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**WOMEN AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION:
FIESTAS, FAMILIES, AND FOODWAYS IN SAN RAFAEL, NEW MEXICO**

By

Stephanie M. Sanchez

B.A., American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2004
M.A., Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 2007

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Anthropology**

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ABSTRACT

Historically, New Mexico scholars and folklorists have often omitted women's roles in Hispanic cultural production and heritage maintenance. However, women make significant contributions to the retention, transmission, and adaptation of traditional Hispanic practices. In this dissertation, I examine how particular Hispanic women, who I refer to as "center women" (Brodkin Sacks 1988), from a small village named San Rafael, New Mexico mobilize their families and other community members in order to successfully perform traditional New Mexican events such as the annual fiesta in honor of the local patron saint, *Las Posadas*, a Christmas time *novena*, and Good Friday commemorations. These events not only illustrate women's cultural competence and the work of kinship (di Leonardo 1987), they are also instances in which women demonstrate agency and innovation within traditional customs as they adapt heritage practices to attract participation from younger generations and disparate groups of family and community members.

Through communal and family cultural performances, I explore changes in Hispanic New Mexican cultural production, but also intergenerational changes in women's beliefs about how traditional practices relate to their lived experiences, contemporary heritage expression and preservation, and social belonging. I argue that the women with cultural competence and social capital must reproduce themselves within the community in order to continue traditional Hispanic practices and to maintain a communal character for their increasingly dissimilar village. Older and younger generations of women have qualitatively different experiences with village life, and these differences have precipitated changes in how the annual fiesta is carried out, the importance of New Mexican Catholicism within events, and even how traditional foods are prepared and consumed. I demonstrate how younger generations of San Rafael women are more likely to participate when customs are flexible, or pick and choose the practices in which they engage and to what extent.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Context

This is a study about the roles of women in the maintenance and continuation of Hispanic New Mexican cultural practices and traditions, such as feast days in honor of a community's patron saint, religious performances and devotions, and seasonal foods and foodways in San Rafael, a village located in west central New Mexico. Historically, New Mexican scholarship has focused on the continuation of traditions or traditional Hispanic lifeways.¹ This includes a disproportionate amount of attention to northern New Mexican land grant communities, the particular rituals and songs folklorists have traced to Spanish or Moorish cultures, and colonial arts such as *bultos* or *santos*, *retablos*, straw appliqué, and tinwork (Briggs 1980; Campa 1979; Chávez 1974; Espinosa 1990; Robb 1954; Steele 2005).² In these accounts, men are the central figures in cultural production, and so become the primary bodies through which scholars have typically portrayed New Mexican life and culture.³

¹ I use the term "lifeways" to describe the customs, practices and arts of a particular community of people.

² *Bultos* or *santos* are painted wooden sculptures depicting traditional Catholic iconography, particularly Christ, saints, Marian images, or angels. Similarly, *retablos* are paintings on wood depicting traditional Catholic iconography. The difference between the two is that *bultos* are three-dimensional, while *retablos* are generally on flat wooden surfaces.

³ Drawing from cultural production theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1993) and Paul Willis (1983), I use the term cultural production to describe the process of creating, consuming, and distributing cultural practices and knowledge and symbolic goods.

Less frequently examined have been the roles of women in the maintenance of New Mexican heritage practices and village life. Despite lack of representation of women within documented New Mexican cultural history, women's roles have garnered slightly more attention in recent scholarship. Historian Suzanne Forrest (1989) writes that New Mexican villagers had to adapt in order to survive economic shifts that had dramatic impacts upon village cohesion and family structure.

The key element in this highly successful strategy of cultural and economic survival was the performance of Hispanic women in building and maintaining kin and cultural networks throughout an area that included all of northern New Mexico, much of Colorado, and parts of Utah, Montana, and Wyoming. The women kept village culture alive and well within this widespread 'regional community,' through patterns of visiting, ceremonial co-parenthood, and religious activities. At the same time, they preserved the integrity and the economic stability of the villagers by growing and processing food, and flexibility adopting whatever new gender roles were needed in their male depleted society" (1989:11).

These shifts included the growing influence of and dependence upon the wage economy, out-migration from village communities to urban centers across the southwest, and continued impact of mainstream American culture upon individuals and the communal environment. Hispanic women's work around maintaining kinship networks and heritage practices has not been the central focus of any New Mexican village text, and so the details of women's day-to-day tasks, conceptualizations of their cultural knowledge, and the nature of retention and transmission of forms of cultural production remained unexamined.⁴

Based upon participant observations of women in their homes and in public spaces, as well as intensive interviews, this study will emphasize older San Rafael women's experiences and cultural knowledge, and the adaptive strategies they employ in order to help

⁴ For the purposes of this dissertation, cultural knowledge refers to general Hispanic New Mexican and local San Rafael values, beliefs, and practices.

facilitate cultural transmission and retention among younger women who themselves are increasingly selective of what cultural practices they participate in, to what degree they participate, and how. I specifically focus on generations of women—a group of older women to whom I refer as “center women” (Brodin Sacks 1988) who are hubs of social organization, social capital, and cultural knowledge for family and community, and their daughters, granddaughters, or close younger female kinfolk, who are either being groomed to become center women, are only peripherally involved in communal and familiar cultural production, or who are entirely uninvolved.⁵

This is a particularly important time for this study because younger San Rafael generations are qualitatively different than their parents’ generations—whereas entire families would move away from the village for employment opportunities, it is now more common for younger family members to leave while older kinfolk remain as a touchstone in the community. There is more individuality and separateness within families, creating more extensive kinship networks across the southwestern region. Additionally, it was common among older generations that their families would combine wage work with subsistence agriculture in order to support the family network. In contemporary San Rafael, it is rare to find a family with a garden, cattle, or livestock. Within sixty years, families have become entirely absorbed in the wage economy.

Performance Framework

My dissertation will show that the shift from subsistence agriculture to the wage economy, which then precipitated other changes in social and cultural makeup, ultimately

⁵ Drawing from social capital theory, I loosely define social capital as a resource based upon social interactions, networks, and norms that facilitates reciprocity, but may also reinforce power structures.

leaves both people and traditions in precarious positions because there are questions as to who will continue traditions, how they will be continued, and in what manner knowledge and know-how of cultural production will be passed down. While traditional New Mexican Hispanic cultural production can include a range of crafts, performances and other expressive arts, it can more loosely be described as forms of culture making. In order to examine intergenerational forms of culture making, I focus this study on key performances in the San Rafael yearly cycle and in the lives of women and their families. These performances, and women's roles within their execution, emphasize the planning, organization, and mobilization of kinship networks, and local knowledge necessary for heritage practices. An examination through a performance framework allows me to see intergenerational changes and continuity—through performances of fiestas, folk dramas, and religious devotions, one not only sees changes in rituals, but also changes in actors' beliefs about the rituals, their society and community, and how the rituals relate to their contemporary village life.

Performance and Symbolic Action

I focus this study on cultural symbolic acts and events—practices, enactments, and foodways that engender ritualistic and performative elements. The study of ritual and performance has moved along a trajectory that has, in the past thirty years, begun to incorporate social processes into its analysis. While anthropologist Victor Turner defines ritual as "a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects...performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests" (1973:1100), I do not hold that there must be an element of the supernatural or religious in order to evaluate an act as "ritual." I believe rituals can be secular or religious, individually- or communally-based, and are ultimately,

social acts with intentional symbolic meaning and context. In this sense, rituals can include a religious procession or devotion, elements of a seasonal food event, or other communal practices in which actors symbolically negotiate social processes.

Anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport further defined ritual “as the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers” (1999:41). What is crucial in this definition of ritual is the inherent connection to performativity; it is only when ritual is enacted in performance that it is brought to life in the sense that when a ritual is then performed, it becomes imbued with situated context. Ritual in and of itself is invariable, but enacted ritual can be located within contemporary social processes, and allows for changes in the local socio-economic and cultural landscape that transforms the ritual performance event. In this way, ritual and performativity are reflexive of the participants themselves and reflective of transformations, and are essential elements in local historical and contemporary enactments.

By the 1980s and certainly the 1990s, scholars began to treat the enactment of ritual or performance as “a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content” (Bauman 1986:3). This definition of performance emphasizes not just content of the action, but individual and communal significance and interaction. This in turn permits evaluations of deep-rooted and “traditional” performances within current contexts and understanding. Folklorist Charles L. Briggs articulates this well, writing, “folkloric performances are not simply repetitions of time-worn traditions; they rather provide common ground between a shared textual tradition and a host of unique human encounters, thus

preserving the vitality and dynamism of the past as they endeavor to make sense of the present (1988:xv).

I believe that cultural performances are “cut from the same social cloth of everyday practice” (Flores 1995:7), and in them, one can recognize the intersection of cultural expressions and social processes. Folklorists Richard Bauman and Roger D. Abrahams noted the significance of these intersections, which “reveal the points of tension within and between groups and the inequities that arise in any stratified society” (1981:4). I deviate from this statement to say that further significance in the study of a group’s cultural and communal practices may reveal group tensions and inequality, but can also highlight the ways in which stratified groups work within, around, and in spite of these disruptions. More recent ethnographic studies of cultural traditions move away from static representations of people and events that focused almost entirely on the structure and content of performances and positions; these studies are effective tools to understand complex interconnections between cultural expression and social processes (Counihan 2010; Garza 2007; Horton 2002, 2010; Lamadrid 2003; Lucero 2002; Nájera-Ramírez 2002; Rodríguez 1996, 1998).

Contemporary Social Processes in Traditional Cultural Performances

The folk “traditions” and practices of Hispanics have been a constant focus for writers and scholars of the Mexican Southwest (see Briggs 1980; Bourke 1893; Campa 1979; Chávez 1974; Cole 1907; Edmonson 1957; Espinosa 1985; Henderson 1998; Jaramillo 1955; Lamadrid 2003; Lummis 1893; Rodríguez 1996; Steele 1976, 2005; Weigle 1976, 1987). The earliest southwestern folklore texts portrayed Hispanic “traditions” as backward or caught in cultural stagnation (Bourke 1893; Lummis 1893; Henderson 1998). Hispanic folklorists themselves often depicted traditions as cultural survivals, and so documented Spanish-

American or Mexican-American ritual behaviors because they were a fading lifestyle and culture.

Munro S. Edmonson, who studied San Rafael village in 1949, along with two other neighboring Hispanic villages, discussed specific elements of “Hispano” culture, the degree to which these elements were Americanized and his concluding “values system” to explain why certain cultural traditions and customs remained (1957:20-23; 53-61). He writes that the “Americanization of Mexicano life in its material aspects has been very thorough-going” (1957:21), with western cowboy style as the standard dress for men, and typical American ankle-length dresses for women. He even wrote, “mexicano handicraft products are far more likely to be found in Anglo than in Hispano homes” (1957:21). This final statement is striking for the way in which it shows that not only were the *Mexicanos* becoming Americanized, and how the Americans had even begun appropriating *Mexicano* folk arts. No longer were traditional folk arts viewed as religious participation; they were instead commodities.⁶ What Edmonson illustrates is that the adaptation to and influence of American mainstream culture has been a constant process for San Rafael residents, from their clothing to their folk arts, and as I will show, even their foods and cultural performances.

In this folkloristic discourse from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, elements of Hispanic lifestyle, such as traditional religious folk arts, are simply reified objects of material culture and commodification. Other sorts of ties between individual and art—religious devotion, family tradition, and cultural production—are erased from the local narrative. Furthermore, once “folk art” is characterized as solely material objects, individual

⁶ I use the word commodity to describe a marketable cultural product for either community status or economic advancement.

agency is omitted as well, leaving behind only a cultural performance, or a *retablo*, or a folk song, as though these “artifacts” are performed or (re)created without people.

The ways in which “traditions” are used in the lives of contemporary people has become a more recent area of focus for anthropologists and folklorists. Rather than viewing people as “traditional” and perhaps living in the past, contemporary studies reveal the dynamic nature of the social, economic, and historical processes involved in cultural expression. “Traditional” acts and events such as fiestas in honor of patron saints and Good Friday processions that villagers have performed for time immemorial are enacted within contemporary lives and influenced by individuals’ experiences, which in turn are mediated by the migration of people, shifts in the economy, and changes in social expectations and customs.

Beginning in the late 20th century, folklorists began treating Hispanic customs and practices as cultural expressions of social processes, thereby constantly changing practices. This new treatment of traditions not as static but as dynamic revealed change and continuity within communities, generations, and families, suddenly making traditions seem not so traditional after all. Context and innovation surrounding traditions became the trend within folklore studies.

Briggs (1980) examined the contemporary commodification of wood carving (*bultos* and *santos*) in Córdova, New Mexico, and demonstrated that customs must be examined within the context of local histories and settings, which emphasizes the ways in which social, economic, and specific historical forces intersect with “tradition.” Intersections of class, ethnicity, and the increased popularity of Spanish colonial arts all played out within the small Hispanic village of Córdova, as local woodcarvers negotiated religious devotion, family, and

cultural tourism. Briggs described the influence of Anglo patrons upon the “traditional” Spanish woodcarving writing that the Santa Fe art patrons “took it upon themselves...to inform the Hispanos that they had lost track of their own traditions and sought to teach them both the characteristics of Hispano art and the way in which it was to be adapted to the modern world” (1980:52). This included a concentration on designs rather than polychrome colors, and carvers produced fewer “traditional Hispano pieces as *relojeras*, or shelves for clocks, and clothes closets” and more “non-traditional pieces such as lazy susans, record racks, and much later, screen doors...” (Briggs 1980:52-53).

Other ethnographers have enriched Hispanic ritual literature through their focus on the transformative character of rituals and practices, as well as on the ever-changing social and cultural meanings to actors and audiences of such “traditions.” In her book *The Matachines Dance: Ritual and Interethnic Relations in the Upper Rio Grande Valley* (1996), Sylvia Rodríguez reveals the ways in which the traditional Matachines dance found in communities of northern New Mexico reflects contemporary land, water, and Indo-Hispano identity and relationship issues. While in one Pueblo community the dance expresses “the inhabitants’ self-identity as a people with two distinct yet inseparable religions,” in a neighboring Hispanic community, it is a “symbolic means of asserting ethnocommunal identity during times of heightened threat to the traditional land-water base” (Rodríguez 1996:88, 61). Each community has a unique understanding and shared cultural meaning of the dance based on their relations within the native American-Hispanic-Anglo milieu of northern New Mexico.

A recent treatment of the dynamic processes and individual meanings associated with “traditional” New Mexican fiestas comes from anthropologist Sarah B. Horton who, in her

dissertation on the Santa Fe Fiesta, discusses disparities of culture and religion, and even included more contemporary functions of fiestas. The mode by which contemporary people reaffirm their ties to community, family, and culture—participation in annual events of the symbolic community—emphasizes the “relationship of the present to the past” (Horton 2003:3). An example of a more contemporary function of a fiesta is return-migration or the coming-back of distant and non-participating family or community members. Horton noted that the Fiesta holds special significance “for one particular group of Hispanos—those who return annually for the event even though economic conditions have forced them to move elsewhere” (2003:229). And so these community members can become re-integrated with family and home through the fiesta revelry, which includes the Burning of Zozobra and the plaza entertainment. From this perspective, the Santa Fe Fiesta “serves as a form of ‘home-coming’ for them, allowing them to express their enduring ties to the region and to family in the area” (2003:229), more so than ties to faith and church.

Horton also highlights the complexity of variation and meaning among participants. For the “home-coming” fiesta goers and many “non-Hispano Santa Feans,” their relationship to the celebration represents an excuse “to party, particularly while reveling at the Burning of Zozobra, enjoying the entertainment on the Plaza, and watching parades” (Horton 2003:29). This contrasts with “devout Hispano Santa Feans” whose Fiesta experience is more religiously focused, and is comprised of Catholic masses and processions, the *Entrada* (the re-enactment of De Vargas’ reconquest of the city), and lastly, the entertainment at the Plaza (Horton 2003:29). Within the framework of the relationship of the present to the past, and vice versa, Horton offers a contemporary perspective on the relationship of “tradition” to present-day claims to race and territory as well as cultural adaptation to economic

constraints. In this sense, the “tradition” of the Fiesta is not static and reified, but is a dynamic process rooted in social contexts and experiences.

Another recent trend is to examine cultural performances as expressions of identity—specifically the complexity of New Mexican identity as it plays out structurally within the performance and for the actors and audiences.⁷ Acknowledging ruptures within identity and community, literary folklorist Enrique Lamadrid writes, “conflict has indeed preserved cultural differences, but it has also created a deep and complex mestizo tradition that serves as a fascinating register of cultural and historical relations” (2003:xiii). This *mestizo*, or Indo-Hispano identity “is vigorously enacted in ritual settings, not for the tourist gaze (for there are virtually no tourists at these celebrations), but rather to celebrate the historic survival of a community and its *querencia*, or deeply rooted sense of place” (2003:xiii). The Indo-Hispano ritual he examines is the folk drama “*Los Comanches*,” which commemorates the encounter between New Mexican “Spanish” culture and the Comanche culture of the southern Plains (2003:1). The significance of Hispanic people in small communities dressing in Plains costumes and re-enacting a battlefield scene between Comanche Indians and Spaniards lies in “the cultural processes of the contact zone,” which are hybrid and complex because “people

⁷ The complexity of Hispanic New Mexican identity is based in generations of inter-ethnic mixing between European Spanish colonizers, indigenous people of what is now Mexico and the U.S. southwest, and Anglo immigrants to the region. Scholars have long debated the reasons behind various New Mexican identities—the political influences including the bid for statehood and to glorify a Spanish past (Montgomery 2002; Nieto-Phillips 2004), and as a means to mobilize and advocate for local interests (Gonzales 2001). Whether one identifies as Spanish or Spanish-American, Mexican or Mexican-American, or Chicano, it is apparent that terminology for Hispanic New Mexicans has never reflected the admixture of blood or the uniqueness of “New Mexican” cultural identity. Regardless of the motivations behind New Mexican identity, Michael L. Trujillo notes that New Mexicans themselves often use “multiple terms depending on the context of the discussion and the sociopolitical orientation of the speaker,” and points out that these terms all identify either what New Mexicans are (ideally) or what they are not (2009:41-42).

struggling with each other are profoundly and mutually transformed” (Lamadrid 2003:12). This complex hybridity was present at the time of the original *Comanche* drama, and is just as true today, albeit for different reasons and in distinct contexts.

In all of these studies of cultural performances and rituals, whether they are from the 19th, 20th, or 21st century, the customs and motivations surrounding performative acts emphasize the practices of older generations, neglecting the work of transmission by omitting younger generations and their understandings of “traditional” New Mexican culture. This study will underscore the importance and everyday practice of transmission as it occurs from older generations of women to younger, and call attention to the adaptive strategies apparent in performances and rituals that ultimately speak to ongoing changes in social, cultural, and communal lifeways in San Rafael.

Fiestas, Las Posadas and Stations of the Cross

I examine specific cultural performances, such as the historically centered role of Catholic traditions that are manifest during, the annual San Rafael fiesta in honor of their patron saint, a New Mexican version of the folk drama *Las Posadas* which takes place from December 16-24th, Holy Week commemorations, and various food events and customs that occur communally and within families. These cultural performances include both Catholic and non-church related community events that feature foodways and feasts (marked events that occur within the Catholic liturgical calendar, but also common food practices). The fiesta is the most communally organized of the three events, and is the most inclusive as well. Although religious in nature, the New Mexican fiesta event has often functioned as the premiere social event at many New Mexican Hispanic communities because it offers religion, socializing, dancing, and food. And so the San Rafael fiesta welcomes people from

the village and non-residents, both religious and non-religious folks, and various generations ranging from babies to people who are 80 years old or older.

Las Posadas is a communal event, but involves fewer community people than the fiesta and hardly any outsiders. However, this event, more so than the fiesta or Good Friday devotions, grooms younger women (women who have families and are still establishing themselves as full-fledged members of the community and future center women) to take the place of older women (their mothers and grandmothers). *Las Posadas* also brings together disparate groups of people because a host of *Las Posadas* does not necessarily have to be the most religious, but the most adept at hosting others. This point is arguable, as some women say that this event should remain utterly religious, while others (younger generations) focus more on food, decorations, and hospitality.

Good Friday is perhaps the most religious in nature, most exclusive, and least communal of all the events. Participants in Good Friday devotions generally all consider themselves religiously Catholic. Three separate Stations of the Cross processions occur in San Rafael, and each draws a different audience, all of which are unique from one another. Little overlap occurs in these audiences, with most occurring between the two church-sponsored events. Fewer cross-generational involvement takes place on Good Friday, and most audience members, regardless of the different Stations of the Cross events, is comprised of middle-aged and older adults.

Through the observation of performances, we can see cultural production, transmission, retention, and change in action. Certain performances and events, such as the fiesta, include younger people and families, while other events, such as *Las Posadas*, remain the domain of older generations and more settled families. Additionally, certain functions

emphasize the separateness of the contemporary village—certain spaces and performances are used by particular groups and people, as is the case on Good Friday when three different stations of the cross takes place, all of which are attended by different community members.

San Rafael Center Women

Over the course of six years of fieldwork in San Rafael, the roles of women have emerged as being of utmost importance in the social fabric of the home and community. (See Appendix A). In both public and personal practices and events, I saw women take on central roles as the holders of local knowledge and organizers and performers of customs. This is not to say all women fit into this conceptualization, or that men and children do not participate as well, but without the presence of key woman figures, rituals, performances, and the knowledge for how to prepare special foods for celebration would not occur, and I would venture to say, would cease to continue. I saw the ways in which a core group of women in San Rafael worked to control how their fiesta and other cultural commemorations were performed and preserved year after year. I saw how, as performers and artists, the contributions from these women shaped the ways in which they and other residents perceive and understand their place in San Rafael, and how their work and presence re-imagined and reclaimed communal spaces to cultivate belonging.

The key to the continuation of traditional practices through dramatic social and economic shifts is women—by and large, it was women who remained in San Rafael during economically unstable times. While men have often felt unable to find viable work and have instead left the village, women have shown a remarkable ability to obtain vocational training or higher education and then obtain local positions as nurses, nursing assistants, social workers, public administrators and educators. At the same time, women have adapted

religious practice and household and community structures in order to allow for more flexibility and greater participation in local customs among different generations of residents and extended kinship.

Rather than categorizing women as “the bearers of culture” or “culture keepers” I prefer to use the term “center women” as coined by feminist anthropologist Karen Brodtkin Sacks to describe women who are centers of cultural knowledge and networks, and who constitute the “sustaining core” of groups, community and family (1988:2-4). Susan Stall and Randy Stoecker go further to say “center women” are community leaders who use “existing local networks to develop social groups and activities that create a sense of familial/community consciousness, connecting people with similar concerns and heightening awareness of shared issues” (1998:744). In this conceptualization, the work of center women is essential to the “development of identity, collective consciousness, and solidarity” (1998:744). Through use of this concept of “center women” I will demonstrate that San Rafael women are not passive actors in cultural transmission, but leaders in the community and integral to the process of meaning making. It is through their organizational skill, innovation, and presence that participation in and execution of the fiesta and *Las Posadas* is possible, and that a ruptured community finds moments of healing through transient moments of belonging.

Women-centered Networks and Power in “Women’s Work”

I consider San Rafael a regional community because “family networks and strategies” are not encompassed by village boundaries, but have expanded over time through marriage and employment opportunities to include a regional focus (Deutsch 1987:9). The regional community is “bound by ties of kinship as well as economy,” and so describes “the mutual

dependency of migrants and villagers” and is both a “strategy and a geographical area” (Deutsch 1987:9-10). At times when the physical community can feel large and scattered, in what ways does the sense of community and subsequent belonging arise?

In the “women-centered model” for community organizing as defined and studied by Susan Stall and Randy Stoecker (1998), and emphasized in a host of other studies on women as community organizers or activists (Gutierrez and Lewis 1994; Martin 2002; Naples, ed., 1998; Pardo 1990), organizing occurs not in order to achieve power per se, but instead “focuses on organizing relationships to build community” (1998:729). In this way, women build community and belonging by expanding their private spheres into the community, so that their households “include the neighborhood” (Stall and Stoecker 1998:733) and minimizes boundaries between families and different social circles. Within this model, cooperation among primary and secondary relationships is viewed as necessary to meet social needs, and bridges the “gap between the community’s needs and its resources” to achieve “practical reciprocity in the network of relationships that make up the community” (Stall and Stoecker 1998:733). The center women of San Rafael engage in community-wide networks that allow them to carry out necessary tasks, perform important communal events, and somehow engage scattered, and even uninterested, younger generations. Without the same level of cultural competence as their mothers and grandmothers, the younger generations are still necessary for the continuation of particular cultural practices. Individual women from the younger generations will eventually become a part of the center women, and so even with limited and selective involvement, the younger women are integral to San Rafael cultural production. It is this interdependence within the network of relationships that

helps establish a sense of community and belonging among different generations and disparate groups of people in San Rafael.

In the feminist privileging of women's work in cultural production, networking, and organizational skills, anthropologists illustrated that women's negotiation of their lived experiences and other social processes is often facilitated through social and kinship systems found within their families, communities, and places of employment (Brodkin Sacks 1988; di Leonardo 1987; Hartmann 1981; Lamphere, Zavella, Gonzales and Evans 1993; Stack 1974; Zavella 1984). Whereas the centrality of Hispanic women's roles in community and family has been mostly excluded from historical literature, more recent emphasis has been placed on the ways in which the once denigrated "women's work" is of utmost importance to social and kinship systems, as well as cultural retention and transmission. As Deutsch writes, "...the family was more complex than a woman's kingdom or her prison. An examination of village women's lives as daughters, wives, mothers, and widows reveals more subtle nuances regarding their status, even within the realm of family" (1987:42). Heidi Hartmann explores a similar concept in her examination of the family as a "locus of struggle... where production and redistribution take place" (1981:368). While in Hartmann's examination, this struggle within families is often involving "housework and paychecks," I find her discussion useful when applied to cultural reproduction within a home and small community, such as San Rafael. In this way, San Rafael center women are maintaining, changing, and redistributing their cultural knowledge and competence for new audiences—whether these audiences are new generations of family members or perhaps cultural tourists.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I saw the ways in which San Rafael center women asserted a tremendous amount of power within public communal arenas as well as within

family spheres. In participant observations, husband and wife pairs often spoke about the importance of making decisions together as a couple. Within private realms, I witnessed more often that women made decisions for the family and home alone without consulting husbands, and husbands also seemed satisfied with this structure. Whether it was by deciding what was to be eaten, how furniture was to be arranged, or how children were to be raised, women asserted agency privately that then trickled out into the community as it was an extension of her home. It is important to acknowledge women's agency within what can be described as traditional gender roles because women's work in the home and in hospitality rituals is central to family and communal networks and the continuation of Hispanic cultural practices. The domestic sphere is not something to which women are relegated; it is a site for agency, power, and struggle as San Rafael center women demonstrate the arts and performance of contemporary Hispanic cultural production.

Practices and Strategies in the Maintenance of Home and Community

San Rafael women's common practices such as the traditional maintenance of church, park and cemetery grounds, daily social visits within the village, the exchange of traditional foods such as *chile* or salsa, pork lard, *pastelitos* (a fruit-filled pie, usually cut into small squares), or *natillas* (a milk-based custard) on particular holy days or holidays, and even providing care and food to another family during times of illness or death, are all integral strategies to the creation of the San Rafael community and in sustaining cultural production.

Sociologist Robert D. Putnam distinguishes between bonding and bridging forms of social capital. Bonding, or exclusive, forms are "by choice or necessity, inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups," while bridging, or inclusive, forms are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages" (Putnam

2000:22). I use this concept within social capital theory and apply it to the performance events of San Rafael. While performance is the lens through which I examine San Rafael women, ultimately the women's work around the events emphasizes the social and cultural capital these women employ. The social activities in which the San Rafael women participate fall along a spectrum of bonding-bridging forms of social capital. The fiesta represents an open cultural practices that attracts distant family members and attendees from neighboring towns, while on the other end, *Las Posadas* is an exclusive religious- and family- centered event with few outsiders present or invited.

Social capital and domestic strategies are essential elements in the study of urban American communities and ethnic enclaves. In *All Our Kin*, Carol Stack studied urban poverty and the "'domestic strategies' of urban-born black Americans" (1974:27). These domestic strategies included exchange of goods and services, shared parental responsibility among kinship, and extensive domestic networks, all of which were adaptations to generational economic deprivation. Similarly, San Rafael women employ various strategies to carry out costly communal fiestas, religious devotions, and family celebrations in light of serious social problems and impoverished conditions. The center women rely heavily upon the mobilization of daughters, granddaughters, aunts, sisters and friends in order to make large amounts of food for family and communal functions (the fiesta meal must feed at least 500 people and is prepared entirely at the parish hall by a group of women about 15-20 in size), to fill volunteer positions within the church community (teaching CCD, acting as Eucharistic ministers), and to organize large communal commemorations (fiesta booths, games, and entertainment).

These communal strategies of contemporary Hispanic villagers are in response to complex historical and economic situations, which necessitate the continued presence of at least a handful of center women. The center women in turn facilitate cultural transmission, retention, and change through providing flexibility within traditional cultural practices and the space for younger women to pick and choose among the traditional cyclical calendar of events. And in this process, new generations of center women are recruited and groomed.

In everyday acts and in specially marked events, San Rafael center women are actively engaged in processes of acquiring and using social capital. There is both a collective and individual benefit to social capital, for those who have access to it. Through forms of social capital, the women are able to take care of communal grounds, continue events such as *Las Posadas* and the fiesta, and ensure some sort of control over the village. The women who are involved also experience individual power, authority, and access to more resources. These are powerful communal and individual tools, but not having access to human resources can be limiting and can contribute to one's sense of belonging uncertainty.

Women and the Performance of Food

Similarly as with rituals and performances, I believe that food is a core element of the human experience and especially the experience of life in San Rafael. The presence of food at all events and in rituals of hospitality contributes to the ways in which Hispanic San Rafael community members engage in meaning making and forms of social capital. Through food, families and communities, share and create memories, reaffirm social ties and reciprocity, express heritage and cultural identity, contribute to community building, and pay homage to deceased loved ones. Cultural foods and food events persist because they are communicative processes that are easily adaptable to lived experiences, yet are representative of invariable

familial, regional, or historical associations. Additionally, cultural foods are tangible bonds that hold together events, whether they are held within family or community settings; heritage foods foster a welcoming atmosphere for intergenerational involvement and innovation, while attracting the interest of younger people.

Just as important as the social act of eating are “the activities related to organizing meals for special occasions and the actual performance of these occasions are...explicitly related to communication...It is the ritualized nature of the procedures at a feast as well as the special food markers (sweets, special meats, or baked goods) that is used to underscore the significance of the occasion” (Goode 1992:240). The organization, planning, and cultural competence necessary to successfully execute the San Rafael fiesta, *Las Posadas*, and a variety of communal and seasonal food events are processes that contribute to, and reveal instances of, community-building and belonging, and should be examined within the broader context of ritual and performative events as these provide moments “in which an individual, by assuming a role, is characterized by inclusion in the social collectivity...” (Weber 1922:132). The work that these women engage in San Rafael is more than simply organizing to execute food events and fiestas—it is “the entire process of organizing relationships” (Stall and Stoecker 1998:730) in moments of cooking and eating together that builds community and belonging.

Other elements important to the preparation, setting, and cultural transmission that occur during food events are the recipes and kitchen utensils used in these times. There is expressive potential in the materials used in cooking, especially with cultural or heritage cooking. Folklorist Janet Theophano writes, “the bond created by possessing this physical artifact is the means by which members of different generations become entwined with one

another” (2002:8). Items such as a rolling pin or apron, a hand-written recipe on old paper, passed down from one family or community member to another, are symbolic markers of lineages and social relationships, and can even mark *entrée* into a particular social position, as when a mother begins sharing recipes with her adult daughter or new daughter-in-law.

The contemporary enactment of San Rafael performances and foodways must be centered in the broader context of historical and current San Rafael socio-economic conditions. Communal collective action and family-centered events such as fiestas and seasonal commemorations are “reflexive, coded, and symbolic means of human communication” (Flores 1995:13) because it is through these events and moments that “people experience themselves, their history, and their place in the social order” (Flores 1995:13). In other words, it is through performances and rituals, constituted of everyday and mundane practices, that people engage in meaning-making, cultural transmission, and develop a sense of self, belonging, and collective memory. In this sense, forms of expressive culture have the salient capacity to mediate social and economic disruptions, if only for transitory periods of time.

The Past in the Present: The Process of Traditionalization

Folklorist Richard Bauman conceptualizes “tradition” not as “an inherent quality of old,” but as “a symbolic construction by which people in the present establish connections with a meaningful past and endow particular cultural forms with value and authority” (1992:128). While Bauman applies this process of traditionalization to storytelling, the genre of legends in particular, I believe that traditionalizing can occur with other symbolic communicative events and acts, such as performances and cultural food ways. Seldom are communal activities, religious rituals, or food events executed without the accompaniment of

personal narratives, family and community stories, or humorous anecdotes. I will use the stories and histories, filled with humor and wisdom, that women shared with me to emphasize the ways in which women traditionalize and ritualize their domestic work. In the course of these moments, women's work with the family and community are heightened to highlight their skills and, on a communal level, their cultural capital.

As numerous San Rafael women attempted to teach me how to cook *natillas*, *tortas de huevos*, and red *chile* with pork, they often interlaced recipes with stories of their early years of marriage and learning how to cook from women kinfolk.⁸ In time, the stories their grandmothers, mothers, and aunts told them, became the stories they told me. Such as the day when one woman, Pauline, began teaching me how to make proper red *chile* from the pods, rather than from *chile* powder, as I was accustomed to making. She took me outside where she stored larger amounts of food in an RV—foods she said “all *Chicanas* must know how to make”—sacks of red *chile* pods, sacks of dried pinto beans, and stacks of corn husks for making *tamales*. She wanted to show me her supply, but she already had our red *chiles* waiting for us inside. She began washing the *chiles* the day before; I asked her why. She picked up the tray of *chiles* that had been soaked overnight, and were now drying, and a toothbrush. She and I sat down at her table, and she said, “Look.” Then she began running her thumb down the length of the *chiles*, opening up each one. She began brushing the seeds away, and said, “My father hated seeds in his *chile* [sauce]. They're not supposed to be there. If there are seeds in your *chile* that means you didn't take your time. You didn't clean them. Why do it if you won't do it right? My father always said, ‘Cleanliness is next to Godliness.’

⁸ *Tortas de huevos* is a traditional Lenten dish eaten on Fridays in lieu of meat, and are egg fritters that are served in red *chile*.

That goes for *chile*.” She said her father loved to cook alongside her mother, and would clean red *chile* pods all afternoon on the weekends—“Back then,” she said, “there wasn’t entertainment; we didn’t have casinos with bands and giveaways. You stayed home and spent time with your family. Our entertainment was going on picnics and drives, or telling stories. So taking time preparing food for your family—that was just what you did. You would talk and cook.”

The red *chile* lessons continued throughout my time in San Rafael, and Pauline continued sharing her *chile* wisdom a little bit at a time, at times repeating the story about cleanliness. And I came to understand those comments to be of utmost importance because of the way she imbued the act of cleaning *chile* with such tradition and authority. Each time we made *chile*, she would tell me about her father, and how much he disliked when *chile* was not cleaned thoroughly or was not smooth enough. She told me of times he refused to eat somebody’s *chile* because it did not pass his personal, and one would think, long-standing tradition of good and proper *chile*. To this day, I think of Pauline’s father, I mean I never knew, each time I eat red *chile*.

Although the stories and foods often transported the women and me to seemingly mythic times, we were still situated within our contemporary experiences. Pauline and I would look around at her kitchen filled with old *metates* (meal grinding stones) she collected from the surrounding lands covered in black basalt, or her *molcajetes* (traditional Mexican stone mortar and pestle) that she still uses to crush dried peppers, and as she told me stories about times when she and her sisters cooked together for family functions, I would feel so connected to deceased people whom I never knew, and to ways of living that no longer suit the lives of men and women of San Rafael. For Pauline, stories are powerful, and she made

them all the more powerful for me through connecting the act and tools of cooking with people and memories.

The “links of continuity” by which the actor engages her performance to past discourses as part of her own construction endows the act, event, or story with situated meaning (Bauman 1992:136). Pauline, as well as other women I was around in San Rafael, often connected their present-day actions with past actions, beliefs, and stories from their parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. And this often allowed the women to carry out “traditions” in new contexts and settings, with different people and family members, and with new purposes. For example, discussions of traditions often led to discussions of the ways in which San Rafael can benefit from cultural or food tourism, and people would often tell me their individual ideas for attracting tourists during Holy Week, or for opening a community bakery or New Mexican restaurant, or for somehow setting the Hispanic villages of the Mt. Taylor region apart from other northern New Mexican villages that seem to capture the attention of scholars and tourists.

Situated meanings and new contexts remove the “tradition” out of the original historical setting and locate it within contemporary circumstances and meaning making. The traditionalization process is socially and contemporarily embedded, yet renders authenticity through the connections with a meaningful past, whether or not that past is represented through the lens of romanticism. I believe that the women of San Rafael, older generations and younger, engage in traditionalization at different times, for different purposes, and to different extents, in order to feel belonging within a continually changing village or family culture, and also to situate herself within the shared history of the region and even New Mexican cultural identity. The women acquire cultural capital that comes from having certain

knowledge—traditional cooking, religious devotion and involvement, and place in local history.

Findings

Whereas in the past community members would accept certain responsibilities and continue certain traditions simply because that was the thing to do, the composition of the community is no longer the same, and motivations to continue and maintain customs have certainly changed along with the community. I have found that younger generations are more likely to pick-and-choose what traditions to continue, such as preferring to learn and maintain traditional foods but not Catholic religious practice, how they continue them, in what community functions they will participate, and to what extent. In this way, younger generations are asserting much more agency and freewill in how they live as contemporary “traditional” villagers. Others who no longer live in San Rafael are more arbitrary in what traditional practices and beliefs they choose to employ and how or why they choose to participate in them; participation may occur to maintain some kind of link with their ethno-communal identity or their former family life. Center women create and transform spaces and opportunities for daughters, granddaughters, and other younger kinfolk in which they can flexibly participate and maintain practices of cultural production that suit younger generations’ regional village lifestyle and choice among traditions.

Because the community makeup has changed over time to include both new residents from outside the area to new generations of San Rafael members, beliefs, and customs, events also serve other transmission and retention purposes. Certain events foster diversity and inclusion, as is the case with the fiesta, which draws people in from outside communities, includes more extended kinship and non-religious participants than any other event, and

involves many different generations. Other events and practices, such as *Las Posadas*, emphasize the grooming of younger generations that is necessary for cultural transmission. And yet other functions, such as the highly marked religious devotions of Holy Week and Good Friday in particular, maintain exclusion and are, by and large, preserved and overseen by several families. Traditional foodways, in general, are the most easily and enjoyably transmissible and adaptable forms of cultural production. These other forms of cultural production and performances all rely upon strict religious participation, residency in the village, or cultural competence that younger generations simply lack. Where there is more religious adherence, there will be less intergenerational involvement. Adaptability to new influences and inclusion help preserve traditions.

Through organization, preparation, recruitment of others, and displays of cultural competence, center women are able to create flexible spaces in which younger women are able to pick and choose in what cultural practices they participate, how, and to what degree.⁹ I argue that the flexibility of “traditional” customs allows for more continued intergenerational cultural transmission amidst changing family and village dynamics.

Summary of Chapters

This dissertation addresses issues of women’s cultural production, social capital and belonging, and intergenerational transmission of Hispanic traditions through the themes of cultural performances, foodways, and religious practices. In Chapter 2, I introduce the San Rafael village in the context of performativity and community engagement by describing my first experience with the annual fiesta, the most popular event in San Rafael. I show that

⁹ For the purposes of this dissertation, I use cultural competence to describe an individual’s range of local cultural knowledge and abilities to successfully utilize and, at times, manipulate cultural practices and information.

while the outward appearance of San Rafael conveys a sense of an efficient and unified collective of villagers, they are in fact a disparate community of beliefs, practices, and generations. Events such as the fiesta, *Las Posadas*, and Good Friday devotions then have greater significance in terms of how the performances continue, by whom, and to what degree.

In Chapter 3, I examine the historical context of the San Rafael village and its residents in order to illustrate the long-standing influences upon the area—influences such as resource mining, booms and busts of industry, and the flow of people and beliefs to the region. These historical factors have had generational effects upon the abilities of families to maintain traditional practices and lifeways. This circumstance necessitates the presence of individuals who have cultural competence, and can create, consume, and distribute cultural products. In Chapter 4, I examine the role of San Rafael center women to the process of cultural production and social capital by describing their organizing efforts and cultural practices involved in the annual San Rafael fiesta. The fiesta is easily the most popular event and illustrates a local example of bridging social capital, which engages cross-cutting ties and resources among community and non-community members.

Chapter 5 continues this focus on women's domestic work and cultural knowledge by examining the significance and use of foods and food practices within the everyday and specially marked events that make up the San Rafael performance cycle. While traditional Hispanic cultural performances are often considered primarily religious in nature, the food events that accompany traditional practices are often the most time-consuming and meaningful element of the entire performance or devotion. This heightened importance stems from women's individual experiences with particular foods and the bonds that are created

and reinforced when women prepare foods for their families and community. This process of traditionalization, or imbuing a cultural practice with authority through invoking continuity to ancestors or an older way of life, is particularly implored in relation to New Mexican Hispanic foods, more so than during religious events, which I argue contributes to the maintenance and transmission of food practices within younger generations.

If Chapter 5 describes one facet of continued cultural production and transmission, Chapter 6 examines the tenuous position of Catholic devotions and religious practice among successive generations of San Rafael families. Women's abilities to demonstrate their religious competence and innovation within religious practices contrasts with unchanging Church devotions to show that the more adaptive and flexible religious devotions of Good Friday attract greater participation among disparate groups of San Rafael and provide opportunities for intergenerational involvement and reverence.

Chapter 7 draws connections between San Rafael women's cultural production and competence and traditional performances by examining the ways in which *Las Posadas* acts as both a bonding and bridging form of social capital that facilitates belonging, reciprocity, and in-group status. *Las Posadas* is representative of the larger themes of this dissertation—that center women are hubs of social organization and cultural production and that they engage in different bonding and bridging events to either reinforce their communal and cultural identities or to attract and influence younger generations of women who do not engage in Hispanic cultural production in the same ways as their mothers and grandmothers, if at all.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Fieldwork—Encountering Performance in San Rafael

Encountering Performance in San Rafael

In August of 2006, University of New Mexico Anthropology Professor Louise Lamphere began organizing a group of students to join her in a visit to document an upcoming centennial celebration at a small village named San Rafael located in Cibola County, just south of Grants, New Mexico. Two months later in October, accompanying Dr. Lamphere to San Rafael, another graduate student and I were tasked with observing and interviewing people about the celebration, while two undergraduate students documented the fiesta with photography and video. My participant observation over the two days at San Rafael led to my eventual dissertation topic—an examination of New Mexican Hispanic traditions with a focus on San Rafael women whose cultural production is key to transmission, retention, and innovation surrounding symbolic cultural practices that are concerned with food ways, family and community belonging.

A Procession in the Rain at Night

The San Rafael centennial celebration began with an evening procession from a family home located at the south end of the village Main Street to the church at the center of town. A three-foot wooden *santo* of Saint Raphael was carried by a group of men leading the procession, followed by a church choir with people following them. A heavy rainstorm burst from the sky but did not affect the procession since most in attendance were prepared with umbrellas and undaunted by the heavy rain. I heard people reciting the rosary where I walked, but people further back of the procession could not hear so if you did not know how to pray the rosary, you were simply taking part in a slow moving walk in the rain.

Luminarias, or bonfires made of pitch wood cut and cross-stacked in squares, lined the main street, and continued to burn even in the pouring rain. Randomly through the procession, behind us a man would raise a gun in the air and shoot into the sky. I and a few other people were startled by the shots fired. The shooter's wife later told me the gun is fired to scare away harmful spirits. While it is no longer common in many New Mexican fiesta events, especially those performed in larger and more urban communities, the practice of firing guns in the air "just before and during the vespers" is a "gesture of protecting the saint" (Montaño 2001:65). Although the woman's story is similar to textbook accounts, her local belief was that the shots kept away harmful spirits, rather than the more innocuous and Catholic perspective of protecting the saint.

The procession continued to another family home north of the church, where we stood in the pouring rain as the group concluded the rosary prayers and then made our way to the church. Upon entering the church I could see those who were not prepared for the rain were soaked. Local priests and other clergy began a solemn evening mass called vespers. The solemnity of this ceremony was enhanced by the storm and the use of candlelight in lieu of electric lights.

Following *vísperas* or vespers, parishioners were invited to the home of Pauline and Anthony Chávez, where the procession began.¹⁰ We joined the people for coffee, hot chocolate, and snacks that were prepared for guests. Their small home was packed with people. We all gathered in the living room and kitchen while the female members of the Chávez family prayed the rosary once more. I noticed some women had rosaries to pray with as those without one simply counted the mysteries and Hail Marys on their fingers. After the

¹⁰ Vespers are a Catholic service of evening worship.

rosary people slowly made their way to the kitchen for a serving of *posole* with pork and red *chile*.¹¹ Other snacks were offered in addition to the *posole*, including *biscochitos*, traditional New Mexican cookies made with anise seeds and *natillas*, rice pudding, and other cookies.

