



out of the *melting pot* and into the kitchen:

identifying *homemaking* strategies of Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello, Idaho

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Dedicated to my grandfather and grandmother whose endless love and support made my education possible; I cannot thank them enough for that incredible opportunity

A Love Poem

What are you? I think you are
pure movement, and nothing but movement.
Sometimes, it is true, I see you draped in a sari
but, oftener, you are a disembodied impatience,
an invisible ship voyaging with a hurricane's speed
across an invisible ocean throughout the day and night
with a cargo of stifled words.

I could not see you, for the gale had blown away
my eyes, and my words were lost somewhere in your embrace.
I was speechless and could not give the world
the details of what you were.
The streets, as usual, teemed with people.
There were, as usual, flowers in the garden.
Stars, as usual, thronged the whole sky.
But you, who are movement and nothing but movement
were, as usual, to be found nowhere.

And yet I know that I always exist
on the shaded banks of a fountain
somewhere within you.

-Ramakanta Rath

Los sueños del fin del exilio:

Se le habían roto los cristales de los anteojos y se le habían perdido las llaves. Ella buscaba las llaves por toda la ciudad, a tientas, en cuatro patas, y cuando por fin las encontraba, las llaves decían que no servían para abrir sus puertas.

-Eduardo Galeano

When you sit at the table with others, sit long, for it is a time that is not counted against you as part of [the ordained span of] your lives.

- Ja'far al-Sadiq, Medieval Shi'a Muslim leader

Abstract:

Homemaking is a process of establishing heritage home cultural practices in a new country due to migration. For Mexican Americans in Pocatello, homemaking includes the active perpetuation of rituals and signs on the part of the private home cook. This is a unique process that has varying integration levels depending on an individual's experience with migration. Ideally, homemaking aids in turning space into place in a host country. Homemaking also includes successful cultural transmission to subsequent generations born within the host country. This investigation outlines the ways in which Mexican American cooks use the private home kitchen space for processes of homemaking in Pocatello, Idaho. In order to do this a theoretical grounding for homemaking is established through descriptions of its central component parts: identity construction, individual agency and migration. This is followed by the synthesis of results of field research gathered in Pocatello, Idaho with homemaking theories. Within this, themes of place, knowledge and symbols are explained as means of homemaking for the Mexican American home cooks. These findings conclude that symbolic food use is an integral tool for Mexican American homemaking. Homemaking is a successful means of identity, cultural and social construction for Mexican American home cooks as well as a powerful tool used in adaptation to migrational patterns.

KEYWORDS: Anthropology, Culture, Latin America, Homemaking, Mexican American, Migration, Private Space, Identity Construction, Agency, Symbol, Ritual, Food, Knowledge, Imaginary Homelands, Power

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1.) INTRODUCTION

“Racism is the elephant in the living room in this country. And we pretend it doesn’t exist. Until acknowledge it, until we acknowledge it, until we acknowledge the past, we are not moving forward.” – Rita Bender Still a long ways from justice

“Dime con quien andes y te diré quien eres.” –Mexican proverb

It is another hot summer afternoon in Pocatello, Idaho. I am looking over my fresh cup of coffee at Bobby, listening intently as he paints pictures of his childhood home and Mexican American family. I ask him what the kitchen means for him. “It all starts from the kitchen. [You] help your parents cook. While your mom is cooking you talk with her and set up the table. It is the beginning of where relationships start in the house. With a visitor, [they] start in the living room but if they’re there long enough they come into the kitchen.”¹ I sat in quiet amazement as he carefully detailed familial relationships and how they were intricately tied to the home kitchen space and the food prepared there. Who and what made this specific room so powerful for his family? Were there other families that had similar experiences with their home kitchens in Pocatello?

The answer is yes. The Mexican American private home kitchen space is the center of household activity as well as the specific location of homemaking practices that guide family members in identity and culture construction. Mexican American home cooks are precisely *who* make this space so powerful. Their techniques of *homemaking* are at the core of this power to make space into place and place into *home*. Homemaking strategies are unique to each individual and have a great deal to do with personal histories of migration. Encounters with migration, prejudice, acculturation, media, and appreciation can all affect homemaking in positive and negative manners. A greater anthropological understanding of homemaking processes and the ways in which they are employed by Mexican American cooks in their private home kitchens is important on a number of levels. Homemaking is a display of the voluntary retention or release of heritage cultural traits. Through these practices it is possible to observe priorities of the home cook through the culture and identity they instill through homemaking. Cultural adaptation, assertion and fusion are visible through homemaking tactics. Therefore, in order to better understand an individual’s relationships with places when exposed to migration, anthropological understandings of homemaking are necessary. When investigating characteristics of homemaking within the field of cultural anthropology it is important to define the current approaches and deficiencies. Specifically, I would like to address anthropological approaches to place and migration and are at the core of homemaking.

Firstly, common anthropological conceptions of *place* and *home* are not seen as mobile entities. Anthropological theory has treated space as a fixed location where *culture* is continuously changing and the *location* remains inert. It is necessary to also observe *how* and *why* places are transformed according to individual and communal identity constructions. The relationships between individuals, their identities, their agency and their places are at the core of homemaking. Within the field of anthropology there has been a deficit in addressing the importance of place. Basso and Feld explain that, “Missing from the discipline is a thematized concern with the ways in which citizens of the earth constitute their landscapes and take themselves to be connected to them. Missing is a desire to fathom the various and variable perspectives from which people *know* their landscapes and, the self-invested viewpoints from which...they embrace the countryside and find the embrace returned. Missing is an interest in how men and women dwell.” (Basso, 1996. 54) In order to address these topics, the ethnographer

¹ Formal interview with Bobby 29 May 2008

must identify the many different definitions of place, knowledge and space in terms of the specific culture in which they are found. (Basso, 1996. 57)

Susan Brin Hyatt contends that it is how places or landscapes are imagined in a culture that anthropologists need to focus in order to better incorporate place into the considerations of identity and culture construction. (Hyatt, 2002. 210) Rodman outlines a similar perspective, detailing that, “Anthropologists would do well to follow geographers’ renewed interest in reunifying *location* (i.e., the spatial distribution of socioeconomic activity such as trade networks), *sense of place* (or attachment to place), and *locale* (the setting in which a particular social activity occurs, such as a church) to yield a more rounded understanding of places as culturally and socially constructed in practice.” (Low, 2003. 207) Individual perceptions and experiences with place and space are integral to anthropological research as a whole and, more specifically, in regards to homemaking processes.

Next is the concept of migration, the catalyst for homemaking processes. Anthropological approaches have had a tendency to fall into classic models of interpretation and to view patterns as structured dualisms. Migration has been most often dealt with by adopting either “assimilation” or “nativism” viewpoints. (Espiritu, 2003. 3) The problems inherent in these approaches is the assumption of the the *melting pot*. This is problematic due to the actual situation in the United States that is not so clear cut. There do exist slightly blurred lines of exchange between different cultural groups but there is rarely a total loss of the heritage culture on the part of any migrant. This involves a transmission of practices and knowledge in a multidirectional flow, not simply from the host country to the new migrant. (Espiritu, 2003. 4) The theory of the *melting pot* or assimilation model is not representative of the majority of migrants. Instead there is the cross-enculturation, or the transmission of culture between both host and migrant.

In order for anthropology to research the properties of homemaking, Katharine Rankin proposes an *anthropology of practice*. In migrational studies it has three analytical advantages. The first of these being that the anthropology of practice discovers the “social differentiation” of seemingly homogenous cultures. Secondly, there is an emphasis on the role that ideology and consciousness play in the process of conditioning agency. Thirdly, the *anthropology of practice* puts the anthropologist at the public level to view political-economic systems. (Rankin 713) It is in this light that migrational studies should be considered within anthropology and its applications to homemaking. Anthropology of practice can aid in identifying strategies of homemaking. For the purposes of this project an anthropology of practice involves first differentiating the Mexican American population from the greater Pocatello community. It also appreciates the individual’s experiences that exist in migration and homemaking. Secondly, the fieldwork involved in this research is dependent on the observation of heritage culture traits present in the homemaker. These culture traits affect the choices that individuals make in their strategies of homemaking. Thirdly, the duration of this research period is spent in the homes and in the community of the home cooks involved. Therefore, the project and my actions occur at the public level. An anthropology of practice applied in the field in Pocatello, Idaho establishes the solid base from which to observe homemaking and its uses. One of these is the retention and transmission of cultural heritage traits in the face of migration. Homemaking success is dependent on an individual’s reception of migratory patterns and the consequent life choices that ensue within the home space.

I would like to outline the reasons for focusing on homemaking within this research and the central questions that I have formulated regarding homemaking processes and Mexican American home cooks. It begins with the *melting pot* myth that runs rampant on the tongues of American citizens. “It promises respect for every individual and group. It promises that everyone who comes to America will change, and all will change together.” (Spickard, 2007. 11) This concept is fascinating as it attempts to sweep all cultural differences into one big lump of Americanness. Immigrant enclaves exist in all areas of the United States.

My specific interest is in Mexican American immigrants and their subsequent generations. Laura E. Gomez describes how “Mexican Americans have been a significant part of American Society since 1848, when more than 115,000 Mexicans became U.S. citizens” (Gomez, 2007. 1) Mexican Americans proclaim, “We didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.” (Gomez, 2007. 2) And so to view the migratory patterns of past and current Mexican immigrants as a new phenomenon is unwarranted. Mexican Americans migrate for more reasons than a forced border change. It is not so much their reasons for migration but how they establish themselves in their new surroundings that I wish to focus on. I am interested in “...how people collectively form a meaningful relationship with the locales they occupy, how they attach meaning to space, or transform ‘space’ into ‘place’...how experience is embedded in place and how space holds memories that implicate people and events.” (Low, 2003. 186) Specifically, with this investigation I would like to answer the question: *In what ways do Mexican American home cooks use the private home kitchen space for the process of homemaking?* To discover how this occurs within Mexican American households and *by the home cook* I will use the migrationally specific identity and culture construction theory of *Homemaking*. In order to do this I would like to propose the following sub-questions that will guide the investigation. The first of these asks: What factors influence the ways in which private space is used for identity construction? Homemaking processes are dependent on a private space for their practice by the home cook. For this reason it is important to view the ways in which they are recruited for homemaking purposes. The second sub-question proposes: In what ways is knowledge employed in the Mexican American private home kitchen space? The uses of knowledge by the Mexican American home cook helps to define what information is used for homemaking and precisely how it is employed for this purpose. The third question is: In what ways does migration affect the homemaking process of the Mexican American home cook? Since homemaking is almost entirely dependent on migrational experiences an evaluation of the individual experiences that the home cooks have with migration is necessary. This also identifies the diverse approaches to homemaking based on personal life experiences and expectations. And, lastly: What role do symbols play in the process of homemaking for Mexican American home cooks? Symbols and their use in ritual are integral for homemaking. Home cooks use symbol and ritual to transmit shared meanings and to establish normalcy in the face of migration. These four questions are aimed at discovering homemaking strategies made by Mexican American home cooks. All of these questions drove my research in Pocatello, Idaho. I would like to detail the research methodologies employed in the field alongside the field setting in which this takes place in order to draw conclusions on these questions.

1.1) Methodology

Pocatello, Idaho is a city of approximately 51,466 residents in a 28.24 square mile area. Of this population an estimated 92% is white, 5% Hispanic and the remaining 3% are of various heritages.² Within the white majority exists the Mexican American community. Although an individual may not agree with immigration or the presence of Mexican Americans in Pocatello, they will eat Mexican food. The immense popularity of this cuisine is demonstrated by the abundance of public access to Mexican and Mexican American foods. Pocatello, Idaho is home to numerous Mexican restaurants, *taco wagons*, and *taco busses*. Pocatello residents visit these localities throughout the week and they serve excellent regionally dependent Mexican food. Food has the unique ability to bring people together no matter what their heritage. E.N. Anderson explains that, “Food transactions define families, networks, friendship groups, religions and virtually every other socially institutionalized group. Naturally, one group can try to use food to separate itself, while another is trying to use food to eliminate that separation.” (Anderson, 2005. 125) It is possible that through food some level of cultural or individual appreciation for fellow

² According to U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

community members, no matter their skin tone, could be introduced and maintained in Pocatello, Idaho.

With my arrival in Pocatello, I was confronted with the daunting task of encountering a key informant base for my research. When proposing this investigation a number of approximately six to ten key informants seemed reasonable. With this amount it would be possible to have personal experiences with them but also to experience variation in lifestyle. Inherent in this type of anthropological participant-observation fieldwork is establishing relationships with previously unknown persons. Due to the outsider status that I held with my potential informants a manner of introducing myself and this investigation would be a starting point. It was immediately made clear by numerous contacts that access to the Mexican American private home space would be extremely difficult unless there was a third party with whom there existed a pre-established rapport that could chaperone an initial visit. I found this person in Florina. She had been a classmate of mine for a number of years. Due to her network of Mexican American acquaintances, Florina was immediately able to introduce this project and myself to my future key informants. This was extremely fortunate as flyers, informational meetings, and Hispanic club attendance proved to be inefficient manners of establishing contacts. In the end I was involved with five key long term informants that truly drove the fieldwork progress. These informants demonstrated extreme variation of migrational and life experiences that awarded mass amounts of unique research sites, characteristics and company to this research.

With each contact or potential informant the project, methods, confidentiality, intentions and actions were carefully outlined. Of utmost importance was to keep the research open to the informants. I employed various methods of investigation while conducting this fieldwork in Pocatello, Idaho. Participant-observation techniques guided the majority of the fieldwork. In terms of this project, this was most often equated with *observing* since I was not a member of the households. This consisted of much time sitting at kitchen tables in numerous households and chatting informally with Mexican American home cooks. Within the private home kitchen space I conducted both formal and informal individual and group interviews. With the informants I practiced both guided discussions as well as open conversations. A digital voice recorder quickly became a very useful tool for the informants that did not mind its presence. Accurate voice recordings were important for the notation of direct quotations and translations. Alongside the voice recordings are a series of detailed notes indicating other actions and expressions of the informants. It was a continuous learning process in not only methodologies but in cultural practices and in Spanish language use.

1.2) Anthropology in Practice

Throughout this field experience I was acutely aware of my role as an anthropologist. For this reason I would like to establish my understanding of my role as an anthropologist in the field as well as the role of cultural anthropology in general. Doing this allows me to look at the field of anthropology as a whole in regards to my outlined central concepts and to evaluate where there may be a lack in either representation or practice. For each study launched within the broad field of anthropology there ought to be a system of “checks and balances” so to speak in which anthropologists feel obligated to assess their work and institute an open discourse within and outside the field. This open critique serves as an introduction to my investigation as well as a call for this open system of “checks and balances”, especially in regards to fieldwork. By defining my role as an anthropologist in the field a much needed open dialogue can be established not only for this project but perhaps it will become a common trend that will allow the field of anthropology to really achieve its core goal: generating and spreading cultural awareness and perhaps even appreciation through our experiences and discourse.

All too often anthropological investigations such as this one are hastened into a theoretical labyrinth that renders them completely inaccessible to the common reader. It is necessary to base research on theory and past studies, however it is also possible to complement

this with accessibility. This can be done with the creation of a partner project. Partner projects to the academic studies will disseminate the general concepts in laymen's terms. Looking back into the annals of anthropological history, the trend to bind to theory and specialized jargon has been a foundation for respect as a science. This can be positive in that it allows anthropologists to be more precise and to better identify phenomenon through a collective vocabulary. However it is at this point that much is lost. As anthropologists, if there is only discourse amongst our own field, how are we helping humanity? There is much to be said for advancements in the field of cultural anthropology and the mass amounts of aid that anthropologists and their projects have provided for environmental, cultural and individual causes. However, in literature, as in practice, anthropology must become more accessible.

Anthropologists have the skills and potential to reach people in far off places, perhaps to incite appreciation of something that was previously misunderstood, feared or hated. It may appear far fetched but if there is one field of study that has a chance of taking on the realms of racism and hate it is cultural anthropology. This is precisely why I find it disconcerting that so often anthropologists are bound by theory and scholastics. I am not casting aside these aspects of learning and teaching, but I am calling for the spread of knowledge. Anthropologists speak of cultural appreciation, open eyes and open minds. If the field of cultural anthropology as a whole can tap into this resource and turn it outwards then we will have taken this insider's perspective and used it for more than just the good of our salaries and our personal pursuits. It is here that I am calling for an open discourse of anthropology; for the open flow of information between academics and the general public; a discourse void of unintelligible jargon. There must be a balance at some point between the "science" and the "culture" that anthropology is built upon. This is anthropology in practice; anthropology that is both of people and for people.

It is the duty of anthropologists to continue with studies and fieldwork, to continue promoting understanding, to open the field of anthropology to public. We do this today by creating means of accessibility such as alternate forms of education applicable to a target audience such as partner projects. After all, it is indeed differences that make individuals and groups intriguing; that is precisely why we hold this profession in the first place. The idea that needs to be brought to public attention is that difference does not have to equate with fear and hate. If there are means of appreciating difference, even if it is simply to the point of tolerance, then the anthropologist must discover the most efficient manner to encourage this and move forward as an open science.

I am not disillusioned of the grandeur and difficulty of these changes; however, we are a field of diversity and promise. Having made these claims of future change in the field of anthropology I would like to introduce the *partner project* to this investigation: The Cultural Cookbook.³ During the four months spent in the field working with Mexican American home cooks I was also designing and gathering data for the Cultural Cookbook. This cookbook contains field experiences and informant's stories of migration or life in Pocatello. It incorporates Mexican, Mexican American and American Mexican recipes from both Hispanic and non-Hispanic members of Pocatello alongside their real life stories. The text and all recipes are written in English as well as Spanish. The information gathered from the thesis research and finalized research composition will be synthesized in an open and public-friendly manner so as to create an atmosphere for cultural appreciation through food. The Cultural Cookbook will then be sold locally as well as abroad with 100% of the profits being donated to organizations decided upon by my key long-term informants. It is my hope that Pocatello community members of all heritage backgrounds will find an interest in this cookbook and learn even the smallest bit of information about their fellow community members. The Cultural Cookbook serves as this project's open discourse of anthropological findings. By means of the Cultural Cookbook I am taking my first steps towards fulfilling the obligation of anthropologists to make a difference in

³ Appendix 7.1

current thought towards anthropological methods and practice. By *applying* the information collected in the term of this project in form of the Cultural Cookbook one more step is being taken to practice an anthropology for the people.

