution and skills in forming and finishing the pots her daughters sign. She was capable of all the pottery tasks from processing the clay to firing the pots and had control over the importance aspect of forming the pottery. However, she did not paint the pots or sign them and therefore, met two of the four criteria. The value and pricing of the pottery produced in the household was based upon her daughters' varying levels of expertise in painting. The household's reputation was based on the daughters' work and Laura's in particular. Lupe and Carlos had a traditional relationship and he controlled the income derived from the family's collaborative pottery production. Therefore, Lupe's decision making input and bargaining position relative to her husband were limited.

Velia Mora de López

Like Lupe Cota, Velia Mora de López is a mother who collaborated with her children to produce pottery and later experienced a decline in the potential empowering aspects of her artistic work when her children left home. Her experience exemplified the vulnerability of familial dependency networks, in spite of her apparent growing independence as a potter.

Velia's mother, Jesus María Sandoval de Mora, first taught Velia's young daughter to make pottery. Later, Velia learned from her mother as well. Jesus María Sandoval was among the early potters working in Barrio El Porvenir by 1980. Velia's daughter, María de Lourdes, was the first in the household to learn to make pottery by watching her grandmother, Jesus María. The young girl would stay with her grandmother during the week in Barrio El Porvenir to be closer to the secondary school.

When home on the weekends, Velia saw how excited her young daughter was to be able to make and sell her tiny pots, and Velia decided to join her. Soon after, Velia and her son Miguel began learning from her mother, Jesus María Sandoval, typically alongside her brothers and sisters. Velia's large Mora family often gathered on Sundays and their mother used this opportunity to teach pottery making to her seven children.

I began making and selling my pots in 1990. I learned from my mother who had been making pottery for ten years already. She began alone by experimenting. It was because of my mother I learned to make pottery. I learned so much from what she taught me. I had no patience, but she taught me how to make them (Velia Mora, interview, June 7, 1999).

The Lopéz Mora household began working collaboratively. Lourdes and Miguel had the responsibility for painting the small *ollas*. Her husband, Humberto Lopéz, helped with processing the clay, sanding, and firing the pots whenever he could take time away from his fields and cattle. Velia was responsible for forming and sanding the pottery and for doing some fill-in work on her children's pots, but she did not sign. She had begun learning the basics of painting with María de Lourdes and Miguel, but she lacked confidence in her work.

It was not until her daughter left the household to marry that Velia pushed herself to improve her painting. Her daughter's departure affected Velia's ability to continue working in pottery and was the incentive for her to learn to paint. Though her son Miguel had less time for his own pottery due to his schoolwork, he worked with his mother to help her improve her painting skills. Velia began signing her work once she mastered the painting. By the time I interviewed her, she felt confident to speak of her style.

The painting, and the way the pot is made is very much my style. I would say my painting looks more like that of my mother and my children. My style is more Paquimé and I like to paint *cuchillos*, (knives) and triangles. My style is more

traditional, but it is the style that is painted throughout this village (Velia Mora, interview, June 7, 1999).

Velia's collaboration with her son and daughter during her early years in pottery meant that her participation was dependent upon theirs. Her control of the pottery process was limited because she was not able to complete the production process from start to finish without her daughter's and her son's help to paint the small pots she was making. It was not until she began to do her own painting and gained control of the entire production process, that Velia began to develop her artistic autonomy. While the household was empowered financially by pottery production, Velia Mora herself was minimally empowered by her pottery production due to this reliance on others' contributions to the process. Still, Velia considers her learning experience to have been empowering for herself and her children in that learning to make pottery has provided each of them with the skills to earn a living.

It is thanks to my mother, because she told me that I had to make pots and that my children were growing and they would have to work soon. Now I understand that it was like an inheritance that my mother gave to me (Velia Mora cited in FONAES publication 1997:31).

Velia's case illustrates what can be an uneasy transition between learning and acquiring the skills and competence which can lead to recognition, signature style, and remuneration. As with Lupe Cota, Velia was required to make economic adjustments when her children left the household. To offset the loss of income, she and her husband increased their strategies to generate income for the household. "It is more or less equal because of all the ways we make money. Beto is working, and I am working at the Clinic and I sell Avon." Velia volunteered at the local ISSTE medical clinic as a Rural Social

Assistant, but she also had part-time employment at a clinic in Nuevo Casas Grandes.

She described the impact as follows:

When we were all working, we made a number of pots. But working alone, it is much less now. There are times that I made as many as 28 *ollas* by myself in one day, but I did nothing else that day. The amount of time for painting depends on the design and the size of the pot. It is difficult to say how many pots I sell each month because I have so much other work. It depends on my other work (Velia Mora, interview, June 7, 1999).

When I asked her to estimate the percentage of household income derived from pottery sales, she replied, “It is between 30% and 50%. Again it depends on how many pots I can make.” I then asked how the household income for 1999 compared to the year before. Velia said it was more or less the same as it was the previous year.

Velia cooperated in selling with her immediate neighbors, many of whom were her relatives by marriage. She was also able to count on referrals made by members of her extended family, the Moras. “We always help each other to sell. If they have a client, they send them to me and if I have a new client, I send them to my family.”

Velia’s sister Lucía and her husband Lorenzo Bugarini, as well as Velia’s brother Juan and his wife Lupe Soto, crossed the border periodically to sell directly to shops and galleries in New Mexico and Arizona. However, Velia’s opinion was that she did not find this strategy worth the trouble.

One time, I went to Phoenix to sell and it is really difficult to sell there. The client I sold to did not pay me well. But I had to sell the pots so I would not have to bring them back¹¹² (Velia Mora, interview, June 7, 1999).

When the women’s micro-enterprise project was organized, Velia joined *Grupo Pearson* with her sister Lucía Mora, and her daughter Lourdes López de Corona. Velia

¹¹² On transporting their pottery across the international border, potters are subject to paying customs on the pottery as commodity goods when they enter the United States and when they return to Mexico.

lived in the same barrio as Lupe Cota, away from the customary tourist routes, so her participation in the micro-enterprise provided her with an alternative marketing strategy. She could also display her work for sale at the *Centro de Acopio, Grupo Pearson's* gallery, located near the center of the village. Her membership ensured her access to a steady income through her bulk sales to the group. The amount of money Velia could potentially earn, however, was initially limited by the requirement that pots sold through the group had to be priced under \$15.00.¹¹³

Working in a style similar to that of her mother and her daughter, Velia had not developed her own signature style and had little recognition within the trading networks. At the time of the interview, she was just gaining control over the necessary steps in the process of production. Velia's vulnerability and low empowerment became most apparent when she was no longer able to depend upon her children to collaborate with her.¹¹⁴

Rosario Veloz Casas

The third and final case is Rosario Veloz Casas. At the time of the interview in 1999, Rosario was a 21 year old single daughter who had made pottery for only one year. She first learned to work with clay and build *ollas* from Ramiro Jr., her younger brother. He taught her to build pottery using the same unique method of forming the *olla* from a single ball of clay developed by their father Ramiro Sr. and his brother, Saul Veloz (see chapter four). Later, her brother Ramiro taught her how to paint.

¹¹³ This limit was raised after *Grupo Pearson* reorganized its leadership.

¹¹⁴ Velia's pottery sales were affected when the paved road between Nuevo Casas Grandes and Mata Ortiz opened in 2004. This resulted in a decline in the number of tourists making their way to this barrio. Likewise, increased competition over raw materials has made it necessary to buy clay and fuel, making it increasingly difficult for smaller producers like Velia Mora and Lupe Cota to see profits from their pottery production (personal communication Lupe Cota May 2008).

Rosario's father spoke up during my interview with his daughter to explain that before his wife passed away in 1991, he and his wife had made *ollas* together. Ramiro Sr. and his wife Silvia Casas had established a reputation for producing quality pottery together. Ramiro formed the delicate thin-walled pieces and Silvia painted them in well executed, Mimbres-inspired designs. Before Silvia passed away in 1991, Rosario's younger brother, Ramiro Jr., had begun learning the basics of pottery making from his parents when he was only 11 years old.

Rosario's father went on to explain that after his wife passed away, Ramiro Jr. began painting in the same style as his mother. As father and son continued to collaborate, production in the household resumed. Ramiro Jr. proved to be exceptionally adept at painting and sales were good. Sadly, in December of 1997 Ramiro Sr. suffered a stroke that left him unable to continue working in pottery. At this point, Rosario's younger brother, Ramiro Jr. became the sole income provider for the household. As the oldest of the children, Rosario assumed the bulk of the household work, cooking and caring for her younger siblings. She opted to work for wages for a number of years before she decided to begin learning to make pottery. At the time of the interview, Rosario had begun working as a housekeeper and cook at the recently opened Adobe Inn (discussed in chapter three).

She described her painting as a continuation of her family's style. In the tradition of her mother's work and like her brother, Rosario draws upon both Mimbres and Paquimé. Whereas her brother uses predominantly red paint on a yellow clay surface, she began using more colors in her painting. Her delicate and graceful style showed promise in her first year of painting and was similar to her brother's in the intricacy of

detail. Rosario was selling her pots within three months after she began working in pottery. A year later, her pots were selling for \$20 and \$25 apiece. While she was signing her pottery at the time I interviewed her, she had not fully attained artistic autonomy in terms of developing her own independent or unique style.

I am still learning and trying to improve my work. I have much to learn. I still talk to my brother and to my father about how to make the *ollas* better. I ask my brother because he has more experience (Rosario Veloz Casas, interview, September 6, 1999).

As she was unable to complete the production process on her own, she continued working collaboratively with her younger brother, Ramiro Jr. She relied upon both his instruction and assistance and her father's advice in order to produce her pottery. Compared to the other single daughters who had been making pottery for a number of years, Rosario was significantly less empowered through her artistic work in 1999. Though she learned from her brother and father who are both well known potters, Rosario had not yet attained recognition nor had she established her own style. Instead, she collaborated with her brother and used his designs and forms. Since she was inexperienced, she was subordinate to her brother and dependent upon him in order to produce pottery. Rosario did not have autonomous control over her pottery income, as her disabled father was reliant upon both his son and daughter to provide the income for the household.

Usually, Rosario went with her brother to locate and dig clay and gather the cow dung used for fuel. Rosario explained, however, there were times when she was too busy with her job at the hotel and could not go with him. When it was necessary for them to buy their raw materials and fuel, their production expenses increased. Both worked

together to process the clay and make their paints. They preferred to use *buñiga*, (cow dung) for most of their firing because as she told me, “For our pots, *buñiga* is better because it burns hotter and stronger. We only use wood when we are unable to get *buñiga*.”

The Veloz family’s reputation worked to Rosario’s advantage from the beginning of her pottery career. Unlike other young potters just starting out, Rosario had ready access to some of the most influential and successful commercial traders in the marketplace. These traders are known to pay well, are well connected to high-end galleries, and offer the possibility for exhibitions in the United States. Despite her inexperience, her access to these trading networks proved significant in gaining exposure for her work, attracting interested clientele, and establishing her name within the marketplace. In 1999 Rosario was selling her pottery from her home with her brother as well as selling directly to her employer at the hotel, Jerry Boyd, who is among the leading traders distributing pottery throughout the United States. Other commercial traders buying her work in 1999 included Adalberto Pérez Meillón, who sold her work throughout southern California and in Ensenada, Baja California, and Ron Schneider who sold in both San Diego and Puerto Vallarta.

Most of Rosario’s and Ramiro Jr.’s income was used for household expenses. “I feel very proud to help my brother and to bring money to the house and my family” (Rosario Veloz Casas, interview, September, 6, 1999). She maintained control of a certain portion of her income, as she put it, “To buy things I need.” At the time of the interview, though, she was making less than \$10 a day working at the hotel. As this was more than she was making with her *ollas*, her job at the hotel took precedence over her

making pottery. However, she worked at the hotel sporadically, only when there were enough guests to require her services. It was difficult for her to estimate how many pots she made in a week because she did not make any when she was working at the hotel. Her desire for a consistent and higher income was one of the main reasons she gave for deciding to start making pottery.

Summary of Collaboration with Family Members

There are a total of twelve women in this category: eight single daughters who collaborate with family members, and four mothers who collaborate with their children to produce pottery. There is considerable variation in how collaboration was organized among the women in the final category. Compared to the couples and the independent producers, this category had the largest number of young women as well as the largest number of least empowered women in this study. Factors such as age and generation, inexperience, and level of skill acquisition shaped the specific conditions that either limited or enhanced the empowering potential of this production strategy.

The dominant strategy in the 1970s was family-based. The 1980s were characterized by an increased trend for couples to work together in co-production (Gilbert 2000b). The diversity within this category reflects both the increased numbers and the diverse range of people entering pottery making in the 1990s. While couples' collaboration continued to be common through the 1990s, we began to see new variations on this strategy as well as increased family collaboration.

There are eight single daughters who lived with their parents. Three of these young women, Leticia Rodríguez, Miriam Gallegos, and Trini Silveira are daughters in households of successful pottery producing couples, who are prosperous enough so they

did not rely upon their daughters' income. These three single daughters maintained greater control over their pottery income and evidenced a higher degree of personal and economic autonomy than the other young women I interviewed. They bought land, planned to build houses, and bought trucks at a time when hardly any women were even driving, much less owning their own vehicles.

Among the eight single daughters who collaborate with family in their production, there were four young women between the ages of seventeen and twenty-two who explained that because they were making good money by selling their pottery, they had chosen to delay marriage or establish living arrangements with a partner. They expressed concern that marriage would be a liability since they might lose control over their earnings and therefore, their financial autonomy.

The parents of the other five single daughters depended on their daughters' earnings as a source of income for sustaining the household. While all of the single daughters had daily access to support, instruction, and other assistance, those who produced in collaboration with their mothers, brothers, and sisters are the same ones whose households were most dependent on the income from their pottery sales. It is noteworthy that among the eight single daughters, the three who rely the least on other family members to produce their pottery are the same three who maintained autonomous control over their pottery income.

Laura Bugarini Cota was empowered through both her learning experience and her distinct signature style and met two of the four criteria. Among the single daughters, she had attained the greatest recognition as an individual artist. Though she was not capable of the entire production process, she did excel at the important task of painting.

She did not, however, have control over the income derived from her pottery. Her experience demonstrates how personal circumstances in each case influence how the criteria interact to enhance or preclude growing empowerment for each woman. In Laura's case, her talent, recognition, and prestige were critical factors in establishing herself as a leading independent potter when she returned to the village after working in wage labor for a year and a half. Initially, she worried she would not have any buyers for her *ollas*. "But very soon after I arrived in Mata Ortiz, I had a lot of work. All of my buyers returned – all of them!"

The eight single daughters in this category represented those within the sample of forty women who were most likely to be transitioning from one strategy of production to another, as is clear in Laura's case. Four of the single daughters had just started making pottery; one was twenty-one years old, another was eighteen years, and two were twelve years old during the research period. All four turned over their earnings to their parents and were the least empowered in this category. Only the twenty-one year old met two criteria, while the other three single daughters met one criterion.

Among the four mothers, only one was able to collaborate with her sons without becoming fully dependent upon their labor. The mother of two well known potters, Gerardo and Martin Cota Guillén, Avelina Guillén began making her miniature pots and figures without any instruction. She processes her own clay and fires her pieces in her kitchen oven. Though her sons helped her by getting clay and providing paint, she could do these tasks on her own as well. Avelina Guillén and Juan Quezada's aunt Doña Chu Celado (since deceased) were representative of a growing number of elderly women who started making pottery in the 1990s. The miniature pots and effigy figures they made and

sold were a source of income for both women. While their earnings did not amount to a great deal of money, this income was important and made a difference within their households. Both Avelina and Doña Chu spoke of their minimal production as a source of much needed income and personal empowerment. Doña Chu and her husband (discussed in the one style co-production category) had a small fixed income and though Avelina is married, her pottery sales are her only source of independent income.¹¹⁵

The inability to produce pottery by themselves adversely impacted the potential for empowerment for three of the four mothers who collaborated with their children. Their children's labor was crucial to the amount of pottery the household could produce and their skill was essential to the pottery's quality. Both Velia Mora and Lupe Cota experienced a decline in their production when their children left home to work elsewhere or to establish their own households. Once their children's labor support was withdrawn, these mothers were no longer able to collaborate in pottery production and their artistic work became less empowering. Working alone, these women were unable to earn enough income to significantly impact their empowerment. Lupe encouraged her youngest daughter to learn to paint the pottery that Lupe formed, but it would be a year or so before she began selling marketable pottery. Velia Mora compensated for the reduction in household income by increasing her strategies for making money through part-time wage work in a clinic, selling Avon, and joining *Grupo Pearson*.

