

Mexicanas' Food Voice and Differential Consciousness in the San Luis Valley of Colorado¹

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I never cooked you know. I was always a bookworm. Ever since I was a growing up. When it was time for the dishes, they couldn't find me, so my poor sister had to do them by herself. . . . We had an outhouse—a soldiers', a government toilet outside—and I'd take a book, you know, and I'd go there, and they'd say, "Where's Helen?" And somebody would pop up and say, "Oh she's in the toilet reading, she could be." And when I thought the dishes were half done or done I'd pop up. I never was responsible for them, they never depended on me, and my sister was such a good cook. She was a good cook and she griped about me not taking turns on the dishes but she didn't fight, she didn't mind. She was grown up on the job, you know, it was natural for her.²

These words of Helen Ruybal, a ninety-nine-year-old widow, mother of two, and former teacher, are part of a long-term ethnographic project I have been conducting since 1996 in the Mexican-American town of Antonito in rural Southern Colorado. I collected food-centered life histories from nineteen women, including Ruybal, and suggest that they reveal women's voice, identity, and worldview.

Antonito is six miles north of the New Mexico state line in the San Luis Valley, an eight thousand square-mile cold desert valley lying at approximately eight thousand feet above sea level between the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains. Antonito is located in Conejos County in the Upper Rio Grande region on the northern frontier of greater Mexico.³ The population of Antonito is 90% Hispanic and thus it is an excellent site to study the contemporary experience of rural Chicanas and Chicanos. My forthcoming book, tentatively titled *Mexicanas' Stories of Food, Identity and Land in the San Luis Valley of Colorado*,⁴ gives a full exposition of how my nineteen interviewees described land and water, defined food and meals, and enacted family, gender, and community relations. In this paper, I use excerpts from one woman's interviews to make two points—first, to affirm the value of the food-centered life history methodology, and second, to suggest how women can display differential consciousness through their practices and beliefs surrounding food.

Food Voice, Feminist Anthropology and *Testimonios*

For over two decades, I have been using a food-centered life history methodology in Italy and the United States to present women's food voices.⁵ Food-centered life histories are semi-structured tape-recorded interviews with willing participants, on

their beliefs and behaviors surrounding food production, preparation, distribution, and consumption. I developed this methodology out of a feminist goal of foregrounding the words and perspectives of women who have long been absent in recorded history. In the interviews women describe material culture as well as their subjective remembrances and perceptions. Topics include gardening, preserving food, past and present diets, recipes, everyday and ritual meals, eating out, foods for healing, eating in pregnancy, breast-feeding, and many other subjects (see Appendix 1 for a list of interview themes). For many women (and some men), food is a significant voice of self-expression. In the meals they cook, the rituals they observe, and the memories they preserve, women communicate powerful meanings and emotions.

Like other feminist ethnographers, I have grappled with how to present an authentic picture of my respondents, one that is as much theirs as possible.⁶ I used a tape-recorder so I could begin the process of representation with their words. Before doing interviews, I established informed consent, telling people in Antonito who I was and what I was doing there, promising confidentiality, and giving them the choice to participate or not.⁷ I asked for their permission to tape-record, explaining that I wanted to have their verbatim descriptions of their experiences, but I also assured them that they could turn the tape recorder off at any time and decline to answer any questions, both of which they did on occasion. While I tried eventually to address all of the topics on my list (see Appendix 1), interviews were conversations with their own momentum and wandered into many non-food topics.

I have not followed the practice of some ethnographers of citing transcriptions verbatim, but at the urging of participants, I have edited the transcriptions to achieve readability, while staying as close to their original language as possible. I eliminated repetition and filler expressions (e.g. "like," "you know"), edited lightly for grammar, and moved around phrases and sections to achieve greater coherence.