During my visit at the Chávez home, after introducing myself, I spoke with several older women who clarified how most of the parishioners who returned to the Chávez home after vespers were related in some way to the Tórrez family—a large San Rafael family that had recently experienced the deaths of two *viejitos* (old men) within a few months. The deceased, Leandro and Alejandro Tórrez, were two of three remaining Tórrez brothers born to a family of thirteen children. Of the original thirteen children each had families of five or more children with many grandchildren of their own thus producing a large and extended Tórrez family tree. Pauline (Tórrez) Chávez, along with her sisters and cousins, hosted the rosary in their home as a *promesa* (promise) to their fathers' memory.¹² Leandro and Alejandro were said to have passionately loved their community, religion, and traditions. After their passing, the women made the *promesa* to continue their fathers' beliefs and practices for the family. While it was the fathers of the Tórrez family who cultivated religious devotion, it was the women of the family who consciously chose to uphold and maintain traditional practices within the family and community.

¹¹ New Mexican red *chile* can best be described as either a sauce or stew. It is commonly made with lean cuts of pork, which some consider a stew. Red *chile* can be eaten by itself with a tortilla, or can accompany other dishes such as *posole*, itself a hominy and pork stew. As a sauce, it is often poured on top of enchiladas, *tamales*, and even mashed potatoes.

¹² A *promesa* is a promise made, often to God, in honor of a deceased person, or for a particular favor. Many women have told me of *promesas* they made for the safe return of an active-duty son. The stories of *promesas* for sons in military engagement go as far back as World War II, and many involve a pilgrimage to the *Santo Niño* in nearby Zuni Pueblo.

The events of Saturday evening were religiously solemn. We were told to be sure and attend the fiesta activities the next day so as to experience the difference between the ritually somber night and the daytime festivities. It was explained that a proper community could not, and should not, have a fiesta without first paying respects to the Lord for granting them another year and to their *antepasados*, ancestors who came before. Only after paying respect to their ancestors and offering thanks and prayers could the community then revel in the joyful celebrations of the fiesta.

A Fiesta in the Sunlight at Day

When we arrived the next morning, people were beginning to gather at the Church, at the parish hall, the parking lot and also at the grotto across from the church called the Guadalupe Grotto and Park. Located inside the parish hall were food booths and games, and a large tent erected in the parking lot provided people with seating to eat and enjoy the musical entertainment that would include *mariachis* and a rock band. The day began with a procession from the post office at the far southern end of the village proper to the church. This procession was livelier than the night before as the Knights of Columbus carried the *santo* of San Rafael, and were followed by the fiesta court featuring a little girl as queen and her two attendants or runners-up in the contest, the choir were seated on a float decorated with Spanish family crests, and the Bishop from the Gallup Catholic Diocese rode in a horse-drawn buggy.¹³ A couple of men and women on horses rode by carrying flags of New Mexico and the United States. Following the parade were people arriving to attend mass.

¹³ Hispanic families in New Mexico continue to acknowledge ties to ancestors with surnames who arrived in the 1500s during the time of Spanish colonization that began in Mexico and moved into what is known today as New Mexico.

The atmosphere was lively and joyful as the San Rafael choir sang thanks and praises to their Lord for the event. People gathered around the procession to take pictures, and children ran around oblivious to the formality of the procession. Somber candlelight from the previous night was now glowing with rays of sunlight through the stained-glass church windows. Women were beautifully dressed, some wrapped in old Mexican shawls, adorned with *concho* belts, turquoise necklaces and ankle-length skirts, the men wore suits or fancier cowboy dress, and also wore turquoise watch bands, and sterling silver bracelets.¹⁴

After the mass, everyone gathered in the parish hall, or just outside, and the Bishop of the Diocese of Gallup offered another blessing. Together, the community prayed and thanked the Lord for the wonderful fiesta about to be enjoyed, and for the hard work of so many individuals to successfully make it happen. And with a shout of “¡*Viva la Fiesta!*” the music began, the sound of games and laughter swept over the building, and people hurried to get in line for the communal meal of pulled beef, slow-cooked for an entire day in the ground, red *chile* stew made with pork, mashed potatoes, corn, green beans, salad, and homemade loaf bread or *tortillas*. All of the food was homemade by a core group of women from San Rafael who enlist and organize the help of other family members to accomplish the task of fiesta food preparation. The beef was slaughtered locally and cooked two days prior by fathers, sons, and brothers of the women cooks; the women pulled the meat that morning. Others from San Rafael helped with setting up booths and adding final decorations to the parish hall.

The organization of the previous day gave way to a controlled chaos of children running about, screams of laughter, constant movement between booths and the indoor and

¹⁴ *Concho* belts are made of leather and have a series of round or oval metal pieces (often sterling silver) embossed with various designs.

outdoor entertainment. Older folks chose tables outside near the live music and remained there most of the day, while others played “Basket Bingo” in the back of the parish hall. Along with games of chance one would find at a carnival (dime toss, fishing for toys, a cake walk), children could have their face-painted or take a pony ride. The close proximity of family homes to the church created an atmosphere of constant movement as children would run from one house across the street to another, to the parish hall, or to the basketball courts at the elementary school. San Rafael today was a place that felt totally interconnected as a church, school and community. In many ways, the San Rafael I was introduced to during the Centennial Fiesta was quite comparable to romanticized depictions of New Mexican life that one would find older folklore texts (Campa 1979; Espinosa 1990; Montaña 2001) and ethnographic studies of village life (Briggs 1980; Kutsche and Van Ness 1981). From this brief encounter, San Rafael residents seemed to be exactly what one would expect from texts. However, over the course of my fieldwork, I learned that this was not the case.

Returning to Reality in the Day-to-Day

Having returned to San Rafael to complete a year and a half of intensive fieldwork at San Rafael, my visit back in 2006 only scratched one surface of the San Rafael community. The photos were like snap shots of an event, a small celebration at a quaint Nuevomexicano village that somehow appeared to exist untouched by American mainstream culture; a community appearing like a mirage to subsist entirely on faith and tradition. But as I continued going back to San Rafael to collect oral histories from the *viejitos* and *viejitas*, I heard romantic stories of life *más antes* (an expression that refers to a period of time long before)—this place was historically called *Ojo del Gallo* (Eye of the Rooster), a reference to the large quantity of water fowl in the area. This was the site of the Old Fort Wingate, chosen

for the lush vegetation, access to game, and spring water (Barela 1975:7).¹⁵ The older folks would point to the bare, somewhat white washed land at the northern part of the town, and say that was where the “*ojito*” (the spring of the local water source) was before the uranium mines and power plants dried out the water table. They described how the *acequia* would flow from the *ojito*, all the way through town, passing through each family’s land, providing water for irrigation and home use.¹⁶ Based upon what residents have said, the *acequia* has not been in use since the 1960s or 70s, but a riparian area existed at the springhead until the mid-80s, when finally all water dried up (Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010; Pauline Chávez, interview with author, August 31, 2010).

The village was not as spread out as it is now. Currently, residents refer to “San Rafael” and “south San Rafael,” consisting of clusters of homes spreading for several miles south of the village proper. People often call the homes in south San Rafael “*ranchitos*” because families in the area maintain agricultural animals, the homes tend to be bigger and widely distributed and generally take up more land. With the exception of a few families in the village proper, the upwardly mobile families of San Rafael either move to nearby Grants, or they move to south San Rafael. Residents who live in this area say they moved to get away from the village center, which over the years has become overwhelmed by the sale of drugs, small-town gang activity, other criminal elements, and homelessness. Squatters stay in gutted homes surrounding the church, the homeless who stay in San Rafael walk up and down the

¹⁵ Fort Wingate was established in 1862 at San Rafael to deal with Navajo and Apaches who the military considered “troublesome” for American occupation (The History of Fort Wingate Depot; The History of Fort Wingate).

¹⁶ An *acequia* (a Spanish term with Arabic roots) is a man-made, communal irrigation system.

Main Street asking for money, food, beer, or a ride, and the Grotto serves as the preferred location for drug dealing, not just among San Rafael residents, but also for people from Grants.

The expansion of south San Rafael is the result of water supply issues. Local historian Josephine Barela wrote, “In 1950 the life-line of the village, the acequia, went dry, due to the drought and perhaps excessive use by industries, which lowered the water table” (1975:29). This resulted in strict regulations upon well water usage that limited residents within the village proper to domestic use only “with the exception of five or six head of livestock” (Barela 1975:30). The inability to maintain home gardens, livestock, or larger alfalfa fields further intensified families’ reliance on wage work and negatively impacted young people’s desire to remain in the village. More recently, residents have experienced a freeze on the sale of new water meters that has gone on for more than ten years, when hydro-geologists found there was not enough water in the underground table to meet the demand from the village. Without the approval of any new water meters, the ways in which young families can move into and around San Rafael are drastically different than the experiences of their parents, grandparents, and the early families that established the village.

Although San Rafael residents have had volatile economic cycles, the economic boom experiences are what local authors and storytellers prefer to remember and document. In a stark contrast, the experiences of bust periods are untold or glossed over for the most part. The current circumstances of San Rafael represents just such a period—once beautiful homes with one and half-foot thick walls of adobe and rock people say came from the Old Ft. Wingate are crumbling and abandoned; the homes people do inhabit are run-down and some lack proper heating, cooling, or running water; yards and fields are no longer dotted with lush

vegetation, fruit orchards, or wild birds; the lack of water makes it impossible for anything to grow, including home gardens; the mineral deposits from the once-flourishing *ojito* leave a strange white coating on the land, almost like a reminder of times past. The Grotto that the community worked so hard to build and maintain in devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe is the stomping ground of addicts, dealers, and the police who try and keep up with them.

More often the latest news heard in town concerns who has died or was arrested. Younger people at San Rafael are dying from overdoses and violence, while older citizens are dying from cancers and other diseases which many locals blame on the uranium mining. Stories of hope more often come from family members who have long moved away from San Rafael in search of a different and better life or what they refer to as a “more satisfying life.” Parents often tell me they are glad their children moved away to attend school or for work, or that they hope their kids take the opportunity to move away for college, but in the same breath, they tell me how they wish their children lived in San Rafael, or will move back home some day. There are fewer younger families and young adults to help carry out the cultural, religious, and family practices that have become romanticized cultural performances such as *Los Pastores*, an old performance about the shepherds’ search for the Christ child, or the role of *mayordomos* who are responsible for the maintenance of the church and grotto.¹⁷ The women too are central to the traditions that seem to romantically bring the family together to make *tamales* at Christmas and recall the performance of visiting neighbors and family on Sundays to catch up over coffee and *pastelitos*. Without younger generations

¹⁷ The role of *mayordomos* is to act as stewards. Historically in New Mexico, there are two kinds of *mayordomos*: those of the church and those of the *acequia*.

around to take part in these activities who takes up these practices, who will teach the next generation, and are those remaining at San Rafael willing to learn these ways?

A drive through San Rafael reveals social and economic stress as graffiti mark decaying empty buildings. Talking with the *viejitas*, it is easy for some to believe a sense of culture loss and continuity is eminent but in my five years of going to, and participating in the annual fiesta, ordinary church functions and special devotions, seasonal events such as *Las Posadas at Christmas* and Easter Holy Week commemorations at San Rafael Church, attending observances at the *morada* (chapterhouse), and countless family events and get-togethers, cultural transmission may not be as diminished as often mentioned by people.¹⁸ Symbolic meanings and expressions are still present, and the work of cultural production is ongoing, albeit somewhat transitory and transformed. These heritage practices can no longer be seen through the romantic lens of memory because it is through such a lens that they appear fading; but when looked at as interactive story of transmission and retention of cultural expression, a pattern of continuity and change emerges.

More importantly, in light of social, economic, and cultural fluctuations that have dramatic and lasting generational effects, how is it possible that symbolic expressions of culture and community even persist? In other words, for many villages and small towns in New Mexico, disorder? Stress within the family and community is the reality, and cultural performances, traditional food ways, and a sense of belonging are necessary and continue in spite of these disruptions and disorganization.

¹⁸ A *morada* is the chapterhouse a local *Hermanidad* or Brotherhood. *La Hermanidad* is an abbreviated form of *La Fraternidad Piadosa de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, or the Pious Fraternity of Our Father Jesus Nazarene, which is a lay religious organization that supports local Catholic devotions and offers mutual aid. This group will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Outlined in my study are several themes that position women at San Rafael within a complex of performance involving symbolic cultural practices such as food ways and cultural performance, which creates space for “community” and nourishes a sense of belonging in a village where residents are challenged daily, either directly or indirectly, by poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, prolonged health issues, domestic violence, and out-migration. Old performers and new performers engage Hispanic New Mexican cultural practices and symbolic meanings in different ways in order to successfully accomplish communal, cultural, social and family life, as well as give cognitive and emotional coherence to their experiences within and outside of San Rafael.

Beginning of Fieldwork

Before beginning dissertation fieldwork, my greatest obstacle was finding lodging. In a village with roughly 900 residents and hardly any new homes allowed due to lack of available water, there are virtually no opportunities to rent or even buy a home in the village proper. I began searching for homes in Grants or nearby Milan, but ultimately felt that I would be too separated from San Rafael, even just three miles away. I let people know I was looking for a home, but I knew there were few options for an outsider like me—if a home were to become available for rent as older folks pass away or move elsewhere, people would surely pass the news on to San Rafael folks first. Older families are always in the hunt for available homes for their adult children, and so I did not stand a chance.

In 2006 when I began work on the Grants Oral History Project¹⁹ with my professor Louise, we interviewed a former resident of San Rafael named Antonio who also acted as a

¹⁹ The Grants Oral History Project began in August 2006 out of a collaborative effort between the Ortiz Center for Intercultural Studies at the University of New Mexico, the Cibola Arts Council, and the San Rafael Parish to document economic and cultural changes

kind of local historian or collector of history for the community. Over the course of the Grants Oral History Project, he became a friend to Louise and me and when I let him know in 2009 that I would be conducting fieldwork in San Rafael, he was pleased and wanted to help me. In the winter of 2010, just as I was beginning to think I would never find a place to stay in San Rafael, Antonio invited me to a music recital and dinner at his old family home in San Rafael, which was now owned by a man who lived in Mississippi. It was this man who would be holding the recital. I was told he was interested in renting the home, and wanted to meet me.

The guitar recital was attended by several families from San Rafael, many of which I already knew. Also at that recital, I met a couple of other women who would later participate in my study. One woman was Yolanda Dubois, who I was told was a fabulous cook and would actually be preparing most of the food for the recital. Knowing she was sister to Ramona Dubois, who was another friend from San Rafael who was helping me search for a home, I wanted to reach out to Yolanda. I was particularly interested in interviewing within families in order to capture a greater cross-generational perspective. Yolanda, like Ramona, is a tall, broad woman. She entered the home in a rush, but was carrying plates of food. She walked over from her home a few houses south on old Mirabal Road. She made delicious finger foods—beef skewers with some kind of a *chile* rub, pigs in a blanket, chocolate-dipped pretzels, and cookies. While we ate and enjoyed wine from a local winery, the owner and I discussed my research. By the end of the night, we agreed that I would stay at the house for at least six months, and then we would re-evaluate the situation. I was excited to begin

over the past eighty years. While the project initially focused on individuals from San Rafael, it soon expanded to individuals from Grants, San Mateo, Ramah, and Atarque, New Mexico.

moving forward with my work, but I really had no idea of what other obstacles I would encounter.

Making Connections

I knew it would be quite a task to collect forty life history interviews from different generations of women. Up until this point, I had only come to know particular women who were heavily involved in the community, which meant they were all church women and all were over the age of 50. These women—Hazel Sandoval, Mary Ann Montoya, Josie Chávez and her daughter Dina Jaramillo—all made San Rafael a viable place to conduct research because they welcomed me into the community, and so others welcomed me as well, and they also began grooming me to be a part of their community. I did not realize it until years later, the amount of work it took to prepare me and adapt me to San Rafael.

While I saw the importance of the older church-devoted women within the community as a whole, I did not want only their perspective, and more importantly, I had noticed that these women did not often have involved daughters. Only Dina's daughter, Elaine Vigil, had taken as strong a role as her mother and grandmother within the community; the other women instead talked about how their daughters were unable to participate due to family, work, or lack of motivation. It was this disconnect that I wanted to know more about, and I knew I would have to go about recruiting the daughters through their mothers. I first began by compiling a list of women who others suggested I call. Sometimes one of the women would give me another woman's number, other times I would have to try and find a number for the woman. Certain women with whom I was close, such as Hazel, Dina, and Mary Ann, already freely gave me the names and numbers of their friends, daughters, or mothers.

Research Participants

The women who provided me with suggestions were hubs of the community involved in church activities, fiesta planning, or local politics. It was more difficult to find participants who were not involved in these realms. I felt as though I were spending months tracking people down only for them to say they were not interested, or were too busy, to try back in a few months. Other women agreed to participate, but in very limited or controlled ways. Some wanted only to participate through the particular events of fiestas or *Las Posadas*. Others did not want to be recorded. Some only wanted an interview—no home visits or family time. I worked with the women on these requests with the hope that over some time, they would come to see that I did not have bad intentions and I was not interested in gossip or past transgressions, but was only interested in how they engaged in cultural production. At times cultural production flows into all other areas of life, including the dirty laundry, but this was not the purpose of my research. I found older women were much more open to the idea of working with me. They wanted to talk about their lived experiences, their childhood, parents, cousins, friends from school. Even when discussing difficult family times or bad decisions, older women shared their wisdom about such matters and without shame or reservation.

Conversely, daughters were suspicious of me and my interest in their private lives. Not only was I asking to interview these women, I was asking for access to their home lives, their community lives, and even their work lives. I would not just be around them, I would be around their families and sometimes their friends and co-workers. These conditions are difficult for younger generations of women to accept; older women were often retired, and so my hanging out at their homes during the day or while they ran errands was not so much strange, as it was simply having company over. For younger women, my presence was

intrusive, and many of them treated me as though they were trying to figure me out as much as I was trying to figure them out. It seemed as though younger women were more concerned with being judged negatively, even the daughters of the women I had known for a few years. The only daughter and current resident of San Rafael who allowed me as much access as her mother was Elaine Vigil, daughter of Dina Jaramillo and granddaughter of Josie Chávez. These three women all treated me as extended family, and would sometimes quickly explain who I was to others by saying I was a cousin. In that way, others would treat me as a cousin figure, not as a complete outsider. With these women, I was often invited over for family dinners on Sundays or on Holy Days. Elaine often told me to just stop by her grandma's home just behind the church to see if anybody was home or if I just wanted something to eat.

After I had interviewed about 10 women who were all heavily involved in the community, I tried to recruit ten more women who were not, which proved to be difficult as well. Although San Rafael is a community established around a Catholic Church, the plaza area of the village is not used as a communal gathering area for residents, but instead has a reputation as a favorite location for drug dealers. I was warned not to hang around the plaza, which is actually the Guadalupe Grotto, because the people who generally frequented that area may be dealing drugs, high on drugs, or looking for some other kind of trouble. Women told me that they often find syringes at the Grotto, which makes it unsafe for children. Women who were close to or in their sixties recalled how they were warned as children that only unsavory types go to the Grotto, but more than half a century ago, it was the central gathering place for community members that has now become imperiled by drugs and criminal activity. Without the Grotto, there is no central place for the community to gather,

and no real way to meet new potential participants other than word of mouth and through the women I already knew.

When I did meet new women who were somewhat removed from the communal life of the village, they tended to be reserved with me and were curious as to what I would ask them if they were not involved in the cycle of events. A couple of women declined to be interviewed on these grounds, and despite my careful description of the project as focusing on the ways life in San Rafael which has changed over the years, one woman flatly said that she did not have anything to do with the church and so would have nothing to tell me.

Another woman told me, “I don’t think I’m the kind of woman you want to talk to.” Other women better understood the point of my talking to as many different women as possible, and agreed to be interviewed. Interviews with women disconnected from or not involved in communal life were often brief in length, and held more negative perspectives on village life and the future of San Rafael. These women also viewed themselves or their families as “stuck” in San Rafael, rather than others whose families were regionally scattered, but for whom San Rafael remained a kind of family hub. An example of how this family hub functioned was demonstrated to me through a special woman named Pauline Chávez.

Pauline Chávez

My attempts to identify and interview younger women and women not associated with the cycle of community events continued throughout my research as it proved to be the most difficult aspect of fieldwork. I experienced a turning point, both in meeting new participants and in feeling as though I were a part of the daily life of the community when I met one particular woman—Pauline Chávez, who was the host of the Centennial Fiesta vespers during my first experience in San Rafael. Pauline was suggested as someone for me

to contact by Antonio, the man who had helped me find a place to rent. He said she was a warm, open woman and I could probably just give her a call. We talked on the phone, and Pauline agreed to be interviewed; we scheduled a time and place, but the phone call was rather brief. Based on that call, I would not have thought that knowing Pauline would become so instrumental to my time in San Rafael.

When I arrived at Pauline's for the interview, it was the same home where we began the centennial fiesta procession and gathered after vespers in 2006. Pauline was very hospitable, asking me how the drive was, how the weather was in Albuquerque. While most of my other interviews began quickly and moved steadily through, Pauline's interview flowed quite differently. Before we began, she insisted that we have the best breakfast burritos in town, which she picked up earlier. While we sat on her porch outside in the unbearable August heat, we sipped cool sodas, ate our burritos, and Pauline questioned me about my studies, my family, and my history. As a native New Mexican, she felt comfortable asking me about whether I was raised Catholic, if my family ever participated in things like the fiestas or Posadas. I told her my family was Catholic, but my parents' home was not very religious and the fiestas and Posadas in San Rafael were the first I had ever attended. I explained that my father's family was very poor and isolated in rural eastern New Mexico, and my mom grew up in a very religious, but very American household near downtown Albuquerque. Processions in the street, *rosarios*, *Las Posadas*, and *los penitentes* were not a part of my upbringing. We finished our burritos and I thought we would begin recording, but instead Pauline asked if I wanted to go for a drive. As we got in her car, I noticed her initialed vanity plate "PAC," and we quickly drove off from her home.

Pauline took me cruising through town; it was our first cruise, but certainly not our last. There are only three main streets in San Rafael—old Mirabal Road, Main Street, and Chávez Road. With all of the turns and small dirt roads leading to small clusters of houses or trailers, one would not think there were only three main streets. Pauline would slowly drive down all the roads, with windows rolled down she would point out where the Dubois lived, where her Grandma Concepción lived, and where the local doctor lives. She drove past the cemetery and asked if I had been there. I said I had been there. She said Mary Ann Jaramillo had been fixing it up. Maybe next time we drive past, we'll see her and can stop and talk to her. As we drove around and she was reminded of people, she would excitedly ask, "Have you talked to Mr. Vigil? Have you talked to Ms. Sara? What about Ella Mirabal? Did Mr. Saavedra talk to you?" It was obvious that Pauline became excited about my project and was eager to help.

Pauline was like a San Rafael encyclopedia—full of the town's history, significant events and people. She had elaborate stories about her childhood and young adulthood, and everything was wrapped up in a story. I could see very quickly that Pauline had a big personality and was an excellent storyteller. We drove to Grants so we could continue cruising around giving her time to share other stomping grounds, she explained her lifelong interest in New Mexico culture and history. She named books she owned—books about the *penitentes*, *matachines* dancers, and Spanish colonial arts. She named books by my professors and was so excited to pick my brain about it all. It was almost overwhelming, but helped so much in lifting my spirits. I did not feel so alone or out of place in San Rafael. Pauline became a kind of mother and confidant for me. Just as other women were touchstones for their adult children, Pauline was my touchstone for the community. After I

completed my fieldwork I continued to return once a week on Sundays to attend mass and have breakfast with either Pauline and her husband, Elaine and her family, or the choir folks who would have breakfast all together.

As Pauline and I came to know each other, she began inviting me over to her home more often. Any time she had family over, she invited me. After a little while, and knowing my agreement to stay at the bed and breakfast had just come to an end, Pauline offered me one of her spare bedrooms—her daughter Stephanie’s old room. I could not have thought of a better living situation for me as her family and I got along, we enjoyed each other’s company, and Pauline truly was one of the best resources in all of San Rafael in terms of knowing history and knowing people. Staying with Pauline allowed her to absorb me into the routine of her life. She invited me to start attending afternoon rosaries held at the church and Tuesday evening Bible Study held at the home of Ms. Sara. Through Bible Study, I came to know two more women in the community—Sara Jaramillo and Theresa García. I also came to see Bible Study as much more than that; it was an opportunity to catch up on town gossip and news. While publically frowned upon, the act of gossip is complex mesh of “social relationships” involving “the gossipers and their subject and...the gossipers themselves,” which illustrates the nature of gossip as a communicative event that is communally and culturally imbedded (Brenneis 1992:152). These interactions alerted me to general communal ideas of moral and cultural values, and were expressions of the women attempting to make sense of “aberrant or outrageous behavior” (Brenneis 1992: 150). Each of the women who participated in Bible Study felt strongly about their community, the future for young people, and women’s roles in families, politics, and the community. Bible Study was a break from other religiously themed events that were often rigid and structured without much discussion.

Our Bible Study was San Rafael's version of a French salon where we gathered to discuss current events, what we saw as solutions, and generally tried to expand our knowledge or understandings of San Rafael life. Both Sara and Theresa followed Pauline's lead in treating me as one of their friends and helping me identify other willing participants, which was an ongoing issue for me.

Becoming close with Pauline's family and friends also allowed me to see that I did not necessarily have to accumulate more participants from across families or by searching in different social circles, but by probing deeper within the ones of which I knew. Many people joked with me that everybody in San Rafael is related, which is why women are not often married to a man from there. I came to find that they are right—the relatedness of San Rafael allowed me to see the tremendous variation within families; two cousins raised almost as brothers who then have two very large families generate a wealth of information on social and cultural change, religious involvement, communal attachment, and kinship structure and relations.

By the end of my fieldwork, younger women had grown accustomed to seeing me at church, driving around town, or hanging out with some of the older women. Several of the daughters who have previously declined to participate in my study were now willing to be included, albeit in a somewhat limited manner still. While few of the daughters treated me as a peer or a friend, the others seemed to treat me in the same fashion that they would treat a friend of their mother's. They were accommodating when they could be and warm and welcoming at all the right times, but if I needed to convey something to them, I would usually go through their mothers, rather than directly to the daughter. I would more likely text and phone their mothers than I would younger generations. When events would occur in

their daughters' lives, it was not the daughter herself who reached out to me, but her mother instead.

The Interviews

Over the course of my fieldwork in San Rafael from the spring of 2010 to the summer of 2011, I participated in and visually documented the annual fiestas, *Las Mañanitas Guadalupanas* held on December 12th each year, *Las Posadas*, which takes place from December 16-24th each year, Lenten practices beginning on Ash Wednesday and culminating with Holy Week and Easter Sunday, First Holy Communion held each Mother's Day, and numerous family celebrations—from weddings to funerals to graduations—which take place at family homes and the parish hall, a common and favorite location for San Rafael gatherings. This is in addition to the numerous fiestas, baptisms, and Lenten activities I attended from the years 2006 to the official start of my fieldwork in 2010. In total, I interviewed 35 women. Some women were interviewed more than once, usually the women with whom I had closer relationships, while others were only briefly interviewed to accommodate her time or interests. Most interviews took place in the women's homes, however a couple of interviews took place in restaurants, three interviews were conducted via email, and five were conducted through phone conversations. On four occasions, the interviews involved both mother and daughter pair. The setting, length of time, and manner in which the interview was conducted was decided upon by each individual woman. The interviewees ranged in age from 28 to 86, both active and uninvolved community members, and distant former residents.

Each interview was based upon a guide that contained five categories of questions: 1) traditional foods and food preparation 2) family gatherings and celebrations 3) community

fiestas and other communal events 4) religious customs and 5) maintenance and use of kinship networks. I based these categories on what had emerged as central themes that women had discussed with me over the previous three years of work I had done in the region through the Grants Oral History project with Dr. Lamphere, and eventually through my own continued visits and preliminary fieldwork. The interviews ranged in length from one and a half hours to five hours. Thirty interviews were completed in one session, while five occurred over the course of multiple sessions. Although each interview was structured upon the same guide, I would often tailor the actual interview based upon each woman's individual preferences. I would either know enough about a woman beforehand to know that she is an experienced cook or a local politician, or within the interview, a woman would open up about one area of her life that would then become the overarching framework of her narrative. In the case of one woman who structured her story around the narrative of her political endeavors, or another woman whose narrative revolved around being perceived as an outsider. Ultimately, I wanted to capture the woman's oral history as she constructs it or experiences it. Only a fraction of the women were consciously aware of and verbalized the importance of cultural practices and their transmission to others—whether a younger generations or for a tourist gaze. For most women, the communal events that took place throughout the year were simply routines.

In preparing to use the interviews for data, I decided to transcribe half of the interviews myself verbatim, and then only partially transcribe the remaining half. I was selective in what half I transcribed verbatim—choosing all of the women who I designated “center women” and then a handful of women who represented the two other women categories—periphery women (this category often included daughters) and uninvolved

women (women who remained uninvolved in communal functions). With the other half of interviews, I made transcription notes—marking where certain sections of questions began and making almost a “clean edit” version of theme questions and answers. I annotated these interviews providing myself with an outline of what was discussed in each interview.

Field Notes and Data

In addition to the data that the interviews provided, I also relied heavily upon my field notes to write the ethnographic vignettes as it was often in my everyday experiences with women that we discussed matters of the family, the community, what the future holds for them. Or at communal events, as we sat around the parish hall having coffee and donuts, the women would begin to reminisce and each woman would contribute to the story of a memory from long ago. I recorded these moments, or particular phrases the women used, on small notes that I made throughout the day. During events or moments when having a pen might seem inappropriate, I would often jot notes in my cell phone, one advantage of technology in the field. Later in the day, I would add to these notes my own observations of particular people or places or groups. I would further add to my notes as other thoughts or ideas came to me, or as I received clarification on a person or thing. From these field notes and interviews, I identified several prevalent themes: New Mexican foodways, faith and religion, social and kinship networks, economic (in)security, migration, and belonging. There were minor themes that arose in about half of the interviews such as uranium mining, health issues, and substance abuse. Together these themes from the interviews inform the structure of this dissertation, and my field notes and the women’s oral histories provide the data presented in chapters 4-7. This methodology of life history interviewing was particularly useful for this small-town ethnographic work in which I focused on everyday practices and

specially marked events to highlight and discuss in depth a woman's lived experiences within the village environment today.

A benefit of technology, specifically smart phones and tablets, gave me the opportunity to take lots of pictures. It had become commonplace for people to document their lives on Facebook, and so I too, with people's permission, began snapping pictures of foods, party preparations, or families together. I was asked to take pictures for First Holy Communion, family gatherings, and even at Good Friday events that are not often photographed. If people forgot their own cameras, they would often ask me to email shots to them, and so I fulfilled the purpose of documenting the community, which proved to be another means by which I gained acceptance in the village.

My Own Transformation in the Village

My own experience of gaining acceptance and some form of belonging in San Rafael perfectly illustrated the themes in this dissertation and the ways in which communal cultural practices foster a sense of community, a shared identity, and a way of belonging, whether you are an anthropology student, or a distant family member, or newly married into a San Rafael family. It was through my participation in particular events, my growing knowledge and respect for local history and culture, and the way in which I applied the knowledge in my daily life that I was able to belong to San Rafael.

While my early work in San Rafael made me feel welcome and comfortable in the village, it was not until I met Pauline Chávez and began accompanying her to daily rosary sessions or weekly Bible Study that others began to open their homes and lives up to me in similar ways. Soon, I was accompanying other women around San Rafael and in Grants—picking up grandkids from school, running errands, and even shopping—eventually assuming

the role of an adult daughter. Many people often joked that I was somehow related to San Rafael families, and folks in Grants often thought I was Pauline's daughter, who is also named Stephanie. Similarly, Elaine Jaramillo often introduced me as her cousin because she thought this relationship accurately reflected the way in which I related to her and her family—I was too old to be her daughter, but I was not old enough to be her sister either. My relationship to residents is somewhat accurate to what many extended villagers experience—a sense of belonging and relatedness, but perhaps not fully a part of the community. It is a way of belonging in relation to others who are touchstones to the community and culture.

Chapter Three

San Rafael History: The Relationship Between Resource Extraction Industries and Current Socio-economic Conditions

Due to its location along the Zuni Mountains and close to Mt. Taylor, natural resource extraction industries have played a central role in the economic trajectory of San Rafael residents, and have had generational impacts upon them and their community. The history of San Rafael has followed a cycle of economic booms and busts centered on logging, fluorspar mining, and uranium mining that have contributed to the current state that is bust in which people must adapt to changes in family and community structures as well as modify their beliefs in cultural practices in order to fit with their daily lives and ability to participate.

The Establishment of San Rafael

The way by which New Mexican villages came to hold anthropological interest have been connected with histories to a distant Spanish land grant past. San Rafael was established fairly recently in comparison with settlements founded along the Rio Grande four hundred years ago. Not until the 1850s, is there a continuous record of various military garrisons and expeditions traveling through the northwest and west-central regions of New Mexico. These troops would often stop in a fertile valley called *Cañon de Gallo*, what is now called Zuni Canyon (Mangum 1990:22-25; Robinson 1994:21). In *Cañon de Gallo*, troops found an abundant and lush ecosystem that thrived around a spring (the “*ojo*”) on the western edge of massive lava flows. This area was previously used by Spanish colonizers as they moved through the area. Local historian Josephine Barela wrote that,

The original name of San Rafael was *Ojo del Gallo* later shortened to *El Gallo* and so known for many years. *Ojo* in Spanish can mean either ‘eye’ or ‘spring’ and many have thought the name was derived from the round shape of the spring resembling a

cock's eye at the north entrance of town; however, this is in error, as the spring in the early days flowed east without banks over the *vega* toward the San Jose Valley. The name undoubtedly was derived from the abundance of wild fowl in the area (grouse, turkey, quail, ducks, etc.), as a vast sea of grass and heavily wooded hills must have been a mecca of wild life in those days, giving the ever-descriptive Spaniards the suggestion for the name. [Barela 1975:7]

The lava flows on the eastern boundary of *El Gallo* were called "*malpais*" ("bad lands") by the Spanish colonizers because jagged and unstable volcanic flows from neighboring dormant volcanoes swept over the land and made passing on horses nearly impossible.

Government surveyor Lt. Amiel W. Whipple in 1853 described this treacherous volcanic area writing,

The whole length of the valley followed to-day has been threaded by a sinuous stream of lava. It appears as if it had rolled down a viscous semi-fluid mass, had been arrested in its course, hardened, blackened, cracked, and in places broken, so as to allow the little brook to gush from below and gurgle along by its side. The lava bed is frequently a hundred yards in width, the cross-section being a semi-ellipse, in the centre probably thirty feet high. [Executive Documents, 33rd Cong., 2nd sess., Vol. III, Part I, Chap. 8, No. 91 (1854), p. 62.]

Although the rugged volcanic flows, "which appear to have rolled in a fiery torrent" (Lt. Edward F. Beale, House of Representatives, Executive Documents, 35th Cong., 1st sess., No. 124 (1858)) seem to consume the landscape and render it unusable for human settlement, the U.S. military saw it useful to establish a military fort in this area, which was inhabited by Acoma, Laguna, and Zuni Indians, and raided by Navajos (Mangum 1990:27-29, Robinson 1994: 22).

Due to a shifting focus within the American military and constant threats of Navajo raids, by 1861, the only two military installations in west central New Mexico, Fort Defiance and Fort Fauntleroy, had been abandoned (Mangum 1990:29-30). By 1862, Col. Edward R.S. Canby, who had been charged with responsibility for New Mexico's defenses, requested and

received permission to establish a new garrison on the western edge of the *malpais*, at the campgrounds of previous expeditions—*Ojo del Gallo* (Mangum 1990:30). The site was chosen because “the *Ojo del Gallo* Valley afforded excellent pasturage. In addition, its position, astride an intersection that blanketed the approaches of two major highways—the old military road to Fort Defiance and the Spanish highway to Zuni Pueblo--provided control and access in which to block or pursue an adversary” (Mangum 1990:31; Robinson 1994:22). The new military outpost was called Fort Wingate, in honor of Bvt. Major Benjamin Wingate who received life-ending injuries at the Civil War battle of Valverde February 21, 1862 (Mangum 1990:30, Robinson 1994:22).

The official date of establishment for Fort Wingate is October 22, 1862, and it was at this time that “an aggregate of 11 officers and 317 enlisted men of the 1st New Mexico Cavalry Volunteers reached Fort Wingate to initiate their long association at the malpais garrison” (Mangum 1990:31). Most of the men who comprised the New Mexico Cavalry Volunteers were Hispanic, and so would often socialize with women from the nearby Hispanic land grant communities of *Cubero* and *Cebolleta* (now spelled *Seboyeta*) (Robinson 1994:22). This was the start for contemporary San Rafael families—culturally similar Hispanic men from other parts of New Mexico and local women began marrying and establishing roots in what would become the small, but culturally important, village of San Rafael.²⁰

²⁰ There are two stories behind the naming of San Rafael. The first is that the village is named for the patron saint, St. Raphael, which is a common practice for Hispanic New Mexican villages. The connection to or reason for selecting St. Raphael as the patron saint is unknown. The second story is that the village was named for Fr. José Rafael Chávez, an apostate priest who served the first families who began settling San Rafael in the 1850s. See Chapter Six.

After the Long Walk in 1864 in which 2,000 Navajos were forced to march from Fort Canby to Bosque Redondo for four years of confinement, Navajo people began to return home to a reduced reservation area in regions of northwestern New Mexico and eastern Arizona (Robinson 1994:23). In 1869, Fort Wingate was transferred to a second location, what was the old Fort Fauntleroy (currently Fort Lyons) (Mangum 1990:32, Robinson 1994: 23). Although Fort Wingate was abandoned as a military garrison, numerous Hispanic men who were associated with the Fort from their volunteer service remained at the fertile site, which was no longer under constant threat of Navajo raids. The infrastructure of the old Fort Wingate provided these families with the necessary tools to establish a village. Mangum writes that,

During the dismantling of Wingate--predominantly Spanish-Americans, ex-soldiers, and citizens--built a cluster of homes, in 1869, within a mile of the old post. They called their new settlement, San Rafael. Resources were plentiful. Timber and adobe from the post became the nucleus for new homes and outbuildings. The industrious settlers adapted the military's irrigation ditch for use in supplying water to their homes and field crops. [1990: 32-33]

In addition to structural resources from the old Fort Wingate, the settlers were also in an area of rich ecological resources that would go on to aid in the establishment of the entire regional economy, and impact current socio-economic conditions.

A History of Fluctuation

It is impossible to know exactly when this Hispanic settlement began to experience its population and economic fluctuations, but one can certainly look to the expansion of the Transcontinental Railroad in New Mexico in 1881 as a start to a different epoch and way of life within the San Rafael region based on a cash economy. The Hispanic families of San Rafael had for some time relied upon subsistence agriculture, trade with neighboring

Hispanic and Native American villages, and ingenuity. As with many small towns and communities across the US, the coming of the railroad signaled many changes, the greatest being the increased connection to different ways of living and the increased influence of the wage economy (Robinson 1994:27-28). Ranching and farming industries followed the railroad, and soon, small-town agricultural production could no longer compete with big business. For many families, this meant entering the wage economy through service or large-scale agricultural industries, which required workers, often males, to leave home for periods of time. As this occurred, the ability for families to maintain a subsistence agricultural way of life began to fade. Maintaining animals and caring for the land became a luxury, and for some a burden, rather than a necessity in order to feed themselves as wages paid for store bought foods and services. However, for those families who were able to make a living from ranching and farming, the railroad made it possible for them to market their sheep and cattle, and so for some such as the Mirabal family of San Rafael, the wage economy marked the start of a boom for family business. The Mirabals, headed by Sylvestre Mirabal, became one of the wealthiest, if not the wealthiest, Hispanic families in the San Rafael region. Through Sylvestre's business savvy and political connections, the Mirabal family acquired vast amounts of land and tens of thousands of sheep in New Mexico and Arizona. The family owned a mercantile in Albuquerque and shipped wool around the southwestern United States, and eventually, Sylvestre went into the banking business as well. The Mirabal family maintains a certain high status in the San Rafael area, but they no longer as involved or known as they once were. Their story illustrates that for some, the railroad led to greater opportunities and successes, but overall, the Mirabals are an exception, not the standard.

The Railroad and Grants, NM

Less than twenty years after the founding of San Rafael in 1869, three Canadian brothers, Angus, John, and Lewis Grant, were contracted to build railroad track through the *Malpais* (Mangum 1990:35-36; Robinson 1994:27). The brothers broke ground in the *malpais* in January 1881, at a place the locals called *Los Alamos*. The site was named by Jesús Blea, who had a homestead there, and who named the location for “the little cottonwoods at a spring bubbling from the Malpais” (Robinson 1994:27). *Los Alamos* was halfway between Gallup and Albuquerque, and, like San Rafael, was close to accessible timber and water resources in the Zuni Mountains (Robinson 1994:27). Different from San Rafael was the fact that the *Los Alamos* area could be purchased by the railroad companies for expansion.²¹ One site in particular in the Los Alamos area was the homestead of Don Jesús Blea, which the railroad company chose as a stop (Mangum 1990).

In 1881, the site was renamed Grant’s Camp, after the three Canadian brothers who were contracted to build the tracks through the *malpais*, and was later called Grant Station for the railroad stop there. Mangum writes, “a closer inspection reveals that Grant probably owed its existence to neighboring San Rafael. This thriving agricultural community, located on the western edge of the *malpais* and four miles south of Grant Station, offered economic potential railroad executives coveted” (1990:36). As with the Spaniard colonizers and the first Hispanic San Rafael settlers before them, industry moguls saw San Rafael as a prime site of “economic potential” that sprang from the abundance of natural resources. And so once more, San Rafael, and this time, the residents of the small village, became resources in

²¹ The government gave railroad companies land in exchange for building tracks in specific locations. The government gave every other section to railroad companies, creating a checkerboard pattern of ownership (Mangum 1990).

support of economic growth. Meanwhile, the area and local cultures grew increasingly influenced by the American wage economy.

Expansion of San Rafael

As the railroad powered its way through New Mexico to the west coast, local San Rafael residents continued to develop more as an integrated community with visible families and activities. In an 1885 petition to President Grover Cleveland claiming the village of San Rafael, residents described the process of establishing their village:

In the year 1869 when the military troops of the United States abandoned the old Fort Wingate, to go to establish what is not the new Fort Wingate, we were invited by the Commanding Officer of said Post to come and occupy the lands of the Old Fort Wingate, which we have always possessed since that time and have broken the ground, dug ditches, built houses and fences, establishing a town named San Rafael, of about sixty head of families, or three hundred inhabitants, where we have a church which is the headquarters of a large parish, ore religious district. [Valencia County Abstract and Title, Petition and Manifest, Book A-6, Page 326]

The small village grew rapidly, and by the 1870 census, the population was at 678, which was more than any other neighboring villages or communities (Mangum 1990:33). The San Rafael “settlers developed an economic base centered around livestock, principally sheep, the standard-bearer of economics in frontier New Mexico” (Mangum 1990: 33). Business also began in San Rafael, as a shepherd and businessman named Romulo Barela from *Pajarito*, New Mexico (a community in contemporary Albuquerque’s South Valley) came to San Rafael to graze his sheep, and decided to remain and open a store and saloon alongside his sheep and cattle operation (Barela 1975:9). The Barela Mercantile was the first of its kind within the region, and was followed by other local general stores and saloons (Barela 1975: 19-20).

As local business and culture began to grow in San Rafael, the expanding railroad operation in Grants also began to boom—bringing in not only railroad workers, but also others who saw the area as opportunities. It is generally accepted by historians of the area that “the railroad had left an indelible mark on the region, perhaps more than any single event before or after. The coming of the steel rails permitted the area to gain an economic foothold that attracted a slow but steady increase in population” (Mangum 1990:36). It was during this time that San Rafael experienced a “flood of Anglo immigration” that “had begun to revolutionize New Mexico’s economy” (Edmonson 1957:19). Whether perceived as positive or negative, this revolution brought with it “sweeping economic changes wrought by the building of the railroads and the gradual integration of New Mexico into the American market economy” (Ibid). Rather than frame the historical trajectory of San Rafael as “integration” into the market economy, I argue that for the Hispanic and Native American communities, the indelible mark left by the railroad was not the increase in population, but rather, an encroachment from outside American business and industry, which, in form and function, differed quite dramatically from subsistence agriculture and local sheepherding. Mangum writes that,

The railroad encouraged the ranchers to expand their herds. In 1870, the New Mexico sheep count numbered 619,000 animals statewide. Ten years later the sheep population exploded to 3.9 million. According to the New Mexico census taken in 1885, ten thousand sheep alone belonged to San Rafael residents, Martin Gallegos and E.Q. Chavez. San Rafael rapidly became the center for sheep raising. [Mangum 1990: 38-39]

Anthropologist Munro Edmonson, who conducted fieldwork in the area during 1947, wrote, “the technological patterns of the Anglos are increasingly replacing the old Hispano techniques,” which included agricultural practices. However, what was viewed as prosperity

would not positively impact most people in San Rafael. The reality of the situation in New Mexico was that only a minority of the Hispanic population was capable of adapting to and negotiating the changes that the railroad and business expansion brought about. Within the San Rafael region, there were only a few families that prospered and advanced in terms of class. In San Rafael, there was the Mirabal family, while the small village of *Atarque* had the García family, and with some influence in San Rafael due to intermarriage with the Mirabals, were the Candelarias from Concha, Arizona. To use the term popularized by Clark S. Knowlton (1962), families such as the Mirabals were the patrons of the village and what Edmonson describes as the “*rico*” class (1957:45). As historian Suzanne Forrest writes, “If there is one single factor responsible for the transformation of a once proud, independent, and self-sufficient people to abject poverty and dependence, it is the inexorable seizure of wealth and power that accompanies the superimposition of a technologically and economically dominant culture upon a preindustrial civilization” (Forrest 1989:17).