¹¹⁵ See Mata Ortíz, Newsletter March 2005 for Spencer MacCallum's account of how Lydia Quezada arranged to purchase her elderly aunt's (Doña Chu) pottery with the cooperation of Steve Rose, a commercial trader.

Conclusions

I have argued that women are empowered differentially by their participation in pottery production. I relied mainly on interview data to convey women's perceptions of their circumstances, and augmented these with my own observations. Some women clearly expressed they had increased their economic and artistic autonomy through their artistic work, while others did not have much to say in response to my questions regarding increased autonomy. Nonetheless, all the women I interviewed stated that their involvement in pottery production had improved their economic well-being.

I have presented portraits of three women within each of the four production strategies. These categories include: 1) women working as independent artists; 2) couples who co-produce two styles with separate signatures; 3) couples who co-produce one style with one signature; and, 4) women who co-produce with a family member other than their husbands or partners. Using four criteria, I examined how women do or do not exploit the range of potentialities for empowerment possible within each of the four strategies. The four criteria used as indices to assess how particular strategies shape women's possibilities for empowerment are: 1) learning the skill to make and paint pottery; 2) developing a distinct signature style and attaining recognition within the market and art worlds; 3) gaining control over all or some important aspects of the productive process; and 4) control over marketing one's pottery and maintaining control over the resulting income. By looking within the categories to assess how the various criteria women have met interact to capacitate them, it was clear that growing empowerment is a process. It is important to emphasize that none of the four production strategies precludes women from being empowered. The four categories are used as

heuristic devices to describe and differentiate variability and are assigned according to the production strategy used by individual women during the research period. These are not fixed, nor do they reflect deterministic trends.

The cases of the independent potters illustrate that working independently offers the most potential for empowerment. This is particularly clear in those cases where the women were taught by exceptional teachers; had established distinct styles and gained recognition as independent artists; gained control of their production from start to finish soon after they began making pottery; and maintained control over their income.

There was a greater range of outcomes in terms of empowerment within the other three categories. The twelve women in the category who co-produce two styles with their husbands and also produce their own pottery, represented the largest number of women who approach being independent producers. Of these twelve women, nine had control over their production and marketing, produced and signed their own pottery. The majority of these women stated they had either sole control or equal input in how their pottery income was spent and therefore, met all four criteria. Likewise, these women attributed their decision-making input to the workable and equitable relationships they have with their husbands. Their strong presence in the market through exhibition and demonstration placed Graciela Martínez, Socorro Sandoval, and Nena López among the most empowered by their artistic work.

There were three women among the twelve in this category who were less empowered by their artistic work. One was capable of the full production process, but her potential for growing empowerment was negatively impacted because her husband signed the pots that she formed and painted. She met only two of the criteria as she

lacked recognition and did not have control over the pottery she produced. The other two had less control over the production process, as they were unable to form the pottery and purchased blanks. One of these two became increasingly less empowered by her artistic work when her husband left for wage work.

Among the ten women in the category of co-producers of one style, five of these women signed the pottery they produced collaboratively with their husbands. They also maintained control over their marketing and income and hence, met all four criteria. Like women in the two style category, all five were capable of the entire production process and also approached independent status. The potentiality of recognition as a key factor in the process of growing empowerment became clear among the other five women who co-produced one style with their husbands. Angela López, Gaby Almeida, and Elvira Antillón demonstrated that it is possible for women to be empowered through their artistic work, even when they co-produced with their husbands and the men signed the pottery. These three women were as empowered by their artistic work as the women who attained recognition through their signature styles of pottery in the other two categories. All three women had control over their production and had attained recognition for their roles in the production partnerships through exhibition and demonstration with their husbands; this was empowering. These women pooled their incomes with their husbands', and like women in the two style co-production category, attributed their equal input in economic decision-making to workable and equitable relationships shared with their husbands.

The potential of recognition as a key factor to empowerment becomes apparent, when the situations of these three women are contrasted with those of the other two

women in this category who did not have this recognition. The importance of their artistic roles in production and the labor these two women contributed, remained hidden. The woman least empowered by her artistic work in the one style co-production category had little control over production as she had just begun making pottery, and as a young wife, was subordinate to her husband in producing pottery.

The cases discussed in the family collaboration category demonstrate that whether they are single daughters or mothers collaborating with their children, those who co-produce with other household members often do not have complete control over the process of producing their pottery. Likewise, the woman may be a successful and recognized potter, but if she does not have control over the money she is earning, it is unlikely she will be empowered by her work. This point was particularly clear in the cases of young daughters who had little if any control over their pottery income. The experiences of the mothers who depended upon their children to either form or paint their pottery, demonstrated the contingency of interaction among the criteria, as well as the potential vulnerabilities women have when they depend upon family networks in production. These vulnerabilities became most apparent when the mothers were no longer able to rely upon their children's collaboration.

Based on the portraits I have presented in this chapter, my findings indicate there are numerous interacting factors that account for why some women are more empowered than others. The variability I found within each of the categories correlated with different levels of empowerment. Growing empowerment through a woman's artistic work is reflected, more or less, by the number of criteria she has met (see appendix A). However, as Laura Bugarini Cota's experience demonstrated, not meeting certain criteria does not

negate the potential her artistic work offered. The empowering effects of artistic work are contingent upon each woman's personal circumstances and a complex mix of factors that is different in each case. These include but are not limited to the quality of her learning experience, skill, and competence, agency exercised, and the nature of patriarchal relations she is subject to within her household and community.

There are two variables recurring consistently throughout the portraits that correlate women's home-based artistic work, and the income they earn, with the potentiality to move them towards growing empowerment. These are gaining control over the productive process, and having access to and control over the resulting income (Tiano 1994:38, 52; Blumberg 1995:3; Safa 1995:31). As discussed in the introduction, the criteria embody two aspects of production: the aesthetic and material components. My argument for the usefulness of these criteria is based upon the integral relationship between skill and aesthetic sensibility, since being able to do something well is intimately tied to both competence and confidence. Essential to growing empowerment is having both the skill and competence in the productive processes required to make pottery well, and the aesthetic sensibility to express creativity within the local aesthetic system. It is equally based upon the argument that control over production processes and economic resources have the potential to empower in profound ways.

In the first category of independent artists, all six (100%) women were empowered by their artistic work (see Appendix A). The largest numbers of women empowered by their artistic work are in the two categories where women collaborate with their husbands or partners to co-produce either one or two styles of pottery. Within these categories, collaboration and the degree of equity within the partnership are important

variables correlated with growing empowerment. In the two style co-production category, nine of the twelve (75%) women were empowered by their artistic work, and in the one style co-production, eight of the ten (80%) women were empowered by their artistic work. In contrast, there were only three of the twelve (25%) women in the family co-production category who were empowered and met all four criteria.

These numbers indicate the importance of workable and equitable partnerships and that it is critical other household members are supportive of a woman's pottery work. The importance of household support was evident in the portraits of independent artists, women who produce in couples, as well as those co-producing with family members.

Women's participation in the mixed-gendered art tradition in Mata Ortiz is significant for the number of women who are being empowered through their artistic work. I have argued that both economic and non-economic components account for the empowering aspects of pottery making. In this chapter, I have examined the strategies of production women and men use as home-based artists to produce ethnic art for global markets. I have described how they learned their skills, developed their competence, and gained the confidence that potentially leads to the control of economic resources resulting from success in the marketplace. This is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

MARKET AND ART WORLDS

As an artistic community that responds directly to global markets and art worlds, Mata Ortíz potters as well as their consumers are all participants in transnational networks of cultural production and consumption which involve and indeed rely upon the flow of “persons, things, values, signs and information” (Kearney 1996:123-24).¹¹⁶ I structure this chapter to emphasize the following: first, to understand the construction of the market, both local and global; second, to understand how women have responded to market expectation and demand, created strategies to establish marketing ties, and exercised agency through their interactions with art intermediaries; and third, to understand how the underpinnings of the market system depend upon multiple constructions and interpretations of the notion of authenticity (Graburn 1999:344).

Within this chapter I focus on the dynamic agency of three groups of actors: “the artists/producers, intermediaries and consumers” (Graburn 1999:344) to reveal the interconnected, triangulated relationships which characterize the nature of the market. I use Howard Becker’s model of “art worlds” to frame and make clear the ways in which the local and global markets that have developed in tandem with the pottery tradition are part of a larger social network: the global art world for ethnic arts (Becker 1982). This model is conducive to a conceptual framework that encompasses the organized sets of relationships existing among those who produce, circulate, and consume art works.

¹¹⁶ These networks are indicative of and consistent with my understanding of globalization as it has been defined by anthropologists over the past thirty years and succinctly described by Nandini Gunewardena and Ann Kingsolver as “a set of social and economic processes that entail intensified global interconnectedness, (and subsequent changes in local livelihoods), via mobility and flows of culture, capital, information, resistance, technologies, production, people, commodities, images, and ideologies” (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007:8).

These relationships are critical for constructing and maintaining the context or space in which goods are marketed, social relations are maintained, and differing discourses are created and circulated. When a new art form arises, its acceptance in the art and market worlds depends upon “a discourse created around and within it” (Lippard in Rushing 1999:147). Shelley Errington points out that artifacts or objects are “mute and meaningless” until meaning is assigned or created through discourse within market and art worlds through “the categories they fall into and the social practices that produce and reproduce those categories” (Errington 1998:4). Errington further explains:

The notion of “discourse” also includes the notion of power. The power may include the power and positioning of individual speakers, but more commonly it is the power of the categorizations of knowledge and the material practices that perpetuate them and re-create them (Errington 1998:4).

Because Mata Ortiz is situated within transnational socioeconomic networks that produce a particular nexus of social relations, power is differentially distributed between producers and consumers. Graburn was among the first to address the unique theoretical issues, including power inequalities, that arise when non-western societies¹¹⁷ begin producing ethnic and tourist arts for politically and economically dominant consumers (Graburn 1976:2-4).

Despite power differentials and structural constraints within the market both male and female potters attempt to exploit their capacity for agency, with variable success. In the struggle to earn cash incomes, potters deliberately resist the loss of autonomy in the

¹¹⁷ Regarding recent anthropological work focused on the increased “transnational movements of “ethnic” peoples” from rural to urban areas in the Third and Fourth Worlds (usually as refugees or workers), Graburn notes that ethnic arts are no longer simply the object of tourist sales, but instead are likely to be produced and distributed more widely within First Worlds. Also, the “relative demise of the Second World, the communist bloc” has caused these designations to “become somewhat anachronistic” (Graburn 1999:343).

local and global market through efforts to maintain control of their production and marketing processes (Grimes and Milgram 2000:4). Renato Rosaldo spoke to the potters' conscious and intimate knowledge of the market and its importance when he wrote: "[t]o imagine that the artist produces without regard for the market is as foolish as to suppose that the market fails to take the nature of artistic production into account" (Rosaldo in García Canclini 1995:xiv).

Market Worlds: Local and Global

In the local market, commercial buyers, tourists, and serious collectors as well as art intermediaries such as museum professionals and gallery owners are attracted by the opportunity to purchase directly from the potters at significant savings over commercial market prices in the United States and elsewhere. Tourists may be individuals who come independently or with tour operators. Collectors come to the village intent upon expanding their personal collections and typically have long-standing relationships with particular potters whose work they value. Museum representatives come seeking objects for specific exhibits or to expand museum collections. Buyers and commercial traders (locally referred to as *comerciantes*), come from such varied locations as France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, and the United States.

Locally, the most common type of marketing is direct sales from the producer to the buyer. Potters have an advantage in the village as they are able to eliminate the middleman from their sales and act as independent entrepreneurs. Potters keep abreast of the current market prices for their pottery through relatives who travel to or live in the United States, when they travel to give demonstrations, and by asking tourists (and anthropologists). Many potters hope to charge the same prices traders receive in the

United States; however, their ability to do so is confounded by the fact that buyers who make the trip to Mata Ortiz are strongly motivated by the belief they will be able to buy the pottery at lower prices. Prices continue to be substantially lower than prices within the global marketplace, but contrary to the popular belief that bargaining is expected and even essential to the experience of Mexican markets, the potters in Mata Ortiz are reluctant to lower their prices even further.

The Local Market World

During the research period from 1998-1999, pottery was readily available from the 300 households actively producing pottery in Mata Ortiz. Tourists and other potential buyers are likely to be hailed with “Do you want to buy pottery?” from doorways as they pass houses. A vehicle with U.S. plates in any of the neighborhoods will attract attention from nearby households. It is not unusual for the vehicle to be corralled by a pickup truck driven by an eager potter anxious to make a sale. Typically, prospective buyers are led to the potter’s house to see even more of his pottery or that of his family members. Over the years, it has become common practice for buyers seeking pottery to go directly to individual pottery-producing households. As this continues to be the basis for sales throughout the village, pottery households have adapted their everyday lives to the shifting transformation of home space into gallery-market space.

Many of the better known potters who have developed a steady flow of regular customers display pottery for family members, friends, and neighbors. As homes vary in size, the space designated for display may be an entire room or limited to the kitchen table. During the period of research, I noted a definite shift toward “showcasing” the pottery in a variety of aesthetic displays: glass cases, old weathered kitchen cabinets or

trasteros, or an informal display along rustic adobe walls and fireplaces. This attention to presentation became more apparent to me as an increasing number of potters began to travel across the border to give demonstrations in galleries and participate in museum exhibitions. I correlated the rise in this practice with potters' having more opportunities to see how their work is displayed in exhibits and galleries.

The number of organized tours to the village increased during this same period and significantly impacted how marketing is organized locally.¹¹⁸ Though tour groups had been coming to the village by van, the new road which opened in 2004 has since made it possible for large tour buses to drive to the village. Having the work of numerous potters in centralized locations serves the interests of these tours. First, it allows tourists the opportunity to select from the work of numerous artists at one time. Second, it efficiently accommodates the tour operator's time constraints.¹¹⁹ News of the arrival of cars, vans, and buses full of *turistas* travels fast. In a less organized but equally effective strategy, potters in Barrio El Porvenir gather at the basketball court to sell. As soon as the news circulates, people begin to congregate carrying cardboard boxes filled with pottery, hurriedly wrapped in dishcloths and old baby blankets.

The increase in tourism has not necessarily benefited the village evenly as many pottery-producing homes are overlooked and not included in the itineraries of organized tours. Concerned with keeping schedules and a lack of time, tour organizers are not likely to visit the households of lesser known potters. These potters continue to rely on

¹¹⁸ As the number of large buses increased, direct marketing to tourists within the village has become more concentrated at central locations in Barrio Centro and the number of tourists going to individual pottery households has decreased.

¹¹⁹ Buyers have more opportunities to see the variety of pottery available for purchase if they are independent of a tour guide.

their neighbors' willingness to display their work in order to gain access to buyers.

Despite the competition, it is not unusual for potters in one household to direct prospective buyers to another potter's home if they do not have what buyers are seeking. This practice illustrates the importance of networks and relationships of reciprocity among potters to their potential success within the local market.

Pottery is also displayed for sale in the pharmacy and numerous small markets or *tienditas*, throughout the village. By 1995, Juan Quezada and his sons had opened the first formal gallery space in the village which featured work by Quezada family members as well as work of potters outside the family.¹²⁰ A year or so later, another gallery space opened in the Adobe Inn Hotel. As with better known potters who display the work of family members, friends, and neighbors, these formal gallery spaces offer tourists and buyers the advantage of seeing the work of numerous potters in one location.

The greater share of profits on pottery sold in these formal gallery spaces goes to the owner of the gallery rather than the potter. Whereas family and friends may display pottery for one another cooperatively or for a small commission, the pottery displayed in formal gallery spaces is typically purchased from the potter at commercial rates which are often significantly lower than prices the potter could expect if the piece were sold directly from his or her own household. As a result, local gallery sales typically do not result in the potter getting the highest possible price. As explained by one gallery owner, the galleries must make a certain profit in order to cover overhead expenses.

¹²⁰ This first gallery space is now a residence. For many years, Juan and his wife Guillermina have displayed pottery in the living and dining rooms areas of their home. With the opening of the new road and increased tourism, they have since converted additional rooms into gallery space.

These galleries constitute an alternative venue for potters to sell within during those times when there are fewer traders and tourists coming to the village. Many potters rely on these galleries as a much needed source of consistent income, particularly lesser known potters or those who live a distance from areas frequented by new buyers and tourists. They benefit from selling to local galleries as well as from the additional exposure when their work is displayed. This exposure offers the possibility that buyers will take the initiative to find where they live and buy directly from independent potters. The extent to which gallery owners are willing to share that information is variable and often dependent upon the quality of personal relationships existing between gallery owners and potters.

