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COMMODIFIED PERCEPTION OF CULTURE: A RHETORICAL INQUIRY OF FOOD ADVERTISEMENT NARRATIVES

CONSUELO CARR SALAS

Doctoral Program in Rhetoric and Composition

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Dean of the Graduate School

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Dedication

To those who have helped me up the mountain.

COMMODIFIED PERCEPTION OF CULTURE: A RHETORICAL INQUIRY OF FOOD ADVERTISEMENT NARRATIVES

by

CONSUELO CARR SALAS, B.A., M.A.

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION: ORIGINS OF THIS INQUIRY

One evening I rushed into my neighborhood grocery store and frantically looked up to the aisle markers with the list of products available in each aisle looking for premade salsa. I zigzagged through the aisles when suddenly I stopped in my tracks. There it was. A huge aisle sign for Aisle 5b: "Mainstream Salsa" (see Figure 1.1). "Mainstream Salsa?" I thought to myself. "What exactly is that supposed to mean?"

Figure 1.1: Mainstream Salsa

I live in El Paso, Texas—a border city that sits directly next to Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México. According to United States census data, El Paso is 80 percent Hispanic, and it is commonplace to see an aisle dedicated to Mexican premade food products, even in national

chain grocery stores. The Mexican premade foodstuff found in this aisle expands what can generally be found in the "Ethnic" or "Mexican" aisle of grocery stores in other locations. In this aisle, you can find Mexican Coca-Cola, packaged in the same red and white label but made with real cane sugar instead of high fructose corn syrup; Jarritos, a Mexican flavored soda packaged with three different sized *jarros* (jugs) aligned in order from small to medium to large; Las Palmas red and green *enchilada* sauces, featuring images of plump red or green enchiladas perfectly plated; Doña María's *mole*, a *chile* chocolate sauce, always sold in a short glass container with the image of a plate of chicken with mole; and *El Mexicano nopales*, with a label that shows strips of de-thorned cactus pads. This aisle is a familiar space for shoppers in El Paso as most common Mexican premade foodstuff can be found here, but off to the side of this aisle was aisle 5b, "Mainstream Salsa."

I was curious what the use of the word "mainstream" as an adjective with salsa really meant. Mainstream, according to the Oxford dictionary (2017), is defined as "The ideas, attitudes, or activities that are shared by most people and regarded as normal and conventional." Looking at the literal phrasing in aisle 5b, the use of the term mainstream with salsa asserts that the salsa found in this aisle would be one that has been generally accepted as meeting normal characteristics of salsa. However, this still left questions of what these general characteristics are and to whom these characteristics are acceptable?

I walked into the aisle to see exactly what was stocked under "Mainstream Salsa." Within the aisle I found Hatch Green Chile from the Hatch Valley of New México, with its iconic "Hatch" typography; Pace *Picante Sauce* with a bright orange-and-yellow sun; and *Cholula* hot sauce with the image of a woman dressed in white sitting beneath the archway of an adobe house. This moment is representative of marketers and producers of prepackaged foodstuffs

feeding us, consumers, a narrative of a culture's foodstuff. This of course is in opposition to us learning this knowledge from the people of the culture. After critical reflection of this moment, I began examining how Mexican foodstuffs are packaged and presented to customers.

After speaking with Food Studies scholar Meredith E. Abarca at my university about this, I noticed more and more that certain types of images are prevalent on numerous Mexican food product labels, and I took my exploration deeper. While it may seem that there is variety in the images used to signify that said product is "Mexican," this is actually an illusion. Examining tostada chip bags, tortillas, or salsa reveals several commonly used stereotypical images. You may see actual foodstuff plated enticing the consumers' eye (see Figure 1.2). There may be images of Mexican women, such as the Madonna *v*. whore binary, at work with either a motherly or sultry Mexican woman (see Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4). When Mexican men are portrayed, they are depicted as either the "sleeping Mexican man" or the *charro* (traditional horseman from México) with or without a horse (see Figure 1.5). Absent representations of people themselves, there may simply be the *sombrero* or the *zarape*. Such representations shouldn't come as a surprise as these images have been used for close to a century to represent México and Mexican people and have become visual tropes for this group (Behnken and Smithers, 2015). When examining Mexican food products, very rarely will you find imagery that goes beyond these representations.

While there are a limited number of images used in conjunction with Mexican food products, the sale of Mexican food products in the United States has steadily increased in the last century. As an example, "Doritos and Tostitos tortilla chips [are] the second and third most popular-selling snack chips in the country (behind Lay's Potato Chips)" (Bentley, 2004, p. 209). More recently, Associate Press reporter J.M. Hirsch (2013) reported,

> Salsa overtaking ketchup as America's No. 1 condiment was just the start. These days, tortillas outsell burger and hot dog buns; sales of tortilla chips trump potato chips; and tacos and burritos have become so ubiquitously "American," most people don't even consider them ethnic. (para. 1-3)

It is clear that Mexican foodstuffs have increasingly gained popularity with a United States market; however, to say that these foods are "American," is wrought with complexity.

Figure 1.2: Plated Food on Can Label

Figure 1.3: Sultry Mexican Woman

Figure 1.4: Motherly Mexican Woman

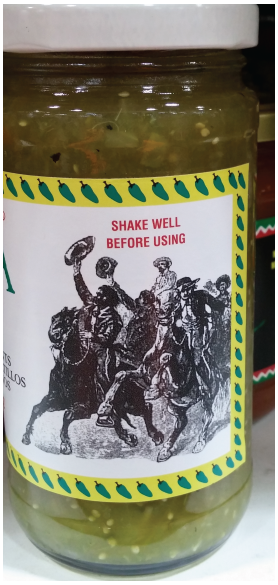

Figure 1.5: Men on Horseback

While it may be hard to fathom now, U. S. consumers rejected many foods from México in the late 19th and early 20th (see Salas and Abarca 2015; Mendoza Guerrero 2015). As an example,

> On May 13, 1899, *The Los Angeles Record* ran a story about the near-death experience suffered by Miss. Maude Hufford, 'one of the most handsomest girls in Los Angeles [...] a most pronounced blonde [with] beautiful flaxen hair, a pearly complexion and large expressive blue eyes […]' who 'had been lying at the point of death since early last Sunday morning […] due to ptomaine poisoning, produced by a tamale that was composed of putrified [sic] meat. [...] In their reading of this report, published in one of Los Angeles' "most liberal newspapers," food journalists Victor and Mary Lau Valle state that while "[t]here's no proof that a 'putrified' tamale was responsible for Hufford's poisoning," the reporter makes a strong effort to "convict a cuisine by means of racist analogy." The description of the girl, according to Valle and Valle, captures "the image of Anglo racial purity [which] was stricken by deceptive spices and 'bad meat,' the reporter's shorthand for racial defilement. (as qtd. in Salas and Abarca, 2015, p. 203)

As is clear in this short excerpt, while consumers in the U.S. have grown to accept and joyfully consume Mexican foodstuffs, this is a fairly recent shift in attitude.

Also, by stating that these products have "become so ubiquitously 'American,' most people don't even consider them ethnic" demonstrates a clear example of cultural appropriation of a minority group's foodstuff by U.S. consumers writ large. Many foods that were once unpalatable or unappealing to dominant white culture have, through cultural appropriation, entered the U.S. mainstream food system (Gabaccia, 1998). As bell hooks (1992) argued, this is the "commodification of difference" that "promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization" (p. 36). Through cultural appropriation by the dominant culture,

these foods have been accepted without necessarily accepting the people who produce this food and the political, cultural, and socio-economic context for which the foods were created.

In summation, more Mexican foodstuffs have become accepted by U.S. consumers, and this increase in acceptance has translated into an increase in sales of Mexican food products within the United States; however, the increase in sales is coupled with limited images used to signify that those food products are Mexican. The limited imagery falls in line with what writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) has called the "danger of the single story." According to *New York Times* reporter David Brookes (2016), the danger of the single story is

> complex human beings and situations are reduced to a single narrative: when Africans, for example, are treated solely as pitiable poor, starving victims with flies on their faces. [Adichie's] point was that each individual life contains a heterogeneous compilation of stories. If you reduce people to one, you're taking away their humanity. (para. 1-2)

The danger of the single story according to Salas and Abarca (2015), is "the process of having only one version of an image, metaphor, or symbol, which leads to a single essentialized interpretation" (p. 208). Therefore, the danger in having such limited representations of Mexicans on Mexican food products is that these images reduce the heterogeneity of Mexican culture, people, and their foodstuffs.

Arlene Dávila, Associate Professor of American Studies and Anthropology at New York University, smartly complicates the concept of stereotypes within advertising. Speaking to the marketing and making of Latinos in the U.S. specifically, Dávila (2012) explained,

> […] the categorization, ordering, and simplification at the heart of any process of stereotyping are necessary components of human interaction and communication. What makes stereotypes so troublesome is not that they order and simplify information by

> reducing complexity to a few limited conventions, but that in doing so, they both reflect and, more important, engender social hierarchies. As a vast literature has clearly shown, stereotypes are never intrinsically negative or positive, but are always historically created and produced in conversation with social hierarchies of daily life. They work by restricting the range of interpretations and therefore facilitating the evaluations that reproduce and valorize the social distinctions at play in the greater society. Even when individuals may interpret these images and ideas differently or imbue them with an idiosyncratic meaning, these renditions are by necessity framed within dominant social conventions. (p. 82)

To Dávila's point, while limited visual representations of Mexicans and Mexican Americans themselves are not inherently damaging, they are problematic because they circulate in a cultural dynamic that places them as "othered" from dominant culture ideology.

Because images associated with food products are so intimately connected with the culture of the food product, they especially have the potential to create a single essentialized interpretation of a group (Salas and Abarca, 2015). Therefore, our attention needs to turn to images paired with foodstuffs because they are the "mundane practices [of the everyday], not one of which is important but each of which, taken together, are the concrete materials of which we constitute our selves" and others (Dickinson, 2001, p. 23-24).

Paying careful attention to the micro moments of our everyday interactions with images paired with ethnic food products is what this dissertation does. It highlights the small moments that do not individually account for constructions of cultures but collectively and over time lead toward a macro understanding of certain groups and cultures. It calls attention to the product packaging and logos used to demonstrate that these interactions, no matter how small, continue

to contribute to a collective understanding of the people of the food. Additionally, it delves into what these images do when there is an attempt by individuals and groups to translate their cultural identity to another with a limited sign system.

In this chapter I introduce readers to the multidisciplinary conversations that informed this study, the theoretical framework that guided this study, as well as a short explanation of the methods used to conduct this study. This work opens a space where visual rhetorics, cultural rhetorics, food studies, technical communication, and critical race theory can expand and work together to understand how visuals associated with racial and ethnic groups and their food products contributes to perception of cultures. The multidisciplinary conversations that inform this study stem from the fields of rhetoric and writing studies, food branding, and ecological understandings of communication, specifically visual communication. This work is necessary and timely because food product packages are largely unexamined spaces within the discipline of rhetoric and writing studies, and yet they play a considerable role in the creation of perception of cultures. Further, rhetoric and writing studies theories and frames have much to contribute to fields such as food studies and advertising to which food branding has a more extensive history and relationship.

SITUATING FOOD BRANDING WITHIN RHETORIC AND WRITING STUDIES

This dissertation asks us as readers and consumers to slow down and acknowledge the images that are used to sell food products. By paying attention to the images and asking what those images mean to different groups in different contexts, we can begin to interrogate why they work rhetorically and why we keep using them. It is my the overall hope in this dissertation to bring awareness to how we visually represent particular groups and to consider how a small shift

in visual representation can eventually lead to a macro shift in the collective perception of that group. I begin here by situating my research within rhetoric and writing studies.

The Power of Branding: Creating a Product's Presence

Product packaging is a medium that advertisers, and subsequently their corporate clients, employ to communicate with their intended audience of consumers. The power of branding is applicable to numerous types of products from food and beverage products to health and beauty products. On NPR TED Radio Hour, host Guy Raz (2015) interviewed Morgan Spurlock, documentary film producer of *POM Wonderful Presents: The Greatest* Movie *Ever Sold*, on the power of brands:

> Guy Raz: Here is a question for you. Even though we know so much of advertising is deceptive, right? Why are we still so seduced by brands?
>
> Morgan Spurlock: God, see that is the multimillion-dollar question, but you know I don't think that were just seduced by brands I think we are seduced by the *imagery that surrounds that brand*. It's that these pants are going to make you slimmer, this drink is gonna make you hotter, this perfume is gonna make you sexier. It's like everything that comes with that brand and the messaging around it. We buy into the dream that surrounds that product much more than we buy into the product, and then once we start using it we start to believe in the dream of what that product does for us.

Spurlock asserted that brand imagery is just as important as the product itself in producing customer desire for the product.

The importance of product packaging is also an essential element to consider with food product packaging. According to communications scholar David Girardelli, "a package not only

functions as a protection of the food, but it also acts as a symbolic vehicle in the process of attributing symbolic values to the food contained in the package" (p. 311). Seeing food product packaging as a "symbolic vehicle" of the contents allows us as consumers to begin to shift our attention to the valuable role product packaging plays in our decision of food products. On the National Geographic Channel television series *Brain Games*, Susan Carnell (2014), a professor of psychology at Johns Hopkins University, asserted:

> The bright vibrant colors in the supermarket are all a part of the allure of making food more attractive to your brain. Before any food has entered your mouth or your stomach, in a way you've already begun to eat it with your eyes. How food looks is as, if not more, important than how the food actually tastes. In many cases the different brands you see all taste the same with the same ingredients and the same cooking methods. All you're really buying is the packaging. The brain is already hard wired to have an association with the foodstuff being sold, and so what is being sold is not necessarily the foodstuff itself but instead the packaging.

Product packaging and advertisement companies are well aware of the enormous role product packaging plays in alluring consumers to products with the ultimate goal of purchases.

The food aisle is a space where "presence," as discussed by Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, is on display for visual rhetoricians. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), "by the very fact of selecting certain elements and presenting them to the audience, their importance and pertinency to the discussion are implied. Indeed, such a choice endows these elements with a *presence*" (p. 116). Therefore, what the marketing team for food products decides to present their customers is a form of what they would like to give "presence" to in their product. The images on the label present a strategic argument that advertisers hope

resonates with the consumers.

Marketers themselves discuss the important role product packaging has in the viability of a product. According to global food packaging firm Del Sol Foods LLC's website:

> Many factors determine market success; which is why we control the integrity of packaging from colors to materials design. Our creating team assures that all of our packages stand out, inform and demand the customer's attention" by using "the packaging as a comunication [sic] tool." (n.p.)

The packaging itself communicates with its audience; however, what allows an ad to be successful is the careful negotiation of both the advertisers' and the consumers' previous knowledge and experiences. Both the advertisers and consumers mold how the packaging is received and what it communicates. This may seem obvious, but the construction and negotiation of the appropriate symbols to use involves a delicate balance of what images the advertisers have been previously exposed to and what they believe will most resonate with their audience. Advertisers may try to push boundaries, but consumers have just as much stake in the conversation, as the next section begins to explain.

Construction and Negotiation of Visual Rhetorics

When discussing visual imagery, it must be understood that audiences and rhetors work in conjunction to create meaning. Judith Williamson in *Decoding Advertisements* succinctly stated, "Advertisements' role is to attach meaning to products, to create identities for the goods (and service providers) they promote" (iv). While Williamson presented a valid point, several scholars align themselves with the notion that consumers are not simply recipients of advertisers' messages but, instead, active participants in creating the meaning of advertisements (see Olson, Finnegan, and Hope (2008); Niblock (2001); Pajaczkowska (2001); Faigley (1999)). Co-editors

of *Visual Rhetoric* Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan, and Diane S. Hope (2008) asserted "rhetorical critics are particularly interested in how images' influence on viewers and spectators are hardly passive; rather they co-create meaning along with the artifacts themselves" (p. 3). Lester Faigley (1999) also noted that consumers are active participants in meaning creation of advertisements. Faigley (1999) argued that the advertisement would only be successful if the sign system inherent within the viewer allows it to be so. For example, "[…] advertisers enact a conversation of images with their audiences. Advertisers are both manipulators and manipulated because they must interject their product into an ongoing system of signs. Their effect depends on extending a set of cultural associations" (Faigley, 1999, p. 191). Therefore, the advertisement is only successful if the images resonate with the viewer's sign system and allows it to be.

Dávila's (2012) extensive ethnographic research on advertising firms, their corporate clients, and marketing to "Hispanic consumers" further complicates the notion of negotiating sign systems. In her one-on-one interviews with advertisers, Dávila (2012) relayed many instances where advertisers work extensively with their corporate clients to expand their view of Hispanic consumers. For example,

> Lionel Sosa's Agency, the first and still one of the few agencies found it and led by a U.S.-born Mexican-American, struggled to convince clients that there were also English-speaking Latinos who, like himself, had grown up bilingual in this country–although this alternative definition of the market never came close to eclipsing the dominant picture forged by the New York advertisers. What remained unchallenged, however, were the behavioral stereotypes that accompanied this early image of the Hispanic as a family–oriented, Catholic, traditional, conservative, and immigrant Spanish-speaking individual or, put in a harsher guise, the stereotype of the "traditional-bound, Spanish-speaking

> recent arrival who eats a lot, is suicidally brand loyal, prefers audio-visual media, has a large family, does not venture beyond his ghetto-like environment, and really gets turned on by his culture." (p. 60)

Therefore, what is seen on product packaging is a careful negotiation between advertisers, corporate clients, and consumers. Each of these actors has their own sign system they carry with them that allows them to make sense of each situation. The images and symbols on product packaging are the result of this construction and negation of the available sign system. The section below continues to explore the construction and negotiation of the meaning of images with advertisements by looking at each incident as part of a larger network that helps us to make sense of situations in the moment.

Networked Semiotics and Cultural Logic. Philosopher and Sociologist Bruno Latour's (2005) actor network theory provides the language to help untangle the "network" created with the multiple signs put on display in food advertising. Latour's (2005) work in *Reassembling the Social* is particularly helpful because he accounts for human and non-human objects having an equal role in allowing individuals to be a part of particular assemblages. Latour (2005) argues that the world should be perceived as radically interconnected. The world is a place where humans and non-human objects "enroll" one another in "assemblages," clusters of people and objects where "actors" or "actants" (themselves acting assemblages) use power and persuasion to do things. In this context there are mediators and intermediaries. Intermediaries help transition and enact things without changing the things in and of themselves. Mediators on the other hand help actors transition and enact while at the same time transforming both the action and the actor in the process. According to rhetorician Clay Spinuzzi (2008), actor-networks are assemblages of humans and nonhumans; any person, artifact, practice, or assemblage of these is considered a

node in the network and indeed can be an actor-network in itself (p. 7). Within this framework every food related image we encounter is either an actor, and intermediary or a mediator depending on its function in the particular social context. Every food related image is a single node in a larger network of visuals we consume that helps us create meaning and enhance and shape how we perceive the world.

The images that resonate with the consumer within the aisle of the grocery store as well as in a restaurant are a result of their complex social webs (socio-cultural and socio-rhetorical milieu). These sign systems make sense because of and relative to previous interactions with images and the meaning that the individual assigns to the images, whether consciously or sub-consciously. As argued by rhetorician Karen LeFevre (1984), we cannot remove the social from the individual and the individual from the social, as they are one in the same. Nick Enfield's (2000) concept of cultural logic is also helpful in understanding this networked meaning. Enfield (2000) asserted:

> The social world is an ecological complex in which cultural meanings and knowledge's (linguistic and non-linguistic) personally embodied by individuals are intercalibrated via common attention to commonly accessible semiotic structures. […] This process of people collectively using effectively identical assumptions interpreting each other's actions – i.e. hypothesizing as to each other's motivations and intentions – may be termed cultural logic. (p. 35)

The images/sign systems that resonate with individuals can therefore be called their (individuals') cultural logic, their ecological complex through which they make sense of future interactions. Each consumers' ecological complex, which constructs their individual cultural logic, has been created through a network of representations that they have encountered through

life experiences. As I discuss below, scholars in rhetoric and writing studies have begun to consider the ecological nature of communication.