However, San Rafael residents recognized early on that the railroads did not necessarily mean they would benefit, writing in their 1885 petition to President Grover Cleveland that “Our best agricultural lands are situated on sections which the company of the Atlantic and Pacific railroad reclaim; and which it will sell unexpectedly to some rich monopolist cattle owner” (Valencia County Abstract, Petition and Manifest, Book A-6, page 326). The early settlers of San Rafael saw that the vast tracts of land on which they grazed their sheep were disappearing into the ownership of larger businesses and industries. They could not have known, however, that with the train would come a wage economy that would quickly supplant their communal and subsistence way of life.

In addition to the challenges brought by the railroad, a series of natural and human disasters drastically affected the ability of local sheepherders to maintain their flocks and way of life. These began in the early 1890s when a severe drought hit the region, which, coupled with over-use, greatly affected the ability to graze herds of animals (Mangum 1990: 39). Both World War I and the Spanish influenza, which struck San Rafael from September to November 1918, decreased the sheer number of men who were involved in the local agricultural and sheep business (Barela 1975:26). In 1920, an epidemic of scabies struck New Mexico stock, including those sheep in the San Rafael area (Barela 1975:26; Mangum 1990:48). New Mexico stockmen began dipping their sheep that year, and for subsistence agro-pastoralists, such as those found in San Rafael, the economic means to care for the sheep were not always there. Then in 1929, with the collapse of the stock market, San Rafael stockmen were unable to sell their wool and were forced to store it for a period of two years while they waited for wool prices to rebound (Barela 1975:26). Mangum describes this period writing that,

Between 1927 and 1929 sheep prices dipped, while the expense of feeding the animals skyrocketed. In Valencia County, where it had cost twenty-five cents to maintain each head of sheep in 1890 had by 1927 escalated to \$4.13. The maintenance expense for sheep, coupled with low wages, forced many of the smaller ranchers out of the business during the 1920s and 1930s. [1990:48]

A few years later in 1932, a blizzard struck the high country of New Mexico almost entirely wiping out sheep populations for local stockmen who were able to maintain a few small herds despite the difficulties of the previous decade. The areas south of San Rafael along Highway 53—grazing lands around El Morro, Ramah, and Atarque—received the brunt of the storm (Cecilio Sánchez, interview with Louise Lamphere and author, November 11, 2006; Abe Peña, interview with Louise Lamphere and author, August 11, 2007).

This series of disasters, and the growing influence of outside cattle industry, heavily impacted the ways in which San Rafael residents provided for their families and community, and forced them to enter the predominant wage economy. While villagers struggled to maintain their independence and communal-subsistence lifestyle, nearby Grants was experiencing a boom as the increase in resource industry attracted more residents, and even more business. This is evidenced in 1929, the same year self-sufficient shepherders are struggling to maintain their flocks, when the town of Grants received its first electric and water utilities, high school, and telephone exchange (Barela 1975:29; Robinson 1994:29). However, the economic growth Grants experienced due to the expansion of the timber industry did not last, and reflects a larger historical and regional trend of cyclical economic booms and busts, that I believe can be traced back to the dismantling of the old Fort Wingate, perhaps the first economic boom and bust of the region, as mostly Hispanic men and their families were accustomed to the benefits of the Fort and, within a few years, found themselves without work and trade business.

Zuni Mountain Timber and Early Mining

With the railroad and the growing influence of American institutions and values, San Rafael residents began to find themselves at the behest of the market economy. Outside interests saw the area as a resource-rich and wage-dependent, while locals were losing their self-sufficiency. The first foray into resource extraction came in the form of timber industry. Railroad companies expanded into the nearby Zuni Mountains, and logging seemed a natural business to pursue. The A&P Rail Road in particular seized the opportunity to buy precious forestlands along the Continental Divide, and then subcontracted the work of harvesting for railroad ties (Mangum 1990:39). Logging towns such as Mitchell (currently Thoreau),

Kettner (named for the original homesteader), and Sawyer quickly sprang up and were thriving Anglo communities in the Zuni Mountains (Mangum 1990:40). However, by 1913, the American Lumber Company, which controlled the timber operations in the Zuni Mountains, had folded and eventually became the property of McKinley Land & Lumber Company. Logging continued under McKinley Land & Lumber Company, until in 1924, it became a part of the West Virginia Timber Company, owned by George E. Breece (Mangum 1990:40). Breece was a mogul who expanded 38 miles of track through the Zuni Mountains, constructed company homes for his employees at the western edge of Grants, and whose timber operations gave Grants and San Rafael immediate economic boosts. Both communities experienced booms in local business, stores, and an influx of outsiders (Mangum 1990:45). With the passing of the Homestead Act in 1916, homesteaders were also increasingly drawn to the area around Grants, especially on the edges of the *Malpais* where they could establish homesteads and be in close distance to economic resources and business (Mangum 1990:46).

Overlapping with the timber business, local mining began in 1916 when a small copper mine opened at a site called Diener in the Zuni Mountains (Robinson 1994:28). While this mine was one of the first mining operations in the area, it only remained in business until the early 1930s. However, the local pastoral and agricultural way of life became more and more difficult for young families to maintain, and more men began finding work in the local mines and timber companies, while others were willing to migrate to neighboring Arizona where lumber camps and mining operations were beginning to appear (Barela 1975:26; Mangum 1990:40). For the most part during this period, only single young men, or groups of men, would relocate for employment opportunities. Young men's parents, siblings, and even

wives, remained in San Rafael village at the family home and the men would return when they were able to do so. This migration of men occurred with the general belief that they would eventually return to their home village when the opportunity allowed.

With World War II escalating in Europe, Italian pumice imports were severed, and were replaced with American pumice mines, which began opening around the San Rafael area in 1936 (Barela 1975:29; Robinson 1994:29). The war was also the impetus for fluorspar mining²² to begin in the Zuni Mountains, where, in 1940, three mines opened, employing 150 people (Barela 1975:29; Robinson 1994:29; Filemón Vigil, interview with author, March 9, 2011). The fluorspar mines were in operation from 1940 to 1952 (Mangum 1990:122). During this period, numerous Hispanic men and families from northern New Mexico moved to the mining camps that littered the Zuni Mountains. Eventually when the fluorspar mining closed, many of these miners and their families moved into the San Rafael and Grants communities where they obtained work in the service economy or in the next big boom.

Carrot Capital of the World

It was also during the 1940s that enterprising farmers in Bluewater began growing carrots, and other produce, which enticed businessmen Ralph Card and Dean Stanley to open Stanley & Card Vegetable Companies, and begin growing and boxing vegetables such as lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, cabbage, potatoes, onions, and peas (Barela 1975:29; Mangum 1990:50; Robinson 1994:30; Toby Michael, interview with Louise Lamphere and author, June 25, 2008). The growing and boxing of produce attracted migrant farm workers to the area, and further expanded the regional community and cultural influences in the area.

²² Fluorspar was used as a chemical flux in other metals during World War II.

For the most part, Navajos and local Hispanic boys were hired to work in the fields, while Filipinos and local Hispanic girls were hired as packers (Mangum 1990:50; Robinson 1994:30; Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010). Within twenty years, the local produce industry folded when they were no longer able to compete with California companies that packaged carrots without the leafy tops in cellophane bags (Mangum 1990:50; Robinson 1994:30; Toby Michael, interview with Louise Lamphere and author, June 25, 2008; Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010).

By the late 1950s with the decline of the carrot industry, once again San Rafael (along with the entire Grants region) slipped into a decline with lack of local industry, and an increasing number of men and families were forced to migrate out of their home villages. One source of wage income was mining operations west of New Mexico in Arizona and Nevada (Pauline Chávez, interview with author, August 31, 2010). And so several men from the village moved to these locations, which and returned with wives from these places, which has created an enduring link between San Rafael and the communities of Williams, Arizona and Winnemucca, Nevada. These links that were established through marriage between mining communities also led to an expansion of the San Rafael regional community.

From Carrot Capital of the World to Uranium Capital of the World – The Third Boom and Bust

The economic decline of the San Rafael region did not last, and these extended San Rafael families were once again able to return to their village upon the discovery of uranium by Paddy Martinez near Ambrosia Lake, New Mexico in 1950. The discovery of uranium and the resulting mining boom and bust in northwestern New Mexico has had lasting socio-

economic impacts upon the people who have worked and lived within the “uranium belt” of America.

Uranium has held a rather controversial and significant place within the lived experiences of at least three generations of San Rafael residents. The ubiquitous presence of uranium mining within the interviews and stories I collected reflects its ongoing influence throughout the entire Mt. Taylor region.

Initially, the opening of uranium mines was the start of an economic upturn for the working-class of San Rafael and nearby Hispanic communities. People were grateful for the opportunities the uranium mines provided. Expressing this sentiment, local historian Josephine Barela wrote, “Early in 1950, the uranium mines were opened in the Ambrosio Lake and surrounding areas; these mines have employed many, many men from San Rafael, affording them the largest salaries ever paid in the history of this area. Along with the mines came large supermarkets and chain stores giving employment to many of the citizens of Grants and San Rafael” (1975:30). At this time, in the minds of local residents, uranium was an economic blessing. Any other effects of the mining--environmental and social impacts--remained unknown and of little concern for the next thirty years.

For the community, the uranium mines generated almost immediate economic growth and expansion, unlike any other period in the region’s history. The Hispanic families experienced the greatest changes within their personal economies as “Hispanos constitute[d] the bulk of the laboring force” within the major uranium mining operations (Edmonson 1957:47). In a reversal of the previous situation, Hispanic New Mexican men came from northern communities to San Rafael searching for work having heard about the opening of the mines and how mining companies would hire any man who could pass a physical (Susie

Gallegos, interview with author, September 29, 2010; Dina Jaramillo and Josie Chávez, interview with Louise Lamphere and author, March 25, 2007; Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010; Hazel Sandoval, interview with author, February 29, 2011). It was not only Hispanic men from around New Mexico who moved to San Rafael. Mining attracted families from states as far away as West Virginia. At one point, the area south of San Rafael was called "Little West Virginia" due to the large number of Anglo mining families that moved to the area.

The high price of uranium

On an average day, the miners spent nine hours or more underground. They ate lunch and took their breaks along side uranium ore and dynamite. Although long term effects of uranium exposure were not known, mining itself was dangerous work, and many men experienced injury or death from dynamite blasts or rock collapses. One woman recalled the hectic night when her husband was injured in the mines:

Even my husband got hurt, his eye in the mines in '59. What ever that is on a certain thing they use at the mines, got loose and came and hit him but he had the safety goggles on and all that plastic got in his eye and cut it. We got there and the doctor, he looked at his eye and he said, "You know, Mrs. Tórrez it's going to be a 50/50 chance on that eye. He may have an eye if I can do anything, but he might lose it and he might not have an eye." And I thought, oh my gosh. And then his mom and everybody gone, he has to go into surgery and so I thought, oh dear God. So, he went in right away and they saved his eye. So, he didn't lose his eye. And this was very early on in our marriage, you know? [Mabel Tórrez, interview with author, June 14, 2011]

Stories such as the one Mabel shared with me from early on in her marriage were more common than one would think. In the interviews, most women had stories about some sort of mining accident that impacted their family. Women told me about their husbands, fathers, or brothers-in-law who were injured in mine blasts or in machine accidents.

Despite the danger, this work was necessary, and the accidents were a part of life for people in the San Rafael region. One woman told me in a matter of fact manner of the day her brother was buried alive at one of the uranium mills.

Orlando worked for a transporter. One time he was working for this contractor and he got buried alive. They had to dig him out and, you know how they can't use the machinery. They had to dig him out with a shovel. It took a long time and he was sick for a long time. I know he told me the story one time, but it was so--oh my gosh, I would say it was probably 30 years ago or over 30 years ago. It was a long time ago. [Teresa García, interview with author, April 18, 2011]

Although young, these individuals and their families were in constant peril due to the mines.

And those who did not suffer injury on the job, suffered in health later in life as exposure to radionuclides found in uranium was discovered to cause numerous illnesses related to both environmental and occupational exposure. And for many men, the occupational hazards were par for the course for living and providing for one's family in the San Rafael area.

He [her father] just said how awful they were. He said, "I just worked. I was the worker. I was the laborer. I did what the bosses told me and that's all that I did." He said, "And sometimes we didn't have masks. We didn't have anything. They never took care of us. But we didn't think anything of it because we needed the money and we worked. I had 10 kids to support." So, that's what he focused on...supporting his kids. [Teresa Marquez, interview with author, November 21, 2010]

Exposure to radiation has led to respiratory issues, lung and kidney disease, and various cancers (EPA 2011). These diseases currently plague San Rafael residents, along with other communities in the Grants Mineral Belt²³. The negative experiences with uranium continued long after the mines closed, but are always framed within the context of economy.

²³ The Grants Mineral Belt is an area of land with uranium occurrences more than 85 miles in length, and contains the Chuska, Gallup, Ambrosia Lake and Laguna uranium mining districts. It "extends along the southern margin of the San Juan Basin within Cibola, McKinley, Sandoval, and Bernalillo counties as well as on Tribal lands. The Grants Mineral

And so he lied about his age to get into the mines to help his mother raise the kids. He left school when he was in 3rd grade, the mining was in 10th grade. His dad died really young. Him and my mom had just got married and so he was sick during the time that my dad turned 17 and so my dad lied to get into the mines so he would be able to help them out. My dad stayed working in the mines, I think he was 42 when he retired. And that's what ended up killing him. It was the uranium in his lungs. [Teresa Marquez, interview with author, November 21, 2010]

Due to particular negative incidents at nuclear power plants in the United States in the late 1970s and early 1980s, fewer American nuclear power plants were opened. The U.S. began importing uranium from other countries, and mines began scaling back operations. Higher-grade uranium was imported from Canada, which certainly doomed the industry in the uranium belt of the United States. Amidst safety issues and falling uranium prices, the mines around San Rafael closed. By the mid-1980s, the uranium boom ended and by 1990, all uranium mining operations in New Mexico were closed (EPA 2011).

The closing of the mines has had a tremendous and long-lasting impact upon San Rafael residents. The entire region fell into an economic depression as mining families moved away or became dependent upon welfare, social security, or government assistance for disabilities related to radiation exposure. Other businesses that opened to serve the growing population of miners and their families also soon closed. Large numbers of men were suddenly unemployed, and the area was without any industry to offer other work. I believe the high number of unemployed men and the limited opportunities for local employment drastically changed the community and family structures of San Rafael as women entered the workforce and became the major wage earners, young families and single adults began moving away in search of opportunities, and communal participation was

Belt was the primary area for uranium extraction and production activities in New Mexico from the 1950's until late in the 20th century" (EPA Grants Mineral Belt Fact Sheet 2010).

supplanted by individual pursuits and hindered by increased criminal activity and substance abuse. In particular, local prisons have become a major economic provider in the region, especially for women who have entered the workforce as social workers, nurse practitioners, and other positions in the health sciences (Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010; Mary Ann Jaramillo, interview with author, July 13, 2010; Terry Marquez, interview with author, November 21, 2010; Melody Pohl, interview with author, January 23, 2011; Hazel Sandoval, interview with author, February 29, 2011). Women's increased involvement in the workforce, and at times their role as sole economic providers within families, have shifted how families are structured and the focus from women's domestic work to women's paid work.

Uranium mining effects upon social and communal organization

In her 1975 memoir of San Rafael, local historian Josephine Barela described the community as comprised of interrelated families that regularly came together in celebration of their faith and culture. Barela highlighted the most essential elements of San Rafael lifestyle--communal participation in events such as the fiesta and Las Posadas; involvement in the local Catholic Church, not just through regular attendance but also through stewardship of the San Rafael Mission Church, Guadalupe Grotto, and religious instruction; and frequent interaction with other villagers. Twenty years prior in 1957, anthropologist Munro Edmonson described an almost identical community structure in his values-orientation study of three Hispanic villages in west-central New Mexico (San Rafael, *La Tinaja*, and *Atarque*). Although Edmonson's values studies can be critiqued for the way it essentializes Hispanic New Mexicans, his descriptions of particular roles and practices emphasize the importance of

community social structure and maintenance within San Rafael (Edmonson 1957) and support Barela's memories of her home village.

Through the 1980s, families who remained at San Rafael after the uranium mines closed continued to organize themselves around community practices despite the fact that locals were economically insecure without mining wages to support their families. Just as quickly as uranium mines provided upward mobility for families, their closure eliminated all such opportunities. This created a situation either in which men left their families for long periods of time to work outside of San Rafael, entire families moved away altogether, or women became the primary wage earners. Women being more flexible in the work they could perform, were able to find jobs in local restaurants, in the school system as cafeteria cooks or as bus drivers, as cleaning ladies and laundresses, or as secretaries or clerks for county offices.

Eventually, women found more stable work in the latest regional industry-- correctional facilities. Not only have the five regional correctional facilities provided women with opportunities to work outside the home, they have motivated women to pursue higher education degrees in social work and nursing--two programs offered through the local New Mexico State University branch campus in Grants (1968) and the University of New Mexico-Gallup campus (1968). While local women have obtained higher education and better jobs, men have not fared so well. Without employment, many San Rafael men have turned to criminal activity as a means of economic survival or have succumbed to substance abuse in order to cope with their situation. Faced with pervasive social problems and changes in the economic pattern of women as wage earners have affected men and women's roles within the

community. A San Rafael resident identifies the struggle to maintain participation in community and religious activities.

Oh my Lord. I know there is a lot of drug and alcohol use, vandalism, violence, it just goes on and on. I don't know, the whole make up of the town has changed. Where we used to be safe and you know more people were involved, it's totally opposite now. Some people, we don't even know because they've moved in from other places and a lot of the families that were here have moved out. Some end up coming back, which is really nice. [Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010]

Whether there is absolute causation between the lack of work and the changes in community does not necessarily matter so much as the fact that residents clearly believe there is a strong correlation between their most recent economic downturn and the way in which they relate to one another, their village, and cultural practices.

Traditional lifeways and uranium

A 2011 Grants Mineral Belt Uranium Biomonitoring Project report that focused on individuals from Grants, San Mateo, San Rafael, Milan, Bluewater, and Laguna Pueblo asked specific questions of 100 participants related to their environmental exposure. These questions were an assessment of potential sources of uranium exposure based on: consumption of locally-grown fruits, vegetables and meat, collecting plants or gardening in Cibola or McKinley counties, and running, hiking and/or biking in Cibola or McKinley counties (U.S. Department of Health Environmental, Health Epidemiology Bureau, Grants Mineral Belt Uranium Biomonitoring Project March 2011). These are all activities that require individuals to come into contact with uranium-contaminated dirt. They are also all activities that were once essential tasks to life in San Rafael village—whether it was growing vegetables and *chiles* in a family garden, hunting in the nearby Zuni Mountains, collecting *piñon* nuts or wild herbs for teas and *remedios*, or spending a family holiday hiking in the

mountains, picnicking or hunting Easter eggs, a close relationship with the land has been essential to San Rafael cultural practices.

Currently, many of these practices are no longer possible or encouraged due to uranium exposure found in the soils, streams, surface water, and groundwater (Environmental Protection Agency 2011; Kaufmann, Eadie, and Russell 1976; U.S. Department of Health 2011). I was warned fairly early on by San Rafael residents not to drink the water, and as I heard more and more stories of health issues related to mining, I began to question the ways in which uranium mining and exposure affected life in San Rafael. It was Pauline who first pointed out to me that nobody in San Rafael has a personal garden or grow grass in their front yards. People were too frightened of getting cancers to continue personal gardening. This, on top of the fact that within Pauline's lifetime, water had become quite scarce because of the mining operations. The once lush vegetation natural to the area transformed to dry, barren land.

The water situation in San Rafael has become so precarious as a result of uranium mining that their traditional, communal water irrigation system—the *acequia*—as well as the work and roles associated with it, are no longer a part of the local culture. I asked Mary Ann Montoya, a local writer of traditions, about the *acequia* and the role of water within the community: “They had water in wells, personal wells and each house had their own water well. But that was precious, so that was just for cooking or drinking. They had to go and get the water in buckets and tubs from the *acequia*, which was the water that used to run through San Rafael before it dried out.” As I asked her about what the *acequia* brought to the community she said,

That was a natural, beautiful resource that we had. Because there used to be fields, alfalfa fields, but now we do not have that. There was cattle, even before my time, it

was more beautiful but I remember us growing up and driving to Grants, there was still water there. There was a little bit of water left. But then it was gone in the 50's because that's when the uranium operations started. So, they sold those water rights and of course the water table was drained, so we had no water there. [Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010]

During the past ten years, the depleted water table has necessitated a moratorium on water meters for homeowners, which creates a situation in which younger San Rafael generations, young couples and families, are unable to remain in or move back to their home village. Instead, younger people from San Rafael move to nearby Grants or Milan, a smaller town that developed on the western edge of Grants.

The relationship between Grants and San Rafael has been somewhat conflicting throughout its short history. Since the establishment of Grants, the town's relationship with neighboring Hispanic communities has been fraught with racial and class issues, which I believe stem from the fact that Grants was founded for and by non-natives. In fact, other New Mexicans and even out of state workers came to the area strictly for economic gain, with no interest in having ties with established cultural or regional history to the area. Grants has continued to attract outsiders, including many Anglos, due to a regional history of mining work. As Grants has grown, San Rafael's reputation as a rough, impoverished village has also expanded. San Rafael residents are thought to be unwelcoming to outsiders and almost every woman asked me if I knew the nickname for San Rafael kids in Grants—"rock-throwers." San Rafael kids were said to throw rocks at anybody who was not from San Rafael. A few people in Grants told me stories of being harassed on the small streets of San Rafael, another college-aged boy from Grants told me he was almost "jumped" in San Rafael because he was dressed in a "preppy" style.

Currently, there remains a continuous movement of people between Grants and San Rafael because Grants is the nearest town to many of the villages around the Mt. Taylor region. Today people often must travel to Gallup or Albuquerque for some consumer goods, especially clothes, electronics, or major household purchases, but the bulk of day-to-day purchases can, and are, made in Grants. Without any sort of local business in San Rafael, almost all residents work in nearby Grants or at area construction and mining operations. A migration of people for economic purposes inherently leads to more interpersonal relations and an expansion of kinship networks, especially for San Rafael residents. While Grants residents may only have cause to go to San Rafael if they are related to families there, San Rafael residents must travel to Grants and patron businesses there on a daily basis, attend school, and often have family and friends there. With such dependence and entire networks of people in Grants, San Rafael residents have little incentive to remain in their village other than to return home.

Conclusion

As each of these resource extraction industries—timber, fluorspar mining, carrot farming, and uranium mining—have entered their heyday, collapsed, and re-emerged in a different form, so too have San Rafael residents experienced cultural and economic booms and busts, which emphasizes the way in which San Rafael is at the behest of regional economies. During periods of successful agriculture or mining employment, the community rallied to rebuild their church and grotto more than once. During more prosperous times, cultural performances and communal participation was stronger with more people involved. They organized and performed two Christmas folk dramas called *Los Pastores* and *Las Posadas*. *Los Pastores* takes months of practice, elaborate costuming, singing ability, and

required the actors to speak fluent Spanish. Their annual fiesta lasted for three days and would draw visitors from surrounding Hispanic and Native American communities. The town itself boasted several stores, including the first mercantile of the region, a few bars, and a popular dance hall (Barela 1975:19-20). To emphasize the centrality of San Rafael to life in the Mt. Taylor region, it was even home to the only brothel in the area, which catered to the large mining population and folks passing through on the train. In the booming periods, San Rafael was seen as the place where one could find culture, faith, goods, and entertainment.

Chapter Four

Center Women and Organizing: A Case Study of the Annual San Rafael Fiesta

Introduction

We had come to know of San Rafael through a member of the Cibola County Arts Council, which is based in Grants, NM. Her name was Ava Peets and she called the Maxwell Museum to see if anybody would be interested in studying the village near Grants. After a lunch meeting and a visit to another nearby village named Moquino, the initial group involved in the meetings between the Cibola Arts Council, the Maxwell Museum, and the UNM Department of Anthropology decided to begin an oral history project of the Grants region. Dr. Lamphere asked if I would be interested in working on what came to be called the Grants Oral History Project, and I was excited for the opportunity. Our first assignment was to document San Rafael Church Centennial and make connections in the village.

My first memory of San Rafael is of driving into the small dirt parking lot in August 2006 with Dr. Lamphere. The parking lot is to the side of the church and in front of the parish hall. Both the religious and secular members of the San Rafael community rent and use the space to host large family gatherings or meetings. Dr. Lamphere and I arrived at the parish hall in the early evening to attend one of the San Rafael Church Centennial committee meetings. Antonio Trujillo who, at the time, was the San Rafael historian for the centennial fiesta invited us to the meeting. Antonio became acquainted with the Grants Oral History Project through Ava Peets, and he was our first real connection to the village, and was a tremendous asset in my fieldwork.

We entered the parish hall – I remember looking around to see what surrounded me. We walked on an old wood floor, and the men's heavy boots made a loud thud as though

there were some depth below the floorboards. The hall is rectangular with white walls and brown trim around high, small windows that line the room. There were fall decorations of orange, red, and brown in one corner of the hall. Stacks of chairs and folded tables remained against one wall. To the left of the room was a hall that leads to a kitchen area and restrooms. The committee sat at long folding tables arranged in a square in the center of the room.

My first impression was that the meeting was well attended. There were a dozen men and women present, mostly women, who all greeted us warmly as we entered. Not much attention was given to our presence, which put me at ease as I was still unsure what this trip was about or where it would lead. We were able to sit back and watch the meeting unfold. For the most part, the attendees were older people, and this remained true for all committee meetings I attended over the course of my time in San Rafael from 2006-2011. Most of the committee is comprised of Hispanic San Rafael residents and community members. Here, I am distinguishing between members who live locally and those dedicated community members who live in nearby Grants and Milan, but who participate in the communal and religious life of San Rafael. Occasionally, younger residents would attend meetings, but their participation in these planning sessions was not consistent.

The women who emerged as important figures in the fiesta planning are also central women to the organization and continuation of San Rafael familial, communal, and religious life. I refer to these core women as center women for their essential positions in San Rafael cultural retention, transmission, and production.

If you have ever sat in on a meeting as a guest, you know you receive an onslaught of information, much of which does not make sense to you at the time. None of the work that the committee was conducting that night--discussing finances, booths, and timeframes--held

any significance to me. It really was not until four years after this event, when planning began for the 2010 San Rafael fiesta, that I appreciated and understood the significance of the fiesta committee. What occurred between my first fiesta in 2006 and then in 2010 was my own transformation as a part of the community, my increasing level of involvement in fiesta preparations, and my growing knowledge of San Rafael practices and beliefs. I went from being a young woman most people regarded simply as a student to a member of the San Rafael fabric. In those four years, I entered into the lives of the center women and at times felt as though I were being trained to be one of them. They told me who they trusted within their own families to help in the work of cultural production; they told me of their worries that none of their kids or grandchildren will care about the fiesta at time passes; and they taught me how to cook, pray, and laugh with them. Over those four years, I felt more accepted; I felt like I was some distant San Rafael family member who had returned to (re)learn what I had forgotten or never known. I came to appreciate the individual, and more importantly, the group effort that is necessary to successfully accomplish events such as the fiesta. Even when a woman is acting independently to clean the church or cemetery, or to organize and prepare a family birthday party, she is doing so with accumulated and shared knowledge that she acquired from another family member, a neighbor, or a teacher.

Any community member willing to participate can attend fiesta committee meetings. Over the years, I came to see exactly what that meant--at times, the homeless Native couple who lived in a run-down RV at the end of town sat in; women attended with their young children and babies; occasionally, somebody would bring a dog. Another time, a young woman, Sally Gallegos laughed aloud because she was the only member of her family in attendance at that particular meeting saying, "I'm representing the family tonight." She was a

part of the larger Gallegos family, who are well known and respected throughout San Rafael and Grants. She is the youngest of three adult children, all of whom participate in communal and family traditions following the example of their parents Susie and Tony, and her family are representative of the social and kinship networks that figure so strongly in the successful planning and execution of the annual fiesta. The core group of women who consistently attended the meetings often brought their husbands, and when their husbands were absent, the women freely volunteered them for various physical tasks. These core women were also responsible for the maintenance of past fiesta records, parish finances, and the general knowledge and history to carry the fiesta out. They were able to locate free or low-cost community resources, they arranged for a massive amount of donations, and organized the cooking of a home-cooked, communal meal to serve at least 500 people. For some time, I only saw the performance of the fiesta, but behind that celebration was months of organization and preparation, and more importantly, the women responsible. The core women embodied their combined experiences and knowledge to maintain the annual fiesta, which is a continued negotiation of contemporary New Mexican village life. The ways in which the core women successfully execute the fiesta draws attention to what at first seems contradictory—how village traditions remain a part of the cultural experience while ever changing. Upon closer examination of the center women and their efforts at fiesta organizing, I will show just how the fiesta tradition embodies a village identity for different people and amidst social and economic changes.

Center Women and Cultural Production

This chapter will explore the significance of women's cultural production for familial and communal use by specifically examining the annual San Rafael fiesta in honor of the

village's patron saint. The San Rafael fiesta is rooted in Catholic tradition, and performed within the framework of Nuevomexicano folk customs that weave faith, family, and food for a localized, place-based experience. In previous treatments of southwestern Hispanic village fiestas, the focus has been on the structure of the New Mexican fiesta event, or the fiesta is collected along with other Hispanic folk practices in the documentation of what are perceived to be fading and somewhat static traditions. This dissertation and particularly this chapter differ from previous folkloristic texts in that it privileges women's work, organization, and cultural production surrounding performative events. Older folklore accounts of New Mexican events focused almost entirely on performance structure or content (Bourke 1893; Cole 1907). The influence of actors, audience, and their social worlds is absent from the performance, and with the majority of roles intended for males, the focus upon characters tends to omit women entirely. With the exception of Marian-like roles within fiestas and performances (Sklar 2001; Horton 2003; Rodríguez 1996), women's presence and contributions to folklore practices, especially through practices that support the execution and transmission of cultural expression, have not been included in New Mexican scholarship. In order to recognize and examine women's roles within a large communal performance such as a fiesta, one must attend to the preparation and execution of the event, not just the public performance. In my conceptualization of feminist folklore, women are the center of analysis, and this removes the action from the central performance to other areas, such as organization, preparatory acts that also include performance, ritual, and stories that contribute to community building.

During my dissertation fieldwork from 2010-2011, I observed how these women worked together to accomplish various communal tasks, most of which were intertwined

with the village's religious and cultural character. Over the course of a single year, the women organized and executed the annual fiesta, Christmas season commemorations, Lenten devotions, and numerous efforts to clean and maintain the church and cemetery grounds. In addition to their yearly calendar of events, in 2011, the women began a huge fundraising effort to renovate the historic San Rafael mission, which, like other adobe mission churches of New Mexico, suffered from structural issues.²⁴

The efforts of the women proved successful because the women who I refer to as "center women" are the hub of communal and cultural practices around which kinfolk gather and are organized. I take the term "center women" from anthropologist Karen Brodtkin Sacks who used it to describe key female figures in union organizing at Duke Medical Center. These "women were centers and sustainers of work place networks" and were central and essential to efforts at unionization consciousness shaping (1988:120-121). I employ and borrow the center women term on the basis of the San Rafael women's organizational work and mobilization of younger generations, husbands, and even the local Catholic clergy to host, honor, and celebrate their community. Furthermore, these women view themselves as links between older generations and lifeways and younger generations who they believe are more and more removed from "traditional" village life and practices. These women are indeed the "gap generation" for Spanish-speaking New Mexicans—they remember an older post-WWII American culture, as young adults, and now as older adults, have experienced dramatic shifts in social dynamics, political economy, and technology. Their children and

²⁴ Due to changes in the way Hispanic New Mexican communities have preserved adobe church walls, many historic adobe churches are now suffering from deterioration and collapse. The situation has garnered attention from the Catholic Church in New Mexico as well as numerous historic preservation organizations, which are now working with communities to restore and stabilize these historic, traditional buildings.

grandchildren grow up in a far different village environment than they, and so these women are the links of continuity between the oldest generations of San Rafael residents (80+ years) and the youngest (teenagers and children). In this way, the women's accumulated knowledge and abilities to negotiate contemporary village life situates them as those responsible for the retention and transmission of heritage practices. For this reason, I differentiate between "center women" who are the hubs of cultural and social communal life, periphery women who assist center women and may become central figures one day, and those who remain, by choice, uninvolved.

Categories of Women

I organized the women into three categories based upon their level of involvement in San Rafael activities, their interview responses about the community and their attachment to it, and the roles I saw women perform within their families and in the community. These three categories are center women, periphery women, and non-participatory women. Although I have established three major categories of women, this is not to say these are the only "types" or relationships that exist in San Rafael. Often roles and categories intersect in interesting ways that often develop as a means of cultural continuity. For example, a woman may come to occupy a particular central role within the Posadas custom because her family is known for that tradition, but then she may not assume any such role for any other season or event.

As with many areas of women's lived experiences, these categories are somewhat indefinite and shifting, and the women's roles within them may change over time depending on such factors as life cycle, employment, geographic distance, and willingness. These categories do not encompass all aspects of a woman's life, but through a description of who

they are within their families and the village, I will show that only particular women have both the family and community leadership personas that ultimately mark a center woman.

Center Women

Of the three, the center women category is the most stable and holds the most social and cultural capital. The center women are organizers within the family and community. They have strong community personas, which often extends beyond San Rafael. The center women were often mentioned in other women's interviews—within stories and as important community members. Their roles within San Rafael made them some of the first women I met when I initially began going there in 2006. They emerged from my weekend at the fiesta as obvious choices to interview—they were involved in the fiesta activities, other men and women deferred to them for certain decisions, and they quite literally held keys to all necessary resources and money (buildings, supply rooms, money bags, even restrooms).

Center women are hubs within their families—their adult children and grandchildren often gather at their request and in their homes. The women themselves are resources for cultural and local knowledge. I believe it is not exactly coincidence that the majority of center women are excellent storytellers. They have heard and absorbed many experiences and stories, and also share the knowledge they have accumulated over the years. And because they have strong community personas, the center women also have more social capital and more social investment than others. By social capital I mean the human resources and ability to organize these resources for whatever purposes. In addition, the women are highly invested in the wellbeing of their community—both the people and the cultural production. While others would permit, for example, the fiesta to lapse one year due to lack of participation, the center women would never allow that to happen. Each year one woman or

another will mention to me that there is a chance the fiesta just will not happen, but this group of center women is able to come together and rally their families and community. And this is exactly why the current generation of center women is so concerned with the future—they know the amount of cultural competence and effort necessary to execute the entire cycle of fiestas, posadas, Good Friday, and family functions, and they see fewer and fewer younger women taking their places within events and practices that are integral to family and communal identity.

In this way, center women are dependent upon periphery women as assistants to carry out tasks and events, but are also potentially the future center women. In past generations, it may have been more obvious to know who was next-in-line to carry on particular family traditions and communal events, it is less obvious in a contemporary village due to out-migration, less cultural conformity, and different family structures. While center women may mention that a particular daughter is their “right hand man,” they are not as sure whether that daughter will become as prominent and central to the community as they themselves.

Periphery Women

Periphery women are assistants to center women, and may or may not be in the process of being groomed to be a center woman. Periphery women are dependent upon center women as supervisors and organizers, and do not perform either these functions themselves. These women have cultural knowledge, but not necessarily cultural competence. The periphery women have the information and familiarity necessary for such tasks as preparing traditional New Mexican Christmas *tamales*, but lack a proficiency or confidence to do so. As one daughter and periphery woman stated about making *tamales*, “I could help someone make them, but I don’t think I could make my own *tamales*, no” (Sally Gallegos,

interview with author, March 22, 2011). Often times, the periphery women made comments similar to this—they expressed knowing how to do something, but not the wherewithal to actually do it on their own in their family or as representative of the family.

The role of periphery women varies in terms of stability, only because the women who occupy these roles are able to drift in and out of community involvement as is necessary for their personal lives. As such, the periphery women have less social investment and capital; she participates because she has a mother, sister, or mother-in-law who is a center woman, not necessarily because she feels attached to the cultural production or community. Often, periphery women adjust how much and the way in which they participate due to obligations of a young family (their own children are in sports and other extracurricular activities), education, or career (women are more likely to seek higher education and obtain outside employment opportunities).

Non-participatory Women

Periphery women may become center women with time, as is the case with Elaine Vigil who has steadily filled the important roles of her mother and grandmother, or periphery women may at times become non-participatory community or family members. The distinction between periphery and non-participatory daughters was clear as I was recruiting interview participants—mothers would often recommend that I interview whomever of their daughters they believed had more involvement and cultural knowledge. At times mothers discouraged me from interviewing non-participatory daughters, or the daughters themselves would tell me they did not have anything to offer me. I found the non-participatory daughters did not lack in cultural knowledge, but instead had varying levels of willingness and ability to participate.

Non-participatory daughters had virtually no community involvement, and while they engaged in family contact, their level of contact was not as high as periphery sisters or was at the very least, limited. Periphery daughters tended to speak and see their mothers and family often, in many cases, every day, while non-participatory daughters' familial contact was more infrequent and less regular. Non-participatory daughters were less likely to grant me a formal interview, and I would seldom if ever see them at community or family functions. In this way, they seemed to have less social investment—the outcome of the community or cultural traditions is not of great concern to their lived experiences. In addition, these women expressed less attention to the transmission or retention of cultural knowledge.

Other non-participatory women remained at a distance due to other factors such as health limitations or substance abuse. One woman who struggles with addiction described the ways in which she tries to pass on to her children religious and cultural customs. She also expressed a deep love for her community, but her role in San Rafael cultural production varies quite a bit from season to season due to her addiction. As this woman shows, the variability of non-participatory women also creates an image in which they are not depended upon by the center women because they are not necessarily reliable, but any help or assistance they provide is always welcomed. Community events such as Posadas and the fiesta offer opportunities for geographically distant and emotionally removed kin to participate and reaffirm their place in family and village. However, with little investment in community and social expectations, the non-participatory women are not dependent upon center women or periphery women, and as such, are not as concerned with maintaining social appearances. In contrast, center women and their families are more concerned with the image

they project, as illustrated by the center women picking and choosing which daughters, if any, I should interview.

The Center Women of San Rafael

Of the 35 women who participated in this study, I categorized eight of them as center women based upon their heightened roles in San Rafael community organizing and maintenance of traditional practices.

The Voice of San Rafael: Hazel (Chávez) Sandoval

Hazel Sandoval is a Hispanic New Mexican whose family has been in the San Rafael area for at least three generations. She is in her early 60s, married for forty years to her husband Wilkie, who is from northern New Mexico and moved to San Rafael in the 1960s to work in the uranium mines. Hazel and Wilkie have three adult children—Danette, Dion, and Danielle. Her children range in age from their mid-thirties to their mid-forties. Hazel and her husband play pivotal roles in the communal life of San Rafael as both volunteer in almost every community project, with Hazel often taking the lead in organizing other community members. Although now retired, when I first met Hazel, she still worked at one of the four correctional facilities in the Grants area. In the past, Hazel and Wilkie have served numerous times as *mayordomos* of the church and the annual fiesta. Hazel's ability to organize people and events speak to her social capital—she and her husband are known and well connected. She is often able to located resources—people, supplies, etc.—that the community needs for projects and events. This has been apparent in cases such as the church restoration project in which a few families organized and worked together to restore buckling adobe church walls. Not only do Hazel's actions make her a central figure, but her home is located near the center

of town and so easily serves as an essential place for hosting community events and family gatherings.

Hazel is also well known for her singing voice. She is on the San Rafael Catholic Church choir, and has been a member since she was a young woman. Her mother was also on the choir, so Hazel continued familial participation. Hazel's voice is powerful and carries the choir. At times the choir is absent from mass—usually when they have agreed to sing for another church's celebration. On those occasions, mass ends a little early, and there is a noticeable absence of aesthetic beauty. In the first daily rosary I attended with women from Bible study, they asked why I was not singing along at the end of the rosary. I said I was unfamiliar of the lyrics and melody and so chose to remain quiet. They told me that a song of devotion is even more powerful than a prayer, and so I must not skip over that part. The role of song in the expression and celebration of faith within San Rafael is of great importance not only within mass, but also as representative of the community. Pauline Chávez, the woman with whom I stayed for part of my time in San Rafael, once referred to Hazel as “the voice of San Rafael,” and lamented over the thought of no younger women stepping in to join the choir.

Pauline (Tórrez) Chávez

Pauline Chávez is one member of the large Tórrez family of San Rafael. Pauline's father Alejandro was one of ten Tórrez children. Eight of the Tórrez children went on to have sixty-five surviving children. Pauline was one of thirteen children. Up until Pauline's generation, the Tórrez families were all large and have for the most part remained in San Rafael. Pauline is married to Anthony Chávez, who was born in Albuquerque and raised in nearby Grants. They have three adult children—Stephanie (age 36), Anthony (age 35), and

Tommy (age 31). For most of her life, Pauline has worked hard, a trait her father impressed upon her and which she has imparted on her own children.

While she has picked up and passed on a strong work ethic, only recently retiring from her position as court clerk in Grants, Pauline has also developed a gift for storytelling. One of her favorite resources and subjects is her father, who told his share of stories and jokes. One of the places I felt most comfortable was in Pauline's kitchen when I could sit and sip coffee while Pauline threw on an apron and began boiling dried *chile* pods for red *chile* and chopping potatoes or reheating meat from the night before. As she moved from her refrigerator to the table to set down *tortillas* or yellow hot peppers and back to the stove to continue cooking, Pauline would tell me stories about the first time her husband Anthony met her parents and younger siblings whom she imagined must have looked like heathens chomping their gums on pork chops while Anthony was being introduced. Pauline also repeatedly talked about particular traits of her father that she mimics—cleaning the *chile* pods in a meticulous manner and always straining the red *chile* so that no seeds remain. Food and cooking plays a central role in Pauline's life, and she revels in her cooking abilities and knowledge. Each year for the fiesta, she and her sisters Nadine and Cathy run a baked goods booth that could rival any bakery. They feature cinnamon rolls, scones, homemade bread, fudge, a variety of cookies and Danishes, *natillas*, and sweet rice.

Mary Ann (Desalla) Montoya

Mary Ann Montoya is a deeply religious woman and very active in both the San Rafael and St. Theresa (located in Grants) Church communities. Her mother Flora Dubois, Uncle Albert Dubois and his wife Celia were also very involved in the religious community, and these family members have all had a tremendous impact upon Mary Ann's religious and

cultural life. After retiring as an educational assistant in 2007, Mary Ann has devoted her time to writing stories about cultural practices and religious events for local newspapers. She is married to Johnny Montoya, who moved to the area from northern New Mexico to work in the uranium mines. Mary Ann and Johnny have three adult daughters—Jessica (age 46), Tanya (age 42), and Bianca (age 38). Tanya and Bianca each live in Albuquerque and visit mostly around certain holidays, while Jessica lives in Las Vegas, Nevada and rarely visits. Mary Ann and Johnny are also members of the San Rafael choir.

Mary Ann has an infectious laugh and tells stories with tremendous emotion and excitement. At times, she is filled with such emotion that tears stream from her eyes, and this too is infectious. Mary Ann has vivid memories and intense emotional attachments to things and particular people. This makes her a great local historian and writer. Often when I wanted to know about community history or religious instruction, other women would suggest that I speak to Mary Ann. We would exchange emails and texts, but for the most part, I would find Mary Ann at communal gatherings or after church to socialize and pick her brain about the carrot fields, Las Posadas, or the fiesta. Mary Ann is a repository for San Rafael life and history, like her predecessor Josephine Barela.

Mary Ann (Gallegos) Jaramillo

Mary Ann is from the Grants area, but has lived in San Rafael since 1972, when she moved there to marry a San Rafael native, Corey Jaramillo whose family has been in San Rafael for several generations. Mary Ann did not grow up in a religious household, and so has obtained the sacraments of baptism, communion, and confirmation in order to marry Corey. In her interview she said, “Once I got to this community—in my life, we didn’t go to church. Once I got here, I changed.” Mary Ann has been a part of the San Rafael community

since her marriage, and takes a strong initiative within the community to improve the cemetery and Guadalupe Grotto. Her husband is a contractor and Mary Ann often accompanies him and works on projects herself, and so they are both called upon as resources for community projects, such as constructing a wheelchair ramp or entryway for the Guadalupe Grotto. Mary Ann also teaches catechism classes and has been a member of the Sacred Heart Society since her marriage. Each year, Mary Ann and her daughter Adrienne (age 35) run a nachos and hotdog booth at the fiesta. Mary Ann's family also contributes to other community efforts at the fiesta such as cooking for the fiesta meal and donations for other booths. Mary Ann and Corey have another son, Andrew (age 40) who lives in Albuquerque and does not often visit.