Other marketing venues that do allow potters to realize their full profit margin within the local market include *La Posada de las Ollas*, the oldest lodging in the village and *Casa de Marta*, a smaller posada run by Marta Veloz. Both allow local potters to come by in the evenings to sell their work whenever guests are staying there.¹²¹ Another venue is the workshop/gallery, *Centro de Acopio*, opened early in 1999 by *Grupo Pearson*, the local women's marketing organization. In the interim years since the research period, numerous additional galleries have opened throughout the village.¹²²

There are a few small shops selling regional crafts and souvenirs in both Viejo Casas Grandes and Nuevo Casas Grandes where one can purchase examples of Mata Ortiz pottery in the range of \$5 to \$100. In the late 1990s, the three largest selections of what are considered collector quality, high-end pieces could be found in Viejo Casas

¹²¹ Since the research period, Amelia Martínez de Tena began renting rooms as well.

¹²² These include but are not limited to galleries opened by Graciela Martínez and Héctor Gallegos, Angela López and Roberto Bañuelos, Noe Quezada's son-in-law Oscar Treviso, Lucía Mora and Lorenzo Bugarini, Pilo Mora, Lila Silveira, Jorge Quintana, and the gallery run by the *Unidos Artesanos de Mata Ortiz*.

Grandes at the gallery owned by Nicolás Quezada (one of the originators of the pottery tradition) in his home near the ruins of Paquimé,¹²³ at the *Las Guacamayas* gallery owned by Máyté Luján Soto, and at the *Museo de las Culturas del Norte* museum shop.

A small group of local potters-turned-exporters act as middlemen, purchasing or accepting work from other potters on consignment. They transport the pottery across the border, selling to shops and galleries in larger Southwestern cities. An even larger group of local entrepreneurs, mainly from Nuevo Casas Grandes, promote the pottery in local, regional, and international markets. Typically, these individuals are not potters themselves, but have entrepreneurial interests in tourism, local galleries, and exportation of regional goods.

The Global Market World

Global market venues extend from fine art galleries and museum stores that feature “one of a kind” high end ceramics, to specialized outlets for ethnic arts,¹²⁴ websites on the internet, tourist and souvenir shops, and open-air markets. Potters largely rely upon art intermediaries to develop their name recognition through anecdotal descriptions, photographs, and narrative accounts of how they produce the pottery. Such practices further contextualize the lives of the producers and imbue authenticity and value to the pottery. Art intermediaries (which include government officials) do much to frame the geographical site of production with the “aura of authenticity” in the national and international, or global, imagination “whereby cultural capital becomes convertible into economic capital” (Wherry 2008:48).

¹²³ Numerous pottery producing households in the Nuevo Casas Grandes area have added gallery space within their homes in the years since the research period ended in 1999.

¹²⁴ Examples of specialized outlets include stores such as El Paso Saddle Blanket Company in El Paso, Texas and the chain of Jackalope stores in New Mexico and California.

Since the potters of Mata Ortíz began producing for a transnational market in the late 1970s, the consistent and continuous involvement of commercial traders, gallery buyers, museum personnel, and private collectors in the local market has increased over time relative to the expansion of the market. The instrumental roles of these individuals are critical in creating and maintaining the market. Those involved in marketing the pottery span a full range of social and economic backgrounds,¹²⁵ as varied as the locales of the markets in which they operate (Steiner 1994:2). The largest group of art intermediaries is the traders who purchase the pottery directly from the potters and transport it across international borders into tourist, ethnic, and fine art markets. Commercial traders constitute the most consistent and reliable source of revenue for the potters. Traders are predominantly male; however, I noted a significant increase in the number of female traders coming to the village during the research period. I was familiar with ten female traders who came to the village on a regular basis. There are also international gallery owners who bypass the traders and independently make annual or bi-annual trips to the village to restock their inventory.

Traders have a key role in this transnational flow of pottery into international markets. “The traders are the advance team,” I was told by one trader. “They (the potters) do not understand the pressures we have. We have to keep the market going. They need us!” As independent artists and entrepreneurs, potters have a certain amount of flexibility in setting their own schedules; however, some find it challenging to anticipate the unpredictability of traders’ arrivals. Though dates for projected arrivals

¹²⁵ Other commercial traders I came to know include retirees from business, law enforcement, civil service, and a few with backgrounds in anthropology. One trader I am familiar with is a former schoolteacher. Currently, he is a high profile international commercial trader and is well known in the Mexican coastal city where he operates a gallery.

may have been previously agreed upon, potters related how traders often arrive without notice, a month earlier or later than expected.¹²⁶ During my fieldwork in the late 1990s, it was common to visit homes toward the end of the week to find everyone scrambling to meet an unanticipated deadline for a given order. Often this meant having to stay up all night painting, then hoping for optimal weather in the morning so the pot could be fired and ready for the buyer who would only be in town for the weekend. If a specially ordered pot isn't ready, potters know there is always a neighboring potter with an equally fine piece to sell. Competition is a constant presence in the local village.

Typically, the pottery is resold on the retail market at a minimal 200% profit margin, so a pot selling for \$50 in the village will easily bring \$150 or more once it is located in the international marketplace. Potters spoke of their frustration knowing traders realize a much greater profit on the pottery than they are able to realize locally. Because potters rely on commercial buyers for the largest share of their sales, their position is somewhat marginalized in terms of power relative to the position of these buyers in the local marketplace. Subject to border policies and restrictions, potters are often marginalized within the international market as their ability to participate directly in the U.S. marketplace is hindered by policies that prevent them from crossing and selling, independent of traders. Only a handful of prominent potters are able to obtain passports and visas that allow them to engage transnationally in the art and market worlds. Applications for passports and U.S. visas require demonstrating one's economic security with proof of property and a secure income.

¹²⁶ Since the installation of telephone lines in 2002 and the increased popularity of cellular telephones, special orders from traders and collectors can now be placed via telephone and arrival dates are more easily scheduled. Telephone lines and wireless communication have also facilitated the wider use of computers for the same purposes.

For some potters, their efforts to market directly in the United States are crosscut by factors of nationality, class, and a lack of contacts and familiarity with market practices. When potters attempt to market on their own their efforts are not always successful, limiting them to selling in the lower end markets of border cities. This can be attributed to their not knowing specifically where pottery will sell and who the most likely buyers are. It can also be attributed to their lack of experience in dealing with buyers, especially gallery owners. Another disadvantage is the U.S. buyers know that Mexican potters are limited by the length of their visas and traveling expenses; the result is the potters often end up selling their goods in bulk at a much lower profit than they had hoped.

Commercial traders have distinct advantages over the local independent potter-turned-exporter, due in large part to the years they have spent building their marketing networks. With discretionary capital available, some traders are able to loan money or advance payments on pottery orders. I was made aware of instances wherein goods not readily available locally (e.g. power tools, audio equipment, appliances) were bartered, apparently in the interest of ensuring steady orders of pottery. Often these practices entangle potters in relationships of dependency and obligation to particular traders. In some cases, the trader gains exclusive advantage over the potter's production until the debt incurred is met through an equal value in pottery. One potter related how she and her partner circumvent these relations by selling on the sly, but expressed to me they could not compete openly in the market for higher profits without inviting conflict with the trader involved. In this situation, the potters are basically stuck in a circular

relationship of obligation; working for the trader to pay off the debt incurred for the goods and often obliged to accept the prices offered by the trader for their pottery.

Women's Interactions with the Market

In the following section, I highlight women's agency within their market interactions in order to illustrate that many of these women play active and conscious roles in establishing their position within the market, negotiating their prices, developing their clientele, and making alliances with traders and collectors who can expand their marketing and exhibiting possibilities. I extend the concept of social capital as the "capacity to mobilize scarce resources based on one's social relationships" (Wherry 2008:8) to include those interactions with art intermediaries essential to market success and in turn, attract even more customers. Here I am referring specifically to how male and female potters self-consciously deploy strategies with the aim of securing and maintaining their positions within trading networks that also represent opportunities for exhibition and demonstration.

Both male and female potters have a keen awareness of the instrumental roles of traders, collectors, gallery owners, and museum professionals in establishing and supporting their artistic careers. Likewise, they understand the roles of art intermediaries within the market in creating and enhancing the market value of their art. From the beginning of the pottery industry, women potters have realized opportunities to exhibit and demonstrate, thereby not only increasing the market value of their pottery, but imbuing their art with both cultural and symbolic capital, making it more valuable to consumers and yielding better prices for the producers.

Social Strategies to Market Success

Potters' social connections in the market are best characterized using Frederick F. Wherry's model to describe more intimate, long term ties as "embedded" and weaker, short term ties as "arm's length." By "embedded" I am referring to personalized, integral ties that potters establish with their buyers over time. Ties conducted at "arm's length" tend to be more businesslike and usually last only the time required for the sales transaction (Wherry 2008:80 citing Granovetter 1983). Further, Wherry notes the most favorable market opportunities often result from a combination of both kinds of ties rather than relying solely upon one or the other (Wherry 2008:80 citing Uzzi 1999).

Women who have been the most successful in establishing repeat business with clientele are those who have developed both cultural and symbolic capital through exposure in the international marketplace. As pioneers, Lydia Quezada Celado, Consolación Quezada Celado, and Taurina Baca Tena led the way as independent women potters invited to the United States for exhibitions, demonstrations, and teaching. As discussed throughout portraits in chapters two and five, many women work with their husbands to effectively manage and use their social connections with galleries, museums, and other cultural institutions with personalized, yet professional business acumen. Although not an exclusive list, examples of such couples include Juan Quezada, his wife Guillermina Olivas, the majority of Quezada family members, Graciela Martínez and Héctor Gallegos, Gaby Almeida and César Domínguez, Angela López and Roberto Bañuelos. Typically, potters establish embedded relationships with commercial traders, gallery owners, and collectors who represent the greater proportion of return clientele.

As interrelated complex systems influencing aesthetic judgments, taste, and preferences (Maquet 1986:145), Mata Ortíz market and art systems are as much about creating context as they are about selling pottery. Marketing is not limited to stores and galleries but occurs in other contexts as well. Museums have a key role in educating the public through exhibitions, demonstrations, judged competitions, and publications. These contextualize other components that support and enhance market value, appeal, and connoisseurship, through which the potters accrue recognition and prestige that boosts the prices of their artistic work (Garcia Canclini 1993; Karp and Lavine 1991; Parezo 1990; Maquet 1986; Bourdieu 1984; Graburn 1976). Other contexts include special teaching workshops, cultural tours, and annual judged competitions sponsored by museums and cultural institutions.

As Field notes in the case of Nicaraguan San Juanense ceramics, the certification, legitimization, and authentication of Mata Ortíz pottery as an art form “has required the ongoing input of experts, specifically anthropologists, craft dealers, art historians and museums to do the work of authenticating and ultimately of adding value” (Field 2009:517). In their roles of educating the public through exhibition and representation, museum professionals enhance marketability by opening doors to possible market venues (Karp and Lavine 1991). Potters develop reputations within the gallery and museum circuits and clients look forward to opportunities to buy from them, sometimes making trips to the village for that purpose.

Access to symbolic capital by way of exhibition, demonstration (see Figure 6.1), and teaching within academic and cultural institutions¹²⁷ throughout Mexico and the United States has benefited Mata Ortíz potters in establishing their reputations as individual artists (Parezo 1990; Wade 1986). Recognition that certain commercial traders, collectors, and academics are better connected than others to high end galleries and museums became especially acute after the publication of Bill Gilbert's "green book," *The Potters of Mata Ortíz: Transforming a Tradition* (1995). Potters seek alignments with these individuals since they may potentially facilitate recognition at higher levels within the market and art worlds, translating into success.

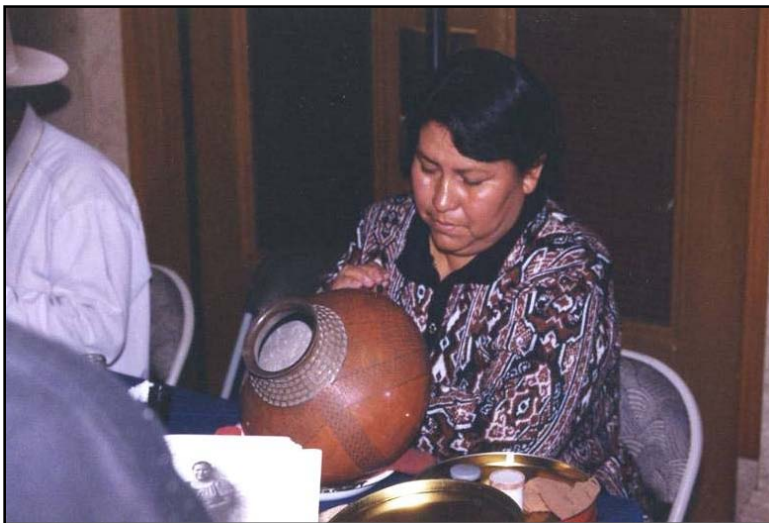


Figure 6.1 Socorro Sandoval de Silveira demonstrating at Arizona State Museum in March, 1999.

¹²⁷ These institutions include national and regional museums, universities, community colleges (and their art departments), as well as cultural institutions such as the Amerind Institute in Dragoon, Arizona and artist centers such as Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts (ISOMATA) in Idyllwild, California.

My preliminary fieldwork began at a time when Gilbert's catalog was the talk of the town within the Mata Ortiz community. The favorable reception of my research¹²⁸ as well as that of Bob Estes, another University of New Mexico graduate student, was undoubtedly enhanced in part by the realization of the capital garnered by those potters who had been featured in this catalog. The potential marketing advantages in being featured in any publication, popular or academic, do not go unnoticed. As described by Bruce Bernstein, similar publications about Pueblo potters constitute "guidebooks" for consumers, often providing photographs that identify individual potters. The potters' words come across as "ways to get to know them," and information as to where to find artists is usually provided (Bernstein 1993).

Over the past three decades artist-patron and artist-dealer relationships, with an emphasis on personality have become increasingly important goals for the potters (Brody 1976:76). Without exception, these individuals and couples are particularly adept at developing relationships that establish a personalistic dimension within the market exchange (Wherry 2008; Garcia Canclini 1993:72; Briggs 1989:142-145). For example, regardless of whether a meal is on the table or they are in the midst of pottery work, market-conscious potters take the time to make visitors to their home feel welcome and are gracious and hospitable, since anyone may become a potential client. These potters are equally adept at maintaining the cultural capital they accrue by consciously and carefully maintaining these relationships through personal interaction tailored to each client's interests and preferences. Certainly, talent and selection by merit explain in part

¹²⁸ Likewise, I recognize this as a fortuitous coincidence which further enhanced women's willingness to speak with me about their work.

how some potters become exceptionally successful (Colloredo Mansfeld 2002:117-119), yet, as Michael Chibnik observed of Oaxacan carvers:

[m]erit does not consist entirely of artistic talent. The most successful artisans also understand market trends, maintain smooth relations with their clients, and ask appropriate prices for their pieces (Chibnik 2003:172).

During exhibition and demonstration opportunities, some well known individuals and pottery couples take the initiative to act more autonomously as their own agents and reduce their dependence upon middlemen. While they may rely upon art intermediaries to arrange for their participation, they sell their art directly to higher paying clients in these venues. I observed César Domínguez and Gaby Almeida in control of their marketing during an exhibit in 2000 at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Juan Quezada, his wife Guillermina, and their family members set up display tables alongside leading commercial traders at an event held at the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles in 1999. This shift toward autonomous control of marketing is reminiscent of the trend that moved through the Southwest Pueblo art market in the 1980s, which resulted in large part from the individualizing practices within markets and museums that emphasized named artists known for their distinctive styles (Vincentelli 2003:202).¹²⁹ It is important to note, however, being able to make this shift is contingent upon potters having attained the level of success and recognition that affords them opportunities (e.g. exhibitions, demonstrations) to represent themselves in more prestigious market venues.

¹²⁹ Within processes of commodification of non-western art, Graburn proposes the prevalent logic of the “art-collecting public” results in agents or middlemen often having artists sign their works “since creative works of value are made by named individuals in our culture, the best of someone else’s culture must also be made by unique, named individuals” (Graburn 1976:22; see also Chibnik 2003:57-58 for similar discussion of Garcia Canclini 1993:63).

A second group of transactions involve short term “arm’s length” ties. As described earlier, these are less personalized, often taking place in potters’ homes or resulting from individual potters assertively seeking out buyers. These transactions occur either locally in the village or involve traveling to Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chihuahua City, Juárez, or across the international border to sell directly to stores or wholesalers in El Paso, Phoenix, and elsewhere in the United States. In the previous chapter, Olga Quezada and Velia Mora both related difficulties in attempting to seek buyers on their own in Juárez. Their attempts at these transactions met with varying levels of success and indicated that numerous factors (e.g. access to buyers, market shifts, border policies) were at play. However, transactions initiated at arm’s length have the possibility of developing into more embedded relationships, as we will see in the case of Ana Trillo.