Moving from a Rhetorical Situation to a Rhetorical Ecology. In 1968 Loyd F. Bitzer first coined the term rhetorical situation. In Bitzer's construction of the rhetorical situation, exigence, the motivation for speaking, is found within the situation – the rhetor has no agency in their response (7). Bitzer argued, "…it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence" (2). The rhetors response is already dictated by the situation. In contrast to Bitzer, Richard Vatz removed all exigence from the situation, and instead placed the exigence within the rhetor. According to Vatz (1973), "No situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which he chooses to characterize it" (154). Vatz argued that the situation is only constructed when it has been interpreted and explained by a rhetor to an audience (156). Therefore, the rhetor, in Vatz's construction, contains the agency to not only construct the situation, but also to respond to the situation. Scott Consigny entered the discussion of the rhetorical situation at the theoretical half-way point of Bitzer and Vatz and proposed that each scholar was correct and incorrect in different areas. Consigny proposed that rhetors enter the rhetorical situation from an "art of topics" that allows them agency and a response that is not determined by the situation (184). Rhetoric as an "art of topics" operates as an "instrument," the ability to choose how to enter into a situation, and a "realm," which are all the constraints outside of the rhetor (181-2). As an art of topics, the rhetor must work in relationship with the situation, but the rhetor is also allowed to bring their perspective on the issue at hand. While there have been numerous debates on the theoretical construction of the rhetorical situation, all of these conversations revolve around one key philosophy, the sender, text, receiver model of communication.

Rhetorician Jenny Edbauer (2005) complicated previously held notions of the rhetorical situation and advocated that it be seen more as an ecology than a static situation. Beginning first with a critique on the terms sender, receiver, and text, Edbauer (2005) asserted, "sender-receiver models of public communication tend to identify a kind of homeostatic relationship, which simultaneously abstracts the operation of social links and circulation" (p. 6). Citing Louise Weatherbee Phelps' call to complicate rhetoric's elements, Edbauer (2005) argued

> there is also great power in describing 'how an element (e.g., the writer as 'ethos') is discriminated from a flux and perceived as invariant, stable, and autonomous … Natural and traditional categories acquire greater depth and scope when we … temporalize them, interpret them as metaphors, expand their range of variation, multiply their interpretations, pursue their logic to the limit, or treat them in historical-institutional terms.' Rather than seeing rhetoric as the totality of its discrete elements, Phelps' critique seeks to recontextualize those elements in a wider sphere of active, historical, and lived processes. (p. 8)

In her attempt to recontextualize the rhetorical elements, Edbauer (2005) expanded on Bitzer's definition of exigence. According to Bitzer (1968) exigencies are "located in reality, are objective, and publicly observable historic facts in the world we experience, are therefore available for scrutiny" (p. 390). However, for Edbauer (2005) "exigence is more like a complex of various audiences/speaker perception and institutional or material constraints" (p. 8). With this in mind, rhetorical situations become "an ongoing social flux" (p. 9). Ultimately, Edbauer (2005) proposed a

> revised strategy for theorizing public rhetorics (rhetoric's publicness) as a circulating ecology of effects, enactments, and events by shifting the lines of focus from *rhetorical*

> *situation* to *rhetorical ecologies* […] to add to the dimensions of history and movements (back) into our visions/versions of rhetoric's public situations. (p. 9)

Viewing an encounter with a food product packaging as a rhetorical ecology as opposed to a static rhetorical situation pushes rhetoricians to account for previous interactions consumers have had with certain images that amalgamate in the moment of interaction. The experience in that small moment of dissonance, relatability, etc. in a grocery store or entering a restaurant is the amalgamation of both the creator's and consumer's ecology of images that come together and allow the images to make sense or cause dissent considering the rhetorical purpose that they are being used and received in. In short, Edbauer (2005) asserted:

> though rhetorical situations models are undeniably helpful for thinking of rhetoric's contextual character, they fall somewhat short when accounting for the amalgamations and transformations – the spread – of a given rhetoric within its wider ecology. Rather than replacing the rhetorical situation models that we have found so useful, however, an ecological augmentation adopts a view toward the processes and events that extend beyond the limited boundaries of elements. (p. 20)

This ecological augmentation is necessary to create a more complete understanding of what occurs in the aisle of grocery stores as well as in restaurants. We move now to the social semiotic approach to visual literacy as this field also advocates that images make the most sense when the rhetorical ecologies of both the producers and consumers of images align in the moment of the encounter.

Visual Literacy. A social semiotic approach to visual literacy is helpful to further illustrate the networked nature of meaning making of images we encounter. According to social semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006)

> (1) Communication requires that participants make their messages maximally understandable in a particular context. They therefore choose forms of expression which they believe to be maximally transparent to other participants. On the other hand, communication takes place in social structures which are inevitably marked by power differences […] (2) Representation requires that sign-makers choose forms for the expression of what they have in mind, form which the see as most apt and plausible in the given context. […] Speakers of a foreign language use exactly the same strategy. They choose the nearest most plausible form they know for the expression of what they have in mind. (p. 11- 12)

As is indicated in this quote, the foundation of social semiotics is that individuals pull from a number of different social cues and negotiate which will be the best to enact in any given situation. Reaffirming this point, Frank Serafini (2017) asserts that a social semiotic approach to visual literacy

> views the processes of meaning making across a diverse range of modalities as a social practice embedded in and affected by existing cultural norms and power structures. […] emphasizes the semiotic resources that are mobilized in a given text and
>
> focuses on the ways in which given visual strategies can be deployed within and across texts to achieve ideological ends. (p. 10-11)

In short, a social semiotic approach to visual literacy is very much in line with an ecological view of rhetoric. It takes into account the multiple factors that must be negotiated at once in order to effectively engage and communicate visually. While there are many other scholars to pull from to discuss this field, the core philosophical under pinning of social semiotic approach to visual literacy is most useful to this work as it helps to demonstrate the how one's cultural

logic, previous interactions with images, as an ecology is constantly negotiated in moments of encounters to help make sense of the situation.

Actor network theory, cultural logics, and rhetorical ecologies allow us to slow down the moments of interacting with food product packaging and interrogate how participants are able to "choose forms of expression which they believe to be maximally transparent to other participants" and how they "choose forms for the expression of what they have in mind, forms which they see as most apt and plausible in the given context" (Kress and van Leeuwen p. 11-12). The constraints of both the author of the image and the consumer shape what images are used and noted, how these images are received, and what their meaning is. However, it is by pulling apart and trying to understand what components create these assemblages that we can gain a deeper understanding of why certain images resonate more than others as I will discuss in the next section that moves us from visual rhetoric to a new materialist approach to visual rhetoric.

Moving towards a New Materialist Approach to Visual Rhetoric

Discussion concerning viewing images as networked began within the last twenty years, but recently came to fruition with Laurie Gries' new materialist approach to visual rhetoric (Gries, 2015). In the early 2000s, when the study of visuals began to seriously be incorporated in to the field of visual rhetoric, scholars used terms such as "intertextuality" to refer the networked nature of meaning that could be found within images. According to visual rhetoricians Marguerite Helmers Charles A. Hill (2004),

> One of the ways that we understand [a] photograph is through its reference to other images. Thus, one of the ways that images may communicate to us is through *intertexuality*, the recognition and referencing of images from one scene to another. The

> reader is active in this process of constructing a reference. If the reader is unaware of the precursors, the image will have a different meaning, or no meaning at all." (emphasis mine, p. 5)

Within this early rhetorical analysis of photography, Helmers and Hill (2004) presented the argument that viewers' previous interaction with other images allows them to make sense of the images they encounter.

Similarly, physicist and social semiotician, Jay Lemke (2004) included contingent factors such as race, class, and positionality, viewers' cultural logic, that would influence their interpretation of images:

> Every time we make meaning by reading a text or interpreting a graph or picture we do so by connecting the symbols at hand to other texts and other images read, heard seen or imagined on other occasions […] Which connections we make (what kind and to which other texts and images) is partly individual, but also characteristic of our society and our place in it: our age, gender, economic class, affiliation groups, family traditions, cultures, and subcultures. (p. 314)

While, it is clear that considering issues of the networked nature as well as contingent factors such as cultural logics into viewers' interpretation of images has been considered for some time, the concern that arose was that there was not one single methodology for which to conduct this type of work. According to Hill (2004),

> Ultimately, a comprehensive theory of visual persuasion will need to incorporate the insights gathered from a variety of viewpoints and methodologies, including cultural, psychological, and textual studies, and attempt to explicate how the mechanisms

> identified by these different methodologies work together in the production of, reception of, and response to persuasive images. (p. 26)

The search for this methodology came to fruition with the work of Gries.

Gries (2015) in the groundbreaking text, *Still Life with Rhetoric: A New Materialist Approach for Visual Rhetorics*, continued the conversation of Edbauer (2005) and placed the networked nature of images in conversation with an ecological model of rhetoric to create a methodology that accounted for "living nature of images." According to Gries (2015) "The notion of rhetorical ecology is productive from visual rhetoric, then, because it challenges us to imagine how images emerge and flow within a network or field of forces, affects, and associations" (p. 27). In her text, Gries (2015) introduces the methodology of iconographic tacking, tracing images across time and space, as one methodology to account for "how images emerge and flow within a network."

Gries (2015) carefully constructed a new materialist rhetorical approach to images in a way that accounted not only for their rhetorical effectiveness in the moment, but also their adaptations across time, space, and media. Her explanation of the benefits of such a theoretical foundation is worth quoting at length:

> In order to account for rhetorical transformation this new materialist rhetorical approach turns the scholarly gaze mostly towards futurity. By futurity, I am referring to the strands of time beyond the initial moment of production and delivery when rhetorical consequences unfold, often unpredictably, things circulate and transform across space, form, genre, and function. In terms of research, a new material rhetorical approach advocates for conducting empirical investigations to make transparent what happened not only to an image but also to the people and other entities and image encounters when they

> all enter into complex relations. A new materialist rhetorical approach recognizes that this "happening" occurs before and while an image is being produced. However, in order to account for a thing's complex rhetorical life, this approach is most interested in what happens after the image is initially produced and distributed. To account for this unfolding eventfulness, methods such as iconographic tracking can take a new material rhetorical approach and attend to seven distinct yet co–implicating material processes: composition, production, distribution, circulation, transformation, collectivity, and consequentiality. Such scholarly attention can help disclose how an image undergoes recomposition, reproduction, redistribution, and re-assemblage, which intensify the circulation, transformation, and confidentiality not only the image but also its derivatives. (p. 14)

The underlying theoretical foundation of new materialist approaches to visual rhetoric is conducting empirical research to understand what happens to the rhetorical life of an image after it is produced and distributed. This dissertation works from this philosophy and advocates that in order to fully understand an image's "complex rhetorical life" we must look at it not only within the moment it is encountered but to track it across time, space, and iteration.

Gries (2015) uses the concept of futurity and large computer generated data sets, which make sense because the image was fairly recent; however, my study conducts iconographic tracking of images by working backwards, from the present to the past using historical archival methods. Gries (2015) tracked the progression of the Obama Hope image, which came to life in 2008, and followed it as it was picked up, remixed, and reused across a variety of different media over the course of the next several years. My work, while still informed by the same theoretical underpinning of Gries (2015), moves from the present to the past to trace how, for example, the

image of the sleeping Mexican man became so pervasive in conjunction with Mexican food products. This change in trajectory places emphasis not on seeing where images go, but on how images have evolved so that they make sense when we encounter them in the present moment. Drawing on previous studies that have looked at various representations of Mexicans in film, cartoons, and visual media, this study adds to an already established group of scholarship that looks at the impact images have on the construction of ethnic groups, namely Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Hispanics writ large.

As a note, I find it essential to discuss the use of various identifiers used to describe Mexican and Mexican American people in this dissertation. Throughout the dissertation "Mexican," "Mexican American," "Hispanic" and "Latino/a" will be used. As a general frame, I use Mexican and Mexican American to describe the population on which this dissertation focuses. However, I also use the labels Hispanic and Latino/a. This only happens in reference to participant responses (as I asked participants to self-identify), scholarship that uses these labels, and institutional documents that use them.

Examining Images of Mexicans: An Ongoing, Multidisciplinary Effort

Stereotypes of Mexican men and women have been used for close to a century in different mediums and contribute to the "cultural logic" of perceived Mexican identity. Examination of images used in conjunction with Mexican people is not unique to this dissertation by any means. In this section, I highlight studies of these images in literature, marketing, and anthropology.

Mexican American literature professor William Anthony Nericcio (2007) archived the trajectory of representations of Mexican Americans in the United States in postcards, films, photos, and advertisements. In *Tex[t]-Mex*, Nericcio's (2007) archive spans from Speedy

Gonzalez to Frito Bandito and demonstrated that stereotypical representations of Mexicans have a long and complex history. He provided an exhaustive analysis of the trajectory of images that have been used with Mexican Americans for over a century.

Nericcio unveiled how *representations* of Mexicans are, in fact, nothing more than a *presentation* of Mexican via American "cultural creators" (24–25). (Stuart Hall (1997) argued that mass media does not simply *reflect/represent* characteristics of groups but instead *creates/presents* an idea of them (*Representations*)). Additionally, While Nericcio claimed these representations are nothing more than "seductive hallucinations" of Mexican Americans and not actual, he admitted these images carry significant meaning. His work allows readers "to understand the series of events (historical and aesthetic) that rendered our contemporary 'Mexican' and Latino hallucinations meaningful" (p. 24). Nericcio (2007) argued

> 'Mexicans,' in the imagination of the Americas — North, Central, and South — are less a *raza* than a seductive ruse and maintain that the peculiar and particular apparitions of 'Mexicans,' 'Mexican Americans,' 'Mexican-Americans,' 'Hispanics,' 'Chicanas/os,' and 'Latinas/os' in the U.S. marketplace are overdue for patient scrutiny. (p. 28)

This dissertation adds to the patient scrutiny begun by Nericcio (2007) to continue interrogating the use of these images.

Anthropologist Arlene Dávila (2012) conducted exhaustive ethnographic research on how the "Hispanic marketing industry" has created and reinforced the image of U.S. Latinos. Dávila (2012) concentrated on the multiple facets of advertisers as "brokers and mediators" in the construction of U.S. Latinos and how U.S. Latinos respond in kind to the images created by these advertisers. Dávila (2001) found,

> authorship of the ad is always shared and negotiated in ways that partly incorporate the expectations of their audience, with creative acting as "surrogate audiences" who anticipate the needs and desires of the most important segment of this audience: the corporate clients They and their representatives have the power to censure the images that do not meet their stereotypical conceptualization of Hispanics and to constrain the diversity within the context of the ads. (p. 129)

Dávila's (2001) work provided a peek behind the curtain of marketing agencies and uncovers the multiple political, economic and cultural facets that must be considered when examining product branding tailored to U.S. Latinos.

Anthropologist Maribel Álvarez has also closely traced the use of the images as markers of Mexican and Mexican American identity. For over twenty years, Álvarez has specifically examined the image of the sleeping Mexican man and its use with Mexican food and Mexican people. She has found this image to be used as the logo of a hotel business card as well as the logo or brand of a Mexican food restaurant. Through her ethnographic research with *curio* shop owners on the Arizona/México border, she found that her participants did not see the image in a negative light. Her work demonstrates how the use and interpretation is always contextual. Building on this work, I argue that the ultimate test of whether the images used by advertisers to sell Mexican food are effective or not can be found within the aisles of grocery stores.

The work of this dissertation owes a great deal of gratitude to these works that have come before as they provided a solid foundation for where I move the conversation. Nericcio (2007) provided solid foundation of tracking the trajectory of a plethora of images that have become markers of "Hispanic," "Mexican," and "Latino" identity. Similarly, Álvarez's hard work of following the image of the sleeping Mexican man for the last twenty years across time, space,

location, and genre was especially helpful and essential to the work of this dissertation. Lastly, Dávila's (2012) work offered an entry point to the main conversation of this dissertation: "the marketing and making of a people." While Dávila's work addresses advertising agencies, I engage with the users (individuals who have businesses) and consumers of the images.

THE STUDY AND MY METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was twofold: 1) to understand the influence cultural stereotypes have on consumers from a rhetorical perspective; and 2) to bring a new theoretical framework to visual rhetoric that accounts for the rhetorical purpose of and consumer responses to the pairing of ethnic stereotypes with food products. By building on the work of several disciplines, I place the construction and negotiation of meaning within a networked view of language in conversation with empirical research. By looking to the spaces of restaurants and ethnic food selling points, I create a holistic view of how a seemingly innocuous experience of shopping in the "ethnic" or "international" food aisle in your grocery store, or going out to eat at an ethnic food restaurant continues to add to our repertoire of available images of certain ethnic groups.

To achieve my goal I have asked the following research questions and sub-questions:

RQ 1. What networked, rhetorical influence do cultural stereotypes have on consumers? How does pairing a food with a commodified perception of an ethnic group affect the culture's cultural capital?

a. *What images do consumers associate with Mexican food products and restaurants and why?*
b. *How do business owners perceive their use of Mexican images and symbols when paired with Mexican foodstuffs?*

RQ 2. What frameworks for critical inquiry of advertisements exist within rhetoric and writing studies? How can a commodified perception of culture framework contribute to a critical inquiry by academics and consumers alike?

My approach was influenced by the combination of rhetorical inquiry and empirical research as proposed by Lauer and Asher (1988). I combine an exploratory case study with two embedded units of analysis (Chapters 2 and 3) for which I obtained IRB approval with theory-building (Chapter 4). In the text that follows, I describe the theoretical framework grounding my analysis followed by my methods divided into two parts: empirical and theory-building. The purpose here is to offer "big picture" theoretical and methodical grounding. In Chapters 2, 3, and 4 I expand upon each of these sections, providing greater theoretical and methodological detail.

Theoretical Framework

In Salas and Abarca (2015), I laid out Commodified Perception of Culture (CPC) as "a result of mass production, which is the very process by which Mexican food has been accepted into the American palate and beyond" (207-208). CPC as a framework for visual analysis puts issues of "authenticity," nostalgia, and "global memoryscapes" into conversation. For this study, I used this initial version of CPC as my framework for analysis of empirical data: to look at the perceptions of everyday consumers and business owners (Chapters 2 and 3). This allowed me, on one hand, to test the theory's viability and on the other, to use the space of the dissertation to expand and improve it. In Chapter 4, I explain both the original construction of my CPC framework (for the purposes of differentiation I am calling it CPC 1.0) in detail, and I demonstrate how inductive analysis expanded the original framework and how it evolved into what I am calling CPC 2.0. Ultimately, I present CPC 2.0 as a framework for visual rhetoricians to analyze the multiple dynamics involved in creating a single story of certain cultures or groups

by being attuned to the ethnic stereotypes used by mass merchandisers. In the paragraphs that follow, I describe the theories that ground my analyses.