1.3) Thesis Structure

The assessment of anthropology in the field is integral to the course of this study and is further presented as a recurring theme throughout the following sections. The presentation of this research project consists of first establishing a theoretical base and then incorporating this theory with the empirical research findings. The synthesis portion will then be followed by the conclusions that I have reached in regards to both theoretical and empirical data analysis. The theory I have selected for this research presentation is that homemaking. In order to ensure its appropriate use for this project homemaking is described in terms identity construction, individual agency and action, and migration. Since this report is representing Mexican American immigrants and their families I found these concepts to be extremely useful. Following this theoretical backing the empirical findings from my research are presented within the following divisions: “Place, Space and Identity”, “Knowledge”, and “Symbols”. “Place, Space and Identity” is separated into sections of “Migration” and “Private Space”. The “Migration” component is an opportunity to identify how my informants have used homemaking during their experiences with geographical place changes as well as how the Mexican American home cooks construct identities within a host country while retaining ties to an *imaginary homeland*. The following section, “Private Space” outlines the ways in which Mexican American home cooks define their private home kitchens through identity construction, agency and migration.

Succeeding this is the discussion of “Knowledge” containing three intertwined themes: “Transmission”, “Power”, and “Agency, Action and Identity”. “Transmission” explains the means by which my informants acquire, use and transmit culinary knowledge within their private home kitchen space. Also presented are the ways in which the home cook uses knowledge transmission for the process of *homemaking*. This discussion flows into the “Power” section. Knowledge has a unique relationship with power especially when applying it to Mexican American cooks and their private home kitchen. Within this section I profile the ways in which Mexican American home cooks transform knowledge into power in their kitchen space and how this knowledge is a means of identity construction and homemaking. “Power” leads directly into “Agency, Action and Identity”. This section is used to define the Mexican American home cook’s active agency in knowledge use, acquisition and transmission that is central to understanding the overall process of homemaking.

Next within the empirical-theoretical synthesis is “Symbols”. I have segmented this section into “Food” and “Ritual” in order to better represent the diversity of informant data collected. “Symbols” are necessary for the perpetuation of cultural practices. Food, in particular, provides an indispensable array of symbols for the Mexican American home cook. I take this opportunity to summarize the ways in which my informants employ symbolic food use for identity construction, agency and action, travel, culinary relationships, communication, cultural resistance, forming imaginary communities and *imaginary homelands*, budgeting time and cultural adaptation due to migration. Tied closely into this is “Ritual”. “Ritual” outlines the manners that Mexican American home use rituals in order to establish social hierarchies and power dynamics, transmit knowledge, and define the meanings of symbols within their greater strategy of homemaking. All of these topics are then consolidated in the final “Conclusions” section in order to draw final conclusions on the ways in which place, space, identity, knowledge, and symbols become tools for Mexican Americans in their homemaking experiences in Pocatello, Idaho. I would like to continue now, by introducing the various interpretations of and approaches to homemaking.

2.) HOMEMAKING

“I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry ‘home’ on my back.” – Gloria Anzaldúa, “Borderlands”

With the increased displacement and migrational patterns occurring with contemporary peoples the concept of homemaking can be encountered on a more frequent basis. Recently, “homemaking” has become a label for the phenomenon of using conceptions of home to stay in contact with a migrant’s heritage culture or heritage community. Yen Le Espiritu defines homemaking as, “...the process by which diverse subjects imagine and make themselves at home in various geographic locations.” (Espiritu, 2003. 2) Homemaking drives the immigrant’s experience and provides a much needed space for identity construction within a new cultural system. Homemaking is not only utilized by new migrants or immigrants. I would like to argue that homemaking is a process of keeping tradition alive for both first generation migrants and their consequent familial generations. And so, homemaking is useful in the initial culture migration but also for the retention and transmission of heritage cultural values and practices. Homemaking involves the transformation of space into place by active human agents. Through strategies of identity construction when faced with migration, homemaking becomes a means of cultural empowerment. Individuals choose to re-create certain aspects of their heritage homeland within the context of their new place. For Mexican American home cooks, homemaking is a valuable tool for imagining homelands, community creation, heritage culture retention, identity construction, and acculturation. To understand these relationships inherent in the homemaking process, I would like to further outline the dynamics present between dwelling and place, migration, identity, and agency.

2.1) Dwelling and Place

Dwelling is described by various anthropologists when discussing place and homemaking. Basso and Feld describe dwelling as the, “...multiple ‘lived relationships’ that people maintain with places,” and that, “...it is solely by virtue of these relationships that space acquires meaning.” (Basso, 1996. 54) Inherent in dwelling is the transformation of space into place establishing meaning. (Low, 2003. 232) Dwelling implies the organization of space and it defines place. John Gray outlines four ways in which this is done. The first is that by using objects a spatial relationship is created between the individual and the object. Second, the act of dwelling creates a system of referential relationships between the objects being used. Gray further explains that, “The use of any one thing implicates the use of other things so that together these uses constitute a coherent totality, a world in which each thing has a proper – and thus meaningful and nameable- place in spatial and practical terms.” (Low, 2003. 232) Thirdly, dwelling can be a way of perceiving the world and one’s private space. And lastly, Gray contends that, “...by using objects, people gather them together spatially to form a place whose meaning derives from both actions and objects.” (Low, 2003. 232) Gray uses the concept of dwelling to define the human-spatial relationships that exists. Dwelling is a useful approach for identifying materialistic and spatial relationships that are established in the process of homemaking. When discussing this type of material use of space it is useful to profile the relationships that exist between space, place, private space as localities and acts of dwelling. When combined, these elements play essential roles in the diverse experiences with homemaking.

Central to the process of homemaking is the ability to make space into place. This involves human agency and choice as, “...humans ‘write’ or impute in an enduring way their presence on their surroundings.” (Low, 2003. 185) Low explains that writing human presence creates inscribed spaces. Inscribed spaces are filled with relationships between humans and their spaces. (Low, 2003. 13) This is not a one way process either. Giving a space meaning and turning it into place represents a cyclical process in which, “...places produce meaning and that

meaning can be grounded in place...” (Low, 2003. 207) Basso and Feld introduce the term, *Sensing place*, to describe this. A place is sensed by its inhabitants when their ideas and feelings animate this space. The place reciprocally then, animates the ideas and feelings of the person. It is both an inward and outward movement of active sensing. In this manner a physical place becomes intricately tied to the individual’s mind and imagination. (Basso, 1996. 55) Therefore, sensing a place is a means of homemaking and identity construction. The power to turn space into place is in large regard due to these processes of identity construction and home making. The active dweller contains a network of associations of place-based thoughts about the self that lead to, “...expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender.” (Basso, 1996. 55) Sensing and dwelling are important ingredients for the homemaking process. Keeping these in mind, I would like to further elaborate an understanding of homemaking by discussing it in terms of migration, identity and agency.

2.2) Migration and Homemaking

Essentially it is due to an initial act of migration that homemaking comes into practice. Homemaking is a response to situations of migration for individuals and their consequent generations in a host nation. Homemaking is used in this manner to establish a sense of normalcy in daily life by continuing accustomed cultural practices. Homemaking strategies may also indicate a level of desired or required assimilation to a place. Homemaking then is reliant on migratory patterns. Today, increased access to means of travel signifies exposure to migration in nearly all levels of society. It is for this reason that homemaking is so integral to discussions of migration. Michael Kearney explains that there are two main types of migration, (1) the seasonal movement of residence and (2) the leaving of one locality to settle in another. (Barfield, 1997. 322) The second of these two will be taken into consideration for the purpose of this investigation as my field research focuses on permanent or non-seasonal migration. Migration brings into question many aspects of individual and group identities and their association with homemaking strategies. There are individuals that find acculturation to be a useful tactic for identity construction and cultural heritage retention. Thomas F. Glick describes the process of acculturation as, “...culture change set in motion by the meeting of two autonomous cultural systems, resulting in an increase of similarity of each to the other...the donor culture may not present the full range of its cultural elements, and the recipient culture’s own value system may act to screen out or modify certain elements...” (Barfield, 1997. 1) Glick goes on to explain that acculturation may include the deculturation, stabilized pluralism (a retention of a degree of cultural autonomy), or even the assimilation of a group or individual. (Barfield, 1997. 1) The numerous avenues of acculturation highlighted by Barfield demonstrate the propensity for each person’s migrational and homemaking situation to be exceedingly different from others.

Displaced or migrated individuals are the center for homemaking. Yen Le Espiritu discusses the Filipino experience with identity construction in the face of migration. She describes how Filipino nationals migrating to the United States are, “...leading lives stretched across borders.” (Espiritu, 2003. 2) These immigrants continuously “...transform and remake the social world around them.” (Espiritu, 2003. 2) It is through homemaking that they retain ties to their homeland and live transnational lives. The Filipino immigrants construct identity through various conceptions of home. Many of these individuals construct their identities within a physical space that they call home and a distant geographical locale that they also refer to as home. Such transnational lifestyles can be understood as, “...’different modalities of situatedness-in-displacement’...” (Vickroy, 2005. 109) This describes the fluid perceptions of ethnicity that arise from situations of globalization, migration and forced exile. (Vickroy 2005.109) Transnational identities involve affects of, “...global flows of people, capital, and cultural forms...” (Espiritu, 2003. 9) and they can lead to the creation of imaginary homelands; those spaces in which individuals remember and recreate their heritage homeland although they may not be physically present.

Homemaking tactics involve active transformations of space into place. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga describe three approaches to defining this occurs in migrating peoples. The first of these is the *global spaces* approach. Global spaces consist of deterritorialized spaces due to contact with the global economy and monetary flows. This approach takes into account, "...the importance of the global and informational city, uneven development, and flexibility of capital and labor in the social production of space." (Low, 2003. 25) The second approach is that of transnational spaces. They explain that "With the globalizing economy, people move across borders creating new transnational spaces and territorial relationships". (Low, 2003. 25) And, thirdly, there is the approach of translocal spaces. It is characterized by interventions of media and migration that cause social change and, the breakdown in the uniform understanding of space, place and culture. Thus, translocal spaces are established and public cultures become common place in individual imaginations. This leads to the consequent breakdown of notions of "state-based territoriality. (Low, 2003. 25)

All types of *trans* notions discussed here aid in establishing new vocabulary and theories for addressing migration. These concepts of migration also assist in the formulation of a greater understanding of homemaking as a response to these migratory pathways. When faced with migration, individuals adapt means of identity construction through agency and action in order to better guide their chosen strategies of homemaking. Therefore, homemaking is reliant on individual experiences with migration, distinct identity constructions and the diversity of individual agency. Migration, Identity and agency are central components of homemaking.

2.3) Identity and Homemaking

Identity construction is integral for adopting strategies of homemaking. Differing paths of migration, heritage culture, and personal histories affect the choices that individuals make in selecting their strategies of homemaking. Homemaking both facilitates and is facilitated by identity construction as it furnishes individuals with enculturation guidelines and it is also transformed by individual identity choices. It is this individuality that makes each homemaking experience so unique. Todd Sanders explains that "... 'identity,' like 'tradition,' forms part of the social imagination. Far from being fixed, identity is actively molded in particular social, cultural and historical settings." (Sanders, 2003. 341) Identity in and of itself is slightly problematic to define as it is a fluid concept. Identity can be best understood as the ways in which individuals and groups perceive themselves and the ways in which others view them. As Todd Sanders explains, "...identity is actively molded in particular social, cultural and historical settings." (Sanders, 2003. 341) Identity is a dynamic and multidimensional process. For this reason I would like to look at *how* identity is, not solely *what* identity is.

Jorge Larrain proposes a threefold series of identity components. First, identity is a social construct and is determined by culture. Individuals define themselves in cultural categories that are shared with other individuals. (Larrain, 2000. 24) Examples of these shared aspects of culture are religion, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and occupation. The second component of identity presented by Larrain is the concept of self-recognition in terms of the material world. By means of material objects identity is tied to pathways of consumption and cultural and traditional industries. (Larrain, 200. 25) This component of identity involves the intimate relationships of individuals with their surrounding material world, a world in which individuals see their self-image in relation to and, at times, as inseparable from material objects. Larrain's third component part of identity is the idea of the other. The mere existence of the other establishes a necessity to both internalize and distinguish oneself from others. (Larrain, 2000. 26) In defining self there exists the presupposition of the other who retains and practices different life modes and holds distinct customary practices. (Larrain, 2000. 29) Larrain goes on to illustrate that, "...identities come from without in so far as they are the manner in which others recognize us, but come from within in so far as our self-recognition is a function of the recognition of others, which we have internalized." (Larrain, 2000. 27) Identity construction then, according to Larrain,

is driven by an intersubjective process of mutual recognition. (Larrain, 200. 27) In terms of homemaking, Larrain exposes the ways in which shared and mutually recognizable cultural characteristics are used to structure identity within household units even during times of migration. Shared cultural characteristics are used in homemaking to reinforce desired identity construction paths in a new homeland. This is also driven by the use of the material world in which objects can be culturally familiar and have meaning for identity construction and homemaking. And lastly, exposure to the *other* as described by Larrain provides a series of options in an individual's cultural repertoire. It is from these different culture traits discovered through migration and globalization that individuals structure homemaking strategies.

Individual identity construction must also be considered in terms of the greater society. In homemaking processes it is possible to establish *counter-cultures* within the greater social norm. Homemaking at the personal level affects individual choices within the larger community. The larger community is also partly responsible for individual choices of homemaking. Therefore the identity construction cycle includes the societal level. Society affects individual identity construction in that group expectations help shape and change individual identities. Personal identities of a community form characteristics of a collective identity that can be seen in the individual's conception of self. Collective identities are reliant on *imagined communities* in which individuals of a specific community believe in an intangible connection to other members of the community even though they may have never met. (Larrain, 2000. 33) Benedict Anderson coined this title in order to describe the ways in which members of a society feel connected even though they do not personally know one another in the context of nations and nation building. (Anderson, 2000. 6) This process enables the creation of aspects of personal identity as well as the formation of communities, groups and even nations. Individual identities meet on some lines to form the collective identities or *cultural identities* as Jorge Larrain and Stuart Hall refer to them. (Larrain, 2000. 31)

The process of creating and maintaining cultural identities could not exist without transmission. Homemaking is a means of facilitating identity construction when faced with migration. The individuals within the collective recreate aspects of identity through practice and daily life. This process is cyclical; the collective identities are perpetuated by the individual expression of actors with identities and consequently the existing collective identities allow for the actor's individual expression. (Larrain, 2000. 31) Identity construction as a whole can be traced back to the individual and their actions. Richard Johnson outlines his perception of the cycle of identity construction. He presents it as a counter-clockwise circle of four elements: (1.) ways of life, (2.) cultural reproduction, (3.) public versions, and (4.) readings. The cycle can begin at the point of the variety of modes of living. From this great wealth of diversity, aspects of public identity are selected and excluded. The public identity then influences how its individuals and groups perceive themselves and their identities by their readings or reception of the public identity. The readings of the public identity can involve either the acceptance or refusal of the image. The refusal of characteristics creates opposition to the dominant culture. (Larrain, 2000. 36) This cycle is of course dependent on culturally accepted truths. Foucault describes how cultural identities are passed on from generation to generation, feeding into the "production", "accumulation", "circulation", and "discourses" of truth that establish relations of power within constructions of identity. (Foucault, 1980.93) Social and power relations are integral to the success of homemaking tactics.

Individual courses of homemaking reflect the diverse manners in which people see themselves and their relationships to others within the society. Strategies of homemaking are representative of the characteristics that individuals aspire to attain or wish to be viewed from without. Identity construction then, in terms of homemaking, is a guiding force. As individual and communal identities are forged, they are done so through acts of homemaking and consequently homemaking tactics aid in the construction of identities. Homemaking strategies may be altered due to individual life experiences that affect their access to and desire for specific

means of identity construction. Individual choice greatly affects identity construction and strategies of homemaking. Personal choice lends for the unique patterns of homemaking that are adopted by migrants and their families.

2.4) Agency and Homemaking

Agency determines exactly how and in what forms homemaking takes place. Especially in situations of migration, individuals choose the cultural characteristics they wish to retain or reject. Therefore, through homemaking, individuals assert their agency through active choice. Agency is an individual's ability to make conscious decisions in regards to their life and identity. It is through individual agency that society is reproduced and altered. An individual's identity is formed in terms of a collective identity and the collective identities of a group or society cannot exist without the individual action. (Larrain, 2000. 31) Much like identity construction, agency functions in cyclical patterns. Daniel Rosenblatt defines the terms in which human agency must be understood:

People are written by chance and history but are also the authors of society... That people can change the conditions of their existence is certainly possible but that they might do so without reference to having been made within those conditions is an absurdity, not an ideal. Nor need a person's agency have any connection to their individuality: It could just as likely derive from their position or from a concatenation of circumstances beyond their control... Agency is a social action... agency is always relative... (Rosenblatt, 2004. 470)

When considering agency within homemaking, observing the actions of individuals in terms of their greater socio-cultural systems is key. Homemaking is precipitated and transmitted by individuals who are making choices. Bruce Kapferer describes agency as, "...the capacity of human beings to affect their own life chances and those of others and to play a role in the formation of the social realities in which they participate." (Barfield, 1997. 4)

One means of agency is the use of knowledge in the guiding and transmission of culture, especially in regards to homemaking. Agents, when exposed to migration, may have choice in terms of the knowledge that they condition their homes with. Homemaking is driven by the knowledge of these agents and its active transmission and omission. The knowledge base of individual's is dependent upon their heritage culture and lived experiences. It is this knowledge that the agent has access to. For a number of reasons knowledge can be actively altered or retained. This can be done for changing circumstances of health, location, economics, and personal preference. Knowledge adaptation is not only a consequence of human agency and action; it is also a driving force for homemaking. Out of necessity, cherished family recipes can be altered by means of contemporary and culturally dependent health knowledge. These adaptations to traditional knowledge make possible the continuation of the familial knowledge and traditional recipes. Due to the alterations, individuals with special health needs are able to eat the meals that are part of their cultural heritage. (Callahan, 2002. 128-138) This is a key reason for the survival of traditional knowledge in contemporary identities. Even with migration then, dynamic homemaking strategies are a platform for knowledge adaptation and transmission ensuring the longevity of cultural heritage practices.