In some cases, certain traders favored potters they perceived as less experienced. One trader explained to me as potters become savvy at dealing in the marketplace, they become less attractive to buying agents. For example, as certain potters develop embedded personalized relationships with particular clients, their art becomes less available to buyers outside of the marketing relationships they have culled. Commercial traders are always looking for new but talented potters, since their prices will customarily be lower; conversely, potters actively seek the best price possible. The reader may recall from chapter four the determination demonstrated by less experienced potters Blanca Quezada and Maricruz López, who stood firm in getting what they considered to be fair prices for their pottery. These arm’s length incidents exemplified the confidence both women have in asserting the quality of their work.

As the result of a particular experience, Lydia Quezada explained that she decided to remain independent from any one trader because: "... they only do what they want to do; they try to be very possessive" (Lydia Quezada, interview January 12, 1995). She related how there had been one trader in particular who was very jealous about her selling to anyone else. She explained she had signed a contract to sell exclusively to him; however, he was very picky and whenever he found anything wrong, he would reject that pot. One day he came and bought all the pots she had but one, which she described as having a very insignificant flaw. Later, another buyer came and wanted to buy the pot the other trader had left behind. She decided to sell the pot, reasoning that the first trader had rejected it. Soon after, this pot was included in an exhibition. When the first trader who had rejected the pot saw it in the exhibition, he was very angry and confronted Lydia. They argued, as she felt he was unreasonable in demanding control over pottery he had rejected. After this, the trader broke the contract, saying he did not want to work with her any longer if she was going to have other clients. Thereafter, she decided to be independent as it was too restrictive not to be able to sell to whomever came to buy.

Lydia's description of her experience with this trader is significant for a number of reasons. As she explained, the problem centered on a disjunction between the economic arrangements Lydia had with this trader and her own aesthetic and qualitative evaluation. The fact that the other trader placed the pot in an exhibit validated her own evaluation of her work, of her artistic judgment, and her identity as a talented artist. Resistance to the trader's exclusive power over her was indicative of her increasing confidence. Her decision to sell freely in the market evidenced growing agency on her

part and was empowering for her in terms of her processual movement toward marketing her pottery on her own (Lydia Quezada, interview, January 12, 1995).

Further evidence of women potters adapting their marketing strategies is illustrated in the following example of one woman's use of short term, arm's length transactions to develop long term, embedded relationships. Visitors are likely to be approached on the street by potters, male and female, with pieces of their pottery for sale. In some written accounts, those using this strategy are referred to as "roadrunners" and the idea is conveyed that the strategy is somehow indicative of the seller being overly aggressive or desperate for sales. However, I observed this was an effective strategy for selling and one that was commonly used by many potters, male and female, in the village between 1994 and 1999.

Ana's experience illustrates how this can be an effective way to access buyers and gain direct exposure in the local market, which can also be a key step toward establishing relationships that are critical in expanding a network of buyers. I made my first purchase from Ana Trillo in this way on the street in Barrio Americano in 1995 (see chapter four). Meeting Ana by way of this purchase led to my interviewing her two years later, when she spoke of how her proactive marketing strategy resulted in her meeting buyers from Deming, New Mexico who became her first important clients. In turn, these clients were instrumental in extending her exposure to other interested buyers in New Mexico and Arizona. For Ana, her strategy of directly seeking buyers resulted in increased sales which then inspired her to improve her work (see Figure 6.2). By 1999, she had developed a strong return clientele and had enough orders to guarantee a steady flow of buyers to her house. That same year, Ana was featured as one of the second generation

potters in the book, *The Many Faces of Mata Ortiz* (Lowell et al. 1999). Since, she and her husband Monico Corona have traveled to the east coast of the United States to exhibit and demonstrate. She has also begun teaching Americans to make pottery in her home.



Figure 6.2a Ana Trillo with an example of her work in 2007.
Personal collection of James Kemp, M.D.
Photography by Richard O'Connor.



Figure 6.2b

As discussed in chapter three, numerous pottery producing households in Mata Ortíz rely upon multiple income strategies. Among Oaxacan carvers, Chibnik observed overall household economic strategies aim at risk aversion and long term planning¹³⁰ and attempt “not to rely too much on any one economic activity” (Chibnik 2003:82). He points out the reason that carvers don’t “allocate more labor-time to craft production,” when it is the most profitable source of income is that “expanded production might not result in more sales” (Chibnik 2003:81). Similarly, among potters I interviewed in Mata Ortíz, some explained they engage in multiple and diverse strategies in order to maintain their economic viability against the instability of the market, and the possibility of it disappearing altogether. Spikes of high sales to plummets of no sales are constant reminders of the difficulty in anticipating the future and being assured of a steady income. Debi Flanigan is an American who first came to the village around 1985, became a trader, purchased a home, and married a local potter. Together, the couple became well known for the clay animals and nativities they co-produced. Speaking from personal experience, she described the tentative nature of the market and the reality of the potters’ vulnerable position during summer months when sales typically drop.

People count on having regular customers and then when no one comes to buy the pots, what good are they? If you have three months of labor sitting in front of you and no one there to buy them ... well, you can’t eat them! People go back to hauling water and cooking on their wood stoves in the hottest time of the year. Propane is too expensive. They feel really defeated. I think it would be good to write all this up. Let the *gringos* know that when they only buy from the best

¹³⁰ Chibnik’s view contrasts with earlier theorists who attributed risk aversion to a “peasant conservatism” typical of “traditional” cultures” (Chibnik 2003:82 referring to Foster 1962; Rogers 1969). Citing contemporary anthropological theory, Chibnik suggests risk avoidance behavior as practiced by rural artisanal producers “is economically sensible because poor rural families cannot afford the loss of a substantial investment of land, labor or capital” and instead rely upon a “diversity of activities” (Chibnik 2003:82).

potters, they are cutting off the largest part of the community (Debi Flanigan, personal communication, August 26, 1998).

The most prevalent multiple income strategies among men who have accumulated capital from their pottery sales are investing in land and cattle, while women potters often invest in home-based businesses. These businesses often involve cash loans, video/DVD rentals, selling clothing, shoes, and housewares, and are sometimes operated in partnership with their husbands. Pottery is often accepted as payment for these goods. For example, if a potter buys a dress for \$30 she might pay for it with a pot worth \$45 on the local market. Taking pottery in payment for goods allows these women to build an inventory of other potters' work which they display and sell along with their other goods. Some of these home-based businesses accept other potters' work on consignment as well. When I met Martha Martínez Rentería in 1994, she and her husband Mauro Corona Quezada were selling other people's pottery alongside their own and by 1996, they had a separate room to display and sell others' work. Martha later set up a clothing and shoe store during my fieldwork in 1998.

For some women potters, building an inventory of other potters' work through their home-based businesses presented the opportunity to begin exporting to the United States once they had sufficient inventory to make a trip north worthwhile. Becoming an exporter also requires owning a truck and being able to get a visa in order to travel to urban markets in the Southwest United States. In addition to selling household items and clothing, renting videos, and extending loans, Lucía Mora began exporting pots with her husband Lorenzo Bugarini. Her sister-in-law Lupe Soto de Mora, who operated a small grocery, also exported pottery with her husband Juan Mora.

In previous chapters, I have emphasized that numerous women, as individuals or in couples, have gained prestige as leading potters alongside their male peers. I have also discussed how certain women are unrecognized, as their labor remains hidden within their husbands', sons', or daughters' signatures once the pottery enters the market and art worlds. However, within the local market women are by no means invisible. Women have conducted their own marketing transactions as well as negotiating sales for other household members since the beginning of the pottery industry. As in the case of Guillermina Olivas, Juan Quezada's wife, women often have assumed the responsibility for marketing the household's pottery to buyers who come to the house during the day. This is also true for couples who produce pottery together, since male partners are often away from the household during part of the day working in fields or tending cattle. Among the women I met in Mata Ortiz, I am unaware of any who turned buyers away because their husbands were not at home. When there is a male trader at the door and the woman potter is the only one home, she is going to handle the transaction. Typically, language differences are not a barrier to sales; many of these women have a working knowledge of the terms and key phrases that are likely to characterize the transaction.

Grupo Artesanal Pearson: The Women's Micro-enterprise Project

I first heard about the formation of the women's micro-enterprise project, *Grupo Pearson*, while conducting preliminary fieldwork during the summer of 1997. Earlier in May of that same year, an independent organizer from Mexico City, Guillermo Lozano Kasten, had called a meeting to explain the proposed project to interested women. As the group's first secretary, Lucía Mora explained the primary objective of the project was to provide reliable income through membership in a "company" comprised of women

already involved in the existing pottery industry. Its long term objective was to encourage and assist in the formation of micro-enterprises that would eventually be individually owned and managed by the women. The project would aim its retail focus on the Mexican market, which at that time was still untapped. Lozano explained to the women that the project would only purchase pottery priced less than 120 pesos (about \$15 in 1997) which he would then market in various metropolitan and tourist areas in Mexico. Plans also included exporting the women's pottery to international markets by way of Mexico City and entering their work in international competitions throughout Latin America.

Within my core sample, I interviewed nine members of *Grupo Pearson* who represented 17% of the membership of 52 women. These women explained to me that they were asked to predict how many pots they could produce every fifteen days. This number was used to establish a contract order, or *solicitud*, with each of the fifty-two women. The women decided on the name *Grupo Pearson*.¹³¹ The parent organization is *Solidaridad*,¹³² with specific assistance provided through representatives of SEDESOL¹³³ and FONAES.¹³⁴ Financial backing for the women's program was provided through a FONAES loan. As explained to me, this loan provided the funds necessary to meet the contracts established between the program's organizer and the women potters, until the project showed a profit.

¹³¹ During its first years, the women's group was referred to as *El Grupo de Cinquenta Dos Mujeres* as well. A second group of fifty-two women formed soon after and was known as *Grupo Paquimé*.

¹³² *Solidaridad*, or National Solidarity Program

¹³³ SEDESOL *Secretaría de Desarrollo Social*, or Secretary of Social Development

¹³⁴ *Fondo Nacional de Apoyo para las Empresas de Solidaridad*, or National Fund for Support of Solidarity Businesses

The implementation of this economic project within the community of Mata Ortiz was exceptional in the history of the local pottery industry. I had been told repeatedly, particularly by male potters, that potters in Mata Ortiz had consistently resisted and rejected any outside intervention in their art by state agencies. When I discussed the issue of cooperatives with Juan Quezada, he related how his own attempt to organize a cooperative, *Sociedad Cooperativa de Alfareros*,¹³⁵ with the assistance of the Mexican Foreign Trade Institute had failed to attract local interest in community level cooperative action (Juan Quezada personal communication, July 28, 1997; see MacCallum 1979:73). Another prominent potter in Barrio El Porvenir, Macario Ortiz, told me the potters do not want to relinquish any control over their work or the prices they ask. He emphatically stated: “we want to be free to make pots as we want” (personal communication, January 12, 1995). Therefore, it was surprising news when I heard about the formation of the women’s group, as this was the first time government-sponsored assistance had been accepted by any of the potters and any kind of group-based strategy had been initiated.¹³⁶

When I returned a few months later in December of 1997, certain key events were unfolding that would undermine the women’s trust in Lozano. The first event to spark controversy was the announcement that a member of the women’s group had been awarded a prize of 40,000 pesos (approximately \$5000) in a judged international

¹³⁵ Cooperative Society of Potters

¹³⁶ When the women’s project formed, I had discussions regarding its future prospects with a number of commercial traders. A few expressed concerns that the women’s low priced pottery might “flood the market” and result in an overall decline in the value of Mata Ortiz pottery. Others remarked the women’s marketing of lower priced pottery would not matter since it would be sold mainly in the Mexican market. I had opportunities to discuss the project with local male potters as well. While acknowledging the possibility of positive outcomes, few men gave wholehearted approval to the project. One male potter expressed his doubts as to its potential, commenting “*Hay muchas problemas posible*,” [There are many possible problems]. Others felt the women’s lower priced pottery would not pose a threat to their own niches in the high end of the marketplace.

competition held in Bogota, Colombia. Her pot had been entered in the competition by Lozano through a representative of FONART.¹³⁷ Together with other pieces representing the group's work, this pot was submitted with the understanding that any funds realized would be deposited in an account for the whole group. Acting proactively on her behalf, the potter contacted the FONART office in Mexico City and arranged for the prize money to be sent to a bank account in Nuevo Casas Grandes. The FONART representative was in agreement that the prize money belonged to the artist, as it was her name on the pot.

The incident over the prize money had a double-edged effect. The group demonstrated its potential as an effective venue to promote the women as artists and bring them into the international market. The members of the group were accessing a consistent income within a nascent, but expanding Mexican market for Mata Ortiz pottery. However, for certain members this incident constituted a challenge to the authority of Lozano, the group's president and undermined their levels of trust and confidence in him. Further, this incident ignited conflicts within the membership and factions formed; it also raised significant questions regarding the extent of control the group held over the actions of an individual artist. The idea of cooperative sharing of financial benefits contradicted the basic understanding of entrepreneurship and artistic endeavor in Mata Ortiz as these had developed over the past thirty years.

The incident regarding the prize money brought to light a number of potential problems. The women did not have a constitution or bylaws which clarified the

¹³⁷ *Nacional para el Fomento de las Artesanías*, or National Fund for the Promotion of Arts and Crafts promotes popular and traditional Mexican art through direct purchase from artists which are distributed to national retail stores located throughout Mexico (Stephen 1991:138).

operating procedures for the program. Also, the women wanted to appoint a local representative who would have the authority to act on behalf of the membership in the absence of Lozano. This responsibility would include authority over the bank account and the group's material holdings.

Women in the micro-enterprise group expressed concern that they were being excluded from the internal operations and their finances were being mismanaged. They wanted to know whether other pots that had been entered in similar competitions had won awards. If so, where was the prize money? According to members I spoke with, Lozano did not answer the questions about the money directly and produced neither the leftover pots nor the money. The women were not satisfied with his explanations. Within the membership, women became suspicious when they realized he was not keeping them informed of various competitions and exhibitions in which he was entering their pottery. Both Lucía Mora, who was the group's secretary at the time and Amelia Martínez, who was the vice president, were surprised to hear news that an exhibit of the group's pottery had opened at the Centennial Museum at the University of Texas, El Paso. Both expressed their concern that neither they nor any of the other women had been told about this exhibit. Since El Paso is about four hours away, the women viewed the exhibit as a missed opportunity for demonstration and marketing. In response, the women sent a letter to the director of the museum in El Paso informing him that the members of the group were unaware of the exhibit and that it had been arranged without their knowledge.

On their own initiative, women within the membership contacted Marta Turok, a noted Mexican anthropologist known for her extensive work with artisans, to seek advice

on how to best protect the interests of the women's group.¹³⁸ Turok became involved with the community as coordinator of the first major exhibition of Mata Ortiz pottery at the Franz Mayer Museum in Mexico City in 1999 (see chapter two).¹³⁹ Together, Turok and the women carefully read through the FONAES contract. Turok explained to the women that they were carrying full responsibility for repayment of the loan. Though he had been named president, Lozano's responsibility was limited to representing the women in the promotion of their sales. By this point, their suspicions had been confirmed when they realized that a significant amount of the original loan money was unaccounted for.

On Turok's recommendation, the women brought their concerns about Lozano to the attention of FONAES, the government agency that had provided the loan. She also recommended they contact Lozano, requesting him to provide a report. Unable to contact him directly, Turok advised them that under the law of association, two telegrams sent to his address of record would suffice as proper notice. His failure to respond allowed them to make changes in the group's leadership. As a result of the level of distrust that had developed, Lozano resigned in 2000. Women from within the membership assumed leadership and responsibility for the continued operation and development of the program, dealing directly with FONAES (Marta Turok, personal communication June 29, 2009; field notes 1997-1999).

¹³⁸ At the time, Marta Turok was the president of a Mexican non-governmental organization, *Asociación Mexicana de Arte y Cultura Popular, A.C.* (AMACUP). The women also contacted representatives of FONART.

¹³⁹ In collaboration with Jim Hills of Tucson, Arizona, Marta Turok coordinated this exhibition at the national level, to bring long overdue attention to the village and the role of Juan Quezada (discussed in chapter two). Turok was also instrumental in Juan Quezada's receiving the National Arts and Science Award in 1999.