My methodology coheres with two linked intellectual traditions—feminist anthropology and *testimonios*. It shares feminist anthropology's goals of placing women at the center, foregrounding women's diversity, challenging gender oppression, and reconstructing theory based on women's experiences (Moore 1988). My use of food-centered life histories to give voice to marginalized women links with the research of other feminists who have examined food as women's voice⁸—particularly Hauck-Lawson's (1998) research on immigrants in New York City, Pérez's (2004) "Kitchen Table Ethnography" with women on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, and Abarca's (2001, 2004, 2006) "culinary chats" with Mexican and Mexican-American working class women—all of which use women's food stories to theorize about their identity, agency, and power.⁹

Like the *testimonios* gathered by the Latina Feminist Group, food-centered life histories are about "telling to live." *Testimonios* involve participants speaking for themselves about events they have witnessed, events centered on "a story that *needs* to be told—involving a problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, exploitation, or simply survival" (Beverly 1993: 73). *Testimonios* are personal narratives that reveal individual subjectivity while calling attention to broad political and economic forces. They grew out of Latin American liberation movements at the same time that feminism was emerging in politics and scholarship. Sternbach (1991) highlighted the

fact that these movements shared “breaking silences, raising consciousness, envisioning a new future, and seeking collective action” (Sternbach 1991: 95). Both feminism and *testimonios*, she said, linked the personal and the political, the “private, domestic or intimate sphere” with the “public, historic or collective one” (Sternbach 1991: 97). This is also the aim of food-centered life histories: to thrust the traditionally private sphere of cooking and feeding into the public arena and show the impact of women’s experiences on culture and history. The experiences and voices of rural Colorado *Mexicanas* have been left out of the historical record for too long,¹⁰ and recuperating them enhances understanding of the diversity of Mexican and Mexican American women. It fulfills a central goal in feminist ethnography, enriches our understanding of American culture, and makes possible more inclusive political policy.

Food and Differential Consciousness

Across cultures and history, food work can represent drudgery and oppression but also power and creativity. My second goal in this article is to show how women can challenge subordination and strive for agency through their food-centered life histories by evincing what Chela Sandoval (1991) calls “differential consciousness.” Differential consciousness is a key strategy used by dominated peoples to survive demeaning and disempowering structures and ideologies. It is the ability to acknowledge and operate within those structures and ideologies but at the same time to generate alternative beliefs and tactics that resist domination.¹¹ Differential consciousness is akin to Scott’s (1990) idea of the “hidden transcripts” developed by oppressed peoples to undermine public discourses upholding power structures. Ruybal and other women in her community took diverse stances towards food and were able, in Sandoval’s words, to function “within yet beyond the demands of the dominant ideology” (1991: 3).

Women can develop differential consciousness in their relationship to food, as Ruybal did, by challenging the dichotomy between production and reproduction that has been so detrimental to women’s social status.¹² As Engels originally pointed out in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, and feminist anthropologists have elaborated upon,¹³ the splitting of production and reproduction led to the privatization and devaluation of women’s labor both inside and outside the home, and, to quote Engels (1972: 120), the “world historical defeat of the female sex.” Interpreting Engels, Eleanor Leacock (1972: 41) argued that a major force in the subjugation of women has been “the transformation of their socially necessary labor into a private service.” This process has characterized much of women’s food work with the global decline of subsistence farming and the separation of production and consumption, but women in Antonito have resisted it in several ways.

Ruybal pursued three strategies throughout her life that displayed differential consciousness and enabled her to overcome the production–reproduction dichotomy surrounding food. First, she rejected cooking as pillar of her own identity yet respected women who did it—especially her sister Lila. Second, she welcomed and legitimized her husband’s cooking, and thus reduced the dichotomization of male and female labor. Third, she produced and sold *queso*—a fresh, white cow’s milk

cheese—and, thus, transformed kitchen work into paid, productive labor. In these ways, Ruybal minimized food's oppressive dimensions and enhanced its empowering ones. I focus on Ruybal's experience but place it into the broader cultural context by referring to other women I have interviewed in Antonito, some of whom shared Ruybal's strategies of publicly valuing women's domestic labor, enlisting men's help in the home, and making money from food. In contrast, other women in Antonito found cooking to be a symbol and channel of oppression (Counihan 2002, 2005). Food work offered diverse and conflicting avenues of self-realization for *Mexicanas* in Antonito as it has for women everywhere.