An immense portion of base knowledge for any individual or community is made of symbols. Symbols are integral to the stability and survival of a community identity. Individuals have access to the symbols with which they were enculturated. Through human agency, individuals, groups and even nations apply symbols in a variety of ways to retain, transform, and transmit cultural knowledge and rituals in their processes of homemaking. Symbols are as adaptive as knowledge and this lends for the continual acceptance or rejection of new forms through agency. It is for this reason that symbols and their meanings are so integral for homemaking. Contemporary patterns of migration and immigration open the door for culture clashes of symbols and practices. When faced with this, individuals do not lose their identity, they establish homemaking strategies in order to maintain and adapt their identity construction

ideals. (Harrison, 1995. 265) Efforts of homemaking allow for both the retention of heritage culture as well as the integration (if desired) of attributes from the host culture. This involves voluntary symbolic adoption on the part of the host country and the new migrant. Therefore strategies of symbolic adaptation or manipulation can be retarded or revised in order to confront the symbolic complex in its entirety in a new socio-cultural system. (Harrison, 1995. 267) Symbols serve an integral purpose to the processes of social movement and homemaking. The active use of symbols through homemaking tactics establishes the agency involved in knowledge stores and use. Symbols as knowledge are propagated and utilized by human agency through lifestyle, location, migration and personal choice. The perception, reception and understanding of this knowledge shifts with life paths such as personal choice and agency, specific enculturation processes and migration. The dynamism inherent in this type of agency makes it a valuable asset for homemaking. Homemaking is reliant on such active modes of transmission. It is through individual choice and action that homemaking tactics are created and launched. In the face of migrational changes, individuals actively construct and enforce their identities with homemaking practices. This can be readily seen in the situation of Mexican American citizens living in Pocatello, Idaho by their demonstrations of private home kitchen use for homemaking purposes. Homemaking and its characteristics is specifically demonstrable in this population due to visible cross-cultural transmission and culture retention. Amongst this population homemaking strategies can best be traced through actions of the Mexican American cook in their private home kitchen. In times of migration, home cooks apply homemaking techniques to combat difficulties of migration and life changes. It is also employed as a means of transforming space into place and place into home. This is done through knowledge acquisition, transmission and adaptation. Homemaking strategies are performed as well through the use of food as symbol in rituals within the home kitchen. Homemaking for Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello includes the active application of these components.

3.) MEXICAN AMERICAN PLACE AND SPACE

“Can we recognize that borders are made by people (in ‘fields of power’ like everything else) and, yet, take them to be real nonetheless? Can we recognize that asserting ‘identity’ emerges as a mode of political activity at a particular historical moment and appreciate the identities asserted reflect real differences between people?” – Daniel Rosenblatt

Place and space play important roles in the overall processes of homemaking for Mexican American home cooks. Within the Mexican American context, space and place can be understood in disparate fashions. Although the two words *place* and *space* are used interchangeably in common speech they do indeed hold different meanings. Put simply, place is a space that has been given meaning by human action, agency and use. (Barfield, 1997. 360) Within the Mexican American experience I would like to consider the ways in which space is converted to place by home cooks through homemaking practices. In this instance space is converted into a private home place by means of various homemaking strategies. This is done in response to migration that carries individuals away from their previous home space and into a new one. Therefore, Mexican American home cooks are adopting homemaking tactics within a larger system of migration and private space. I would like to further extrapolate with descriptions of homemaking applications of individual experiences with migration, including prejudice and conflicts of identity construction. Following this, it is useful to canvass the ways in which home cooks *sense* place to fulfill homemaking strategies; or the ways in which they use space for identity construction, cultural transmission, social and power relations and the overall shaping and performance of homemaking techniques. In order to best detail my informant’s use of homemaking in these areas I would like to first provide a brief description of place and space.

Place is a space of power relations. Denise Lawrence explains that the idea of place as a cultural representation transcends the physical location because it is, “...invested with power through discourse.” (Barfield, 1997. 361) People utilize places for representation of their identities and consequently a geographical site becomes part of their identity. (Barfield, 1997. 361) This is the case in homemaking processes. The relationship between place and power can be understood by looking at the language used to discuss a place, how a place is seen as a way of life, and various conflicting representations of a place. (Barfield, 1997. 360) Lawrence outlines that places are given power by adopting figurative means of discussing this place, when this place is equated with a way of life and when there are different representations of a place. (Barfield, 1997. 360) Place can be a geographic location or a space of habitual occupation. Lawrence contends that within the field of anthropology this idea of place has been ignored and set aside in favor of defining traits of culture as more intangible qualities such as mentalities or practices thus avoiding entirely the sites in which these occur. (Barfield, 1997. 361) Lawrence explains that anthropologists must investigate, “How and why individuals and groups invest sentiment and emotional meanings in spaces, and how places evoke feelings that express a sense of identity, and people’s bonds with spaces are key issues in research on place attachment.” (Barfield, 1997. 361) This can be done through descriptions of Mexican American experiences with homemaking in Pocatello.

Mexican American homemaking involves different manners in which to consider space and place. Conceptually, place can be a larger geographical locality or a smaller scale private space. The homemaking process as demonstrated by Mexican American home cooks involves a large degree of ties to actual geographical locations. Original heritage countries or homelands should not to be underestimated in the process of identity construction and homemaking as, “...attachments to geographical localities contribute fundamentally to the formation of personal and social identities...” (Basso, 1996. 53) Within the geographical spaces exists private space. It is precisely in this realm of private space that the majority of field findings will be considered. Private space can be understood as a space made place by certain individuals whose practices

restrict or admit certain individuals based on such guidelines as relationship status, social hierarchies and power dynamics. Ali Madanipour contends that structure and retention of private space relies on boundaries. (Madanipour, 2003. 8) It is through homemaking processes that Mexican American home cooks establish boundaries for this creation of private space. A prime example of private space, that will be elaborated further, is the home space. Within the private space of the home there are many domains that carry varying degrees of privacy. The private home kitchen is a space containing complicated structures of power and social relations. This is integral to understanding the processes of identity construction and homemaking for Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello. Migration also affects conceptions of place and space as geographical localities and as imagined niches.

3.1) Migration

“To know who you are, you have to have a place to come from.” – Carson McCullers, The Heart is a Lonely Hunter

Migration involves spaces and places on both the large and small scale. Migrationary measures put immigrants in a position that is ideal for homemaking tactics. Homemaking is useful for immigrants due to its propensities for cultural and personal adaptation and retention. When migrating, people not only leave a nation, they leave behind *home*. Within this sense of *home* resides the sense of self. When faced with migration, individuals and groups have the ability to transform space and place in order to suit their cultural heritage demands through homemaking. It becomes increasingly important to take into account exactly how individuals who are faced with migration constitute their ‘ethnic self’ within these spaces. For instance, Garcia explains how immigrants in the United States form new cultures using their past and current social realities. (Garcia, 2002. 81) Many immigrants adopt this type of response to migration. This is observable as well with Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello. Working with both first generation and consequent generation immigrants to the area, issues of migration and adaptation are at the root of most topics of discussion. Throughout this field study, the key informants identify migration in terms of multiple different realms of life. Central to this is the immense individuality of experiences with migration from a *home* place to Pocatello. The consideration of place here refers to place on a national or regional level. The Mexican American informants describe their reasons for departing their previous homeland and each is distinct from the others. The variation ranges from Florina running away from home to find more opportunities as a woman to Rosario as a pregnant woman traveling alone to find her husband who had previously moved to Pocatello. There is Edwin, a student who left his entire family behind in order to pursue his education and Bobby who is constantly faced with struggles due to his Mexican and American roots. For all of these individuals migration performed by themselves or their families became a means of transformation. I would like to profile the Mexican experiences with migration by discussing it in terms of prejudice, identity construction conflicts, and homemaking.

Migration adds a new dimension to their heritage and lifestyles. It also brings these individuals into close contact with the, “...fears of internal ‘colonization’ by a foreign culture” (De Fina, 2003. 44) that can be found in the United States. This is unfortunate but a fact of life for immigrants in the United States. Each one of the individuals involved in this project detailed their experiences with prejudice or misunderstanding. Bobby depicted the racism he encountered when attempting to apply for a job as a teenager. I am instantly transported to his youth. The sign in the store window reads, “Now Hiring”. Bobby enters the store to request an application. The store owner explains that the position had been filled. Soon after, a non-Hispanic friend of Bobby inquires about the same job and is quickly handed an application. Edwin also related a story of prejudice against Mexican Americans. It occurred at his friend’s home. A locksmith was

repairing the door and the recently new owner of the home innocently remarked that the area seemed quite nice to live in. The locksmith replied, “Yeah, it’s a fine neighborhood until the Mexicans and the blacks move in.” This type of attitude amongst non-Hispanic populations in Pocatello appears to be commonplace in the lives of these Mexican American citizens. There is the struggle to establish one’s identity, for this reason homemaking becomes such a useful tool. When faced with migration to a relatively hostile environment, homemaking allows for successful identity construction even in the face of prejudices.

The changing of place with migration often leads to not only prejudice and misunderstanding but also to conflicts of identity conceptions. Bobby illustrated that, “[I] have to prove to the Mexicans how Mexican I am and I have to prove to the Americans how American I am – I’m still an individual and my situation is totally different than anyone else’s.”⁴ He expresses the need to have his individual identity recognized over either the Mexican or American aspects that comprise it. This situation is demonstration of the individual manners in which heritage is felt in the present. Migration raises questions of identity that may have not otherwise been present. Homemaking tactics can aid in clarifying characteristics of both personal and cultural identities. Although homemaking is often a process of advantage to first generation migrants and their families, it can lead to integrational difficulties, such as situations similar to the one Bobby describes. However, homemaking and identity construction most often provide a stable base for individuals in new places and spaces. For example, through homemaking at the private home space level, community spaces can be built. Garcia defines these spaces as, *immigrant enclaves*. These are, “Mexican communities whose boundaries contain elements of Mexican lifestyles and cultural traditions but within an American context.” (Garcia, 2002. 82) The formation of Mexican immigrant enclaves with migration lends for a network of support that could not otherwise be found. Fedra and her family utilize available networks such as church meetings and all-Hispanic soccer leagues. Florina often volunteers at local churches and Hispanic organizations that focus on uniting Hispanics in the area. Rosario makes use of the bilingual health facilities that exist in Pocatello and that specifically cater to Mexican Americans in the area. The Mexican American home cooks also exist within a support network of Hispanic friends and family in Pocatello or surrounding communities.

Migration can cause confusion of identity but when there are means of establishing normalcy, migration remains very positive for the overall processes of homemaking and identity construction. Making use of homemaking resources allows for the existence of Mexican American lifestyles. Therefore, Mexican migrants and their families retain varying degrees of their original cultural practices even through their migrational transitions. Garcia explains that, “...although most Mexican immigrants retain a sense of pride and loyalty to Mexico and their traditional cultural values and practices, they adopt new gender roles and behavior patterns that usually lead to changes in their family...there is no one general type of Mexican immigrant family.” (Garcia, 2002. 101) This is observable in my field findings in the immense variance that the home cooks experienced with their change of place. Rita first arrived in the United States three years ago. She traveled to Nebraska to see the birth of her first grandson. She was able to stay three months during that visit. She then moved to Pocatello and has been living here ever since. Rosario has been living in Pocatello for two years. She explains the sacrifices that she had to make in order to come here. Her husband had left months before she did from Mexico. He had to cross the border alone. She then traveled, three months pregnant, to Pocatello. She describes the first few months as being extremely difficult for both of them. Now, after two years they are doing well and have a beautiful baby boy.

Previously unimaginable roadblocks to their cultural transmission brought on by migration are present concerns. Fedra often discusses her dismay at her two year old son’s use of the English language in the home. Her’s is a household of Spanish language and it was

⁴ Formal interview with Bobby 29 May 2008

horrifying to her that her son, Carlitos, would first learn English even though he is surrounded by the Spanish language. She is making overt attempts to train him out of speaking English in their home. Each time he says a word in English she quickly corrects him with the Spanish equivalent. Although she has instituted a strong practice of homemaking, socio-cultural adaptation is still taking place through her son. Thus, migration to this American space presents new obstructions to desired and actual identity construction leading to adaptive homemaking strategies incorporating these.

Other Mexican American home cooks savor the change in norms experienced with migration and change of place. Florina felt that her migration was a much needed 'escape' from the restrictive gender roles that were present in her family. She quickly learned English and attended university. Migration equated with not only increased mobility but also opportunities to establish a new means of homemaking that would incorporate individual needs and desires associated with change of place and lifestyle. Florina explains:

"I feel free to do whatever I want to do. In Mexico they point fingers. The emotional freedom that I have here - you can't put a price on that. The freedom of choice, it's a really good feeling, it's priceless."⁵

In this way, the spatial movement that individual's undergo dictates experiences and defines new meanings of culture and identity. Florina's strategy of homemaking incorporates many attributes of the American culture while retaining pride in her heritage.

This idea that migration leads to new means of identification and adapted processes of homemaking is illustrated by the concepts of imaginary homelands and transnational identities. A change of place often leads to new mechanism of identity construction and homemaking that are most efficient for their new home. For most migrated individuals, a means of constructing identities can be found in their recreations of home through imaginary homelands. Mexican American home cooks retain real and imagined ties to this place through family, travel and memories. I was witness to this in the Mexican American homes that I visited. Lexi has been instilled with her grandmother's images of Mexico. And although they are few, they are still an image of the Mexico in her mind. They are images that enabled her to make a new home in Pocatello. Commonplace conversation in these homes presented countless descriptions of Mexico. Rita informed me of excellent vacation possibilities there depending on the time of year and my personal preferences. In great detail she describes her homeland. By relaying this information to me she is actively imagining and transmitting her homeland. In this way they have imaginary homelands as well as literal home places. Mexican American home cooks then have transnational identities; living within two or more cultural systems at the same time. This includes elements of both heritage and lifestyle, thus influencing homemaking tactics. Imaginary homelands and transnational identities are integral for identifying the actual lived migratory experiences that Mexican Americans have undergone. The application of these concepts is a useful tool in defining the individual's ability to employ homemaking in heritage culture retention.

With imaginary homelands, Benedict Anderson's proposed that nations are *imagined* because there is no manner of having every individual community member know one another personally. According to Benedict, communities contained differences due to abilities of imagining in distinctive ways. He describes a case of Javanese villagers that felt strong ties to their community members although they had never before seen each other. Even in cases of migration they were members of that community. Anderson called these migratory relationships with homeland, "indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and citizenship". (Anderson, 2000. 6) The physical element of place is removed in this situation. It is in this light that I choose to represent my informants. Throughout my time spent with them, they eagerly express their love of Mexico and their Mexican identity ties that they still hold firmly in place. Many of my

⁵ Formal interview with Florina 17 May 2008

informants desire and plan to return to their homelands. Others prefer the lifestyle that they have encountered in the United States. Anderson's depiction of the Javanese is representative of homemaking by means of creating imaginary homelands as migratory response. In other words, homelands can be imagined *from* anywhere and *by* anyone. It is this ability to imagine a place or relationship that aids in an immigrant's homemaking and identity construction process in a new homeland.

This practice is also described as *multilocality*. Multilocality refers to individual's reflexive relationships with places. Rodman explains that, "...anyone dislocated from his or her familiar place, or from the possibility of a local identity – is keenly aware of contrasts between the known and the unfamiliar...people often see a new landscape in terms of familiar ones. This is a multilocal way of sorting out meaning." (Low, 2003. 212) Within the homes of my informants I was able to take count of their multilocality. It was often that televisions were tuned to the *telenovelas* or Spanish language cartoon programs. The food products in the cupboards are most often Mexican brands because that is what is familiar. Radio stations are tuned in to *banda* music or Mexican news. Social networks that the majority of my informants are involved in consist of other Mexican American members of the community. In these ways a multilocal or imagined community is lived through homemaking strategies.

In Pocatello, I witnessed ample evidence of this. As response to migration and as a tool of homemaking, imagining homelands and communities comes in quite handy for Mexican American home cooks. The existence of an imagined Hispanic community can be seen in the two Mexican grocery stores, all Spanish-language religious sermons, all-Hispanic community clubs, exclusively Spanish-language television and radio channels, and organized Mexican dances. The presence of these demonstrates the imagined Mexican community that exists in Pocatello. While in the homes of my informants I was able to view their individual access to their imaginary homeland. Rita travels often between her home in Sinaloa, Mexico and the United States to visit her family. When she plans a trip to Pocatello she brings certain foods that are expensive or inaccessible for her family residing here such as Paprika. She also brings verbal accounts of the changes taking place in her homeland. Therefore, by means of travel the Mexican American immigrants living in Pocatello, fashion new images of their homeland. In this way the perception of the homeland can be altered with continued contact. And this is indeed a cyclical process. For instance, Rita will at some point return home to Mexico. She will bring goods that are not available for her there and she will bring stories of her travels with her to Sinaloa. Imagining a community and a homeland is possible with the help of such travelers.

For the individuals involved in this research, there are different types of imagined spaces. There is the imaginary homeland; those images of a heritage place in which their initial enculturation was experienced. Imaginary homelands are experienced in a new host nation by means of memory, travel and media exposure. There is also the imagined community where immigrants have the opportunity to establish a Hispanic community within the greater city. This is done through consumerism, media access, club formations and word of mouth. Both imaginary homelands and imagined communities are very real phenomena and they co-exist with an individual's experience with migration. They demonstrate Steve Striffler's description that, "The connection between a community and a locality has been long broken by the experience and understanding of migration." (Striffler, 2007. 684) Therefore conceptions of place and space are forever changed by migratory patterns and the people that experience them. Imagining homelands and communities after migratory experiences is part of the homemaking process.

Change of place due to migration not only changes perceptions of community and homeland, it also creates a shift in the ways in which one identifies themselves within this new space. Esquibel and García explain this experience for recently immigrated Mexican American women as, "multiple positions of identity" that overlap. These immigrants learn to, "juggle cultures" and have "plural personalit[ies]" with some identities taking place in the Mexican American context others in the mixed Mexican American/Anglo world. (Esquibel, 2000. xv)

Considering now the Mexican American home cook, women like Lucy's sister view their work in the kitchen the same as she did in Mexico. She runs her kitchen as if it were a traditional Mexican kitchen. Through her actions as the home cook she is able to create and re-create her Mexican homeland here in Pocatello. She *juggles culture* and her identity in order to keep her traditions and her identity as the *cocinera* alive. Other immigrants have a complete displacement of identity during the migratory process. Fedra and Rosario had been nurses in Mexico, a much respected position. Upon their arrival to the United States, the borders did not recognize their accomplishments and they were relegated to restaurant jobs due to the language barrier. For these women, a change of place with migration is detrimental to their identities. Both women expressed to me the desire to again work as nurses and to attain this occupation in the United States.