Following the reorganization, the new president, Amelia Martínez, oversaw the building of the group's workshop and gallery on land purchased through negotiations by the secretary Lucía Mora and treasurer Lupe Soto. The building project also had support from the local municipal government in Viejo Casas Grandes. In the announcement for the opening of their new gallery, *Centro de Acopio*, the women identified themselves as *Grupo Artesanal Pearson*. Women continued to enter national competitions and expand their marketing networks; however, representation was from within the membership. The group continued successfully for two or three more years before membership began to decline.

The events leading to the reorganization of the women's micro-enterprise group have been addressed in an essay written by Mexican anthropologist, Eli Bartra (2003). As I state in the introduction, there is a fundamental difference between my interpretation and Bartra's regarding the impact of outside intervention and the women's response to what they perceived as unfair and underhanded marketing practices. In Bartra's account, the women are described as having been easily taken advantage of and unwittingly duped by Lozano. Further, she maintains women's production is subordinate to that of men and that in general, women tend to make small pots (Bartra 2003:108-117).

As emphasized in the introduction and throughout this dissertation, I have argued that women's aesthetic and productive contributions have been substantial relative to those of their male peers. Regarding the notion that women make small pots, it is important to realize that per the *solicitud*, or agreement, members of the women's micro-enterprise group focused their marketing on smaller, competitively low priced pottery that could be shipped easily. Within the group's membership and throughout the wider

community there are women who produce large pieces of pottery. Examples of such work by Lydia Quezada, Consolación Quezada, Taurina Baca, Gloria Hernández, and Socorro Sandoval are amply illustrated in chapters four and five.

Within the constraints of the local patriarchal system in which women are indeed subordinate to men, I found that these women were neither duped nor taken advantage of easily. My interpretation focuses on how the women acted upon their suspicions to protect their interests, and through their own agency asserted control, actively investigated their concerns, and obtained assistance. The women called Lozano to account for his dealings on their behalf, which ultimately resulted in his resignation. Contrary to Bartra's assessment of the women being in a marginalized position relative to Lozano, these were not the actions of subordinated victims, but of women who challenged their marginalization and resisted being victimized. I would suggest that Lozano underestimated the years of experience represented among women within the membership in dealing with commercial traders, and this was perhaps more than he bargained for. My findings are based upon discussions I had with members of the micro-enterprise project, including key players in the reorganization, and my observations while living in the village for eighteen months during the time these events occurred. Since Bartra's findings were based on a much briefer time frame, this may account for the difference in our perspectives.

Participation within the group has expanded the women's understanding and their knowledge of markets and art worlds. Some took the benefit of their experiences and developed effective strategies that allowed them to bypass the local market and place themselves within the international market arena. Often they entered this arena as

independent artists, representing themselves. All of this was played out in the full view of the community. The women consciously negotiated the potential of the increased attention and publicity that has been focused on Mata Ortiz pottery in Mexico to strengthen their own identity as artists. As the group's president for two years, Amelia Martínez de Tena credits the expansion of her marketing skills and knowledge of outside markets to her experience in dealing directly with agency officials who work in the interest of promoting Mexico's arts and crafts (e.g. FONART). Other women among the membership, like Luz Elva Ramírez and Martha Martínez Flores de Domínguez, independently entered international competitions in other regions of Mexico and have gained recognition for their work.

Thus far in this chapter I have described the construction of the local and global markets in order to demonstrate how women exercise agency within these contexts as they actively respond to client taste and market demand, effectively interact with art intermediaries and create strategies to establish marketing ties, and shape opportunities to expand their markets. In the following section, I demonstrate how the underpinnings of these market systems depend upon multiple constructions and interpretations of authenticity.

Multiple and Shifting Meanings of Authenticity

Societies and their various forms of cultural production, be it popular culture, art, or music, bump into each other at every turn. In today's global world, we are inundated through media representations with "flashes" of cultural images from all over the world, seen everywhere at once. The construction of "ever-new" hybrid forms results from these transcultural interactions (Price and Price 1999:6; Garcia Canclini 1995). The

questions asked about art and aesthetics have changed dramatically. As noted by Sally Price and Richard Price, the anthropologist can no longer describe or ask about “discrete, authentic” traditions. Instead questions are directed to the “exploration of change, movement, hybridization, creolization, negotiated identities, borderlands and unstable authenticities” (Price and Price 1999:2).

Anthropologists who have studied transcultural arts over the past thirty years or so have come to understand authenticity as a culturally and “historically contingent construction” whose meaning “appears at a certain moment” (Errington 1998:102). The multiplicity and malleability of the meanings of authenticity are made clear in Les Field’s explication of how the pottery produced in the Nicaraguan artisanal community of San Juan de Oriente has come to be seen as authentic at a particular historical moment. Through an analysis of the “articulation of multiple historical processes” of the last century, Field explains how each type of San Juanense ceramics came to embody four kinds of authenticity (Field 2009:517). By comparing various exhibitions of San Juanense pottery within diverse Scandinavian museum venues, Field finds that the very heterogeneity of these museum venues “were testimony to the ambiguous, polyvalent and undecided nature” of the Nicaraguan pottery (Field 2009:507).

In the analysis of multiple constructions of authenticity in transcultural art markets, numerous theorists recognize authenticity to be an analytical category with differential meanings for producers, intermediaries, and consumers (Wherry 2008; Casteneda 2004; Chibnik 2003; Phillips and Steiner 1999; Graburn 1999:352; Marcus and Myers 1995; Nash 1993). In his study of art markets in Cote d’Ivoire, Christopher Steiner concluded that the understanding carvers and traders have of authenticity as it is

constructed by consumers is similarly influenced by historical processes. Carvers who create the art rely on printed images in books as their point of reference for “authentic” African art. For traders who supply African art to Western consumers, “authentic African art only exists in the present, *after* European contact” and the consequent removal of African art to the West where it was declared “authentic” (Steiner 1994:102-103). Western consumers locate the meaning of authentic, “genuine” African art in what existed in the past *before* European contact. I return to the relevance of Steiner’s observations of constructing and measuring authenticity further on in my discussion of similar practices by Mata Ortíz potters.

June Nash points out that the intrinsic value of a handmade object “is precisely the human labor embodied in the product and what it tells about a whole way of life” (Nash 1993:10). Underlying market forces and relationships are notions of authenticity grounded in “... the Western world’s search for the primitive, the handmade, the rare, and the authentic, (and) the search inevitably turns to the past” (Graburn 1976:19). It is in this sense that understandings of authenticity go beyond what is “comprehended with direct perception” (Moeran 1984), and have more to do with an object’s singularity as a unique one-of-a-kind object (Kopytoff 1986), its qualitative aspects of being handmade, and the “natural” and “traditional” techniques by which it was produced.

As I stressed earlier, proximity to the archaeological site at Paquimé contextualizes the authenticity of Mata Ortíz pottery and validates the social and cultural conditions of the site of production as an authentic site where traditionally produced pottery is available. Multiple notions of authenticity have guided the ways in which male and female potters in Mata Ortíz have innovated and developed a dynamic system of

ethnoaesthetics that is contemporary, yet still connected to the authentic as it is understood relative to the artifacts of Paquimé and to Pueblo pottery of the Southwest United States.

Since the initial development of the Mata Ortiz pottery industry in the late 1970s, early promoters appealed to a market audience already familiar with the pottery of the American Southwest. Concerted efforts were made to introduce the pottery into fine art galleries and museums (Gilbert 1995; Parks 1993; MacCallum 1979). Select examples of the pottery have been the object of numerous exhibitions within the context of both ethnographic and fine art museums (Johnson 2001; *Artes de México* 1999; Gilbert 2000, 1999, 1995; Parks 1993; Parks and MacCallum 1999; MacCallum 1979). In the 1999 publication, “The Many Faces of Mata Ortiz Pottery,” the authors explain that with increased popularity “[m]ore and more U.S. traders discovered the village and brought the pottery north across the border to an expanding market. The path of least resistance led to American Indian galleries, virtually the only outlets for high-quality ethnic pottery” (Lowell et al. 1999:10). This strategy is clearly consistent with Graburn’s observation that “the forces on the artist who makes traditional objects for sale usually point in the direction of some historical recorded model of what is the real thing” (Graburn 1976:14). In the case of Mata Ortiz pottery, the “real thing” includes the prehistoric artifacts of Paquimé, contemporary Pueblo pottery of the American Southwest, and Mata Ortiz pottery itself.

It is difficult to tease out what is exclusively Puebloan and what is exclusively Chihuahuan from the hybrid repertoire of designs and forms used by Mata Ortiz potters. When we consider the extent of trade and interaction that possibly occurred among

prehistoric communities in what are now two regions separated by an international border, the hybrid forms of contemporary Puebloan and Chihuahuan pottery seem to echo the past. Nonetheless, the cultural ownership of the designs used on Mata Ortiz pottery continues to be a contentious issue for some Pueblo potters in the Southwest United States (Brown 2003; CIAC 2000).

Meaning of Designs and Motifs

Mata Ortiz potters continue to be influenced by design elements and motifs they observe on prehistoric pottery as well as contemporary pieces by Pueblo and Euro-western studio potters. No longer limited to barter, diffusion of these designs in the 20th and 21st century is channeled through various external sources. Potters observe both prehistoric and contemporary images of form, design, and motif as photograph images and graphics within archaeological site reports, ethnographies, art history texts, and museum catalogs. The tattered and well-thumbed condition of these books is evidence of their repeated use by the potters. Often provided by traders and collectors, published materials expand the potters' knowledge of both prehistoric and contemporary ceramics. Field writes that the Nicaraguan potters he worked with similarly drew upon catalogs and books of Pre-Columbian art of Meso-America as resources for their designs and painting (Field 1999:16). Like the Nicaraguan potters, potters in Mata Ortiz do not have ethical concerns about drawing on other pottery traditions for inspiration. More recently, potters have shown me books they acquired during trips to the United States.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Steiner's example is useful in terms of understanding how printed images in books act to both document "authentic" examples of pre-Western contact and to legitimize and authenticate post-Western contemporary objects (Steiner 1994:102-103).

Much like Steiner found among Cote D'Ivoire carvers, authenticity becomes "something that emanates directly from the pages of a book," providing "the "aura" of truth about an object" with which to measure or gauge the quality and accuracy of all subsequent "copies" (Steiner discussing Benjamin 1999:103). I suggest the printed texts used by Mata Ortíz potters provide not only sources for designs and forms, but play influential roles in how potters in Mata Ortíz interpret authenticity, as well as how they understand their consumers' definitions of authenticity.

Potters traveling beyond the village for exhibitions and demonstrations have opportunities to view pottery of various art traditions and regions through museum exhibits, commercial art shows and galleries. The experience of traveling outside Mexico has provided opportunities to observe and in some cases, to share pottery technologies with potters in Europe and the United States as well as Latin American countries. Marysia Galbraith has written about this exchange of information as a favorable result of the multidirectional impact of globalization (Galbraith 2002: 62).

Sally Price and Richard Price dispute the idea that the artistic motifs of the Maroon art they have studied for more than forty years "carry a specific 'meaning' which can be 'read'" from the objects themselves (Price and Price 1999:8-9). In their earlier book, *Afro-American Arts of the Surinam Rainforest* (1980), they argued that studies expressing such attempts were mostly the result of "cajoling" the informants to accept the interpretations the researchers proposed. Instead, they maintain the focus of inquiry must begin with the kinds of meanings artists themselves consider important (Price and Price 1999:9). This is the essential component upon which ethnoaesthetic theory is based and that I employ throughout this dissertation.

In Mata Ortíz, potters do not have the same level of consensus shared among Pueblo potters regarding the meaning of the designs they employ. As explained by Pueblo sociologist Tessie Naranjo, a member of the Tewa community:

... elements of Pueblo pottery always refer to the cosmic view of the world. They continually re-state the connectedness of all natural elements, including humans. Mountains, clouds, lightning, water, raindrops, seeds, corn, flowers, water-serpents, bears, and feathers are incorporated into spirals and lines of continuous movement which represent the connective breath of the universe. All represent the complex system of inter-relatedness within which all humans dwell (Naranjo 1992:33).

When Pueblo potters carve or paint *ava-nung*, the water serpent, or the bear paw, they are “calling forth the presence” of these beings from within their ancient cosmology (Naranjo 1992:xi). In contrast, the absence of a tradition of oral transmission of pottery technology, or of cultural continuity of the symbolic relevance of designs and motifs with temporal and cultural depth, the designs used by contemporary potters in Mata Ortíz have multiple and shifting meanings. Unhampered by long standing tradition, these meanings are “ambiguous” and “polyvalent” in nature (Field 2009:507). Meaning is socially constructed within the interaction among the shared ethnoaesthetics of this community of artists with market processes, clients’ discriminating tastes, and art preferences (Bourdieu 1984:230-232). Collectively, the design elements compose a repertoire of designs and motifs appropriated through observation of the prehistoric objects found in the local environment, and through numerous external influences (e.g. clients’ taste, collectors’ preferences, archaeological site reports, exhibit catalogs). The visual components of the ethnoaesthetic system include both the repertoire of “traditional” designs and motifs inspired by Casas Grandes artifacts and the body of *new* designs, motifs and forms emerging from the dynamic relationship between innovation and tradition.

Authenticity and Market Recognition

The pottery in Mata Ortíz is considered by many aficionados to be the modern form of a tradition that began with the prehistoric inhabitants, extending forward as one continuous tradition. However, as I have discussed earlier, the history of the pottery industry in Mata Ortíz does not line up neatly with what is known from the archaeological record about the prehistoric producers of the pottery associated with the nearby archaeo-tourist site at Paquimé.

In their ongoing discourse with traders and outside patrons, popular and scholarly interpretations of the meanings of Southwest Pueblo designs and motifs based on archaeological, ethnographic, and art history sources are communicated to the potters. The lexicons used by potters, traders, and collectors to identify, describe, and in some cases attribute meaning to these designs and motifs, more often than not emanate from this discursive field. Within popularized national narratives, the prehistoric inhabitants are considered to be the originators of the pottery tradition, and are often identified as the predecessors of the modern tradition and even the ancestors of the contemporary potters. Conversely, I must emphasize the majority of people I spoke with in Mata Ortíz do not identify with the ancient inhabitants of the region as their direct ancestors and instead, refer to them as “*moctezumas*.”¹⁴¹ When I asked Juan Quezada what he thought about traders, gallery owners, and internet entrepreneurs who represent him as an Indian, he laughed and answered “I would really like to be an Indian, but I am not.”

¹⁴¹ I often heard this term used to refer to both prehistoric peoples as well as archaeological ruins. When I asked why this term was used, I was told: “*es del tiempo de Moctezuma*” [... it is of the time of Moctezuma].

As an unanticipated consequence, initially locating Mata Ortíz pottery within the Southwest pottery market led to challenges over whether Mata Ortíz potters have the right to make and to sell their pottery within this market. There is consensus among certain sectors of the Native American community that Mexican-made pottery intrudes upon Native American cultural property rights within the Pueblo Southwest market. Citing the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, these individuals maintain Mata Ortíz pottery is not authentic Pueblo pottery nor is it indigenous Southwest pottery.¹⁴² After encountering sporadic and inconsistent demands by U.S. Customs agents that pottery be indelibly engraved with “Made in Mexico,” a group of American traders requested a ruling on this regulation from the U.S. Customs Service in Washington, D.C.¹⁴³ The ruling contained amendments requiring that Native American-style arts and crafts could be marked “Made in Mexico” by means of a string tag or adhesive labels. This ruling took effect on January 1, 1994 to coincide with the effective date of NAFTA.

Despite the favorable ruling for the traders, the question remains as to why traders and dealers are so adamant against inscribing the country of origin on the pot in the first place. The objection to this indicates there are other factors contributing to their desire to avoid clearly stating that the pottery comes from Mexico. I read the traders’ resistance as indicative of an underlying understanding that the popularity of Mata Ortíz pottery is

¹⁴² The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, Public Law 101-644 (Brown 2003:215)¹⁴² prevents the import of goods from other countries which mimic Native American style arts and crafts. Advocates of Native American Arts and Crafts interpret this regulation to direct that the country of origin be indelibly engraved on the item under U.S. Customs marking requirements. As one representative of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board told me, “If they can take the time to inscribe their names into the pot, then they can engrave “Made in Mexico.” It is the law.”

¹⁴³ On different occasions, three traders explained to me that their objection to engraving “Made in Mexico” on the pots was based on their concern that the engraving would lower the value of the pots. The information I refer to regarding this ruling is drawn from correspondence between one of the traders and the Department of the Treasury, U.S. Customs Service. The response letter from the U.S. Customs Service is dated August 25, 1994.

dependent upon its recognition as an authentic and legitimate art form within the Southwest marketplace.