Antonito, Colorado

Antonito is a small town running six blocks east to west and twelve blocks south to north along U.S. Route 285 and State Highway 17 in Southern Colorado. Several Indian groups, especially the Ute, Navaho, and Apache, originally inhabited the region around Antonito in what is today Conejos County. This area was claimed by Spain until Mexican independence in 1821 and by Mexico until the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, when it became part of the United States. In the mid-1850s, the earliest Hispanic settlers immigrated from Rio Arriba County, New Mexico and settled in the agricultural hamlets of Conejos, Guadalupe, Mogote, Las Mesitas, San Rafael, San Antonio, Ortiz, La Florida, and Lobatos on the Conejos, San Antonio, and Los Pinos rivers. When the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad tried to build a depot in 1881 in the county seat of Conejos, landowners refused to sell their property, so the railroad established its station and a new town in Antonito.¹⁴

The town grew steadily due to its commercial importance, saw mills, perlite mines, ranching, and agriculture through and after World War II, with its population peaking at 1255 in 1950 and then dropping steadily to 873 in 2000. In the 2000 census, ninety percent of residents declared themselves "Hispanic." Today the town hosts a pharmacy, a locally owned supermarket, three restaurants, a seasonal food stand, two gas stations, a video store, a hair salon, and several gift and used-goods stores. The climate is cold, dry, and dusty with average annual rainfall a meager eight inches and only two frost-free months a year. Traditional agriculture and ranching depended on the complex ditch or *acequia* system that channeled water from the rivers into the fields, but today commercial agriculture relying on center-pivot irrigation is increasingly common.

Today, poverty is widespread in Antonito, Conejos County, and the predominantly Hispanic rural region of Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado that Martínez (1998: 70) calls the *siete condados del Norte*, the seven rural counties of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado with Chicano/a majorities.¹⁵ In the Antonito area, important employers are the town, the county, the perlite mine, the schools, the hospitals in La Jara and Alamosa, and the service economy in Alamosa thirty miles north. Many people get by on odd jobs, baby-sitting, trading in used goods, home health care work, public assistance jobs, and welfare. In the summer and fall there is a small tourist economy due to the popular Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad, and to hunting, fishing, and vacationing in the nearby San Juan Mountains.

Helen Ruybal

Helen Gallegos Ruybal grew up with her parents, two brothers, and one sister in the small farming and ranching hamlet of Lobatos, four miles east of Antonito. They owned a modest five acres of land that Helen's mother inherited from her parents. Helen's father used the land to raise some crops and farm animals to provide for their subsistence. She said, *My father used to milk four or five cows, to get around, to get going. And we had two or three pigs and he took care of them and butchered them at the right time, and we had lots of pork.* Helen was not born into the local elite, called *ricos*, whom she defined as those having *money and ranches and animals and cows and water*, but she did achieve membership in the Hispanic elite through education, work, and accumulation of wealth.

Ruybal's parents followed the traditional division of labor: *he provided and she raised the children.* When her father was young, Ruybal said, *He was a common laborer.* But later he opened a small store and also taught school for a while. She remarked: *My father opened up a little convenience store just in a room of the house because the school was there and the kids would go buy candy and go buy peanuts. And they had cigarettes and tobacco and all those things . . . And my mother just cooked and sewed and raised the kids and put up the garden food.* Ruybal's mother was like most women in the community, including her sister Lila, whose primary work was gardening, preserving food, cooking for the family, caring for children, sewing, quilting, cleaning, washing clothes, and other forms of reproductive labor.

Rejecting Cooking, Respecting Women Who Cooked

But Ruybal diverged from the norm represented by her mother and sister and spent as little time as possible on domestic chores throughout her life, while maximizing her productive paid work outside the home. Her food-centered life history revealed both the tactics she followed and the ideologies she developed to support her choices—ideologies grounded in differential consciousness. Ruybal eschewed the housewife role and cooked as little as possible, but valued and benefited from the help of her mother, sister, and husband. Her strategy minimized the subordinating dimensions of reproductive labor.