She contributes to all community efforts, but is less likely to ask for assistance in the projects she initiates. Within the past year, she has planted a row of trees that line the road to the cemetery, and has placed large wagon wheels along the fence that marks the southern boundary of the cemetery. Families have slowly given her money to plant a tree in honor of deceased family members, but Mary Ann has never solicited any financial assistance or labor. While she is a part of all community efforts and is included by other women in cooking for clean-up days, she is fairly introverted in terms of communal voice. Despite this, I believe her work, knowledge, and ability to groom her daughter to participate in a similar fashion warrant Mary Ann to be considered a center woman.

Susie (Chávez) Gallegos

Susie Gallegos comes from the Chávez family of San Rafael, and is related to several of the older families from the village. Her cousins include Hazel Sandoval, Pauline Chávez, and the Dubois sisters, and include many others within the San Rafael area. During her

interview, Susie commented, “If you look in San Rafael I’m related to everyone there. Really. And that’s the truth. It’s crazy somehow or other we are all related down the line” (Interview with Susie Gallegos, September 29, 2010). In 1970, Susie married Tony Gallegos, a man from northern New Mexico who moved to Grants to work in the mines. They lived in San Rafael a short while before moving to a new subdivision in Grants, where they raised three children. Their son Gabriel (age 43) and their youngest daughter Sally (age 37) live in Grants, but because of their mother’s ties to the village, they attend all communal functions in San Rafael along with their spouses and young children. Their middle daughter Tanya (age 41) lives in Denver, but visits regularly and will occasionally attend communal events. Susie and Tony are well known in the Grants area for their political and civic involvement extending back to the late 1970s. The Gallegos family maintains a strong family devotion to their Catholic faith and practice. Although all the family members attend St. Teresa’s Catholic School in Grants, the family members show devotion to both St. Teresa’s Church and San Rafael Catholic Church. The Gallegos family actively participates in San Rafael events—running booths for the fiesta, hosting *Las Posadas* each year, and attending Good Friday devotions at the *morada*. Susie always provides dishes for communal meals, and her family can be counted upon within the San Rafael community to contribute financially and volunteer time.

Bessie (Rodríguez) Debassige

Bessie Debassige is the second oldest of 11 children born to Juan and Clorinda Rodriguez of San Rafael. Bessie’s father and uncles worked at a logging camp in McGaffey in the Zuni Mountains, and later served in World War II and returned to San Rafael to open a little store. Bessie’s maternal grandfather was a sheepherder for the Mirabal family, and

spent much of his time up in the mountains. Bessie's mother stayed at home, preparing food for her large family, washing clothes, and tending to her home. Bessie remembers fondly of her childhood, "We were a pretty close family, you know. We'd always eat together, always eat together. And we always used to all go to mass. That's one thing mom and dad used to make us do, is go to mass. And we all went to mass and we ate together" (Bessie Debassige, interview with author, October 28, 2010).

In 1969, Bessie married a French-Canadian miner who moved to the San Rafael area, and together they raised four children before her husband passed away from a brain tumor. Two of her sons John (age 34) and Peter (age 38) and one daughter, Emilia (age 28) live in Albuquerque, while her oldest daughter Elaine (age 43) lives in Denver. By her own admission, her children have little attachment to San Rafael and do not often visit. Bessie is an essential member within the center women group because of her cooking skills, which other women consider more traditional, and also for her devotion to San Rafael Catholic Church. However, in contrast to other center women who have a daughter to assist, Bessie manages to prepare food for the fiesta and other communal meals by herself. Occasionally, depending on the event, she will call on the help of her sisters and sister-in-law, Nadine Rodriguez (younger sister of Pauline Chávez).

Dina (Chávez) Jaramillo

Dina Jaramillo is a woman in her late sixties with three adult children, Elaine, Allen, and Carla. Her husband Roy, who was born in the nearby village of Moquino, passed away ten years before. Although her youngest daughter lives in Texas, Dina's family is tight-knit and actively involved in the public life of the village, especially within the local San Rafael Catholic community. Dina's family opened up their homes and lives to me and made me feel

a part of their family. Dina became involved just as her mother Josie Chávez was once actively involved. Although Josie is no longer able to participate in community events, she is almost always at Sunday mass unless she is not feeling well. Even in her late 80s, Josie is still responsible for red *chile* at her family's Sunday dinner and for *tortillas* throughout the week.

Even though the center women are so passionate about their village and maintaining their cultural community, it is surprising that Dina is the only one with an actively engaged daughter who is following in the footsteps of previous generations of women. It is noteworthy that within this one family there are three generations of center women, but like many of the other families around them, Elaine's own adult daughter no longer lives in San Rafael, choosing instead to live in Texas where she attended college. So while the Chávez/Jaramillo family has maintained a high level of involvement, this intergenerational participation will soon fade.

Elaine (Jaramillo) Vigil

Of all the center women, Elaine Jaramillo (age 50) is the youngest and follows a line of actively involved women. Before Elaine, her mother Dina Jaramillo (age 69) and grandmother Josie Chávez (age 87) were both central figures to San Rafael religious and communal life. These women have all been *mayordomos* of the church and active members of the local Sacred Heart Society, which is responsible for particular church duties such as cleaning and maintaining the church and parish hall.

Elaine is quite aware of her role in maintaining family, community, and religious practices, and carried out such practices with pride and tremendous devotion. Around me, she

is often very reflexive of why she is so dedicated to the church and San Rafael community, calling the church her “home.”

And knowing that--how strong our parents and grandparents were in the church that we had to do the same. And the church is my second home, you know because I go there and I feel very at peace. I feel very comfortable. I go in there and decorate for hours on end and it never phases me, I knew I was safe. It's like my second home and it gives me peace and tranquility that I need. [Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010]

Similar to the other center women, Elaine often wonders what the future holds for the church and community when there are no apparent center women in training. Elaine's own 29-year-old daughter lives in Texas, and visits only a couple of times a year. Her 18-year-old son has just moved to Texas to attend college, and so her immediate family network is her mother and grandmother. Elaine often takes on the responsibility of organizing cleaning days for the church, which is quite a project but illustrates the way in which the center women accomplish necessary tasks.

Center Women Organizing

Center women display the leadership skills to mobilize people, make use of available resources, and organize within the community. Center women engage the work of kinship through which they are able to call upon a variety of people for labor, donations, and other talents that are necessary to execute family functions and their traditional cycle of events. The center women accumulate knowledge and resources, and are able to use them in particular situations to achieve an end. These women work among generations of people to learn older ways of doing things, and then adapt them to suit their needs. The center women themselves seem to recognize each other's abilities, and their skill at using each woman's specific talents also contributes to the success of the center women's organizing. While each woman herself is a hub within her various social spheres, they exist as center women almost

as a unit. No one woman is capable of organizing the fiesta, but with these women and their particular networks in action, they are able to be efficient and successfully execute the event.

Among the social resources of which the center women make use are the periphery women—older women who are limited in how much and in what ways they can participate, daughters who may be restricted by distance or requirements of their own families and work, and other kinship networks, such as in-laws, work friends, and religious associations in other communities.

Periphery women are called upon at certain functions and perform certain duties. They do not initiate participation in certain communal events such as the fiesta or Las Posadas, but are the “go-to” assistants for center women. For instance, when Pauline Chávez begins planning for her fiesta baked goods booth, she knows she can count on her sister Nadine, who is an excellent baker, and her sister Cathy who generally assists in the kitchen and often does a lot of the dish-washing and kitchen cleaning. For the most part, Pauline chooses the foods that she will sell at the booth, but she also recognizes the strengths of her assistants. Her sister Nadine has worked as a cook in local school kitchens and is an excellent cook who knows how to bake large batches. Cathy currently works as an educational assistant at a local middle school and is able to obtain permission from her school to use the cafeteria kitchen on the morning of the fiesta. Nadine takes over to make large batches of freshly baked homemade bread, Danishes, and cinnamon rolls just hours before the fiesta begins on Sunday.

The day before the 2010 fiesta, I assisted Pauline and Nadine in the kitchen making *empanadas*, cookies, fudge, *natillas*, and sweet rice. The *empanadas*, *natillas*, and sweet rice were all recipes Pauline had collected from her in-laws, her grandmother, and her mother

(respectively). We gathered around the kitchen island as Pauline gave us lessons in *empanada* dough and filling, until Nadine and I were able to prepare the *empanadas* and roll them in a cinnamon and sugar mixture without Pauline watching over us. At one point, Pauline called us over to her stove to watch her make *natillas*. I had asked about them in months prior, and so this was my first lesson in making Pauline's *natillas*, which I remembered from the night of fiesta vespers in 2006. The milk used for the *natillas* must be boiled and stirred just right, and so Pauline prepared all of the *natillas* while Nadine and I worked on the other baked goods that had more room for error. I did not mind not having a hand in the *natillas* or sweet rice; I felt more comfortable making simple cookies and *empanadas* while Pauline handled the more complicated and, in my mind, more traditional foods. Her daughter Stephanie arrived from Albuquerque later in the evening after she finished her shift at work to help with the last remaining batches of cookies and no-bake treats that were purchased through a local school fundraiser.

Pauline's daughter Stephanie and I each participate when necessary or upon availability, and so are not steady periphery women. For the most part, I am invested in the fiesta for other reasons, and so I am often available, but for the adult daughter of a San Rafael center woman, the investment in cultural continuity and retention is quite different and influenced by other social and generational factors. With the conclusion of fieldwork, I continued going to mass in San Rafael on Sundays, women would often comment that I came even though their kids (who also live in Albuquerque) could not seem to visit. On one hand, I felt awkward that the comparison was being made, but on the other, these comments were indicative of other influences upon the adult children of San Rafael residents who have moved away and choose to remain at a safe distance. When I asked Stephanie about how

difficult it is to participate in San Rafael events while living near Albuquerque, she said, “I’m not as involved as I would like to be if I was here. But then sometimes being in a small community, like San Rafael, you want to be the savior of everything that you try hard to please everybody and you can’t, especially after having kids” (Stephanie Galindo, interview with author, January 5, 2011). With the exception of Elaine, center women tend to be women who are retired, and so have the time and energy to perform communal necessities. The center women pressure their adult daughters, who often have children of their own, into participating to some degree within community events. This pressure is how center women begin grooming their daughters or granddaughters, but it can also be the reason some adult daughters choose to remain peripheral or not participate at all. If the pressure is not cause to remove oneself from the hub of activity, it can also serve to illustrate the hard work of kinship and small community social relations that many younger women simply do not want to deal with. Along with the center woman identity come a heightened position, more communal responsibility, and a greater sense of scrutiny, all of which can detract potential future center women.

Although Pauline is a center woman, she is dependent upon periphery women to accomplish large tasks such as fiesta baking. Pauline, Nadine, Cathy, and I worked steadily in the kitchen from the morning around 8:30am until around 10:00pm at night, taking breaks only to have meals, to assist in the final set up of the booth on Saturday afternoon, and to attend vespers in the evening. Pauline’s husband Anthony, Nadine’s husband Roger, and Cathy’s son Javier performed many errands that allowed us to focus solely on preparing the food, such as changing the kitchen garbage, delivering baked goods to the booth, or picking

up other supplies or children. Altogether we worked for roughly two days to have the booth completely ready for the fiesta.

The effort seemed to span all of Pauline's family because over the course of those days, we were visited by Pauline's *tía* Rita, her oldest son Anthony and his daughter and son, her mother Helen and Helen's friend, and Cathy's daughter and granddaughter. The kitchen seemed to be constantly busy. All of Pauline's family knows to enter through the back kitchen door, so that area was the hub of the house for the weekend. Even when the husbands were not busy, they would gather around the kitchen or sit at an open chair at the kitchen table. Only the children would hang out in the living room watching TV. The men would not interject in our kitchen conversations about past fiestas, cooking, or family relations, but when prompted by any of the women, the men always had a lot to contribute about what their family traditions were. Roger, as a San Rafael native and younger brother of Bessie Debassige, would often describe how certain practices were done when he was a child or young man, such as building *luminarias* or cooking the fiesta beef. Pauline's husband Anthony often talked about how different life was in San Rafael as compared to his family's experiences in Albuquerque and Grants, which he described as more "city," meaning that there was not a cultural community to which they belonged, their traditions were not performative, and their religion was much more subdued. However, now he has come to appreciate the differences San Rafael offers.

Certain periphery women, usually of some family relation like Nadine and Cathy and located in San Rafael or close by, are consistently called upon to assume some duty or to provide some resource, while other women (social associations and distant kin) may drift in and out of the periphery category due to a variety of reasons. Periphery women are often

daughters and in many cases do not live in San Rafael, but are close enough in nearby Grants or Milan, and even Albuquerque, so that they are able to easily donate time to local efforts. And in families with more than one daughter, there is generally only one daughter who fulfills the periphery role, while other daughters are somewhat unreliable or do not participate at all in San Rafael communal events or religious practices.

Although most periphery women are stable in their roles, some women occupy a tenuous position due to substance abuse, economic insecurity, or inability (lack of desire) to maintain a religious connection, and religious devotion is significant in the lives of the center women. These individuals may drift in and out of their roles as periphery women all throughout the annual cycle of events. At times they may not necessarily be welcomed back into the community social circle, but their participation and service to the community is always used and appreciated.

As is shown, the role of periphery women is fluid, and while some women go between fulfilling the position and lack of participation, other women begin to step into the role of center women. This is illustrated well by Elaine who has taken over the role of her mother Dina, who had performed in the same role as her mother, Josie. These three women have all been active in the religious community as members of the Sacred Heart Society, *mayordomos* of the church with their husbands, and as catechism teachers. By 2005, the *mayordomo* practice has been phased out of the San Rafael Church because the head priest at St. Teresa's did not see the utility of appointing unwilling *mayordomos* each year. In the past, young couples willingly performed this duty as their obligation to the church and their community. Accepting a commitment to act as stewards of the church symbolized one's entrance as adults and as a couple, and was an excellent way for young newlyweds to

establish themselves in the community. Over time, young couples grew less and less willing to perform these duties, and in the remaining years of the *mayordomo* practice, the priest was forcing couples into the role or was relying upon older couples.

After the practice ended, Elaine took it upon herself and the Sacred Heart Society to take care of the physical well being of the church through cleanup days. One of the most important cleanup days is for the fiesta. Cleaning the church entails sweeping the tiled floor where the pews sit, vacuuming the carpeted altar area, dusting the four large statues located on the altar and sometimes changing the decorative covers on which all the statues rest, and polishing the pews. The women who usually participate are Elaine, her mother Dina, Hazel, Mary Ann Jaramillo, and a variety of other relations. At times Hazel has brought her daughter Danielle or her cousin, while Elaine invites various friends from the extended church community or from work. While women clean inside, a few of the women's husbands usually perform outdoor tasks. The one exception to this gender separation is Mary Ann Jaramillo who prefers to work outdoors, usually cleaning the Grotto and occasionally helping the men with their tasks. Mary Ann often assists her husband on site at his contracting business, and so feels comfortable performing such tasks for the Church. In particular, Mary Ann has a devotion to caring for the grotto and cemetery, so she will often pursue these tasks alone and outside of schedule cleanup days. She has planted trees that now line the small dirt road to the cemetery and has installed rusted wagon wheels to act as a boundary on the southern side. She routinely waters the roses and weeds at both the cemetery and the Grotto.

Older women and other who are unavailable during the daytime contribute to the cleanup effort through making a dish for lunch for all the workers. The lunch usually consists

of red *chile*, a meat dish such as pork chops or beef tacos, *tortillas*, Spanish rice or *fideos*, beans, salad, and dessert(s). Throughout the day, everybody has access to water bottles, sodas, coffee, and donuts or cookies. The food contribution is important because Elaine almost always organizes cleanup days around the scheduled outings of local Cibola County Detention center inmates. Elaine works there as a nurse and has access to inmates who are permitted to supervised off-ground work. The inmates' schedule is based on the number of guards available to accompany the men (between 2-3 guards necessary). The male inmates come to San Rafael to do grounds maintenance and to assist with seasonal decorations such as the two 20 foot Christmas trees that adorn the altar throughout Advent and Christmas seasons.

On numerous occasions over the years, I have assisted Elaine with church cleanup. She would often text me the night before to let me know that the inmates would be coming. Once or twice, I showed up at the parish hall only to find out it was canceled at the last second because the guards were suddenly unavailable. If I were coming from Albuquerque, Elaine would occasionally ask me to bring items for sandwiches (meats, lettuce, cheese), *tortilla* chips, or a store-bought dessert. I would spend my days inside the church helping Elaine lift the heavy statues to clean and dress them. Or she would ask me to work in the choir loft polishing, vacuuming, or draping decorations. Elaine would have me perform the duties that she felt the older women should not do—heavy lifting, going upstairs to the choir loft, or tedious tasks.

Around the noon hour we would all eat lunch together at the parish hall. The inmates usually ate at one table where the guards would sit with them. When there were more than two guards, the guards and inmates would move around more, but all the women still ate

together at one table. Unlike other community meals where you feel as though you are in a cafeteria, eating on cleanup days is more like a family meal. Women would clear each other's plates from the table, or serve one another, younger women would fetch items such as salt, coffee, or napkins for older women, and conversations were humorous and revolved around family. If somebody's husband or son were home, the women would call them to eat or make them a plate to take home. The inmates would always compliment the women on their food and comment on how much they ate. Knowing that the inmates do not have homemade meals, the women tell the men to help themselves to seconds and thirds, or to have another serving just before leaving for the day. As the inmates get ready to head out, they come into the kitchen area and stuff their pockets with sodas, as it is one item they are allowed to take back with them. The women encourage them to take snacks or candy with them, at least for the ride back to the detention center where they will then have any remaining food items confiscated.

The cleanup days are successful for numerous reasons, but of primary importance is Elaine's role as the hub of the organization. In previous years when *mayordomos* were responsible for the church maintenance, the involvement of friends, work associates, and certainly local inmates was unheard of and unwarranted. Without the built-in help of the *mayordomo* custom, Elaine mobilizes all of her resources—friends, family, acquaintances, and work relationships to accomplish the task. As a forty-nine year old woman, she has access to and can organize older and younger groups of women from her various social circles in San Rafael and Grants. She convinced others to call upon the inmates for help, so now their presence is accepted and expected. Elaine established a unique way of accomplishing a necessary communal task, which would not have occurred in previous

generations. It is in these situations when change is apparent that the women innovate within their traditional repertoire. Whether allowed to or not, younger generations attempt to inject their cultural participation with different influences or approaches. Situations such as the church cleaning or the fiesta often allow for innovation because it is these traditions that are imperiled otherwise. However, innovation is not as accepted or necessary within other heritage practices. With customs such as traditional foodways, younger and older generations tend to be at odds, as younger women favored new and healthier food options, while older women prized standard ingredients and older methods of cooking.

New Mexican Fiesta Event

The annual fiesta at San Rafael represents the true spirit of the community despite its' economic variability and other community stress factors outlined in chapter three. As the fiesta committee stated in the local church bulletin, "Your selfless efforts made this event possible. By giving of your time, we brought a small community together, even if only for a day" (October 28th Bulletin). Both community members and active volunteers recognize that not only is the fiesta important in terms of its cultural value, it holds significance as a means by which a fractured community reaffirms relations and continuity. But even the statement in the church bulletin does not fully express how the fiesta brings "a small community together." I contend that it is not just for one day that a sense of togetherness and belonging is achieved; the organizers initiate and continue work on community, kinship, and cultural production well in advance of the fiesta weekend, which then makes possible the execution of events such as the fiesta, *Las Posadas*, and Good Friday devotions. It is for these reasons that I will focus on the work and organization of San Rafael center women.

The annual San Rafael fiesta is held in honor of St. Raphael, the archangel who is the patron saint of travelers and of San Rafael village. The fiesta was initially held on the first weekend on or after October 24, which was the original feast day for St. Raphael. In 1962 as part of the Vatican II changes, Pope John XXIII recognized September 29 as the feast day of the three archangels—Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Although it took some time, San Rafael began observing the feast day for St. Raphael on the first weekend following September 29, in accordance with the church. In 2011, the fiesta council elected to return to celebrating the previous Vatican II feast for St. Raphael on October 24th. While members expressed their desire to return to what they viewed as a more traditional date, the change afforded them another month to plan that year. The planning began so late in the season that if set to go in late September, the fiesta was in jeopardy, and so an additional month gave the committee more time to organize and secure donations. This back-and-forth with the fiesta date created a situation in which the date was then tenuous in following years. In 2012, the priest at St. Teresa's in Grants informed the fiesta committee that if they held the fiesta on October 24, there was a not a good chance that the bishop of the diocese could attend. The fiesta council opted to hold the fiesta on October 20-21st to accommodate Bishop Pelotte's schedule.

In general the San Rafael fiesta follows the same ritual observances each year. All of the elements found within the San Rafael fiesta are regarded as standards of the New Mexican fiesta experience. The sequence of events includes a religious procession the night before with the *santo* of the honored saint. The saint is delivered to the church altar where vespers services are then held. On Sunday morning, people gather for a celebratory mass, which is then followed by the more secular fiesta celebration. The fiesta includes food,

music, and variety of entertainment (Montaño 2001:64-65). The San Rafael fiesta follows this general model, but includes local variation and may even change year to year based upon available people, resources, and other coinciding events such as the local church centennial, the statehood centennial, or even the deaths of certain individuals important to the community. To emphasize the variation and flexibility of the fiesta tradition, I will compare the centennial fiesta celebration in 2006 with more typical fiestas, which are less organized and at times have been in jeopardy of not taking place at all.

Las Fiestas de San Rafael

In 2006, the church centennial obviously marked that year's fiesta celebration as especially important and worthy of an extravagant effort. Informal planning began in the late summer, while organized fiesta committee meetings began in August. Because I began attending the committee meetings in August 2006, I was under the impression that San Rafael was always an organized village with strong religious devotion and tremendous participation from community members. I believed this because the 2006 committee meetings were always attended by a large group of roughly twenty people that remained fairly consistent throughout the planning period. While there were not participants in their teens or twenties at the meetings even then, there were more women in their 30s and 40s, as well as more men in attendance. And so I saw generational and gender variations, what I thought was an accurate representation of the village.

In comparison, for the 2010 fiesta, which was not marked as any sort of extraordinary feast day, informal discussions began in August, and formal meetings began the following month in September. 2010 was the year in which committee members elected to move the fiesta back to the original October 24th date. At the time, the planning effort was slow-

moving and so having the fiesta nearly a month later afforded the fiesta committee a few more weeks to organize. Up until that decision, committee members were expressing concern that the fiesta may not happen at all due to lack of leadership, participation, and organization. Older couples complained that all of the work of the fiesta fell to them, while younger couples only wanted to show up and enjoy all the festivities.

For the 2006 centennial fiesta, community members were expecting a wider audience—extended family members, family friends, and diocesan clergy. In this way, the fiesta was organized and designed for a different audience—outsiders who expected some sort of cultural expression of communal identity and history. Without the centennial recognition, the fiesta audience does not usually attract many outsiders or notable religious figures, and so the aim is internally focused on residents and close extended family.

For all San Rafael fiestas I have attended with the exception of the 2006 celebration, the Vespers have been a small, not well-attended service. People, usually older couples and their adult children, meet at the church just before vespers begin at 7pm. A few community members have even suggested eliminating the vespers because there is not much of an audience turnout, but I believe that due to vespers being a religious element of the fiesta, it will likely continue. The participation is never more than ten to fifteen people, and rarely includes children. Once the vespers ended, the attendees leave without much ado. On a couple of occasions, one family has lit fireworks as a way of commemorating the start of the fiesta upon the conclusion of the vespers.

In contrast, the 2006 vespers were a much larger component in the fiesta weekend. They began at the south side of town, at the home of Pauline and Anthony Chávez. A crowd of people gathered in the front yard of the home, obviously waiting for something to begin.

After a little while, the Tórrez family, of which Pauline is a part, walked out of the home with the St. Raphael *santo*. The crowd formed a more organized group, and the Tórrez family joined the group up front where they were the leaders of the procession. As a newcomer, I had little idea of what was going on and I knew absolutely nobody there, so I simply followed the group and found myself in procession. While we walked northward down Main Street, which was lined with *luminarias*, we prayed the rosary and men fired guns to protect the *santo* and procession from any evil spirits. We eventually gathered at another home on the northern part of town, where we concluded our rosary and made other petitions for blessings. We then walked back south to the church where the St. Raphael *santo* was placed at the altar. The church filled with people. So many that foldout chairs were placed in the outer aisles along the church walls, in the back of the church, and up in the choir loft. As a person who had never been to a San Rafael mass, I was under the impression that all religious functions were this well attended and specially marked, which is not at all the case.

I would currently characterize the contemporary practice of religious devotion as more religious attachment and association; family members appear to fade in and out of active engagement with the church and have less interest in Catholic doctrine. The exceptions are strongly devoted couples in the San Rafael community who are said to have a “lived faith”—what Hazel described as not living by the Bible per se, but as living the best one can with one’s given situation and changing circumstances (Hazel Sandoval, personal communication with author, February 29, 2011). This idea of a lived faith allows for flexibility and a greater encompassment of individuals who may not otherwise be accepted within a stricter Catholic following. This includes unwed couples with children, divorced members, members struggling with substance abuse or those involved in criminal activity,

and individuals who have repeatedly left the church. I will further explore this concept of “lived faith” and its role in the San Rafael community in Chapter 7.

Recalling again my 2006 experience, after the vespers, all parishioners were invited to join the Tórrez family at the home of Pauline (Tórrez) Chávez, where the procession began to commemorate Alejandro and Leandro Tórrez (Pauline’s father and uncle, respectively) who passed away within a couple of months of one another. This gathering of family and parishioners after vespers is completely unique to the usual vespers service in San Rafael, and was done by Pauline and her cousins as a *promesa* to their fathers who were both active within the community and particularly devoted to the fiesta. Most attendees were in some way related to the extensive Tórrez family, but also included most of the San Rafael Choir who normally attend all communal events. As part of the *promesa*, the Tórrez family had taken the San Rafael *santo* to watch overnight in their home and had placed it on an altar in the living room, where the crowd gathered to pray the rosary. I stood in the kitchen, which was also filled with people. Many of the Tórrez women had personal rosaries, and less-expensive rosaries were being passed around the crowd for those of us who did not have one. I knew the Our Father and Hail Mary, but was not quite sure of how the rosary was prayed. It was not until 2010 that I learned how to properly pray the rosary, and how to do so in a group setting.

Different Tórrez women took the lead for each one of the ten decades of the rosary. She would pray the first half of a prayer, and the crowd would respond with the second half. After each decade, she would lead us in saying the Glory Be, the Fatima prayer, and a short prayer that I have only heard said in San Rafael: “Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we love you. Save souls.” Some of the women did not use rosaries to keep track of their prayers; they instead

subtly counted the ten Hail Mary prayers on their fingers. After a half hour or so for the rosary, Pauline turned the crowd and thanked everybody for attending. She said her father and uncle would have loved to have been there, and then invited us all to begin eating *biscochitos*, *posole*, and *natillas*.

The next morning, the fiesta began with another procession. This time it began further south than the previous night—at the post office, which marks the southern boundary of the village proper. This procession was more like a small parade. There were people in cowboy dress on horses carrying flags of the United States and New Mexico. There was a horse and buggy for Bishop Pelotte from the Gallup Diocese, who would be the celebrant of the mass. It is quite an honor to have the Bishop present at the fiesta, and I have only attended this one fiesta in which any outside religious clergy accepted the offer to attend. No doubt the centennial garners such attention from the Bishop, but the average fiesta does not necessarily warrant his presence. Behind the Bishop were community members, both male and female, who carried the San Rafael *santo* alongside the local priest who held a painting of the San Rafael Church done by a local artist. With the exception of the 2006 and 2011 fiesta, I have only ever seen men carrying the San Rafael *santo*. In both exceptions, the women carrying San Rafael did so as a *promesa* to a deceased family member or as a petition on behalf of an ailing family member. The choir traveled on a flat trailer with haystacks on which they sat while they sang and played guitar; several of the center women carried small banners with their family crests. The rest of the community who was there for the morning mass followed behind these others in no particular fashion. Several people, including myself, walked alongside the procession and took pictures. Other people, mostly kids, watched from their yards and returned to their homes rather than attending mass.

Similar to the vespers service, the fiesta mass was completely filled with people. From the choir loft where I was seated and able to overlook the entire church, I saw men and women dressed in fine clothing. There were many young people—children and teenagers—and younger families present. The church was beautifully decorated in flowers, and the altar seemed to glow in white from the bright linens on the table, the glowing candles, and special adornments for the celebration of the Eucharist. I have come to find that such attendance usually only occurs for the fiesta and certain Catholic Holy Days of Obligation (Christmas, Holy Week) and on the first Sunday of each month when baptisms take place.

Parishioners filed out after mass for the start of the fiesta, but children and families who had not attended mass had already begun playing games and buying tickets for the booths, face painting, and pony rides. Although a small space, the organizers are able to fit quite a number of booths and games.

In general, the booths are the same each year. Some booths are run by a particular family, while others are run by different volunteers each year. One constant is that women always run the booths. Men usually help with setting up the frames and then they step back for women to decorate and manage the booth. The booths that are run by different women each year include a holiday decorations booth, one called the plant booth that gives household plants and pumpkins as prizes, and the religious booth. Booths that are run by particular women or families are the nachos/hot dog booth which is run by Mary Ann Jaramillo, the cake walk which is managed by members of the Sacred Heart Society, and the Dubois family *posole* booth. Mary Ann Jaramillo is usually assisted by her daughter in the nacho and hot dog booth, and the Jaramillo family donates all nacho and hot dog ingredients as part of their fiesta contribution. The Sacred Heart Society organizes the cakewalk by

asking all members to bake cakes or pies. Older members will often bake more than one cake or pie because they are not able to work at the booth itself. Younger members are usually the ones who actually run the cakewalk on the day of the fiesta.

A booth with women's history is the *posole* booth, which is run by the Dubois family. The booth was originally run by Celia Dubois who passed in 2005, and whose legacy has had a lasting impact on other women in the community. Although she passed before I began my stay in San Rafael, I was asked from the start if I had had Celia's *posole*. Upon meeting Celia's daughter Ramona, who among all her siblings is the most active in the community, she asked me, "Have you had my mom's *posole*?" I had not, so she told me to be sure to stop by her booth at the next fiesta to try it. Ramona has inherited the booth, and runs it with her oldest daughter, Nicole. She has a picture of her mother hanging in front of the booth.

Two other center women can be counted on to run booths, but what they offer changes from year to year. Both Pauline (Tórrez) Chávez and Bessie (Rodríguez) Debassige consistently contribute to communal events and are active in the religious community. Both the Tórrez and Rodríguez families are well known as cooks and so the two booths always feature foods of some kind. In the past, Bessie has made *biscochitos*, *tortillas*, and *sopaipillas*, while Pauline will offer a variety of baked goods. The two women are also in-laws (Pauline's sister Nadine is married to Bessie's younger brother Roger), and both women depend on Nadine to assist in decorating the booths and in cooking. Because the booths vary in what they offer, the women must be somewhat aware of what the other is doing. Bessie is known for not informing the committee of what her booth will be, but knowing this, Pauline will not offer *tortillas*, *biscochitos*, or *sopaipillas*, as she views these foods as Bessie's domain. Bessie's children do not live in San Rafael and seldom return. When I asked Bessie

on whom she relies to help with the cooking, she was quick and proud to say, “I do it by myself” (Bessie Debassige, personal communication with author, October 22, 2010). I believe her pride stems from the fact that she has the knowledge and competence to successfully prepare traditional foods without the assistance of others. To decorate her booth, her younger sisters, her brother Roger, and sister-in-law Nadine all assist her. Within the Rodríguez family, Bessie is considered the matriarch, and although she prefers to cook and bake alone, she can call upon and organize her siblings to help her. This arrangement presently works for the Rodriguez family, but there is a lack of involvement from younger Rodriguez family members; one usually only sees middle-aged family present at community events, even at Rodríguez family *Las Posadas*, an event where one generally sees the presence of more children and extended family.

Many younger women do not run their own booths, but instead assist their mothers. One exception is Sally Gallegos whose parents contribute to the fiesta through donations, but who do not run a booth. When they were younger, Sally’s parents Susie and Tony would donate to and run the Knights of Columbus hamburger stand.²⁵ Tony is a member, and the Knights of Columbus attend all area Catholic Church events to offer the hamburger stand. This is different from other family booths at the San Rafael fiesta because the hamburger stand is managed by the Knights of Columbus and is not exclusive to the San Rafael community or fiesta. After a certain point, Susie and Tony stepped back from fiesta obligations, and have let their children assume responsibilities. Currently, their son Gabe,

²⁵ The Knights of Columbus is a lay Catholic organization that was founded “to prevent Catholic men from entering secret societies whose membership was antithetical to Church teaching, to unite men of Catholic faith and to provide for the families of deceased members” (www.kofc.org, accessed August 21, 2013). It is named for Christopher Columbus, the patron of the organization.

also a member of the Knights of Columbus, manages the hamburger stand in San Rafael, Grants, and Milan. Sally manages a booth of children's games outside, while their parents socialize and relax.

Each year behind the parish hall, the Tórrez men (from Leandro's family) run the Basket Bingo. Leandro Tórrez was in charge of the game until his death, at which time his oldest son began running the game. When I asked Pauline why Leandro and why his son, she said it was because the Tórrez men are funny and charming, so they make good bingo callers. They often joke, tease players, and even give updates to NFL games throughout the day. Even walking in the parish hall, you will hear people heckling Tórrez, which shows the joviality of the fiesta space. Themed baskets are created and donated as prizes. Some baskets are small and contain children's toys and candy, while other baskets are a bit larger and may have blankets, a foot massager, artwork, or edible treats. For the 2010 and 2011 fiestas, I contributed bath and candle baskets, a chocolate basket, and a coffee basket. The baskets are prizes for bingo games that continue throughout the afternoon. The bingo game is well attended, and often draws in residents who do not participate in any form in community events as well as players from Grants and Milan. For small communities such as San Rafael, bingo games were once regular events for adult socialization. Many of the people I have interviewed said that bingo is no longer continued because surrounding casinos provide that sort of entertainment for adults, especially retired adults. But for an event such as the annual fiesta, bingo is quite an attraction, and so it is not uncommon to sit outside with the bingo crowd and to hear someone on the phone saying, "Mom, come to San Rafael, there's bingo." Several times, daughters have asked me to play bingo cards for their moms or grandmas until they arrive. For the most part, women—middle-aged and older, attend the bingo game but

men, usually older men, are scattered among the crowd. Kids often use the bingo space as a central location—their family is seated there, so they can play games, leave their prizes for their family to watch, or come and eat a little bit, and then go back to the fiesta to play. By the end of the day, you will see the die-hard bingo players surrounded by prizes and food, having served as the family base camp at the fiesta.

The 2006 fiesta featured *Matachines* dancers from *Alcalde*, a small village in northern New Mexico. Anthropologist Sylvia Rodríguez who studied the *Matachines* along the upper Rio Grande valley of New Mexico writes that the dance “is a ritual drama performed on certain saint’s days in Pueblo Indian and Mexicano/Hispano communities,” and is characterized by “two rows of masked male dancers wearing mitrelike hats with long, multicolored ribbons down the back (1996:1). The dance includes three other important and named characters: *La Malinche*, a young girl in white; *El Monarca*, a crowned *Matachines* dancer; and *El Torito*, a young boy dressed as a bull accompanied by two adult clowns. The dance performance is accompanied by a violin and guitar. It is interesting on a few levels that San Rafael included the *Matachines* dance for the centennial celebration, but never for any other fiesta or communal functions. First, as Rodríguez points out, within New Mexico, the *Matachines* dance is primarily found along the upper Rio Grande Valley, generally called northern New Mexico. San Rafael is located outside of this geographic area and as such, the *Matachines* dance has never been a part of the symbolic complex of the Hispanic or Native American communities. Hispanic communities of northwest New Mexico and west-central New Mexico (where San Rafael is found) are unlike northern communities in terms of demographics, Native American cultural influence, and *Nuevomexicano* cultural tourism has largely been absent. While northern New Mexico is considered the “Hispano homeland”

(Nostrand 1996), and so promotes the “Spanish” past for tourist purposes, places like San Rafael are excluded from the image of what it means to be Hispanic in New Mexico. When I initially began spending a significant amount of time in San Rafael, women would often make comments to me in which they were comparing their village and experiences to that of northern communities: “We have fiestas like they do up north,” or “we have pilgrimages like they do in Chimayo.”²⁶ It was as if they were not only comparing their cultural repertoire to what they have experienced as tourists of northern New Mexico, but also trying to insert San Rafael into the cultural landscape of the state. They wanted to show me that they were capable of these same forms of production, essentially saying that they too had the cultural knowledge and competence necessary for this kind of performative expression. Over the years, several women have talked with me about ways to draw cultural tourism to San Rafael. Ideas ranged from opening a local restaurant or bakery featuring local talent and traditional foods to opening up Good Friday services at the *penitente morada* to the public. These ideas illustrate the need San Rafael residents have to be perceived as part of the New Mexican cultural landscape. The fact that they brought in matachines dancers from northern New Mexico to add more flavor to an otherwise local fiesta further demonstrates the way in which the fiesta was changed for the centennial to set that particular celebration apart from other fiestas, and also to insert San Rafael’s traditions into the greater New Mexican folklore.

To accomplish this task, one choir member named Denise Sanchez, contacted a friend from up north, who then put her in touch with the *Matachines* group. Denise said she once saw the group perform, and thought it would be a good idea to have them come for the

²⁶ Chimayo is a small village in northern New Mexico that is known as a Holy Week pilgrimage site for the healing qualities of the dirt located there.

centennial, which would surely draw a much wider audience than other fiesta celebrations, which tend to only attract the local San Rafael community and extended family and friends from nearby Grants, Milan, and occasionally Laguna or Acoma. Denise, a guitar player, accompanied the *Alcalde* musicians in playing the music for the *Matachines*, and was the only local person who was a part of the performance.

While there were a few additions and aesthetic changes to the 2006 fiesta, the majority of the fiesta day itself was typical of all San Rafael fiestas. Participation greatly increases in the afternoon as non-religious families come to enjoy the entertainment. The majority of booths are aimed at children, while most adults simply enjoy socializing in the parish hall or out front. Most people eat the communal meal, a serving of pulled beef, corn, red *chile* and beef, pinto beans, salad, a dinner roll or *tortilla*, mashed potatoes, and some sort of dessert. For most years, the communal meal is organized by the women of the fiesta committee and is one of the easier tasks to plan because they have prepared this particular meal numerous times only with slight changes. The beef is donated by one of two families—the Miguel Mirabal family or the Tomás García family. The Mirabals have long been the patrons of San Rafael, and so they have historically provided for larger expenses of community events. The García family owns the local bar and carry on subsistence ranching farther south of San Rafael along Highway 53. They have access to cows and pigs for communal meals and even as raffle prizes, which was the case in 2011. The Mirabals and Garcias can be counted upon to carry out this tradition out for loyalty to their community and as families who have the means to provide such donations.

Another example of loyalty to the community that was demonstrated in 2010 when the women decided to prepare a turkey dinner instead of pulled beef, and between close

family members, they each contributed and cooked a turkey to provide enough for at least 500 guests. Certain women, who expected to be busy or out of town, offered to buy turkeys if others would cook them. One woman who could not afford a turkey offered to cook them as her contribution.

...And my labor, what ever you need help with. I can cook, I can clean, you know, but I don't have money to give. And they [fiesta organizers] would say, 'No, that's good enough.' And then I was so happy that the turkey dinner came out so good...My sister [Margaret] came and there was only two of us. She's real good. She doesn't know how to cook, but, you could give her dishes and she'll wash them, and she'll clean, and she'll vacuum up in the kitchen. I told her, 'I just need you here because you're someone I can depend on,' and I know she knows how to organize and stuff. And sure enough she made it for the fiestas and she helped me. It worked out good, enough food, plenty. [Yolanda Dubois, interview with author, January 11, 2011]

Yolanda's contribution to the fiesta illustrates not only how the larger fiesta organization and preparation is carried out, but also how family-level organization and preparation is accomplished. The task of cooking turkeys is delegated to particular women with cooking skills, who then call upon their own assistants who have other essential skills—the ability to clean, to help organize. These different levels of mobilization and organization are essential to the success of sizeable community events.

In 2011, Bessie asked if she and her sisters could prepare the communal meal as a gift to the church. She would not tell anybody what they were making because she wanted it to be a “surprise.” Numerous times at committee meetings, others would ask if she needed any help or supplies, but each time Bessie would say that she, her sisters, and nieces had it all under control. On fiesta morning, I sneaked out of mass to watch what was going on in the parish hall kitchen. Bessie and her four sisters were furiously rolling out and deep-frying *masa* for Navajo tacos. The younger women were chopping tomatoes, onions, and lettuce for toppings and stirring the red *chile*. Younger children, both boys and girls, were present in the

kitchen with the women, and were acting as assistants to them—cleaning, conveying messages, or hauling supplies from one area to another. Bessie, the second oldest sister, was in charge of the operation, as other family members would obtain her approval for quantity and quality of the food, and for instruction of what to do next.

No matter what the organization and fiesta planning has looked like in any particular year, the booths remain the same and are pulled off one way or the other. When planning has not gone well, the center women are usually the ones who step up to ensure that the staples of the fiesta are always present: vespers, procession, games, booths, food, and bingo. There was a time in the past when the fiesta also included a *baile* (dance) at the end of the day, but as expenses increased and organizers had to consider such things as location, alcohol, and security, the dance was eventually phased out of the San Rafael fiesta.

Changes in Participation

The remarkable quality of San Rafael center women is their ability to organize events and people—they are each hubs within their own families, and so draw others in for help and support, which sets them aside from other periphery or non-participating women. Not only do San Rafael center women organize cultural production, they also seem to reproduce themselves. This reproduction of center women seems to occur in one of two ways—either within the family (a mother influences a daughter or granddaughter), or among female non-blood kin, such as in *comadre* relationships, or close work relationships.

Center women reproduction within families seems to be the most common form, and at the same time, the most rapidly changing social phenomenon affecting the maintenance of San Rafael village traditions. While there is a fair amount of comradeship among friends and neighbors, for the most part, center women seem to reproduce themselves by grooming a

daughter or granddaughter. This is the most common means by which the roles of center women continue in San Rafael, and at the same time, is also one of the most rapidly changing social phenomenon affecting the maintenance and adaptation of village traditions.

In the past, the San Rafael community was more bounded in the sense that families were able to remain in the village or close by. For roughly the past twenty years, San Rafael has experienced an out migration of young people. The generations that engage in out migration, currently in their thirties and forties, did so for a variety of reasons. Among the women I interviewed, they expressed a desire to find more opportunities outside of San Rafael, they left to attend college and have remained away, or they moved away with their husband. One woman who moved to Albuquerque with her husband noted the pressures upon a San Rafael center woman to have to care for family and the community, and her unwillingness to fulfill such obligations. She described the conflict that arose between her apparent growing obligations to San Rafael and those to her new husband who was not willing to be an active participant in the community life.

If anybody in San Rafael needed something I'd jump to anybody...I'm glad that I pulled away from that because...sometimes you got to sweat the small stuff. And living in a small community like that, being the oldest granddaughter, I was always worried about my cousins, worried about-worried about everything else and then I think when we moved over here and that kind of made me put it in perspective. [Stephanie (Chávez) Galindo, interview with author, January 2011]

With more young people moving away from San Rafael, and even being encouraged to move away by their parents or other family members, there are fewer women replacing older generations within central roles in the community.

Younger women who have moved away would often discuss particular traditions they enjoyed or that they missed while away, and did so with a romanticized view of that custom and what it represented to them. Even so, these women are ultimately limited in how and to

what extent they can participate, which seems to make traditional practices more of a special event rather than an obligation to family and community.

But my time away really made me appreciate so much about my family and home, especially San Rafael...the food, the culture, the people, the traditions. I became much more involved in Las Posadas when I was able to come home from college for a long Christmas break. I never found that anywhere. [Interview with Tanya Gallegos, March 2011]

But at the same time, she acknowledged that her participation in *Las Posadas* would become “substantially less” if she continues to live outside of New Mexico. In this way, the younger generations are more mobile, extended geographically, and so less obligated to fulfill central roles within community. However, this is not to say they are not fulfilling central roles within their families. While daughters may pull away from commitments to events such as the fiesta and *Las Posadas*, they have not pulled away from assisting their mothers in organizing family celebrations and even acting as hubs for family gatherings. Several of the younger women who live in Albuquerque and the surrounding metro area routinely host their extended families for holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and parties that bring together the younger families and their children. In this way, the younger women are able to pick and choose particular customs, practices, and ways of expressing their heritage that were not available to older generations.