An adjustment of discourse has paralleled the flurry of exhibitions of Mata Ortíz pottery during the past decade in both Mexico and the United States. The new discourse declares the pottery is “good enough to stand on its own,” with some suggesting that Mata Ortíz pottery is perhaps even finer and more delicate than Pueblo pottery. In contrast, there is an obvious reticence to completely disassociate the pottery from the Southwest market. Mata Ortíz pottery continues to be sold within this market¹⁴⁴ and clearly there is much to be gained in terms of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital for the potters as well as for various art intermediaries (traders, gallery owners, collectors, museum professionals). The boundaries of authenticity are monitored within the market by both traders and patrons who reject designs and forms that are “too similar” to distinctively recognizable Pueblo traditions such as those of Santa Clara, Acoma, San Idelfonso, and Zuni, to name a few. However, a buyer in 2009 is just as likely as a buyer in 1979 to be told by a salesperson that the makers of these pots are the Indians of the Casas Grandes Pueblo.¹⁴⁵ The question of authenticity within a discourse of ethnicity is still the linchpin here (Casteñeda 2005; Little 2004; Chibnik 2003; Field 1999; Graburn 1999, 1976; Novelo 1993; Nash 1993).

The potters I spoke with in Mata Ortíz self-identify as *Méxicanos* and are not bothered by the idea that buyers think they are Indian. By managing the construction of

¹⁴⁴ I am aware of numerous galleries extending from San Diego, California to Mystic, Connecticut which sell Mata Ortíz pottery alongside Pueblo pottery. This holds true for the majority of internet sites selling Mata Ortíz pottery.

¹⁴⁵ As recently as April of 2009, a salesperson at a major museum gift shop in Albuquerque, New Mexico identified and described the potters of Mata Ortíz to me as Native American potters.

their *mestizo* identity in ways that neither assert nor deny association with Native American identity, they are able to successfully project an image that is “ethnically relevant or suitably exotic” (or both) to their consumers (Graburn 1976:21). Likewise, promoters of Mata Ortiz pottery have successfully established continuity with a “genre that is deemed worth collecting by outsiders” (Graburn 1976:21). In other words, they have successfully maintained the attention of consumers who are interested in Pueblo pottery. Through recent shifts in discourse, art intermediaries have engendered an appreciation among consumers for Mata Ortiz pottery as *mestizo*-made Mexican pottery.

Edwin Wade has described how the international ethnic art market is not a “singular” market, but is instead a number of distinct, segmented markets which are “geographically delineated” (Wade 1985 in Parezo 1990:565). Separating ethnic arts from other art markets, as is the case with Native American art in the Southwest United States, reinforces its distinctiveness and “otherness,” in the selling of “ethnic diversity” and a “traditional past” (Parezo 1990:574). Nancy Parezo has proposed that because the “submarkets increasingly diversify and expand,” there is room for competition. Certainly, Mata Ortiz pottery has experienced market success thus far and is evenly represented within a diversity of markets (Parezo 1990:573).

The Tension between Authenticity and Innovation

Those visiting Mata Ortiz often decry the modernization of the village. The paved road into the village and improvements to the local infrastructure are criticized as signs of modernity, indicators that the “real” Mata Ortiz is disappearing. Signs of underdevelopment (e.g. lack of plumbing) have come to represent what is, or was, the authentic way of life in Mata Ortiz. Their stance resonates with Dean MacCannell’s

assertion that in the postmodern yearning for authenticity, tourists seek to satisfy desires for what they perceive as “real” and yet absent from their own lives, in “other times” and “other places” or in “the lives of other peoples away from “everyday life” (Urry 2002:9 citing MacCannell 1976:3). Graburn reminds us that “authenticity is a concept tourists carry with them in their heads,” and one not likely to have been found “in other times, places, or peoples – or at least not until the tourists arrived!” (Graburn 1999:351). These yearnings are consistent with clients’ tastes for “real” and “natural” pots made in the labor-intensive, “traditional” authentic way (Phillips and Steiner 1999).

As discussed in the introductory chapter, when potters adopt advancements in technology such as the use of kilns and commercially produced materials, their choices are often critiqued within the community of outside patrons as a devolution and loss of “tradition” (Cohodas 1999:146; Moeran 1984:201). The aesthetic appeal of the pottery is closely associated with the “natural” materials and technology by which it is made (Steiner 1994; Cohodas 1999; Errington 1998; Garcia Canclini 1995). As a result, the preference for pottery that is closer to “nature” and produced according to specific “authentic” techniques potentially inhibits artistic expression and innovation. This tension between aesthetic expression and market appraisal has artistic and material consequences for the potters. David Harvey has noted the precarious position artists have relative to market forces, and how the commodification of their cultural production has often led to “cultural destruction in the aesthetic field itself”¹⁴⁶ (Harvey 1990:22).

¹⁴⁶ See Harvey’s discussion of how the decline in patronage of cultural production (i.e. aristocratic, state and institutional) during the cultural and economic shifts towards modernity at the end of the 19th century resulted in the commodification of art which inevitably led to “cultural destruction in the aesthetic field itself” (Harvey 1990:22). Competition within “aesthetically informed activity” re-constructed the reality of the defining boundaries of ‘art’ (Harvey 1990:22).

Constraints are often exerted on the potters to produce what the market demands, and constitute contradictory sources of tension between innovation and tradition.

Alternatively, this same tension can be read dialectically as a very real source of dynamic creativity.

The romanticization of hand-made commodities potentially conflicts with potters' economic objectives and their identity as creative artists. The aesthetic ideal, based on criteria of simplicity, demands the pottery be produced through labor-intensive technology and from natural resources and techniques. Adherence to consumer taste and demand constitutes a conflict for the potters as they are interested in making and selling as much pottery as possible. They aim to increase their production efficiently without jeopardizing their distinctive styles and the "constant innovation" that characterizes the reputation the potters have developed over the past thirty years (Gilbert 1995:13). In this sense, meeting consumer and market demands to remain "traditional" places limits upon and even impedes potential innovations in process and technology that will increase production and facilitate ongoing creative innovation (Price 1989).

There is also the reality of competition which exists among the potters. Kilns, commercial paints, the use of molds, and the shift of segmenting tasks to specialists (e.g. forming blanks, sanding, burnishing), are all strategies deployed by potters to increase production so they can see a greater profit. If potters lessen the labor-intensive process by using kilns, for example, they can produce larger amounts of pottery and realize a greater profit more quickly. The use of kilns also lessens the potters' vulnerability to the elements of nature so they can fire pots despite inclement weather. These new practices raise the question of whether implementing these strategies will result in potters losing

their position in the marketplace. At the time of the research, these practices were viewed by consumers as denigrations in quality and a loss of authenticity. The following excerpt from an article entitled “Controversy over Use of Electric Kilns” from an internet newsletter expresses the sentiments underlying this ideology.

Several electric kilns have been set up in Mata Ortiz and arguments are running both ways. Some say that anything to increase production and lessen the risk of losing pots in firing should be encouraged. But what is the public’s enchantment with Mata Ortiz pottery? It is an essential part of our nostalgic love affair with process, which we’ve so largely lost touch with since everything’s available, ready-made, in stores. As it is, some drive 200 miles to see an open-air, dung firing. Who would drive any distance at all to see pots fired in an electric kiln? (MacCallum 2002).

Representative of many of the women I spoke with, Luz Elva Ramírez clearly recognized the market appeal and value of her pottery was due in large part to her buyers knowing it was produced by hand in the “way of ancient Indians.” In discussing the possibility of *Grupo Pearson* purchasing a kiln in the summer of 1997, Luz Elva stated firmly that she would continue to make her pots in the traditional way – “my own way of doing things” – firing with cow dung or wood because she knew her buyers prefer pottery that is made “completely natural” (Luz Elva Ramírez, interview, July 30, 1997).

Criteria of simplicity that aim to preserve the traditional and natural production processes can be detected within the standards by which pottery is judged at the regional *concursos*. In recent years, these standards were amended to reflect a negative evaluation of time-saving practices such as polishing with grease, shoe polish, or soap. The innovative use of commercial colors on the pottery was temporarily banned as well. Similar evaluations are reflected in the standards that must be met by Native American potters participating in Santa Fe’s Indian Market (Bernstein 1993). Amendments to the

concurso standards ignited a local contestation over whether the *concurso* officials had the right to tell Mata Ortiz potters how to make their pottery. Potters strongly voiced their objections to INAH and requested these standards be reversed.

The implications of these criteria, determined by patrons culturally outside the daily lives of potters in Mata Ortiz, must be considered. Again, I turn to Dean MacCannell whose words are worth noting in this case. He warns that the consumer's desire for authenticity has the potential of "causing a people to endlessly reproduce themselves for others (and) – effectively removes them from the stage of history" (MacCannell 1994:163). Potters need to be successful and they need to make money with their art, yet the contradiction persists between their needs and the market demand to produce "natural, traditional pottery."

There are ample images throughout this dissertation which illustrate how women potters maintain production techniques, forms, and design styles that connect their work with authentic Paquimé artifacts, contemporary Pueblo pottery, and Mata Ortiz pottery.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, both male and female potters strive to express their individual creativity while pushing the boundaries of the distinct, yet dynamic system of ethnoaesthetics as it is understood and shared among the potters in Mata Ortiz.

The defining features of a marketable pot which exemplifies the aesthetic of Mata Ortiz pottery have changed in dramatic ways over the past thirty years. As observed in other artistic communities, multiple notions of authenticity emerge from the constant interaction and negotiation of potters' artistic and economic intentions with buyers' expectations and demands, and fuel the dynamic nature of the aesthetic standards and

¹⁴⁷ Mata Ortiz pottery is also known as Casas Grandes pottery within the market (see Cahill 1991).

principles prevailing within this artistic community. It is from within these triangulated, homologous relationships among objects, producers, and consumers, that the “correspondence between goods production and taste production” constitutes various notions of what is distinctive and authentic (Bourdieu 1984:230-232). Authenticities have differential meanings for the artists who produce objects and the audiences who buy them, and these meanings are constantly shifting and changing (Field 2009; Graburn 1999:344; Price and Price 1999; Jules-Rosette 1984). Potters negotiate contradictions between their own personal aesthetics and market demand by testing the market with new designs and forms while still adhering to notions of what their consumers consider authentic.

Summary

In this chapter, I described women potters as agents actively locating and securing their place within local and global market systems. Many of these women have achieved economic success and moved toward growing empowerment because of their interactions with the market. Pottery making created an environment in which women and men can make choices which allow them to take advantage of new opportunities and change their lives in ways not available prior to the initiation of the pottery tradition.

Women’s substantial contributions to this mixed-gender aesthetic tradition result from their market interactions, understandings of market response to their work, and through the dynamic relationships between artists and their intended audiences (Jules-Rosette 1984:228-229; Salvador 1978:1). Judgments regarding criteria, competence, and value are expressed within these market interactions and potters pay close attention to them. Both male and female potters are equally attuned to market feedback regarding the

popularity of certain designs and forms, based on how well these sell (Nash 1993:10). Contributions by women and men are contingent upon having the aesthetic sensibility and technical competence necessary to an intimate understanding of the artistic and material sides of production (Salvador, personal communication, 2008). The development of aesthetic and technical competence in the process of growing empowerment within the marketplace has to do with having the finesse and confidence to exercise creative choices, which can become the distinguishing signs of one's own style.

In the chapter on ethnoaesthetics, I demonstrated how the potential for success and growing empowerment may increase through initiating stylistic changes, elaborating on particular motifs, and creating new designs and forms. In developing her cultural capital as a skilled and competent potter, a woman's expression of distinctive creativity can result in gaining recognition in the market and art worlds through signature style, thus increasing her economic capital through better prices and higher income. In many of the cases presented in the chapter on empowerment, we saw that gaining control over all or some important aspects of the productive process led to a woman's subsequent control over her economic resources and management of her market relationships. In this chapter on the market, I have provided a wide range of examples of how women effectively use strategies to build social capital through both short and long term connections with traders, collectors, museum professionals, and agency officials. Women use these connections to expand their marketing networks, encourage return clientele, and access opportunities for self-representation in exhibition, demonstration, and teaching venues. I discussed how these connections represent social capital that is potentially instrumental in accessing both economic capital through their market success, and symbolic capital

through recognition and prestige within the market and art worlds. In deploying their strategies, women depend on these relationships; however, this dependence does not negate their capacity for agency. This was illustrated in the cases of women who stood firm in their asking prices, resisted control by traders, or protected their interests in their dealings with outside intermediaries, as with the women's micro-enterprise group.

By focusing on growing empowerment as a process I have shown that women are changing their social position within the community as income earners, while changing and advancing the economic status of their families through the sale of their pottery on the international art market. By expanding my analytical approach to bring together women's aesthetic contributions with their social and economic contributions, I demonstrated how aesthetics and economics interact to give women social recognition and economic resources, often empowering them within their households and community.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Mata Ortíz pottery is one of the most important expressions of cultural production to appear in Mexico in the second half of the 20th century. Although there are numerous scholarly and popular texts documenting this artistic tradition, few researchers have given particular attention to the significant aesthetic and productive contributions of women. This dynamic art form has involved women as well as men since its initial stages over thirty five years ago. In this dissertation, I have presented three central arguments. First, I argue that women are consistently making substantial contributions to the ongoing development of the local artistic criteria of excellence within this mixed-gender aesthetic tradition. Second, through learning and controlling the major aspects of pottery production and subsequent income from pottery sales, women are changing their social position within the community and the economic position of their families. Third, women are actively responding to market forces and expanding their position within the market in order to achieve economic success.

My examination of women's aesthetic contributions, in conjunction with the ways in which they exercise agency to gain control over their productive and economic resources, is an innovative approach. Its advantage is in providing a view to how women are able to mitigate their marginalization and subordination through their intentional and purposeful agency (Gunewardena and Kingsolver 2007:11), within the structural constraints of both the local patriarchal system and the local and global art and market worlds.

The first body of literature is art and anthropology, specifically pertaining to ethnoaesthetics and women as artists. Because my use of ethnoaesthetic elicitation began with the artists' perspective on their motivation, artistic criteria, and judgments, it provided a window to their agency. Through women's own words, I realized how their intentional and purposeful actions were steps toward growing empowerment. The second is the feminist scholarship on women and work in Latin America (and elsewhere). Its emphasis on women gaining control over productive and economic resources offers promise in understanding how women's productive labor in home-based commodity production has the potential to transform their power in the household and community. The third is the literature addressing artists securing their place in local and transcultural market systems and empowering themselves through their active agency. Bringing together aesthetics, production, and the market in one study allowed me to construct a framework in which I build upon and advance these bodies of literature by demonstrating how women as active agents have been able to translate competence and income derived from their artistic work, and their control over productive resources, into personal and economic empowerment within this dynamic mixed-gender artistic tradition.

Initially, women learned pottery making because of their connections to Juan Quezada, the originator of the artistic tradition. In exploring his role in reviving Paquimé pottery, we saw the instrumental roles that Juan Quezada's sisters Lydia and Consolación, as well as Taurina Baca Tena and other family friends had, as his initial female students. Together with Juan's brothers, Nicolás and Reynaldo, these women were at the center of the first generation of potters working between the mid-1970s through the early 1980s. All three were highly visible in the extensive Quezada family

exhibitions, which brought unprecedented attention to the village. They were crucial to the development of the pottery industry and in establishing new avenues of economic opportunity for Mata Ortiz women. Through comparison of photographic images documenting the early development of Juan Quezada's style with early images of his first female students' pottery, we were able to see how major shifts in Juan's aesthetic expression are reflected in their work. Juan's first students expanded his initial design principles to generate new aesthetic features and develop their distinctive styles. My emphasis on these women sets the stage for women potters who came later.

I introduced these women, who began making pottery in the 1980s, through portraits in chapters two, four, five, and six in order to emphasize the diversity of women's experiences and the varying degrees of success they attained during each of the last three decades. As Juan's immediate family and friends taught others, a burgeoning phase of expansion resulted in a second generation of potters by the mid-1980s. Women were well represented among these new potters and increasingly took active roles in production and marketing. In some cases, women influenced their husbands to shift some of their labor from agriculture, ranching, or wage labor to pottery making. Working either as individual artists or in collaboration with their husbands or family members, many women distinguished themselves within a highly competitive market dominated by male potters, traders, and collectors.