Erik Cohen's (1988) concept of emergent authenticity is essential as it is the first instance that provoked paying critical attention to ethnic stereotypes associated with food images. Cohen (1988) explained emergent authenticity as:

> 'Emergent authenticity' stresses one aspect or refers to one manifestation, of the wider phenomenon of invention of tradition,' …In principle it is possible for any new-fangled gimmick, which at one point appeared to be nothing but a staged 'tourist trap,' to become over time, and under appropriate conditions, widely recognized as an 'authentic' manifestation of local culture. (p. 380)

While emergent authenticity began the conversation, I call into question the situation and condition that leads to "gimmick" arbitrary constructions of cultures and cultural memories to be the ones remembered, and by questioning the "tourist trap" or the "new-fangled gimmick."

Similarly, I use Arjun Appadurai's (1996) concepts of "imagined nostalgia," and "ersatz nostalgia." Appadurai defined "imagined nostalgia" as "[…] nostalgia for things that never were" (p. 76) and ersatz nostalgia as "[…] the simulacra of periods that constitute the flow of time, conceived as lost absent, or distant" (p. 78). Jean Baudrillard's (1981) simulation and simulacra is necessary to discuss here. Baudrillard (1981) defined simulation as "no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (p. 2). Baudrillard argued that due to simulation all that remains is nostalgia, the longing for something that is now gone. Simulacra is the static image that is a result of simulation. Therefore, the image of the Sleeping Mexican man is the simulacra of the simulation of the socio-historical cultural history of the representation of the sleeping Mexican

man.

Within these constructions of nostalgia or simulation the common thread is the idea that memories are constructed out of false perception of occurrences. When discussing "imagined nostalgia," Appadurai (1996) highlighted the phenomena that mass merchandisers have actually created nostalgias because they do "not principally involve the evocation of a sentiment to which consumers who really have lost something can respond. Rather these forms of mass advertising *teach* consumers to miss thing they have never lost" (emphasis mine, 76). The concept that mass merchandisers can "teach" consumers to miss something that they never lost is integral when considering the selling cultural representations on a national and global scale.

The ability to teach consumers to miss something they have never lost positions images to be removed from the real conditions under which that nostalgia was original created. It is here that I bring in the concept of "food consciousness" (Abarca, 2007, 2013, 2015). According to Abarca and Pascual Soler (2013), food consciousness "demands an analysis of the material conditions surrounding food production, distribution, and consumption" (p. 5). In a later conception, Abarca and Salas (2015), Abarca expressed that we must also be aware of food "as well as a commodity vested with symbolic and metaphorical substance" (p. xxx). I apply the same theoretical underpinning of food consciousness to the images that are paired with food products: we must demand an analysis of images paired with food products that examine the material conditions through which this images came to be. Without this analysis we neglect the historical, cultural, socio-economic conditions in which they arose. This is only made worse since images move rapidly across spaces. These images are no longer simply isolated to regional or even national chain grocery stores, but because of innovations in technology these representations can be accessed on a global scale.

Through mass communication and technology the hyperreal in the form of a memorial nostalgia for something that never was can now be shared on a global scale. Kendall Phillips and G. Mitchell Reyes' (2011)"global memoryscapes" "captures the intersections between memorial practices and global forces" (p. 2). "Global memoryscapes" are "a complex landscape upon which memories and memory practices move, come into contact, are contested by, and contest other forms of remembrance" (Phillips and Reyes, 2011, p. 5). This demonstrates that memories, much like nostalgias, have become socially constructed concepts that have moved beyond local and national boundaries. It is necessary to keep this in mind as the discussion of the perpetuation of the image of the sleeping Mexican moves from various locations.

Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) offer a way to identify and analyze the "hyperreal" found in visuals by providing their "grammar of visual design." This concept explores the social and cultural aspect of visual communication. Kress and van Leeuwen are most concerned with the unspoken but powerful rules of representation within a Western context. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) define "grammar of visual design" as a "general grammar, of contemporary visual design in 'Western' cultures, an account of the explicit and implicit knowledge and practices around a resource, consisting of the elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication" (p. 3). As such, Kress and van Leeuwen's view of the role visuals play in communicating continues to look at images as networked and making meaning because of our previous conditioning to allow them to.

Images associated with Mexican food have complex histories, and their uptake by advertising agencies has complicated the distribution of these images. I find it best to untangle and understand how multiple actors (producers and consumers) interact with these images to create meaning. These various theories work together in a way that allows visual rhetoricians to

analyze that small moment in a grocery store or when entering a restaurant by pulling apart that moment and trying to create a deeper understanding of why certain images resonate more than others to eventually understand the ways in which visuals within advertising work to communicate with consumers.

Part One: Exploratory Case Study with Two Embedded Units of Analysis

The exploratory case study presented over Chapters 2 and 3 contains two embedded units of analysis: one unit of analysis concentrated on consumers and the other concentrated on business owners. Each of these units corresponds to a sub-question for RQ1. I chose to use an exploratory case study for several reasons: 1) the study asked to describe a social phenomena; 2) the study consisted of multiple units of analysis that needed to be put in conversation to achieve a more holistic view of the issue; and 3) the two units of analysis served to test the hypothesis of my theoretical framework (explained more in detail in the previous section), setting off a praxis (theory, practice, theory) loop.

According to social scientist Robert K. Yin (2014), a leading expert on case studies methods,

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
    - investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when
    - the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident
2. A case study inquiry
    - copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
    - relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a

triangulating fashion, and as another result

• benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 16-17)

Because this study concentrated on the real world implication of images related to food products, and I had already developed a germinal theory to explain this issue, the case study method provided a feasible empirical fit. Further, I have the flexibility of continuing to build upon or complement this case study with other case studies in the next several years.

There are several different types of case studies, descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory. A descriptive case study already has an articulation of what is known about the issue. According to Ruthanne Tobin (2012) "A descriptive case study is one that is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset" (p. 289). An explanatory case study, as is evidenced in the name, explains a phenomenon. According to Harder (2012) "explanatory case studies can be employed to explain phenomena. Explanatory case studies should consist of an accurate description of the facts of a case, considerations of alternative explanations, and a conclusion based on credible explanations that are congruent with the facts" (p. 371). An exploratory case study "is the exploration of the hitherto unknown" (Streb, 2012, p. 372). Exploratory case studies are most successful when they explore something that is yet unknown (Streb, 2012, p. 372). Streb (2012) stated that the usefulness of exploratory case studies comes in their ability to study of social phenomena in their original context" (p. 372). Because I was not sure what I would find or where my data would lead me, i.e. I didn't have a descriptive theory, and because a study like this had not been done before, i.e. I was not beginning with facts on the issues, but I was still studying a current social phenomena within its real world context, I decided to conduct an exploratory case

study. This method still constrained my study but allowed me the flexibility to see where the data would take me. While there is some criticism of the exploratory case study, some see it as a preliminary research step because it lacks theory based prior assumptions, it was the best method to use in this study because it still allowed me to "develop the necessary definitions, frameworks, and hypotheses for the subsequent" theory building on the topic (Streb, 2012, 372). Below is a summary of methods used within each unit of analysis. More specific details on the methods are provided in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

Research Question 1a. *What images do consumers associate with Mexican food products and restaurants and why?* To address this question, I conducted three video and voice recorded focus groups of three to four participants each using three methods of data collection: individual drawings (Gauntlett, 2007; Durá & Singhal, 2009; Walton, 2014), an individual short-answer questionnaire, and group discussions (Kitzinger, 1995). In each focus group, I asked participants to position themselves as working for an advertising company in El Paso, Texas that had taken on two new clients: a tortilla company and a new Mexican restaurant. As advertisers for the company, they were tasked with creating the name and logo of each company. The clientele, the target audience, they were attempting to appeal to through their name and logo for each company were people like themselves. This was so that what most appealed to them and why could be revealed through their design. As I will explain in detail in Chapter 2, I used nonprobabilistic sampling, namely "snowball sampling" to select study participants (see Table 2.1). In total, 14 participants were recruited for these focus groups. Snowball sampling allowed me to recruit participants through acquaintances so that through these focus groups I could set a tone of curious acquaintance rather than academic researcher. Additionally, I wanted to ease the issue of access and gain opinions of people who I had not previously engaged in scholarly

conversations with. My study focused on gaining perception individuals who had been residents of El Paso for at least five years. The focus group environment not only allowed participants to say explain their drawings, but also allowed them to consider, align, and deviate from other participants responses while explaining their position and revealing their thought process and purpose. I used Glaser & Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method from grounded theory to code transcribed conversations based on themes which allowed for continuous cross-reference of data unveiling patterns, differences, and allowing me to rely on theoretical saturation as a stopping point.

Research question 1b. *How do business owners perceive their use of Mexican images and symbols when paired with Mexican foodstuffs?* To address this question, I conducted audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with eight owners of different food restaurants in the city of El Paso, Texas. I employed semi-structured interviews for a number of reasons. First, the opened ended nature of the questions allowed participants to express their rhetorical choices, decisions of audience, purpose, and trust building, and their personal creative process in the creation of their respective logos and brands. Additionally, restaurant business owners are limited on time, and the format of semi structured interviews allowed the participant to provide fruitful responses in short, 30 minutes – 1 hour, periods of time. I wanted to know the decision process in creating company logos; therefore, I interviewed owners who met at least two basic criteria: 1) owned a Mexican restaurant or Mexican food company in El Paso, Texas, 2) use Mexican images and symbols with their restaurant logo. Finally, semi-structured interviews allowed me to ask follow-up questions. I also used Glaser & Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method to code transcribed interviews based on patterns, differences, and relying on theoretical saturation. As I

explain in Chapter 3 in greater detail, I had originally planned to interview 12 participants but reached theoretical saturation with eight.

Part Two: Theory-building

My second research question asked: *What frameworks for critical inquiry of advertisements exist within rhetoric and writing studies? How can a commodified perception of culture framework contribute to a critical inquiry by academics and consumers alike?*

To address this question in Chapter 4, I synthesized my analyses combining: 1) a deductive and inductive analysis looking at the data from RQ1 through my theoretical framework, and 2) an iconographic tracking of the image of the sleeping Mexican (Gries, 2015). This praxis loop allowed me to arrive at a more complete theory of Commodified Perception of Culture (CPC) that can be used by researchers, students, and even the average consumer. While this study isolates its analysis to the sleeping Mexican man as well as other Mexican culture tropes, this chapter also anchors the use of CPC in another example of an ethnic food stereotype.

Deductive and Inductive Analysis. The inductive component of this research came about after seeing a gap in the ways visual and cultural rhetoric have thus far conceptualized the use of ethnic stereotype images associated with food. I placed scholars from visual rhetoric, new materialist approaches to visual rhetoric, cultural rhetoric, sociology and visual sociology and consumer studies, in conversation and created a new theory that would assist visual rhetoric in analyzing imagery placed with food products. The deductive component of this research came about as I tested my previously constructed theory against participant responses from questions 1.a and 1.b, seeing where the theory diverged and converged with the results of what participants had stated in their responses. The final result of these two methods of analysis is a preliminary

theory that accounts for the theoretical framework I constructed in conversation with the participants' responses in this round of the research.

Iconographic Tracking. Laurie Gries' tracking of the "Obama Hope" image is the first major instance of iconographic tracking in the field of visual rhetoric. As defined by Gries (2015), iconographic tracking follows the image through its evolution of forms and media. Through this methodology, the network of the image is traced and mapped across time, place and adaptation. According to Gries (2015) the methodology for iconographic tracking has three steps: collecting, assembling and uncovering the images' remixes (p. 110-113). While Gries (2015) was able to electronically mine her data set, the images I worked with were not available to be mined in the same way, in large part because they are older images.

As opposed to collecting a large data set by electronically searching for an image, I conducted an in person historical archival research of the image. I first began researching the image with travel log narratives and photographs by U.S. travelers in México in the late 1800s. I then followed the image through its various iterations in cinematography in the 1910s – 1930s; which several scholars had already extensively documented. Archival research was then conducted with Maribel Álvarez at the University of Arizona Tucson's Southwest Center. Álvarez has curated an extensive collection of sleeping Mexican items, such as postcards, food boxes, photographs, business cards etc., within her Sleeping Mexican Lab.

It was at the Lab that I quite literally looked through boxes and folders of artifacts and began the process outlined in Gries' (2015) R2 "assembling the data into collections," and R3 "data mining and assembling a collection" (p. 112). Throughout this process I was looking for moments of "composition, production, distribution, circulation, transformation, collectivity, and consequentiality" the fourth research phase (Gries, 2015, p. 113). (More details on the

methodology are provided in Chapter 4). While a great deal of interesting, surprising data was collected from these three different data collection methods, there were some limitations to the scope of this study due to x and y.

Limitations

Just as I expand upon my literature review and methodology in each chapter, I also discuss the limitations of my research. Most notable is the location in which the study took place, which resulted in a homogenous participant sample. While one-on-one interviews within the second unit of analysis, that incorporated business owners, proved to be helpful ways of engaging busy restaurant owners, the limitations of having one-on-one face to face interviews, lack of time to be reflexive in their answers, and asking to immediately explain something that they not have previously considered may have affected the responses gathered. Lastly, due to current technological limitations relative to the image of the sleeping Mexican, I was unable to amass the large data set of visuals as done by Gries (2015). While the images I was able to collect proved to be sufficient for this iteration of the study, more extensive searching will need to be done to complete the picture begun in this project. Below is short summary of each of the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

This dissertation constructs a holistic approach to the rhetorical use and effectiveness of ethnic stereotypes paired with food product packaging. The work of this dissertation is applicable to numerous "ethnic" groups, and it is my hope that people continue to take up this work for various ethnic groups, but for now this project limits its discussion to Mexican foods. By examining the placement of these images and others like them on Mexican food packages, I question the situation and condition that leads to "kitschy" and at times stereotypical

representations of Mexican culture. As I hope to demonstrate in subsequent chapters, commodified perception of culture also serves as a framework to analyze the multiple dynamics involved in creating a single story of certain cultures or groups by being attuned to the images created by mass merchandisers. The outcomes of this research have important implications for researchers, students/teachers, and everyday consumers.

The following is a breakdown in the chapters of this dissertation. I ask that you view this as a roadmap for the document ahead.

Chapter Two: Unlikely Dinner Guests at the Visual Rhetoric Table. Chapter two presents the methodology and findings for research question 1.a: *What images do consumers tend to associate with Mexican food?* This chapter introduces readers to 14 study participants, all who live in El Paso, Texas, who were asked to engage in "creative research methods" to construct logos and branding for two different Mexican food companies. Participants' drawings as well as the focus group discussions provided valuable insight as to what images had influenced them, and more importantly *how* they had been influenced.

Chapter Three: Taking a Seat at the Table. Chapter three presents the methodology and findings for research question 1.b: *How do business owners perceive their use of Mexican images and symbols when paired with Mexican foodstuffs?* This chapter introduces readers to eight different business owners, all who have had their restaurants for at least 15 years in El Paso, Texas. Each business owner uses different types of images as their logos to communicate with their clients. The chapter presents their reasoning, and hypothesis of what their images mean and communicate to their clients

Chapter Four. **Evolution of Commodified Perception of Culture.** Chapter four presents Commodified Perception of Culture: how the term came about and what it means. It

details the iconographic tracking of the image of the sleeping Mexican man as well as the inductive and deductive results of the research that led to my revisions of CPC (CPC 2.0) as a theoretical framework for visual rhetoric.

Chapter Five: Conclusion: Implications and Applications of CPC. The final chapter concludes the findings of this study as well as advocate that CPC is a framework that can help visual rhetoricians (scholars, practitioners, and students) examine how food advertisements communicate with their desired customers/audiences. Having an understanding of the distribution and consumption of images associated with food stuffs can allow for a deeper understanding of a small moment where culture is created and enacted diurnally, but isn't given much attention.

Chapter Two

UNLIKELY DINNER GUESTS AT THE VISUAL RHETORIC TABLE

Within the fields of visual rhetoric, social semiotics, multimodal analysis, and new materialist approaches to visual rhetoric, an overwhelming number of scholarship concentrate on critical analysis of visuals. Strikingly missing from these analyses are the opinions of people outside of the academy. While what images mean and do can be exhaustively debated within the academy, it is just as important to consider what these images mean to everyday people in the spaces that they live. Therefore, in this chapter and in Chapter 3, I invited unlikely dinner guests to the table of visual rhetoric and called upon consumers to explain their interpretation of images paired with Mexican foodstuffs and restaurants and ultimately answer: *What images do consumers associate with Mexican food product and restaurants?*

This effort contributes to the call put forth by media and communications scholar David Machin and linguistics Andrea Mayr (2012) to examine what images mean to people outside of the academy and contributes to the scholarship of how "everyday people" interpret and engage with the images analyzed by visual rhetoricians. This work moves past visual analyses that isolate their findings to the opinion of the analyst and to the images' effectiveness in the moment, and towards a method that includes "everyday people" who do not spend their time in the academy. Additionally, it looks at images as living and networked. This work provides visual rhetoric a way to make visible the social, cognitive and epistemological function of certain visual images, but to also make those visual functions apparent when paired with racial and ethnic groups and their foodstuffs.

Ethnic Food

First, I must begin by engaging in the complexities and power struggles of the phrase "ethnic food." The mere existence of the term places emphasis on a dominant group and places an "othering" label on that which is different than the dominant group. According to food studies scholar Krishnendu Ray (2016),

> Among theoretical sophisticates "the ethnic," within scare quotes, is an unutterable referent to color and inferiority [….] The term itself is one of the signs of unequal relationship between the self-proclaimed normative center of the Euro-American imagination, its dominating institutions, and numerous categories of others such as the foreigner, the tourists, the exile, the stranger, the immigrant, etc., in a rich semiotic universe of slippery, relational selfhoods and Otherness. (emphasis in the original, p. 4)

When using the term ethnic, there is an inherent othering that is largely linked to issues of race and class. However, with or without this nomenclature there are still power struggles for people and their foods that do not ascribe to dominant white culture. This is not, however, to paint those who would fall into the category of "ethnic" as completely without power:

> the ethnic restaurateur carries that connotation of subordination yet potential strength, the inferiority of the foreign-born yet the possibility of some cultural capital, a person, who due to limits of money, social, or cultural capital, could never play in the domain of high culture yet cannot be excluded from American culture. (Ray, 2016, p. 11)

The term ethnic has a great deal of difficult history, but I use it as a label of foods that come from minority groups within U.S. culture regardless of the foods popularity within the larger U.S. food system.

Food Studies

Food studies scholars, including Krishendu Ray (2016) and others such as Lucy Long (1998; 2004), have specifically examined consumers' and producers' perception and interactions with "ethnic" foods. Consumers' interaction with ethnic foods has the potential to lead to what Long (1998; 2004) termed "culinary tourism." Long (1998; 2004) defined "culinary tourism" as "the intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an Other – participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered as belong to a culinary system not one's own" (p. 21). Long (1998) does not critique the practice of culinary tourism, but instead offers it as a framework "for seeing the varieties of interfaces in which adventurous eating occurs as instances of negotiation individual and social perception" (p. 195). While there are a number of different critiques to be made of "culinary tourism" as a practice, Long's (1998; 2004) framework offers a helpful tool to slow down the eating process and "identif[y] venues in which food is presented as tourist attraction" (Long, 2004, p. 11).

Visual Rhetoric and Food Studies

The field of food studies takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the cultural, political and economic aspects of food and the food system. The foods on our plates, the types of plates we eat off of, and the utensils, or lack thereof, we use for consumption, are single nodes in larger networks of socio-economic, political, historical, cultural, environmental, and ethical factors. In similar fashion, images associated with Mexican foodstuffs are a micro moment that can speak not only to a person's culinary tastes but also the complex socio-rhetorical power images associated with an ethnic group have in the creation of perception of not only that group's foodstuff but also the group itself. According to Long (1998), "food is more

than simply the dishes we consume" (p. 15). In other words, embedded in our food production and consumption everyday tools and practices are cultural, economic, and historical details.