Even as a girl Ruybal had ambitions beyond the traditional female role: *I wanted to be different. I wanted to go my own way*, she said. She aspired to *education, earning money, and doing some good to people.* Assistance from her sister and parents was critical to Ruybal's ability to study and work: *I had my likes and dislikes supported at home. . . . My parents were interested in education for all of us . . . and my folks believed in going without so we could have supplies and go to school and we never missed it.* By running a store and raising their own food, Ruybal's parents were able to send her to Loretto Academy, a Catholic boarding school in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she completed high school and teacher certification. She returned home and began teaching while she went part-time and summers to Adams State College in nearby Alamosa. She achieved a BA in 1954, which enhanced her credentials and earning power. She was employed steadily, first in several different hamlets around Antonito,

and later in the better paying Chama, New Mexico public schools forty miles away over the San Juan Mountains.

Ruybal's employment gave her financial independence, which meant that she did not have to marry for economic reasons as many girls did. Helen's future husband, Carlos Ruybal, courted her for years and both families supported the match, but Helen resisted marriage: *I wanted to be free to do what I wanted. . . . I didn't want to be tied down. . . . I didn't want to get married, and I refused to all the time, for the sake of not having a family to keep. . . . I wanted to work, and I felt like if I had children, I wasn't going to be able to work. I skipped marriage for a long time.*

Not only did she avoid marriage, but Ruybal also rejected cooking and the prominent role it played in many women's identity: *I never cooked you know. I was always a bookworm. Ever since I was a growing up.* For Ruybal food production, preparation, and clean-up were marginal activities she avoided if she could: *I'm not really a kitchen guy, you know what I mean, a provider in the kitchen.* Nonetheless, she could not escape cooking entirely but made it clear that she was a haphazard and indifferent cook. For example, one day she visited me and brought a gift of bread she had just made, saying, *Is it good? I thought it was kind of good. Sometimes it doesn't come out right. . . . I'm not a good cook [laughs], I'm not a steady cook.* Another time Ruybal spoke about making home-made tortillas, which she and everyone else in town thought were superior to store-bought ones, but she acknowledged her own uncertain skill: *Sometimes I make tortillas. And sometimes they come out good and sometimes they don't, not so good. And oh well.*

Ruybal eventually succumbed to cultural pressure to marry and she had to manage the household and the two children who came soon after her marriage. Crucially important was the support of her mother and sister: *My sister Lila was my right hand; she raised my kids. I'd come from my home, one mile, and I'd leave my kids there. What they didn't have, they had it there, and what they had, well they used it. She took care of them, fed them, and cleaned them up, and when I came in the evening I visited with her, and I picked them up, and I went home.*

Ruybal respected her sister's domestic identity, proficiency in the home, and accomplished cooking: *Lila had six children. . . . She used to sew and crochet and knit and make quilts, pretty ones. . . . And she cooked and she baked. . . . Her children still remember the jelly rolls, and they came out perfect like the ones in the store. . . . She used to make pies, a table full of pies, apple pies. . . . And she had such a good heart, and she was a good cook, she was a good housekeeper.*

Throughout her life Ruybal valued her sister and worked hard to stay on good terms with her: *We got along fine until she died. We were in favor of each other always, since we were growing up. . . . And we never got mad at each other, and we never got into a fight. . . . If it was for my side, she'd go out of her way to do it, and I'd go out of my way to appreciate it. I gave her a lot of things. . . . If she needed twenty dollars, I gave it to her. . . . I always would give her every gift like that, any amount. And she would accept it. . . . I had a good job in the first place, and I had less children, and more money, more money coming in. I was working and I couldn't miss a day and she never earned money. She just cooked, and washed and ironed, and took care of her kids and my kids.*

Even though she said her sister "just" cooked, Ruybal was able to appreciate and benefit from her sister's assumption of traditional female duties while at the same

time she rejected them for herself. Not all women in Antonito were able to forge mutual respect out of difference, and public criticism of other women's choices was not uncommon. But Ruybal and her sister displayed differential consciousness by valuing and benefiting from each other's different choices vis-à-vis domestic labor and public work.