Even so, numerous older women mentioned their desire that their older daughters would one day move home to San Rafael. While it is more of a dream for many of the women, for some, their adult children have returned to live in San Rafael after retiring at an early age from the military. Other adult children have purchased property in San Rafael, almost as a way of stamping their presence on the community from a distance.

Conclusion

The efforts of center women to organize social and kinship networks in order to preserve communal cultural practices illustrate that expressions of faith and religion, communal history, and heritage are all essential to the San Rafael lived experience. San Rafael women's cultural production weaves together faith, families and foods in ways that allows for the continuation of the fiesta for changing participants and audiences—this may include the use of outside networks of human capital, as with the male inmates who help clean the parish, and an increased secularization to attract more people from the community.

Chapter Five

Women and Food

I savor each simple gesture in this kitchen, filling the tea kettle, lighting the stove, click of the cup in the saucer. They've all been here, are here, the family of women, nursing one another with teas—de canela, hierbabuena, gordolobo. Straight and erect in their good health or bent with age and arthritis, sacramental acts for another woman, or a husband, father, or child, steeping an old cure that began underground. 'It is strange to be so many women,' as Adrienne Rich says.

— Pat Mora, *House of Houses* (2008)

Introduction

If there is any constant theme in San Rafael, it is the presence of food and strong cooking talents at all family and communal events. Foods, often very particular traditional New Mexican foods, are central to the lived experiences of San Rafael women and their families in various ways to memorialize, reaffirm family or communal ties, or express one's identity. For women who live in or near San Rafael, seasonal foods such as fresh green *chile*, *tamales*, *natillas*, or *tortas de huevos* are as important as the celebrations and seasons themselves, and are in fact indicative of the season or liturgical calendar. For other women who may no longer live in the area, and even for those who see traditional lifeways as fading customs, these seasonal foods are associated with memory and emotions. For many women, the foods their moms and grandmothers prepare(d) invoke nostalgia for one's childhood or deceased relatives, and in some cases, romanticism for what one perceived as a fading or lost way of life. Whereas for other women, or during less ritualized seasons, these foods and their preparation are more of a practical matter, and so they may prefer convenience to custom. Overall, food is a very sensual encounter, and is so intertwined with the lived experiences of San Rafael women and their families that it is through particular food practices and

acquisition of food knowledge that they have come to experience and make sense of their life cycles. From first learning to cook for one's spouse, to incorporating new foods and ingredients into their repertoire, to decreasing the amount of cooking one performs and instead watching over as younger family women prepare food, women often recounted pivotal moments of life as newlyweds, an established family, and older age through their discussion of food.

Over the course of my field work in San Rafael, I saw individual women and groups of women prepare numerous dishes and meals—sometimes elaborate full-course Sunday meals of ham, red *chile*, mashed potatoes, vegetables, and *tortillas* for their family and at other times a simple dish of fried potatoes with fresh, chopped *chile* peppers from the garden wrapped in a re-heated *tortilla* made just for the two of us as we sat talking over coffee in the kitchen. Never was there a community event or family celebration without particularly associated foods. Christmas must have *tamales* and *biscochitos*, while Good Friday must always feature *tortas de huevos*, *quelites*, and *natillas*. In fact, the San Rafael calendar, as with many New Mexican Hispanic calendars, can be delineated by seasonal foods and food practices. However, while these foods and their preparation are all couched in terms of “traditions,” San Rafael women often demonstrate innovation in their culinary repertoires through changes in traditional ingredients and method of preparation, as well as integration into the diet of a broader array of foods. This demonstrates women's agency and adaptability in traditional foods and food events. This chapter will examine San Rafael women's transmission and innovation surrounding Hispanic New Mexican food and food events, and the ways in which New Mexican food practices contribute to one's heritage expression and sense of community belonging.

Performance and Competence

As performance studies, and folklore in general, has moved away from the study of the performance message or content, and refocus on the performer and her communicative processes, the study of performance is no longer text-centered, but can instead be viewed as the study of communicative phenomena. One of the major assumptions and arguments I will make here is to treat and analyze particular food events, which include the preparation and display of food, as performance. For those purposes, I will use Richard Bauman's definition of performance "as a mode of spoken verbal communication [that] consists in the assumptive responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence" (Bauman, 1974:293). What is important in this definition to be emphasized is the communicative manner and ability of the actor to express emotion, heritage, family, and community. In order to do so, to communicate so many layers of meanings, the actor must embody a certain level of aptitude and finesse to ensure her audience picks up on the numerous contexts, meanings, and symbolisms present in the preparation of seasonal foods and at particular holy day or celebratory meals.

The seasonal nature of food—the tastes, smells, and textures—render it a particularly salient mode of communication through which women tell the story of who they are as individuals in families, communities, and other social circles formed of generations of women. While I have sat with women as they prepared meals for dinner, larger gatherings, or communal meals, the women all combine food with story. This happened more so when women cooked in groups; whether close relatives or close friends, the women would all wander into stories of their youth and world trigger memories and emotions in each other. Folklorist Charles L. Briggs identified what he considers the three major characteristics of

performance—The performance contains 1. “Conventional signals” that mark the occurrence and type of performance at hand, 2. “The existence of particular formal or stylistic patterns,” and 3. Parallel grammatical structure, which could include rhyme or simply the balanced organization of sentences or phrases (1988:9).

Within these cooking experiences I shared with particularly gifted artists (I do not believe the women themselves would ever refer to themselves in such a way), I was audience to food performance, carried out with competence and “creativity in tradition,” as Briggs calls it. Such as when Pauline Chávez was teaching a group of her in-laws and myself how to make *tamales*—the interplay between verbal art and performance of food go hand-in-hand, as was demonstrated by Pauline Chávez who was my host and cooking instructor. She told me how her grandmother and mother made particular recipes, what it was like watching her mother and father cook growing up and then actually cooking on her own, of record batches of *tamales* she made for past Christmases. And there was a certain poetry or verbal artistry in the way she instructed me to knead dough or smoothly spread *masa* for *tamales* on cornhusks; there were poetics in many of the ways that women discussed food or memories associated with food. As when Ramona Dubois started thinking about the fall and her mother’s green *chile*, and told me to “just imagine old Mirabal road, walking down there from school, we [she and her siblings] could smell the roasted *chile* and the *tortillas* and the wood burning stoves. Hmm, it was so good” (Ramona Dubois, interview with author, October 2011). These were more than moments of cooking for me or for Ramona. They are storytelling events and performances of food-lore that, for actors and audience, are associated with San Rafael.

Charles L. Briggs writes that a gifted oral performance artist “uses stylistic devices in such a way that the form and content of the performance reflect the artist’s view of the way these two worlds, imaginary and real, are connected” (1988:2). In a similar fashion, I argue that a skilled cook is able to employ such stylistic devices as anecdotes, jokes, historical or regional tales, even religious allusions in the act of preparing and presenting food. This not only situates the cook as competent on different levels, but also contributes to the reinforcement and continuation of practices within families and kinship networks.

Food, Tradition, and Identity (*Tamales*)

For many women, the seasonal occurrence of particular foods and the presence of foods at religious and secular events or celebrations are significant as cultural and communal traditions, and as a tangible means of maintaining some sort of connection to one’s family, community or heritage. Folklorists often point out that “traditional foods and ways of eating form a link with the past” (Kalčík 1984:37), and it is because of these perceived connections with a historical and cultural past that these foods and food events endure and adapt through generations. For each generation, particular ethnic foods are a part of a “repertoire of foodways” that individuals can “call upon to use in symbolic displays of ethnic identity” (Kalčík 1984:41). Just as Bauman’s process of traditionalization describes a process in which actors “establish connections with a meaningful past and endow particular cultural forms with value and authority” (1992:128), so too do foods link the present to the past. For some this past is more recent and may be linked to a particular time in life or family member. For others the link is to a more romanticized and distant historical memory. In each situation, food knowledge and cookery competence lend authority and credence to the cook, even if there is innovation and change within traditional recipes.

As far as foods are linked to particular heritage and cultural practices, such as *tortas de huevos* and salmon patties for Good Friday, often times “the activities related to organizing meals for special occasions and the actual performances of these occasions are even more explicitly related to communication” (Goode 1992:240) than the occasions themselves. The ways in which dishes are prepared, the planning of special food events, the time at which they are eaten, or how they are presented and arranged all communicate individual and group identity or status. As a village established around a Catholic Church, both figuratively and literally, for members of the San Rafael community, their food practices are integrally associated with seasons and the liturgical cycle. Participation within this cycle communicates communal involvement and status, cultural competence, and ethnic and religious identity.

Communal cultural events and performances practiced in accordance with the liturgical cycle are not uncommon among Hispanic villages in New Mexico. As Fabiola Cabeza de Baca wrote in *The Good Life: New Mexico Traditions and Food*, the recipes she included “have been a part of the lives of Hispanic New Mexicans since the Spanish colonization of New Mexico” (2005: v). Recipes such as *chile verde*, *tamales*, *albóndigas*, and *biscochitos* “revolve around the observances and traditions of what could have been any Hispanic family in a New Mexico village...the same pattern of life is followed today in many isolated New Mexico villages” (Cabeza de Baca 2005: v-vi). While Cabeza de Baca’s text was originally written in 1949 and is not necessarily an accurate depiction of contemporary villages, which tend to have less religious devotion and cultural involvement than in previous generations, the recipes remain fairly similar to what is used and practiced in contemporary kitchens.

The gustatory pattern of natural and religious seasons seems to begin in the fall with the roasting of the green *chile*, of which the distinctive smell which fills kitchens and expands in a small area surrounding outdoor *chile* roasters located at grocery stores and farmers markets. *Tamales* and *posole* are staples of a New Mexican Christmas dinner. When I asked women what they prepared for Christmas, they often replied, “the usual,” before describing how they make *tamales*, when, who helps, and how many. Each year I would ask women when they would make *tamales*—some made them before Thanksgiving, while most made them two to three weeks before Christmas. Most of the women prepared *tamales* with other female family members—usually mothers and daughters, followed by sisters, and finally a mix of female relatives. Certain women, almost always women who were around 60 years old or older, prepared *tamales* without any assistance from female family members.

In 2010, I joined Pauline, her husband’s sister-in-law, her sisters, and the daughter-in-law of one of the sisters in making pork *tamales* for their family. These sisters did not feel comfortable making *tamales* on their own, and so asked Pauline, who has a reputation as a cook among the extended family, to help them with the process. As one can imagine, preparing pork *tamales* with a group of women who are each leaving with a few dozen, means these *tamal*-making sessions, what Pauline always calls a *tamalada*, results in the making of between 15 and 20 dozen *tamales*.

The other women and I all came prepared with aprons while Pauline provided all other tools and ingredients. She prepared her cuts of pork and red *chile* the day before, so the meat and *chile* filling was ready for our *tamalada*. While she heated the red *chile* and meat in a large crock-pot, the rest of us worked on soaking and dabbing dry the cornhusks that wrap the *tamales*. Dried cornhusks come in sacks, and must then be softened for use. It is

important the husks are then dabbed dry because any wetness will make the *masa*, or dough for *tamales*, difficult to work with. Pauline and her sister-in-law prepared a large amount of the *masa* from a dry mix that is commonly purchased at grocery stores. Once the *masa* was ready, Pauline instructed us all in how to not only apply the *masa* to the cornhusks, but how to do it quickly. Of the entire process, the most difficult part was applying the *masa* to the husk so that it was not too much or too little dough and so that it would not become sticky. Once you spread the *masa* on well enough, you could easily scoop the red *chile* and meat mixture and fold the bottom end “like a *burrito*” while tying the other end with a strip of a cornhusk. Pauline then turned a stainless steel steamer upside down in a large crockpot and instructed us to fill the crockpot with unusable pieces of cornhusks. She then filled the bottom of the pot with water, and we placed more cornhusks at the bottom to prevent water from actually being able to touch the *tamales* once we placed them in the crockpot. With the folded ends down, we placed each standing *tamal* into the pot until we had concentric circles of *tamales*. Pauline placed a kitchen towel on these and put the entire pot on the stove to steam the *tamales* for a couple of hours.

While the *tamales* steamed, we gathered around the table and had Christmas cookies Pauline’s sister-in-law had baked earlier. We were joined by one of the women’s husbands—two other husbands left before I arrived to pick up one of their grandchildren who had flown in from college. As we passed time, Pauline’s in-laws were somewhat embarrassed in saying that they had never made *tamales*. They were all Hispanic New Mexican women in their fifties, and it seemed unlikely that they would not have much experience making such seasonally important foods, but they were from Albuquerque and so had fairly different upbringings than Pauline and her family. After some time, one of the women mentioned that

she had actually made *tamales* before, but that it had been a long time prior and she did not feel like they turned out well. They commented that in comparison, Pauline's *tamales* were like those they would normally order for the holidays. Whereas Pauline's family, and most of the families in San Rafael, gathers together and prepares a large quantity of *tamales* for all of the individual families, the in-laws instead each ordered pre-made *tamales*, and just enough for their own family's celebration.

Knowing that I would be present and what my interests were in, the women told me other stories of their more "traditional" practices—making *biscochitos*, packing green *chile*—but they easily conceded that the communal customs practiced in San Rafael were different and have somehow endured where they have faded elsewhere. Outsiders, such as Pauline's in-laws, and myself ascribe to San Rafael a distinct characteristic, which also helps contributes to San Rafael community members' group and ethnic identity as Hispanic New Mexicans. Fredrik Barth wrote "a categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction, they form ethnic groups in this organizational sense" (Barth 1969:13-14). While this conceptualization is dated, the idea that actors use ethnic identities to organize themselves carries over to more contemporary descriptions of ethnicity not as a category, but as a process "in which the relationship of individuals and groups and the communication of identity are significant" (Kalčik 1984:44). Within this process, how do individual actors identify and categorize themselves? It is not enough to say, as Barth does, that actors "use ethnic identities" to classify particular groups and determine who belongs and who does not. We must know in what ways actors define,

transform, and negotiate these group organizations and dynamics. Foods, eating events, and knowledge of food customs are markers of cultural and ethnic belonging. The “continuity of ethnic groups depends on the maintenance of boundaries between groups” because in the face of social and economic impacts upon cultural retention and transmission, signifiers must exist to determine who belongs and who does not (Kalčík 1984:45).

In the instance of the *tamales*, and cultural food practices in general, these dishes indicate membership to a larger cultural group, while what are perceived as more unique customs—the *tamalada*, *luminarias* vs. *farolitos*—signals membership to a more local San Rafael group. When the women responded to my interview questions about what foods they prepare for Christmas time with “the usual,” they recognized that I would have some idea of the standard New Mexican Christmas fares of *tamales*, *posole*, *biscochitos*, but even then, their more individualized performances of these foods and eating events associated with the season also classify the women by skill and competence.

Recipes as Memory and Commemoration (*Posole*)

Foods and food events are links of continuity because within their preparation and passing from one woman’s hands to another’s, they embody the women who prepared the dish in the past and intertwine contemporary women with those who came before. The particular food ingredients, the process of preparing a dish, or the event in which a food usually appears, are all tied to one’s memories of these occurrences in the past and the people they embody. It is through traditional foods that people engage memory and commemorate a time, a place, or a person. For some, traditional food practices commemorate a shared cultural history and identity. Recipes, then, are modes by which women form ties with others and also assert one’s connection to a historical past. The older the recipe, the more

authenticity the possessor, and her food, acquires. Just as Bauman's theory of traditionalization describes links of continuity within verbal arts, recipes, as often verbally transmitted and only more recently written down, particularly emphasize the ways in which women engage in the process of traditionalizing in every day life and in special events.

This is the case with one family's *posole* recipe. The Dubois family is known for providing *posole* for the annual fiesta, however this is not the only place or event in which the Dubois *posole* plays a central role. As is customary in Hispanic New Mexican households, *posole* is generally served during the Christmas season. The ingredients for *posole*—*nixtamal* or white hominy, onions, pork, and red *chile*—are not dependent upon any natural season, and so the connection between *posole* and winter is not clear. Perhaps because it is a warm, hearty stew that can provide for a large family, *posole* is popular around the Christmas holiday and is generally not eaten past that time.

Before I actually tried the Dubois *posole* at the fiesta, I was introduced to it at the Dubois family posadas, where it was the main dish among a horde of pastries, homemade candies, cookies, and fudge. In addition to the usual ingredients, Ramona also provides guests and family with cilantro and lime wedges to top the stew. When I asked one of the daughters why this was so, she said it was simply how their mom always made and served *posole*. The inclusion of cilantro and lime wedges connotes an influence outside of the standard New Mexican fare. Some San Rafael villagers said they looked forward to this *posole*, the flavor as well as the cilantro, while others said they did not care for the cilantro, as it was perceived as not New Mexican. Talking about how she learned to cook, one Dubois sister said, "You were growing up at your mother's apron strings. That's how you learn" (Ramona Dubois, interview with author, October 2011). In saying so, she created links

between several generations of Dubois women—those who had prepared the *posole* before her, and taught their daughters at their apron strings. Whether or not cilantro and lime are a part of the New Mexican tradition, the Dubois recipe has the authenticity of age and place.

Even though these links exist, that is not to say the recipe remains the same or that the *posole* does not take on the character of the woman preparing it. Ramona's younger sister, herself an excellent cook, described this cooking phenomena as "whatever spirit you put into it (*posole*) yourself" (Yolanda Dubois, interview with author, January 11, 2011). And although Ramona has continued preparing her mother's *posole* and most of the village refers to any Dubois woman's *posole* as Celia's recipe, Ramona has shown innovation in her recipe that varies it quite a bit from her mother's version. Yolanda remembered in her interview that one year "Ramona's daughter got kind of mad and she just said, 'I don't' know what my mom's doing, but that ain't grandma's *posole*...she [Ramona] has this and wants to put that, all kinds of herbs and grandma wouldn't.'" Yolanda went on to say that her mother's recipe, in comparison to Ramona's method, was "real simple, just salt, onion, garlic, your *chile* pods, and pork, good pork. And that's how we make it" (Yolanda Dubois, interview with author, January 11, 2011). Within this family of women, they each felt a continued connection to their deceased mother and grandmother, and felt the desire to honor her through maintaining her *posole* recipe. Ramona carried this out through providing the *posole*, however transformed or enhanced, for the family and community when it was expected. However, for the Dubois family, "grandma's *posole*" is made in a specific way that cannot be altered. The Dubois *posole* recipe demonstrates how the transformational nature of recipes represents so much more than simply adding or changing an ingredient or method of preparation.

Commemoration and authentication are both ongoing processes that are present when a woman uses the recipe of her mother, grandmother, or some other female kinfolk.

Some of the more popular foods that women learned from female kinfolk that hold a special place in their cultural memory and identity are those for seasonal sweet foods such as *biscochitos*, *panocha*, or *natillas*. These recipes are staples of New Mexican traditional fare, found in classic cookbooks such as *The Good Life: New Mexico Traditions and Food*, *Historic Cookery* (Cabeza de Baca Gilbert 2005; 1970), *Comidas de New Mexico* (Delgado 1967), *El Plato Sabroso* (Delgado de Stewart and Quintana 1972), *Mexican Cookbook* (Fergusson 1945), *The Genuine New Mexico Tasty Recipes* (Jaramillo 1981), and *Las Comidas de los Abuelos* (2003), which is a collection of women's recipes published over the years in *La Herencia*, a cultural and historical magazine based in Santa Fe.²⁷

Although traditional staples, they are not generally made by younger generations, for a variety of reasons. Many of the recipes, and older methods of preparing them, are too time-consuming for a woman who works outside the home and then must care for her family in the evenings. One of the foods, *panocha*—a pudding made from ground sprouted wheat and *piloncillo*, has an acquired taste and a grainy texture that many younger generations do not appreciate, and so, no longer include in their cooking repertoire.²⁸ Similar to *menudo*, which

²⁷ Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Gilbert and Cleofas Jaramillo were both participants in a revival of Spanish culture in New Mexico, and were attempting to insert what they believed to be “traditional Spanish” foods into the cultural narrative. Jaramillo prefaces her text by writing, “In this collection of Spanish recipes, only those used in New Mexico for centuries are given, excepting one or two Old Mexico recipes.” Spanish revitalization often denied the influences of other regional cultures, and emphasized Spanish ancestry.

²⁸ In addition to the taste and texture, the word *panocha* is a derogatory term, found in contemporary Mexican culture, for the vagina. As Mexican culture has grown to influence New Mexico and southern Colorado, where *panocha* pudding is part of the food repertoire, younger generations have especially shied away from the dish. In almost every conversation I

many women I interviewed described with distaste, *panocha* has almost vanished from the season in which it was once commonly found—Easter.²⁹ One week in Lent, as Pauline and I sat around the table chatting with her *tía* Rita who had come for a visit, the two brought up Rita's *panocha*, which she used to make for the entire Tórrez family for Good Friday. Rita described how she used to make it, and Pauline chimed in that the old way was the only way to prepare it. First, one must have access to *piloncillo*, an unrefined Mexican brown sugar that comes in a cone or block. This alone was a difficult task, because contrary to contemporary society where one can find Mexican food items, and many other international food items, in grocery stores or specialty international markets, small stores in and around San Rafael did not have *piloncillo*. Rita explained that it was often brought up when family members visited Mexico, or cities close to the Mexican border. If *piloncillo* was not available, but it was the Lenten season, women would cheat by simply caramelizing sugar, but this also changed the flavor of the *panocha* and made it sweeter, so the *piloncillo* was always preferred, even if it was much harder to acquire. The ground wheat is mixed with boiling water and flour and set aside until it is combined with a mixture of liquefied sugar, butter, and cinnamon. But before sugar mixture is even prepared, Rita explained that the ground wheat and flour mixture must sit in a darkened place for at least one day. This step is a personal and local flare that I have not found in recipe books. Rita went further to explain that if you really want the *piloncillo* to taste its best, the ground wheat and flour mixture must

had with San Rafael women of all ages, the contemporary slang meaning was brought up as a reason why the dish has faded from customary food practice.

²⁹ It is interesting to note the symbolic significance of an Easter dessert made of sprouted wheat—wheat itself is a powerful Christian symbol used to represent believers and, as an essential ingredient of bread, is representative of the sacramental Body of Christ. The sprouting wheat signifies the resurrection of Christ and redemption of His believers.

be placed in an old tin coffee can. Pauline said all the women would keep old Folgers cans around for just this task, and that they would place the mixture under the sink where it would remain cool and in a darkened spot. After a day or so, the wheat and flour mixture was combined with the sugar mixture and boiled again before being baked until it reached the desired consistency. A week or two later on Good Friday, Pauline's *tía* Rita visited again, this time with a Tupperware of *panocha* for us to share. The flavor and consistency was certainly hard to appreciate. However, as Pauline's sisters Cathy and Nadine came over, they each were surprised to find their aunt's *panocha* and eagerly ate small bowls. Later that night in the *morada*, Pauline told other relatives—another aunt and cousins—that Rita had made *panocha* for us, which elicited an excited response, especially from her aunt Ernestine who said it had been years since she last had some. Ernestine wiped her lips and said her mouth was watering thinking about it. She then scolded her daughters and me for not knowing how to make *panocha* saying, "These girls, pffft, they wouldn't even know how." Then after some thought, she asked Pauline if she thought Rita would teach us all how to make it saying, "If we all chipped in for ingredients, then she can show us how."

The *panocha*, as well as other traditional New Mexican foods, provokes nostalgia and the act of preparing it commemorates what many women view as a fading lifestyle—their little village has changed in terms of demographics, violence, physical appearance, and layout. Community members no longer interact the way they once did—neighbors and extended relatives no longer visit on Sundays, women do not gather in the mornings for coffee because most women work rather than remain stay at home mothers, and food preparation is a matter of convenience. For many, traditional foods are soul food—nourishing on multiple levels because their preparation is a labor of love.

I remember the green *chile* my mom made, which was a labor of love. I remember her roasting the *chile*...roasting it over the wood stove and then letting it set and cool off. Then peeling it, then setting up clotheslines. There were clotheslines, and I remember doing it as a little girl—you had to get two *chiles* and you didn't cut the tails so you would pierce the tail of one and push the other one through. And you would hang the *chile* on the line so it would dry. And as soon as it was dry you put it in little flour sacks and just hung it up. And you just take it out, break off the tail, soak it, wash it, then cook it. [Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010]

The length of the process, the work involved, both speak to the devotional character of traditional food preparation. Patience and skill were necessary; convenience was out of the question. Mary Ann displays cultural knowledge, competence, and authenticity through her involvement in this older method of preparing green *chile*, and what we can characterize as a more “authentic” form of cultural food production.

The sensual nature of foods makes them a source of remembrance that can be experienced through taste, touch and smell. These senses embed the foods into our bodily memory for later recall

I like to cook when the people are there so they can smell it. I like to stir the pot; I want you to see it too. I want to see it, I wanna make the house smell like it. I want my kids to remember that because I remembered it when I would come from school. Man, I could smell my mom's *tortillas* from down by the church. I'd say, 'I bet you that's mom's *tortillas*. I could smell them, my mouth started watering. [Pauline Chávez, interview with author, August 31, 2010]

Food memory becomes a powerful tool for the maintenance and transmission of particular traditional practices, even if the practices change within the continuity.

The practice and memory of older methods harken back to a time, as one woman said, when the people of San Rafael “grew all their vegetables here. They would exchange. The only thing we bought was sugar and lard sometimes. They even slaughtered their own pigs” (Betty Salazar, interview with author, November 16, 2010). Although changes toward convenience have taken place within a single lifetime, the “older” way of doing things is a

distant memory far removed from the lived experiences of younger women. I experienced this myself as one day I sat in the living room of Sara Jaramillo, a woman in her late 70s, and she burst through her kitchen with a large, heavy bag. She could barely lift it into the living room, and I was totally taken aback when she held it up to me and asked if I wanted lard. Her husband's family had a *mantanza*, so she had an abundance of homemade lard. I was disappointed to say I had no need for it, but the sight of this enormous block of lard reminded me that it was only a short while ago that this was the norm, not my olive or vegetable oil that always left my "traditional" foods tasting not quite right.

Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil remembered a time when families would pick their own wild spinach to prepare *quelites*, a dish of cooked spinach, red *chile* seeds, onion, and sometimes bacon, ham, or pinto beans.

I remember when we were growing up at the ranch, there were *quelites* by the acres. And we would just sit there and pick the wild spinach. And then we'd clean it and cook it and it would shrink down to nothing. It shrinks down to merely nothing. And oh, the way my grandma makes it. My grandmother, she adds a little bit of bacon and she puts beans and some, not juicy beans, but slightly drier beans, then she puts *chile* seeds, like *chile pequin* to give it... Oh, my God it's delicious. It was delicious. And as I was growing up at the ranch, there was nothing there that didn't taste good.
[Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010]

A subsistence lifestyle, even some combination of wage work and subsistence agriculture, as Elaine experienced growing up, has all but vanished from San Rafael and the surrounding region. Due to this transition to complete dependence upon the wage economy, no families really engage in collecting wild edible plants or herbs. Some families still collect *piñon*, but for the most part, rely upon others who collect *piñon* to sell on roadsides or at gas stations. Currently, *quelites* are most likely made with canned spinach, however fresh spinach is now more readily available at area grocery stores. Mary Ann Jaramillo discussed the generational transition from collecting wild spinach to purchasing canned spinach, saying:

We used the can because in her [her mother's] era they had to go collect it because it grew wild at the *acequia*, along the water. But my mom says they used to collect it, go out and gather it. And then wash it and clean it and then they'd fix it. But the way we had it, we got canned. [Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010]

In contrast to these stories of food and a far different lifestyle, younger women often mentioned convenience as the motivating factor in food selection and preparation. Their memories focused on traditional food preparation as laborious, not romanticized with the passage of time or advancement in one's life cycle.

When I was younger, we used to peel it [green *chile*] and pack it, and it would just take all night. It was an ordeal. But now we're just—the easiest way. We'll get it roasted and we'll even get it chopped already. And we'll just put it in the freezer. I just want to make it as easy as possible. [Sally Gallegos, interview with author, March 22, 2011]

With more younger women going to work and school, or possibly leaving the village for a period of time, the family dynamic has changed—stay at home mothers are rare, especially in San Rafael where women were often able to adapt to new employment and educational opportunities and so became the primary providers for their families. Younger families have continued to move away from the village. Increased opportunities outside of the home for all family members in larger urban centers also change the way in which families divide household work and caring for children. Food preparation and choice are prime indicators of these influences upon younger Hispanic families as they migrate away from their home village.

As my mom always used to say, 'If you have beans, rice, tomato sauce, and flour you're set.' But when you're moving to the city, it's not that—you know, there's just so many other options that make it easier for you just to grab a dozen Hot Pockets and keep them in your freezer. [Stephanie Galindo, interview with author, January 5, 2011]

The idea that traditional food practices are constantly changing, being affected by contemporary forces, and reflective of other social processes, is not new or radical. In 1945, Erna Fergusson wrote that,

Nothing more surely reflects the life of a people than what they ate and how they prepared it. When the railroad came to New Mexico, fifty years ago, it changed everything, even what went on in the kitchen. Imagine the difference when flour and meal could be ground in mills instead of metates; when white sugar could be bought, and lemons and oranges; and machinery made ice; and there were iron stoves (1945: 4).

Just as cultural performances reveal larger social dynamics and both individual and community attempts at meaning making, so do traditional foods and food events mirror the people behind them, their contemporary lived experiences, and their understandings of identity and belonging.

It is in the act of preparing food that one either commemorates or perhaps does not, and that the connections between a cultural past and shared cookery knowledge become apparent. Furthermore, in the examples from younger women, we see the obvious generational differences in the actual act of cooking. These women are not engaging in moments of traditionalization or commemoration in quite the same way as their mothers and grandmothers—their experiences with traditional foods are in constant negotiation.

Food Competence (Red *Chile* and *Tortillas*)

When I first began staying in San Rafael, I lived at a big, run-down home called the Whispering Mesa Bed & Breakfast. It was once owned by the Nabor Mirabal family, the son of one of the founders of San Rafael. Several members of the Mirabal family went on to establish themselves as wealthy landowners and shepherders. Their homes are all located at the north part of the village, with the large home of Sylvestre Mirabal as a beacon for the

village itself. The owner of the Whispering Mesa at the time of my stay was the adult son of the woman who last lived there. She was originally from the east coast, but spent some time of her childhood in Grants during the uranium boom years. She eventually settled and raised her children in Arizona, but once they were grown and she divorced, she moved to San Rafael, near her childhood home. She passed away a couple of years before, and her son was interested in renting the home when possible since he lived in Mississippi. Uninhabited homes in the village proper tend to become dilapidated quickly, or are used as homes by homeless people who cannot find shelter in Grants.

The woman who owned the Whispering Mesa was in the process of attempting to open a bed and breakfast when she became ill and was unable to complete the renovation. From outside, the two-story house looks old, but has a classic appeal; it is square with a slight pitched roof, white wood siding, and the front door perfectly centered. A narrow walkway led to a small gate that opened to old Mirabal Road, named after the family that once populated that area. Beside the house is a small red barn that holds various outdoor tools. On the north side of the house there is an overgrown area that the owner intended to be used for special outdoor events. A trellis marked an entrance to this area, which also had decorative ceramic pots, benches, and a statue of St. Francis.

Indoor, the house was cluttered and in need of major repairs and a thorough cleaning. In the summer, the house was an oven, and in the winter, it was extremely cold. The only charming aspect of the house was the kitchen, where it looked like the previous owner had spent much of her time and energy. The kitchen is often the gathering space of any home, and so perhaps the women who lived there devoted herself to making the kitchen the centerpiece of her bed & breakfast.

The kitchen island stored so many bowls, pots, and pans underneath it that they overflowed out from the storage space. Old cast iron meat grinders were attached to the top of the kitchen island, adding to the old-fashioned style of the kitchen. On the wall above the southern kitchen window hung old copper pots and a few old irons that one must heat on a stove. On the opposite side of the kitchen, there was a lovely wooden cabinet that was filled with old dishes, coffee mugs, and books about the area's culture and history. On top were a multitude of tall, short, narrow, and wide glass jars filled with dried wild flowers, seeds, and herbs. In front of the cabinet was an old, thick wood table on which I would often write field notes or read. Beside the table was an old wooden hutch that the previous owner used to hold various clay jars, pictures, notebooks, her Bible, and a few shelves of cookbooks and botanical texts. I loved going through the old cookbooks; she had classic books such as *The Joy of Cooking*, Betty Crocker cookbooks, and a collection of regional books—*The Mexican and Indian Cookbook*, *Comidas de New Mexico*, *Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Canyon West*. She had her own notebook in which she wrote or clipped recipes, birthdays, names of people, phone numbers, appointments or other important notes, and words from the Bible. All around the kitchen, in any space that would hold an object, there were old coffee containers, old salt and peppershakers, or old oilcans. Even though an Anglo woman owned the home, the kitchen was modeled after 1940s or 1950s San Rafael. It was obvious the previous owner also had a nostalgic perspective of her home and life. Anthropologist Judith Goode writes “particular recipes and kitchen utensils are passed down to perpetuate the family's special taste preferences and style. Thus family continuity is deliberately conveyed through the transmission of unique practices in those aspects of the system in which variety and creativity are permitted” (1992:239-240).

I was inspired by the recipes, the jars of dried herbs, and the cookware that was shelved and shoved in every available space around the kitchen. These items made the kitchen seem so authentic; it was so unlike my unused kitchen at my home in Albuquerque, which seemed to only store the foods I eat, not really become a part of the process of food preparation or food events. My Albuquerque kitchen reminded me of work and chores—dishes to be washed, mediocre meals that I prepared out of hunger, not out of joy or love for cooking or people for whom I was cooking. In quite a contrast, I wanted to make red *chile* in the bed and breakfast kitchen; I wanted to wander out onto the *vega* (the stretch of land on the east of San Rafael) I could see out of the kitchen window and pick wildflowers and herbs to dry; I somehow wanted to carry on whatever the former owner had envisioned but not completed. Standing in that old kitchen, sitting at the old wooden table, I would revel in culinary fantasies set in quaint San Rafael.

I immediately focused on red *chile*, as it is such an iconic image in New Mexican culture. Not only are red and green *chiles* symbolic of the regional culture, they are food staples for both Native American and Hispanic communities in New Mexico.³⁰ Red and green *chile* varieties have been cultivated and used in basic foods since time immemorial. Botanist C.B. Heiser writes that between 5200 and 3400 BC, Native American groups began growing *chile* plants, and so *chiles* are one of the oldest cultivated crops in the Americas (1976: 265-268). The word “*chile*” derives from the Nahuatl word “*chil*,” which referred specifically to *Capsicum* peppers (Bosland 1996:2). New Mexican red *chile* is a sauce that derives from capsicum peppers, in contrast to chili, which, for *chile* pepper aficionados, refers to a stew with beans and meat. Red and green *chiles* are the New Mexico state

³⁰ Red *chile* is simply green *chile* harvested later in the season.

vegetable and play a defining role in state cultural tourism and agricultural marketing. The New Mexico Tourism website acknowledges the cultural and economic attachment to *chile* stating that,

Many families in New Mexico include the green chile in every one of their meals. After you've taken a bite of the New Mexico-grown green chile in any dish, you may find it hard not to bring a little warmth back to your home with the many traditional New Mexican recipes available at your fingertips. More chile peppers are grown in New Mexico than all other states combined, and 20 percent of the harvest is destined for the fresh market. Red and green, both piquant pods are an essential ingredient for cooked sauces in traditional New Mexican dishes. [New Mexico Cuisine. New Mexico Department of Tourism, www.newmexico.org/culinary, accessed February 27, 2013]

What, for some, is a traditional custom rooted in identity and history, is for others a multi-million dollar industry (Fryxell 2007). According to the New Mexico Chile Association, the green *chile* industry provides “over 2,000 full-time and over 10,000 part-time jobs to New Mexicans” (Important Industry Information. New Mexico Chile Association. www.nmchileassociation.com/id15.html, accessed May 24, 2013). In recent years as the green *chile* competition has expanded into a global industry, the New Mexico green *chile* has come to symbolize the state's local culture and character, as well as the shared history of New Mexicans. The cultural and economic significance of *chile* upon New Mexico is profound, as it has also positively influenced a greater emphasis on locally grown foods and traditional foodway practices, as well as a growing interest and commodification of New Mexican cultural cuisines.

However, standing in the lovingly-decorated kitchen space that was significantly better cared for than the rest of the home, red *chile* for me was some sort of path to belonging or at least understanding a little bit more what belonging to the community, or to the larger New Mexican culture, meant. I was asked by a number of women if I knew how to make red

chile, if I made it with pods or powder, and if I cooked at home—these questions were all attempts to figure me out. My answers would tell them what kind of a woman I was; I seldom made large meals or large quantities of anything, including red *chile*, because I was single and lived alone. I had never really perfected cooking or my red *chile* recipe because I had never been married and am not a mother, so I never had a pressing reason to do so. I used *chile* powder because my mom used *chile* powder, and she used it out of convenience (what the women considered a habit of younger generations and urban families).

Relying upon old habits, I initially tried to make red *chile* using the powder, which is finely ground dried red *chile*. The powder is added to flour browned in oil. Once this is mixed, you add water, spices, and heat. I followed the directions perfectly, but my red *chile* just did not seem right. It was far more watery than other women's *chile* I had had in San Rafael, and it lacked the vibrant red color of their *chile*. I had not used meat, which was a personal choice, but the consistency and color could hardly be blamed on the lack of meat. There was something else missing that I could not identify.

One day in the parish hall, I told Elaine that I just could not figure out what was wrong with my *chile*. I told her my *chile* lacked flavor, it was not at all bright red like her grandmother Josie's *chile*, and it was not very thick. Her first question was, "Do you make powder or the pods?" I told her powder, and she asked if I had ever used the pods. I said no. My mother did not make red *chile* from pods either, so that method was beyond my knowledge and abilities. It has since been impressed upon me by numerous women at numerous gatherings, both formal and informal, that *chile* powder is far inferior to the *chile* pods in taste, texture, and color. Southwestern writer and entrepreneur Erna Fergusson wrote, "in all recipes, the best results are obtained by using this pulp, whether made from 'outdoor'

chile, or from commercial evaporated chile. Chile powder may be used, but the flavor is never as delicate” (1945:12). Elaine then went on to describe how to make red *chile* from the pods. She gave me a brief run down—first you clean and soak the dried *chile* pods in water. You remove the pods from the water, and add them to a boiling pot of water to cook. Once the pods have softened, remove them and add to a blender. As is needed for consistency, use some of the water in which the *chile* was boiled. Once blended, one would normally strain the mixture to get a nice, smooth *chile* sauce. Elaine said if you blend the *chile* well enough, you would not have to strain the seeds and *chile* peel at all. You then take the red *chile* and cook it on the stove with chunks of meat, usually pork, or simply simmer the sauce on the stove until ready to serve. While I could understand and repeat her directions, I felt completely inept when I found myself back in the kitchen attempting red *chile*; so inept that I abandoned my efforts for another time when I felt more competent. Perhaps with the passing of time, the skill would magically come to me.

Months later, I found myself in the kitchen of Pauline Chávez. I had not yet begun staying with Pauline and her husband, but she had already made it a habit of inviting me to her home to relax or for specific learning moments and cooking or religious opportunities. On this occasion, she would be making red *chile* and knowing my interests from our visits over time she invited me to watch her. She did not know I was plagued by an inability to make something so simple and necessary as red *chile*. I sat at my usual place at her table, and she poured me a cool drink while she collected her materials—sacks of dried red *chiles*, a cookie sheet, a toothbrush, and a bowl. Pauline began by rinsing her *chile* in water. She picked up one of the rinsed *chiles* and told me always remove the stems of the *chiles*, which easily came off. She dumped seeds out of the *chile* pod, and said you must also split it open

along the length of the *chile*. She spread it open, and began brushing the inside of the *chile* with the toothbrush.

Next, Pauline soaked her *chiles* in water. She said she normally lets them sit for some time, but that we were going to make it a bit quicker. Once the pods were soaked enough, Pauline placed them in a large boiling pot of water. She covered them and they cooked until they were softened, limp *chiles*. She took the boiling hot *chiles* and poured them into her blender. Steam rose from the boiled *chiles*, and Pauline added some of the “*chile* water” to the blender. She told me to never throw out the water—you will need this throughout the *chile* process. She blended and added water until the red *chile* became a bright red, smooth sauce. She then said that you must strain the *chile* through a small strainer to ensure all small bits—mostly *chile* peels and veins—were completely removed. She repeatedly said that you cannot make *chile* without properly straining it. “I just hate getting any little bits in my teeth. It should be smooth.” She carefully strained the *chile* into a frying pan, and was left with a paste of *chile* peels in the strainer. Pauline walked over to her cabinet to take out one of her “secrets.” She quickly added two beef bouillon cubes to her *chile* and said that it adds to the flavor. To the *chile* sauce, she added pork that was frozen from an earlier meal. A short time later, her husband came in from outside and we sat down to enjoy red *chile* with pork and *tortillas* while Anthony told us about his latest outdoor project.

On that occasion, and numerous occasions since, I watched Pauline quickly prepare red *chile* and serve her family within a half hour. She has mastered the *chile* sauce enough to know where short cuts can be made or the recipe manipulated to suit her time requirements or cookery needs. Even after watching Pauline competently and skillfully prepare *chile* on numerous occasions, I was unable to leave her home and make my own *chile*. After once

struggling for two hours to make a pot of red *chile* at my home in Albuquerque, I vented to Elaine about my lack of skill the next time we were cleaning the parish hall. She laughed wildly at me and at the thought that I had taken two hours to make simple *chile*. Both Elaine and Pauline tell me that I will eventually figure out how to make *chile*—efficiently and of quality. After laughing at me, Elaine said that “by the time you’re an old lady, you’ll be making red *chile* and *tortillas* with ease.” But she also admitted she does not make her own *tortillas*; it’s unnecessary when her grandmother Josie still makes *tortillas* for the entire family. Elaine will eventually have to learn that skill, but for now, she relies upon older women in her family to provide certain recipes.

Elaine’s responses to my food questions—what traditional foods she makes, and which ones she prefers to have her mother and grandmother make—are common among daughters and younger generations. In every interview with the daughters, I would ask if they knew how to make red *chile* and *tortillas*. I received answers much like my own experiences—“I do *tortillas*, my Spanish cooking isn’t that good though. I don’t make the red [*chile*], but I’ll do the green” (Sally Ann Gallegos, interview with author, March 22, 2011). The difference is that red *chile* requires more cookery skill and a recipe, while green *chile* preparation only requires that one has the time and ability to roast and peel large amounts of the green pods. Another woman, a daughter of a center woman, who is in her early forties and lives in Albuquerque, does not often make standard New Mexican dishes such as beans, *tortillas*, or *chile*, but does participate in the annual Albuquerque Old Town Salsa Fiesta. She and few friends prepare a homemade tomato, *chile*, and *jalapeño* salsa, canned and sold in mason jars. Stephanie, the daughter of Pauline, has become known within her family networks in San Rafael for making ceviche, a recipe she learned from her mother-in-law. It is

now expected that she will contribute ceviche at particular family functions, such as Holy Communion and baptisms. What these younger generations of women show is that they often engage traditional or cultural food practices in ways that emphasize their choice within foodways, new influences, or their creativity and personal style.

Other foods that are also indicative of traditional food competence are *tortillas* and *sopaipillas*. Whereas older women often mentioned *tortillas* and *sopaipillas* as “everyday foods,” younger women discussed making these foods as experiences fraught with trial and error and repeated failures: “I can’t make *sopaipillas* though. I’ve tried a bunch of times, and they’ve only come out good twice” (Melody Pohl, interview with author, January 23, 2011). One of the center women who expressed that she no longer had reason to make *tortillas* because her children were all grown and she and her husband were often busy with work, showed me her *tortilla* press which she recently purchased to make *tortillas* for her grandkids—“...it’s so simple, just make the *masa* and then press it...and it only takes a second” (Susie Gallegos, interview with author, September 29, 2010). For this woman, and other older women, they had already mastered the art of making *tortillas*. For younger women, *tortillas* still present a challenging task that they would rather leave to older female relatives. Elaine Vigil, herself a center woman, describes this as the sense that her own *tortillas* would not compare to older women’s *tortillas*, specifically her grandmother’s, and so she was able to opt out of preparing her own.

And my grandmother tells us stories that she was 7 years old and she had to have a little bench and she’d be making *tortillas* at 7 years old. I find that quite amazing. Whereas, I still don’t make *tortillas*. I’m sorry. So I’m pretty bad. The one time I tried not even the chickens would eat them so I gave up. She still sends us *tortillas*. She’s still a very good cook. I could never measure up. I could never find her secrets, I could never have her talent, you know. [Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010]

These younger women, like myself, recognized they did not have the same skills as mothers or grandmothers, and instead pick and choose what practices to assume and which they would rather rely upon other, older women kinfolk to prepare. In this way, I distinguish between having cultural culinary knowledge and having competence to put that knowledge into practice.