Scholars in multiple fields outside of food studies have focused their critical lens on the communicative abilities of food packaging. Within the field of communication, Greg Dickinson (2002) looked at how the images paired with food production strategically highlight certain aspects of the commodity while also hiding other portions. Dickinson (2002) highlighted Starbucks' deliberate attempts to construct a narrative through their visual rhetoric that is "absent reference" to actual coffee production (see Adams 2007). By examining "spaces" through the lens of Lefebvre, Dickinson (2002) argued that Starbucks through its colors, logo, and marketing of "natural" coffee products helps construct a space that constructs a particular narrative for the customer who frequents the coffee shop:

> This display – and the entire practice of brewing the beverage – materializes a complex rhetoric that serves to involve the customer in a concrete transformative process while striving to cover over the difficult social, cultural, and economic conditions that make the coffee available in the first place. At the same time, this display points to the ways Starbucks embeds the drink and the drinker in a visual scene of naturalness. (p. 13)

Dickinson (2002) laid the groundwork for using "food spaces" as sites of rhetorical inquiry that uncover the sometimes accidental complexities that create our everyday constructions of self.

In a 2015 episode of NPR's *TED Radio Hour* Brand Over Braine, host Guy Raz actualizes Dickinson's work. In this interview with Professor of Clinical Psychology and Cognitive Science at Yale University Paul Bloom, Raz recounts an incident where he had the best cup of coffee.

Guy Raz: Okay, so I recently had the best cup of coffee of my life.

Bloom: Uh huh.

Raz: And the barista had a like handle bar mustache and a monocle, I am making that up, but he is telling me about this like single origin bean from Maui and the name of the person who roasted it the day before and the water he pours over the grounds is exactly 197 degrees and he hands me this cup and says this is going to be the best cup of coffee of your life, and you know what it was. He was not lying.

Bloom: He was not lying, but having told you all this got you into a state where you were ready to appreciate it.

Raz: Yeah.

Bloom: If it came out of a coffee urn at Alcoholics Anonymous it may not have tasted quite so good.

Raz: Yeah! Even it was the same exact coffee.

Bloom: Yeah. That's right.

In this exchange, while not negating the pleasurable flavor of the coffee, Bloom (2015) asserted that the setting of selling the coffee as well as Raz's receptiveness to the story positioned Raz to have the experience he did.

Greg Dickinson and Casey Maugh (2004), building on Dickinson's work in 2002, argued that grocery stores are also rich cultural hubs to help consumers form an identity through what they present and simultaneously hide. This is done precisely through the way that grocery stores visually represent themselves. For example, the color schemes, the images that are placed to indicate various sections of the store, and even the way certain products are presented all help to situate the consumer in a deliberate space that hides actual food production.

Both of Dickinson's works are foundational in this study. They demonstrate how food as a terministic screen allows visual rhetoric to examine the way images associated with food create a sense of place, taste, and cultural awareness; however, they still limit their analysis to that of the researcher. This study builds on these pieces by engaging in the everyday consumer of these products.

THE RECIPE: METHODOLOGY

In my attempt to uncover why certain images, e.g. the *sombrero*, the *zarape* and the sleeping Mexican man, are continuously paired with Mexican food product packaging while others are not, I battled two key issues. First, the main purpose of this component of the research was to uncover the seemingly invisible and unconscious impact certain images have on consumers. If I simply provided my own analysis of these images I would be replicating previous methodologies and neglect the important aspect of uncovering what these images mean to everyday people in the spaces that they live. To gain a better understanding of why certain images have continued to be replicated and remixed, and how certain images add to the construction of Mexican identity and Mexican food, I determined that I needed to engage with everyday consumers. This seemed incredibly daunting because I knew that the issue of representation on food product packaging would not necessarily be apparent to the average person. In other words, while I see images on food product packaging any time I walked into a grocery store or a Mexican restaurant, I am an academic trained in and constantly surrounded by critical thinking. From personal experience, I knew this would not necessarily be the case for potential participants. The average, everyday person in my neighborhood or group of friends is less worried about these issues, if at all. Therefore, I needed a methodology that would provide my participants the time, space, and ability to pull on and interact and externalize their cultural

logic and the network of images they had previously encountered. This then sparked the second issue, which was how to make visible the cultural logics of other people. Looking to the field of Consumer Culture and Advertising writ large, consumer testing, placing various brands of similar products in front of consumers to see which brand they would be drawn to more and why at first appeared to be an option (see also McQuarrie and Mick, 1999). However, it soon became clear that this consumer testing would fall short of truly making visible the influence certain images had on consumers.

With my dissertation committee, I decided that the best method of engagement to answer my research question: *What images do consumers associate with Mexican food product and restaurants?* would be through "creative research methods" focus groups. Developed by sociologist and media theorist, David Gauntlett (2007) "Creative research methods" are "research processes in which people are asked to *make* things, and then reflect on them, rather than having to speak instant reports, or 'reveal' themselves in verbal discussions" (emphasis in the original, p. 92). This methodology also helps mitigate the concern that

> researchers expect people to explain immediately, in words, things which are difficult to explain immediately in words; and that researchers often start with their own sense of a topic or problem (media, prejudice, economics or whatever) and then are frustrated when their pesky subjects do not seem to think that this subject-matter is as important as the researchers do. (Gauntlett, 2007, p. 3)

As has been documented by Gauntlett (2007) and Ross Horsley (2005), creative research methods, a form of visual sociology, allows participants to provide more fruitful responses than survey and interviews alone:

> the method [creative research methods] recognises [sic] and indeed embraces the creativity and reflexivity of people. […] it's not about tricking or cornering search subjects in order to confirm a ready-made hypothesis. Instead, it offers them tools through which they can thoughtfully communicate their own meanings and understandings. […] this approach avoids treating individuals as mere 'audience' of particular products. Rather than defining people as 'soap opera viewers' or 'magazine readers', this approach recognises [sic] that people receive media messages from all kinds of places, all day long, and that they somehow process all these but do so as a whole person. (Gauntlett and Holzwarth, 2006, p. 85)

Recognizing that images associated with Mexican food stuffs was something that participants actively operated in without being fully conscious of, I determined that this research method was the most effective in allowing fruitful discussion on the topic to occur. This was in large part due to its ability to allow participants to create and reflect on the topic over an extended period of time.

The methodology of asking participants to create their responses is not unique to the methodology of "creative research methods" and has been employed by numerous disciplines, in numerous contexts and in numerous ways (see Theron, Mitchel, Smith & Stuart, 2011; Knowles & Cole 2008). What Theron, Mitchel, Smith and Stuart (2011) have termed "participatory visual research methodologies, the "use of visual (photography, video, digital storytelling, drawings) as participatory methodology […] often regarded as one aspect of community-based research," has also been used within the field of Technical Communication specifically when asking participants to reveal things that may seem everyday, commonplace, or so obvious that we no longer actually see them (see Dura, 2010; Walton, 2014).

While participants could have provided their drawing responses to my questions on an individual basis, I deliberately assigned individuals to groups because I wanted to uncover not just what images they associated with Mexican food products, but why they associated these images. According to communications scholar Jenny Kitzinger (1995), the focus group method "is particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but *how* they think and *why* they think that way" (emphasis mine, p. 299). It was interesting to see that within the focus groups as participants explained their drawing other participants asked questions as to why they drew what they did or aligned with what was drawn. I realized that indeed the focus group environment not only allowed participants to say explain their drawings, but also allowed them to consider, align, and deviate from other participants responses while explaining their position and revealing their thought process and purpose.

The Guests at the Dinner Party

Nonprobabilistic sampling, namely "snowball sampling" was used to select study participants (see Table 2.1). Nonprobabilistic sampling is a non-random selection of participants, and snowball sampling is a method where participants recruit other participants. I solicited several acquaintances and asked if they would like to be a part of my research group and also invited them to bring anyone they thought would be interested to the focus group as well. Ultimately, fourteen people from the city of El Paso, Texas, participated in the study. According to Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce, and Laura Johnson (2006), "If the goal [of the study] is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve [participants] will likely be sufficient" (p. 76). Therefore, I began with a benchmark of

twelve participants, but after the third focus group and fourteen participants, theoretical saturation was met.

Table 2.1: Study Participants

Column1	Age	Sex	Self Described Ethnici	Native / Non Nativ
Focus Group One				
Tony	33	M	Hispanic	Native
Maria	67	F	Hispanic	Native
Hector	60	M	Hispanic	Native
Isabel	59	F	Hispanic	Native
Lucy	40	F	Hispanic	Native
Focus Group Two				
David	45	M	Mexcian	Non Native
Celeste	25	F	Latin	Non Native
Nancy	45	F	of Mexican Descent	Native
Carolina	44	F	Mexican American	Non Native
Charlie	46	M	Mexican American	Native
Focus Group Three				
Jesus	27	M	Mexican American	Native
Mary	25	F	Mexican American	Native
Yvonne	53	F	Hispanic	Non Native
Cynthia	29	F	Hispanic	Native

Of the fourteen participants, one self-identified as Mexican, four as Mexican-American, one of Mexican descent, seven as Hispanic and one as Latin. Participants were asked to self describe their ethnicity through a process of fill-in-the-blank. They ranged in ages from 24-67, and there were five males and nine females. El Paso, Texas, is situated directly on the U.S. west Texas border with México. 80 percent of the population self identifies as "Hispanic," according to the most recent U.S. census. Therefore, while it was not purposeful to have participants be from the same ethnic group, it was not surprising that the group became so homogenous. While three of the participants were not originally from the city of El Paso, all participants had lived in the city for at least five years. I wanted to mine the opinions from people who reside in the El Paso border region precisely because of the close proximity of México and individuals' exposure

(though varied) to both cultures. Further, the images in the study are very prevalent in the region, and I wanted to see if average residents considered them the norm or questioned them. In future iterations, I plan to conduct this study in different areas and with more diverse populations to be able to compare results and perception.

Putting my Guests to Work

To have participants reveal what images they associate with Mexican food products, I asked them to position themselves as working for an advertising agency that had just taken on two new clients. The first client was a new company producing and selling tortillas. The second client was a new Mexican food restaurant that was opening in El Paso. I instructed participants to design logos and names of the tortilla package and Mexican food restaurant in a way that would appeal to them; in other words, they were to create the logo for a product they would buy and a place *they* would like to eat at. I provided color pencils, markers, crayons, drawing paper, rulers and protractors for participants to create their design for each scenario.

Figure 2.1: Research Site

Throughout the recruitment process as well as during the focus groups, I constantly stressed that the quality of the drawing was not the interest of the study but that instead I was most interested in the content of the drawing. I also expressed that participants could simply draw a stick figure if that is what they felt comfortable doing, explaining that the discussion portion of the study would allow them to clarify their drawings.

Because the main purpose of this portion of the study was to have participants reveal what images they associate with Mexican food product and restaurants, once participants completed their drawings I gave them a brief written questionnaire asking them to explain their design choices. The questionnaire asked the following questions:

1. Tell me about your design choices in the creation of this brand.
    a. Why would this brand design draw you to this restaurant/food product?
    b. How is your brand different or similar to other Mexican food products and restaurants?
2. Outside of yourself, who do you think would be drawn to the restaurant and food products based on the logo you have created?

With question 2, participants were asked to consider who outside of themselves would their logos appeal to.

The questionnaire served two purposes. First, answering the questionnaire before the group discussion allowed participants to formulate and record their own opinions prior to interacting with the group. This helped to mitigate the issue of group thinking. Second, it prompted the participants to consider and explain the reason why they made the design choices they had both to themselves and it prompted them to consider how and why their design might appeal to others. Once all of the participants had completed their drawings and questionnaires we

then engaged in a focus group discussion that stemmed from the questionnaire as well as where the discussion moved.

LET'S EAT! RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Appetizer: One of Each, Please!

While participants could have verbally explained their logo designs, drawing their The field of Food Studies takes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the cultural, political and economic aspects of food and the food system. The foods on our plates, the types of plates we eat off of, and the utensils, or lack thereof, we use for consumption, are single nodes in larger networks of socio-economic, political, historical, cultural, environmental, and ethical factors. In similar fashion, images associated with Mexican foodstuffs are a micro moment that can speak not only to a person's culinary tastes but also the complex socio-rhetorical power images associated with an ethnic group have in the creation of perception of not only that group's foodstuff but also the group itself. According to Long (1998), "food is more than simply the dishes we consume" (p. 15). In other words, embedded in our food production and consumption everyday tools and practices are cultural, economic, and historical details.

Participants' responses proved to be a valuable component of the project for several reasons. First, asking participants to draw granted them the space to be reflexive on the task at hand. This mitigated the concern of having participants explain immediately things that they may not put much importance on. Second, asking participants to draw brought to the forefront subconscious thoughts and memories that may not have been accessible in oral or written responses. According to educationist Sandra Weber (2008), "Images can simultaneously present multiple viewpoints or generate multiple interpretations, and can call attention to the everyday by making it strange or casting it in a new light" (p. 50). While Weber (2008) focuses on the

benefits that researchers can glean by including images within our research, I found that three of her "Ten Good Reasons" to use art-related images in research really captured the value of asking participants to draw their responses in this study:

> 1. Images can be used to capture the ineffable, the hard-to-put-into-words. Some things just need to be shown, not merely stated. Artistic images can help us access those elusive, hard-to-put-into words aspects of knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden or are ignored.
>
> 2. Images can make us pay attention to things in new ways. Art makes us look; it engages us. The reason we need and create art has to do with its ability to discover what we didn't know we knew, or to see what we never noticed before, even when it was right in front of our noses.
>
> 3. Images can facilitate reflexivity in research design. Using images connects to the self yet provides a certain distance. An image reveals at least as much about the person who took or chose or produced it as it does about the people or objects who are figured in it. Under the right conditions, using images can thus facilitate or encourage a certain transparency, introducing the potential for reflexivity into the research design. (p. 44-46)

Lastly, and probably most obviously, participants' drawings were crucial because they provided an artifact for the study. While one participant could have simply stated she would portray her grandmother in the kitchen making the tortilla, having the physical artifact of the drawing concretizes that participant's thought and externalizes what that participant means when she envisions her grandmother in the kitchen making tortillas. In short, asking participants to draw enabled them to put their cultural logics on paper in non-textual form. Through their drawings, participants engaged in their memories and nostalgias in an attempt to demonstrate authenticity.

Additionally, through their drawings they revealed that certain icons have become symbols of Mexican identity and thus Mexican food even if they could not pinpoint exactly where these images come from.

The focus group discussions also proved to be especially fruitful to the core purpose of this portion of the project. The discussions allowed participants to reveal the cultural logics they were pulling from in the creation of these images by allowing their memories of home or previous experience within grocery stores and restaurants to influence what they drew. Participants could have simply drawn their logos and then left the interpretation of what the images meant to me; however, this would have eliminated essential and interesting discussion on the network of images and experiences each of the participants were operating in and their process of translation of themselves to others. The drawings as well as the focus group discussions allowed me to see what types of life experiences or images had influenced them, and more importantly *how* they had been influenced. While the focus groups contained group discussions, in the results below, I pullout individual responses that were most salient to the themes developed during the process of coding. However, it should be noted that these responses were generated as a result of the group discussion.

First Course: Coding

Participants' written responses to the short answer questionnaire as well as their and verbal responses within the focus group discussions were coded using Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparative method of grounded theory. The images participants drew were not coded. I was deliberate in not allowing my interpretation of the drawings to overrule what participants said their purpose was; therefore, the drawings were only coded based on the participants' verbal and oral explanation of them. Additionally, the main tenant of this study was to amplify the

voices of everyday people, and so it was imperative that codes were generated using participants' own words. According to Johnny Saldaña (2016), "In Vivo Codes use the direct language of participants as codes rather than researcher generate words and phrases" (p. 71).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained that the "constant comparative method of grounded theory" is "concerned with generating and possibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems" (p. 104). Categories and properties attributed to the construction of a theory but are differentiated: "A category stands by itself as a conceptual element of a theory. A property, in turn, is a conceptual aspect or element of a category" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 36). The constant comparative method consists of four stages: "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory" (p. 105). "Incidents" are coded "into as many categories of analysis as possible as categories emerge or data emerge that fit an existing category" (p. 106). Each incident is then constantly compared to each incident. The comparison eventually evolves from incident to incident to "comparison of incident with properties of the category" (p. 108).

To demonstrate this theoretical methodology in practice, let me explain in brief how this method was, in part, applied to the participants' responses. As an example, at the onset of reviewing the transcript of focus group one, I coded numerous incidents with the category of "authentic" as the participants repeatedly used this term. However, when I reviewed the transcripts again, I began to compare each incident within authentic with a property of the category, for example, grandmother, smoke, etc. When I reviewed the transcript for focus group two, the same incident of authentic arose, and at times it aligned with previous properties from focus group one, and at times it deviated. After constantly comparing each of the incidents and

then eventually the properties of each incident from all three focus groups I was able to construct a more complete view of the participants' responses.

Main Course: Themes

Two-thirds of the participants stated that throughout the process of creating the logos they remembered their mothers and grandmothers, and the smells in the kitchen as these women were cooking. As a result of them flashing back to this memory, they recreated the experience of their home for the consumer in order to communicate that what they were selling was authentic Mexican food. Additionally, one-third of the participants stated that they wanted to communicate to their consumers an "experience" of México to appeal to the authenticity of their product. Throughout the discussions another one-third revealed that they were utilizing "traditional" markers of Mexican cooking, such as a *trompo* and a *molcajete*, because they were signifiers of Mexican identity. In other words, participants created both linguistic and visual codes that they knew would mean something to a particular audience who were also in the know of what these images meant. This demonstrated at the onset that participants were swimming in a pool of visual representations and deliberately choose ones that they believed would resonate most with their audiences. Below are the themes that emerged from the three focus groups that were conducted in this unit of analysis. Pseudonyms were given to each of the participants.

Home/Homemade/Grandmother. The depiction of home and homemade was a common concept that arose in several participants' responses. Out of the fourteen participants, nine depicted images of "Home/Homemade/Grandmother" for either or both the tortilla company and the new Mexican food restaurant. Of the nine participants, there were a total of twelve drawings. Two of drawings depicted older women within the kitchen space in the physical act of making tortillas (see Figure 2.2a; Figure 2.3).

Four of the drawings presented images of a home (see Figure 2.4; Figure 2.5; Figure 2.6; Figure 2.7). Three of the depictions of home contained the images of smoke to signify the act of cooking (see Figure 2.5, Figure 2.6, and Figure 2.7). Figure 2.7 contained both images of a home as well as smoke to demonstrate the active act of cooking. Two participants depicted to the kitchen space. Figure 2.8 depicted a "window view of kitchen" absent a person cooking and Figure 2. 9 displays a worn pot cooking beans and freshly made tortillas with steam rising from them. Three logos, Figure 2.10; Figure 2.11; Figure 2.12; Figure 2.13 all presented names of women as the main preparers of the food being advertised.

For this particular theme**,** I grouped together the categories of "Home/Homemade/ Grandmother" because in each of these drawings, participants attempted to appeal to a sense of authenticity through a sense of nostalgia of home, homemade cooking and consequently grandmother's cooking.