Mexican American home cooks highlight their identity changes or potential for changes with their spatial migration. Florina was in search of opportunity and for this reason immigrated to the United States. She said, "I'm happier here than there. As a woman and as a human being, there [Mexico] I wouldn't have the same opportunities."⁶ Speaking in terms of gender identity, Florina feels more freedom in the United States even though it is not her "native" country. Therefore Mexican-Americans like Florina are forced to forge their own identity regardless of their traditional familial and cultural heritage due to migration. Bobby on the other hand has spent his entire life in the Pocatello area. He was raised in a Mexican American family and thus carries multiple identities. Due to his parent's spatial migration he has expressed the difficulties of being Mexican-American and trying to find his place and identity amongst the two cultures. Bobby explains that, "It's hard 'cuz I'm really just a Mexican-American. [I] have to prove to the Mexicans how Mexican I am and I have to prove to the Americans how American I am. I'm still an individual and my situation is totally different than everyone else's..."⁷ Therefore along with migration comes confusion and stressed identity expectations. When cultures are enmeshed and the lines of accepted truths are blurred, clear identity construction and production become slightly more difficult. It is at this point that a guided experience with homemaking can make a difference. The migratory experiences of Bobby, Florina, Lucy and others are all so unique. The migration of space and place carries with it individuals with varying access to identity construction and homemaking tools. For this reason each person holds claim to their personal migratory histories and reactions. The use of space and place for migrational purposes creates an entirely diverse realm of imaginary homelands, imagined communities, multilocality, and homemaking practices. In these processes it is important to have a location that can be used to foster identity and cultural construction during practices of homemaking. The Mexican American private home kitchen is just such a place.

3.2) Sensing Place

"...awareness of a place is brief and unselfconscious, a fleeting moment (a flash of recognition, a trace of memory)...it is at times...when individuals step back from the flow of everyday experience and attend self-consciously to places-when, we may say, they pause to actively sense them-that their relationships to geographical space are most richly lived and surely felt. For it is on these occasions of focused thought and quickened emotion that places are encountered most directly, experienced most robustly, and most fully brought into being. Sensing places, men and women become sharply aware of the complex attachments that link them to features of the physical world. Sensing places, they dwell, as it were on aspects of dwelling." – Keith H. Basso, Senses of Place

The private space of the Mexican American home kitchen is more than just another room in the house. The Mexican-American home kitchen stands out as a place of bringing together, a

⁶ Informal meeting with Florina 11 June 2008

⁷ Formal interview with Bobby 29 May 2008

place of creation and a place of delicious aromas and tastes; all surrounding the Mexican-American home cook. The cook creates and fosters this atmosphere; they make this space their *home*. The power to convert private space into place is largely due to various individual homemaking practices and identity construction. The Mexican American cook actively makes choices in their home kitchen in regards to culture transmission and social communication. Within this section I would like to show the ways in which my informants practice homemaking through tactics of sensing place. In this way, the home cook gives this space meaning. Basso and Feld describe that through active agents, places gain meaning, that they are sensed. These sensed places “speak” with the messages that the agent encodes them with. Sensed places then are reflectors of an agent’s active awareness in creating a space from which to view the world. (Basso, 1996. 56) As an active agent, the Mexican American home cook dwells in and senses their home kitchen space. And in this manner, homemaking is used to formulate the private space of the Mexican American home kitchen. This is an individual experience for each cook (the active agent) and each home kitchen (private space). From my experience with Mexican American home cooks, the private home kitchen space is guided and shaped by the homemaking techniques adopted by the individual cook. These cooks use the private home kitchen space to foster identity construction and cultural transmission as well as social hierarchies and dynamic power plays. Sensing place requires the active agency of the home cook in order to give the kitchen space meaning. By sensing they are in fact dwelling and carving place out of space. The ability to sense place becomes a successful strategy of homemaking in that it utilizes many other aspects of homemaking for its proper function. Sensing of place is highly dependent on the space available. For Mexican American home cooks, the private space of the home kitchen is easily given meaning by a knowing hand. This is due to the relative privacy that exists there and the dominant control that the cook has over this space. The home cook is openly able to actively sense this space and use it as a base for homemaking tactics. Mexican American home cooks, then, operate their systems of sensing place in order to fulfill their greater strategies of homemaking. This is done in the private home kitchen space through *charlas culinarias*, power relations and intentional or unintentional geographical material placement.

Within each kitchen that I was invited to, there exist elements of social and cultural reproduction taking place on a daily basis. This is performed, for example, in Fedra’s kitchen often. Rita, her mother, divides her time between Fedra’s home and that of Rosario. Therefore, when I visit Fedra’s home and Rita is present it becomes an extremely social time. If Rita is not able to be there, Fedra appears much more focused on teaching and demonstrating her cooking methodologies. When Rita or Rosario are also sitting at the table with me there is an immediate shift to gossip of local and world affairs. This social time within the private home kitchen becomes a forum for issues such as sexual reproduction, birth control methods, intra family jests, family histories, technological changes in food preparation methods, ingredient access and use, meal presentation and food combinations, life aspirations and concerns regarding migration or lifestyle. Inness describes these social times as *charlas culinarias* in which women speak of technological advances and how they changes culture and traditional practices. She explains that during social discussions within the home kitchen, “They speak conscientiously and critically of how such modifications affect the understanding of their own social, cultural, and economic positions.” (Inness, 2001. 131) *Charlas* are then a means of self-reflection and identity construction. These discussions take place in the home kitchen. *Charlas* give meaning to, or allow the private home kitchen space to be sensed through knowledge transmission, debate, social revitalization and community construction. This aspect of homemaking allows for the making of space into place through active agency. My common seating place at the dining room table is an ideal location for witnessing and at times participating in *charlas*.

My *charlas* with Rita progress in unique ways. Perhaps it is her experiences or her age, but she appears free to discuss anything and everything. She openly instigates a discussion of her discontent with her appearance. She is straightforward in attributing her “extra” weight to having

children. She is a single woman, having been married and widowed three times. She recounts stories of travel and adventure all over the world and her desire to be happy. She is not shy about her past or that of her daughter Fedra. The two of them often would poke fun at each other over a story or event. *Charlas* with Rita are colorful and full of energy. She is proud of her family and traditions. Rita even discounts the use of cookbooks for “simple” recipes that you ought to just experiment with such as fruit and yogurt smoothies. During my time in Fedra’s kitchen, Rita and Fedra discuss immigration issues explaining the cost and difficulty for Mexican citizens to receive a United States visa, even if only for travel purposes.

The *charlas* are also a common occurrence in Edwin and Nicole’s home. *Charlas* in their kitchen space involve political debates and future plans. Each visit is met with an increased comfort level between them and me, meaning I became included in the discussion. Edwin often mentions the current predicaments in Mexico including poverty and malnourishment. He highlights as well the immense propensity for giving that he experienced there during his childhood. Edwin, during the *charlas culinarias*, hits on topics of cultural difference and difficulties that he finds in the United States. The United States culture is very high stress compared to his home and people seem much more concerned with money. With a proud gleam in his eye he describes the *fiestas* of his homeland. There, families are willing to spend an entire savings on these parties because it is the time spent together with family and friends that is truly important.

I was also included in *charlas* at Maria’s home. Since her husband was not home she was able to speak freely about her situation and life plans. She discusses her marriage at a young age and how this frustrates her grandmother. She has recently moved in with her husband and so is a fairly new central home cook. While she is discussing these matters she shows me that her kitchen is too small and she is not used to having such little room to work. She presses tortillas and jokes that she is lazier than her grandmother because she uses a press for corn tortillas and a rolling pin for flour tortillas to save time. She now turns to make the salsa and attempts to use a food processor that had been her mothers when she got married. Maria explains that people used to make the salsa by hand but the blender really saves her time. I ask her if she gets enough sleep seeing as she is a full time student at Idaho State University, a housewife, and the home cook in her household. She looks at me and smiles saying that she never feels that she gets enough sleep since she wakes up very early to prepare fresh tortillas for her husband every morning. We then begin speaking of Mexico and her heritage. She offers images of an older Mexico, perhaps the Mexico that her grandmother remembers; an imagined Mexico. It was Maria’s grandmother who immigrated to the United States and Maria grew up in a Hispanic family within the United States. Maria has been once to Mexico to visit a friend. The Mexico she describes does not have washing machines or dryers; she speaks matter of factly as she says this. The contemporary Mexico that I am familiar with is full of washing machines and dryers. This became such a curious statement to me that I began to ponder further on her reasoning for mentioning this specific bit of information. And then it struck me: she is relaying her grandmother’s *imaginary homeland*. In her grandmother’s era in Mexico laundry would have been tended by hand without the use of *lavadoras*. And it is this specific instance that re-inforces the power of homemaking through cultural and knowledge transmission. Maria sees Mexico through the eyes of her grandmother. This *charla* with Maria exposes the *imaginary homelands* and their transmission into identity construction and overall homemaking tactics. The *charlas culinarias* are integral to homemaking processes in a new country as they enforce ‘normalcy’ and community; actively sensing places.

Sensing places also involves the foundation and reinforcement of power hierarchies. The existence of pre-established and unspoken rules guides individual action and access to the kitchen. And it is for this reason that private space remains private. The Mexican American home cook is a player as well as an organizer of the power relationships and individualized hierarchies taking place within the private home kitchen space. Power relations are structured by

homemaking in that they outline the prescribed familial, gender and social roles that are culturally desired or expected. Power dynamics within the private home kitchen space are clearly visible in the homes of the Mexican American home cooks. Foucault explains that, "...power is conceived primarily in terms of the role it plays in the maintenance...of the relations of production..." (Foucault, 1980. 88) Therefore, in the process of homemaking, power is essential as culture, meals, identity and symbols are continuously maintained and produced within the home kitchen space. In other words, power in the home kitchen is understood by its relationship to the food and cultural production in the household. Hughes gives example of this in regards to black home cooks. She explains how the female home cooks would:

...maintain domination over the Black kitchen and allow the Black man to assume the dominant role in the household...Dominance over her kitchen was her opportunity to reign over the oral, nurturing territory of the household; it was, and still is, her chance to demonstrate to her man and her family that she is endowed with a special gift of culinary creativity. (Counihan, 1997. 274)

With this passage Hughes is describing not only the dominance of the kitchen but the cook's freedom within this realm and her use of this kitchen space as a platform for powers of culture transmission, culinary knowledge and creativity. The cook asserts power in the home kitchen by means of "culinary creativity" and oral history. The cook is then consequently constructing identity through power and vice versa. This hierarchy is also present in my experience within Mexican American homes in Pocatello, although, it was not simply based on gender. There were times in which I glimpsed the gender hierarchisation of my informant's home kitchens but they were few. Perhaps, this, in and of itself is evidence enough. When scheduling times to meet with Fedra, Rosario, Lexi and Maria in their homes, I was always invited during the middle of the day when their spouses would not be home. The time that I spent with these women then, is time that they feel is *theirs*. I was aware of the spatial boundaries present, for instance, in Fedra's home. Her husband arrived home from work before I had left and he did not once enter the kitchen. He sat at the dining room table and Fedra brought him food. This is indicative of his respect for her as the home cook but also in their mutual understanding of the use and boundaries present for the kitchen space.

After time spent in each of the houses it became clearer that the home cook in general, no matter the gender, assumes the leadership position within the kitchen space. I had the opportunity to work with two male home cooks during my time in the field. They demonstrated the same techniques of establishing power over the kitchen space as the females did. Therefore I would like to argue that it is the knowledge, not the gender of the home cook that gives them such authority over the private kitchen space. For example, Edwin explains that he *always* makes the chipotle salsa even if someone else is cooking the main meal due to the difficulty in achieving the "perfect" flavor. Each of my informants express similar kitchen practices. They would not allow others to help in their kitchen work unless their knowledge level was equal to or more highly respected to their own. Therefore, through knowledge and practice, power is established within the home kitchen space. I viewed this in Rosario's home as she was preparing a meal in her kitchen. Rita arrived for a visit and although it was not her home, Rosario asked her advice and guidance for cooking the dish correctly even though she had prepared it countless times previously. Once a cook's knowledge and skill is known and respected it is not bounded to one private home kitchen space, it is fluid and follows them wherever they go. This is demonstration of the mobility of sensing place and imagined communities. Homemaking, in this sense, is such a useful tool due to its ability to establish understandings of power dynamics and identity constructions within a space but also within associated social circles.

Demonstrations of power can also be found within the spatial allowances afforded to visitors. Maria Elisa Christie depicts the privacy enacted and retained in the kitchen space. She states that, "...the cook exercises a certain amount of control over those that sit at her table. There is a huge difference between being served and being allowed to participate in the

preparation of the food: the second is much more difficult.” (Christie, 2002. 34)⁸ These boundaries established by practices of homemaking are outwardly obvious in my informant’s homes. With each visit I was aware of an increased comfort level between myself and the cooks. This is seen by my acceptable movement through rooms of the home. I am initially allowed to sit in the living room space. This then shifts to the dining room table that is a slight bit closer to the actual kitchen. The kitchen itself however, is the most difficult room in the home to gain access to. I was often invited as an observer to the practices undertaken there, whether from the dining room table or from a standing position within the kitchen space. However, I was never asked to help in any manner within this space. The most poignant example of this privacy and social hierarchy occurred during a visit to Fedra’s. She was extremely busy cooking for the day and her youngest son was in need of a diaper change. I was sitting at the dining room table with her older son, Carlitos. Rita was also present and she was located in the living room watching television, a great deal further from the kitchen than where I sat. Fedra had given me a plate of food and a glass of *jamaica* before entering the baby’s room. She told me to have as much Jamaica as I liked and so I entered the kitchen to refill my glass. While I was in there Carlitos ran over to me and was signaling that he also wished to have something to drink. I asked Fedra which cup I should serve it to him in and she quickly yelled to her mother to get Carlitos some juice, without even acknowledging that I had spoken to her. I had already been acutely aware of my limitations within the home kitchen space and this experience made it ever clearer. I am a newcomer in each of the homes I visited and in order to retain the social organization of the home it is necessary for the home cook to establish boundaries for every individual who enters this space. Sensing place in this case occurs through the practice and maintaining of social hierarchies and boundaries that define the home cook’s understanding of that space. Maintaining these boundaries and hierarchies is a necessary act of homemaking.

Through intentional and unintentional material placement, the home cook can display these social and familial hierarchies. During the homemaking process, in order to sense the kitchen space, cook’s work within the bounds of the literal building construction of the home. Within this structure, the Mexican American home cook places objects in distinct areas of the kitchen in order to stay in accordance with their ideas of proper homemaking tactics. The geography of the home kitchen space is demonstrative of personal choice, convenience, symbols of culture and identity, and familial hierarchies. Each one of my informants relayed that they, as the home cook, organize the kitchen space. Therefore, they decide where the cups are in relation to the plates and the location of the various ingredients. The choices made here are most often made for the sake of convenience. According to efficiency guidelines for each cook kitchen appliances and utensils are placed. However, there are other items that placement is selected according to hierarchy or order of the home. For instance, at each home seating placement of family members varies. Both round and rectangular tables are be found. At Lexi’s home, her husband sits at the end of their rectangular table with his back to the kitchen and she sits along the side with the children. Fedra owns a round table and Carlos, her husband, most often sits also with his back to the kitchen. Edwin and Nicole share the role of the home cook and they have a small round table in which they alternate seating positions. The home cook places themselves at the table according to ease of access to the kitchen space. They also need to be in a position to observe the kitchen space. Therefore, the placement of people within the kitchen space is guided by the home cook and their role in the kitchen space. Through practices of organization and material use, the Mexican American home cook is able to sense their kitchen space as personally as possible. This is also a means of establishing ownership over this space. It is through such practices that they actively assert their homemaking capabilities.

The private home kitchen space is experienced by Mexican-American home cooks with a sense of ownership. When asked specifically if the individual cooks felt that the kitchen space

⁸ All translations performed by author: December 2007
Out of the melting pot and into the kitchen

was more theirs than anyone else's in the home they quickly answered that yes, it was. Some homes demonstrate more egalitarian ownership of the kitchen space due to the dual responsibilities accepted by the dwellers. Edwin and his girlfriend, Nicole are examples of this. They share the cooking and cleaning operations undertaken within their kitchen space. They have therefore established an equal power dynamic within this space. They are sensing the kitchen space in a mutual manner. In terms of the homemaking process, this type of household is evidence of a cross-cultural transmission of practice and knowledge. Therefore, the homemaking that takes place within their kitchen is that of a fusion of American and Mexican lifestyles. To a certain degree, all of the families with which I worked are faced with this integration at some level due to their current residence in the United States. Their private space practices are altered to some extent by their experiences with migration. And it is precisely the adaptability of the homemaking process by means of sensing place within the private space of the home kitchen that makes it so powerful. Sensing place involves the feelings of ownership over the kitchen space. For the Mexican American home cook, sensing place is done through *charlas culinarias*, power relations and geography. Places are sensed in order to follow the cook's own pre-determined and adaptive strategies of homemaking. Within this process exists the continuous transmission of knowledge, practice and culture. Adaptability to changing conditions due to migration proves to be an efficient means of continuing identity construction within the private home kitchen space. This does not signify a loss of heritage. On the contrary, the Mexican American home kitchen is a symbol of unique powers of cultural retention, adaptation and transmission that homemaking really imparts. Therefore, the use of knowledge in homemaking tactics leads to the ultimate success in this process.

4.) CULINARY AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

“Ordinary women...used their creative culinary and housekeeping talents to create and reflect change in their lives.” – Psyche A. Williams-Forsion

Knowledge not only enculturates individuals into a specific socio-cultural system, it also creates a certain degree of resistance to change with migration and creates role importance with food production and distribution. Culinary knowledge in particular carries with it cultural heritage and homemaking techniques. It is learned, practiced, transmitted and adapted according to life experiences. Culinary knowledge, for these reasons, is highly regarded as a specialty in the case of Mexican American home cooks. They have expressed that if they did not cook, no one else in their household would assume those responsibilities due to their skill level. Their cooking knowledge has been acquired through years of apprenticeship and practice. Inness explains that, “...the secret of good cooking, has nothing to do with gender, but with wisdom with which ingredients are combined.” (Inness, 2001. 124) Culinary knowledge is perceived by consumers as distinct flavors dependent on the cook and generations of recipe adaptation. Culinary knowledge as well as cultural knowledge are so widely respected within the process of homemaking due to the power and agency associated with their acquisition, transmission and adaptation. Within the homemaking process, Mexican American home cooks use their different realms of knowledge in order to turn the kitchen space into place. The types of culinary and cultural knowledge that are of importance in regards to Mexican American homemaking are traditional heritage knowledge, host country knowledge, and medicinal knowledge. Within the space of the Mexican American home kitchen culinary knowledge is acquired, transmitted and adapted in manners that involve agency, power and identity. Therefore, in order to completely present the homemaking strategies observed within the Mexican American home kitchens I would like to first discuss experiences with the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. Following this I canvass the knowledge adaptation observed and described in the field. Agency, power and identity aid in the synthesis of choices and practices of the Mexican American home cooks. In accordance with agency and action, identity and its processes of construction are tightly interwoven. The agency and action of individuals determines their identity and their consequent experiences with knowledge acquisition, transmission and adaptation; thus affecting the overall processes of homemaking.