Traditional food competence comes from necessity. For older generations, learning to prepare foods such as *tortillas* and *sopaipillas* was a necessary skill. In the case of Elaine's grandmother Josie, a woman born in the 1920s, whose mother passed away and who was the only female in the household, preparing *tortillas* at age seven was essential for her family. This would certainly not be the case today with the creation and popularity of store-bought *tortillas*. In comparison to the “*tortilla* story” of a younger woman, a woman born in the 1960s, who said,

The time I learned to make my *tortillas* in my life, believe it or not, I was already a grown girl. I was in 11th or 12th grades. I asked to go on a date and my dad let me go. And when I came back, the way we talked about my date was my dad taught me how to make *tortillas*. And so we sat there and talked about my date and at the same time, he's giving me a recipe for *tortillas*. That's how I learned to make *tortillas* with my dad. [Veronica Montaña, interview with author, February 12, 2011]

For Veronica, her experience with learning to make *tortillas* is intimately connected to her relationship with her father, who was not only trying to communicate with his daughter, but was likely also imparting important information to her as a woman who would soon have the responsibility to cook for a husband and eventually a family.³¹

³¹ Among the study participants, the Tórrez sisters (Pauline Chávez, Veronica Montaña, Nadine Rodríguez, and Cathy Eríves) were the only women who shared stories of cooking with their fathers or male relatives.

Generational Changes in Food Practices

At the same time, it is within these moments of traditional food events that women also inserted agency into the gustatory narrative of the community. Agency in the form of authority over food and food events, as well as for changes to traditional cooking—the way in which foods are prepared, what foods are included during particular seasons, and even the reasons for which they cook. The authority women asserted over the foods they prepared and at meal times is perhaps the most salient form of agency and shift among different generations of women. Older women spoke with a definite confidence in their food practices and choices, while younger women lacked this self-assurance and often needed their mothers, or another older female relative, to help them prepare traditional foods: “We’ll get together [to cook]. My mom does the *chile* cooking and the *masa* making...my mom would make her *tamales* here [San Rafael], but I still needed my *tamales* there [Bloomfield], so my mom would go to Bloomfield and help me with my *tamales*” (Stella Valdez, interview with author, November 16, 2010). In contrast with one of the center women, Bessie, who makes “14 to 16 dozen” Christmas *tamales* for her adult children and grandchildren by herself each year-- “And I make *tamales* for all of them. That’s my Christmas to them” (Bessie Debassige, interview with author, October 28, 2010). For younger generations, cooking traditional foods is no longer necessary; it is not a skill acquired at a young age, but rather a skill or hobby a woman can *choose* to learn or master.

With mastery over foods comes the ability to assert one’s knowledge over others, such as the case with Pauline who has very specific food practices and beliefs that were passed on to her by older relatives, assuring others that they are “authentic,” traditional practices.

I think I started cooking when I was probably, 10 or 11 because I remember making *tortillas*, peeling potatoes. We didn't have these fancy potato peelers, so if we were peeling potatoes, I remember my dad, he would just barely take the skin off. Real conscientious. It was a lot of detail in cooking. Little things, like when you finish making your *masa* and let it rest and make a *crucita* on top of it. You know, little things like that. I was even telling my mother-in-law that, 'You know, when I make [Spanish] rice at your house and you and Yolanda [Pauline's sister-in-law] start stirring up my rice, I don't like it.' I said, 'Now it's my time, because when I make it at your house Mrs. Chávez [her mother-in-law], I see you guys stir and stir my rice.' Once we [Pauline's family] make the rice and toasted it, we put the lid on it and we never opened it again, that was it. [Pauline Chávez, interview with author, August 31, 2010]

Not only is Pauline particular about her preparation of foods, she is a good cook and can assert herself within the kitchen over other women. In contrast, younger generations of women transform traditional recipes to better suit their needs, desires and lives away from San Rafael. As illustrated by the 40-year-old daughter of Susie Gallegos who lives in Denver, authenticity and the maintenance of particular practices is not the priority when preparing meals.

I tried to eliminate frying by baking instead of deep-frying when possible. I prepare corn *tortillas* in the oven by brushing with olive oil. I tried to cut down on using lard and cooking oil, altogether....which obviously doesn't work when you're trying to make things like flour *tortillas* and *sopaipillas*. It's also probably why my *tortillas* always came out like crackers...at one point, I tried using a pita as a substitute which had the same texture in ways, but still not the same. I think I even once tried to substitute ground turkey for *chile*...but something was off. In the end, my Mom's food is still the best. [Tanya Gallegos, interview with author, March 2011].

Simple changes such as using a *tortilla* press or healthier ingredients, and even being able to use measurements in recipes, all drastically affect the foods and the cook. It is interesting to consider the influence of memory and belonging in the success of changes in traditional foods or meals--often women described an "off" feeling when discussing the ways in which they changed their mother's or grandmother's recipes. In this way, the younger women are using innovation in how they engage traditional foods. The dish itself remains the same, yet

manipulations to the ingredients or preparation render the dish as incomparable to a more traditional recipe. Perhaps these changes remove the dish from the traditionalization process, but the recipes themselves still signify an “ongoing connection to the past” (Theophano 2002: 50), especially as younger women compare themselves to older generations and even as they attempt to manipulate and transform the recipes of older women.

Other women, usually those women in their 50s, 60s, and 70s, altered recipes in more subtle ways, after many years of successfully making more “authentic” recipes. One woman in her 60s named Bessie, said,

My Nana Emelia [her grandmother], she would make *biscochitos*. She would make hers so nice and fat and big. They were really good. You know, a lot of things we learned was really by watching. They [her grandmother, mother, and aunts] were always doing stuff, they were always busy doing stuff like that, so just by watching really. And then my mom, she wrote a recipe on what to add and stuff. But her recipe doesn't have *anise*. Because we don't like *anise*. I don't care for it too much. Hers doesn't have *anise*. [Bessie Debassige, interview with author, October 28, 2010]

In Bessie's family's case, the recipe for *biscochitos* was handed down verbally until her mother decided to write it down, and, rather than documenting her own mother's recipe, decided to record her version of *biscochitos*—made without anise. I argue this is a way for women to assert their own authority within this gastronomical realm that requires a certain level of local cultural knowledge. It is only when a woman feels she has mastered her mother's or grandmother's recipes that she can indeed modify them. Food scholar Janet Theophano writes that, “modification may be personal and the selection of recipes themselves idiosyncratic, but culinary knowledge is collectively generated. Because it is knowledge accumulated over time, it acquires a patina of meanings that may be called upon to celebrate a culture, challenge prevailing stereotypes, and simply preserve a vanishing way of life” (Theophano 2002:51). Not only do these stories indicate agency, they also signal

belonging for the women who are now the storytellers and able to link themselves through the narratives to traditional practices and women who were masters within the kitchen.

Bessie's anecdote about *biscochitos* also marks a particularly interesting change between generations—dependence upon written recipes, rather than having the knowledge and skill to prepare and measure ingredients from memory and based on touch or feeling. Women who had older female kinfolk still in their lives all made similar comments about how their cooking did not compare to abilities of these older women.

I'm not as good as my grandmother because she can literally just throw in her ingredients without even measuring. Whereas I'm a measurer. I need to know exactly how much to put in. And then you get to learn that the texture of the dough has to be thin enough and not too thick. [Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010]

As the main preparers of meals within the home, most of the women I interviewed decided what was to be had for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, what groceries were to be purchased, and from where. Despite such control within the household, most women routinely mentioned that, especially in their earlier years of marriage, they often cooked to please their husbands' tastes and cooked foods that their husbands' own mothers or grandmothers prepared.

My husband said, 'Gosh, are we having potatoes again?' I was like, I don't know. And then I started asking her [her mother]. When I first got married, I lived next door. And I'd run over and I'd ask her and then my mother-in-law. I learned from her a lot too. Just watching when we'd go over and then I'd watch my mom and I'd ask her. [Susie Gallegos, interview with author, September 29, 2010]

However, several women were also assertive in saying that they did not conform to their husbands' preferences, and instead the husbands conformed to his wife's style of cooking and particular regional tastes. Mary Ann, a woman in her late 60s, remembered of her early years of marriage that her husband often mentioned foods completely unknown to her.

And *albóndigas*, we never had *albóndigas*. I mean, we didn't, I don't ever remember having it. But we went to up to Las Vegas, Johnny [her husband] says, 'Well, grandma is going to fix my favorite dish when we go.' And I said, 'What is that?' '*Albóndigas*.' I said, 'What is that?' And then he explained to me what it was [meatballs]. He says, 'I don't even like them anymore.' [Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010]

Mary Ann's story shows that she ultimately made the food choices within her home, and that after some time, her husband Johnny conformed to her preferences, forsaking even his grandmother's *albóndigas*.

While Mary Ann's story is unique for her age group, it is more often told among younger women who described no longer cooked to please her husband or family, but instead cooked for her own pleasure and convenience. This is illustrated in one mother daughter pair—the mother who would often say that the way to a man's heart was through his stomach, which is quite a contrast to her daughter who, when I asked if she cooked meals according to what her husband preferred and grew up with, or meals that reflected her upbringing, responded:

I bring in the foods that I grew up [around]. I definitely cook the *chile* the way my mom shows me, the way I see it done. [Stephanie Galindo, interview with author, January 5, 2011]

She specifically contrasted New Mexican *chile* with *chile* her husband grew up around in Mexico and said she makes her *chile*. What is notable here is that she is cooking for her husband, ensuring that he was taken care of at home, yet did so with her own food choices.

Stephanie's response differs from the experience of another woman of similar age, who said,

I learned how to cook from my mom. Although I cook totally different from my mom, I learned the concept of cooking. I learned to add things to foods, seasonings, but I developed my own style. Me and my mom cook so different. I use different salsas than her, the tastes I've acquired [Melody Pohl, interview with author, January 23, 2011].

Although different experiences among contemporaries, both Stephanie and Melody describe their choice and agency in family food matters rather than emphasizing or even acknowledging cultural continuity and maintenance of traditional food practices.

It is not only the women's food choices that have changed, but also society's notions of food that have changed around the women. A number of the women, all roughly 40 years old and older, related stories about being embarrassed to eat *tortillas* while at school. Stella Valdez, a woman in her early 50s, remembered,

I was embarrassed! Red, red that I was eating a *tortilla* for lunch. Ms. Saul [her teacher] put a stigma on me. And now any kid would be dying for a *tortilla*, but in those days I wanted a Rainbo Bread. I wanted a store-bought bread, I didn't want a homemade *tortilla*. [Stella Valdez, interview with author, November 16, 2010]

And as Stella pointed out, today's children appreciate homemade *tortillas* that they are less likely to have on a daily basis whereas older generations were accustomed to having *tortillas* available at most meals. Now, children and younger adults have grown used to finding foods such as *tortillas* at the homes of their mothers and grandmothers. Because of this, the children of younger women have come to associate a certain character, quality, and memory to "grandma's food." As Stephanie said,

"They [her children] never forget grandma's house or grandma's cooking. 'Celeste [her daughter] what do you want for your birthday?' 'I just want *tamales*.' And I'm thinking, oh my gosh, that's all she's asking for? But my mom, she makes them and they've been there for every year of her birthday, so they know it only comes once a year, so yeah, sure, ask for *tamales*" [Stephanie Galindo, interview with author, January 5, 2011].

While women in their 30s and 40s may view traditional foods and food practices as optional, and even customs relegated to leisure activity, tailored to suit their lives in urban areas away from older kinfolk, perhaps their children will re-insert traditionalization into food processes, as they remember the smells, tastes, and stories from grandma's house as she made these

foods that became precious commodities over time, rather than staples of a New Mexican Hispanic household.

Conclusion

Among generations, cooking is a process of memorializing female ancestors and their practices. The act of cooking allows for conversations about food and family, while providing a space for cooks to assert authority, authenticity, or innovation through food choice and preparation. While older generations of women demonstrate mastery of traditional foods, younger women have different relationships to these same foods and food events. Within the younger generations, women are not acquiring the food competence to the same degree as their mothers and grandmothers, but at the same time, these younger women insert more diverse influences and options within their food repertoire.

Although there are many changes and differences in the way New Mexican Hispanic women provide and prepare food for themselves and their families, it was my experience that food—talking about food, preparing food, and eating together—was memory-laden and was a vehicle for discussing and understanding sense of self, belonging, and family, regardless of generation or distance from San Rafael. Whether foods assumed some greater representation of one's heritage or home, or became an area in which a woman could allow her creativity and personal style come forth, or if preparing certain foods were a connection to loved ones, foods are personal and intimate experiences for women and their families, and tools for reflection and expression.

Chapter Six

Women and Religion: Good Friday in San Rafael

Introduction

As with other areas of local knowledge that this dissertation has emphasized and examined, religious participation and strong religious competence is a path to belonging within the San Rafael community. It is through participation in the church community groups such as the church choir, the fiesta council, the Sacred Heart Society, Bible Study, the Blessed Mother devotion, and numerous other social circles that extend from these religious associations that women establish and maintain their position in the community. This is not to diminish any woman's religious devotion or emotional attachment, but to instead emphasize individual agency and meaning making, both of which more accurately demonstrate cultural changes over time and across generations. Whether deeply devoted, casually involved, or completely non-participating, women can demonstrate religious competence as a means to reaffirm ties to the community or cultural landscape. In this chapter, I focus on the women who employ religious know-how during the Easter Season. These women may have extensive and continual involvement in the religious community, or may only be casually involved through other family members, while still others only participate in the religious community through the local *hermandad*, one of several terms for *La Fraternidad Piadosa de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, which is a lay religious organization that carries out particular religious observances related to the Catholic Church and mutual aid within the community (de Aragón 1998; Henderson 1937; López Pulido 2000; Steele 2005; Vigil 2005; Weigle 1976). Even if only periodic, such participation by these women at key moments

within the San Rafael religious cycle reconnects individuals to family and place in ways for which other communal involvement does not allow.

Although the San Rafael village was not officially established until after the 1869 abandonment of the old Fort Wingate, a secular priest named Fr. José Rafael Chávez served the early families who founded San Rafael in the mid-1850s (Barela 1975:13).³² Father Chávez was an apostate Catholic priest who built the first chapel in San Rafael on the site where the present day Guadalupe Grotto is located. Father Chávez allegedly had a family, but despite this, he retained respect within the community. This is apparent in the writing of local historian Josephine Barela who said, “The little chapel became somewhat of a shrine and all funeral processions on the way to the cemetery stopped in front of it and said prayers for the dead buried there” (1975:14). Fr. Chávez’s chapel, unrecognized officially, was adopted as the soul of the community.

The Chávez Chapel was eventually demolished, but the memory of Fr. Chávez remains as the older generations of women often told me about the apostate priest with a family who is buried in the corner of Guadalupe Grotto Park. While there are few records of Fr. Chávez, his story seems to represent the somewhat progressive and tight-knit nature of San Rafael religious practice. One woman commented on this as we sipped coffee in her kitchen, saying that their Catholicism is not necessarily always in accordance with official Church practice and does not always fall in line with the Bible, but is instead a “lived faith” that bends and sways with inevitable changes in the social and cultural character of the community.

³² The whereabouts of Fr. Chavez are not documented, but church records show he was no longer priest by the official 1906 establishment of the San Rafael Church.

San Rafael continued as a fairly homogenous Hispanic village—most people were active in the local Catholic Church (Barela 1975). In women's interviews, women in their late 40s or older often remembered a difference in the roles of religion and church in their lives when young in comparison to their current roles. One woman described this saying,

...I don't know what's in store for the future because there's not as much community involvement. The whole make up of families these days and what they're practicing is totally different from how we were raised. You know what I mean? Families nowadays pick a basketball game or a football game over going to church. I know when we were playing basketball when we were little our coach was very Catholic oriented and before we even started tournaments or before anything we would go to church as a team. [Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010]

The general community is no longer as religiously oriented or culturally homogenous. Many women of the generation I have termed "daughters" have married outside their ethnicity, culture, or religion. Several of the older women would make comments about how this led to less religious involvement in the Catholic Church, and one woman with whom I spent time each week often talked about her daughter's conversion from Catholicism to her husband's faith (another Christian denomination), or her son's divorce. She worried she and her daughter would be in different heavens, or even worse, that her daughter and son would not go to heaven at all.

While the village is currently more heterogeneous in terms of religion or family structure, many people still consider religious practice as a primary identity of the community and standard measure of belonging for individuals. It is through religious participation that one can become a part of the community—I, myself, experienced this, and I also saw returning daughters, other kinfolk who moved to the area, and daughters-in-law who became re-integrated with the village through participation in activities that centered around the church and traditional cultural events. Only when I began participating in particular

church-centered activities did I begin to fit in with the community—especially the community of adult women. It was during these activities that the adult women discuss their lives and the issues of the community. As I attempted to make myself a part of the village, I came to recognize the importance of being at the church with the older women and making myself available to them. This focus upon church-related activities is spatial and cognitive—the San Rafael Church is a physical locus for communal gathering and commemoration, while the cultural and religious practices carried out in San Rafael become central events within the lives of involved women and their families. This central importance may vary from woman to woman—one woman may see the events and practices as an opportunity to become a part of the community, while for another woman, these events are a part of the greater liturgical cycle and holds other meanings entirely.

In west central New Mexico, an area dominated by Native American communities, Anglo settlements, and pockets of fairly new Hispanic villages, there is a lack of awareness that “traditional” New Mexican cultural practices are known and continued. Especially in comparison to northern New Mexico, west-central New Mexico remains left out of the New Mexican cultural milieu. Regionally San Rafael has taken on the characterization as a sort of center where area residents can find and participate in “traditional” New Mexican culture. However, among the people of the Mt. Taylor region, particular communities are known for their “traditions.” These communities include Seboyeta, San Mateo, and San Rafael. While the populations of Seboyeta and San Mateo have always remained low, San Rafael, through its population booms and busts, gained greater notoriety, involvement, and interest for the local traditional practices. More recently, a member of the Grants Mainstreet Project, an organization devoted to the development of the city of Grants, referred to San Rafael as a

“diamond in the rough” that could potentially be “another Chimayó.”³³ This reference to *Chimayó* was not the first time I had heard area residents draw a comparison between the two communities, as women often noted that San Rafael was similar to the towns and villages “up north”; communities often perceived as more authentic or traditional.

Good Friday

From the annual feast days for their patron saint and Our Lady of Guadalupe, to entire seasons of the year, communal events in San Rafael are based upon the Catholic liturgical calendar, or Church Year. Liturgical seasons outside of what is termed Ordinary Time include Advent, Christmas, Lenten, and Easter seasons. Throughout these liturgical seasons, the expressions of family, community and culture are steeped in tradition, yet reveal variability amongst participants in terms of personal meaning and religious articulation (or lack thereof). Initially, one would think such variability would not be conducive to successfully performing Good Friday devotions, however the Stations of the Cross held at the local Catholic Church and the *Via Crucis* held at the San Rafael *morada* (*penitente* chapterhouse) both continue, with new additions, forms, and adaptations to meet the needs of the practitioners and (potential) audiences.³⁴

Holy Week is of great importance to Catholic New Mexicans and to New Mexico cultural flavor. Holy Week is the final week of Lent before Easter Sunday, and consists of four religious holidays—Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday), Good Friday,

³³ *Chimayó* is a small Hispanic mountain community north of Santa Fe that is known for its *Santuario*. *El Santuario de Chimayó* is a local Catholic pilgrimage site with dirt that is believed to have healing properties.

³⁴ The *Via Crucis* is Latin for Way of the Cross, another name for the Stations of the Cross. Within San Rafael, the two events depict the final hours of Christ (the Passion), yet they remain separate and quite different in terms of performance.

and Holy Saturday. Good Friday in San Rafael is marked by three specific events which are simply different versions of the same religious devotion—the pilgrimage and Stations of the Cross sponsored by St. Theresa’s Catholic Church in nearby Grants, the Stations of the Cross held at the San Rafael Catholic Church, and the *Via Crucis* performed at the San Rafael *morada* following the Stations of the Cross. All of these events are Roman Catholic devotions that enact the Passion of Christ and Christ’s crucifixion, and are performed in remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice for his followers. Both of the Stations of the Cross and the *Via Crucis* have standard Catholic meanings, however a difference in content, emotional expression, and audience reveal deeper personal meanings and community fissures. I will first discuss the San Rafael Stations of the Cross and *Via Crucis*, held at the Catholic Church and *morada*, respectively, and then I will discuss the St. Teresa’s Stations of the Cross pilgrimage that ends in San Rafael.

Both Stations of the Cross and *Via Crucis* are performances, or “an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in a special way and put on display for an audience” (Bauman 1992:41). Aside from the content, the significance of these performances lies in the situational and cultural contexts in which they take place. This includes the ways in which each event is enacted, the people who participate as actors and audience members, and the varying individual and community meanings associated with the cultural performances.

Because of the multiple layers of meaning and reflexivity of cultural performances, they “tend to be the most prominent performance contexts within a community and to share a set of characteristic features” (Bauman 1992:46). Cultural events are often scheduled, which allows for advanced preparation, they tend to be “coordinated public occasions” that are

temporally and spatially bounded and are, for the most part, structured in terms of the performance activity that takes place within the spatial boundary (Bauman 1992:46). As planned, communal events that offer participatory actions, both the Stations of the Cross and *Via Crucis* are occasions for which people gather and reaffirm traditions, familial and social ties, and community and personal identities. The collective participation from San Rafael residents and extended community members, lies at the heart of these cultural performances and fosters local belonging. A sense of belonging arises from the reconnection with family and community members in symbolically marked spaces and enactments where cultural competence and social capital assume heightened importance and value, even among individuals who are not regularly a part of the local Catholic community.

For the most part within San Rafael, the events surrounding Holy Week are the domain of older generations and mostly women, but often attract relatives who no longer live in San Rafael and even family guests who have never experienced a “traditional” New Mexican *Semana Santa* (Holy Week). Although younger generations do not often participate in *Semana Santa* activities for reasons that range from the time commitment involved, to lack of knowledge of the practices, to lesser religious attachment, there remains tremendous respect amongst younger folks and non-practicing Catholics for the *penitentes* of San Rafael as they are not only rooted within old San Rafael families, but recognized on a statewide cultural level as “traditional” New Mexican religion. The *penitentes*, or *Los Hermanos de la Fraternidad Piadosa de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*, has historically served as a lay religious order within Hispanic villages, but is more popularly known for their *Semana Santa* devotions and practices, including flagellation and other forms of embodying the physical suffering of Christ’s passion. In contrast to the *penitentes*, the Holy Week activities of the

local Catholic Church generally only attract the devout, older Catholics and are more Roman Catholic in nature, with only slight performative gestures.

Stations of the Cross

During the Lenten season, a less-involved version of Stations of the Cross is carried out each Friday evening at six o'clock at the San Rafael Catholic Church, with a more detailed version reserved specifically for Good Friday. In the Stations of the Cross performed on regular Fridays, the event is rather brief. When I attended one Friday during Lent, I was fairly surprised by the lack of attendance. There were only a handful of people, and I was the youngest person there. I found that usually only a small amount of people gather on these Fridays, but that attendance seems to increase as we grow closer to Good Friday.

This version of Stations of the Cross features "The Way of the Cross" as composed by St. Alphonsus Liguori, which describes the events of the Fourteen Stations, or pivotal occurrences, in the last hours of Christ. Small purple books of "The Way of the Cross" are stacked in the back of the church, so each person can read along with the deacon. Parishioners remain standing throughout the ceremony. The deacon does not stand at the altar as in traditional masses, but instead stands in the church aisle among the pews. At each Station, the deacon reads a description of what occurred at that time, along with a religious meditation, followed by a brief sung response from parishioners. While the deacon reads the meditation, parishioners kneel, and stand again when their response is due. This version of Stations of the Cross lasts between 30 and 40 minutes.

The devotion is quite a different performance on Good Friday when Stations of the Cross takes place at two o'clock in the afternoon and includes a reading of the Passion of Jesus according to John as well as the Veneration of the Cross. In other Lenten versions of

the Stations of the Cross, verses from John the Baptist are not a part of the performance. Their inclusion here creates an “official” atmosphere where parishioners know they are performing a standard Catholic ritual along with other Catholics worldwide. The difference in performance is due simply because one is performed on regular Fridays of Lent, while the other is performed on Good Friday of Holy Week. Holy Week includes particular reenactments of events that correspond to the last week of Christ’s life. The reading of the Passion of Jesus is the Gospel according to John the Baptist and provides a narrative account and reenactment of the Fourteen Stations, rather than a brief description as is done on other Fridays of Lent. The timing of Good Friday services at the Church is strictly for scheduling purposes, rather than having a religious significance. In the past, the church-sponsored Good Friday services have been held at 2 o’clock in the afternoon, which allowed folks to go directly from the church to the *morada* for their Via Crucis at 3 o’clock. More recently, the church services have begun around noon to allow for participants in the St. Teresa’s pilgrimage to remain in San Rafael for Good Friday mass when they finish the pilgrimage. Despite the changes in scheduling, as a devotion that takes place in the Church, it is highly structured and does not vary in form aside from individual performances. For the purposes of this paper, I focus on the Stations of the Cross as performed on Good Friday.

The Good Friday service consists of the Liturgy of the Word (which contains the Stations of the Cross in a narrative form), the Veneration of the Cross, and the Holy Communion. In contrast to usual masses which also consist of the Liturgy of the Word and the Holy Communion, performative elements of the Good Friday service elaborate the heightened importance and reverence of the day and event. Two men volunteer prior to the Good Friday mass to play the speaking roles—one man reads for both Pontius Pilate (the

Roman procurator who sentenced Christ to death) and Peter the Apostle (who denies Christ three times during the arrest and Passion), while another man is the narrator (perhaps the voice of John the Baptist, but this is not explicit). These men are joined at the altar by the priest who has the speaking role of Jesus. Parishioners, who remain standing at their pews, follow along in the missal and play the Roman people who call for the crucifixion of Christ. None of the text is memorized or passed down orally through generations; the execution of this event relies solely upon the Roman Missal, from which all actors read. The text provides a narrative of the events leading to the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Christ, and is comprised of passages from Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, and the Passion account taken from the Gospel of John (referred to as the Book of Glory).

The reenactment of the Passion of Jesus takes about forty-five minutes, and is followed by the Veneration of the Cross, during which parishioners pay homage to the Holy Cross on which Christ suffered and died.³⁵ The priest stands at the altar holding a statue of Christ. In San Rafael, the *Cristo* from the *morada* is used. Parishioners line up between the pews and, as the priest holds the statue, they kiss the feet of the Crucified Christ. Some parishioners simply kiss the feet, while others kiss his feet and hands, or gently rub parts of His body. The Veneration of the Cross tradition is found in Roman Catholic Churches everywhere, and is an official devotion. The official rituals performed within the San Rafael Church are routinized and, for the most part, lack regional elements. However, San Rafael parishioners use the *Cristo* from the *morada* rather than the Christ statue from the church,

³⁵ Also known as Adoration of the Cross, this is one of several Feasts of the Cross. Although Veneration has not always been a part of the Good Friday ritual, it is now included in many Catholic Churches.

which I believe endows the event with increased reverence and capability for cultural transmission.

The *Cristo* statue varies quite a bit from other statues in that it is carved from wood, rather than plaster. He is darkened over time and has very dark features as well. He wears tattered clothing, and is obviously the image of a battered and bloodied Christ. This is a drastic difference from more common Christ statues that portray Him as light-skinned with blue eyes and light brown hair, draped in a white flowing robe. The *Cristo* does not radiate beams of light, but instead conveys tremendous suffering and pain. The *Cristo* has a long history in San Rafael, and most people do not actually know from where it came. One of the oldest men in the community and relative of local historian Josephine Barela said his father claimed the statue came from Reserve, NM, about 100 miles south of San Rafael in the Gila National Forest. He said there was some connection to Reserve, but did not know the specifics. The specifics are not as important as the general belief that this *Cristo* has been in the community for as long as anyone can remember—a tangible connection between generations of the faithful.

Los Hermanos

When I first walked into it, the *morada* was quite unlike any other building I had been in before. It is a humble square building with compact dirt floors that are cracking from the years. There is an old feeling and smell to it. However, little history of the building, the materials within it, and the hermandad itself is known. The pews are former church pews given to the *morada* when new ones were purchased; aged *santos* and small plaster statues sit above the door, in *nichos* along the walls, and on the altar. One set of pews lines the left wall, and another set is opposite them. Additional pews sit diagonally of to the right side, but

provide only a partial view of the altar. The opposite-facing pews leave a space in the center of the main room where the *hermanos* gather and conduct ceremonies. Many in the audience face the *hermanos* in the center, and can participate alongside them, quite literally, if they choose to do so. There are no windows, except for a small opening just above the door. The altar itself is made of volcanic rock—a characteristic of the region, since San Rafael sits on the western edge of *El Malpais* (“the Bad Lands,” so named by the Spaniard conquerors), which are jagged, rough lava flows that extend for miles from a range of extinct volcanoes.

Immediately I noticed that contrary to church functions, the *morada* audience and participants are almost always and solely comprised of women, which is a contrast to the male-dominated *hermandad*.³⁶ Some women enter the *morada* and quickly sit down, while others gather at the front of the *morada* where the *Cristo* stands in a plain black robe. They light candles at the base of the altar (which remains entirely covered in black until *Sabado de Gloria*) in honor of deceased loved ones.³⁷ The volcanic walls behind the *Cristo* hold small pictures of deceased loved ones, many who were past *hermanos* and *hermanas*. Some of the pictures were taken there at the *morada*, others were from personal family events, and many

³⁶ Most *hermandads* in New Mexico and southern Colorado follow the male exclusive rule that has persisted within the organization for time immemorial. The San Rafael *hermandad*, in contrast to all others, has two active, full-fledged female members who are *hermanas*. This is a known fact within the area, but not accepted elsewhere. The *hermanas* have family ties to the *hermandad*, with one of the women said to be “falling into her father’s spot. And so she’s an *hermana*” (Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010). When I asked San Rafael *hermanos* why or when they allowed female members, they simply said that was how their group had always been. One *hermano* even described the group as “progressive.”

³⁷ *Sabado de Gloria*, or Saturday of Glory, commemorates the day Christ laid in the tomb, and while this is still a somber day within the Church, it is a glorious day at the *morada*, filled with expressions of joy that include an Easter egg hunt and confetti thrown at the *Cristo* and the *hermanos* as they sing a final *alabado*.

were taken during military service. Numerous rosaries hang from pictures and candles, and the *Cristo* himself is draped in a turquoise rosary. Many women kiss the hands and feet of the *Cristo*, and kiss or touch the old black and white pictures that line the altar along the walls, as they remember and reflect on their loved ones.

During one of my early visits to the *morada*, my friend Dina accompanied me, which seemed to assure others that I was ok since she and her family have a long history with the *hermandad*. We walked in and sat quietly with several other women waiting for the *hermanos* to enter. I began asking my friend Dina about the special candleholder and cross that stand in the middle of the room—where they came from, how long she remembered them being there. As far back as Dina could remember, they had been a part of the *morada*. After a little while, she turned to one of the oldest women in San Rafael, Mrs. Apodaca, and in Spanish asked about these items. Mrs. Apodaca, who is the mother to several *hermanos*, quickly responded that they had been around for a very long time. The large *tenebrario* or candleholder was dedicated to Mrs. Apodaca's father who was an *hermano*, and so had his name carved into it. She went on to say that her father was an *hermano*, her husband was one, and now three of her sons are *hermanos*. There is obvious generational reverence and participation in *la hermandad*. If one's family did not attend these services early on within the village's history, it is less likely that any contemporary family members would now attend activities at *la morada*. Several members of *la hermandad* who do not have direct blood lines to past *hermanos* have other relational ties—godmothers and other kinfolk who routinely brought them to the *morada* and who influenced their later involvement. The regular attendees at *hermandad* events tend to be immediate, and some extended, family members of several older San Rafael families—the Chávezes, the Barelás, the Garcías, the

Murriettas, the Duboisés, the Apodacas, and the Valdezes. These families have had a long history of involvement with the *hermandad*, and so while they have branched off and grown to include many other families, participation generally can be traced to one of these lineages, several of which are founding families of San Rafael.

At almost all *morada* events, those in attendance are primarily women—mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters—which makes the atmosphere friendly, but somewhat exclusive. The women often range in age from their 80s to young women in their 20s. Of the people who attend the *morada*, only a few families are also active Church members. There is a clear division between *morada* regulars and church regulars, but the reason for this division is not always clear. Having past family members who were once *hermanos* or current family members who are members certainly influences women's contemporary participation. Women who do not attend *morada* events, but who were religious otherwise, often told me stories of being scared as a child by the events they saw occurring at the *morada*. "They didn't explain anything to you. So I was scared of the *penitentes*" (Stella Valdez, interview with author, November 16, 2010). A few women privately expressed distaste for the *penitentes* and had very little to say of their presence in the community. There are numerous regular attendees to the *morada* who are otherwise non-participants in the local Catholic community.

The split between *morada* and church groups may also originate simply from historical presence. Each institution was established around the same time in San Rafael—the official acknowledgment of the church is 1906, and while the history of the *morada* is not documented, one older woman, Betty, said in her interview, "since my mom was young, they've had the *penitentes*," which points to their establishment some time around the turn of

the century, considering that Betty's parents were born in 1899. However, in periods when there were not always regular priests present at the church, the *morada* maintained and continued growing. So at times, the *morada* has had a greater religious influence, while in recent generations, the church has had a greater impact upon the community. While they both provide Catholic teachings, they are certainly seen as separate institutions. Betty went on to contrast the *morada* with formal religion saying that at one time, "It [*los penitentes*] was stronger than the religion [Catholic Church]" (Betty Salazar, interview with author, November 16, 2010). This clear difference remains a part of the local historical memory and continues to affect contemporary participants.

The separation between the church and *morada* groups could also be affected by the general nature of the *Hermandad*. *Los Hermanos* has long been a private group that works diligently to remain, in this sense, exclusive to members and their families. The Good Friday observances of *Los Hermanos* are open to the public; however, these are not at all publicized or widely considered public domain. While *Los Hermanos* of San Rafael have been consistently welcoming and open to attracting new members, many other groups, including neighboring *hermandads*, have not been so open to outsiders, even if they are guests of community members. Many elements of the *hermandad* rituals remain tightly held secrets among members, which further add to the inaccurate but widely held belief that the *hermandad* is a secret society that perpetuates medieval-like flagellation rituals. The sense of exclusivity is also exacerbated by the fact that *hermandad* observances are solely in Spanish—all prayers, songs, and communication among people and *hermanos* occurs in Spanish, which excludes not only outsiders but younger generations who no longer speak or understand Spanish.

Via Crucis

Directly after the Stations of the Cross ends at the Church, people begin to gather at the *morada* for the *Via Crucis*. While the timing is done just so, it actually provides somewhat of a conflict for some people. Certain families do not participate in the *Via Crucis*, and so they return to their family homes to enjoy traditional Good Friday meals of *chile con tortas de huevos*, *quelites*, and salmon patties. In the passion narrative, Jesus is crucified at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and so some families prefer to commemorate this event by eating their family meal at this time, while others are instead compelled to commemorate the crucifixion through religious embodiment or enactment, which can be found at the *morada*.

At the *morada*, the audience gathers inside and waits quietly for the faint sound of the *hermanos'* morose songs, called *alabados*, grows louder and louder outside the door. Thomas J. Steele, S.J., writer, collector, and historian of New Mexican religious culture, wrote that *alabados* represent "any narrative hymn about Jesus' suffering and death, then broadened to include any hymn, the narratives of saints' lives, prayers of all sorts, and devotional lyrics meditating on a few chosen moments of the passion" (2005:3).³⁸ As the *hermanos* approach, the older women who know the song begin to quietly sing along. The songs of the *hermandad* are the province of the *hermanos*, who have spent long hours learning songs how to sing the particular intonations of the *alabados* as well as how to sing in Spanish, but many older women have also learned the *alabados* through years of attending. These women still remember and sing along in Spanish. The *hermanos* enter the *morada* and touch or kiss the

³⁸ *Alabados* and *alabanzas* are religious hymns of praise and devotion closely associated with the *Hermandad de Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno*.

standing crucifix that stands near the entry. Once finished with the *alabado*, the *hermanos* lead the group outside to the first of the fourteen stations.

The First Station is a large cross, roughly twelve feet tall, that has a framed, colored drawing depicting what occurred--“Jesus is Condemned to Death.” The group kneels before the Station, and the written depiction is read aloud in Spanish. This is followed by the *alabado*, “*Considera alma perdida*,” or “Consider, lost soul.” The entire *alabado* consists of fourteen stanzas, a new one introduced for each Station. Each subsequent Station is represented by smaller white crosses, roughly two feet tall that also have small, framed depictions of the Station. The stanzas do not describe what occurred at each Station, but instead calls upon the people present to take into consideration what Christ must have been feeling and experiencing in exchange for humanity’s redemption. In between each Station as the group follows behind the *hermanos*, the first stanza of “*Considera alma perdida*” is sung together by all people present:

*Considera, alma perdida,
Que en acqueste paso fuerte
Dieron sentencia de muerte
Al Redentor de la vida.*

Consider, lost soul,
that in this/that cruel move
they imposed the death sentence
On the Redeemer of life.

As the procession passes each station, the people touch each smaller white cross representative of that station, and make the sign of the cross.

There are various roles within the performance. The *hermanos* are grouped in front of all the participants. One *hermano* leads the procession while holding the *Cristo*. At each Station, he stands before the group facing them. At times, one of the *hermanos* has carried a large wooden cross, representing Christ. However, in most instances, there is only an individual carrying the statue of Christ. The other roles include three individuals, usually women and children, who hold statues that represent the three Marys who were present at the

crucifixion: Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of James and Joseph. In the chronology of events, Mary the mother of Jesus, appears twice—once in the Fourth Station, “Jesus meets His Sorrowful Mother” and again in the Thirteenth Station, “Jesus is taken down from the Cross and placed in the Arms of His Mother.” The *hermanos* usually select women and children to carry the statues of the Marys just before the performance on Good Friday. These three individuals wait for the rest of the procession at the Fourth Station and then walk just in front of the *hermanos* alongside the *Cristo*. While this part of the Via Crucis performance re-enacts the Encuentro between Mary and Christ, it differs from other New Mexican Encuentro rituals that are entirely separate performances and processions. In these other versions, the Mary and Christ statues meet, and the individuals holding them tilt the statues’ heads as though mother and son kiss, and then process back to their church or *morada*. At each subsequent station, the Marys and *Cristo* stand before the group as they sing and kneel. And at the end of the Fourteenth Station, the *Cristo* and Marys stand before the group as each person present touches or kisses each statue and makes the sign of the cross. The *hermanos* then lead the procession back to the *morada* while singing, “*Dios te salve, Dolorosa*.” This *alabado* continues while the group assembles inside. Once finished, the *hermanos* exit and the other participants are free to remain in the *morada* and light candles and pray.

In 2013, I helped carry one of the smaller statues along with another woman and her young nephew. This woman’s twelve-year old son had been following the *hermanos* for the past few years, and it seems likely that he will eventually join. Being supportive of him, his mother Dorinda had begun to attend all of the Lenten Friday night rosaries and Holy Week devotions held at the *morada*. As my professor Louise and I waited outside of the *morada*

waiting to be invited in, Dorinda very quickly asked me to hold one of the statues with her. I felt uncomfortable, mostly because I am not from San Rafael and so I thought somebody else should fill the role, but the *hermanos* did not seem to mind my participation, so I agreed. As more people began to arrive and the *hermanos* let everybody know they could go inside, Dorinda, her nephew and I walked out to the Fourth Station where in the text Mary the Sorrowful Mother meets her son, Christ. While the hermandad is somewhat exclusive and certainly private, my own inclusion after a few years demonstrates that the group is concerned with the expression and continuation of religious and communal practices, not in maintaining absolute exclusivity. However, my association with particular women over the years assured the *hermanos* of my innocuous presence and has facilitated my acceptance by the *hermanos*. On one occasion, the wife of an *hermano* directly asked me who I was and upon telling her, sat down to tell me what it was like to marry into the life of the *hermanos*. On another occasion, one *hermano* who I had not met before was about to order me to stop taking pictures when another stepped in to say that I was ok. I do not believe these moments would have occurred without the patient and careful facilitation by particular center women.

Passion at the *Morada* vs. Stations at the Church

Spaces and community significance that contextualize the performances further distinguish Stations of the Cross from *Via Crucis*. The Stations of the Cross is performed within the church space, which emphasizes its place in official Roman Catholic doctrine and endorsed practices. The physical space itself dictates, and in some ways, limits the movement of the performance, as well as the event structure. As people are confined to the pews, movements are restricted to kneeling and standing, which are used to demarcate particular

moments in the ritual such as when the priest or deacon narrates the meditation for the station (kneeling) versus when parishioners offer a response at each station (standing).

In contrast, the *morada* is a consecrated space, not officially blessed or holy, but highly revered as it represents the faith and heritage of the people of San Rafael themselves. San Rafaelians constructed the *morada* building and the *hermandad* itself was designed to function within a particular community, which maintains and reaffirms local ties. The roots of the *morada* run deeply within the community and individual families; the cemetery that surrounds the *morada* is for members of *hermandad*. One can certainly trace family lineages as one walks over old gravestones and markers. Materials used within the *morada*, such as the candle holders or crosses, are made in honor of long-deceased *hermanos*, who live on in the building. Women cry during *penitente* ceremonies for their grandfathers, fathers and sons who all participated at some time. The pictures of deceased *hermanos* line the walls—photos from WWII, Vietnam and even more recent conflicts. The *morada* is representative of generational cultural and religious transmission, and revered pictures from the past highlight the fact that la *hermandad* is built upon and maintained solely through generational involvement.

The most apparent comparison comes from the performances of the two versions of the Way of the Cross. Structurally, they both follow texts that proceed through all fourteen stations, giving a brief account of the event that occurred. These texts remain the same from year to year, but the church performance is a recitation that resembles the Catholic mass. Participants remain in their pews, mostly facing the altar. They are led by a simple clergy member, and kneel at predetermined times. They read certain parts of the text in response to the clergyman. Similarly, participants at the *morada* also respond and kneel at determined

times and are led, not by a single clergy member, but by a group of laymen who are members of an exclusive and private organization.

While the content of the performances is the same, the physical movement from one station to another during the *Via Crucis* at the *morada* lends a feeling of re-enactment and a more lived experience of relating to the suffering Christ. This feeling is enhanced by the *alabados* that are sung at all public events at the *morada*. In comparison to the short response parishioners sing during the Stations at the church, the *alabados* have a much stronger influence and presence within the performance. In their antiphonal, call and response performance, the singers advance the narrative, verse by verse, as the public follows each with the chorus, reflecting deeply on the song story. The *alabados* are central to the *Via Crucis*. Steele writes that historically “the peoples of New Mexico took much of their spirituality from the alabados” (2005:4). Although this may not be true of a daily experience because in contemporary San Rafael the *alabados* are mostly performed for Lent and Easter, the somber melodies and simple lyrics of suffering still affect participants within particular settings.

Father Thomas Steele writes that “frequent, repeated exposure to such singing fixes in the minds of listeners and singers reverberating patterns that bind individuals to follow believers and all members of the local Christian community to each other, maintaining the traditional mind-set from generation to generation” (2005:4). These melodies and lyrics also elicit stronger emotional attachment and investment of audience members. One woman remarked, “Could you imagine going through what His mother did?” This was a common sentiment amongst the older women, who, on any levels, identify with the experience of the Virgin Mary. As historian Linda Hall writes, the Virgin Mary can, on one hand, represent “an

impossible ideal for living women,” and on the other, she “presents a pictures of wholeness and integrity, of nurturing and healing and power, which is comforting and validating” (2004:2). Mary exemplifies the role of a mother, and perhaps for this reason, the mothers I have met seem particularly emotionally invested in the *Via Crucis* at the *morada*. It provides an appropriate space for public sorrow and sadness for events and tragedies that the women have experienced. Women grieve for the passing of loved ones, not just within the previous year, but over the course of their lives, such as the time I stood at the altar with Dina and I noticed tears on her cheeks. She saw that I looked over at her, and then told me that she was missing her dad. Another woman was so overcome by emotion at the altar that her family had to escort her out of the *morada*. Another woman explained to me that her son had recently passed. Good Friday at the *morada* conjures up the raw emotions and memories of losing parents, siblings, and children in a way that standard Catholic religious events do not. The sacredness of *penitente* practices in San Rafael is cultivated through this real-life embodiment of suffering, sacrifice, and redemption, which is not only experienced by supreme beings but by earthly people as well.

This veneration of Mary and her sorrow and maternal devotion is perhaps best shown through Marian *alabanzas*, or religious songs of devotion and reverence, some of which are sung by *Los Hermanos* during their *Via Crucis* and *tinieblas*³⁹ rituals. One popular *alabado*, called “*Dios te salve, Dolorosa*,” sung as participants enter the *morada* after the *Via Crucis* says,

³⁹ *Tinieblas* is a ritual performed on the night of Good Friday, which includes the singing of *La Pasión* and a *rosario* and flagellation. The word “*tinieblas*” refers to the darkness that followed the death of Christ and is reenacted that night through a great calamity of noise and a ceremonial lighting of candles.

*Dios te salve, Dolorosa
Madre de Dolores
Madre de tormentos,
ay, triste madre,
qué sentimiento!*

God save Thee, Sorrowful Virgin
Mother of Sorrows
Mother of Torments,
Oh, sad mother,
what emotion!

Father Steele, himself an *hermano*, wrote of the Mary as Mother connection that “the mother was the center of the life of the family, offering them food and comfort by the way she managed the home and serving as a model and mentor for the younger children, especially the girls. In this way she passed on to them in even greater measure the traditional lifeways of Hispano New Mexico than did the father” (2005: 18-19). This archetypal modeling and empathy is enacted and embodied by women during the *hermanos*’ Stations of the Cross, which allows for an emotional and popular devotion in San Rafael.