Blending Gender Roles: Involving Husband in Cooking

Ruybal's food-centered life history revealed how she improved her status by involving her husband Carlos in domestic chores and thus challenged the splitting of male and female labor so instrumental to women's subordination.¹⁶ Ruybal did not marry until she was sure that Carlos would support her career as a teacher. She said, *He thought of me. If I was going to work, he didn't want to put any objections, just go ahead and work. And . . . the first thing, [my daughter] Carla came. And Carlos helped me a lot and I helped him a lot. . . . And then, not even two years later, [my son] Benito came. I wondered how far I was going that way. And I didn't want a large family. . . . So after that, well, we just didn't let our family grow bigger. . . . We were both combined. We both wanted the same thing.*

Because of her economic contributions to the marriage and busy work schedule, Ruybal was able to secure her husband's help at home and to skirt some of the domestic labor that fell to most women: *I never had to cook. . . . I had kids, but they went to boarding school. I had them in the summer and Carlos used to help me a lot. In fact, they'd be with him at the ranch. . . . He would [cook] when I wasn't home. On Fridays when I came from school he had supper ready. He did fried potatoes, he did fried beans, and he did everything fried quickly, because he didn't want to be at the stove watching it. . . . And he cooked and he had a good meal and I helped him too, we both cooked.* Carlos learned to cook as many men did during summers in the all-male sheep and cattle camps, but unlike most, he utilized his skills at home.

Ruybal described the prevailing gender ideology based on clear and separate male/female work and the differential strategies and consciousness that she—and some others—upheld: *People just wanted to go that a lady's job is a lady's job. . . . They didn't expect the wife to go out and plow the garden or to pick up the plants or brush. They didn't like for them to do men's jobs. . . . And a man's job would be a man's job. . . . But I knew husbands that did all the housework . . . and they took care of the babies, put them to bed and fed them, changed them, dressed them, and changed the diapers, and people would laugh at that, for me they did too. . . . People would be nasty about it—some would—they were jealous. . . . They didn't want men to be that soft and kind-hearted. . . . But others said, well, she deserves it, that he be considerate. She deserves that help. . . . They would consider it right, she deserves it if she works and earns the bread and butter, why not do the dishes for her and do the floor, and make the beds and things like that? And others would think that that's ladies work—make the beds and wash the floor. . . . Some men didn't do anything but eat and provide—provide flour, provide money, provide salt and pepper. All those things but they wouldn't do anything in the kitchen.*

Carlos liked to be a helper always. . . . I always had some other little thing to do, understand? I didn't have it to sit down here and watch. I did other things that had to be done, even little things and bigger things in the home, or in my job, my duty. Because I had to be prepared for that every day and I saw that I was before I tackled anything else. In the mornings, when I went to Taos [to teach], he'd get up early in the morning and run my car, warm and ready to go and he'd come in and prepare breakfast for me. . . . He saw me out and the dishes were left on the table and buying more bread was left on the table and he'd get those things ready for the week, he'd do it.

Ruybal's relatively egalitarian marriage went against the publicly stated value of men controlling family and budget. One man told me that he knew several marriages that fell apart when the women bettered themselves through education, attained jobs outside the home, and gained financial independence. Husbands did not always define their wives' economic success as a boon, but according to Ruybal, Carlos respected her brains and business acumen, and they worked together as successful business partners, with Helen bringing in a steady salary and Carlos managing the growing ranch. Their cooperation allowed them to maximize their economic position and accumulate land and cattle, attaining the status of *ricos*.