4.1) Acquisition and Transmission

“...like a story that yields different possibilities with each new reading so do recipes yield new stories with each new re telling.” – Sherry A. Inness

“...we resemble other mammals, which learn their proper foods partly by hanging around with parents and watching what they eat. ‘Good food’ is simply the food they are used to.” –E.N. Anderson

The acquisition and transmission of culinary and cultural knowledge for Mexican American home cooks are affected by agency and identity construction. The acquisition process takes active agency on the part of teacher and student. Throughout, the identities of both actors are shaped and changed according to the events experienced. In this way acquisition and transmission of knowledge are integral for homemaking. Acquisition establishes a base knowledge that can be built upon through consequent learning and life happenings. Mexican American home cooks demonstrate a vast amount of base knowledge in the following areas: ingredient substitutions, amounts of protein or fat in a food, the cooking time of certain ingredients, time management with various parts of meals, time management with the daily routine of the cook, budgeting ingredients, ingredient substitutions for living in the United States,

and the uses of various apparatus in the kitchen. This base acquired knowledge serves as a launch point for agency and action on the part of the Mexican American home cook. Base knowledge is dependent upon the individual and their location. A traditional heritage culture generally will guide initial culinary knowledge acquisition alongside personal preferences on the part of the teacher. Variations in information acquisition lead to specialties of knowledge that are perceived as a power source. For example, specific desert preparation is regarded as a powerful skill. Fedra detailed to me that she does not know how to make desserts very well and so she will go to Rosario's house to eat desserts. Instead of learning the recipes herself she respects the special touch that Rosario has with these certain recipe types. Rosario's personal culinary enculturation and talents lead her into a specialty and her skills are then well known throughout the imagined Mexican American community of Pocatello, Idaho.

With a base of knowledge, the Mexican American home cooks are able to practice, perfect and experiment. Once the base culinary knowledge is formulated, the home cooks cook by memory for the great majority of their recipes. They add ingredients "a gusto". In fact, I did not witness any of my informants use a cookbook. I was indeed shown cookbooks but they were not put to use. Edwin and Nicole explain that they may use a cookbook for the first time that they cook a recipe and after this they will "cook by heart" and modify how they see fit. Rosario actually writes her own recipes and modifies them through creative practice. Fedra owned many cookbooks from Mexico and others printed in the United States that are geared towards the Mexican American citizens. Fedra imparted to me that this last type of cookbook is very interesting due to the great variations found in the Mexican food that exists in the United States. She then describes the immense difference in culinary patterns throughout Mexico. Mexicans from all parts migrate to the United States and so "Mexican" food can be understood in a great variety of ways in the United States. Heritage culture variety also adds to the continuous learning process that Mexican American home cooks undergo in order to stay within their desired homemaking strategy.

Cultural and culinary knowledge acquisition are then heavily dependent upon agency and action to perpetuate meaning and practice. This is a continuous practice of re-evaluating one's position in the world and in relation to other people. Therefore knowledge acquisition is an ongoing process throughout the home cook's life. This functions within and creates perceived and accepted culture through homemaking practices. The accepted truths established through enculturation and homemaking lead to active choice by the home cooks. Each one of the Mexican American home cooks that participated in this study seek out brand name foods that are familiar to them from Mexico or their childhood households. Through their initial experiences with knowledge acquisition they are exposed to these specific name brands. In some respects their enculturation has conditioned them to do this however, with migration their choices are varied greatly. In order to create a homeland in Pocatello, they continue to purchase these specific name brands. In regards to this type of agency, Hyman explains that, "The good reasons we have for doing this action rather than that one consist mainly of features of the situations in which we find ourselves..." (Hyman, 2004. 25) Therefore, in light of migration, Mexican American home cooks become active agents in their daily decision making and homemaking using their histories of knowledge acquisition as bases for agency and choice.

The application of acquired knowledge in the form of cooking is also a means of asserting agency through action. Inness contends that the process of cooking can be used to, "...define an alternative form of expression and so avoid silencing the voices of women who speak, share, and assert themselves...The language of cooking yields various narratives of self-representation." (Inness, 2001. 137) In the case of this field experience, my informants were not strictly female. Edwin, for example, held great pride in his Chipotle salsa and would not allow anyone else to make it. In his memory banks he holds various recipes passed onto him from his father and his father before him. These are recipes that elicit emotional as well as historical responses in the cook. By actively choosing to be the carrier of such recipes he is asserting his

heritage and his desire for instilling it in his homemaking. Such acts of willful expression and representation lead to issues of identity and active identity formation through knowledge acquisition, retention and practice.

Williams-Forson outlines how acquired and practiced culinary knowledge establish *self-valuation* in the case of black families faced with migration. “Self-valuation (Collins) addresses the ways in which one goes about defining himself or herself. Cooking familiar foods for their families was one of the ways in which lower-class black women negotiated their new surrounding and maintained a sense of self.” (Williams-Forson, 2006. 97) By asserting their choice to cook familiar foods in an unfamiliar environment, these cooks aid in their identity construction and homemaking by becoming active agents of culinary knowledge application in the home kitchen. The Mexican American home cooks that I spent time with indeed employ tactics of self-valuation. Instances that stand out are attempts at heritage knowledge acquisition. Bobby, Edwin, Lexi and Florina each detail how they often contact their parents or grandparents in order to inquire the traditional manner of preparing certain dishes. Their reason for doing this is their search for the taste of *home*. For these individuals, the ability to enact aspects of their cultural heritage through cooking is a means of self-valuation and identity construction. Therefore, the active acquisition of culinary heritage knowledge is demonstration of individual agency through knowledge. For the process of homemaking then, cultural reproduction in this manner is highly successful. This is a clear demonstration of the role that agency, action and identity due to knowledge acquisition take in the overall concept of homemaking. The acquisition and practice of knowledge is not only a means of self-valuation, it is also a source of power.

Culinary knowledge acquired and practiced by the Mexican American home cooks enables the homemaking process due to its selective public access and tendencies for mutability. Therefore knowledge in action is powerful. Foucault goes outlines how, “...power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action.” (Foucault, 1980. 89) Exercising knowledge power is the means by which knowledge becomes powerful. Knowledge is exercised by means of acquisition, transmission and use. Individuals are enculturated into a certain system by means of cultural knowledge transmission on behalf of the teacher and acquisition on the part of the student. With knowledge it is possible to continue a cultural heritage legacy. This aspect of knowledge awards the holder power and a special place in social hierarchies. In this way identities are constructed within a cultural structure and homemaking system. For this reason, Mexican American home cooks are real power holders within their homes and their cultures.

Homemaking is a process that functions due to the transmission of knowledge. Knowledge transmission allows for dynamism in identity, cultural retention and adaptation, transgenerational heritage transmission, and the transnational application of culinary practices in the face of migration. Marvalene H. Hughes explains this use of homemaking for the resiliency of identity when confronted with migration. According to Hughes, when Africans were forced to leave their homelands and put into slavery they were able to hold onto their heritage identity and also to adapt their identities to a new environment. This was successfully accomplished by oral history transmission and through the transgenerational and transnational use of “soul food”. She explains that, “...Blacks proclaimed internally (to themselves) and externally (to the world) that they would maintain an African identity through food. Blacks have sought many avenues to the maintenance of identity in U.S. cultures; soul food became one preserver of Black culture.” (Counihan. 1997. 274) Hughes provides a clean example of how knowledge transmission and food preparation are used as a means of identity empowerment and structure during migrational change. Hughes demonstrates how powerfully dynamic the process of homemaking is as a means of cultural retention. Also, identity construction and homemaking are influenced by choice. Individuals and groups often consciously select ingredients that hold certain powers in their

culturally dependent reserve of knowledge and that reinforce identities. Foods and ingredients are known transgenerationally by means of knowledge transmission.

In Pocatello, the transmission of knowledge to and from the Mexican American home cook is highly indicative of homemaking strategies. Nearly all of my informants learned their culinary base of knowledge from their mothers or grandmothers. Rita's knowledge transmission to Fedra was quite an interesting case. Rita was not only a mother and the home cook but also a store owner. She was gone during the day at her store and when Fedra reached age nine she had to choose between running the store while Rita cooked or she, herself had to learn to cook. Fedra did not enjoy learning the prices of items in Rita's store and much preferred the option of cooking for the family. Rita would write down the food to be prepared and Fedra would follow these guidelines. When she had questions she would run back to the store to ask her mother. It was in this manner that Rita transmitted her culinary and cultural knowledge to Fedra. Now that Fedra is living in the United States it is important for her to practice this culinary knowledge on a daily basis in order to reinforce her cultural heritage and imaginary homeland.

In each household that I visited there is a common expression of a desire for the children, no matter the sex, to learn their cooking skills and knowledge. Edwin explained that, "...[its] important for kids to learn to cook...it doesn't have to be our recipes just something they like cuz then they have an appreciation for the work that goes into it...if they don't learn then they end up eating fast food and don't appreciate what it takes to eat well."⁹ There is not only a desire but a need expressed for the continuation of knowledge transmission in the overarching concept of homemaking. Fedra voices extreme concern for an apparent glitch in her pre-determined structure of homemaking. This shows itself in the form of her son's English language acquisition. Fedra is very quick to correct his English language use with a Spanish alternative. She discloses to me that it is of utmost importance to her that he first learn his cultural heritage language of Spanish and then he will need to learn English in order to function within the American society. This situation is demonstrative of the quirks of migration no matter the pre-supposed expectations of homemaking. And again, in this case adaptability is extremely useful for the progression of homemaking and continued identity construction. Individual actors in this case drive forward this process by means of intentional agency.

My personal experience with culinary knowledge transmission yielded various means of transmission. During the fieldwork I was gathering recipes for the Cultural Cookbook¹⁰. And so the Mexican American cooks provide me with one or more recipes with each visit. It was throughout this recipe transmission that I noticed how differently each one transmits knowledge. Rita employs a strictly verbal approach, detailing every little step of preparing a meal with color descriptions, amounts of time and every single detail since she does not have her kitchen with her here. Fedra is very careful to explain every step of her cooking process and makes sure to explain everything to me and to show me the steps and how much she is adding while actually creating the recipe, as did Edwin and Maria. Rosaurio did not speak at all while she was cooking. She invited me into the kitchen in order to learn by watching. This style is actually how all of the informants aside from Fedra have told me that they learned to cook.

The transmission of knowledge is most common in two forms: verbal and non-verbal. As described above there is also the transmission of knowledge through written information. The majority of the home cooks express that they learned from their mothers, fathers and grandparents by means of non-verbal visual means. Most of the informants watched and learned. They describe how they still call their mothers or grandmothers for recipes and help cooking or in the kitchen. The transmission, no matter how it is experienced is a continuous process as is the acquisition and practice. It is this ongoing practice that allows for cultural survival and adaptation by means of homemaking.

⁹ Home visit with Edwin 23 May 2008

¹⁰ Appendix 7.1

4.2) Adaptation

Culinary and cultural knowledge adaptations serve as progressionary measures in situations of migration and immigration. Adaptation involves the altering of past methodologies in the face of life and technological changes. Adaptation of knowledge also consists of the intentional refusal to change past methods. Mexican American home cooks perform adaptive alterations for various purposes. The most common reasons for the modifications and adaptations of culinary knowledge are: allergies, health concerns, increased knowledge of dietary needs and ingredient contents, contemporary food concerns (GMO's, hormones, pesticides, etc.), access to ingredients, price of ingredients, technology, cultural fusion of recipes, creativity of the cook, personal tastes, migration, extra-regional marriages (from two different states in Mexico with different recipe styles), and daily schedule constraints. Lexi is forced to adapt her mother's recipes due to the secrecy her mother keeps in regards to her recipes. Therefore Lexi recollects the recipes and makes up the missing parts. Other informants adjust ingredient use for health purposes such as Edwin who now excludes lard and whole milk from his diet due to their high fat content. Fedra alters her cooking style in order to meet her husband's religious dietary restrictions of pork and beef. When Maria got married she changed all of her methods of cooking since her husband is not accustomed to eating lard. Her family does not like this style of cooking and so when they are all together she caters to each one, making dishes both with and without lard. Edwin and Nicole adapt through creative alterations. During a visit they perfected a recipe that they had tasted at a local taco bus. They tried preparing it themselves many times before they were pleased with the overall flavor. In this situation they began with a familiar taste and slowly experimented until they reached an acceptable flavor. A large part of adaptation is bringing in the "new". In the case of food and knowledge this means adding new combinations to one's culinary repertoire.

Within the format of my fieldwork demonstrations of cultural adaptive agency are visible in the conscientious choices of the homemaking facilitators. For example, Fedra actively changes her son's English language use in favor of Spanish language. Other times of adaptive agency by my informants are the intentional shifts in ingredient use due to high fat content, personal tastes or religious beliefs. Maria announces her self-proclaimed laziness at her choice to use a rolling pin to make flour tortillas as opposed to making them by hand. She makes this choice in order to save time in her busy schedule. Rita demonstrates her agency by cooking meals that she enjoys alongside those for the other members in the family, "Cada quien con su onda." Edwin and Nicole are active agents in their culinary knowledge adaptation by constant creativity. Each time that they cook a recipe they try new ingredients to see if it improves the taste alongside their usual ingredient modifications due to personal eating styles. The entirety of individual and group experiences affect current life choices and options for agency. Mexican American home cooks act their agency for purposes of time constraints, technological advancements in preparation techniques and individual tastes.

Adaptation becomes integral to the survival of knowledge in counts of migration. The wealth of knowledge possessed by the Mexican American home cook is adaptive in its application towards homemaking. In order to ensure the survival of recipes and ingredients during migration Mexican American home cooks employ practices of fusion and adaptation. Nancy L. Hunt discusses this in regards to Mexican immigration to the United States. She describes how the traditional use of specific ingredients such as corn and spices is also carried to the United States with the Mexican immigrants. The traditional Mexican knowledge adapts to the resources available and to the tastes of the United States. (Hunt, 1988. 283-290) Hunt shows that knowledge transmission is not a one way street and that in cases of migration, cultural knowledge from the host and visiting countries often fuse; a process of adaptation. I have also observed in my fieldwork that all of the families adapt their culinary knowledge to either fit health needs of a family member, religious dietary needs, or to fit ingredient likes and dislikes of their family members. And although this alters the recipes slightly it allows for the survival of

the recipes and the traditional knowledge of the cooks. Fusion and adaptation are integral for the survival of traditional and non-traditional knowledge.

Although knowledge is adaptable, there are situations in which modifications are not made due to respect for the initial cook of the recipe. Edwin did explain to me that some of the recipes he makes are very old and that he does not ever change them such as the tuna soup that his father makes. However, in all other situations, if there is a practical change that can be made to a recipe he will do it if it will help the flavor. During contact with migration there can be power associated with tradition retention and adaptation refusal. For example, Hughes explains that “soul food” is a key ingredient for “Black” culture in the United States. The recipes that comprise “soul food” are orally shared trans-generationally. Through word of mouth the “soul food” is touching the core of the African-American straight from Africa herself. (Counihan. 1997. 274) In this case then, the root of power of the African American cook is their ability to cook with “soul” and to practice and transmit traditional heritage culture with and without adaptations. Traditional knowledge can elicit the negation of adaptation on the part of the active agent. Medicinal knowledge is an example of knowledge that is acquired, practiced and transmitted simply due to its heritage. There are many culinary approaches to medicinal knowledge. Florina describes how her mother would apply fresh cut tomatoes on the neck for the mumps, rub raw eggs on her abdomen for a stomach ache, have her eat minced snake for tonsil problems, and drink herbal tea for stomach aches and other ailments. Edwin explains to me that guava is a really important food for colds and flues, *nopales* help lower cholesterol, chamomile is used to treat upset stomachs and for eye infections if applied directly to the eye itself, and Eucalyptus tea is used to treat colds. My informants respect this knowledge of their mothers and grandmothers even though the thought of some of the remedies makes them laugh. They do not seem to know why the ingredients are used, just that they *are* used and that they *do* work. This addresses some level of accepted cultural truths and knowledge in that this medical knowledge is not questioned it is simply accepted as what one does if they are sick or troubled. There are also countless recipes that are used commonly by the cooks that are generations old, an example of knowledge and culture resistance in the face of migration and life change. This type of unquestioned traditional knowledge leads to transgenerational transmission. Christie explains that by means of knowledge, cultural preservation comes about and that by continuing knowledge transmission a culture gains in strength and has the ability to resist certain degrees of outside change and disruption. (Christie. 2002. 28) Therefore, through this type of knowledge traditional heritage knowledge and culture is retained through acts of homemaking.

Traditional knowledge retention is a means of adaptation refusal in order to establish desired structures of homemaking. The active acceptance of adaptation to cultural and culinary knowledge is also employed for this purpose, especially when confronted with migration. The knowledge cycle of acquisition, practice, transmission and adaptation is central to identity construction and homemaking for Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello, Idaho. By means of active agency on the part of the homemaker all types of knowledge can be preserved and altered at will. For this reason culinary and cultural knowledges play such a key role in homemaking processes. A large portion of the home cook’s knowledge base is built upon the meanings and uses of food. Food plays a symbolic role in the homemaking processes for Mexican American home cooks.

5.) FOOD AS SYMBOL

“yo soy como el chile verde, picante pero sabroso” – Popular Mexican Saying

Symbols are important tools in the homemaking process. It is by active use and repetition of symbols that the home cook is able to transmit culture and culinary practices. Symbol meanings construct and are constructed by individual and collective identities. A central symbol employed for this purpose for Mexican American home cooks is food. Food is used to enculturate not only tastes but cultural components as well. The home cook is an active agent in this process. Foods selected for this purpose are meant to structure foodways that solidify aspects of personal and collective identities. (Anderson, 2005. 129) In terms of homemaking, food is used as a symbol of home and culture; it is a means of *sensing place*. E.N. Anderson ties taste and place together, relating “sense of place” with “sense of taste”; that people are essentially “consuming geographies” since, “To eat the familiar home food is to be at home, at least in the heart- as well as the stomach.” (Anderson, 2005. 130) Food, then, draws power as a symbol due to its propensity for travel. Food has the ability to migrate with individuals and their cultural traditions. For this reason, when confronted with the *other*, food is perceived as symbolic of group and individual identities. There exist intense ties between Mexican cuisine and identity, between what people eat and who they are. (Pilcher, 1998. 162) Food is a means of identifying with oneself and others within the greater homemaking process. The intentional and unintentional use of food as symbol and as the carrier of culture and identity is central to successful homemaking for an initial migrant and their subsequent familial generations. In order to outline this further, I would like to profile the ways in which Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello, Idaho use food and ritual to symbolize and perpetuate their cultures in the overarching process of homemaking.