The *alabados* of *Semana Santa*, so closely associated with the *hermanos*, are, perhaps, the greatest contributing element to the Good Friday practices at the *morada* and help create an atmosphere quite different from that found at the Catholic Church. The lyrics are often mournful and distressed, and the music itself stylistically resembles religious chants, which create a somber atmosphere. One of the center women said of the *alabados*, “...just to hear the *Hermanos* do their chanting and their singing. Oh my God, that is something that you can’t replace because it reminds me of my grandfather. It reminds me of past members of the *morada* and people that I used to see when I was little” (Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010). The emotionally charged *alabados* contribute to the attachments formed by the *morada* participants, especially if one attends on an annual basis. I believe the sorrowful tone of *Semana Santa*, and the emphasis upon the relationship between Jesus and his mother, make the events and performances of the

week particularly powerful and relatable for women, which is why women often comprise the audience and maintain the cultural knowledge associated with the *hermandad*.

A mournful tone marks all of Lent, and this mood was fostered throughout Lent by covering religious statues within homes and places of worship, not allowing music, television, dancing or laughter and fasting or food avoidance on particular days.⁴⁰ This general attitude is somewhat lacking during the Stations of the Cross performed at the church. Contributing sensual and bodily elements such as emotionally charged singing and spatial composition, which are investing actions for the participants and audience, are absent from the narrow Roman Catholic performance.

Local Pilgrimages

Of particular note in New Mexican religious practice is Good Friday pilgrimages, which are popular and, what many New Mexicans consider, an essential element of Holy Week in New Mexico. In terms of its role within religious participation and practice, pilgrimage offers an opportunity for lay people to embody a spiritual transformation and perform their personal religious devotions. As anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner write, “Pilgrimage is one way, perhaps the most literal, of imitating the religious founder...pilgrimage may be thought of as extroverted mysticism, just as mysticism is introverted pilgrimage. The pilgrim physically traverses a mystical way; the mystic sets forth on an interior spiritual pilgrimage” (1978:33-34). Pilgrimages are not only sacrificial devotions for many Catholics; they also contribute to local cultural tourism as they draw

⁴⁰ Black cloths cover statues in *la morada*, while purple cloths cover statues in the church. Purple represents royalty and spirituality, while black represents mourning and loss. The colors used within the church and *morada* emphasize the focus of the Lenten seasons for each of these organizations.

locals and tourists into Hispanic villages that rely upon the commodification of Spanish arts and foods for income. As pilgrims walk from distances as far away as Albuquerque to the most well known pilgrimage site in New Mexico, the *Santuario de Chimayó* north of Santa Fe, it is common to come across people selling bags of dried red *chile* powder, *atole* powder, *piñon* nuts, wooden crosses or rosaries, cross necklaces, *santos* or *bultos*. San Rafael residents do not perform a pilgrimage per se, but do participate in a local pilgrimage, and the village itself is the site to which this pilgrimage travels, further demonstrating that San Rafael is a locus for traditional cultural and religious practices.

Victor and Edith Turner write “pilgrimages are probably of ancient origin...but pilgrimage as an institutional form does not attain real prominence until the emergence of the major historical religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam” (1978: 1). For the average person, pilgrimage provided an opportunity to “exteriorize” their “interior salvific journeys” (Turner and Turner 1978:7) and remove themselves from earthly sins, to undertake penance, and to reconnect oneself to the holiness within their lives.

While pilgrimages have long had a place within Catholic culture around the world⁴¹, the Stations of the Cross pilgrimage from Grants to San Rafael is a more recently implemented tradition among the local Good Friday devotions. While many pilgrimages exist in homage to some particular religious founder, or a mystical appearance of a religious figure or miracle (Turner and Turner 1978), the local pilgrimage that takes place in Grants and San Rafael have neither of these characteristics and was instead borne of the desire to insert a

⁴¹ Such well-known pilgrimages include *el Camino de Santiago* to the *Santiago de Compostela* Shrine in Spain, the Marian pilgrimages to Medugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lourdes, France, as well as numerous others throughout the Holy Land and Rome.

religious experience where one did not exist. It is aimed mostly at young people, but has become an event for all ages and community members. This pilgrimage is part of a revitalization of faith and religious fervor, and is perhaps a response to increased secularization.⁴²

Additionally, the San Rafael-Grants area has often been omitted from New Mexico literature and tourism, and this includes attention during Holy Week, which usually attracts native New Mexicans as well as tourists. While other parts of the state commemorate Holy Week with pilgrimages such as the pilgrimage to the *Santuario de Chimayó* and the *Tomé* Hill pilgrimage, the only commemorations taking place in Mt. Taylor communities are individual pilgrimages that families will offer in honor of a loved one or are very localized practices that center around *Los Hermanos*. Many of these practices are not well known or documented, and are certainly not advertised. Local *hermandads* in Seboyeta, San Mateo, and San Rafael had, for many years, provided locals with traditional Holy Week rituals. What is noteworthy about most of the Holy Week practices in this area is that they are the purview of *La Hermandad*, not the local Catholic Churches. In an attempt to fill this gap, in 2010 clergy and parishioners at St. Teresa's in Grants organized a small Good Friday pilgrimage that would begin at the church in Grants and end at the San Rafael Church, about four miles away. This pilgrimage began as a youth-centered activity, but in the following years, more and more adult members of the Grants and San Rafael communities quickly began participating in the only organized Good Friday pilgrimage. San Rafael residents are

⁴² Within the region, other smaller pilgrimages take place, such as one that travels from the small village of Moquino through the villages of Bibo and Seboyeta, and returning to the Moquino *morada*. From the St. Teresa's pilgrimage, others have evolved. One family walks from St. Teresa's to the nearby town of Cubero while carrying a cross, roughly five feet long.

particularly well represented as it ends at the Church in time for Stations of the Cross mass at noon.

The St. Teresa's pilgrimage begins with a mass at 8am at the church. When mass ends, the congregation follows St. Teresa's youth deacon who leads the procession to San Rafael. As is common with most of the other religious events, there are more adult women than men who participate. What is especially noticeable is the participation of much older women and women in poor health who take part as an act of faith or a *promesa* of some kind. In recent years, I have seen female family members walk along with a sister who was battling breast cancer as well as an older woman who was limited in her walking abilities and who suffered from diabetes walking with younger female relatives helping her along the way with water and physical support.

Among the younger participants, in contrast, there always seems to be a fairly equal number of boys and girls. The younger participants are mostly members of a Catholic youth group called Life Team. However, they do not seem to engage with the event through deeply held faith and devotion, but rather because of their participation in a peer group. At times I have seen these teens listening to their iPods along the way, texting, laughing boisterously, and swearing. This is quite different from Good Friday expectations of older generations who often described Holy Week as a somber period in which one could not laugh, listen to music, make noise, or have any sort of fun.

We didn't eat any meat, of course. All throughout lent. We didn't listen to the radio, we didn't watch any TV. We used to go to the Stations and it just, that's what it was...just sacrifice. No meat. Always go to confession. [Bessie Debassige, interview with author, October 28, 2010]

An anthropologist who came through the area in the 1940s, Munro S. Edmonson echoed this sentiment writing that Lent was "a time of fasting, penitence and sobriety. The people refrain

from eating meat, and from indulging in undue levity. In the more conservative households there is a proscription not only on drinking alcoholic beverages, dancing, movies and so forth, but also on games and laughter at home” (1957:36). Older generations of women have even more elaborate stories relating their experiences with Lenten observances and abstaining from all forms of pleasure. One of the older women of San Rafael related a Lenten folktale told to her by her even more conservative mother:

Because, in those days they believed you couldn't do nothing. Between her and my mother in law I couldn't sweep, I couldn't do anything. And not take a bath for 40 days. They had a lot of old traditions, you know. My mom, one time I wanted to go to the dance during Lent. And she said, 'No, the devil will get you!' And I said, 'Oh my God, what a thing to say.' I said, 'The devil will not get me.' And she said, 'Yes he will. In my day, when I was a young girl this girl went to the dance on Holy Thursday, or something like that, and they told her not to. Her mom told her not to, that she was going to see the devil, and she didn't pay attention. And in those days we went to the dance, we sat down, and then the men stood up and they'd come to dance with whoever they wanted. Anyway, that's how it used to be. And so, she went in and she sat down with her friends and he came for her. He was the best looking, most handsome guy. He came for her and they went off to dance. Pretty soon while they were dancing the horns came out, out here [gesturing to her head] and then she saw his hands where the nails came out. Well she fainted and then the nails came way out here, and then the tail back there, and he was red. So she fainted. And they said, that's what would happen if you went to a dance late in [during Lent].' After that I never went. [Mabel Tórréz , interview with author, June 14, 2011]

As these Lenten beliefs and folktales show, adherence to the strict rules governing Lent have certainly lessened with each passing generation. This is an indication of greater social change within the community and larger U.S. society. Quiet, sacrificial devotions no longer fit with our ability and obsession to our ability and obsession to remain plugged in, online, and ready to upload instant photos of our experiences. What seems to change when contemporary social trends are at odds with devotional practice is individual meanings of, and attachments to, religion and faith. No longer can faith only be practiced along the unwavering guidelines of

the Catholic Church—a more lived and adaptable reality that involves faith when possible has replaced a strict framework of religion.

The St. Teresa's procession is not simply a pilgrimage; it is the Stations of the Cross devotion that is hinged upon the physical procession of the participants. Once the group makes it out of Grants (about one mile of walking along the main street, Santa Fe Avenue), the fourteen stations begin. A small group of people at the front of the procession carries a large wooden cross, which they then stand up at each of the fourteen stops. At each stop, the youth deacon leads the procession in prayer and meditation on the event and meaning of each particular station. During the first year, the cross-holders were only older, middle-aged men, while in more recent years, I have seen younger high school boys and girls carry the cross, and more recently, the sisters of the Rodríguez family of San Rafael, the family of center woman Bessie Debassige, experienced the tragic loss of a niece just before Holy Week and so carried the cross as we entered San Rafael village limits. As we gathered for the fourteenth and final station, the group of middle-aged sisters, including Bessie, and their daughters stood the cross up, and their visible tears and anguish were a very real expression of suffering and a mother's pain.

While the participation demographics have changed somewhat to include more adult community members, the event is still focused on Catholic youth and fostering the development of the local Catholic community. While the enactment of Stations of the Cross at San Rafael Church on Good Friday uses passages from the Bible, the St. Teresa's youth procession uses modern language and ideas to address the larger concepts that each station represents—compassion, conviction, and faith. In comparison to other local Stations of the Cross enactments, this one is obviously more physical—the walk itself is four miles and for

many older folks, this presents an act of hardship or suffering in honor of Christ's passion. While not so much a physical hardship for younger students, it is roughly four or five hours of their day off from school that is spent on religious reflection and community engagement.

Walking from Grants to San Rafael, as with any pilgrimage, seems to help embody the devotional act itself. Movement within the landscape embeds the pilgrim into the narrative of the event, forging an association and an enduring memory of the observance. As phenomenologist Edward Casey writes, "To be embodied is *ipso facto* to assume a particular perspective and position; it is to have not just a point of view but a *place* in which we are situated. It is to occupy a portion of space from out of which we both undergo given experiences and remember them" (1987:182). The setting of the pilgrimage—the more urban streets of Grants, which are ultimately a precursor to the rural state highway that leads to the small San Rafael main street—and the rugged backdrop of distant mesas, volcanic lava flows, and the Zuni mountains contribute to the experience of reenacting the Stations of the Cross, a story of a journey to redemption. Within pilgrimages, the natural and cultural landscapes intertwine to form a relationship between faith and place, and so in these moments of devotion, the land and features around the pilgrims are imbued with a sacredness and become symbolically powerful, if only during the event or memories of the event.

As the pilgrimage moves to the rural village setting of San Rafael, the group is joined by other San Rafael residents who come out of their homes as the procession walks along Main Street. The quieter setting of San Rafael allows the group to walk as a larger collective, whereas in Grants, the group quickly becomes stretched out. At the remaining Stations, the large group can gather together, and it is in these final stops that the entire procession is actually able to participate all as one. Once at the San Rafael Church, the group holds the

final Fourteenth Station. At this point, other parishioners who have come for the noon hour mass will join the procession. Without much ado, the pilgrims end the Stations of the Cross and join other parishioners inside for mass. Many of the participants choose not to stay for mass and are picked up at the church and driven back to Grants. Several of them walk back to Grants, an extension of their personal devotions on Good Friday. The pilgrimage not only functioned to create a new ritual for local people, rather than going to other pilgrimage sites, but also functions to draw people into San Rafael and the church, in particular. San Rafael, as a sort of cultural center for the area, is rich in religious performance and is as close to popular ideas of “traditional” New Mexican Catholicism, itself an element of cultural tourism.⁴³

Generational Shifts Among Women

While I have described events and situations in which women have engaged in “traditional” Catholic Hispanic practices, I am attempting to demonstrate that women yield tremendous amounts of agency and innovation within their actions, words, and beliefs. In many instances, the women are working with traditional elements, but are inserting subtle changes and adaptations, which allow for more inclusion and involvement and also help foster belonging and cultural attachment. When the women make adjustments, such as providing handouts of Spanish and English lyrics to a particular devotional hymn, this is done on a communal level to involve more people and make the faith more accessible to others. In other ways, women craft their faith and practices around personal obligations and family intentions.

⁴³ Other forms of traditional New Mexican Catholicism that have become strong elements of local tourism include the Spanish colonial arts—*bultos*, *santos*, *retablos*, straw appliqué, and tinwork. These were all devotional arts that have become the bedrock of commodified cultural tourism in New Mexico.

During Lent and Easter of 2010, I was still staying at the bed and breakfast. As I was getting up and trying to warm the house as best I could on Good Friday, Dina Jaramillo called to invite me to join her at the morada for her own pilgrimage of sorts. She said she would be there around 11:30am, and her daughter Elaine would be joining sometime after. Elaine worked the night shift as a nurse's assistant at the local detention center, and finished her shift at 6am. She often forgoes sleep in order to participate in community or church events. Elaine has a deep devotion to her church community, which seems to come from her closeness to her mother and grandmother, both of whom maintained similar levels of involvement with the church community:

...We spent a lot of time in church and we grew up respecting the church, you know. And knowing that—how strong our parents and grandparents were in the church—you know, we had to do the same. And the church is my second home, you know because I go there and I feel very at peace. I feel very comfortable, like I say, I go in there and decorate for hours on end and it never phases me, I knew I was safe. It's like my second home and it gives me peace and tranquility that I need. [Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010]

It is apparent in San Rafael that religious devotion runs in families—those who are involved in the church tend to have a mother, father, or grandmother who demonstrates some level of religious fervor that is then mimicked and continued. However, Elaine's participation and devotion is somewhat of an anomaly because she is as devout as her mother and grandmother, and has taken her mother's place in the community of center women. Other women comment on the amount of work that Elaine does for the church, and this is unusual because many of the daughters are not at all this involved or do not take such initiative.

Several daughters discussed their own "falling away" from the church, which often occurred when the daughter moved away from their mothers and San Rafael. One daughter said,

By this time, when you're living in the city, not away with mom and dad, then yeah, you do try the non-denominational church, Christian churches, you find other things that will get you closer to God. But my mom always says, 'You keep it where the heart is...home. Why are you gonna break tradition?' And I don't want to break tradition. That's what my mom says, 'Why do you want to break tradition?' And it's not me wanting to break tradition, it's just personal experience. [Stephanie Galindo, interview with author, January 5, 2011].

The idea that religion is something situated in place, specifically in San Rafael, was a common element of the daughters' stories:

There was no culture that resembled mine to speak of in Ann Arbor. Yes, I went to church just about every Sunday, but it was cold, uninspiring and uninviting. But, when I came home, I would love to go to mass in San Rafael. It was where I belonged, almost as if I'd never left. [Tanya Gallegos, interview with author, April 2011]

In some respects, it showed the symbolic value and attachment, both cultural and religious, that these women have for San Rafael. It demonstrates the emotional interconnectedness the women understand that is in play among place, belonging, and forms of cultural expressions. Another daughter described her life away from San Rafael in Bloomfield, a town near Farmington in the Four Corners region. The differences she described were religious in nature. She said, "Things do get forgotten when you're not here...And when you move and they don't have anything like that [like San Rafael religious traditions], it's easy to fall out of it" (Stella Valdez, interview with author, November 16, 2010).

The symbolic importance of San Rafael's religious heritage continues for many women as simply that—symbolically important, but not as central to their lived experiences or identities as for their mothers and grandmothers. Due to this, families with intergenerational devotional expression and reproduction are now the anomaly. The three generations of Josie Chávez, Dina Jaramillo and Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil are remarkable in this pattern of involvement and dedication to community building.

When discussing their private family functions and devotions, Dina and her daughter Elaine would always mention Dina's personal Good Friday pilgrimage. Dina began the private pilgrimage in the late 1990s as a *promesa*, or promise, in debt for her son's safekeeping while he served as a marine during the Persian Gulf War. Dina is only ever accompanied by her children, usually her daughter. When I arrived at the *morada*, Dina was seated on a small wooden bench just outside the *morada*. I came up to her and said hello. We sat outside for a few minutes; I was unsure what we were doing or waiting for. After a few minutes, one of the *hermanas* walked past and said hello. She stopped and invited us into the *morada*. We walked to the altar where Dina kissed her fingers and then touched the hands of the *Cristo*. The *hermana* sat down in a foldout chair beside us. We remained quiet, until Dina turned to the *hermana* and asked for permission to take the *Cristo* out of the *morada*. She spoke only in Spanish and translated the conversation for me as we turned and followed her toward the door. She was going to ask the other *hermanos* for permission for Dina to remove the *Cristo*. After a couple of minutes, the *hermana* returned and quietly told Dina she could have the *Cristo*. As 67-year-old Dina somehow managed to pick up and hold the three-foot statue, she told me to hold two smaller statues of Mary and Veronica.

We continued outside of the *morada*, and I really had no idea what we were going to do. Just then I saw Dina's daughter Elaine walking to us from her truck. She very quickly walked up to me, took one of the statues and instructed that I would help her say the rosary while her mom carried the *Cristo*. Elaine and I flanked Dina as our small group walked slowly from the large cross that stands outside the *morada* entrance to each of the fourteen white crosses marking the stations of the cross that line the dirt road running along the *morada* and cemetery properties. As we walked, Elaine would say the first part of the Hail

Mary—"Hail Mary, Full of grace, the Lord is with thee, Blessed art thou amongst women, and Blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus"—and I would follow up with the second verse—"Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen."

While Dina spoke in Spanish at the *morada*, Elaine and I prayed in English, which is an obvious generational change because Dina knows neither one of us speaks Spanish and would not require us to do so in order to participate in her devotion. Together, we would follow ten Hail Marys with an Our Father and a Glory Be. We recited ten decades of the rosary, but did not include mysteries or a meditation for the station. In contrast to both formal Station of the Cross processions and rosary recitations, Dina and Elaine forged their own Good Friday tradition that was a blend of procession and rosary, and for Dina, was a physical hardship. For both Dina and Elaine, the *promesa* behind the procession gives this event, and their Good Friday devotion, a heightened personal significance beyond the original Catholic custom of commemorating the passion of Christ, but also represents an actual embodiment of the sorrow a mother feels for her son's sacrifice.

For other daughters, those who are of Elaine's generation and younger, participation in formal religion and traditional practices have become more of a choice, rather than an institution. From these women, one can understand the ways in which experiences with religion have changed from their mother's generation to their own and how these changes have influenced the ways they have practiced or enforced religion with their own young children. For older San Rafael women, those who are roughly 50 years old and older, there is a definite sense that maintaining faith and devotion was much harder for their generations; that religion was stricter and less lenient. One woman who is no longer involved in the church, and whose adult children no longer attend church, remembered of Holy Week,

For Holy Week, oh man, when I was growing up Holy Week was...it was Holy Week, I mean the whole 40 days was penance. When I was growing up, I mean, I knew what penance was. These kids don't know what penance is [Diana Marez, interview with author, December 2, 2010].

This sentiment draws a comparison between generations, but also alludes to another phenomenon among a particular generation of women—religious instruction and participation was often viewed with disdain, as though it were punishment, rather than a cultivated sense of devotion and soulful nourishment. For these women, religion became optional, and furthermore, became something they did not want to “force” upon their own children. Or at the very least, they wanted their children to have a more positive experience with faith and spirituality than they had growing up. One woman expressed this saying, “I didn’t want my kids to be pushed into that [Catholic religion]...At the end, I told them, both my kids, it’s your choice—you don’t have to stay Catholic” (Veronica Montaña, interview with author, February 12, 2011). Another non-involved daughter of a center woman, when I asked why she was not a part of the religious community also said that it was “forced” upon her and that she grew up thinking it was unnecessary and “too strict.” In response to this, she rebelled against her family’s faith and now refuses to participate in any religious activities or have her son participate, despite remaining very close to her religious parents and siblings.

Veronica, the younger sister of center woman Pauline Chávez, discussed the differences between her older siblings and herself, one of the younger siblings in a large family with almost twenty years difference between the oldest and youngest children.

They [her sisters] were full of prayer. Always wanting to pray rosary. I was more laid back. I was into my religion, I believed in it, but I wasn’t—I don’t want to say my sisters are fanatic...I was more reserved, more private with it, whereas Pauline [her oldest sister] is more open with it. [Veronica Montaña, interview with author, February 12, 2011]

Veronica, in comparison to her older sisters, was raised in a more lenient household in which she was able to question her parents' strictness and conformity with the local religious culture.

I remember telling my dad one time, he would punish us and he'd tell us, 'You guys are gonna go clean the church.' And I told him, 'You're gonna turn me off from my religion! 'Cause I'm always going to remember that this is just punishment. I'm never gonna know that this is supposed to be good for us.' [Veronica Montaña, interview with author, February 12, 2011]

This shows that even within families, there is quite a bit of generational variation in terms of religious belief and practice. Whereas a certain generation of women, those I generally refer to as the mothers, described their religious participation as comparable to their own mother's and grandmother's religious devotion, the daughters cohort, in general, acknowledged that their participation was not like previous generations. Daughters' participation was often fragmented, limited, and optional. One daughter of a center woman expressed this sentiment saying,

Religion is important. However, throughout college, there were periods when I fell away. Other times, going to church was just comforting because it was familiar. Now, religion is important, but my faith pales in comparison to that of my parents and grandparents. [Tanya Gallegos, interview with author, March 2011]

This was another common thread among daughters—that cultural and religious participation is place-based, and so remaining in the village facilitates continuation and transmission of religious and cultural competence. Stephanie, the daughter of a center woman, said,

When you're living in the city, not with mom and dad, then yeah, you do try the non-denominational church, Christian churches, you find other things that will get you closer to God. But my mom always says, 'You keep it where the heart is...home. Why are you gonna break tradition?' And I don't want to break tradition. That's what my mom says, you know, 'Why do you want to break tradition?' And it's not me wanting to break tradition, it's just personal experience. [Stephanie Galindo, interview with author, January 5, 2011]

Not only is faith place-based, for many daughters, it is linked to particular female kinfolk. A younger woman whose family moved from San Rafael when she was young, but who later returned to San Rafael as an adult, expressed this saying that her religious instruction came from two specific individuals—her aunt from San Rafael and her paternal grandmother from Mexico. “My auntie Geraldine was one of the people that would take me to church. Her and my dad’s mother. Otherwise, I wasn’t raised in the church” (Melody Pohl, interview with author, January 23, 2011). Later as an adult, her link to faith is through Elaine, who she admired as “a good person” who was “so giving,” and could provide Melody with answers to her religious questions. Elaine later became Melody’s sponsor in RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults), a role similar to a godparent. Elaine, who is a new generation of center woman, embodies all of the characteristics of an older center woman while understanding that contemporary expression of faith has changed—“I know that the faith is there. It may not come out a lot, but still it’s there. It’s there” (Elaine Jaramillo-Vigil, interview with author, November 3, 2010). Elaine’s understanding of the younger women’s conceptualization highlights changes and adaptations within religious participation, not only for the Catholic community, but for others as well. Religion is no longer foundational to families and communities, but is instead optional and a choice among many choices. Turner and Turner acknowledged this writing,

Thus, under the influence of the division between work-time and leisure-time, religion has become less serious but more solemn: less serious because it belongs to the leisure sphere in a culture dominated by the high value set on material productivity, and more solemn because within that sphere it has become specialized to establish ethical standards and behavior in a social milieu characterized by multiple options, continuous change, and large-scale secularization (1978:36).

This emphasis on “less serious but more solemn” also alludes to what some of the women described as the negative experience with religion—the sense that it was too strict, too limiting, and not accepting enough of changing values and behaviors.

Conclusion

Dina’s personal Good Friday tradition highlights the ways in which traditions operate within individual and communal lives, not to mention the fact that so many traditions are what historian Eric Hobsbawm calls an “invented tradition,” or “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1983:1). As I have shown in this chapter, several of the more popular and publicized traditions surrounding San Rafael’s Good Friday are all in some way, invented traditions, whether created by a single individual, a group, or some kind of conglomeration of the two. This characterization as an invented or re-invented tradition is certainly true of individual or family-based ritual practices such as the one by Dina Jaramillo. Dina’s Good Friday practice, and others like it, is significant because they show that adaptation and change of traditional culture continues and results in local pilgrimages, an enacted and embodied *Via Crucis*, and private devotions based on long-standing *promesas*. While religious devotion has certainly changed and perhaps faded, a sense of faith remains and is cultivated in new forms by younger generations of women who willfully pick and choose if and how they participate in the religion of their parents and grandparents, and who transform faith to suit their needs and lived experiences in and away from the village. Although the practice and engagement with religion has changed among generations, it remains a central feature and mode of belonging within San Rafael, where religion is often

facilitated through one's relatives or other kinfolk, and is synonymous with place, culture, and history.

Chapter Seven

Intersections of Belonging, Religion and Food: A Case Study of *Las Posadas*

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the Christmastime novena, *Las Posadas*. I concentrate on *Las Posadas* because it is a central performative event within the community, and is considered one of their primary traditional practices. *Las Posadas* occurs during a pivotal season of the year in which families, extended kin, and varying community members are drawn together. While the fiesta and Holy Week events attract both residents and non-residents, *Las Posadas* is much more focused on the inclusion of only certain families and the bonding relationships among them. *Las Posadas* demonstrates how the themes of religious, cultural, and food competence intersect to inform and sustain a sense of belonging for resident and distant community members. These different family groups exhibit a localized expression of heritage, but the *Las Posadas* event itself also illustrates a means by which a disparate San Rafael community performs a shared cultural and religious identity, as well as exercises and cultivates an important sense of belonging for disparate community members. Women's roles within this process are of utmost importance as they are the central figures in the planning, preparation, and performance of *Las Posadas*, which is a Christmas novena that ends on *Noche Buena* (Christmas Eve).

Belonging and Community

The concept of sense of belonging has been important in the field of mental health as researchers have explored the way it relates to issues with depression and anxiety (Hagerty and Williams 1999; Choenarom, Williams, and Hagerty 2005), success in higher education among underrepresented populations (Ostrave and Long 2007; Walton and Cohen 2011), and

even the mental wellness within the LGBTQ community (Kertzner, Meyer, Frost and Stirratt 2009; Walton and Cohen 2011). Within the realm of psychology, social belonging is loosely defined as the sense that one is socially connected (Walton and Cohen 2007). Belonging, as a focus within larger studies of human relatedness, has broad implications on health and educational policies. Researchers have gone so far as to offer a measure for one's sense of belonging consisting of the Sense of Belonging Instrument (SOBI), which is a 27-item self-report instrument made up of two scored scales (Hagerty and Patusky 1995). While these studies attempt to catalog, measure, and characterize the behaviors and beliefs that contribute to social belonging, ultimately, belonging is a sensory experience that varies from community to community and from family to family. One engages in belonging to, for example, an ethnic or cultural community far differently than one engages in belonging to a professional or work-related social group. While the practices, forms of knowledge, and factors that influence belonging vary in situations and associations, the skill and ability to belong to different groups lies in the sensual realm of feeling and expression; we sense belonging through everyday experiences and interactions, we do not quantify our belonging, or, at times, our "belonging uncertainty" or a state in which social stigmatization leads one, and others, to question the "quality of their social bonds" (Walton and Cohen 2007:82). I argue this state of belonging uncertainty also affects the ways in which individuals and families interact in a communal way, and thus, in the traditional practices of community and family. This fluctuation between belonging and belonging uncertainty necessitates the strong influence of center women who act as hubs of social organization and cultural production for the rest of the community and within larger, somewhat dissimilar families.

Related to one's sense of belonging is the idea of "community," which has been central not only to this dissertation, but has proven to be essential to the culture and character of San Rafael. Much like belonging, community has long been the source of sociological theory, and has more recently become a focus in social psychology. Initially theorized by Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) as the dichotomous *gemeinschaft* (community) and *gesellschaft* (society), the concept and psychological study of community has evolved in a similar fashion as sense of belonging—researchers have worked to identify factors that characterize community (Hillery 1955; Riger and Lavrakas 1981) and measure one's sense of community (Doolittle and MacDonald 1978; Glynn 1981). Researchers have also identified four elements to a sense of community: membership, or a "feeling of belonging;" influence, or a "sense of mattering;" reinforcement, or "integration and fulfillment of needs;" and shared emotional connection, or the "commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences" (McMillan and Chavis 1986:4). It is important that within this construction, belonging is one element of community. This framework of community and belonging is essential in understanding the intersection of performative events and the center women's efforts at cultural transmission and retention.

While these studies lacked the individual and human nuances found within the sensory experience of community, contemporary ethnographic studies have contributed to the scholarship on community and belonging through studying expressions of identity within particular cultural and ethnic groups (Flores and Benmayor 1997; Getrich 2008; Rosaldo 1994; Zavella 2011).⁴⁴ These often include, among other forms of expression and in-group

⁴⁴ The distinction between a physical, geographic community and a relational group based in the "character of human relationship, without reference to location" (xvi) was first elaborated by Gusfield (1975).

participation, the study of regional foodways (Brown and Mussell 1984; Lefler 2013; Montañño 2001; Pilcher 1998), language use and retention (Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean 2006; Schrauf 1999; Guardado 2008), and “traditional” cultural performances and rituals that persist and evolve in enclaves across the United States (Briggs 1989; Liu and Geron 2008; Lamadrid 2003; Lucero 2002; Medina and Cadena 2002; Min 2010). These ethnographic studies offer a qualitative perspective to expressions of in-group construction and meaning making. These experiences are often hybrid expressions of one’s identity and belonging to various communities or groups.

Based upon my fieldwork, belonging in and to San Rafael, as both a community and cultural group, is cultivated through 1) face-to-face interaction, 2) personal relatedness and acceptance, and 3) local cultural competence. An individual may lack in one or more of the three criteria, or may show aptitude and skill in another area. These three criteria and the ways in which women fulfill them may shift and transform over time. Ultimately, belonging does not simply happen—it is a fostered emotion and reciprocated through acceptance. Also contemporary belonging has moved beyond the static dimensions of race, religion, and class to also include broader categories that reflect personal values, beliefs, experiences, and networks outside of traditional family and home community relations. Within the San Rafael performative cycle, the Catholic novena and New Mexican event, *Las Posadas*—through food and religious devotion—exemplifies the intersections of traditional community and contemporary belonging.

Las Posadas

While Christmas Day and the Christmas season hold tremendous significance within the Catholic community of San Rafael, it is the activities of Advent that best illustrate the

traditional and hybrid expressions of family and community. In particular is the drama *Las Posadas* (The Inns), which begins on December 16 and ends on December 24. *Las Posadas* represents Mary and Joseph as they search for shelter on the eve of the birth of Christ. Mary and Joseph, along with singers and participants, sing and request shelter at a different home each night, but each night they are rejected. On the last night, Christmas Eve, the procession of Mary, Joseph and various other actors finally find shelter at a manger, located in the local church, where a Christ child doll is placed in the manger, representing Christ's entry into the world. The nine night performance includes prayer, singing, and food as each night ends with the procession entering the host home and enjoying coffee, hot chocolate, and a variety of treats.

Elsewhere, as in Mexico, *Las Posadas* is “celebrated as a social gathering accompanied by music, dancing, and cocktails” (Campa 1979:229). Campa does not mention food and beverages in the New Mexico script, but cultural writer Mary Montaña states that the procession is “invited in, where everyone partakes of hot chocolate and *biscochitos* or similar Christmas fare” (2001:175). While most folklorists hold food and food events to be significantly meaningful elements of cultural experiences, in the case of “traditional” *Las Posadas* foods, they are typically modest treats that place emphasis on the religious nature of the performance, rather than on social aspects or status markers.

The San Rafael *Las Posadas* have been an integral part of the village as long as anyone there can remember. The origins of the San Rafael *Las Posadas* are unknown; however, most of the communal traditions are thought to have been passed down from ancestors who migrated from other Hispanic settlements of Seboyeta and Atrisco. *Las Posadas*, in general, has a rich history in Spanish-speaking communities of the Southwest.

Early folklorist Arthur L. Campa described *Las Posadas* as a “miracle play” and “important folk presentation” that illustrates the importance of the Christmas season in the Hispanic Southwest by simple fact that it is a nine-day social and religious event (1979:229).⁴⁵ As such, the performance requires dedicated communal and familial participation and organization, both of which are more difficult to secure amidst changes in family structures, lack of community cohesion (socially and religiously), and out-migration of younger generations.

As with many New Mexican Hispanic folk customs, *Las Posadas* is steeped in history and tradition, yet varies from community to community, and family to family, which allows for the integration of local customs and character. In San Rafael hosting *Posadas* is a custom often adopted within families—the women who volunteer today do so as their mothers and grandmothers did. Local writer Josephine Barela briefly described the drama in her posthumously published memoir of the village, and acknowledged it as one of the central religious customs for the community (Barela 1975:18). In many ways, the contemporary performance of *Las Posadas* follows Barela's description of the religious performance, but the actual organization and execution of the event has transformed to honor deceased loved ones, to include and reaffirm ties with an extended community, and to showcase women's hosting and cookery skills. This last point is significant in that traditionally, *Las Posadas* was an unpretentious event that functioned to teach scripture and inculcate religious devotion. While *Las Posadas* certainly still serves to teach scripture, elaborate spreads of foods and drinks also reveal the participants' awareness of and attention to aesthetics, status and

⁴⁵ Miracle plays are accounts of miracles and interventions of a saint, while mystery plays are depictions of particular Biblical accounts.

community belonging that transcend religious attachment. As scholars Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell write, "...foodways in subcultural groups are rooted in tradition but express dynamic aspects of in-group culture through a process that is highly charged with meaning" (1984:5). Attention to the foods and food preparation within individual families' *Posadas* will illustrate larger social, economic and cultural changes amongst San Rafael community members.

Over time, *Las Posadas* has been transformed by individuals and in newer and older communities to better suit local character and demographics. For example, Campa writes that originally, *Posadas* was performed over nine nights, but due to cold weather in New Mexican mountain villages "participants compromised by holding the *Posadas* celebration on Christmas Eve, stopping at nine different houses on the way to the manger" (1979:229). Local San Rafael compromises include driving to home as the village became more spread out and less nucleated, and incorporating scripts for people who no longer remember the song for *Las Posadas* or who do not speak Spanish, the language the song is in. Also, in the original text, the devil has a much more significant role, as he is the one who has intended to keep Mary and Joseph away from the Inn (Campa 1979:229). In contemporary enactments of *Las Posadas*, the devil's role has faded, and the participants inside the host home now sing his lines. San Rafael *Las Posadas* are similar to this latter description by Campa—they do not feature a devil's role. However, the community still performs all nine nights of *Las Posadas*, an element of the older traditional form that is not often found in contemporary enactments elsewhere in New Mexico. In both older and newer versions, the physical manger plays a significant role in the performances, as it remains bare up until Christmas Eve when a statue or doll of the Christ-child is placed in it, marking the end of the Advent season and

start of the Christmas season. I believe the continuation of the nine-night novena, rather than an abbreviated version, contributes to a greater sense of importance for the hosts. With such significance, contemporary hosts often devote much attention and effort in their personal manger scenes, their food choices, and other such hospitality rituals.⁴⁶

For nine nights, people gather at the San Rafael Catholic Church and either walk in procession or drive to that night's home. Each year, about half of the host homes are located close enough to the Church for people to gather and walk while praying the rosary. The other half of the homes are located south of the village proper or in neighboring Grants, and so community members caravan to those homes and pray the rosary when gathered inside. Historically, the village centered upon the San Rafael Church. It is only within the past twenty years when San Rafaelians began moving away from the village center to avoid criminal and drug activity that the need to drive to the host home has arisen.

The actual costuming of children to play Mary and Joseph is a practice that has faded away with time, but each year at least one or two of the host families have children dressed as Mary and Joseph, and the two will carry statues of the Holy Family and place them at the family's Christmas tree for a special blessing. In years past, not only were Joseph and Mary in costume each night, but also Mary often rode in procession on a live donkey. Once at the home, the choir members, who often assume leadership roles during communal functions, distribute lyrics to the various songs that accompany *Las Posadas*. These songs include "*Pidiendo Posada*," as well as traditional American Christmas carols sung in both English

⁴⁶ I define hospitality rituals as the heightened performance or display of particular domestic activities for the benefit of an audience or some desired effect.

and Spanish.⁴⁷ The family of the host home comprises the responsorial singing group that denies lodging to Mary, Joseph and their traveling companions (the carolers). Once finished with “*Pidiendo Posada*,” the procession is invited in for a blessing of the Christmas tree and the Holy Family (represented by statues), Christmas carols, and refreshments.

While the actual performance of *Las Posadas* lasts less than an hour, the preparation and execution on the part of the host family begins a few weeks prior when volunteers sign up for each one of the nine nights. It is widely accepted that *Posadas* is, for the most part, the domain of women because the major element to each family’s *Posadas* is the food event—what is served, for how many people, and who one calls upon to help cook. While the procession, rosary, and Christmas songs remain the same each night, it is the foods featured at each family’s home that show variability and hybridity within the “traditional” framework. This includes secularization of the religious event, mixing of traditional New Mexican foods with American, Mexican and Native American foods, and the inclusion of and reliance upon an extended community network. As I discussed in Chapter Five, with many New Mexican traditions, the foods associated with a particular event have a sacred quality in the eyes of

⁴⁷ Although *Pidiendo Posada* is the official name of the song, in San Rafael, the song simply goes by *Las Posadas*. The San Rafael version matches the version of *Pedimento de las Posadas* recorded and translated by John D. Robb (1954). The song includes one part for the participants in the household who represent innkeepers, and participants in procession who accompany Mary and Joseph. (See Appendix B).

A sample of the lyrics passed out at the San Rafael *posadas*:

Afuera

¿Quién les da posada
A estos peregrinos
Que vienen cansados
de andar los caminos?

Who, to these poor pilgrims
shelter will be grudging,
as they come exhausted
o’er the highways trudging?

Adentro

¿Quién es que las pide
Yo no la he de dar
Si serán ladrones
Que querrán robar.

Who is this that asks me?
Entrance I deny,
for they may be robbers.
Who to steal would try.

participants, and so through an engagement in food, women, including younger generations, maintain more than simply recipes. It is this ability to transform particular elements of cultural practices to better suit contemporary lived experiences that allows communities and people to continually organize and sustain New Mexican folk traditions.

Although a couple of women expressed that the San Rafael performance of *Las Posadas* should remain a somewhat low-key event during which neighbors gather for coffee, hot chocolate and *pastelitos*, most women use the opportunity to highlight their cooking repertoire and abilities as hostesses. But *Las Posadas* also serves to draw home adult children and grandchildren who live in regional urban centers such as Gallup or Albuquerque, and it also gathers together a growing and more separated family network that is occupied with work, school, and various extracurricular activities. The women who felt *Las Posadas* had grown too extravagant purposefully limited the foods they served, and did so for sake of tradition as well as to maintain focus on the religious aspect of the novena. She described the “traditional” *Posadas* fare as *tamales* and *posole*—two dishes that require time and skill, but are not costly and are usually prepared in quantities for a larger number of people.

In contemporary *Posadas*, one rarely finds *tamales* or *posole* served. Instead, hosts prefer to serve more contemporary American party foods, store-bought foods, and an array of sweets and baked goods. A woman in her 80s spoke of this difference saying that, “in those days all they gave was *biscochitos* and punch, or something. Or cake and punch, and nowadays they make a *comida*, like Christmas, or like Thanksgiving” (Mabel Tórrez, interview with author, June 14, 2001). Mabel Tórrez is a woman in her 80s, but this sentiment was also expressed by women in their 70s and 50s.

Back then when they used to have *Posadas*, they didn’t have what they have now. The chocolates and cookies are fine, you know. But then they started this feeding the

people. A lot of people don't want to get involved. They have *posole*, they have turkey, they have a whole fiesta. And that's why the people, we talked about it before, a lot of us, they don't want to get involved because of that. Because you don't feel that you should do it, but then you feel like, '*qué vergüenza*.'

Stella [Betty's daughter]: They did it, and they did it. They're doing it, they're going to say, '*Qué* miserable. She doesn't want to feed us.' And maybe they don't, but that's the way you feel. That they're saying it about you. [Betty Salazar and Stella Valdez, interview with author, November 16, 2010]

The displeasure certain women have expressed toward contemporary *Las Posadas* emphasizes just how the party-like atmosphere of the event has taken on a heightened importance within the community structure, which has manifested in an event more akin to a meal, rather than a religious performance that featured small foods and coffee or hot chocolate. While recent American trends of religious choice have influenced how the event is carried out and the ways in which women engage in these practices, the ability to pass on rituals of hospitality do not require strict adherence to organized religious or fervent religiosity.

For the more elaborate spreads, the preparation of foods often begins a few days prior to the event, and for most women, includes recruitment of female family members (usually daughters, but some families' cooking parties consist of two or more generations of cooks and kitchen assistants). The intergenerational nature of holiday cooking illustrates the way in which New Mexican cultural expression, in this case, foodways, is learned, transmitted and transformed not just in one family, but also in a village. This transmission among and between families contributes to the sense of a shared identity, culture, and community. Sharing food knowledge between women cultivates belonging—as women share food and recipes, they welcome one another into a specific cultural and social community in which such foods and food knowledge is necessary capital. As Hortense Powdermaker wrote, “The communal eating of food and customs concerning it may be said to have a double social

function: (1) to maintain the cohesion of the society and of groups within it; (2) to determine, in part, the relation of the individual to the society and to the smaller groups within it” (1932: 236). Over the course of enacting the performance of a revered tradition and then sharing a meal planned of devotion and commensality, *Las Posadas* reinforces face-to-face interactions, a sense of inter-relatedness, while emphasizing a woman’s local cultural competence and innovation within competence. These elements all intersect to cultivate belonging and community. In this way, the food event and participation in the performance act as tools of social capital. They indicate and facilitate social connections and draw attention to the private and public benefits of belonging.

The Sandoval Posadas

The Sandoval family home is located a short distance from the Catholic Church on the main street of San Rafael. Hazel and Wilkie Sandoval are a retired couple with three adult children who range in age from their mid thirties to early forties. Each of their adult children has children of their own who range in age from seven years to their early-twenties. While all three children and their families live within several miles of their parents, none actually live in the village proper. Of the three kids, Hazel has described her youngest daughter Danielle as her “go-to person” for family and holiday gatherings. She often laments how busy her older children are with work, which makes them unable to participate to the same degree as Danielle. It is with the help of her youngest daughter, along with Danielle’s teenaged daughter, that Hazel prepares homemade dishes and drinks, decorates her home, and organizes the *Posadas* party. Together, Hazel and her daughter carry out hosting *Las Posadas* each year, just as Hazel’s mother did. Hazel’s aunts also host *Las Posadas* each year, as do her cousins. Hazel, her aunts, and cousins illustrate the trend for *Las Posadas* for extended

families to participate in the event. It is through this type of intergenerational and extended family participation that bonding communal events are able to continue and adapt. Although *Las Posadas* seems to run in families, it is unusual to see large groups of immediate family prepare for one night of hosting. Mothers or grandmothers generally call upon their daughters for assistance, rather than other female kin folk, such as their own mothers or sisters, or close female friends. Hazel and Danielle's involvement and partnership is the norm for *Las Posadas*. Younger women provide the innovation and energy while older women provide the knowledge and know-how. In this way, the Sandoval *Las Posadas* exemplify the contemporary standard in San Rafael.

The 2011 Sandoval *Posadas* were on the second night of the novena. Hazel's two young grandchildren dressed as Mary and Joseph and led the procession to the Sandoval home. Simply due to proximity to the Church, more community members attend those *Posadas*. While each household has a few guests outside of the family and community social network, for the most part, the people who participate in activities such as *Las Posadas* are family—immediate and extended kinship. The other group present at every *Las Posadas* is the Church choir, which provides the music and is present at all communal functions. The Sandovals, as a well-respected and civically involved family in San Rafael (and in nearby Grants), usually have a well-attended *Las Posadas* that consists of family, extended kin and close family friends or associates. For this reason, Hazel presents a large spread of food for *Las Posadas*. In one interview, Hazel said of this:

I try to have more than I think I'm going to need because I'd rather have more food than not enough, you know, to me that's embarrassing. That was, growing up, one of the things—my mom always had food on the stove. Always had coffee for people. We might not have afforded, you know, all the fancy cookies and all the stuff but she

always--even crackers and jelly and she would put it out for people that came to visit.
[Hazel Sandoval, interview with author, February 29, 2011]

Hazel's experiences, knowledge, and practice of contemporary *Las Posadas* is intimately connected to her mother, and her own contemporary food practices, which are non-traditional in terms of quantity and types of foods. They are legitimized and made authentic by Hazel's tie to her mother's tradition of hosting and hospitality.