Ruybal's economic power outside the home raised her value in the home. Involving her husband in the family cooking and admiring him for it improved the status of food work, reduced her domestic workload, established reciprocity, and challenged the subordination implicit in the expectations that women feed and serve men (cf. DeVault 1991). In contrast, another Antonito woman, Bernadette Vigil, described how her Puerto Rican husband humiliated her by forcing her to cook rice his way, and threw her creations against the wall until she "got it right" (Counihan 2002, 2005). Vigil's was an extreme situation, and most women fell somewhere in between Ruybal and Vigil, cooking—sometimes willingly and sometimes not—and spending much of their time on domestic chores, especially feeding men and children.

Transforming Reproduction to Production: Making and Selling Cheese

Ruybal's food-centered life history detailed how she transformed food work from "private service" to public gain by selling cheese she made from the milk of the family's cows. She said, *For ten years, at least ten years, maybe more, I made cheese, white cheese. My husband and my son used to milk at the ranch and bring it from there to town. . . . Cheese was a luxury item, like ice cream on a cake. . . . Oh, that used to be my job, and I'd use that money for a lot of little things. Even big things, I'd just put it with the rest of the money. . . . That was a job, but I liked the idea, I didn't work hard. Even when I went to school, I'd leave the cheese hanging and I'd go away and come back and it was all ready to take it out and put it in the pan in the refrigerator. . . . As long as I had the milk, instead of throwing it away, I made cheese. That's what I did it for more than for an income. But I loved to get the money that I got from my work.*

Converting reproductive labor to productive work enhanced Ruybal's pride, money, and power—in her culture and in her marriage—and enabled her to develop

differential consciousness towards food work as she simultaneously minimized its importance in her identity and valued its economic contribution. Many other women in Antonito used their food preparation skills to make money. For example, Ramona Valdez grew up on a ranch in Guadalupe with her parents and two siblings, and from the 1930s through the 1950s, she regularly made cheese and butter, which she sold for fifty cents a pound. Valdez also raised and sold turkeys. Through these activities, she was able to accumulate \$800, a lot of money in the 1950s. Pat Gallegos made and sold cheese in the 1990s. Flora Romero was renowned for planning and cooking the food for funeral dinners and weddings. Gloria Garcia and Dora Sandoval both owned and ran local restaurants, and they catered weddings and parties as well. Several women made and sold tortillas, burritos, *empanaditas*, or tamales. Selling food in public gave what they ate in the home a monetary value and transformed food work from undervalued "reproduction" into remunerated "production." By holding differential attitudes towards these diverse forms of food preparation women were able to value their own work and that of others.

Conclusion

Ruybal's food-centered life history showed how she used food as a path to dignity and power, key issues in women's mediation of gender roles. She was among a minority of women in her community who achieved a college degree, a steady career, and a reduced domestic workload; nonetheless she was not unique but rather fell on a continuum of acceptable roles for women. Indeed almost all of the nineteen women I interviewed worked for money for varying periods of time. As they went in and out of the work force, their domestic roles contracted and expanded. Their experiences showed the permeability of the boundaries between public and private, production and reproduction, a permeability that some women, like Ruybal, were able to exploit to gain social prestige and economic power.

Ruybal's food-centered life history revealed her differential consciousness. She functioned "within yet beyond" dominant beliefs about women's food roles—*within* by valuing domestic labor and those who did it, *beyond* by curtailing cooking and using food to further her identity as a worker: *within* by recognizing the gender-dichotomized power structure of her culture, *beyond* by transcending gender oppositions. She, more than many women in her community, managed to shape "the relationship between women's reproductive and productive labor" (Moore 1988: 53), an essential step toward gender equality. Ruybal's flexible attitudes and activities surrounding food enabled her to be economically empowered and socially valued, and to attain the sense of belonging and respect that are hallmarks of what scholars have called cultural citizenship (Flores & Benmayor 1997).

Food-centered life histories are a valuable means to gather information that may otherwise be inaccessible (Hauck-Lawson 1998). They can reveal women's nutritional status, economic realities, psycho-emotional states, social networks, family concerns, and even spouse abuse (Ellis 1983). This information can buttress public policies relevant to women's needs, such as the WIC program, food stamps, and meals for senior citizens; small-business loans for women to start up food-based

enterprises; and publicly funded child-care programs to permit women to work and attain parity with men.