5.1) Food

“The beginning and root of all good is the pleasure of the belly, and everything wise or exquisite must be referred back to this criterion.” – Epicurious

Paths of migration often lead to identity shifts and alternate strategies of homemaking. In order to facilitate desired cultural transmission, Mexican American home cooks turn to food preparation and use. The individuals involved in this project adopt food as a symbol of their heritage culture as well as their contemporary cultural fusion. This is apparent in the communities of culinary creation and consumption that are present in Pocatello. These Mexican Americans migrated from various locations in Mexico and they stress these regional differences in their cooking in order to accurately portray their heritage in homemaking and identity construction through food. Rita and Fedra demonstrate this with their method of tying *tamales* that is specific to their homeland, Sinaloa, Mexico. They are openly identifying their culinary practices with their Mexican American identities. Food then, when prepared by Mexican American home cooks stands as a source of identity construction, power, cultural and individual pride, resistance, and cultural transmission.

Migration is integral influencing food choice. Mexican American home cooks are dismayed by the lack of Mexican brand and ingredient selection available in Pocatello. They are forced to make substitutions in their cooking or to have a special ingredient shipped to them from family and friends currently living in Mexico. The need for particular ingredients and their shipment to Pocatello creates lines of open communication with the homeland, contributing to imagined communities and imaginary homelands. Lexi’s mother drives from Pocatello to Denver, Colorado in order to find specific peppers. Such extraordinary efforts to access familiar ingredients are demonstrative of the real and perceived power of the specific ingredients used for

identity construction and homemaking. The application of food for self and other definition can be contributed to the desire to feel at home and comfortable in new places. (Williams-Forson, 2006. 128) Food is a means of allowing home to travel and of allowing an individual journey there at their leisure. Food sets cultural guidelines and directs desired cultural transmission. Throughout this research period, symbolic food use is employed for several reasons including identity construction, agency and action, travel, culinary relationships, communication, cultural resistance, forming imaginary communities and imaginary homelands, budgeting time and cultural adaptation due to migration.

There is historical evidence of black women in post-slavery United States using food for vicarious travel and to give their loved ones a *mobile home*. (Williams-Forson, 2006. 125) Mexican American cooks in Pocatello also perform this means of a traveling home. María makes sure that each morning she awakes early to prepare her husband a hot lunch since he is not able to return home. Rosario describes a similar situation. Even on the days that she is extremely busy due to her work schedule and home duties, she allows extra time in the morning to prepare a hot lunch that is transportable for her husband. In this way their cultural norms and homemaking techniques are employed even when the cook is not physically present at meal consumption. This practice is important for the overall expression of identity by its ability to send homemaking tactics with family members; asserting the home cook's identity through culinary means. Their desired homemaking strategy is shared with members of their home through this practice. The consumer of these meals is able to be home by means of taste. Food travel is also a manner of enforcing their status as the central home cook as well as retaining the socio-cultural relationships of their household. Food travel is a means of communicating culture through the preparation of familiar recipes. Mexican American home cooks establish the bonds of their *imagined* Hispanic community since traditional foods are able to travel into the greater Pocatello society. Members of this imagined community are then resistant to culinary consumerism changes that they are faced with during their daily work and travel schedules because they are not forced to participate in the economic or culinary actions of Pocatello. Mexican American home cooks as active agents of heritage retention through food, provide their family members tools for cultural resistance through food travel. In this way homemaking techniques are employed outside the home kitchen space. This practice can be understood as active resistance.

For many migrants, arrival to a new country presents dilemmas of cultural and identity representation. Food is one means of clarifying these blurred lines and affirming social and cultural identities. (Williams-Forson, 2006. 128) Food represents a means of active resistance in paths of identity construction and homemaking for Mexican American home cooks. Resistance by means of culinary practice depends on a familiar taste. Sensual forms of knowledge such as smell, touch, texture contribute to an individual's understanding of culture through food. Since this knowledge is culturally and family specific, familiar tastes vary. (Inness, 2001.123) Specific food tastes are then a symbol of challenge to the dominant culture through the establishment of independent meaning and communication. Mexican American cooks are aware of this symbolic nature of the foods that they actively choose to use. There are common ingredients that my informants identified as indispensable for their homes. María, Rita, Rosario and Fedra explained that beans, eggs and tortillas are essential for their households. For these home cooks, these foods are essential due to their nutritional and cultural properties. Edwin finds fresh cilantro indispensable in his home. Cilantro for him is a personal taste; his family did not eat it while he was growing up. This is evidence of the individual traits that can be passed on through homemaking. Therefore, these specific foods for the home cooks are actively used for homemaking in that "indispensable" ingredients carry mutually intelligible messages of health knowledge, culture, and individual identity. Necessary foods for households vary and for this reason, they are indicative of culinary and cultural identities of the home cook and their homemaking strategies.

Foods are also markers of special events or holidays. For Edwin, his father's tuna soup is only prepared traditionally for Christmas and New Year's. In his home kitchen he will not prepare it except for these days. Special occasions such as *fiestas* warrant the making of *tamales*. *Tamales* are a symbol of celebration and hard work for these Mexican American cooks. For Carlitos first birthday, the women in Fedra's family spent one week making enough tamales for the celebration. The food preparation for such an event is a time of socializing, *charlas culinarias*, and of pre-celebration. Throughout my investigation I spoke with many individuals that proclaim the specific use of tamales for times of *fiestas* due to their extensive preparation time. They are not a common food and when you are offered a *tamale* it is understood the amount of work that has gone into it. Attention paid to *tamales* can be seen in the numerous preparation techniques that exist. Rita profiled the differences between the ingredients used and the preparation of the *tamale*. These variations are representative of regional differences found in original heritage homelands. They also demonstrate the personal preferences of Mexican American home cooks. Even the tying of the *hoja* signifies what flavor the tamale is and the region from whence it originates. Preparation of holiday food markers such as *tamales* is demonstrative of cultural resistance through the continuation and mutual understanding of *fiesta* foods and practices. The active assertion of heritage culture through current food use is evidence of food employment in homemaking and identity construction practices by Mexican American home cooks.

Regional variation of homeland also guides the symbolism of certain food use in the United States. Florina describes that for her, *enchiladas* and *chiles rellenos* are, "...the flavor of Mexico!"¹¹ Fedra's husband cooks with different spices than she does since he is from the south of Mexico. According to Fedra, the food prepared there is very different from her homeland of Sinaloa. Although my informants are all of Mexican and Mexican American descent, there are foods specifically symbolic to their personal cultural heritage or family ties to Mexico. This shows the adaptation of the home cook that exists even with intra-Mexican cooking and culture. In all cases, the foods that they select tie them to Mexico and their original Mexican family lines. Reinforcing this aspect of cultural heritage even in times of migration is a means of visiting their imaginary homelands on a daily basis. In this sense each of my Mexican American informants are part of the Pocatello Mexican American imagined community.

There are indeed foods and recipes that "communicate" the realities of life in the United States. Edwin points out that the lifestyle in the United States is much faster paced than where he lived in Mexico City. For this reason, Mexican American home cooks modify recipes and ingredient use to hasten preparation. Fedra tells me that she used to prepare recipes that were more *sofisticadas* before her children were born. Now, Fedra is pressed for time and has access to pre-prepared goods such as packaged tortillas. Fedra then has more time to care for her children, take care of personal business, and perform her household routines. Rosario cooks much more complicated recipes on the days that she does not have to work. She reserves her specialty foods for these days. This is done so that the preparation does not need to be rushed; ensuring the right rituals and tastes. Edwin and Nicole abashedly admit to being in a tremendous hurry after a very long day and consequently buying pre-cooked chicken so that they could still prepare the recipe that they had planned. In this case there exists the desire for specific meals with limited time on the part of the cooks. In order to create the recipe in the face of time constraints adaptations are made possible through technology and pre-made options. Foods that require extensive amounts of time and preparation also communicate the importance of an event the cook's preferences, and lifestyle. Rita, for example, when relaying recipes to me is extremely specific in the details of the preparation and presentation, including where each food should be placed in regards to the others on a plate or on the table. Through this she is communicating her time constraints, knowledge, her priorities, pride, ideal food preparation and presentation, and

¹¹ Formal interview with Florina 11 June 2008

her life situation. It is this type of culinary communication that allows Mexican American home cooks to experience the world and express their identities through food.

This field study also exposes incidences of food holding a life force and an almost mystical power. The cooks anthropomorphize foods and ingredients by means of their word choice. They employ characteristically human terms to refer to their cooking. For instance, one afternoon, Fedra is going over the methodologies of the proper preparation of Carne Paprika. In this recipe, it is necessary to allow the meat to *sleep* in the refrigerator over night. This also occurs with the use of garlic in cooking practices. Rita and Edwin both explain that when sautéing, you must cook the garlic long enough to *impregnate* the oil with its flavor. This word choice is not accidental; it is representative of the relationships that exist between the food and the cook. Food is treated verbally in a manner of closeness depicting the ways in which the home cook truly identifies with the foods that they prepare. During the preparation of food this is visible as well. Edwin and Florina explicitly state that they must be attentive to the meal they are cooking; they must care for it. My informants are actively participating in the food preparation and perceive this process as integral to themselves as actors and as agents of homemaking processes. It is this relationship that creates a sort of mysticism around the cook and their culinary powers.

One afternoon Fedra is speaking of her friend Martha. Rita is sitting at my side and in a knowing voice she relays to me the story of Fedra's pregnancy with Carlitos. Fedra had morning sickness with Carlitos and would get very ill anytime she ate anything except Martha's cooking. For some reason it was only Martha's cooking that did not make Fedra feel nauseous. And then, once Carlitos was born he not only adored Martha but preferred her cooking over anyone else's. Both Fedra and Rita explained this to me in a matter of fact manner. It is completely understood that Martha's cooking has a special tie to Carlitos. When observed in this light it is possible to consider that the home cook transmits energy and messages through their food preparation. This transmission marks the lifelong relationships between the cook and their foods as well as the relationships between the cook and the consumer through the preparation of these foods. The cook's personal identity is then asserted through their foods. The mystical powers of the home cook are perceived as markers of power and pride for the consumer. The perception of these powers is dependent upon the mutually intelligible understandings of culture and practice. This is done through homemaking tactics established by the Mexican American home cook.

As an indicator of identity, this example takes into account the individual means by which identity is constructed and homemaking practices are undertaken in the Mexican American home kitchen. There is a real power of food in this sense. Foods are symbolic of respect and levels of knowledge. Many of my informants describe the process of preparing food for a *fiesta* or special meal. There exists a hierarchy of duties. According to an individual's age and knowledge level they are assigned a certain food or ingredient to prepare. For instance, tortillas are prepared by younger women and more trivial jobs such as peeling and chopping vegetables would be given to the youngest or newest cooks. The oldest and most experienced cooks are responsible for the most intricate and talent associated tasks. This is evidence of the communication of food and its preparation through active practice. The communally understood meanings of these hierarchies and foods add to feelings of group solidarity. (Anderson, 2005. 6) Homemaking creates and perpetuates these meanings through the active agency of the home cook. Mexican American home cooks dictate which foods are used for special occasions and also individual roles in their preparation.

Food then, is brought to life by the active agency of the home cook. Foods are symbols in a system of communication that is full of meanings and protocols. (Counihan. 1997. 20) For the Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello, food is a symbol of communication, identity, travel, power, relationships, and homemaking. For many of the cooks, aspects of their traditional Mexican heritage by means of food preparation and consumption "speak" through their cooking. Foods communicate the messages that the home cook encodes them with. The individuals

involved in this project express that it is important that these messages are transmitted to their children so that they may also receive the traditional food culture; so that they are part of the imagined Mexican American community of Pocatello. Therefore, even if recipes are altered due to migration, the retention of certain qualities of traditional culture become a powerful tool for cultural identity productions, accumulation, circulation, and discourse from generation to generation. Food represents the true heart of homemaking for the Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello. Foods are used by these individuals in the structuring and acting of rituals performed in daily life. Ritual practices are integral to the understanding and transmission of food symbols and their powers.

5.2) Ritual

“Soy tan simple como la capirotada...soy la comida en la mesa cuando llegan de jale...soy la que calienta los TV dinners...soy tamales at Christmas time...Soy coconut...”
– La Chrisx’s poem “La Loca de la Raza Cosmica”

The definition of ritual practices has often been associated with highly structured ceremonies, especially in the history of anthropological ethnography. However, ritual is also a descriptor for all human actions that convey an individual’s social and cultural status. (Barfield, 1997. 410) They can be the daily life actions that provide insight into people and situations. Rituals are integral for times of transition in individual’s lives. By practicing rituals a framework of relative normalcy can be established no matter their location. (Barfield, 1997. 411) For Mexican American home cooks rituals are used to guide processes of social construction, identity construction, self-valuation, and homemaking when faced with migration and other life changes. Rituals are means of establishing social hierarchies and power dynamics, transmitting knowledge, and defining the meanings of symbols. And it is these points that I would like to discuss in regards to Mexican American home cooks and their ritual practices. The rituals to be described here are culinary rituals. Mexican American home cooks use such food rituals for homemaking strategies.

Identity construction through culinary ritual takes many forms. Culinary knowledge and the rituals therein are acts of the creative identity of the home cook. (Inness, 2001. 128) The right to this form of creativity and the active agency they employ in pursuing it by means of culinary ritual afford the cook a means of identity construction. (Inness, 2001. 129) In this way the cook is given a voice through culinary ritual. It is an opportunity to establish their place within the home hierarchies and power dynamics that exist there. There is a definite sense of respect for culinary rituals within the Mexican American home kitchen. Bobby explains that not only is his mother highly regarded, it is expected that she cooks even when they travel. This respect is due to her culinary and cultural knowledge. He exclaimed, “If she’s cooking we know its going to be good!”¹² Therefore his mother and their family know her role and her talents within that role. In this way, rituals aid in identity construction. There are certain dishes that due to their preparation ritual are highly regarded within the Mexican American community in Pocatello. *Tamales* are one of these. The reverence for a specific cook’s individual rituals can lead to the specialization of certain home cook’s culinary talents. Rosario, for instance is considered by her friends and family to be extremely talented in creating desserts; again stressing that individual knowledge can lead to personalized rituals that help create a niche for the home cook within their home and the greater society.

I was able to experience this veneration of home cooks first hand. I was invited to a *tamale* making event that Fedra and her friend Martha were teaching. These two home cooks had been asked by their church to teach other members to make *tamales*. The plan was to make

¹² Formal interview with Bobby 29 May 2008
Out of the melting pot and into the kitchen

enough *tamales* for the church congregation. As I was observing, Fedra and Martha did not even speak to each other directly about the food preparation during this event. They took part in *charlas culinarias* but the ritual of tamale making was well known between the two and therefore needed no discussion. There were about eight non-Hispanic church members that came to learn and to help. This was the first and only time that I was allowed and invited to aid in the preparation of food. Each step in this process was taken on with well practiced hands. Even though Fedra and Martha had increased the yield amount of their recipes, they knew exactly the proportions of ingredients without referring to a recipe. They are careful throughout to tend to each pot of food. They remain composed and organized. They direct the helpers in order to ensure that everything is ready at the correct time. The members of Fedra's church were absolutely amazed at Fedra's knowledge as they continued during the entire process to ask her questions. The fact that they recruited her for this event is evidence as well of the immense respect that she had earned with these people due to her culinary knowledge and rituals. In this way, Fedra is indeed "carving out" a place for herself in the public sphere through her culinary ritual. (Inness, 2001. 132)

Culinary rituals are employed as a source of power by Fedra and other Mexican American cooks within their own familial hierarchies and the overall Mexican American community social networks. In this instance, Fedra is contributing to the cross-cultural transmission that occurs in cases of culture encounters. And so, alongside Fedra's contribution to social networks and enforcing respect for home cooks, she is also promoting and spreading her heritage culture to the dominant culture in Pocatello. This is an important means of spreading cultural appreciation and regard for Mexican American knowledge and culture. Knowledge and practice of rituals are significant for homemaking and cultural heritage transmission through culinary actions. The home cook establishes and reinforces their place in social and familial hierarchies through their culinary knowledge as Bobby described above. In Fedra's home kitchen she combines her cooking with cleaning and childcare. The meal preparation never suffers as she works her culinary rituals around her other household tasks and in this way privatizes her ritual practices. For Fedra, the ability to prepare difficult and delicious meals is a source of respect and homemaking. By governing her home duties in a manner that places a premium on food and culinary skills she creates a niche for herself within her family and the greater Mexican American community in Pocatello. She is actively asserting her identity and her role as the homemaker. This is also a means of practicing self-valuation by establishing and perpetuating her identity through her household and social roles. Each cook dictates their ritual practices within the home thus demonstrating the immense diversity in ritual practice throughout the Mexican American community.

For Mexican American home cooks, ritual practices are also used in coping with migratory newness. By continuing familiar food rituals, the meanings of symbols are understood, imaginary homelands are established, knowledge transmission can occur and homemaking is possible. Within each household that I visited, the kitchens function very smoothly, even when there are two cooks sharing the same space. It is clear that through practice of rituals and understanding of common symbols that the private kitchen space is not only a place of creativity but also of efficiency and order. Each time that I visited Edwin, he and Nicole would prepare a meal together. They do not verbally decide who performs which acts, they simply know through much practice and accumulation of shared ritual knowledge the order of events. By means of repeated practice and exposure, the meanings of symbols and rituals in their home are mutually understood as common knowledge. Since Nicole is not Hispanic, it is important for Edwin to communicate the symbols and rituals of his heritage. He performs this through culinary transmission of knowledge. Edwin in this sense, aids in building images of his imaginary homeland for Nicole so that she may also partake in Edwin's other home. Thus Edwin, through culturally familiar ritual, shares his desired homemaking strategies with Nicole.