Grandmother in the Kitchen. The top part of Figure 2.2, Figure 2.2a, has the image of a woman standing by a stove with a brown circle in the palm of her hands. At the top of the image is the term "CASERAS." *Caseras*, translated into English, means "homemade." When I asked Lucy, the author of this particular image, why she decided to use this term as the brand name of her tortilla company, she stated, "they are homemade." Lucy explained that the brown circle represents flour dough. The depiction of the hands was meant to capture the movement hands make as they are smacked together to flatten the dough in an attempt create perfectly round flat circles that, when cooked on a *comal* (hot plate), become tortillas. As the participant explained the drawing, she stated this image came about from remembering her grandmother in the kitchen making flour tortillas by hand. She said, "this would be a picture of a grandmother, an old lady somebody old reminding me of my grandma making tortillas on the stove." Lucy was quick to

Figure 2.2: CASERAS: Homemade by Grandmother

explain that this representation would "have to be a grandmother, not a young lady. Somebody old, traditional." The reason for this representation of a grandmother cooking homemade tortillas stemmed from Lucy's own taste. She stated "Me personally, I don't like buying the manufactured ones [tortillas]. I go to the stores that make them on a daily basis. I don't like eating manufactured because it just doesn't taste the same to me."

From Lucy's responses we see that there are quite a few key issues occurring in her tortilla product packaging and brand name. Lucy attempts to visually represent a memory she has of her grandmother. This depiction of the past resonates with the concept of nostalgia and attempting to freeze a moment in time to mentally return to it. Even though Lucy does not enjoy consuming "manufactured" tortillas, she masks the mass produced tortilla that would be in this

packaging. Instead, she steers the consumer to concentrate on the image of the grandmother in the kitchen and title of "CASERAS" as being representative of the quality of the tortilla.

Moving to the bottom half of the drawing, Figure 2.2, Figure 2.2b, it is obvious that there is a very different representation. Figure 2.2b still carries with the brand name of "CASERAS" because "that [being homemade] is important to me." Even though the brand still evokes a sense of homemade with the title of the product, this image is absent the representation of the grandmother at home making the tortillas. Instead, this image presents a woman dressed in a *folklorico* dress, with a *sombrero charro* on the floor to the side of her. Behind the woman *papel picado* [perforated paper] is hanging. Lucy emphasized that in the bottom portion of the image there was "Red on top green on the bottom to represent México." Lucy explained that the two different types of representation were deliberate. The top one was to appeal more to those who have had the experience of eating fresh homemade tortillas while the bottom half was meant for those who did not have that experience.

Cynthia, in Figure 2.3, drew a woman with graying hair with the word "Grandma" on her dress standing in front of a table with a bowl and a rolling pin within a kitchen space. The woman is inside of the kitchen and flour tortillas are on the stove. According to Cynthia, "It's just supposed to be a grandmother in the kitchen making tortillas. To me it's always been the homemade tortillas made by your grandma. A picture of a grandma would draw me to buying that brand of tortilla because from past experiences little old Mexican women make the best homemade tortillas." Similarly to Lucy, Cynthia attempted to recreate a scene that would invoke the memory of a grandmother making tortillas as a way to connect that the tortilla product with a sense of home cooking and therefore quality in the taste.

Figure 2.3: Grandma in the Kitchen

Casita/Home Cooked. Moving away from of images of women in the act of cooking, four participants drew physical structures of a home. Even though women are missing from these images they are still evoked to create a sense of home and home cooked food.

In Figure 2.4, there is a square home with a terracotta roof. The name of the restaurant, "Mi Casa" [my home], is on the door entering the restaurant, and the restaurant has a slogan, "Authentic Mexican Cuisine: 'The way your Abuela [grandmother] makes it!'" In her questionnaire asking for her reasoning in her design, Yvonne wrote: "Name: 'Mi Casa' to welcome clients. Slogan: Authentic Mexican Food Like Abuela [grandmother] […] to illustrate and emphasize traditional recipes used. Further elaborating on her choice of the word "cuisine" as opposed to "food" within the focus group discussion, Yvonne explained, "I thought cuisine instead of food because maybe someone would say this is not just taco bell or you know a commercial Mexican food restaurant. With cuisine you're gonna get something more original more authentic." Yvonne attempted to communicate that the foods within this restaurant are not

Figure 2.4: Authentic Mexican Cuisine

simply mass produced products, but instead "something more original and authentic." Yvonne went on to explain, "And that is also why I put "the way *abuela* makes it." There is somebody back there making homemade recipes. You know from their great grandmother or whatever." The slogan was Yvonne's attempt to trigger a sense of homemade but not homemade just by anyone, but instead homemade by grandma.

When asked, "Who, outside of yourself, do you think would be drawn to this type of restaurant?" Yvonne answered, "non-Mexican food eaters." When I probed about why she thought this, she explained:

> I think they want to taste something different. Maybe they are travelers. Maybe they are passing through an area like El Paso where people actually don't stop to visit the culture but they are looking for something quick to say "Oh I ate at Mi Casa restaurant in El Paso and it was authentic food." So maybe just non-Mexican individuals.

I pushed Yvonne a little further and asked, "How did you design your [restaurant] differently from someone who would have more local of Mexican people visiting them? What do you think makes yours different from theirs?" To this she responded: "It's brighter. It's more exaggerated, I think. It's maybe looking for a bigger crowd other than I am here I know that is a great restaurant every Saturday night."

What was most interesting from this exchange is that while Yvonne used similar tropes in her logo as other participants, such as a home, depictions of food, a molcajete on the table, the use of the words, "authentic" and "*abuela*," she stated her design was geared towards non-Mexican food eaters because it was an "exaggerated" representation Mexican cuisine. There is a little bit of a contradiction in the logo however due to the use of "your Abuela." The use of the word "your" assumes that the audience/consumer has an *abuela* who made Mexican food. However, for Yvonne this is being used not so much as a way to resonate an actual memory of but instead to evoke a sense of any grandmother's home cooking and instilling it on this establishment.

While this particular restaurant is meant to appeal to non-Mexican food eaters, Yvonne explained that her design choices came from an actual memory she had from her childhood. She remembered:

> I went back to when I was young we used to eat at Casa Ole every weekend. It was our thing our parents used to take us to eat there […] It was a little pub in the mall and it was like this [pointing to her design] it had the tile inside and it looked like a little Mexican neighborhood and the tile roofs and the arch doors and everything was bright and colored and that is kinda what I was looking at.

Yvonne's drawing and explanation is demonstrative of the network that is created when we interact with the images around us. First, this particular image stems from an actual experience Yvonne had eating at a restaurant when she was a child. She possessed a memory of a space she and her family would eat at and used her memory of their look as inspiration for the logo she drew. This single moment is representative of the construction and negation of images. Yvonne took an actual lived experience and translated it to appeal to individuals who are non-Mexican food eaters. She negotiated her visual repertoire and chose aspects that she thought would most appeal to her target audience by "exaggerating" certain features of the design while still appealing to a sense of homemade and authentic.

In the following participant responses, in addition to seeing images of a home, you will also see smoke as a signifier of the active act of cooking.

Figure 2.5, drawn by Maria, presents "The Good Casita Mexican Food." The home in this image is called *una choza*, which directly translates to hut, but is also known as a home with a thatched roof. When asked what about this image would draw her to eat at this restaurant, she stated: "Porque por la chimney [Because of the chimney]. They would smell. Smell the food. Maria presented consumers with a logo that would entice her to go to the restaurant because of the active act of food cooking as well as the smell of the food cooking.

Isabel, author of Figure 2.6, stated she decided to create this brand image and name because, "The words *deliciosas, como de casa* [delicious, just like from home] would be enough for me to taste and try to compare the taste to the taste I had as a child as I warmed them [the tortillas] up on the *comal*." This again demonstrates an attempt to try to place the consumer within the home and kitchen space and visually provoke them to remember the taste of homemade tortillas as they are inside an aisle of a grocery store.

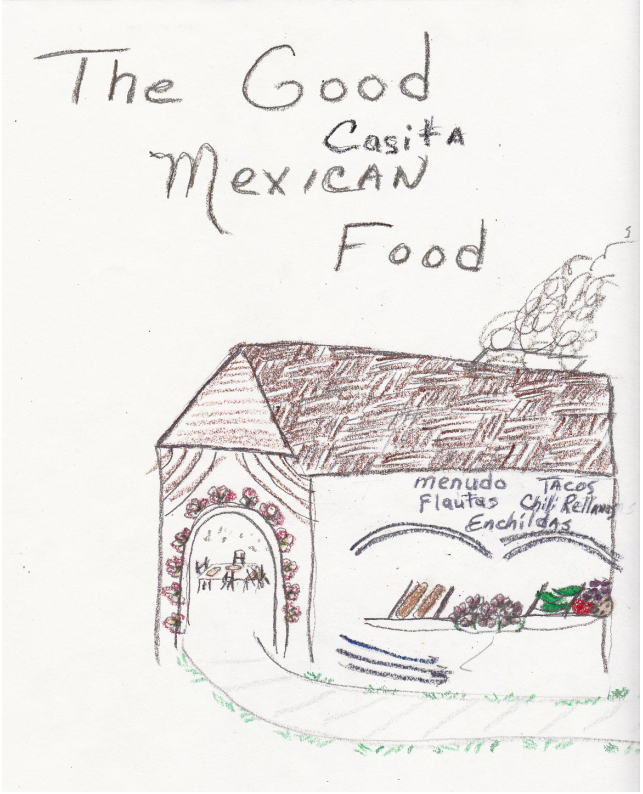

Figure 2.5: The Good Casita Mexican Food

Figure 2.6: Tortillas Deliciosas Como de Casa [Delicious Tortillas like from Home]

When asked about the image itself, Isabel explained that she drew this image,

> Just to grab you, just to get your appetite going. Like "from my house, wow I remember when we used to make them." And then I drew a picture of a house, again with smoke coming out because the scent. I have the memory of when my mother was making these at home *como olía* [how it smelled]. Hopefully this would take them back because they were like *como de casa* [like from home].

Isabel drew heavily on the sense of smell so consumers can viscerally experience the smell of homemade tortillas.

Figure 2.7, drawn by David, also called upon the home space and smoke. The name of the brand is "Home Tortillas," and the slogan is "Al Comal, Como Hecho En Casa" [From the hot plate, like they are made at home]. In his response to his individual questionnaire, David wrote: "The comal or grill, brings back the ancestors in us all. The fire burning, the smoke, the name Home takes us all back home." The last phrase, "Home takes us all back home was underlined on the questionnaire itself. In the group discussion, David explained,

> I wanted to create something with smoke. I wanted to draw a *comal* but I couldn't draw a *comal*. A *comal* is like a big flat pan where you bake and make tortillas so I wanted them to feel homemade. So instead of calling them "*Hecho en México*" [Made in México] I called them '*Hecho en Casa*' [Made at Home]. And the brand will be called Home Tortillas.

To continue to add to the notion of fresh and homemade, David stated his product would not come in a plastic bag, but instead would be in a cloth bag.

Figure 2.7: Home Tortillas

The physical texture of the product was to help the consumer associate the product with "fresh." David explained,

> The bag will be a drawstring bag […] because the first thing that came to mind was a sack, like a potato sack. So typically they are given to you in paper or plastic, but this would be a cloth sack. […] We all know that my product isn't really made at home, but I want you to think that.

What is strategic in each of these three drawings depicting smoke with the home is that the imagery of the smoke does not dictate the smell. What home cooking smelled like to each author

as well as each consumer is most likely different, and yet the imagery of the smoke is still effective not only because we can all smell the smell of the food cooking, but rather because it allows each person to instill the smell of their homemade foods and project that onto the restaurant.

Kitchen Space. The following two images move us back into the home space. Both evoke the place of the kitchen, but are still absent the people who cook. In Figure 2.8 Tony presented us with a "window view" of his home's kitchen. He presented a kitchen table, a stove, a clock pointed at 5 p.m., to symbolize dinner time, and a portrait of a rooster because this is what his grandmother had in her kitchen. When explaining his process in creating his logo on his

Figure 2.8: Home Kitchen

questionnaire, Tony wrote: “it’s not a person or product being sold, it’s a place. You want to come into a place that makes you feel at home.” Further explaining this in the group discussion, Tony stated:

> I actually thought of my house. […] A window into the kitchen of what you would see at a house that you would eat your food at. […] This is what I thought of when I open the kitchen door and I see my kitchen. My whole thought process for this is jut like my logo isn’t about a person or a product […] it’s not supposed to be about a person or product, but this is about a feeling that you have when you eat there. So my thing would be people will go there because they want to feel like they are at home eating food. As opposed to being at a restaurant and eating food. That is what my logo would ultimately lead to. You know what I mean? That would be what my logo is ultimately trying to be like welcoming and be like “Oh I am home” even though its loud and there are waiters walking around.

Figure 2.9, by Hector presents La Cocina de Apetitos. For his logo, he presented a pot of pinto beans, a *molcajete* (stoneware mortar), ingredients to make *chile* (tomato, jalapeño, garlic and onion) and freshly made tortillas with steam still coming off of them. On the questionnaire, Hector wrote: “This is also an indication of home cooking and a table filled with the ingredients and products in preparing Mexican food.” He further elaborated in the group discussion:

> And the Mexican food restaurant, I named it ... I started out with a name. La Cocina de Appetitos. And then I started going from there thinking about, what would ... What would spark my appetite? *Antojos* [cravings] in other words, you know. And I thought about beans, and I thought about salsa made in a molcajete, I thought about fresh made tortillas, you know, stuff like that. […] Typically, what I would see on the table when my mom,

when my grandma was preparing the food. And when I read that, I imagined beans on the stove a *molcajete*, *un chile*, *la tabla para las tortillas* [a board for the tortillas]. The whole nine yards.

Hector explained that the pot itself had the dark coloring on it not to symbolize a flame, but instead that the pot was worn, that it was on old pot that had been used.

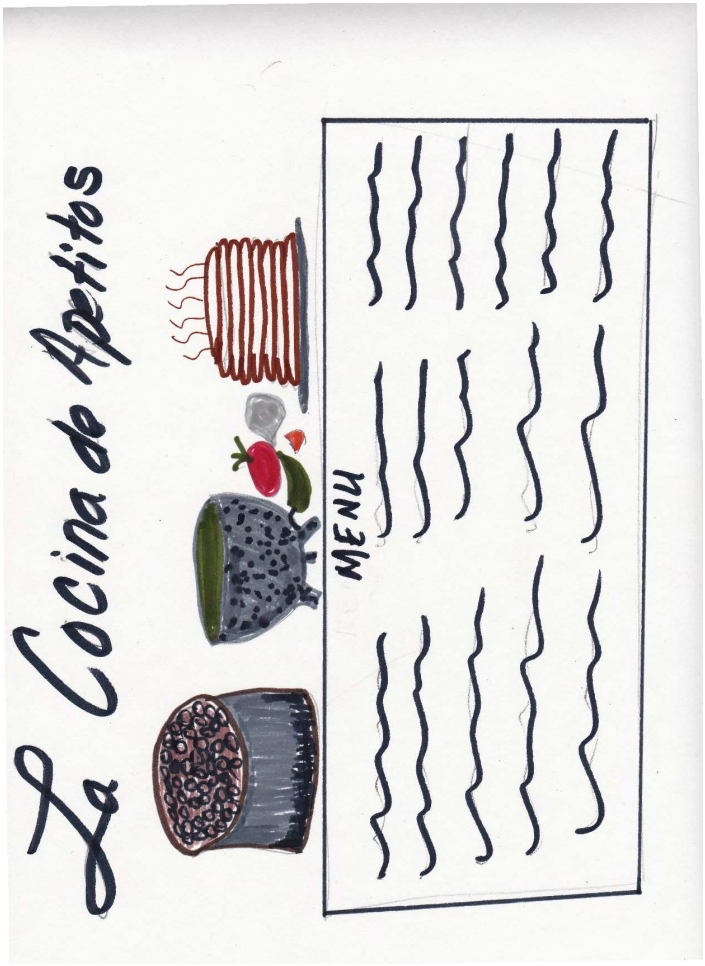

Figure 2.9: La Cocina de Apetitos

In both Tony's and Hector's images, they recreated what they remembered being in the kitchen while their grandmothers were preparing food. While both left out actual portrayals of

the women who made them food, these women and their influence were very much a part of the creative process they had. In both cases Tony and Hector recreated the welcoming environment their grandmothers established for them to recreate that experience for their prospective consumer, hoping the same kind of imagery would resonate with them.

Evoking Women Cooks. The following four logos, Figure 2.10, Figure 2.11, Figure 2.12 and Figure 2.13, were drawn by three participants and presented the names of women as the main preparers of the food being advertised. One participant, Mary, evoked the names of her grandmother and mother, as these were the best preparers of tortillas and Mexican food in her opinion. Jesus did not name his mother, but called upon her dream of opening a Mexican food restaurant in his creation of his logo. Lastly, Yvonne called upon a "Hispanic" name to evoke that sense of a woman in the kitchen preparing food.

In her written response for Figure 2.10, Mary explained:

> I drew the logos with things found in a kitchen because I associate good Mexican food and tortillas with a homemade authentic style. So, I named them after my favorite cooks [Ana and Maria], which are my mother and grandmother. I think most people raised in this culture associate good food with their mother, and it seems to be very common here in El Paso to find restaurants simply named after people.

Further elaborating, Mary unveiled,

> The reason I put Maria's is because well both of mine are just names and like you said [positioning to Cynthia] usually when you find those authentic places they are just names like really simple um and that is usually what I like to go to. And then I put Maria because it is my grandmother's name. Well when I did this I associated like a lot of

people do like Jesus with their mom or grandmother. So like those are the people that are the best cooks. So I think my grandma made the best tortillas so I put Maria's tortillas.

For her restaurant Mary made known that her design was inspired by her mother:

> Okay here is my Mexican food. It's Anna's Mexican Food because my mom is Anna and so I associate the best food from her. I also wanted to have a kitchen thing which is the cutting board and the rose is just to signify you know how you honor your mom so just Anna's with the little rose.

Absent the frills of *papel picado*, *sombreros charro*, arched doorways, and bright colors, Mary's logos presented a more subdued sophisticated and simple design that still paid homage to her favorite chefs, Maria and Ana

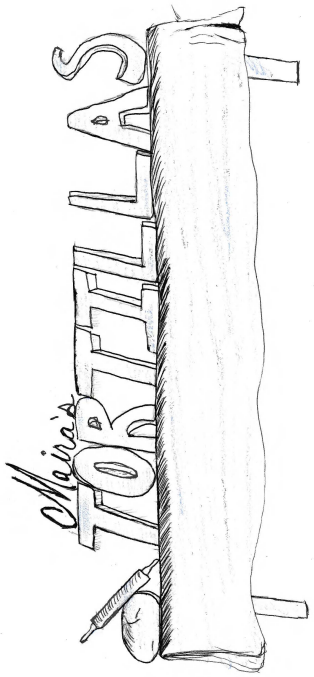

Figure 2.10: Maria's Tortillas

Figure 2.11: Ana's Mexican Food

For Figure 2.12 Jesus disclosed

> This was a lot more personal; my mom has always said if she ever had the opportunity to open a restaurant she would name it “Frijoles” [beans]. I threw in “mom’s” because I think when most people, and I mean Hispanics, think of Mexican food they picture their mom’s food. I also chose the chicken because my mom has a lot of chicken decorations and my grandma had a lot of roosters in the kitchen. Rooster decorations not actual roosters, just to clarify. And, for me, it ties in that idea of “Mom’s Frijoles.”