Together with numerous male potters, they infused new levels of individual expression into the emerging art form, dramatically expanding the creative boundaries of the community's aesthetic system. Still, in many cases, their contributions have not been recognized as being on a par with the men by traders, gallery personnel, museum

professionals, and previous researchers. I extended my analysis to images of work by women in the second and third generations within a framework of five key aesthetic design features: *movimiento*, (or movement), naturalism, complexity, filled space, and surface treatment. By examining particular pieces of their work within this framework, it becomes clear how these women's contributions have changed the direction of the community's aesthetic system. By focusing on the aesthetic development of individual women, specific stories emerged of how becoming skillful and competent built the artist's confidence as she developed her art.

I discussed the work of forty women in this study. They include first-generation potter Lydia Quezada, exemplifying women who have achieved international fame through their technical excellence, and her niece Dora Isela González Quezada, who is known for her consistent production of beautiful incised pottery. Through her experimentation with technique and design, Lydia quickly surpassed her male and female peers, with the exception of her brother Juan. Her elegant mastery of the features of *movimiento* and minimal complexity ensure Lydia's prominent status and continuing influence upon the aesthetic system of the community.

Among second generation potters, women's contributions to the artistic tradition predominately came from working in collaboration with their husbands and family members.¹⁴⁸ Socorro Sandoval de Silveira taught herself to make pottery in the early 1980s and later taught her husband. She specialized in the use of slips and textured surface treatments. Graciela Martínez de Gallegos' interpretation of the *cuadritos* design

¹⁴⁸ Twenty-one of the forty women interviewed for this research project entered pottery making between 1981 and 1990 and of these, sixteen entered between 1985 and 1990. In eleven of these cases, it was the women who initially began to make pottery on their own.

influenced many of her neighbors. Angela López de Bañuelos, Olga Quezada de Ledezma, and Martha Ponce de Rodríguez first learned together in the late 1980s. While these women began independently, all went on to develop distinctive family styles with their husbands. Miriam Gallegos Martínez, Leticia Rodríguez Mora, Trini Silveira Sandoval, and Laura Bugarini Cota are among the single daughters who collaborated with family members in pottery making households. These young women attained prestige through their originality of designs and technically well-executed pottery. For example, Laura's unique handling of concentric bands of intricate, linear designs led to her meteoric rise and by the age of 16, she was accompanying Juan Quezada and his family to the United States.

A third generation¹⁴⁹ emerged in the mid-to-late 1990s, representing a much broader range of potters, as young as 12 year old Aide González Betancourt and also Doña María de Jesus "Chu" Celado, who began making pottery at the age of 82 in 1994. Others established themselves in the market by creating new forms. Blanca Quezada's small pots with turtle effigy lids are one example of this kind of artful ingenuity. Rosario Veloz Casas established her market viability by incorporating new colors into her family's painting style (Figure 7.1)

¹⁴⁹ Here, I use third generation to refer to women who began making pottery in the mid-to-late 1990s. Third generation is also used in the literature to designate potters who are the grandchildren of first generation potters.



Figure 7.1 Rosario Veloz Casas, 2008

I examined twelve cases, three in each of four categories of production strategies. These include working as 1) independent artists; 2) couples who co-produce two styles with separate signatures; 3) couples who co-produce one style with one signature and; 4) women who co-produce with a family member other than their partner. These did not predict or determine any particular trend. I used these as heuristic devices to describe and differentiate the variability among the forty women interviewed. I emphasize these categories are not static or unchanging and some women transitioned from one category to another during the research period.

I used four criteria as indices to assess a woman's possibilities for growing empowerment. These are: 1) learning the skill to make and paint pottery; 2) developing a distinct signature style and attaining recognition within the market and art worlds; 3) gaining control over all or some important aspects of the productive process; and 4)

control over marketing one's pottery and maintaining control over the resulting income. These criteria address both the aesthetic and material aspects of pottery production. Based upon the integral relationship between skill and aesthetic sensibility, I argue these criteria are appropriate measures of growing empowerment since being able to do something well is intimately tied to both competence and confidence (Salvador, personal communication, 2008). The usefulness of these criteria is equally based on my argument that control over production processes and resources have the potential to empower in profound ways.

I found that women met these criteria in varying degrees according to their skill and competence, the production strategy utilized, and agency exercised. In the analysis of the data, it became obvious that the empowering effects of participation in pottery are contingent upon each woman's personal circumstances. In identifying reasons why some women are more empowered through their artistic work than others, the criterion measuring whether a woman has gained control over all or some important aspects of the production process proved to be a consistent indicator of growing empowerment. Likewise, the portraits demonstrated that a woman may be a successful and recognized potter, but if she does not have control over the money she is earning, she is unlikely to be empowered by her work. As outcomes are dependent upon varying circumstances in women's lives (such as overt patriarchy in the home or not earning adequate income), there are some women who are empowered by their artistic work while others are not.

I found that the high degree to which all six independent producers met the four criteria allowed them opportunities to realize the most potential for empowerment through their artistic work. Lydia Quezada Celado, Consolación Quezada Celado, and

Taurina Baca Tena clearly benefited from the expertise of Juan's instruction. The other three women in this category also learned from experienced and famous potters. While they differ in the levels of recognition, all six women established signature styles, mastered the entire production process soon after they began making pottery, and have maintained control over their income. Taurina Baca Tena, Consolación Quezada Celado, and Dora Isela González Quezada have provided for their families as single heads of households, by means of their pottery making.

The largest numbers of women who approach independent production are in the category of two style co-production, (i.e. those who collaborate with their husbands or partners to co-produce two distinct styles of pottery with two separate signatures). Within these couples, all twelve women are producing, painting, and signing their own style of pottery. In four of these couples, the man is considered the principal artist because he is painting and signing the pottery co-produced by the couple. The woman not only collaborates on the co-produced pottery, she is also independently forming and painting her own style of pottery which she signs. Within these four couples, Graciela Martínez, Nena López, and Blanca Almeida are equally empowered by their artistic work as women who produce as independent artists. The fourth woman's empowerment was diminished by the fact that her husband often signed the pots that she formed and painted. Though she was capable of the full production process and handled much of the marketing, this woman did not have control over the pottery she was producing.

Within the remaining eight couples who work collaboratively, there are two styles of pottery produced and both the woman and man are recognized as principal potters, making and signing their own style of pottery. Six of these women met the four criteria

and approach independent production. While two of these women, Socorro Sandoval and Gloria Hernández, successfully taught themselves to make pottery, they were neutral in regard to the learning criteria. Both women began as independent producers and after their husbands joined them, transitioned into co-production of two styles. Four more women in this category met the criteria of signature style, recognition, and control over the production process and income and were empowered by their artistic work: Lupe Soto, Lucía Mora, Olivia Mora, and Blanca Quezada. Two of the eight women in this category did not have complete control over the production process and were unable to form the pots they painted. Though one met three of the four criteria, the other woman eventually met only one criterion. When her husband left for wage labor, she became increasingly less empowered by her artistic work.

Among the ten women who are co-producing one style of pottery, five work in collaboration with their husbands to produce pottery the woman signs. Like the women in the two style category, Olga Quezada, Lucía Mora, and Ana Trillo were capable of the entire production process, had control over their production and marketing, and had equal input regarding decisions over the income they pooled. They also met the four criteria.

The husband paints and signs the co-produced pottery in the other five couples. In contrast to the women who sign their pottery, Gaby Almeida, Angela López, and Elvira Antillón demonstrate that it is possible for women to be empowered through their artistic work, even when they are co-producing with their husbands and he is signing the pottery. All three women had control over their production and were equally involved in exhibition, demonstration, and teaching workshops with their husbands. Because these couples represent themselves as a partnership within the market and art worlds, the

woman's role as an essential partner in the production of the pottery is clear to their audience and this recognition is empowering. I consider these three women to be as equally empowered by their artistic work as the women who are producing and signing their own styles of pottery in the other two categories. Their explicit collaboration in production, pooling of income, and equal participation in economic decisions has resulted in equitable partnerships with their husbands.

Exhibition and demonstration provide critical opportunities for the non-signing partners to demonstrate their importance within the collaborative context of production. Couples who have opportunities to meet their audiences have distinct advantages over those who do not since both can become equally well known to their buying public and develop their named recognition as a partnership.

In two of the co-producing partnerships in which the man is signing and is recognized as the primary potter, the women's labor is hidden in the production process and the level of their empowerment is more difficult to assess. In one case, despite the strength of her learning history, competence, control over various aspects of production, and equal control over income, this woman lacked recognition within the market. Her signature was not on the pottery and the couple had no exposure through exhibition and demonstration opportunities.

The least empowered among the one style co-producers was a young woman who during the period of research transitioned from single daughter, to young wife, to divorced single mother. With these changes in her status, she moved from the category of family collaborative production in her natal household to the co-producing one style category with her husband, then back to the family collaborative category once she

returned to her parent's home. She was least able to benefit from her pottery making, largely because of her subordinate status as a young wife whose husband signed the co-produced pots.

The final category of women who co-produce with family members represents the greatest variability in how collaborations are organized. The diversity within this category has to do with both the increased numbers and the diverse range of people entering pottery making in the 1990s; thus we begin to see more variations within the production strategies. The dominant strategy in the 1970s was family-based, particularly among the Quezada and Ortíz families. The 1980s were characterized by an increased trend for couples to begin working together in co-production (Gilbert 2000b). While couples' collaboration continued to be common through the 1990s, we began to see new variations on this strategy, as well as increased family collaboration.

There are a total of twelve women in this category: eight single daughters who collaborate with family members and four mothers who collaborate with their children. Some of these women are principal potters while others assist, but all rely upon other household members in varying degrees for help in producing pottery. This category has the largest number (eight) of least empowered women, including four single daughters and four mothers. Conversely, the other four single daughters were among the most empowered of the women interviewed. The greatest contrast is between the women who co-produce with their children, siblings, and other family members, and those who are independent producers.

It is noteworthy that among the single daughters, Leticia Rodríguez, Miriam Gallegos, and Trini Silveira relied the least on other family members in their production

and maintained the greatest control over their pottery income. These three single daughters were empowered by their artistic work as they met the four criteria, and bordered on the independent producer category. Their experiences are consistent with the integrationist position (see Tiano 1987) that women benefit from their participation in productive work and increase their economic and social well-being when they control the income derived from their work (Blumberg 1995a:3).

Laura Bugarini Cota had attained the greatest recognition among the single daughters as an individual artist through her distinct signature style. Her learning experience had been empowering, and though she was not capable of the entire production process, she did excel at the important task of painting. She did not, however, have control over the income derived from her pottery. Like the women in the category of co-production of one style, Laura's collaboration with family members illustrates the contingency of interaction among the criteria in facilitating growing empowerment. Until she established her autonomy as an adult, the combined effects of her personal circumstances diminished the empowering effects of the criteria she had met.

The single daughters represent the women within the sample who were most likely to be transitioning from one strategy of production to another. In addition to the four young women previously discussed, there are four more single daughters who had just begun making pottery. These young women turned their earnings over to their parents and were among the least empowered in this category. Their situations are consistent with Bennholdt-Thomsen's observation that when a woman's productive labor is in response to a household strategy to maximize income, the income women earn may

be regulated according to patriarchal household norms (Tiano 1994:53; Bennholdt-Thomsen 1988:161).

The situation of mothers who collaborate with their children because they do not have complete control over certain aspects of production yielded the most instructive (and perhaps cautionary) data within this category. Both Velia Mora and Lupe Cota experienced a decline in production when their children left home to work elsewhere or to establish their own households. Once their children's labor support was withdrawn, their inability to produce pottery by themselves adversely impacted their potential for empowerment.

Whether a woman is empowered or not does not depend upon which category she is in. As explained earlier, these are heuristic categories and the production strategies do not determine or predict any particular trend. We see instead that growing empowerment is contingent upon a woman's capability to meet the various criteria, and these can be crosscut by her personal circumstances and relationships. By looking at how the four criteria intersect and interact within the various productive strategies utilized by individual women, it is clear that the process of growing empowerment does not necessarily move all women potters toward becoming independent producers. Each woman's particular circumstances are impacted by factors such as age and generation, inexperience, and levels of skill acquisition. The varied experiences of women in the collaborative categories demonstrated that women can be empowered through their artistic work, even when they co-produce with either their husbands or other family members.

The most significant finding emerging from my analysis of women's home-based work in Mata Ortiz is that artistic work can indeed be empowering. Through elicitation of the women potters' perspectives on their artistic work, this ethnographic study has examined the circumstances conducive to women benefiting from the income they earn in the informal economy, as home-based independent commodity producers for a global ethnic art market. Certain individual cases indicate not all women benefit from their artistic work, and demonstrate the ways production for a global market can exploit or otherwise take advantage of pre-existing gendered inequalities (Tiano 1994; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2002). While some women gained recognition, found new markets for their art, and increased their incomes (see Grimes and Milgram 2000), others produced in response to patriarchal demands to maximize household income and lacked control over the income derived from their labor (Tiano 1994:53; Bennholdt-Thomsen 1988).

By bringing together literature on women and work and women as artists, this dissertation adds to and advances both bodies of scholarly work through the processual analysis of women's aesthetic and productive contributions over time. Whereas much of the literature on women as artists has focused on traditions in which women are the dominant producers, (Salvador 1976, 1997; Price 2003; Babcock 1997, 1993) this study has examined a mixed-gender artistic tradition. Previous studies have concluded that women are subordinate to men in terms of defining what is aesthetically beautiful, are often marginalized from control over production and resources (Field 1999; Lackey 1982), and are rarely credited with innovative contributions (Chibnik 2003; Duncan 1998).

My findings are consistent with theorists who address women's productive work and emphasize the importance of viewing women as agents and "active strategists" who realize goals through their purposeful actions (Lamphere 1987:29). Through numerous portraits of individual women, I demonstrate how within the structural constraints of a system of gender relations that subordinate women to men, these women are exercising artistic choices and judgments, and taking purposeful actions when they create signature styles and techniques, gain control over their production and negotiate their interactions within the market. While these structural constraints limit women's options, I concur with Tiano that these constraints "do not entirely determine them" (Tiano 1994:221). When the "situated knowledges and specific actions of men and women" are viewed within the "historically contingent set of processes," we are able to recognize how their agency can mitigate their marginalization and subordination and result in "specific moments, or outcomes of globalization" (Anglin and Lamphere 2007:279).

While I rarely heard mention of feminist discourse or ideology, there is evidence that women and men are experiencing subtle transformations of local gender relations. In speaking of how pottery making has impacted her life, one woman told me:

Yes, my life has changed a lot! The thing that my work has changed the most is the way I decide things. We live better now, because in the past the men did nothing more than give orders. They did not allow the opinions of the wife or the children. Now, we are able to have an opinion and to decide as well.

This woman's words indicate her enhanced power in decision-making and an increasing awareness that pottery making had opened the possibility of transforming domestic patriarchy and the traditional model of the Mexican family.

By developing their own distinctive styles, certain women are actively gaining recognition, better prices, and higher incomes within local and global market systems. At the same time, while responding to powerful market demand, they are contributing in complex ways to the development of the artistic tradition by maintaining their creative integrity through individual expression. My analysis links the process of growing empowerment within the market to the development of aesthetic sensibility, finesse, and technical competence necessary to an intimate understanding of the aesthetic and material aspects of production.

With the growing popularity of Mata Ortíz pottery, transnational networks of cultural production and consumption have intensified, blurring the boundaries of local and global. As a result, the potters are in direct contact with their audience, either in their community or in the international marketplace. This audience has steadily expanded to include artists, journalists, photographers, government representatives, anthropologists, tour guides, and tourists. Potters, male and female, exercise agency in the “cultural work” they accomplish through their interactions to build social capital through both short and long term connections with art intermediaries (Wherry 2008:9).

I discussed specific examples to make clear how women effectively use these connections to expand their marketing networks, encourage return clientele, and access opportunities for self-representation in exhibition, demonstration, and teaching venues. These connections represent social capital that is potentially instrumental in accessing both economic capital resulting from their market success, and symbolic capital accrued through recognition and prestige within the market and art worlds. In deploying their

strategies, women depend on these relationships; however, this dependence does not negate their capacity for agency.

As I have previously pointed out, it is rarely possible to document the emergence of a dynamic living tradition and art form and its aesthetic system as is possible in the case of Mata Ortíz. My research and analysis builds upon the existing scholarship documenting the developmental history of the Mata Ortíz pottery tradition (Gilbert 2004, 2000, 1999, 1995; Turok 2004; Bartra 2003; Estes 2003; MacCallum and Johnson 2001; Parks and MacCallum 1999; MacCallum 1994, 1979; Parks 1993; Williams 1991; Cahill 1991). I am fully conscious of the role this dissertation may assume within the market and art worlds, though that is not its intended primary destination. This study of the aesthetic and productive contributions made by women potters through their artistic work in this mixed-gender artistic community will add to and advance this literature.