Example of ritual for Mexican American home cooks is also found in practices of grocery shopping. Grocery shopping practices are an aspect of ritual that are telling of economic and health priorities. Maria, Rita and Rosario choose to shop at Wal-mart or Win-co due to the relatively large Hispanic foods sections and the low prices. These two stores are considered to be discount grocery stores that sell specialty ingredients used for culinary ritual in homemaking processes. Lexi has health concerns that require her to buy organic foods that tend to be more expensive at the different groceries in town. Edwin prefers to shop at the farmer's market and the local co-op in order to buy natural and organic food as well as to support local producers. In most cases the individuals participating in this project buy groceries once per week. The home cook is usually accompanied by their spouse for these trips. Lexi did explain that when she shops alone she spends less money than when her husband goes with her. Grocery rituals can be affected by access to a vehicle or public transportation. Many of the home cooks are also the home caretaker and their spouse works outside the home during the day. In these cases the home cook's grocery shopping rituals are guided by their access to a vehicle. The home cooks prefer to shop with their spouses since it is perceived as a social ritual between them. Due to the ingredient knowledge of the home cook, their presence is necessary for these outings; again demonstrating that food knowledge is a source of empowerment for the home cook. By establishing the need for their presence, the Mexican American home cook asserts their place as homemaker in their household.

The home cook guides the ritual practices of the household members as well. This is done primarily by daily culinary decision making. The home cook establishes daily and weekly rituals for themselves and their families by food choice and meal times. It is important to recognize that the cook must take into account household member's schedules in order to make these rituals powerful. Respect for the home cook is partly due to their ability to cater to all household individuals. Maria, Rita, Rosario, Fedra and Lexi describe how their daily schedule is formed around the schedules of their families. In this way culinary rituals become family rituals and gain shared meanings and communication pathways. The home cook then uses their culinary knowledge in order to prepare meals at a certain time of day. This can be day dependent as well. Fedra explained that on Thursdays she prepares extra food so that she will not have to cook over the weekend. Friday and Saturday she and her family eat leftovers from the week and on Sundays her family eats at church. Her cooking rituals include much needed days of rest. Fedra is evidence then of how rituals are individualized by family schedules, home cook preferences and established acceptable homemaking norms.

Culinary ritual practices serve a vital purpose in the homemaking process of Mexican American home cooks. Mexican American home cooks aid in the enculturation of their families and the creation of imaginary homelands through ritual practices. These home cooks are able to transmit Mexican heritage through culinary ritual within their homes in Pocatello. Even for the Mexican American home cooks who "Americanize" recipes or cooking practices, they do not see this as a loss of cultural heritage; it is simply perceived as a means of personalizing their kitchen rituals to fit their lifestyle. And so, even as rituals change with life experiences, they do not lose their power to communicate through symbols and use by Mexican American home cooks. Symbolic food use as performed in ritual practices by active agents seeking to define their identities and cope with migration remains key for homemaking tactics. Culinary agency and action by means of ritual is then another means of homemaking for Mexican American home cooks.

8.) CONCLUSIONS

“Mexican families serve as repositories of Mexican cultural heritage. Such traditions include a broad range of cultural practices involving Spanish-language retention, distinct Mexican music styles, food, and Mexican religious practices.” -Alma M. Garcia

“It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity.” – Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie once wrote that “One who writes outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost...it was precisely the partial nature of these memories, their fragmentation, that made them so evocative for me. The shards of memory acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were *remains*; fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols...” (Rushdie, 1991. 11-12) With this admission he is not only lamenting lost memories of India, he is outlining the ways in which it is possible to put the pieces back together even if in a different nation. Rushdie is in fact detailing the very process of homemaking. He did not call it this, for Rushdie this practice is creating *imaginary homelands* when a person is displaced or migrated. (Rushdie, 1991. 10) Homemaking involves not only imagining but creating. The Mexican American home cook transforms space into home through identity and culture construction, agency, symbols, ritual, knowledge transmission, and imagining communities and homelands. This investigation demonstrates the ways in which Mexican American cooks use the private home kitchen space for homemaking processes.

To draw conclusions on this topic I would like to bring together the themes discussed throughout this dissertation as an answer format to the following four sub-questions introduced at the outset of this presentation. The first of these asks: What factors influence the ways in which private space is used for identity construction? The private space in this situation is that of the Mexican American private home kitchen. These places are used for dwelling and sensing place and in these ways the home cooks are constructing identities. Within anthropological research, in order to explore how people sense places it is necessary to investigate the ways in which they go about the actions of constructing identities. Mexican American home cooks use private space in identity construction strategies in order to dwell and sense their home space. Private spaces allow for individual constructions within a greater socio-cultural system. Within the private home kitchen space, Mexican American cooks construct identity based on their personal histories, experiences and preferences. They construct identity by means of power dynamics, knowledge transmission, symbol use, ritual practices and agency. In terms of homemaking, the various uses of private space for identity construction constitute the path of homemaking for that particular household. By choosing individualized paths of self-making, Mexican American home cooks diversify their homemaking strategies with unique heritage homeland customs, personal preferences, and life course obligations and obstacles.

The second sub-question inquires: In what ways is knowledge employed in the Mexican American private home kitchen space? The Mexican American home cooks perceive their knowledge as a badge of their identities. Knowledge is used as a means of identity construction. Knowledge of culturally specific symbols aids in confronting complications of migration and travel. My informants do this by continuing customary culinary practices and ingredient selections. The home kitchen space is the center for their spatial schema. The home cook’s knowledge is used within this to establish their worldviews and where they stand within that world. Knowledge in the kitchen space also represents agency through choice and transmission. A body of knowledge put into practice within the kitchen space lends for relatively expected and unexpected decision making. An individual’s knowledge base determines how they will employ spatial tactics or how they use space in techniques of power. (Low, 2003. 30) Knowledge for

Mexican American home cooks within the kitchen space is a source of power, respect, comfort, heritage and familial culture, adaptation, and agency. It is precisely these factors that define the ways in which knowledge in the private home kitchen space is used in homemaking processes. Knowledge structures the ingredients that will be added into the cultural recipe that is prepared and transmitted to the household.

The third sub-question guiding this dissertation is: In what ways does migration affect the homemaking process of the Mexican American home cook? To begin simply, it is migration that creates the necessity for homemaking in the first place. When individuals are displaced they use homemaking as a means of establishing normalcy in their daily lives within a host nation. Migration necessitates homemaking because it raises questions of homeland, identity and acculturation. Within a new homeland, migration introduces the new *multiplex personal identity*, or the complication of all aspects of daily life due to migration. (Esquibel, xv. 2000) In order to deal with the consequences of migration, individuals use homemaking tactics. Migration also introduces what Malinowski called *transculturation*. This is a system of cultural reciprocity that exists between a host nation and new or established migrants. There are varying levels of assimilation between cultural communities. (Tauchmann, 2004. 92) Homemaking aids in both heritage cultural retention and acculturation in the face of migration. For Mexican American home cooks, migrational patterns that they or family members have undergone are catalysts for the use of homemaking tactics. Thus, in situations of migration, it is necessary for the home cook to turn a new space into their *home*. Homemaking provides a means for cultural retention, adaptation and transmission within the private home kitchen space.

And lastly, the fourth question asked: What role do symbols play in the process of homemaking for Mexican American home cooks? It is quite possible that the most integral symbol used by Mexican American home cooks in their homemaking strategies is food. By the use of familiar ingredients and recipes the home cook is actively endorsing their cultural norms and desired cultural characteristics. Certain foods can even be used to mark special occasions or holidays celebrated in the heritage or host culture. Therefore, food selection demonstrates the desired level of assimilation a specific home cook chooses to undergo. And so, food can be viewed as a symbol of culture retention or assimilation. Food can also be used as a symbol of home and heritage culture for family members who eat outside of the home. The Mexican American home cook can opt to send hot, homemade meals with those family members who travel in order to establish homemaking *to go*. Food then, can be a symbol of culture even outside the confines of the private home kitchen space. It is in these ways that foods are used as symbols of desired cultural retention or assimilation within a greater community setting. Symbols truly drive the homemaking process since only function when they have a mutually understood meaning. It is the obligation of the home cook to define and transmit the meanings of these symbols through processes of homemaking. Thus, it is through symbol use that homemaking is able to perpetuate.

By defining answers to these four sub-questions it is possible to draw a greater understanding of exactly how Mexican American cooks use the private home kitchen space for processes of homemaking. Homemaking is contextually dependent on the private home kitchen space for successful establishment and transmission. The home cook utilizes their broad cultural and social knowledge bases to both transform space into place and to transmit cultural and culinary knowledge. This in turn originates and spreads their desired strategies of homemaking. The strategies chosen by the individual is affected by their personal and collective experiences with migration. It is indeed this migration that initially necessitates homemaking for the home cook. The Mexican American private home cook then must define and employ the use of symbols in order to propel their homemaking tactics.

This research serves to provide a closer assessment of the means in which Mexican American citizens living in the United States dwell and sense place. It also serves as commentary on the diverse responses that individuals and groups have to migration. In terms of homemaking,

the conclusions made in the duration of this research have been many. It has been observed that homemaking is ideally the core means of identity construction for Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello. This is due to its accommodation to the varying degrees of desired acculturation of the home cooks and their families. This project demonstrates the ways in which Mexican American cooks use the private home kitchen space for processes of homemaking. Due to unique migration patterns, diverse original heritage homelands and personal life histories studies of immigration and acculturation can be difficult. Homemaking is a successful means of approaching these topics anthropologically and holistically, using an anthropology of practice. Through the use of homemaking to look at space use by Mexican American home cooks in Pocatello, it has been possible to highlight the central strategies of identity construction for these migrants and citizens. As they have described and displayed, homemaking is a necessary means of cultural retention, practice, transmission and adaptation; necessary tools for identity construction. For the Mexican American home cooks, homemaking represents a means of imagining, traveling, sensing, teaching, learning, accessing power and respect, socializing and most importantly, of feeling *home*.

“...culture can be, and is, controlled by the environment, which places limits on what can and cannot be done. But the physical environment can never determine the content of culture. It is people who create cultural resources and control access to them...the history of the word ‘culture’ continues to suggest to many people that culture belongs to nations, and that it consists primarily of positive attainments and achievements. Although culture is an essential resource, this does not mean that all people have access to all of cultural, or even access to all of the cultural resources that they need or desire. ..culture functions to maintain society and that culture is historical and changes over time, often in relation to (or determined by) changes in society (or economy).” – Nkosinathi Sotshangane

7.) APPENDICES

7.1) Cultural Cookbook Text and Outline

Outline:

- 1.) Introduction
- 2.) What is anthropology?
- 3.) What was my project?
- 4.) What is Mexican food?
- 5.) Informant Biographies
- 6.) Map of Recipe Origins
- 7.) Recipes
- 8.) Cultural and Travel informant Stories
- 9.) Health Benefits of Ingredients or Recipes
- 10.) List of Substitutions

Initial Text:

Mexican food is exciting, fun and delicious! It is full of tradition and myth. Living in the United States has its advantages. With our close location to Mexico we have the opportunity to eat some of the best cuisine in the world! The colorful ingredients and lively flavors intrigue even the pickiest of eaters. From traditional Mexican food to Tex-Mex, Mexican food is a diverse addition to the American kitchen. Now, with the Cultural Cookbook you can prepare all of your favorite Mexican recipes in your own home kitchen! Use your hands, be creative and ENJOY!

I am writing this cookbook as a “thank you” to the many Mexican American Pocatello citizens that were kind enough to help me with my graduate fieldwork. I am a cultural anthropologist and I had been completing research in Pocatello to observe how Mexican Americans use food to keep their heritage alive and to feel at home in Pocatello. This research project was created for my master of science degree in Latin American and Caribbean Studies through Utrecht University in the Netherlands. I personally love Mexican food and to discover ways that it can be used to form community and a sense of self is very intriguing! Cultural anthropology is the study of human cultures and social interactions. You may be asking yourself, “What’s the point of that?” Well, cultural anthropology has been able to help people and their environments all over the world. Anthropologists learn about the ways that people view their world and their place in it. By “putting ourselves in someone else’s shoes” anthropologists can help to mediate between individuals and bigger entities like governments. Cultural anthropology is a field that tries to see the world in a non-biased way and to find the reasoning behind seemingly “irrational” decisions. If you can do this then it is possible to see that these decisions make perfect sense to an individual who grew up in that culture. Anthropologists can also be mediators between cultures. When a person has lived in one culture their whole lives it can be hard to imagine that anyone would ever live any other way. Choices and actions in other cultures often seem illogical or silly. But sure enough there are people all over the world that think *our* culture is odd! One very special power of anthropology is to make other cultures “real”. By getting to know individuals instead of pictures and media representations of a country or culture, a “far-off” culture can seem more relatable. This is especially why I chose to work with Mexican American citizens in Pocatello. Within the American culture there are countless variations in living styles. These can be called sub-cultures. The Mexican American sub-culture in Pocatello is a very interesting and exciting culture!

7.2) Informant Introduction

Central to the anthropological participant-observation field work and research are key informants and contacts. Without the help of these brave individuals this line of work would not move forward. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce my key informants. For the purpose of this presentation the term, key informant, will be taken to mean that either the individual's information was integral to the completion of the project or that they were informants and contacts throughout the research period in its entirety. I will make a distinction between key informants and key long term informants to better stress this. There are individuals who did not wish their true identities exposed and therefore they will be introduced under a false name. I cannot thank these individuals enough for taking the time to make this project successful.

Key Informants and Contacts:

Lucy

Lucy is a first generation migrant having only lived in the United States for five years. She emigrated from Chihuahua, Mexico. She initially came to visit family in Pocatello and decided to stay. She speaks fluent English and Spanish. In her home Spanish is the main language spoken. She has married since her arrival in Pocatello and her husband is also a first generation migrant having lived in the United States thirteen years. She is the central cook in her household.

María

Maria currently resides in Pocatello, Idaho. She is recently married and within her home they speak both Spanish and English. She is from the United States and her husband is originally from Mexico but emigrated to find work in the United States. Maria is a student at Idaho State University. She is a third generation Mexican American. She is the central cook in her household.

Bobby

Bobby is a second generation Mexican American. His father was born in Mexico and his mother in the United States. Bobby is a Resident Director for Idaho State University. He earned his undergraduate degree from Idaho State University. He learned Spanish in his childhood home and is currently fluent in both Spanish and English. His home is predominantly English language driven however Spanish is present as well. Bobby shares the cooking responsibilities equally with house mates.

Key Long Term Informants and Contacts:

Florina

Florina is a first generation Mexican American. She has just completed her studies at Idaho State University. She works for the Hispanic Health Projects run through the Idaho State University anthropology department. She immigrated into the United States in order to find greater opportunities as a female. Florina is fluent in both Spanish and English. She is unmarried and is the central cook in her household.

Lexi

Lexi is a fourth generation Mexican American. She is married to a non-Hispanic Pocatello citizen. They have three children, ages eight, five and one. Lexi began her nursing degree in 2003. In her home they speak English. Lexi is working towards becoming a freelance lactation consultant. She is the central cook in her household.

Fedra

Fedra is a first generation Mexican American. She is originally from Sinaloa, Mexico. She is married to a first generation Mexican American. They have two children. Fedra has a nursing degree in Mexico and would like to also receive this in the United States. In her home they speak Spanish. She is the central cook in her household.

Rosario

Rosario is Fedra's sister in law. She is a first generation Mexican American, originally from Sinaloa. She has been in Pocatello for two years. She moved here with her husband who is also from Sinaloa and is Fedra's brother. Rosario works as a waitress at a local Mexican restaurant. In her home they speak Spanish. Rosario writes her own recipes and she is the central cook for her household.

Rita

Rita is Fedra's mother and Rosario's mother in law. She is a resident of Mexico currently but spends almost half of the year visiting family in the United States. When she is living in Pocatello, she works as a cook at a local restaurant. She is unmarried and travels often. She spends her time in Pocatello living with both Fedra and Rosario equally. When in their homes she helps with the cooking and household duties. She speaks Spanish and some English. She is the main cook for her home in Mexico and while in the United States visiting family she is the authority on knowledge and practice.

Edwin

Edwin is a first generation Mexican American. His purpose of immigration was for University Studies. He has completed undergraduate and graduate studies in Engineering at Idaho State University. He shares his household with his long-term girlfriend, Nicole, who is a non-Hispanic Pocatello citizen. They speak both English and Spanish in their home. They share the cooking responsibilities in their household.

All of these key informants made possible the undertaking and completion of this project. Each will be further discussed below and it is for this reason that I provided general introductions to them. Within the following presentation of empirical research data are further details of these individual's lives, histories and practices. The following section entails the synthesis of field experiences with these key informants and theory of identity construction in order to address the aforementioned central and sub-questions guiding this research.

Pocatello Demographics:

Pocatello is a city of 51,466 people with the surrounding Bannock county population consisting of 77,181 residents in a 1,112 square mile area. There are approximately 69 people per square mile. Of these residents the population demographics are as follows: 92% Caucasian, 5% Hispanic, 1.4% Native American, 1% Asian, .6% African American according to a 2000 census. A very large part of the labor market and economy in Eastern Idaho, including the outskirts of Pocatello, is agriculture. The central crop is potatoes. Potato farming alongside other seasonal crops has drawn a fairly large population of Mexican immigrants, both illegal and legal, to the Bannock County area and surrounding areas. Censuses are often a difficult measure of the true populations of an ethnic group in any area and especially in the case of illegal immigration. The actual percent of Mexican immigrants living in Pocatello and the outlying communities is higher than that listed on the 2000 Idaho Census. Pocatello proper, as opposed to the surrounding communities has a lower population of illegal immigrants due to the relatively urban nature of the city. Therefore, for my project I did not work directly with any illegal immigrants as I only took into consideration Mexican Americans living currently within the Pocatello city limits.

7.3) Mexican American Families Flyer - Spanish Version

FAMILIAS MEXICANAS:
¡NECESITO SU AYUDA!

SOY UNA ESTUDIANTE DE MASTERS EN ESTUDIOS LATINOAMERICANOS. MI PROYECTO DE TESIS ESTÁ EN POCATELLO. AHORA ESTOY BUSCANDO 5 FAMILIAS QUE QUIEREN AYUDARME CON MI PROYECTO. MI PROYECTO SE TRATA DE LOS PODERES DE LA COCINERA EN LA COCINA (TAMBIÉN PUEDE SER UN COCINERO). LA UNICA COSA QUE NECESITO DE USTED ES DEJARME ESTAR EN SU CASA/COCINA ALGUNAS HORAS DE LA SEMANA Y VER COMO FUNCIONA LAS DINAMICAS DE SU CASA Y TAMBIEN TENGO ALGUNAS PREGUNTAS DE ENTREVISTA PARA USTED. DESPUES DE 2 MESES ESCRIBO MI TESIS Y TAMBIEN HAGO UN LIBRO DE COCINA (LLENA DE SUS HISTORIAS Y RECETAS. ¡Y LE DOY A USTED UNA COPIA!). SI USTED O ALGUIEN A QUIEN USTED CONOCE QUIERE AYUDARME CON MI PROYECTO SERÍA BIEN AGRADECIDA! SI USTED QUIERE MAS INFORMACIÓN, POR FAVOR VEA EL PAPEL ABAJO Y ESCRIBAME/LLAMEME. ¡MUCHISIMAS GRACIAS Y ESPERO ENCONTRARSE PRONTO!