Once allowed inside, the group gathered in the den to sing Christmas carols and for the blessing of the tree and statues of the Holy Family, which are placed at the foot of the tree. This lasted a half hour or less, with most of the emphasis placed upon the singing of Christmas carols. The local priests usually do not attend the *Las Posadas*, and in lieu of clergy, one individual is asked at each house to bless the tree and Holy Family. Hazel asked the adult son of the Gallegos family to do the blessing. He is active in the church community in both San Rafael and Grants, so Hazel said he was "the closest thing to a priest." He took the small plastic jar of Holy Water—the one used in home Eucharistic visits—and shook water onto the Sandoval's Christmas tree and Holy Family while reading a blessing from a small prayer book. The blessing effectively marked the end of the more traditional, religious element of the *Las Posadas* ritual. With its conclusion, the less-ritualized aspect of the evening begins with all attendees asked to proceed to the kitchen for food and drinks.

The Sandoval home, more than any other *Las Posadas* home, was lavishly decorated for the season, and Hazel often spoke about her love for the holidays. The outdoor decorations included a manger scene, featuring a frame built by Hazel's husband Wilkie to fit the three-foot statues of Mary and Joseph and the baby-sized infant Jesus on the front lawn. There were Christmas lights along the house and entryway and *luminarias* lighting Main Street in front of the Sandoval home. Inside, their Christmas tree was elaborately lit with

small white lights to match the white- and blue-themed decorations. Poinsettias were displayed on end tables and on counters, while candles shimmered around the room and provided a soft glow throughout the home.

The festive decorations were only upstaged by the food selection. Hazel's kitchen counters were covered by tiered-serving trays with cookies, sweet breads, and chocolates, platters with dips and salsas, chips, cheese balls and finger foods such as pigs-in-blankets, a crock pot filled with green *chile* stew, and several drinks—hot chocolate, coffee, lemonade, and hot apple cider. The crowd shuffled around the kitchen and found seats wherever possible, while the Sandoval's grandchildren gathered in the den to watch TV. While the adults chatted in the front rooms, the children generally stayed away, only coming around to quickly grab food and drink, then return to their claimed space. Although there were certain dishes one would certainly associate with “traditional” New Mexican Christmas fare such as the green *chile* stew, the menu included more American party foods—treats, in large quantities, for all ages and tastes. The menu reflects the intended audience for the event—a variety of people and relationships, folks who may or may not have a strong connection to “traditional” or religious practices and beliefs, and a new generation of San Rafaelians who are strongly-influenced by mainstream American culture and do not necessarily tightly associate “traditional” foods with “traditional” customs. In 2011, I noticed that pigs-in-a-blanket were offered at several of the host homes, and it was the norm to offer a variety of sweet breads and dips, such as cinnamon rolls, pound cakes, Bundt cakes, cheese dips, and salsas.

In order to execute the rather large task of providing such a variety of foods for at least 20 or 30 guests, Hazel calls upon only one family member—her youngest daughter,

Danielle, who is 37 years old, with two children—one a teenager and the other a younger child. Danielle studied to be a nurse at the UNM-Gallup branch campus, but stays at home with her children while her husband works. She does not live in San Rafael, but she is often at her parents' home with one or both of her children. She visits their home at least once a day, and can often be found there after school ends for her youngest child.

She [Danielle] is the one that's here all the time and she's my right hand man for everything, my hijita, I don't know what I'd do without her. She's the one that's here when I'm having something. She's doing things right along with me and helping me. [Hazel Sandoval, interview with author, February 29, 2011]

While being around Danielle in Hazel's home, she often expressed that she participated in community events and assisted as much as possible because of her closeness with her mother. This closeness was also extended to Danielle's daughter, who, as she has grown, has also begun to help her mother and grandmother with some of these preparatory tasks for family events and community functions. In particular, the three made dozens of *tortillas* for a school fundraiser. I marveled at the experience of three generations making twenty dozen *tortillas*, but their pride was in the quantity of *tortillas* they made.

For *Las Posadas*, Hazel and Danielle begin by preparing in advance as many of the foods as possible. This includes baking cinnamon rolls and Swiss rolls and freezing them until the day of the event. Wanting to provide a dip in addition to the standard homemade salsa, Danielle found a recipe for an artichoke and spinach dip and cheese balls. Hazel prefers not to make posole for *Las Posadas*, instead reserving that just for her family during Christmas. She said this is because she does not want her family to become tired of the posole before their personal Christmas-posole tradition. In lieu of posole, Hazel offers a green *chile* stew with beef or pork and potatoes, which she stews in a slow cooker the day of

Las Posadas. In the days before, Hazel will prepare what ingredients she can, such as peeling and chopping the green *chile*.

Each year when I leave Hazel's *Posadas*, I am carrying a plate of goodies, sometimes a bowl of stew covered in foil, and a cup of coffee or apple cider for the drive home. Hazel insists I take food for later—sweet breads to have with my morning coffee or stew for lunch. The Sandoval *Posadas* exemplify a more contemporary trend toward a more lavish and detailed celebration. However, not all *Las Posadas* offer the same amount of food or are as elaborately decorated—the capability to do so depends upon family economics, whether the host can call upon assistants, and the cultural competence of the host to execute the event. Often the best hosts are those who grew up around mothers and grandmothers who hosted. Women who have only recently started participating, usually through marriage, do not show the same attachment and reverence for the event. Such as Denise Sánchez who bought all of her foods from a grocery store, saying she just “doesn’t have time to cook and bake all day” and whose adult daughter does not often visit from Albuquerque (personal communication with author, December 22, 2010).

The Dubois Posadas

Similar to the Sandoval family, the Dubois family home is located close to the Catholic Church. Among the various old, abandoned homes that surround the church, the Dubois household is one of the few to remain occupied. Albert and Celia Dubois built the home for their family of eight children. Currently, only four of the adult children live in and around San Rafael, with the youngest member, Yolanda, occupying her parents’ house with her two young daughters. Although Albert and Celia are deceased, they remain critical members of the community, as they seem to live on in the words, stories, and memories of so

many San Rafael residents. Within the Dubois family, the children of Albert and Celia carry on many of their personal and communal traditions in memory of their parents. The foods associated with family and community traditions are affectionately prepared in honor of Celia, a woman known in the community as a wonderful cook, while their father Albert cultivated in a couple of his children his devotion and participation in *la hermandad*.

Almost as sure as San Rafael *Las Posadas* themselves, the Dubois family will host on the night of December 23rd. December 23rd is the final day of hosting *Las Posadas* because they are held at the church on Christmas Eve in order to welcome the Christ child. Celia Dubois, herself a center woman and family matriarch, began hosting on the 23rd, and it has remained scheduled so despite her passing in 2005. There is not another family that is scheduled regularly in this fashion. For many of the families that are devoted to hosting, they schedule each year based upon their availability—weekends are better for families that work, while others will consider if certain family members will be in town. For the Dubois, the central people involved in the organization and execution of their *Las Posadas* are the three sisters who live in town—Mary Ann, Ramona, and Yolanda—and Ramona’s adult daughter, Nicole, who lives in nearby Grants. The sisters range in age from their early forties to their late fifties. Mary Ann, Ramona, and Yolanda are all very expressive of their devotion to their mother—many of their actions, whether good or bad, are done with the enduring thought of their mother. Ramona’s adult daughter, Nicole, a young woman in her twenties, helps her mother with many of the family functions despite maintaining a low-key role during the actual event. She is not expressive of her motivations to continue these practices, but her mother has somewhat jokingly stated that her daughter “doesn’t have a choice” (personal communication with author, December 23, 2010).

In contrast to the Sandoval *Posadas*, which was comprised mostly of middle-aged couples and the Sandoval's grandchildren, the Dubois *Posadas* was comprised mostly of the Dubois family, including young families and children. Yolanda's children are the youngest of the family, while Ramona's children are all adults with small children of their own. Ramona's son, with the help of other young men, constructed a line of *luminarias* that led from the San Rafael Grotto to their home. While the procession sang outside of the Dubois home, Ramona's son tended to the *luminarias* to keep them lit. Other than *luminarias*, the home remained undecorated due to economic reasons.

Once invited into the home, the procession gathered in the living room. The Dubois had a live Christmas tree from the Zuni Mountains. This, itself, is a tradition not practiced by many families anymore—many of the older women who participated in this research told me stories of their families harvesting their own Christmas trees from the nearby Zuni Mountains. With the introduction of timesaving plastic trees, and convenient pre-lit trees, this practice has all but faded. The Dubois tree had many homemade decorations, the obvious creations of Yolanda's two young daughters. Upon the walls of the house hung numerous religious pictures, crucifixes, and small *santos*. The large window of the home faces the church, which was the desire of their father Albert. As we looked out of it one afternoon, Yolanda Dubois told me that her father did this so his family could always see what he believed was “at the heart of the community” (personal communication with author, January 11, 2011). From stories with many of the older community members, it is obvious that Albert and Celia Dubois were quite devout to the church. For the most part, their children are not as devout, and often echo what many others have said—that faith is a “lived experience.” In saying this, people are delineating between strict Catholicism and a faith that is situational,

and centered more on regional and folk religious expression in daily life and specially marked performances and events.

The presence and participation of children was further emphasized when Yolanda's youngest daughter led the group in saying the final decade of the Rosary. Her voice was small—Ramona's daughter ordered those in the kitchen to come out and stay quiet. One of the women of the choir, and a cousin to Albert and Celia's children, had tears because she was so impressed with the little girl. The Dubois *Posadas* was the only host home in which children were active participants in the event. At other homes, children may have been present, but had little to do with the preparation, the celebration, or the religious character of the evening. One year, Hazel's young grandchildren dressed as Mary and Joseph for the procession, but once these duties were finished, they retired to the den where they could eat and watch television away from the adults.

As with the other homes, once the praying and singing concluded, the hosts invited the guests into the kitchen for refreshments. The centerpiece of the food was the Dubois *posole*, prepared according to their mother's recipe. This was also the only time *posole* was served at any of the eight host homes. Although a simple dish of hominy, pork, and a few spices, one woman's *posole* differs greatly from another's. Ramona, in explaining her mother's *posole*, said her mother felt it was incomplete to eat it without "fixings," such as cilantro, diced onions, or diced avocados. Red *chile* is almost always included, but is generally prepared on the side so individuals can add to the *posole* whatever amount of *chile* they desire. Red *chile* sauce varies in texture, flavor, and spice. Most sauces have a bit of graininess and thickness from the *chile* pods, but others are quite smooth and light. The Dubois sauce was light and smooth, more similar to an enchilada sauce than to a thicker New

Mexico red *chile*. As Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez observed in U.S. Mexican households, not only are recipes “the special province of older women and great pride is taken in the entire preparation,” but also ethnic food recipes often “are the lineal script by which entire households and their descendants may be recognized” (1996:174). Many women in San Rafael also note that they do not prepare or eat *posole* with the fixings included in the Dubois recipe, but it is these personal touches that distinguish their *posole* recipe and family within the community.

On two kitchen tables, guests were treated to a wide array of, mostly, sweet, homemade foods—donuts, powdered cookies, fudge, thumb-print cookies, peanut brittle, strawberry and chocolate cakes, chocolate bonbons, jello molds and *biscochitos*. Guests gathered in the Dubois kitchen, while family members moved from the kitchen, to the living room, to the front porch, where the men of the family seemed to gather. The tables contained so many platters and trays of food that guests had to hold their plates in their hands. With the tremendous selection, most guests were constantly shuffling about the kitchen reaching for one item or another. For the most part, the Dubois family did not eat with the others; they were more concerned with their guests’ comfort and controlling the small children. The fact that the Dubois family will provide a lavish spread of foods while being of a lower economic status and being unable to afford other Christmas luxuries, such as decorations, is indicative of the importance of food in the cultivation of belonging and reciprocity among family and especially among other community members. Marvalene H. Hughes writes that “at the central core of Black food celebrations is the *intent of sharing*” (1997:277), and I believe it is this quality of the *Posadas* food that requires such attention and preparation above and beyond other aspects of the event.

At other nights of *Las Posadas*, guests had a comfortable familiarity with the host families—either because they were distantly related to one another and are aware of this vague relation, or because they are within similar social circles. The Dubois *Posadas* lacked this familiarity, as it is a family not as connected with the other San Rafael families that participate in and attend *Posadas*. There is a clear social divide between upwardly mobile San Rafael families and those that struggle with poverty and substance abuse. The Dubois, known as a religious, yet troubled family, fall within the latter category, and occupy a somewhat tenuous position in the community. Due to this, social interactions at the Dubois *Posadas* were generally limited to memories of Albert and Celia and the cookery skills of the three Dubois sisters. Victor Turner describes this as one phase of social dramas, or a “*breach* of regular, norm-governed social relations occurs between persons or groups within the same system of social relations, be it a village, chiefdom, office, factor, political party or ward, church university department, or any other perduring system or set or field of social interaction” (Turner 1974:38). Folklorist Richard Bauman echoes this sentiment when he wrote, “...performance, like any form of communication, carries the potential to rearrange the structure of social relations within the performance event and perhaps beyond it” (Bauman 1986:4). While the structure of performance and the sequence of actions are important, participants and audiences also communicate aspects of their community’s social and cultural dynamics through various non-verbal acts and symbols, such as processions and foods or food events.

This situation reflects a village-wide sentiment in which, to some degree, most of the families feel connected through intergenerational kinship and social networks, as evidenced by the strong influence Celia and Albert Dubois had, and still have, upon numerous families

in San Rafael; social and economic rifts occur, but *should not* affect religious or cultural practices. Whether or not true, for residents of San Rafael village, especially older folks, there is a certain feeling of obligation and relatedness that allows for cultural practices to continue in the face of negative social problems that may otherwise impede the successful organization and execution of communal and family events. In a community where many families are below the poverty line and receive government assistance, the ability to cook simple, yet beloved New Mexican staples for friends, family and neighbors is an act that can transcend economic statuses, and ensures greater inclusion in communal practices, which are often centered around women's activities and food events that only require love, labor and know-how for successful execution.

Debassige Posadas

Bessie (Rodríguez) Debassige lives in one of the older parts of San Rafael on old Chávez Road toward the northern part of the village. People say that the homes in this area have been constructed with supplies taken from the abandoned old Fort Wingate, an indication of the age of that particular part of San Rafael. Bessie's home is a little further away from the Church than both the Dubois and Sandoval homes, but guests still walk in procession. Bessie is widowed and her children have all moved away from San Rafael, and do not often visit, much less return for communal events. She has several sisters, a younger brother, and an elderly mother, but hosts *Las Posadas* on her own without assistance. At one time, her mother Clorinda hosted each year, and it is this standard by which Bessie prepares her own event. She remembered that her mom would call all of her relatives to invite them "and you would have a house full. And now, if anybody comes, they come. And they used to cook. They used to make *tamales*. They used to make *posole*" (Bessie Debassige, interview

with author, October 28, 2010). As a solo worker, Bessie is unwilling to prepare these foods, and prefers to offer simple, homemade treats, rather than a wide variety of elaborate dips, breads, party foods, and sweets. But there is another layer to her understanding and execution of her own *Posadas*—she is selective and associates only particular food items appropriate for *Las Posadas*, the religiously- and communally-focused event.

In contrast to both the Sandoval and Dubois *Posadas*, which both emphasized food, Bessie Debassige's *Posadas* instead maintained focus on the religious character of the night by not offering a large variety of foods. Bessie's own food competence is also what allows her to be so particular when it comes to *Las Posadas*. She is an excellent cook, and known as such, and so she can judge what is appropriate or authentic fare for *Las Posadas*. In her interview, Bessie considered the Dubois *Posadas* to be traditional because they always served *posole*, an appropriate food for the night. While she herself did not offer *posole*, she made homemade guacamole and pumpkin *pastelitos*, which quickly disappeared. Bessie receives many compliments on her homemade foods, but because these foods quickly ran out, guests left upon finishing rather than lingering and socializing as they do at the Dubois and Sandoval *Posadas*. Since Bessie's children did not return for her *Posadas*, and a big presence from any immediate or extended family, the occasion seemed much less social and more obligatory. Whereas the other *Posadas* are examples of events in which food is a sustaining and symbolically powerful tool for cultural transmission, production, and community belonging, the decreased importance of food at the Debassige *Posadas* adversely affected the social nature of the night. Bessie's understated *Posadas* is quite a contrast to Bessie's participation in other communal events such as the fiesta, where she contributes enormous amounts of homemade traditional New Mexican foods. It is certainly apparent that

Bessie is intentionally setting limits on the food event within *Las Posadas*, rather than reveling in her hosting and cookery skills.

Changes in Las Posadas

Within the contemporary *Las Posadas*, there is a clear delineation in the religious and secular elements. In her description of San Rafael *Las Posadas*, local writer Josephine Barela focused almost entirely on the religious story of Joseph and Mary in search of shelter. The entirety of community participation involved children dressing as Mary and Joseph, accompanied “by several people” as they “went from house to house asking for admittance.” Finally on the ninth day, the “image of the Infant was deposited in the manger at the crèche” (1975:18). Barela’s description says nothing of the social celebration of *Posadas* or any particular foods. Perhaps she chose not to focus on this, or perhaps the secular element of *Posadas* did not hold much meaning, however, there is no doubt of the current significance of food to the continuation and success of *Las Posadas*.

The religious parts of the event, which includes the procession, the singing, and the gathering for the blessing, is structured and routinized. The procession always includes the Rosary. As they reach the host home, those in the procession are provided with the lyrics to “*Pidiendo Posadas*,” and once in the home, are given stapled packets with lyrics to the Christmas carols that will be sung. The Christmas carols are the same each year—Silent Night, The First Noel, and O Come All Ye Faithful. Only the first few stanzas of each song are performed, and Silent Night is also sung in Spanish. Once finished, the hosts often have to announce that it is time to eat because the group is patiently and quietly waiting instruction and invitation. This contrasts the secular celebration, which is unstructured and quite adaptable in content—meaning, food choice and presentation vary from house to house, and

year to year. The emphasis on either the religious or secular varies from family to family and from generation to generation. As illustrated in Chapter Six, younger generations of women are less-religiously involved and view themselves as less devoted than their parents and grandparents. As these younger generations take on the roles and responsibilities associated with *Las Posadas*, either as primary helpers to their mothers or as hosts themselves, the event itself takes on the spirit and style of these younger women—less religious and more hybrid in nature. As Robert Putnam expressed of intergenerational change with regard to social activities and forms of social capital, “perhaps the younger generation today is no less engaged than their predecessors, but engaged in new ways” (2000:26).

One family that illustrates generational shifts in style and competence is the Gallegos family. The mother, Susie Gallegos who is in her early 60s, remembers of her mother’s *Posadas* that she would serve entirely homemade foods—“things that she made”—this included a variety of sweet foods.

...there were empanaditas...and cookies. And I remember they were thick cookies. They were supposed to be *biscochitos*, but they were authentic ones, they were thick. And then she would put the sugar and cinnamon on top of them, everybody loved it. And sweet bread. She made sweet bread with raisins in it. It was so good. And donuts. She made a lot of donuts...it’s the same masa as the bread, and then she would deep-fry it. And she’d roll the little donuts like this and then she’d roll them to have a little hole in the middle and then deep fry them and put sugar and cinnamon on them. Best thing in the world. [Susie Gallegos, interview with author, September 29, 2010]

For Susie, her memories of her mother’s *Posadas* are intimately connected to the experience of tasting and enjoying these “authentic” homemade sweet foods. In contrast, Susie’s youngest daughter Sally, 37 years old, who has remained physically close to her mom, her and her family’s future engagement with the event is filled with doubt and trepidation.

...I think we tend to still stick to what we do, what I do, what my mom does. So, I don’t know, I would like to carry it [*posadas*] on. I would definitely say we’re probably losing a little of it. But *Posadas*, she [her mother, Susie] does that and it’s

like I can see my sister and I saying, ‘Hey, let’s do that.’ I could see if she comes down [from Denver]. Right now, she’s not here and I just think I don’t know if I’d have the confidence, honestly, to do it all on my own. I think I could through, with her, if I had my sister there definitely. Because, can I really do it on my own? They [the older women] always do such a good job. [Sally Ann Gallegos, interview with author, March 22, 2011]

Sally illustrates how traditional events such as *Posadas* are dependent upon cultural competence, especially around one’s ability to prepare foods and organize such an occasion. I argue that the younger women’s sense of belonging and cultural competence are often enmeshed with their mothers, grandmothers, and other influential female kinfolk, and so for these younger generations, long-standing events such as *Las Posadas* are of utmost importance in fostering belonging and cultural competence through face-to-face interactions, but are also sources of anxiety.

Other daughters of center women also discussed their *Las Posadas* participation as it is intertwined with their mother—in other words, no daughter talked about *Posadas* as their event, but as their mothers’ events. Hazel’s youngest daughter Denise, also in her late thirties, described her *Posadas* experience as “helping” her mom. Over the years at each of Hazel’s *Posadas*, I have asked her and Danielle to describe their preparation, and both women have described it in terms of shared work and creativity with regard to the menu. Hazel often credits Danielle with incorporating new recipes to their *Posadas*, such as the small egg rolls and spinach and artichoke dip. Even so, Danielle spoke of herself as her mom’s helper, rather than an equal participant and agent. Each year I ask Elaine, a younger generation of center woman, if she will be hosting *Posadas*, and she expressly says she will do it only to help her mother, Dina. Above and beyond other women her age, Elaine has shown cultural competence and social capital, yet does not feel comfortable hosting as large of an event as

Posadas, which is a central opportunity to insert individual agency within a communal activity.

In comparison, Sally's older sister Tanya, who is 41 years old and lives in Denver, considers *Las Posadas* not so much an occasion to express competence as a Hispanic woman in the San Rafael community, as it is an opportunity to belong to the greater cultural narrative. She gained this perspective after close to 15 years away from San Rafael.

But my time away really made me appreciate so much about my family and home, especially San Rafael...the food, the culture, the people, the traditions. I became much more involved in *Las Posadas* when I was able to come home from college for a long Christmas break. I never found that anywhere. [Tanya Gallegos, interview with author, March 2011]

The Gallegos family illustrates generational influences upon traditional cultural practices—not only does competence and involvement in events change from one generation to the next, younger generations of women are more likely to leave, or have left, the area to attend school or to work elsewhere. These breaks from the village and family affect how and why women engage in traditional practices. The face-to-face interaction that contributes to relatedness is absent, and lack of participation or effort in communal events does not allow one to demonstrate local cultural competence, whether one has it or not.

Uncertainty of Belonging

Experiences of belonging uncertainty were not uncommon among the women who participated in the research, and while they did not use the expression “belonging uncertainty” or “not belonging,” they often described a feeling of not being a part of the

community for a variety of reasons.⁴⁸ The women who discussed the fractured nature of village relationships and social circles were often younger, in their 30s and 40s, and were also often hesitant to participate in this study. They did not consider themselves to be good candidates to provide San Rafael history or describe cultural practices because they themselves were not active or as active as other women in the community, they did not attend church, or were not of the same *quality* as the center women, and so could not perform as those women perform. One woman, in describing the current and past center women of San Rafael, repeatedly commented that the center women were a select group, who were not going to be replaced or reproduced: “What we have now, we better treasure them because once they’re gone...” And when I asked if she would consider accepting the responsibilities of a center woman, she responded, “I’m not that good. Like Elaine [a younger center woman and contemporary], she’s good” (Andrea Rodríguez, interview with author, April 12, 2011).

Several of the women were non-involved daughters of center women, or at the very least, had involved mothers, while others of the women were only peripherally involved in particular community activities. For the most part, these women agreed only to limited participant-observation, email correspondence, or telephone conversations. Only a few of the non-involved women granted full interviews and participant-observation. Their interviews provide an understanding of how difficult a role the center women position is, and further emphasizes the work necessary to foster belonging for oneself and others.

While this dissertation has emphasized the roles and efforts of San Rafael center women in cultural transmission, retention, and change, the center women are the exception,

⁴⁸ “Belonging uncertainty” is a term coined by George M. Walton and refers to “members of socially stigmatized groups [who] are more uncertain of the quality of their social bonds and thus more sensitive to issues of social belonging” (2007:82).

not the rule. More women are unable and unwilling to participate in the local cultural, and often religious, community. The woman who did not consider herself good enough to be a center woman came from a family who attended and hosted *Las Posadas* when she was young, yet she expressed no desire to host *Posadas* as an adult, saying that the issue is not the amount of work or preparation, but the anticipation over who will attend. “It’s not too much work. It’s a lot of waiting, you know, when is it my turn so I could do all the preparing. And who’s all going to come? Is everybody going to be here? And before, when we were younger, there was a lot of people” (Andrea Rodríguez, interview with author, April 12, 2011).

Some social theorists have argued that social capital seems to impose conformity and social division because bonding social capital tends to reinforce the status quo and the insider-outsider dynamic within a community. These “soft shackles of community” (Putnam 2000:351) can be oppressive and affect people’s sense of belonging and ability to participate in communal events. Robert D. Putnam writes that “some kinds of bonding social capital may discourage the formation of bridging social capital and vice versa” (Putnam 2000:362), and in some cases, social capital does reinforce social stratification as only certain people become members of particular groups or societies. And in order to be a member of these groups, one must conform to or exceed expectations—as is the case in San Rafael religious events that are organized, sponsored, or simply influenced by lay religious and community leaders. Although San Rafael does not have booster clubs or an Elks Lodge, the local community leaders and religious councils have assumed the role of these more formal community-oriented organizations. Rather than assuming communities engage in either bonding or bridging forms of social activities, we can see from events such as the San Rafael

fiesta, Holy Week devotions, and *Las Posadas*, that people operate within a continuum of social capital, never relying solely on internal social connections or cross-cutting ties.

Another non-involved woman who came from an involved family said she had not participated in *Las Posadas* “because of one thing or another” (Diana Marez, interview with author, December 2, 2010). Her family had previously hosted each year on December 17th—they were regular annual hosts—but had come to neither host nor attend anybody else’s *Posadas*, or any other communal events. Her lack of involvement also reflected her lack of face-to-face interaction with other residents and neighbors. She invited me to stop by and visit her because I was one of the only people she spoke to outside of her equally non-involved family. She said I would be able to keep her updated with what was going on in the community.

Other women who have experienced not-belonging are those who have struggled with substance abuse, which often leads to long periods of time when the woman is completely divorced from the local community and even her own family. Unfortunately, substance abuse has touched all families in some capacity. Participation in community events or the continuation of particular traditional practices are two of the most salient ways in which these unstable individuals are able to reinsert themselves into the community and reaffirm ties with family and other close kin. *Las Posadas*, as a bonding event, provides a particularly opportune time for women to demonstrate local cultural competence and to cultivate relatedness and acceptance among the people with whom residents are closest, physically and otherwise. For one woman, the costs associated with *Las Posadas* and other communal events is sometimes more than she can accommodate, but *Las Posadas* is an important opportunity to give back to the community, and I argue, to re-incorporate into the community.

...that's why I said the faith is the only thing we have. My mom gave all of us a bible and she said, 'I'm not rich and I don't have jewels to leave you but I leave you my faith.' And that's why the only way I could give back is with *Posadas* or something like that. My nephew said, 'The house ain't even fixed. Why are you signing up for things like that?' I said, 'Because God provides, and it's gonna be ok. They're not coming to look at what you have and that, it's just opening your house. It's for a good thing.' I said, 'You don't even know how much God has carried us.' And that's the least I could do for all the people around here--I can offer them something. That's why I told the girls [her daughters], they know. My mom always did it [*Posadas*] and that's what she told us all. 'There's one thing I ask of you girls, and it's the one time of year that I want you guys to be here and help my *Posadas* be something.' [Yolanda Dubois, interview with author, January 11, 2011]

Yolanda occupies a precarious position in San Rafael because she comes from a deeply devout and community-oriented family, yet she and others in her family, usually the younger family members, have had sustained struggles with poverty and substance abuse. This has negatively influenced the way in the family is viewed within the community, and even among extended relatives who still live in San Rafael. Yolanda has acknowledged her perilous position and spoke of interactions with neighbors in which she felt she or her children were being treated poorly as a result of her family's more recent history. She also specifically mentioned people and families who have offered support and kindness during her difficult times, such as Sara Jaramillo who brings groceries to her throughout the year. The fact that some people have helped is hope for Yolanda that struggles will work out. She compared this to her mom's pot of posole, saying, "...the pot has always been full. And that's why, even for *Posadas*, there are times I don't have money. I don't have a job, but my mom would say, 'God provides.' And God provides. You offer what you have, and I've seen that that's how it works" (Yolanda Dubois, interview with author, January 11, 2011).

Yolanda's situation, which is representative of other families and particular individuals within families, demonstrates how my three criteria for belonging in San Rafael interact to achieve belonging—while Yolanda exhibits local cultural knowledge and

competence, her face-to-face interactions with other community members have not always been positive, and so that has had a negative impact upon her sense of personal relatedness and acceptance. Her belonging is transitory and dependent upon her recent actions and behaviors, as well as whether others choose to accept her. Personal relatedness and acceptance, as it relates to belonging, is also apparent in other women's interviews. For several women whose families were from San Rafael, but they themselves were not born there, acceptance and a sense of belonging to the community was not necessarily cultivated or even desired. One younger woman whose family once lived in San Rafael and who now lives in the village where she is raising her young kids, remembered that when she was young and growing up in nearby Grants, that people from San Rafael "would all look at you like you're an outsider," even though she shared a history with residents (Melody Pohl, interview with author, January 23, 2011). Older women also had similar stories of being teased for being an outsider, which was based upon whether a person was born in the village or if she were of an obvious mixed-raced family (Mary Ann Montoya, interview with author, August 15, 2010; Hazel Sandoval, interview with author, February 29, 2011). These women show that belonging hinges upon face-to-face interactions, personal relatedness and acceptance, and local cultural competence, but also that a sense of belonging changes over time and is situational for some individuals and families.

Conclusion

As a bonding performance event, *Las Posadas* in San Rafael especially emphasizes particular characteristics that promote a sense of belonging among disparate community members. *Las Posadas*, as a religiously based food event, is an opportune time for women to assert cultural knowledge, ability, and resources. The skill of a woman to successfully

execute a night of hosting *Las Posadas* demonstrates her aptitude to negotiate local cultural norms as well as family and communal networks. Additionally, women's talents at cooking and other forms of hospitality rituals are highlighted, and communicate to her audience and participants that she has the necessary competence to belong to San Rafael community and culture.

For certain women or families, specific elements of belonging are lacking or not achieved. For some, this results in a cultural event that is not as successfully accomplished, while for others, communal stigmatization is so heavy, that the absent elements create a situation of belonging uncertainty. This uncertainty may remain with a woman or family, or may shift over the course of a lifetime, as acceptance changes among her peers. The bonding framework of *Las Posadas* also makes it more difficult for new participants to join, and adds more difficulty for individuals who are ostracized to become solid, fully accepted members of the active San Rafael community clique. With so much at stake, it is no wonder that organization, food choice, and social networking becomes the greatest emphasis within the performance above and beyond the original religious character.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

For nothing is fixed, forever and forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have. The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.

— James Baldwin, *Nothing Personal* (1985)

Research Summary

Throughout this dissertation, I have focused on women's work in preparation of specific performances within the San Rafael annual cycle of communal and religious events and practices. The annual fiesta, the Christmas time novena *Las Posadas*, and Good Friday devotions are examples of bonding and bridging social performances that can either reinforce bonds among a closed network of San Rafael community members or create ties among overlapping and cross-cutting networks within and beyond the village. The execution of such performances is possible only through the investment and knowledge of a core group of women, the center women, who are hubs of social organization and cultural production for the community. While men and other family and community members are involved in performances, I argue that the process of cultural production begins far in advance of the performance itself. Center women engage in the necessary work of kinship, community building, and cultural knowledge in order to not only execute performances, but to ensure that the event itself does not fade away with the passing of a generation or two. However, this does not ensure that the event itself will not fade away eventually, as has happened with at least two folk dramas and particular elements of Hispanic cultural expression, such as fluency in Spanish.

Research Aims

This study set out to examine the ways in which changes in social and cultural influences have affected how Hispanic women in San Rafael village engage cultural production and retention among qualitatively different generations. There were three central questions regarding Hispanic New Mexican women's cultural production: 1) who will continue traditional practices? 2) How will traditional practices continue? And 3) In what form or process will transmission of cultural knowledge and competence occur? The traditional New Mexican practices that constitute the majority of San Rafael communal events include the annual fiesta, the Christmastime novena *Las Posadas*, and Good Friday devotions. I structured the research within the framework of performance theory because these events and associative foods encompass "act[s] of expression" (Bauman 1986:3) and ritualistic elements, and are performed to display communicative skill and some form of cultural communal competence.

Summary of Findings

A fair amount of compromise, adaptation, and innovation occurs in order to involve younger generations of Hispanic women in cultural practices. These younger women have qualitatively different experiences with village life, cultural identity and expression, and family networks. Many younger women no longer live in San Rafael—some live in nearby Grants or Milan, while others live 70 miles away in Albuquerque, and still others live out of state in Arizona, Colorado, and Texas. Whereas mothers and grandmothers grew up in a nucleated village setting, which cultivated participation and knowledge of traditional local practices, younger women are not exposed to such constant, everyday influences of the village. As several daughters noted, particular Hispanic practices seemed to fade when they

were away from the village and away from their mothers (Stella Valdez, interview with author, November 16, 2010; Tanya Gallegos, interview with author, March 2011). In addition to factors such as distance from the village, women are no longer learning and maintaining traditional practices out of necessity. This results in younger generations of women picking and choosing the practices in which they engage and to what extent they participate, if at all. Traditional practices and religious participation have become one option among many for women's leisure time.

The ties women have with particular practices and beliefs have also transformed over time. Older generations of women often engaged in the process of traditionalization, or endowing symbolic cultural practices with special meaning or authenticity through asserting ties to the past (Bauman 1992). This is particularly true of women's experiences with food and food events, which often brought together networks of women into a single setting in which they would participate in storytelling around the foods they prepared. Within this setting, the women shared stories and memories from their childhoods and early years in marriage. Storytellers such as Pauline Chávez and Ramona Dubois would weave recipes with tales and lessons from deceased loved ones that seemed to transport us both into some previous time while remaining in contemporary kitchens filled with food processors, *tortillas* presses, and vegetable shortening instead of lard. However, the connections that are (re)created each time Pauline told me to make a *cruzita* on each ball of *masa* for *tortillas*, as her dad had instructed her, or each time Ramona, or some other resident, referred to her *posole* with all the fixings as her mother's recipe, even though it was quite different in style from the *posole* her mom Celia made, are what aide in the sharing and maintenance of traditional food knowledge.

In this individual and communal effort to continue particular cultural practices, one can see that change, innovation, and flexibility are key in order to ensure the maintenance of Hispanic traditions. For these reasons, New Mexican foodways are particularly popular among all generations of women—the skills and knowledge to prepare New Mexican foods can be learned at any point in life no matter where one resides, they can be shared through written text or over the phone, which makes recipes easily transferrable and not necessarily cultural knowledge one must remember, the ingredients can be found at supermarkets, substitutions can be made, and short cuts can be used. New Mexican foods, as with most foods, are adaptable and have always been adapted to meet family needs or preference. The adaptability and innovation possible with foods allows them to be both bonding and bridging in terms of the social capital that accompanies food preparation and eating.

In contrast, strict religious performances and devotions, especially those that do not allow for change or innovation, do not attract as many individuals or families of younger generations, and even when they do, I would argue that the devotional spirit and attachment is qualitatively different than those of parents and grandparents. As was evidenced by the three Good Friday devotions, the Stations of the Cross pilgrimage that was undertaken by youth church groups involving San Rafael and Grants folks resulted in a larger intergenerational audience, and has continued to grow over the years. The unchanged Stations of the Cross held at the San Rafael Church attracts only certain in-group church members such as the choir and Eucharistic ministers. Younger folks rarely attend or show devotional spirit toward Good Friday church-sponsored events. While the *Via Crucis* held at the morada has remained somewhat unchanged throughout the years, the hermandad and their families are a closed network that works to selectively groom and recruit new members.

While the current center women remain flexible in their organizing and performance of cultural production in order to ensure the participation from younger generations, many traditional practices and beliefs continue to fade. From the ability to speak Spanish to participation in the religious community, elements of traditional New Mexican culture continue to change and disappear entirely. Although particular community members are actively working to maintain cultural and communal practices, many others are not, and this includes younger members within the families of center women.

Examples of specific cultural performances that have disappeared from San Rafael yearly cycle include the folk dramas *Los Comanches* and *Los Pastores*. Based upon family pictures and histories, *Los Comanches* was performed during the 1920s and 1930s, but people do not remember the performance anytime after the 1930s. The DuBois family has a picture from the late 1920s or early 1930s of their mother Celia as a young girl participating in *Los Comanches* dances, with the Zuni Mountains as the ever-present backdrop to so many San Rafael photos.



Figure 1. *Los Comanches* performers in San Rafael, New Mexico, c. 1930. Celia DuBois is the young girl in front. Picture courtesy Ramona DuBois.

There is little record or memory of *Los Comanches*, and only a small number of people in San Rafael recognized the cultural performance when I asked them about it. Celia DuBois, who was born in 1924, was likely of one of the last generations to participate in the performance before it faded from the yearly cycle of events. Most individuals of that generation have passed away, or do not remember the event. This may be because they were too young to recall an event that soon faded and did not become rooted in their lives and traditions. *Los Comanches* is not unheard of for the area. In fact, it is currently performed annually in the nearby village of San Mateo on Mt. Taylor. In San Mateo, one's participation in the performance falls within families. Pauline and Anthony's oldest son Anthony is

married into one of these San Mateo families, and so his daughter Sierra participates in *Los Comanches* each year.

The folk drama *Los Pastores* only recently faded from the San Rafael performance repertoire in the early 1980s, when residents remember Tomás García organizing the final play. *Los Pastores* is entirely in Spanish, and so in addition to singing and acting, one must also be bilingual. As with many contemporary New Mexican communities, fewer Hispanics are bilingual, and so their ability to execute a musical play in Spanish dies out.

The examples of the two folk dramas that have faded from use along with other indicators of cultural expression, such as Spanish language, traditional Catholic religion and practice, and even New Mexican foods as staples of the diet, all highlight the fact that cultural change inherently means some forms of cultural loss. Heavily performative events such as *Los Comanches* and *Los Pastores* have faded, while events that only have particular elements of performance, such as the fiesta, have maintained their place in the community. As religious participation, and even communal participation, continues to wane, these less performative events may also begin to suffer in more obvious ways also, e.g., skip years when there is lack of participation or organization.

Recently, a new priest has moved into the long-abandoned priest's home in San Rafael. He has quickly become a part of the community, and that has instilled a new sense of vigor within the local religious community. Perhaps as a result of this, for the 2013, the older generation of women who normally run the fiesta were able to step back while a new group of women, led by Terry (Tórrez) Marquez, were able to manage booths and the kitchen. Hazel Sandoval, Pauline Chávez, Mary Ann Montoya, Susie Gallegos, Bessie Debassige, and Dina Jaramillo were all able to enjoy the fiesta with their grandchildren, or simply sit at

tables eating the “buried BBQ beef dinner” and listening to the DJ play Spanish music. A classic car show with roughly thirty cars and trucks and several low-rider bicycles lined the street outside the church, while a rock band played classic rock songs. The event attracted a diverse group and illustrates how residents are consciously shaping the fiesta to maintain its importance within the community cycle of events.

The performative events, those that have faded with time, those that are imperiled each year, and those that are successfully executed without issues, illustrate the web of human and cultural resources that is necessary in order to maintain a traditional Hispanic village. In order for a traditional symbolic system to survive and persist over time, the tools necessary for that system (e.g., cultural knowledge and competence, the ability to speak Spanish) and the social relations of production (center women and periphery women who offer help or who become center women) must also persist.

Significance of Research

Rather than viewing the situation facing residents in San Rafael as one of culture loss, which is how many of the older women seemed to conceptualize what was occurring among younger people, I argue that younger San Rafael women, some consciously, others completely unknowingly, are engaging in adaptive strategies that result in hybridized and innovative traditional practices that ultimately permit the continuity of Hispanic New Mexican culture.

Although the Hispanic New Mexicans have been legal citizens of the United States since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, I argue that contemporary native New Mexicans occupy a space and experience life in ways that are much more similar to second or third generation immigrants. Ultimately, the issues facing San Rafael residents are issues

that ethnic immigrant groups are negotiating in communities and enclaves across the United States. The topic of assimilation inherently comes up as Hispanic New Mexicans are engaged in a process to gain full access to citizenship in the United States—political, economic, and cultural citizenship. Borrowing these three “zones of citizenship” as developed by social scientist Toby Miller, political citizenship is defined as the right to “reside and vote,” economic citizenship is the right to “work and prosper,” and cultural citizenship is the right to “know and speak” (2011:57). While it may be argued that Hispanic New Mexicans have long had access to these three zones of citizenship, I contend that these forms of citizenship are constantly negotiated processes and situations for Hispanic New Mexicans, and full and unquestioned access to citizenship is dependent on such factors as class, education, language spoken, and expression of ethnic or cultural identity. Within San Rafael, community members are able to speak Spanish, English, and code switch in their homes and in public; they can demonstrate cultural competence and communal pride through events and rituals; but outside of the village, their ability to do such things are limited, questioned, and simply implausible. San Rafael village, like many Hispanic villages of New Mexico, is an enclave for residents and extended family. The village is the site of traditional cultural practices, even as those practices are in processes of change in every moment and with every actor.

In contrast to other ethnic immigrant communities across the United States, San Rafael residents are further along in terms of their negotiations with assimilation and multiculturalism. This is an important case for that reason—through an examination of the San Rafael community and the experiences of its residents, one can not only glean information on the qualitative differences from one generation to the next, but also how an ethnic group interacts and cooperates to preserve and pass on cultural knowledge.

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Appendix A

Major San Rafael Family Networks

List of Major San Rafael Family Networks
(center women in bold type)

Tórrez Family

Pauline [Tórrez] Chávez*

Stephanie [Chávez] Galindo (daughter of Pauline)

Nadine [Tórrez] Rodríguez

Cathy [Tórrez] Erives

Chávez* Family

Susie [Chávez] Gallegos (this branch of the Chávez family is cousin to the Dubois Tórrez families)

Tanya Gallegos (daughter of Susie)

Sally Ann Gallegos (daughter of Susie)

Hazel [Chávez] Sandoval (cousin to the Tórrez family)

Danielle Sandoval (daughter of Hazel)

Dubois Family

Ramona Dubois

Nicole Mirabal (daughter of Ramona)

Yolanda Dubois

Mary Ann [Desalla] Montoya

Rodríguez Family

Bessie (Rodríguez) Debassige

Chávez*-Jaramillo Family

Josie [García] Chávez

Dina [Chávez] Jaramillo (daughter of Josie)

Elaine [Jaramillo] Vigil (daughter of Dina)

Mary Ann [Gallegos] Jaramillo (niece of Josie)

*The three Chávez families listed here are unrelated

Appendix B

San Rafael *Las Posadas* Text

Las Posadas

Afuera

¿Quién les da posada
A estos peregrinos
Que vienen cansados
De andar los caminos?

Adentro

¿Quién es que las pide
Yo no la he de dar
Si serán ladrones
Que querrán robar.

Afuera

Robaros pretendo
Y es el corazón
Que a mi esposa amada
Le des un rincón.

Adentro

No hay rincón vacío
Que puede franquear
Vacío está el campo
Y en el hospedad.

Afuera

Necesidad grave
A mi esposa aflige
Un rincón les pido
Donde se recline

Adentro

¿Quién es quien perturba
De noche sosiego?
Márchense de aquí
No nos quite el sueño.

Afuera

Hacedlo por Dios,
Que mis esposa amada
Con el frío y cansancio
Viene fatigada.

Adentro

¡Qué gente tan necia!
Ya me está enfadando
Márchense de aquí
No estén despertando

Afuera

Que esta bella niña
Ya no sufra el hielo,
No puede aguantar
El rigor del tiempo.

Adentro

Ya se ve que es tarde
Y venir con eso
Se hacen sospechosos
Márchense al momento.

Afuera

La noche se avanza
Por Dios condoleos
Que descanse un poco
La reina del cielo.

Adentro

Ruegos importunos
No, no escucharemos:
Vacío está el campo
Y en el recogeros.

Afuera

Es José y María,
Su esposa amada,
Que a tus puertas viene
A pedir posada.

Adentro

Entra bella niña
Tú y tu compañero;
Esta es vuestra casa
Que humilde ofrecemos.

Afuera

No tengais un poco
Esta caridad:
El cielo benigno
Os compensara.

Adentro

Ábranse las puertas
Rómpanse los velos
Que Viena a posar
La Reina del cielo.