This dissertation provides a particular view of the lives of these women potters during the years of 1998-1999. The designation of a particular production strategy reflects the pattern utilized by the woman at the time of her interview. Unless otherwise noted, I gave attributes such as age, marital status, artistic skill, peer recognition, and market success as these applied during those years. Undoubtedly, the circumstances and personal situations of these women have since changed. Likewise, the passage of time and the fluidity of women's life stages have brought changes in their relationships within their families and their status. Some have married while others have divorced. Young single daughters who had just begun in pottery in 1998 are now successful independent producers. Some have shifted their production emphasis while others are not making

pottery any longer, causing some to advance while others recede in the process of growing empowerment.

Epilogue

In the years since I left Mata Ortíz, I have had few opportunities to make trips back to the village. I have stayed in contact through letters and messages, often delivered by family members who live on the U.S. side of the border. Tito Carrillo, a commercial trader from Tucson and a good friend, has been kind enough to relay messages to friends in the village. Now that phone service is available in Mata Ortíz, I am able to stay in touch more easily. The number of potters has grown dramatically in the village as well as in surrounding communities, and “the quality of this pottery continues to rise” (MacCallum 2008). I am always interested in announcements for exhibits and gallery demonstrations. I look forward to these opportunities to renew friendships, catch up on family news and of course, to see their latest creations.

I have given a few indications of the kinds of changes that have occurred between my research period and the present throughout the text. I conclude with a fuller description of these changes in the pages that follow. Lydia Quezada Celado maintains a strong presence in the art and market worlds and continues to travel widely for exhibitions and demonstrations (Figure 7.2). She is often accompanied by her husband Rito and her grown children, Paula and Moroni, who are potters in their own right. Lydia’s older sister Consolación continues to make her *estrellita* blackware, though she has reduced her production.



Figure 7.2 Lydia Quezada Celado, 2003.
Parks Collection. Photography by Walter P. Parks.

The increasing number of potters has meant that even more women are now involved in the market and some like Gaby Almeida are exploring new opportunities. Gaby has established herself as a commercial buyer for galleries in Houston, Texas and Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico. She and her husband César have also opened a gallery at their home in Viejo Casas Grandes. More recently, Gaby has channeled her enjoyment of cooking into a new enterprise preparing and selling her own *Salsa Mexicana* three days a week in supermarkets in the Nuevo Casas Grandes area.

Since the late 1990s, Gaby has expanded her mastery of various techniques, combining these to create new signature styles. The black pot in Figure 7.3 is formed with white clay and then the surface is polished in a specialized process to create a black

layer. After the pot is fired, she engraves the hummingbird designs to reveal the white clay beneath the applied surface.



Figure 7.3 Gaby Almeida Gallegos de Domínguez, 2008.

Gaby and César continue to balance an active schedule of exhibition, demonstration, and instruction through workshops both in Mexico and the United States. Reflecting upon what they have gained from their twenty five years in ceramics, César told me:

We have many friends, thank God. We have had a really beautiful experience in the market. The most beautiful thing is that we have come to know many places, many people, and we have been able to give our sons college educations. This is what we value the most (personal communication June 7, 2009).

Trini Silveira Sandoval is now married, living with her husband and 2 ½ year old daughter, Natalia, in San Diego, California. Trini is still making pottery with raw materials from Mata Ortíz, but now uses an electric kiln to fire her pottery. Trini

maintains market relationships she established prior to moving to California and also markets her pottery through her family in the village. Her older sister Lila became a student of Juan Quezada after I left the village and is now producing exquisite, technically precise work characteristic of the Quezada family style. Lila's stylistic development represents one of the most stunning transformations represented among the women I met in the 1990s (see Figure 7.4). Their mother Socorro Sandoval has shifted her production from finished pots to forming unfired, unpainted blank pottery to sell to other potters.



Figure 7.4 Lila Silveira Sandoval de Carrillo, 2007.
Personal collection of Richard and Joan O'Connor.
Photography by Richard O'Connor.

Laura Bugarini Cota's career has soared (see Figure 7.5). Co-producing in the two-style category, she and her husband Héctor Gallegos Jr. collaborate on specialized pieces. Laura described how they combine their unique styles in exacting intricate patterns with the extra flourish and elegance that is typical of both the Gallegos Martínez and Bugarini Cota families. Laura emphasized that se and Héctor both sign the “*combinaciones*” they make together, and both potters continue to work independently in their individual styles. Laura took the *Premio de Excelencia* (prize for excellence) for the piece she entered in the 2008 concurso.

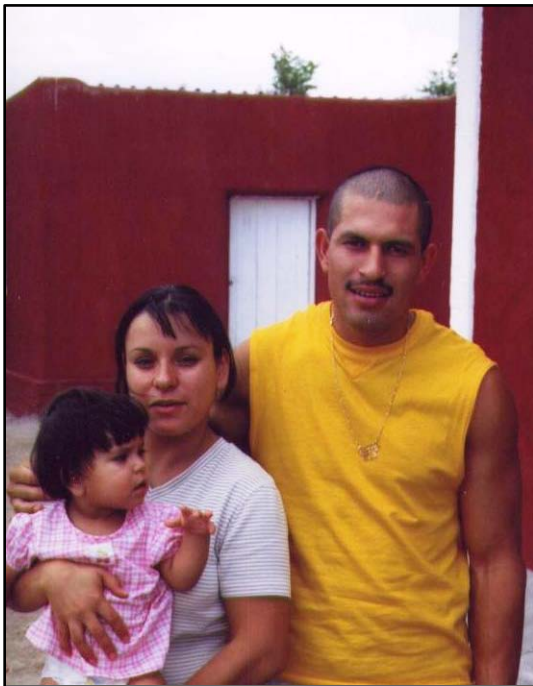


Figure 7.5 Laura Bugarini Cota, Héctor Gallegos Martínez, and Paula Gallegos Bugarini 2006.

On different occasions over the past few years, Laura has convinced her mother Lupe Cota to resume their collaboration. They traveled to Pomona, California to

demonstrate their art at the American Museum of Ceramic Art in June of 2008.¹⁵⁰ They also traveled to Tucson, Arizona for previous engagements. Lupe demonstrates the techniques involved in forming the pottery and Laura demonstrates her painting skills. Lupe is also responsible for firing the pottery.

Laura and Héctor have exhibited and demonstrated extensively throughout the United States during their seven years together. A major exhibition of Mata Ortiz pottery was held to celebrate the reopening of the *Museo Nacional de Culturas Populares*¹⁵¹ in Mexico City in May of 2008. The exhibition featured contemporary Mata Ortiz pottery displayed with prehistoric examples from Paquimé. Together with Juan Quezada, his wife Guillermina, their sons Noe and Alvaro, and Diego Valles Trevizo, Laura and Héctor were among the potters invited to demonstrate and represent the community.

Laura's sisters, Luz Angelica López Cota and Karla López Cota, as well as Aide González Betancourt and Rosario Veloz Casas, were all novice potters in 1999. The four women are now producing beautiful, high quality pieces. The work of these young women is well represented in major selling venues throughout the Southwest and on websites offering Mata Ortiz pottery. As of 2009 their pottery was consistently priced above \$300 in galleries in the southwest United States. Aide González demonstrates her artistry on a regular basis in Jorge Quintana's store in Barrio Centro (Walter Parks, personal communication, April 28, 2009).

The completion of the paved road in 2004 has had a tremendous impact on the community. In particular, it has accelerated the touristification of the village. For the

¹⁵⁰ The exhibit "Pueblo Clay" is described at AMOCA's website www.ceramicmuseum.org/event/archives, accessed June 24, 2009).

¹⁵¹ National Museum of Popular Cultures

first time, commercial-sized tour buses are able to enter the village. When I left in 1999, *Grupo Pearson's* newly opened gallery stayed busy with occasional groups of tourists stopping by. Amelia Martínez told me that the *Centro de Acopio* is rarely open these days as the membership has dwindled from the original 52 women to less than 10 during the interim years. When I returned in 2006 to be a godmother for Adilene Marin López's kindergarten graduation, I saw firsthand that most of the tourist traffic had concentrated in Barrio Centro near Juan Quezada's home, where a number of newer galleries had opened. As mentioned in chapter one, the newest marketing strategy group, *Artesanos Unidos de Mata Ortiz*, had set up a gallery in the renovated historic railroad station located directly across from Juan Quezada's and Guillermina Olivas' home.

Recently, I spoke with Natividad "Nati" Ortega, the group's president, to learn more about how this group had formed (Natividad Ortega, personal communication March 30, 2009). He explained that the idea developed entirely among its members, independent of any outside assistance. Nati stressed that unlike the women's micro-enterprise groups, membership is not limited by gender nor is it individual, but extends to everyone in a member household. The group is not a cooperative. *Socios* (members) pay a percentage of their sales (usually 10%) into the group treasury, which is used for operating expenses. The primary benefit of membership is having access to the tour buses full of buyers in what is now the prime selling location in the village. At the present time, there are 26 *socios* or members, including well known pottery couples like Macario Ortiz and Nena López, and Roberto Bañuelos and Angela López.

When I last returned to my old neighborhood, El Porvenir, I saw many new houses had been built, most constructed of cinder block. My friend Tito Carrillo

explained that this newest extension of the neighborhood resulted from a program whereby the government made small parcels available for about \$100.¹⁵² Most had been purchased by young couples and as Tito put it, “the third generation is building their houses out here.” Directly west of El Porvenir, the village has expanded out over the low hills. The *ejido* located their new rodeo arena and meeting house in this same area. A new community hall for events and dances, *Salon de Actos*, is located nearby. In addition to these developments, a number of new modern stores have opened throughout the village, particularly in Barrio Centro, and many of these now sell liquor which had been prohibited in the past.

In chapter three, I discussed the influx of Americans now living in the village. This wave of newcomers in the last decade or so bears some distinct and important similarities to the influx of Anglo artists to Taos, New Mexico in the early years of the 20th century. In her analysis of the process of site commodification, Sylvia Rodriguez described how the “usual indices of underdevelopment” and the “artistic mystification” of people and place combined to create an aura of authenticity (Rodriguez 1994:144-146, 154). Among the striking similarities is the number of artists (e.g. potters, jewelers, photographers) attracted to Mata Ortiz, hinting at the nascent formation of another art colony. The socioeconomic implications of this new phase for the village constitute an important focus for future research. In particular, I am interested in how the presence of newcomers will impact the local community in terms of limited natural resources, and socioeconomic stratification among residents (Rodriguez 1990:542).

¹⁵² More recently, Debi Flanigan described a new housing program initiated in 2009 in which a small house with a bedroom, kitchen and bath can be purchased for an investment of about \$300 (personal communication June 24, 2009).

In support of the community's self-determination, a group of American traders and collectors established The Mata Ortíz Foundation in 2001 as a non-profit entity that can make tax-exempt contributions outside the United States. The foundation was formed with the express intention to fund only projects that originated from within the community. Local residents formed *Unidos por Mata Ortíz*, a non-profit organization, to assume the role of determining possible projects and to work collaboratively with the American group. The local association has the responsibility to identify and coordinate other funding sources in the region with the donations from the United States (Parks 2001). Thus far, collaborative efforts of these two associations have resulted in classroom additions to the secondary school, a new computer lab complete with fifteen new computers, and a community library where additional computers are available. The community library provides students in the village a place to study and offers opportunities for residents throughout the village to become computer literate (Walter Parks, personal communication, April 28, 2009). The expansion of telephone lines to the village in 2002 and the popularity of cellular telephones over the past decade greatly enhanced the ability to conduct business from any location, for those who can afford them. Undoubtedly, those potters with access to both telephones and computers will have a decided advantage in the marketplace.

Another positive trend is an increase in the number of children of first and second generation potters who are pursuing secondary education or college degrees. In the 1990s, I was familiar with four individuals who had graduated from college: the pharmacist Don José Delores Tena Duran, his wife Amelia Martínez Flores, César Domínguez, and Manuel "Profe" Mora. The last three all returned to teach in the village.

I was told that other residents who had degrees had moved to urban centers to earn a living. Particularly interesting among this new generation earning college degrees are those who are returning to become potters. In Nuevo Casas Grandes, Lydia Quezada's daughter Paula is an example of a young woman who has returned to artisan work following her academic achievements.

Like Paula, there are others who are bringing new knowledge, experience, and expertise to their pottery making and are introducing new ideas and energy into the pottery tradition. Diego Valles Trevizo earned a degree in electro-mechanical engineering which led to a year's scholarship at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia. In the last few years, he developed his talents as a potter and has exhibited in venues as far away as Berlin, Germany. Locally, he had a one-man show at the museum in Viejo Casas Grandes – the first for any of the potters (MacCallum 2008).

In previous chapters, I described various “spin-off” enterprises, many of which involve segmented tasks (e.g. sanding pots, making blanks, and producing paints). The increased number of individually-owned kilns throughout the village has opened the way for entrepreneurial businesses to provide new services - firing pottery for others. In a recent conversation with Spencer McCallum regarding the current use of kilns, he remarked that “the furor has died down” (personal communication, April 10, 2009). He went on to say that while many downplay the fact that they are using a kiln, it is no longer a secret. Spencer also pointed out the use of kilns has increased production costs, by way of the additional cost of fuel or in paying to have pottery fired.

Another area of interest for future research would be to investigate the shifting meaning of a “true potter” as it had been defined in the past, particularly by Juan

Quezada. Considering that it has become increasingly common for prestigious potters, who once made their own pots to purchase these as blanks, the criterion of control over the production process appears to have undergone a similar shift in meaning and significance.

With the increased ability to accumulate capital and access to disposable income, most potters now own vehicles. In addition to enhancing the ability to travel, those who own vehicles have the option of marketing on their own. However, the majority continue to rely upon outside intermediaries. Locally, Mata Ortíz remains a vital market despite recent market fluctuations that both potters and traders attribute to the current global economic crisis.

Conclusion

Apart from the obvious importance of Juan Quezada's role in the development of the pottery tradition, there are two significant ways in which he contributed to shaping possibilities for women to be empowered through their artistic work. First, Juan did not discriminate among his family members, but included his sisters as well as other women. In doing so, he facilitated women's participation, and pottery making emerged as an option for earning income by both men and women. Second, from the time Juan began teaching others, individual creativity and recognition have been central principles within the prevailing aesthetic system. Many of the women introduced in this dissertation have distinguished themselves through their individual creative expression. Even within many of the examples of family collaborative production, as in the Silveira Sandoval household, there was often an explicit expectation that as individuals learn and increase

their skills, they would move toward the goal of producing individual styles that would be recognized as their distinct work, bearing their personal signature.

I found in many cases women potters in Mata Ortiz can indeed be independent artists and earn an income while working in the home and are not necessarily marginalized or disempowered, as has been described for many women involved in home-based work (Mies 1988; Benería and Roldán 1987; Wilkinsen-Weber 1999; Prügl 1996a). Possibilities exist for both men and women in Mata Ortiz to access skills and develop the competence needed to gain control over their production, as either independent producers or in cooperation with others. Moreover, the situation I have documented in Mata Ortiz is unique within the literature on women as artists. By expanding my analytic approach to join the literature on women's aesthetic work and women's empowerment through productive work, I have shown how women's artistic work is empowering in mixed-gender artistic communities.

APPENDIX A

NUMBERS OF WOMEN BY PRODUCTION AND CRITERIA

N = 40

	Learning and Apprenticeship	Recognition and Signature	Control of Process	Control over Marketing and Pottery Income
<u>Independent producers</u> (n = 6)	6 (100%)	6 (100%)	6 (100%)	6 (100%)
<u>Co-produced two styles</u> (n= 12)	10 (83.3%)	11 (91.6%)	9 (75%)	10 (83.3%)
<i>1 style produced with husband or partner and 1 style produced by woman potter</i> (n = 4)	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	3 (75%)	3 (75%)
<i>2 separate styles produced by the couple; each is recognized as a principal potter by their separate signatures</i> (n = 8) *2 are neutral as self taught	6 (75%) (2 n/a)	7 (88%)	6 (75%)	7 (88%)
<u>Co-produced one style</u> (n = 10)	10 (100%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	9 (90%)
<i>man signs</i> (n = 5)	5 (100%)	3 (60%)	4 (80%)	4 (80%)
<i>women Signs</i> (n = 5)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)
<u>Co-produced with family member</u> (n = 12)	11 (91.6%)	9 (75%)	7 (58.3%)	6 (50%)
<i>single daughters</i> (n = 8)	8 (100%)	5 (63%)	3 (38%)	3 (38%)
<i>mothers</i> (n = 4)	3 (75%)`	4 (100%)	4 (100%)	3 (75%)

x axis = criteria

y axis = production strategies

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