SINCERAMENTE,

SOLANA KLINE

ANTROPOLOGA CULTURAL LICENCIADA

CANDIDATA DEL PROGRAMA DE MASTERS EN ESTUDIOS LATINOAMERICANS Y CARIBEÑOS

UNIVERSIDAD UTRECHT, HOLANDA

SOLANAKLINE@YAHOO.COM/208-629-8073

7.4) Mexican American Families Project Information Sheet - Spanish Version

Poder y la Cocinera Mexicana-Americana

Solana Kline 208-629-8073, solanakline@yahoo.com

Aquí tengo información sobre mi proyecto y mis metas de confidencialidad:

Que es el proyecto?

-Esto es un proyecto de tesis de masters en Estudios Latinoamericanos y caribeños. Creé este proyecto con la ayuda de mis profesores en la Universidad Utrecht en Holanda. Mi investigación es para tres meses empezando ahora, en marzo, 2008.

-Mi pregunta de tesis actual es: ¿En cuales maneras son visibles los poderes de la cocinera en las dinámicas de la cocina residencial Mexicana-Americana? Lo que quiere decir esta pregunta es: ¿Como tiene poder la cocinera? Y ¿como usa poder en su casa? Entonces, con mi investigación quiero ver como la cocinera demuestra, gana y usa el poder que tiene en su familia. (Ejemplo: la cocinera decide lo que va a comer la familia y lo prepara si mismo; o la cocinera solo comparte recetas con algunas persona o con nadie!)

-Mi proyecto está en el campo de antropología cultural (los estudios de culturas humanas).

Cuando estoy en su casa usted, voy a usar el estilo de investigación llamado

“observación-participante”. Eso significa que si me deja usted, paso tiempo consigo en la casa cuando hace usted las rutinas diarias de la casa. Así voy a “observar”. También, si quiere usted, ayudo en la casa y así soy participante. Básicamente, solo quiero preguntarle

usted algunas preguntas y ver su día en la cocina/casa. Nunca tiene usted que parar su trabajo para ayudarme con el proyecto! Quiero acomodarle usted y cualquiera cantidad de tiempo que me puede usted ayudar es bien agradecido!

-Tengo cuestiones de entrevista que quiero presentarle si no le molesta!

- Todo mi proyecto e investigación es muy abierto. A veces es posible que le pregunto usted si puede usted repetir alguna historia o información porque es importante e interesante! Es posible que le voy a preguntar usted si puedo recordar sus respuestas o historias porque son muy buenas e interesantes! También quiero tener lo que dijo usted completo y no en fragmentas.
- Es mi meta principal que se siente usted que soy una persona fiable y digna de confianza entonces quiero que sepa usted lo siguiente:
- 1.) Si hay información con que me comparta usted pero no quiere usted que la información está compartida con otras personas, por favor dígame y respeto esta decisión.
 - 2.) Si quiere usted usar un nombre falso por el proyecto está bien!
 - 3.) Si en algún momento decide usted que ya no quiere usted ser parte del proyecto solo dígame!
 - 4.) Si tiene usted preguntas, por favor pregúntamelas!

Algo mas saber:

Su ayuda y participación hace mi proyecto posible. Sin usted no tengo información! Voy a ser abierta con todo lo que estoy escribiendo y preguntando todo el tiempo. Usted va a ser la primera persona leer mis notas y mi proyecta final. Cambio algún tipo de información que quiere usted. Durante el tiempo que pasa con usted, por favor dígame si algo le molesta usted o si hay algo que debo cambiar. Esto es mi primer proyecto de investigación y la ultima cosa que quiero hacer es hacerle usted sentirse incomodo!

7.5) Mexican American Families Information Sheet – English Version

Power and the Mexican-American Home Cook
Solana Kline 208-629-8073, solanakline@yahoo.com

Here is some information on my project and on confidentiality:

What is it?

-This is a Latin American and Caribbean Studies masters degree research project that I designed with my professors at Utrecht University in The Netherlands. My research is for three months starting in February and March of 2008.

-My actual thesis question is: In what ways are the powers of the *cocinera* visible in the dynamics of the Mexican-American home kitchen? What this is actually asking is: How does the Mexican-American home cook have power and how do they use it in their household? So, with my research I want to see how the home cook shows, gains, and uses the power that they have in their family(example: the cook decides what the family eats and s/he prepares it; or the cook only shares recipes with certain people or doesn't share them at all)

-My research is in the field of cultural anthropology, which is the study of human culture. When I am in your home I will be using the research style called "participant-observation". This means is that if you will let me, I will just hang out in your home with you while you do your normal daily routines and "observe" what you are doing. If you ask for help I will and "participate". I basically just want to ask you some questions and see your daily routines in the kitchen/house. You do not need to stop your day to help me with my project! I want to accommodate you and any time you can spend with me is greatly appreciated!

-I have interview questions that I would like to ask you at some point if you don't mind answering them.

-All of my research is very open. I might ask you to repeat important stories or information. I might ask you if I can use a tape recorder so that I can catch exactly what you are saying because your stories are important and I want to know more about them!

-It is my highest goal for you to feel that I am trustworthy so I want you to know the following:

- 1.) If there is information you tell me but do not want shared with anyone else, please let me know and I will respect that.
- 2.) If you would like to have a fake name used in my project that is fine!
- 3.) If at any point you decide that you do not want to be a part of my project just let me know!
- 4.) If you there are questions you have for me, ask them!

Something you should know:

Your help and participation makes my project possible. Without you I have no information! I will be open and up front with everything that am writing and asking you. You will be the first to review what I have written and I will change the information according to your privacy and desires. Throughout the time I spend with you please feel free to tell me if something is bothering you or that I should change. This is my first research project and the last thing I want to do is make you uncomfortable!

7.6) Mexican American Questionnaire – Spanish Version

CUESTIONARIO PARA COCINERAS MEXICANA-AMERICANAS:

¡SU VIDA ES INTERESANTE Y QUIERO SABER MÁS DE USTED!

¡Hola! Me llamo Solana Kline. Soy una estudiante del Master de Estudios Latinoamericanos en la Universidad Utrecht, Holanda. Para recibir mi diploma estoy haciendo un proyecto de investigación sobre cómo la cocinera/o Mexicana/o-Americana/o demuestra poder en su cocina de casa. Por favor, ¿le molesta usted completar algunas o todas de las preguntas siguientes? La información que usted proporciona en el cuestionario solo va a ser usado para mi composición de tesis. Si usted quiere usar un nombre falso está completamente bien.

Otro parte de mi proyecto consiste de un libro de cocina cultural. ¡Con su ayuda lo puedo hacer! Al final del cuestionario hay una sección para historias de migración/vida y para recetas que usted quiere compartir. Por favor, aunque usted no quiere hacer el cuestionario, ¡participe en la sección final para el libro de cocina cultural! El libro de cocina cultural va a ser llena de historias y recetas de mexicanos-americanos viviendo en Pocatello. Voy a publicar y vender este libro y 100% de las ganancias va a ir a organizaciones decididos por ustedes (le gente quien contribuye historias y recetas al proyecto).

¡Disfrute el cuestionario y muchísimas gracias por ayudarme con mi proyecto!

Familia:

- 1.)Nombre:
- 2.)La ciudad en que usted vive ahora:
- 3.)Quiénes son los miembro de su casa/familia?
- 4.)Cuáles idiomas se hablan los miembros de su casa?
- 5.)Dónde nacieron los miembros de la casa/familia?
- 6.)Cuántos niños adultos viven en su casa?
- 7.)Cuántas generaciones viven en su casa?
- 8.)Hay miembros de su casa que trabajan afuera de la casa? Y que hacen?

Comida:

- 1.) Hay Ciertas comidas/ingredientes a que usted se siente un cariño especial? 2.) Hay ciertas comidas que usted prepara específicamente para ciertas personas en su familia/casa? Incluyendo para si mismo?
- 2.) Por dónde compra usted su comida y por qué?
- 3.) Cuáles comidas son indispensables en su casa?
- 4.) Es importante para usted que su familia/miembros de casa disfrutan la comida que usted prepara?
- 5.) Hay comidas/ingredientes que usted usa en México pero no hay aquí?
- 6.) Hay ingredientes/comidas que usted usa por propósitos medicinales?
- 7.) Hay comidas/ingredientes que usted guarda para fiestas o ocasiones especiales?
- 8.) Se siente usted que sus emociones afectan la comida que usted está preparando?
- 9.) Cómo se sentiría usted si alguien que usted acaba de conocer por primera vez ofreció ayudarse en su (de usted) cocina?
- 10.) Cómo prepara usted comida diferente que sus padres/ familia natal?
- 11.) Cómo es diferente la comida Mexicana y la comida Americana?

Salud:

- 1.) Elije usted algunos ingredientes por sus ventajas de salud?
- 2.) Hay una diferencia en la calidad de comida entre México y los Estados Unidos?

Identidad Individual:

- 1.) Se siente usted que su familia se ve su cocinando como parte de su ser?
- 2.) Cuáles tipos de educación ha tenido usted?
- 3.) Que sería su trabajo ideal?
- 4.) En su corazón, a cual país se siente usted un gran cariño?
- 5.) Como se siente usted adentro/afuera de la cocina?
- 6.) Si de repente su familia decidió que no quería que usted cocina jamás, como se sentiría usted?
- 7.) Si usted tenía que dejar su casa por un año, como se sentiría usted de alguien nuevo cocinando para su familia? Sería usted preocupada/o?
- 8.) Tiene usted otro trabajo afuera o adentro de la casa?
- 9.) A veces se siente usted que debe ser pagado por el trabajo que hace usted en la casa/cocina?
- 10.) Hay una comida que usted hace que se hace sentir mucho orgullo y por qué?
- 11.) Cual es su receta favorita y por qué?
- 12.) Hay comida que usted prepara aunque en realidad usted no le gustan? Por qué lo hace entonces?
- 13.) Son importantes a usted las tradiciones Mexicanas?
- 14.) Cuáles palabras usaría usted para describirse?
- 15.) Cuáles palabras usaría su familia/miembros de casa para describir a usted?
- 16.) Se siente usted que su familia/miembros de casa respetan lo que usted hace en la cocina?
- 17.) Que son algunas cosas que usted hace específicamente para si mismo?
- 18.) Cómo se siente usted cuando su familia realmente disfruta la comida que usted prepara?
- 19.) Cómo se siente usted cuando su familia o ciertos miembros de la familia no les gusta la comida que usted prepara?

20.) Si usted hace una comida muy buena, le dicen a usted os miembros de la familia que está buena?

21.) Qué es tradición Mexicana para usted?

22.) Como se describiría a si mismo/a?

Conocimiento:

1.) Piensa usted que su familia respeta su conocimiento de cocina?

2.) Hay recetas que usa usted que son muy viejas? Si sí, conoce usted de dónde vinieron las recetas?

3.) Cómo aprendió usted cocinar?

4.) Las recetas que usted usa son las mismas que preparó su familia cuando usted aprendió cocinar?

5.) Le gusta usted ser creativa/o con recetas? Como usando ingredientes nuevas en una receta vieja?

6.) Cuando usted está enseñando alguien en su familia como preparar una receta, enseña usted la receta "original" o enseña usted la receta con los cambios creativos que usted ha hecho?

7.) Conoce usted algunas historias que se tratan de ciertas ingredientes/recetas?

8.) Hay ciertas cosas que hace usted cuando esta preparando comida que son importantes para el sabor de la comida (como cantando, mezclando un cierto numero de veces, bailando...)?

9.) Cuáles cosas son importantes a usted que usted quiere pasar a sus niños?

10.) Qué tipo de cosa le gusta usted platicar de cuando usted estaa cocinando/pasando tiempo en la cocina?

11.) Hay alguien en su casa que le ayuda a usted en la cocina?

12.) Prepara usted comida de recetas escritas o sabe usted las recetas por memoria?

13.) Le gusta usted tener gente ayudándose en la cocina?

14.) Es importante para usted que su conocimiento culinario está enseñando a sus niños?

15.) Hay recetas que usted considera ser recetas familiares/especificas a su familia?

16.) Cocina usted una receta exactamente lo mismo cada vez? Si no, por qué?

17.) Hay alguien en su familia que quiere aprender cocinar?

18.) Cuando usted necesita ayuda en la cocina, hay alguien que ofrece ayudarle o tiene usted hacerle ayudar?

19.) Disfruta usted compartir su conocimiento culinario?

20.) Si usted está enseñando a alguien como cocinar, enseña usted por medio de hablar o mostrar?

21.) Prefiere usted enseñar como cocinar a los hombres o las mujeres de su casa?

22.) Sabe usted algunos dichos sobre comida o la cocina?

Migración:

1.) Por qué emigró usted/ su familia a los Estado Unidos?

2.) Antes de venir a Pocatello, conoció usted/ su familia a gente en el área?

3.) Por qué vino usted/su familia a esta área de Pocatello?

4.) Se siente usted que su calidad de vida es mejor en México o en los Estado Unidos?

5.) Sobre todo, es usted feliz viviendo en los Estados Unidos? Y si no, por qué?

6.) Se siente usted que hay perjuicios contra usted/su familia viviendo en los Estados Unidos? Por qué?

7.) Qué es "Mexicano" para usted?

Dinero:

- 1.)En su familia, hay un fondo común del dinero ganado?
- 2.)Tiene usted acceso libre al dinero familiar?
- 3.)Quien va a comprar comida en su casa? Cuántas veces de la semana?

Rutinas:

- 1.)Qué son algunas rutinas diarias que usted tiene?
- 2.)Hay un horario de comida durante la semana que usted le gusta hacer?
- 3.)Se siente usted que duerme bastante cada noche? Si no, por qué?
- 4.)Se siente usted que vive por el horario de sus miembros de casa o hace usted su propio horario diario?

Espacio:

- 1.)Considera usted que la cocina es más suya que alguien más en la casa?
- 2.)Organiza usted la cocina?
- 3.)Dónde se sienta en la mesa y por qué?
- 4.)Dónde se sientan el resto de los miembros de la casa en la mesa y por qué?
- 5.)Dónde en la cocina pasa usted la mayoría de su tiempo?
- 6.)Cuántas personas prefiere usted tener en su cocina al mismo tiempo?
- 7.) Qué es la cocina para usted?
- 8.) Para cuáles cosas usas la cocina?

Consideraciones Especiales:

- 1.)Hay ciertas ingredientes que usted guarda para ocasiones especiales?
- 2.)Hay alguien en su familia/casa que tiene necesidades dietéticas especiales?
- 3.)Hay ingredientes que usted no usa a propósito? Por qué?

Tecnología:

- 1.)Hay electrodomésticos diferentes en los Estado Unidos que en México?
- 2.)Hay maquinas o herramientas de cocina que usted usa para preparar comida más rápido que hacerlo a mano?
- 3.)Hay ciertos electrodomésticos o herramientas de cocina que usted necesita, quiere? Y por qué?
- 4.)Hay situaciones que usted tiene la opción usar una maquina/herramienta en la preparación de comida (que hace el proceso de preparación más rápido) pero usted elige no usarlo? Por qué?
- 5.)Se siente usted que tecnología nueva afecta el sabor de la comida? Y cómo?
- 6.)Hay tecnología en su casa que usted piensa es innecesaria?

El Libro de Cocina Cultural, Historias y Recetas:

Si usted quiere ser parte del libro de cocina cultural, por favor complete usted lo siguiente. También incluya su información de contacto para que pueda yo enviarse a usted una copia del libro completo y también en caso de preguntas que tengo para usted. Muchísimas gracias!

- 1.)Por favor, describe (en detalle) sus historias de migración. Si hay información que usted no quiere compartir con su nombre real, por favor usa un nombre falso para que pueda yo todavía usar su historia en el libro porque es interesante e importante! Si usted no tiene una historia de migración de usted/ su familia, por favor escriba una

historia que usted se siente es importante para que gente leyendo este libro de cocina puede aumentar su entendimiento de los Mexicanos-Americanos del Sureste de Idaho!

2.) Por favor escriba usted una receta (en detalle) una receta que se siente usted cómoda/o compartiendo en el libro de cocina cultural. Por favor elija usted recetas que son de origen Mexicano o que son de alguna manera asociadas con su estilo de vida Mexicana-Americana.

*Por favor tome usted nota que la información en la sección del libro de cocina cultural va a ser impreso y vendido. Si usted tiene una receta privada, por favor que no la escriba aquí!

Muchísimas gracias por ser parte de mi proyecto! Si usted quiere más información sobre mi proyecto o de mi, contácteme! Su participación hace mi proyecto posible! Si usted conoce a otras familias Mexicanas-Americanas viviendo en el área de Pocatello/Chubbuck que me dejarían pasar tiempo en sus casas observando y participando en sus rutinas diarias (1-3 horas de la semana por un mes) por favor dígame! Otra vez gracias!

Saludos!

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7.7) Non-Hispanic Pocatello Resident Questionnaire

Non-Hispanic Heritage Questionnaire for Pocatello, Idaho Residents

Food:

- 1.) What do you consider to be Mexican food?
- 2.) Do you cook any Mexican food in your home?
- 3.) How do you feel Mexican food and American food are different?

Identity:

- 1.) What is the first thing that comes to mind when I say "Mexican" or "Mexico"?
- 2.) What do you think of when I say "Mexican cook" or "Mexican kitchen"?
- 3.) What is Mexican tradition?

Migration:

- 1.) How do you feel about Mexican migration/illegal immigration to the United States?
- 2.) Why do you think Mexican citizens come to the United States?
- 3.) What do Mexicans do in the United States?
- 4.) Do you feel people have a better standard of life in Mexico or in the United States?

Space:

- 1.) How do you picture a Mexican home kitchen?
- 2.) Who do you picture cooking in a Mexican home kitchen?
- 3.) Have you ever been in a Mexican-American home kitchen?

Mexico:

- 1.) Have you ever been to Mexico? What was it like?

Knowledge:

- 1.) Do you think Mexican cooks have special knowledge about food or how to cook?

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9.) PROJECT PHOTOGRAPHS



Arroz con Leche



Enchiladas Rojas



Enchiladas Verdes



Jamaica y Albondigas



Munquitos for Rosca de Reyes



Nicole and Edwin



**Pollo a la Diabla and Bacalao
with tostadas**



Enchiladas



Albondigas



Derrick helping at the tamale event



Vegetarian Tamales



Martha

Out of the melting pot and into the kitchen

Solana Kline







Martha and Fedra