I have used food-centered life histories to project Ruybal's voice into the public arena and counter the silencing that has been a central weapon in women's oppression (hooks 1989). Ruybal and other *Mexicanas'* food stories are *testimonios* that counteract erasure and affirm the value of women's labor, memory, and resourcefulness. They increase understanding of Chicanas' diversity in the United States, and challenge universalizing and demeaning portrayals (Zavella 1991).

Appendix 1 Food Centered Life Histories

Food-centered life histories consist of tape-recorded semi-structured interviews with willing participants, focusing on behaviors, experiences, beliefs, and memories centered on food production, preservation, preparation, cooking, distribution, and consumption. The following is a list of key topics presented in condensed form. In an interview, questions are not nearly so condensed and they follow the flow of conversation. Many lead naturally to further topics without prompting.

(1) Consumption

What are people/you/your family eating?

- (a) Where do foods come from, local vs. imported foods?
- (b) Diversity of cuisines?
- (c) Vegetarianism?
- (d) Picky eaters?
- (e) Processed foods?
- (f) Fast vs. slow foods?
- (g) Dietary make-up?
- (h) Nutritional composition?
- (i) Seasonal, weekly variation?

Describe the quality of food.

Describe your meals: names, when, what, where, with whom.

- (a) Describe eating at home.
- (b) Describe eating out—school, daycare, restaurants, fast food, etc.

Describe the atmosphere and social relations of the eating experience.

Describe the current practices about outsiders eating in the home.

Describe the most important holidays and the role of food and commensality.

Do you know anyone with fussy eating habits, eating disorders, body image issues?

Do you know anyone suffering hunger, malnutrition, or food-related health problems?

How do individuals and the community deal with hunger and malnutrition?

Describe the relationship between food and health. Are foods used in healing?

Describe beliefs and practices surrounding eating in pregnancy.

Describe beliefs and practices surrounding eating during the post-partum period.

Describe the beliefs and practices surrounding infant feeding.

Over your lifetime, what are the most important changes in foodways? Their causes? Effects?

Describe outstanding food memories, good or bad.

Describe symbolic foods and their meanings.

(2) Production

How and by whom are foods produced, processed, and prepared?

Who cooks with what principal foods, ingredients, spices, and combinations?

What are some key recipes?

How are singles, couples or families handling the division of labor at home and at work?

- (a) Who does the meal planning, shopping, cooking, serving, clearing, dish-washing?
- (b) Who does other chores—bathroom, floors, clothes-washing, ironing, child-care?

How are boy and girl children being raised vis-à-vis food chores?

Describe the kitchen, place in the home, appliances, cooking tools, and technology.

Is there home gardening, canning, drying, freezing, brewing, baking, etc.? Recipes?

Describe the garden, layout, plants, labor, yearly cycle.

(3) Distribution

Describe your food acquisition.

Who procures food, by what means, where, when, and at what cost?

Do you shop in a grocery store, supermarket, farmers' market, coop, or CSA?

Is food exchanged or shared? How, with whom, when, why?

Is there a food bank, food pantry or soup kitchen in the community? Describe.

(4) Ideology

Describe food uses in popular culture, literature, films, art, advertising, music, etc.

Is food used in religion, magic, or witchcraft?

(5) Demographic Data:

Describe date of birth, marriage, children, parents, occupations, residences, etc.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was published as "Food as Mediating Voice and Oppositional Consciousness for Chicanas in Colorado's San Luis Valley," in *Mediating Chicana/o Culture: Multicultural American Vernacular*, ed. Scott Baugh, Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006, pp. 72–84. I thank Scott Baugh for offering new ways of thinking about my work. I thank Penny Van Esterik for helpful comments and my husband, Jim Taggart, for his support and insights. I thank the people of Antonito for their hospitality and all the women who participated in my research for their generosity, especially Helen Ruybal, an extraordinary woman who passed away at the age of 100 in 2006. This paper is dedicated to her memory.
2. Direct quotations from my interviews with Helen Ruybal appear in italics throughout the paper.
3. Paredes (1976: xiv) defined Greater Mexico as "all the areas inhabited by people of a Mexican culture" in the U.S. and Mexico. See also Limón (1998). "*Mexicano*" is one of the most common terms that the people of Antonito use to describe themselves, along with Hispanic, Spanish, and Chicana/o. The life story of Helen Ruybal, like the lives of other women living in rural areas of Greater Mexico, differs in many ways from those of the urban Mexican and Mexican-American women of her generation explored by Ruiz (1993).
4. This book is under contract with the University of Texas Press.
5. See especially my book *Around the Tuscan Table: Food, Family and Gender in Twentieth Century Florence* (2004) as well as Counihan (1999, 2002, 2005).
6. See Behar and Gordon (1995), Gluck and Patai (1991), and Wolf (1992).
7. The American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics guided my research: <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>
8. On the food voice see Brumberg (1988), especially in her chapter "Appetite as Voice" reprinted in this volume. See also Avakian (1997) who collected personal accounts of cooking and eating from women of various class and ethnic groups. Thompson (1994) collected stories from eighteen women of color and lesbians who used food to cry out against racism, poverty, abuse, and injustice. Hauck-Lawson (1998) showed how one Polish American woman expressed through food her social isolation, depression, and declining self-image—issues that she was unable to speak about directly and that affected her health and diet.
9. Historically, the production, preservation and preparation of food were central to women's roles and identity in the Hispanic Southwest (Deutsch 1987). See Cabeza de Baca (1949, 1954), Gilbert (1942) and Jaramillo (1939, 1955) on the recipes, cooking, and culture of Hispanic New Mexico. Many of the Mexican American women interviewed by Elsasser et al. (1980) in New Mexico and by Patricia Preciado Martin (1992, 2004) in Arizona described foodways and dishes similar to those of Antonito. Williams (1985) and Blend (2001a, b) used a feminist perspective to uncover both the liberating and oppressive dimensions of women's food work and responsibility. Abarca (2001, 2004, 2006) used "culinary chats" and Pérez used "kitchen-table ethnography" to explore Mexican and Mexican-American women's diverse lives. See also Bentley (1998), Montaña (1992), Taggart (2002, 2003), and Taylor and Taggart (2003). For fascinating analyses of literary representations of Chicanas and food, see Ehrhardt (2006), Goldman (1992), and Rebolledo (1995).
10. Deutsch (1987: 11) wrote, "Written history of female minorities or 'ethnics' is rare, that of Chicanas or Hispanic women rarer though increasing, and of Chicanas or Hispanic women in Colorado virtually non-existent."
11. See Segura and Pesquera (1999) on diverse oppositional consciousness among Chicana clerical workers in California. Gloria Anzaldúa's "*Oyé como ladra: el lenguaje de la frontera*" is a wonderful example of differential consciousness expressed through language use (1987: 55–6).
12. Two recent discussions of Latinas' role in transnational food production that undermine the production/reproduction, male/female dichotomy are Barndt (2002) and Zavella (2002).
13. See Lamphere (2000), Leacock (1972), Moore (1988), Rosaldo (1974), Sacks (1974), Sargent (1981).
14. On the history, culture, and land use of the San Luis Valley, see Aguilar (2002), Bean (1975), Deutsch (1987), García (1998), Gutierrez and Eckert (1991), Martínez (1987, 1998), Peña (1998), Simmons (1979), Stoller (1982), Swadesh (1974), Taggart (2002, 2003), Taylor and Taggart (2003), Tushar (1992), Weber (1991), and Weigle (1975).
15. The *siete condados del norte* are Costilla and Conejos Counties in Colorado, and Taos, Río Arriba, San Miguel, Mora, and Guadalupe Counties in New Mexico (Martínez 1998: 70).
16. See Ybarra (1982) and Pesquera (1993) on the relationship of Chicanas' earning power and work to husbands' sharing of household labor.

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