Further elaborating on why Mom’s Frijoles Jesus revealed,

> I chose “Mom’s Fríjoles” because whenever I talk with people oh my mom makes the best food and so people when they think about Mexican food they think about your mom your grandma or something like that so like it’s like I want that authenticity that home

style food. Like you come in and the restaurant is more like home rather than a restaurant. And so I chose a chicken because my mom has a whole bunch of chickens in her, well she like chickens, and my grandma liked roosters, and so I drew that because that is just kinda like the whole thing and I chose *fríjoles* because my mom had always said like if I ever make a restaurant that is what I would call it and so I just through mom's in there for that authenticity. […] Like I said, people say mom's food is the best and like this is kinda going off of my mom. Not saying that your mom doesn't cook well, but I am just using my idea of mom to convey that message to everybody else.

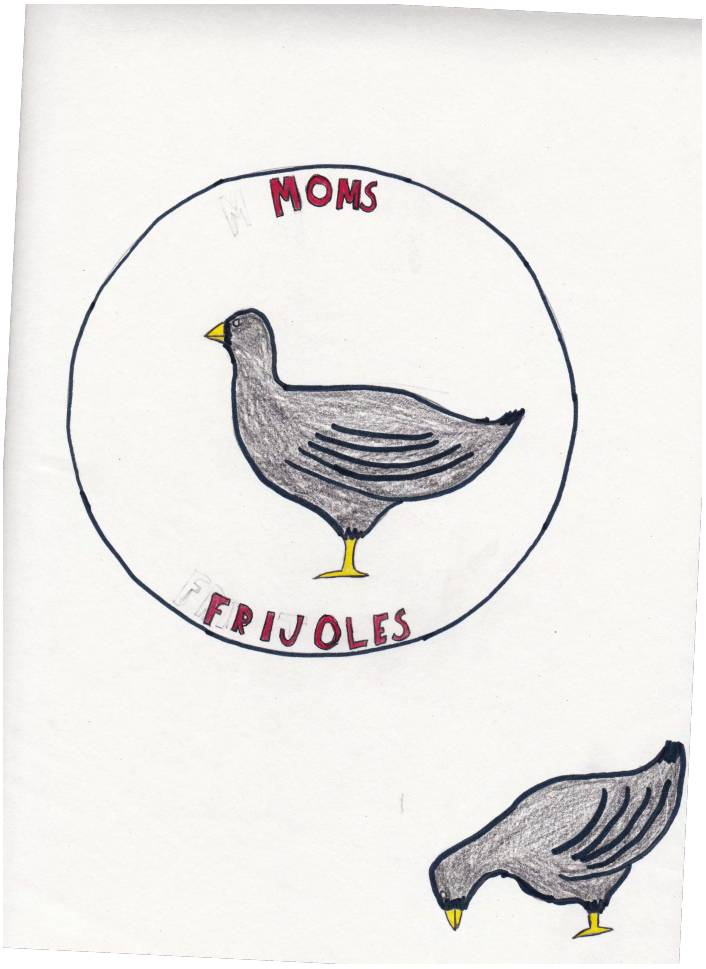

Figure 2.12: Mom's Frijoles

There are several statements I want to draw closer attention to in Jesus's explanation. He stated, "Like you come in and the restaurant is more like home rather than a restaurant." This sentiment resonates very closely with the statement made by Tony, "it's not a person or product being sold, it's a place. You want to come into a place that makes you feel at home." While Tony depicted this sentiment through a "window view of his home kitchen," Jesus attempted to appeal to this through the word "mom" and an image that reminds him of his mother and grandmother, a rooster. Also, in this last statement, "I am just using my idea of mom to convey that message to everybody else," Jesus externalized the theoretical concept acknowledging the network of images and cultural logic he operates in to attempt to resonate this sentiment with his potential consumers.

In Figure 2.13, Yvonne, while not evoking her mother or grandmother directly evoked a woman in the kitchen. Yvonne communicated:

> So this is my tortilla brand. It's Rosita's Home Style Tortillas, and it's round to associate with the shape of the tortillas. Rosita's kinda you know are drawn to a Spanish name, a Hispanic name, a Mexican name. […] Mine says "No Preservatives added" because they are home style tortillas and that is one thing I look for. I don't like name brand. I like home style or fresh made and so I do look for to see if there are preservatives added and that is why I put that on there.

Here the pairing of a "Hispanic" woman's name with "Home Style" is Yvonne's attempt to evoke that woman in the kitchen preparing the tortillas for her customers.

Even though these participants did not depict the women they were referring to, like Tony and Hector, women were very present in participants' design. All twelve of these participants, through their visuals, attempted to create a feeling of homemade, fresh, and

appealing with the sense of smell. Depictions of the home, a kitchen, an older woman, and smoke were used to resonate with someone who knew the practices of homemade food production. This demonstrates the network of images participants circulated in as well as their attempt to negotiate their network in a way that would most appeal to their intended audience.

Figure 2.13 Rosita's Home Style Tortillas

Dessert: Linguistic and Visual Passcodes

In the same way that the participants discussed attempting to make a connection with the consumer through the use of images of home, they also used what I termed "linguistic and visual passcodes." The term passcodes is usually associated with securing either a smartphone, a

computer or a Wi-Fi network. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2017) a passcode is, "A string of characters used as a password, especially to gain access to a computer or smartphone." In other words, a passcode is a code that is used to gain access to a restricted location. In much the same way that we have a passcode to gain access to our phones and computers, I argue that we have visual and linguistic passcodes, in other words a specialized lexis, that allow us to gain insider status with certain groups.

One example of this can be found in this symbol #. For some this is number sign or a pound sign, for others it demarcates a musical note as sharp, for others it is a hashtag, and there may be multiple other meanings I do not have access to. This symbol has a multitude of meanings that can be called upon given our previous interactions with it, our network. We operate in numerous linguistic and visual passcodes daily. While absent references of home/homemade and grandmother, these next five participants called upon Visual and Linguistic passcodes in their drawings of their tortilla package and/ or their Mexican food restaurant logo in an attempt to communicate a sense of authenticity through insider knowledge of the foodstuffs.

Trompo. David in Figure 2.14 uses "*El Trompo*" [The Top] as both the name of his restaurant and as the brand image. "*El Trompo*" is Spanish slang for a cooking method that has a rack of pork on a vertical spit that is then cut in a way to create an upside down triangle, creating the image of a spinning top. David stated,

> A *trompo* is a top, and the only person who is going to understand this is someone who has lived in México. In all of the United States this is actually outlawed by sanitation, they do not allow this in the United States. So only someone who has lived in México would understand this. It doesn't look like this, but it is a metal rod with thin sliced pork

and when the taco man slices it looks like this is [pointing to his drawing] looks like a *trompo*.

Figure 2.14: El Trompo

According to David, if this image does not resonate with you, this is because you are not the target audience he is appealing to. David created a visual and linguistic passcode for his restaurant by drawing on cultural signifies of Mexican cooking methods and preparation method instead of literal translation word and images.

Molcajete: Stoneware Mortar. Similar to David, three other participants depicted a visual passcode with the use of a cooking method within their logos. Hector, Lucy and Yvonne

placed the *molcajete* within their logos of the Mexican food restaurant, see Figure 2.9, Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.15a. A *molcajete* is a mortar made of volcanic rock.

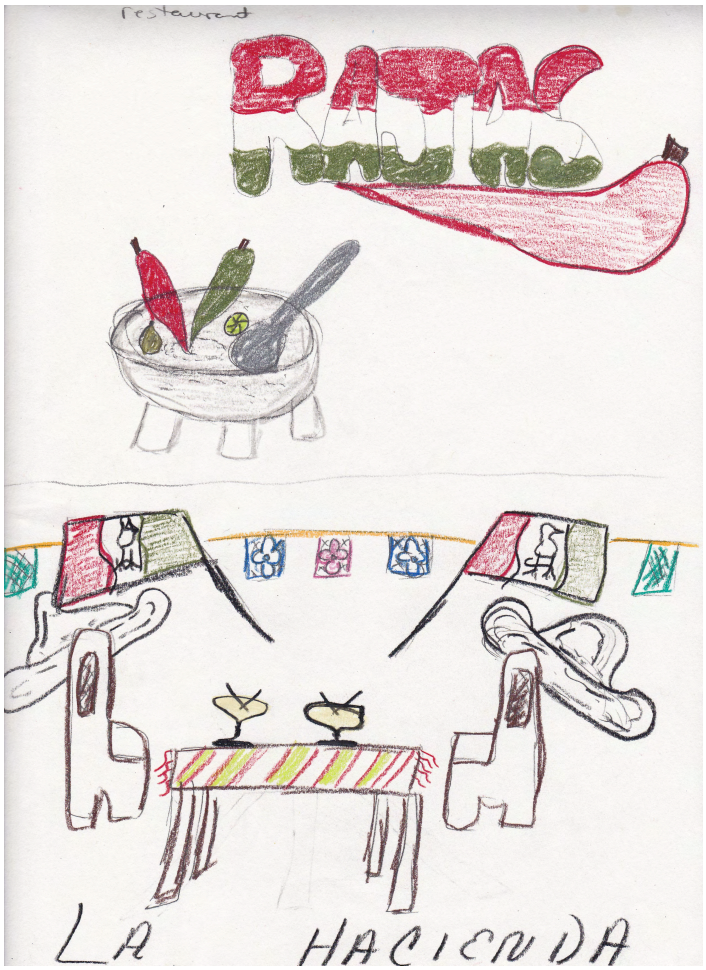

Figure 2.15: Rajas

The molcajete is a very early version of a blender and is primarily used to make salsas but also guacamole. Lucy and Hector prominently displayed the molcajete within their logos as an indicator of salsa. Hector stated, "I thought about beans and I thought about salsa made in a molcajete [mortar]." For Lucy, she presented the molcajete because for her, to be authentic Mexican food it must be spicy. In Figure 2.15a you see a mortar with a red and green chile with a lime and garlic. A spoon, instead of a pestle, is displayed along with the restaurant named

"Rajas" [red and green pepper pods]. According to Lucy, Figure 2.15a and Figure 2.15b, although both for the Mexican food restaurant, have two different audiences. Figure 2.15a with the molcajete is specifically is for people who know Mexican food. According to Lucy

> To me Mexican food has to have chile. Has to has to has to. And it has to be *picoso* [spicy]. Telling them [the customers], eh, we know how to make our salsas. We make 'em real Mexican style not the Del Monte.

Del Monte is a popular brand of canned pre-made salsa, but through the depiction of the visual passcode of the molcajete, Lucy attempted to display that the salsa and consequently the food within her restaurant were fresh and homemade. This is in stark contrast to Figure 2.15b. This logo is for customers who do not have experience with Mexican food, and is attempting to provide customers with "an experience of México." Lucy explained:

> The restaurant is La Hacienda [the estate]. It would have lots of color, the Mexican flag, those *banderas* [flags] everywhere. The tablecloth would be one of those colored *zarapes* [a shawl or a woven blanket]. The *charro sombreros* [a horseman's ten-gallon hat] I guess the traditional [...] it would remind me of going there cause I've been there, it reminds me of México, but it would remind people who've never had the experience ... The chance to experience that culture would want to go there to experience it. It would make them feel like they're in México.

In these two different visual representations, there is a clear example of an individual negotiating their network of visuals to best construct a shared meaning with their targeted audience. By using a visual passcode within Figure 2.15a, Lucy doesn't have to present much about her product. Instead, she allows the molcajete to speak for itself and communicate that the food products are homemade in a traditional form of cooking. This visual passcode, however, is only successful if

the consumer is aware of the molcajete, its use in traditional cooking methods, and what it symbolizes. If the consumer is not aware of what this image stands for, the message will be lost. In Figure 2.15b, however, there are more common images on display. There is the *zarape*, the *papel picado*, the Mexican flags and high wooden backed chairs. While this is not to say that these items don't appear in México, they are much more common in representations of Mexican culture more easily situates the consumer to communicate the experience of Mexican.

Figure 2.16, drawn by Hector, presents an example of a Linguistic Passcode. In this logo there are the words "La Gorda Torta" in brown with neon colors outlining the letters. In his

Figure 2.16: La Gorda Torta

questionnaire Hector wrote: “On the tortillas’ logo: This is an old reference to a tortilla “Una Gorda” which leads me to remember home cooked tortillas. Which reminded me of my grandmother’s kitchen and the smell of fresh made tortillas.” Further elaborating within the focus group discussion, Hector explained:

> Okay. I started out with the tortilla logo. And I didn't have a logo, I just had a title, a name. La Gorda Torta. And the reason for it, well, “la gorda.” When I was a kid, “dame una gorda” means, "give me a tortilla." It's a very common phrase for tortilla. So I figure, La Gorda Torta, people would know that it's an authentic tortilla.

Within the focus group discussion, however, Hector received some pushback. This linguistic passcode was lost on all of the other participants, but Hector stood by his phrase stating this was common for him as a child.

Tortilla José. In Figure 2.17, Jesus introduced us to Tortilla Jose. He is a round flour tortilla with a *sombrero charro* on with tassels. He is sporting cowboy books and a black handlebar mustache. In this instance, the *sombrero charro* is an instant maker of Mexican. When asked why he used a *sombrero* at all, Jesus responded:

> We see that all the time. There are so many brands out there with the *sombrero* and so one, I think he would look plain without it and two what else? I could put a baseball cap on him, but would you really think Mexican food? I think that conveys the idea of Mexican food a little bit more.

Jesus took note of and capitalized on an interesting symbol of Mexican culture, the *sombrero*. As will be discussed much more extensively in Chapter 4, the *sombrero* has become synonymous with Mexican culture, but that correlation has a very interesting history. For now, however, Jesus utilized the *sombrero* on his Tortilla José to instantly ground the image as being Mexican, as he

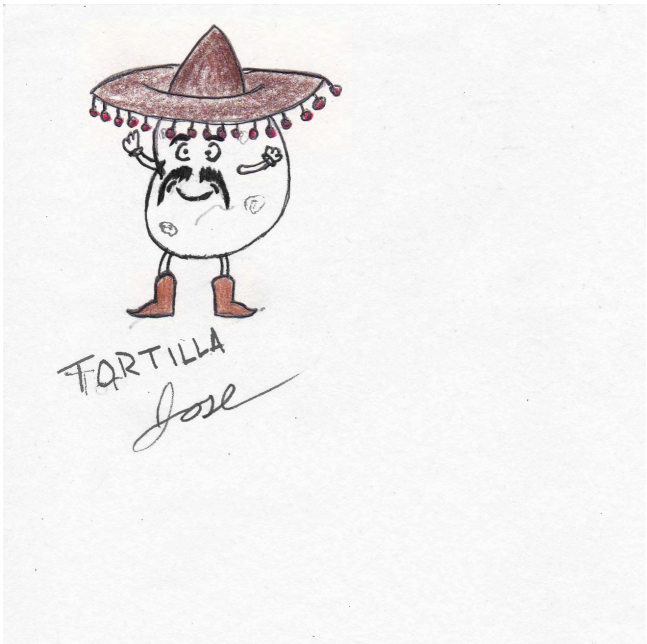

Figure 2.17: Tortilla Jose

stated, if he "put a baseball cap on him would you really think Mexican food?" The honest answer is no, and Chapter 4 will interrogate why this is the case.

Folklore and Indigenous Knowledge: *La Catrina*, An Origin Story. In Figure 2.18 Carolina drew the image of *La Catrina*, *La Catrina* is a skeleton woman whose origin dates back to 1910 (Peters and Peters, 2016). José Guadalupe Posada first depicted her in his zinc etchings *La Calavera Catrina*. She has since become synonymous with death. According to Carolina, she depicted *La Catrina* because "I'm obsessed with the *Catrina*. I like it." She explained that the her drawing was representative of the "Traditional Mexican *Catrina*." To this David responded, "That's definitely Mexican." The use of the *Catrina* as the Mexican food restaurant logo would symbolize a visual passcode to those who are familiar with Mexican folklore.

Figure 2.18: La Catrina

In her logo for the tortilla company, see Figure 2.19, Carolina continued with her theme of depicting Mexican folkloric symbols, but this time concentrated on an indigenous Aztec story. On her tortilla package she utilized the image of the Aztec Temple with the Snake. According to Carolina,

> I'm 100% Mexican. Whenever I look at a package, I go for the package. It just gets in my mind, like if I go somewhere and I like it, I want to know the package to buy it. I have never seen something like this before [pointing to her drawing].

Figure 2.19: Tortillas Aztecas

Through her drawing, she stated that she attempted to symbolize the Aztec symbol of the temple and the story of the snake. While Carolina could not recall the exact details of the story she attempted to portray, I believe she attempted to portray the temples of Tenochtitlan and the mythological serpent Xiuhcoatl, the "fire serpent." Again, through the use of these images, Carolina is attempting to connect with consumers who have insider knowledge of this indigenous story to demonstrate that her food products are representative of Mexican food culture.

Charlie, in Figure 2.20, presented his consumers with an image that most might be familiar with as it is the symbol on the Mexican flag. The snake standing on a nopal cactus growing out of rocks with a serpent in its mouth is representative of the origin story of México. The rocks with the nopal cactus growing are representative of the island city Tenochtitlan, what is today México City. The image while

Figure 2.20: Mexico's Corn Tortillas

adopted by México as its coat of arms has its origins with the Aztecs. According to Charlie:

> It's a Mexican eagle. There's very traditional symbol in México where the Mexican eagle. […] It's a very traditional México symbol that's known throughout México. The eagle, landed on some rocks. [realizing the mistake in his drawing] Okay, it landed on a nopal, but it's traditional. México's corn tortillas, because I'm going with the corn. Everybody in México grew up with corn tortillas. They see the symbol, it's traditional to them. They believe in it, and they follow it.

There are two key issues to take away from Charlie's explanation. First, because this package has the logo of the snake and is the logo for corn tortillas demonstrates an appeal to indigenous

roots, narratives, and ways of preparing food. Corn tortillas were the only tortilla consumed in México until the Spanish introduced wheat flour. Also, Charlie is hoping that this "traditional" image would appeal to consumers' insider knowledge of the origin story of México and feel drawn to his product.

Trademark. In one last example of a visual passcode, Celeste went as far as to use the term "trademark" in the explanation of her design (see Figure 2.21). For the Mexican food restaurant, Celeste created the name "Fire Margarita & *Papita*." As her image she positions flames to the left of a margarita drink. In her explanation, Celeste stated, "I use margarita because [it] is a signature drink for Mexicans." Further elaborating to this point, during the group discussion she stated that her use of the margarita was deliberate. Celeste asserted:

> I pick the margarita, and it's something like, to be honest, I got very angry last time I went to Puerto Rico. I was basically, in front of a port where all of the cruise ships stop. All the gringos, they were freaking drinking margaritas when you're in Puerto Rico, and it's supposed to be mojitos, Cuba Libres, stuff like that. I was like, Wow! Are you kidding me? Like here is a Bacardi distillery like 10 minutes away from you, and you're drinking margaritas? That is like for México. If you go to México, Cancún, places like that, yes, drink a margarita. [...] I'm like, "You're not in México! This is Puerto Rico!

Figure 2.21: Fire Margarita

Order the rice, order the beans, order the plantains." Stuff like that. I think if I want to eat Mexican food, this will be something that will attract me. I will be, "Oh! Margarita, okay then it's Mexican food in that place, because they have margarita." I see it kind of as like a trademark. Like, for people that they're not Latin, or they're not Hispanic, and they're traveling around the world and they want to eat something Hispanic or Latin, they end up ... that's why I picked the margarita. They end up eating a margarita or tacos,

when it's like other cultures over there.

It is difficult to argue that margaritas have become a trademark of Mexican culture, but when pressed as to why she thought this was case, she responded: "I really don't know." In this particular instance, Celeste as well as the other participants in the room ascribed to the belief that a margarita is a trademark of México but they could not pin point exactly where that notion came from. While tequila is certainly the national drink of México, with its UNESCO world designation, the margarita is more so a drink of the United States, thanks in large part to Dallas restaurateur Mariano Martínez's 1971 invention of the frozen margarita machine (Bramen, 2009). What Celeste's response tells us, though, is that the imagery of the margarita has influenced the perception of Mexican culture.

***Digestif*: Experience of México**

The last theme to be discussed is the use if the visuals on the logos to provide the consumers with an "experience of México." During her discussion of the bottom half of Figure 2.15, Figure 2.15b, Lucy stated that she presented the images of the *papel picado* flags, the *zarapes*, the high-back wooden chairs, the *sombreros* and margaritas because "Lucy "it's more the traditional Mexican items. Someone who doesn't know or [who doesn't] live close to México and want to experience it would walk in to get the feel of México." Similarly in his discussion, Charlie explained his design choices for his restaurant logo, Figure 2.22,

> My restaurant is going to be called México's Adventures. Anybody that's visited México, or wants to visit México, what are the adventures in México: La Quebrada in Acapulco, Copper Canyon, and Tequila, Jalisco. You got to go to Jalisco, las playas de Cancun, sunsets with the white sandy beaches, the ruins of Tulum. That's very famous [pointing to his drawings] in Guanajuato. The houses are built so close together, it was said that from

> one balcony to another, they could reach over the boyfriend and the girlfriend and give themselves a kiss. People that have visit México will say, "Oh yeah! I love it, Acapulco. Been there. Oh I need to go there. I've never experienced there," and the people that have never been to México can understand the culture a little. What kind of things going on in México, so they'll be, "Hey, let's go visit."

What was most interesting from Lucy and Charlie's responses is that through their imagery they attempt to provide their consumers with an experience of México, albeit very differently. For Lucy, her way of communicating a sense of place is through the décor, *zarapes*, *margaritas* and *papel picado* flags; however, for Charlie the appeal of the experience is literally providing consumers a staged experience of major attractions in México. While both Lucy and Charlie stated that they were using memories of their own travels to México as inspiration for the logos, the difference in the images demonstrates the difference in the translation of the cultural logic of each participant for the consumer absent the first-hand experience with México.

All of the participants' responses provided fruitful information to scrutinize. There were many moments where the responses were surprising for the images and explanation of their logics, as well as audiences. Below I synthesize these results and how they assisted in creating a more inclusive way of viewing images parried with food products.

Figure 2.22: Mexico's Adventures

SOBREMESA: DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES

At the outset of this portion of the study, I called on "everyday people" to answer the question, *What images do consumers associate with Mexican food products and restaurants?* I asked everyday people to present what images they associated with Mexican food products to uncover their visual network and see the influence different visuals had upon participants; however, this was also done to test the theory I introduced, albeit briefly, in chapter one, CPC. By asking participants to create these images themselves, I was able to glean not only what

images they associated with Mexican food products but also understand why these images resonated and how they came to their design choices. This allowed me to move past my academic interpretation of how images paired with ethnic food products work to see if the everyday consumer would converge or diverge with my framework. Ultimately, this was done in order to gain a more complete perspective of how these images are rhetorically effective beyond the immediacy of the moment.

To recap, CPC is an analytical framework that asks analysts to identify moments within an image that appeals to imagined and/or real nostalgia and consequently authenticity, question and investigate why those appeals are effective, and then interrogate how those appeals are commodified absent a food consciousness, an understanding of the production as well as the people behind the food, and sold on a global scale to different consumers see Figure 2.23.

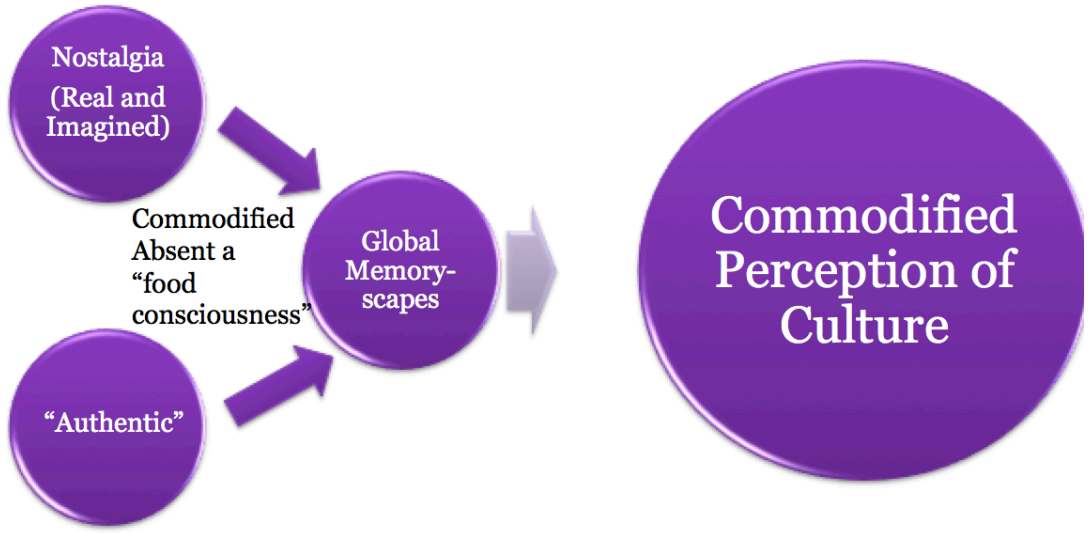

Figure 2.23: Commodified Perception of Culture

Participant responses provided interesting moments that aligned and deviated from my previous construction of my CPC framework.

The participants' drawings and explanation of those drawings presented four major findings: 1) authenticity; 2) stereotype use vs. abuse; 3) adherence and divergence to/from the framework of CPC; and 4) participants as marketers.

Authenticity

It was surprising to find that nearly 50 percent of all responses had appeals to authenticity via appeals to home, home cooking, and grandmother. I had originally thought that more participants would call upon stereotypical representations of Mexican culture, such as the sleeping Mexican man, the *zarape*, the *sombrero* to create their logos, and while these images were certainly there, they were in much lesser numbers. Within the depictions of home, smoke, grandmothers, and the molcajete, the appeal to authenticity was achieved via insider knowledge of the cooking practices. These images attempted to connect a particular cultural experience for the consumer. When seen through a theoretical framework of nostalgia and negotiating oneself with others, we can begin to understand why these images are effective.

In the home theme participants called upon a real or imagined nostalgia to appeal to a sense of authentic. For example, in Yvonne's slogan in Figure 2.4 she uses the phrase "your Abuela." The use of the word "your" assumes that the audience/consumer has an *abuela* who made Mexican food. This is an example of the logo playing off of nostalgia both real and imagined depending on the consumer. As a reminder imagined nostalgia, according to Appadurai (1996), imagined nostalgia "nostalgia for things that never were" (p. 76). For audience members who never had the experience of grandmother at home making home cooked meals, this imagery can still provoke a sentiment. According to Appadurai (1996) through various images we have been conditioned to understand what having a grandmother at home making food might feel like: "nostalgia […] does not principally involve the evocation of a sentiment to which consumers

who really have lost something can respond. Rather these forms of mass advertising *teach* consumers to miss thing they have never lost" (emphasis mine, 76). Therefore, Yvonne's slogan can evoke an actual memory or the sentiment of any grandmother's home cooking and instill it on her establishment. Lucy's depiction of a grandmother in Figure 2.2a works in much the same way. In her representation, however, she grounds the experience with an image. As opposed to Yvonne who evoked the sentiment of grandmother in the kitchen through language, Lucy provides an actual image, a grounded representation of what a grandmother at home making tortillas would look like. In this case, the audience members who had that experience will be provoked to remember, but for those who did not, the image provides a suitable substitute. The moves these participants made are a very common marketing technique that has been noted by other food scholars (see Holtzman, 2006, p. 367). However what is interesting to the purposes of this project is that these individuals were able to call on this marketing technique very easily.

In the group discussion for Focus Group One, Hector summarized key elements that emerged throughout the three focus groups. He stated,

> […] *por ejemplo* [for example], food and how it is influences us in our families very often brings back memories of seeing your elders in their case like your grandma like in my case like my grandma and how she cooked and the way the kitchen smelled and all that stuff you know and all that comes back as a memory as your putting it into art. […] So I think that when somebody doesn't have that background […] That experience they walk into an authentic restaurant and see that, they're gonna walk in smell the fresh tortillas, smell the beans cooking, see the molcajete, see all this and smell it and they create their own experience and think you know what that is an authentic restaurant when you walk in there.

Hector's response touches on the issues of nostalgia, of sensory memory (Sutton 2001), and how to negotiate appeals to authenticity to people of your own cultural group as well as those who are foreign to it. By negotiating their individual network of images and experiences, each of the participants portrayed this struggle in their own unique yet shared way.

Authenticity as a Construction and a Negotiation. It was clear that appeals to authenticity were necessary within each of the participant's drawings, but how each participant chose to appeal to that sense of authenticity is where the construction and negotiation of our previous network of images as well as the assumption of participants' and consumers' network of images converged. There is the sense that certain images provide a perception of Latin@ culture and that using these images allows the consumer to understand the object as Mexican. According to sociologist Jennie Germann Molz (2004), "The ethnic restaurant [is] a symbolic stage upon which the exploration of the exotic, facilitated through the concept of authenticity, becomes an expression of identity" (p. 54). However, what is exotic to some audiences is common to others.

In most cases, when interacting with consumers who were assumed to have the same cultural background as the participants in the study there was that appeal to home/homemade/grandmother. However, when creating a logo for a person who was assumed to not have that same experience, more commonly used images, stereotypes, such as a folklorico dancer, *sombreros charros* and margaritas were used. Additionally, in the focus group discussions there were numerous references to "gringos" [white people], and people who did not have first-hand experience with Mexican culture and or food products. Within these discussions the question of how best to appeal to this group was debated. After participants in focus group one shared their drawings and the logic behind their drawings, a discussion began on the issue of

authenticity and of drawing from one's experiences. Lucy asked, "we are all drawing based our experience, but to somebody who doesn't have that experience, what do they look towards? What about people do not have that experience?" To this Hector responded,

> A lot of restaurants now try to recreate this, and if I were to try to open up a restaurant, I would try to recreate that. For one, think those of us who have had this experience [their life experiences] it would be a familiar experience it would draw us back based on our past experience. For the newcomer who has never gone through that, that is to instill in him that experience. So serving two purposes, one is to the familiar person that this is to draw the person who is familiar with that, and two to invite the one who is not to entice them into trying it.

Participants made interesting decisions to try and communicate a sense of what appealed to them to a person who may not have had the same cultural experiences they did.

Communicating a sentiment to an Other was to ensure that the image would not be so foreign to the consumer that what was trying to be conveyed would get lost. This aligns with Faigley's (1999) argument that the advertisement would only be successful if the sign system inherent within the viewer allows it to be so. For example, "[…] advertisers enact a conversation of images with their audiences. […] Their effect depends on extending a set of cultural associations" (Faigley, 1999, p. 191). While images such as a folklorico dancer and charro *sombreros* are found in México, and at one point were representative of an aspect of Mexican life, they demonstrate the conundrum individuals have of explaining themselves to a group with limited experiences and consequently a limit sign system of the culture. Participants attempted to appeal to authenticity through depictions of home, the *comal*, an older, nurturing woman, the

steam and fragrance of the cooked foodstuff, but they then translate this using more exotic metaphors for "the other" the one who does not know me and how I live.

Stereotype: Use Vs. Struggle

It was demonstrated from these participants' responses that stereotypes may be born from an attempt to translate the familiar using bold gestures to signify what to my home means to you, the tourist, the objectifier of their culture. For these participants this translation occurred through images of folklorico and charro. For example, Lucy emphasized in, Figure 2.2b, that while her brand name is still "CASERAS" because "that [being homemade] is important to me," evoking a sense of homemade with the title of the product, this image is absent the representation of the grandmother at home making the tortillas. Instead, this image presents a woman dressed in a folklorico dress, with a *sombrero charro* on the floor to the side of her. Behind the woman *papel picado* [perforated paper] is hanging. Lucy emphasized that in the bottom portion of the image there was "Red on top green on the bottom to represent México." Lucy explained that the two different types of representation were deliberate. The top one was to appeal more to those who have had the experience of eating fresh homemade tortillas while the bottom half was meant for those who did not have that experience. It is useful to bring back Dávilas' (2012) complication of stereotypes to this discussion:

> While stereotypes in and of themselves are not negative, what makes stereotypes so troublesome is not that they order and simplify information by reducing complexity to a few limited conventions, but that in doing so, they both reflect and, more important, engender social hierarchies. As a vast literature has clearly shown, stereotypes are never intrinsically negative or positive, but are always historically created and produced in conversation with social hierarchies of daily life. (p. 82)

This is where issues of power take a front seat when discussing issues of representation. Who is being represented and who is doing the representation is a conversation wrapped up in issues of power. Marie Sarita Gaytan (2008) argues a similar point when she states "practices of authenticity have real-world implications that illustrate the limits and constraints that less powerful populations face in the marketplace—especially when it comes to accessing the conditions that enable the production and consumption of their identities" (p. 338). In this sense these images were representative of the struggle of stereotype use. While these images were used as a way to provide a passcode for consumers who may not have the same cultural knowledge, what they are demonstrative of is a limited available sign system non-dominant groups have to be able to communicate themselves to others.

None of the participants were trained marketers nor did they have training in advertising and yet they utilized techniques such as appeals to authenticity and evoking memory as a way to best present their product. The results of this study demonstrate that even though participants didn't have any kind of marketing experience, when prompted, we know how to operate in a capitalist society, even if we aren't conscious of it. I don't want to make any strong assertions about this, but it is worth noting and perhaps a useful point of comparison when I expand this research to other audiences in the future as I explain in the next section.

Divergence

Stereotype: Use vs. Struggle demonstrates a moment where my initial iteration of CPC (as a reminder, I will refer to it as CPC 1.0 to distinguish it from future iterations) needs to expand. What was not originally accounted for in my original conception of CPC was the need to construct and yet negotiate the self to others within a sign system. This act of translating one's self to another within a limited sign system adds to complexity of untangling how these images

work. CPC 1.0 accounted for cultural outsiders appropriated certain images as a way to represent the group. What CPC 1.0 did not account for, and what was brought to light in participants' responses, was how to complicate this analysis when insiders of a group using stereotypes are using these images to communicate to outsiders. This theme was not isolated to the consumers, but also appeared with the business owners and will continue to complicated in Chapter 3.

Limitations

While the nonpurposive snowball approach proved to be especially fruitful in recruiting participants to this project, this recruitment style also had several limitations given the location of my project. Again, the participants were all from the city of El Paso, Texas. As stated in the introduction, El Paso is 80% Hispanic, according the most recent U.S. Census data. The snowball sampling of a very homogenous community translated into a lack of diversity in the participants, in the images drawn, as well as the explanations.

The only individual who presented a unique form of diversity within this group was Celeste, who self-identified as Latin. She disclosed that she was from Puerto Rico, and she had no real associations with tortillas. She was familiar with them through popular media, but when asked if she had drawn a flour or wheat tortilla she stated she wasn't even aware of the different types of tortillas because they were not a staple of her diet. This example demonstrates two issues. First, it demonstrates that even though there is a tendency to group vastly different groups of people together under the nomenclature "Latino/a" there are great differences in each of these cultures. And yet, there was still not enough diversity within or among the three focus groups to present vastly different and/or multiple perspectives on the issues being addressed. While these groups did well to demonstrate what images this demographic of consumers associate with Mexican food product and restaurants, more diversity in the participants could have opened up

the discussion to other interesting places. I plan to conduct this same study again in a different location, with a more diverse population, to see what responses I gather from those participants and put their responses in conversation with this initial data set.

EVERYDAY CRITICAL THINKING

While food package narratives may be overlooked as we frantically rush through the grocery store, they are a single moment within a network that contributes to constructions of cultures. Pausing when we encounter food products in the aisles of the grocery store and allowing ourselves to question audience and purpose in conjunction with an analysis of appeals to authenticity and nostalgia, allows for deeper understandings of what these images attempt to do—and allow consumers to question their intentions in buying the product they do over others.

A methodology that allows an examination of what visual imagery means to everyday people moves the field one step closer to understanding the "metadata" constructed with ethnic stereotypes paired with foodstuffs. An understanding of the distribution and consumption of images associated with foodstuffs allows for a deeper comprehension of the small moments where visual imagery helps co-construct notions of Mexican and Mexican American culture. By continuing to allow these spaces of cultural creation to go unacknowledged, manifestations of cultural creations are perpetuated without critical attention.

In the next chapter we hear from a different group of "everyday people," business owners who have Mexican food restaurants in El Paso. While this chapter provided us with a view of how consumers would create their brands, the next chapter introduces us to eight different business owners, all who have had their restaurants for at least 15 years, who use different types of images to communicate with their clients. The chapter presents their reasoning, and

hypothesis of what their images mean and communicate to their clients. Their responses provide surprising points of connection and dissention from the consumers.

At the close of this chapter, I find it crucial to take a moment to comment on participants' engagement with the study itself. Each and every focus group participant was extremely mindful in the production of their images and took the task of creating their logos seriously. They found it important to present a well thought out idea even though they had only been given the prompt at the beginning of the focus group session. Their participation and effort are extremely appreciated.

Food, eaten and digested, is not rhetorical.
But in the meaning *of food there is much rhetoric,*
the meaning being persuasive enough for the idea of food to be used,
like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical device of statement.
-Kenneth Burke

Chapter Three

A Visual Rhetoric Restaurant Tour

To begin, I ask you to consider how a restaurant's design, from the exterior to the way food is plated, influences consumers' interpretation of foodstuffs. As a business, a restaurant attempts to communicate and sell a product to a consumer. The owner of a restaurant, through the foodstuffs that are sold, is attempting to sell not only an experience but also a sense of place with their food product. This sense of place is constructed first with the logo on the? marquee. As the consumer moves into the restaurant space, the décor of the restaurant and the layout of the menu help create a particular atmosphere. These micro moments work together so that when consumers sit at a table to peruse the food choices on the menu, the restaurant owner has already communicated an identity to them. The act of selling foodstuffs is an innately intimate experience that calls on consumers' sensibilities in taste, cultural backgrounds, and perceived notions of authenticity.

In Chapter 2 you "dined" with consumers in order to understand what images they associate with Mexican food products. In this chapter we tour the city of El Paso to sit with eight Mexican food restaurant owners. Each restaurant owner uses different images and logos to communicate who and what they are to their current and prospective clients. By engaging them in one-on-one interviews, we work to understand the reasoning behind the images and logos they have chosen to use. This chapter aims to answer research question 1.b: *How do business owners*

perceive their use of Mexican images and symbols when paired with Mexican foodstuffs? To answer this question, I begin with a review of literature citing studies that look at food business branding and identity from different disciplinary perspectives. I then propose that business owners offer a unique and underexplored vantage point to visual rhetoric. In the rest of the chapter I explain my methodology and present my results and analysis.

BUILDING ON PREVIOUS MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONVERSATIONS

Several scholars in communication, including David Girardelli and Greg Dickinson, have analyzed how restaurants construct their spaces to effectively communicate a message to their customers. Girardelli (2004) conducted an analysis of a chain Italian restaurant Fazoli's in order to determine the strategies the restaurant employed to communicate its "italianicity" to its consumers (p. 313). As mentioned in Chapter 1, Dickinson (2002) conducted an analysis of the composition of Starbucks to understand its appeals to their customers. Following Starbucks' 2009 decision to remodel and rebrand their stores, Aiello and Dickinson (2014) conducted a visual material analysis of three newly remodeled stores in the State of Washington to uncover Starbucks' moves to appeal to a local and unique design of each store. While these scholars present excellent analyses on how these two chain establishments commodified and sold an idea of "Italian" and "local," these scholars limited their analysis of these spaces to themselves. They did not engage with the owners of the establishments, albeit chains, to consider the thought process and purpose behind the images and construction of the spaces. While speaking with business owners to understand their rhetorical purpose in their logos is new to the fields of communication and visual rhetoric, scholars in sociology and anthropology have already begun this work.

Sociologists Shun Lu & Gary Alan Fine (1995) observed food preparation for four Chinese restaurants in Athens, Georgia. Lu & Fine (1995) asked "how ethnic food, as a readily recognized marker of ethnicity and as traditional culture, […] is produced and marketed in contemporary American society. How do Chinese restaurants make their food appealing to those outside their ethnic group?" (p. 536). To address this question, Lu conducted "participant observation, observing food preparation, cooking, and serving and she also conducted 26 interviews with owners, cooks, and customers of these four restaurants" (p. 537). While the owners of the four restaurants were all Chinese, due to the location of the study, the clients of these restaurants were overwhelmingly "American." Lu and Fine (1995) demonstrated that while some modification of Chinese foods was necessary when serving American clients, too much modification would turn away the same clients. Thus, a careful negotiation with Chinese ways of cooking and American palates was necessary for the success of the restaurants. This study, while concentrated on modification of food items, demonstrates the careful negotiation business owners must engage with to appeal to and keep clients.

Sociologist and food studies scholar Marie Sarita Gaytán (2008) interviewed eight owners and managers of Mexican restaurants as well as their customers and food reviewers in Amherst, Northampton, and Springfield, Massachusetts, and Hartford, Connecticut. Throughout her interviews, Gaytán (2008) looked to uncover how these businesses established themselves as authentic, in terms of taste and restaurant ambiance and how their consumers received them. As described by Gaytán (2008), the restaurants she studied in smaller towns had a much larger Anglo-American population and the larger cities offered more diversity. Through her interviews with the owners, clients, and food critics, Gaytán established that there is a careful balance in how far owners and managers can push their clients' previously held ideas of Mexican food

before they become uncomfortable. As a result, the foods served presented more of an "Americanized authenticity." She stated,

> If consumption is one "place" where scholars insist the terms of citizenship are put into practice […], then those consumers who are not "mainstream Northern and Western European" are excluded from particular privileges of citizenship. These processes illustrate not only the limited value of cultural agency in large-scale marketing practices, but also reveal the limitations that hierarchies of exclusion placed on different groups of people. Through the promotion of an Americanized authenticity, the vibrancy of cultural forms that celebrate identity and heritage are collapsed into narratives that emphasize similarity by slaying "close to traditional cuisines that reflect American tastes" (Decker 2003, 114)." (p. 334)

Previous or limited interactions with Mexican food and culture influenced how Mexican food products were prepared, packaged and sold to clients in these establishments.

Anthropologist and food studies scholar Krishendu Ray (2016) focused his research not on how consumers viewed ethnic food, but instead on how "ethnic restaurateurs" have changed the tastes of consumers in New York City. He asserted, "my work draws attention to instances of entrepreneurship at the molecular level – the street – and the daily encounters in shops between immigrants and natives that produce much of the everyday sensorial cultures of cities such as New York" (p. 21). Ray's (2016) work recognizes the labor of immigrant chefs and their influence on changing tastes. Ray (2016) gave voice to the "ethnic restaurateur" who "has a lot to say about the city, the consumer, taste, and making a living within the constraints of those constructions" (p. 24). Much like Gaytán (2008), the chefs interviewed by Ray (2016) tangle with previously held ideologies of what their cooking should be. Differently from Gaytán (2008),

however, Ray (2016) found that these restaurateurs had the ability to change the tastes of consumers.

By interviewing owners of restaurants, these previous studies examine 1) the careful negotiation of food preparation techniques to appeal to American palates, and 2) the value of immigrant tastes and palates in influencing American taste. These studies provide invaluable work that has paved the way for my study. In this chapter I build on these pieces by encouraging restaurant owners to uncover how they construct an image of themselves to their consumer. Much like the careful negotiation of food preparation techniques seen in the previous studies, owners interviewed in this study carefully negotiated their restaurants' sense of identity with their current and prospective clients through the use of the images paired with their establishments.

The field of visual rhetoric also makes this work possible, as it turns our attention from textual and oral information to visual information. To the best of my knowledge, much like the studies originating in the discipline of communication, visual rhetoric has limited its analysis of food branding to the views of the analyst or researcher. While the field of visual rhetoric looks to analyze the "nature of the image," the "function of the image," and/or the "evaluation of the image" (Foss, 2005, p. 146-147) through the lens of intertextuality, Pierce's "semiotics," and Barthes's "signs," (Helmers & Hill, 2004, p. 14-17), what is missing from these discussions is what these images do in the spaces where they live—that is, images are dynamic and operate in dynamic contexts and they should be analyzed in more complex ways and from multiple perspectives.

This is not to say that previous and current work of visual rhetoric is not valuable in pushing our understanding of the role that visuals have in communication, but I argue that the

field of visual rhetoric can greatly enhance the strength of its analyses by engaging the creative agents and decision-makers relative to the images we analyze. New materialist visual rhetorician Laurie Gries (2015) also shares this opinion. While the focus of her study was not images related to food products, Gries (2015) asserted that there is great value to engaging with creative agents of various images:

> Such qualitative research [such as questionnaires and interviews] is important for a number of reasons. First, it helps identify emotions, thoughts, actions, experiences, historical and personal backgrounds, and so forth, which, in turn, help explain why an image was composed and/ or recomposed in particular ways. […] such intentions help disclose what meanings an image has for the designer and perhaps others in their culture, which are important to consider, especially when trying to account for how single multiple images spark consequences in countries other than the United States. Second, such qualitative research can help uncover how visual design might have influenced other unintended consequences. […] Finally, in talking to designers and others intimately involved in the composing processes, scholars can also learn more about the production and distribution processes that influence a visual thing's design and vice versa. Oftentimes, after all, such processes cannot be divorced from each other. (p. 115)

There is a valuable history – usually oral – that can help us, as visual rhetoricians, understand the rhetorical decision making around these images. And while engaging creative agents poses limitations (methodological and logistical), placing visual rhetoric in conversation with creative agents can only lead to a more complete understanding of how visuals function in our lives.

In this chapter, I put restaurant owners' perspectives in conversation with visual rhetoric, in particular with visuals' ability to appeal to authenticity and nostalgia. A visual rhetoric

framework builds on current studies in sociology and anthropology by deepening our understanding of the rhetorical decisions behind food branding so that we can continue to explore how these decisions fit into the larger context of identity construction explored in this case study.

PREPARING FOR THE TOUR: METHODOLOGY

To address the question, *How do business owners perceive their use of Mexican images and symbols when paired with Mexican foodstuffs?* I conducted eight audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with eight different owners of Mexican food restaurants in the city of El Paso, Texas. I chose to use semi-structured interviews for a number of reasons. First, the open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to express their rhetorical choices, decisions of audience, purpose, and trust building, and their personal creative process in the creation of their respective logos and brands. Additionally, restaurant business owners are limited on time, and the format of semi-structured interviews allowed the participant to provide fruitful responses in short periods of time, 30 minutes – 1 hour.

I began with the goal of interviewing twelve participants. According to social scientific and qualitative research experts Guest, Bunce, and Johnson's (2006) work on data saturation, "If the goal [of the study] is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve [participants] will likely be sufficient" (p. 76). However, I reached theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with eight participants therefore data collection stooped (see explanation in this section).

I used nonprobabilistic sampling, which I explained in greater detail in Chapter 2, to select my participants. I wanted to know the decision process in creating company logos; therefore, I solicited interviews from restaurant owners who met one basic criterion: owned and

operated a Mexican restaurant or Mexican food company in El Paso, Texas, during the time of the study. At the onset of this study, I had included a second criterion, which read: Use the image of the sleeping Mexican or its parts the *sombrero, zarape*, and or the bottle of tequila as part of its company logo. My original intention for this portion of the study was to concentrate on restaurant owners who used "stereotypical images," namely the sleeping Mexican man, as their company logo. However, after speaking with my dissertation committee and considering this further, I determined that limiting the study to only owners who use this image would eliminate the narratives of those who do not such imagery. As obvious as this may sound, what was at stake in eliminating the voices of those who did not use the image of the sleeping Mexican man, was eliminating differing opinion on the use of certain imagery as markers for Mexican culture and food. Therefore, participants who use the image of the sleeping Mexican man as well as those who do not were included in this study because they could provide invaluable insight into what they hope to communicate to their audience (consumers) through their rhetorical choice of using different types of images.

By interviewing these individuals, I uncovered some of their thought process in creating and using their logo and also the history of how the logo came to be. I asked demographic questions (1-2) as well as questions relating to the restaurant's branding (3-7):

1. Are you originally from El Paso?
    a. If not, how long have you lived here?
2. How do you define your ethnicity?
3. How long have you owned this restaurant?
4. What was your process in creating the brand for your customer/restaurant?
5. What design choices did you make in the creating the brand?

6. Who is your target audience for your brand?
7. What do you hope your logo communicates to your consumers?

The semi-structured interview process allowed me to go wider and deeper than the questions above. For example, after asking how long they had owned the restaurant, I began asking participants to provide me with a brief history of the restaurant. This allowed the conversation to flow much more smoothly and organically as the history usually intertwined with the creation of the logo. I asked follow-up questions pertaining to the ambience of the space, both the design and options on the food menu, and what they hoped their customers were able to take away from the experience of dining with them.

Similarly to the previous data set, I used Glaser & Strauss' constant comparative method from grounded theory, so I transcribed and then coded interviews based on themes generated directly from participant responses. After the initial coding, I created memos with the key components of the interviews and reviewed the transcriptions again looking for themes I may have overlooked in the primary review. Following the first interview, I continued the process, but incorporated continuous cross-reference of each incident with other incidents in previous interviews. I was constantly looking for similarities and differences across participants' responses. This enabled me to fully unveil the full complexity within each category. As this process unfolded I was able to develop theories and to reduce the number of categories based on patterns. After eight participants, incidents were repeating themselves and no new incidents emerged. I therefore determined that this unit of analysis had reached theoretical saturation.

I obtained the interviews with the business owners in different ways. Friends of family coordinated one interview; Facebook messenger was the medium to solicit one; and the rest were gathered by simply walking in to the restaurant or cold calling and asking if the owner was in.

Obtaining participants for this portion of the study was a challenge. While I was successful in soliciting one interview via Facebook messenger, I reached out to a total of four restaurants using the same means with no luck. Also, simply walking into a restaurant or cold calling did not necessarily mean that the owner would be in or available. When I was unable to speak to the owner during a cold call or walk in, I usually sent a follow-up email or left a message asking if they would like to participate in this study. This resulted in a mere two responses. In short, the most effective method for soliciting these interviews came from the chance of walking in or calling when the owner was available and speaking to them directly. This was not so surprising as the work of a restaurant owner is endless, time consuming, and difficult.

Below I introduce you to the eight owners who spoke with me. Six of the eight owners interviewed are originally from El Paso. Five of these six who were originally from El Paso inherited the restaurants from family. The single owner from El Paso who did not inherit his restaurant opened his restaurant 17 years ago. Both his parents worked in restaurants in Juarez, Chihuahua, México and he decided to open his own restaurant. The two owners who were not originally from El Paso emigrated from different parts of Mexico, but both have been in El Paso for at least 30 years. One is from Torreón, Coahuila, México and has lived in El Paso for 33 years. The other, the only woman owner interviewed, is originally from Guadalajara, Jalisco, México and has been in El Paso since 1979, 38 years.

THE TOUR

First, I offer a brief discussion on the structure of the City of El Paso. As stated in Chapter 1, El Paso is 80 percent Hispanic, according to the latest U.S. Census data. In addition to being the largest U.S. border city, El Paso is also home to one of the largest U.S. military installations, Ft. Bliss. Ft. Bliss is home to the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division. The large

military population brings people from all over the United States as well as the world to El Paso. Also, Interstate 10 (I-10) runs through El Paso. Interstate 10 is the southern-most cross-country highway that runs from Santa Monica, California to Jacksonville, Florida. It is a major stop for most travelers either going or coming from California as well as those traveling through Texas. I bring this to your attention because in addition to the large "homegrown" population that I described in Chapter 2, these two major landmarks affect the client base for local restaurants, and their influence was present in some of the owners' responses.

In the subsections that follow I draw from interview data to provide a brief history of each restaurant as well as who each owner stated was their target clientele. Following the history, I present the themes that arose from participants' responses to my interview questions. I refer to myself in the interview text as "C" for the sake of space. Out of abundance of caution and to minimize the risk posed to my participants who were kind enough to allow me into their place of business and their livelihood, I used pseudonyms for both the names of the restaurants and the owners. This is with the exception of Jalisco's Café who provided explicit consent to use their name and the name of their restaurant. Also, I omit images of participants' logos to help preserve their confidentiality.

Stop One: "The Old Place"

The first restaurant is an iconic restaurant in El Paso. It has existed in the same location since 1927, 90 years as of this writing. The restaurant is currently under its third generation of owners from the same family. According to Jaime, the current owner, Jesus, the first owner came to El Paso from Mexico:

> He set out from Mexico, came over to the United States, and then left to the steel mills, as I learned recently. Made some money, came back, went for his mother, and his brother,

and brought them back. Really started working at a very early age. He started working close by. They say it was in the old Five Points area, a very cheesy restaurant called the Ready to Eat.

Jesus then married Guadalupe and together they opened up Jesus' Place. Jesus's Place did not have a logo on the building, but its menu had a pastoral setting with a man herding goats while wearing a *sombrero* and a poncho. In the late 1930s Jesus and Guadalupe divorced, and surprisingly Guadalupe was granted the business in the settlement. She continued to rent out the restaurant business to her ex-husband, Jesus, until his passing in 1964. It was then that Guadalupe gathered all of her children and told them she was going to sell the property and that whomever of her children was first to offer what she was looking for she would sell the building. In 1964, Guadalupe sold the restaurant to her daughter and son-in-law Maria and Carlos and they became the owners. They gave Jesus's second wife, who was still operating the business, two or four years notice and in 1968 they took over naming the restaurant M & C cafe. Nineteen years after taking over the restaurant, Carlos passed away.

After Carlos' passing, Maria asked Jaime if he would be interested in taking over the restaurant. After a great deal of deliberation, Jaime and his wife Francine took over the restaurant in 1988. In 1995 they were one of five restaurants in the city of El Paso who were awarded a *Guardia de la Cocina* [Guardian of the Kitchen] by the city of El Paso. According to Jaime the award means, "that we were guardians of our original recipes, preserving the culture, the history of our ethnicity. We take much, much pride in that." Jamie and his wife have owned the restaurant for the last twenty-nine years and their daughter, who has been working in the restaurant since high school, will take it over after them.

When asked who is attracted to their restaurant, Jaime stated:

> It speaks to just about anyone that wants a wonderful experience. A wonderful, friendly home-style experience, one of community […] It speaks to anybody. It's a melting pot of many cultures, or many nationalities, many races, many different backgrounds. On any given day you can find an attorney, a judge, you can find a doctor, you can find a blue-collar worker, white-collar.

As part of the "anyone who wants a wonderful experience," are military members of Ft. Bliss. This includes Ft. Bliss's "top brass," as stated by Jaime.

Stop Two: Jalisco's Cafe

Jalisco's Cafe is a long-standing restaurant in the poorest neighborhood per capita in the United States. Historically, the neighborhood is home to many recent Mexican immigrants. Hector, the second-generation owner, has owned the restaurant since 2003, but the restaurant has been in his family since 1954, 63 years as of this writing. Antonia (Tonia) Chavez Serrano, Tony's aunt, was the first generation owner. Tonia was originally from Parral, Chihuahua, México. When she first came to El Paso she worked at a restaurant called Buen Gusto. The owners of Buen Gusto decided to move from their location and bought the property where Jalisco's Cafe current stands. After moving to the new property, they named their restaurant Jalisco's Cafe because they were from the Mexican state of Jalisco. In 1954 the original owners were retiring and looking to sell the restaurant. Tonia's husband, a widower who owned the meat market cattycorner to the restaurant, gave her the money and she paid $1,000 to keep the restaurant. At the age of 37, Tonia became the owner of Jalisco's Cafe. When Hector was younger his aunt would look after him, as both of his parents worked. Hector spent summers and weekend helping around the restaurant. This continued until he was an adult. As a student at The University of Texas at El Paso, he worked at the restaurant in the mornings and took evening

classes. His cousin, his aunt's only daughter, eventually took over the restaurant and Hector left El Paso to work as an electrical engineer. In 1997 Texas State Senate recognized Antonia Chávez Serrano for her contribution to the city in Texas State Senate Resolution 627. In 2003, at the age of 86, Tonia passed away.

Two weeks before her passing, Hector made a promise to her to keep the restaurant running. He left his job as an electrical engineer and took over the family business. In 2014 the county commissioners of El Paso declared April 21, 2014 "Jalisco Café Day" in recognition of the 60th anniversary and acknowledging the life of Antonia Chavez Serrano.

According to Hector, his main clientele are individuals who work in the downtown area (i.e. judges, attorneys, city representatives), which is in close proximity to his establishment. Additionally, his restaurant serves people who either grew up in or still live in the neighborhood. In addition to these two groups, however, he also has clients who live throughout the city and those who are passing through El Paso and found his restaurant using Google Reviews.

Stop Three: Man in White

David has been in the restaurant business all his life. Originally from Torreon, Coahuila, México, David and has lived in El Paso for 33 years and this is his second restaurant in El Paso. David purchased the restaurant in 2003 from the previous owner who had experience with Chinese restaurants, but had no experience of running a Mexican food restaurant. Due to the previous owner's inability to speak Spanish and lack of familiarity with Mexican foods, his restaurant was not doing well, and he was looking to sell it. David offered to buy the restaurant and shortly thereafter he became the new owner. After purchasing the restaurant, David, hired new managers, staff, and a professional chef. Together in collaboration with his chef, David's

menu holds more than 100 items, ranging from food that you would find in Mexico, to fettuccine alfredo.

According to David, his main clientele are "people from Ft. Bliss" as well as people who are from El Paso. According to David people from Ft. Bliss are especially attractive to his business because, "they are the ones who spend the money and they're eating [out] every single day, every single week here in town." Also, because military personnel are no longer allowed to go into Juárez, Chihuahua, México, where they used to "get good Mexican food or the flavor or scenery of Mexico," David tries to provide "a little bit of it here in this place."

Stop Four: Superman Burritos

For 15 years Pete has been the second-generation business owner, of the first restaurant in El Paso to sell "super burritos." Super burritos are extra-large burritos, at 13 inches long as opposed to the regular 9 inches. Pete's father, originally from Camargo, Chihuahua, México, came to El Paso when he was 22 years old. He worked in restaurants in Juárez as well in El Paso, eventually opening his own restaurant in 1975, 42 years as of this writing. Having seen "super burros" in Mexico he brought the concept to El Paso.

When asked who is the main clientele, Pete stated, "60 – 70 percent of our clients come from Ft. Bliss. Military. It's a big part of El Paso. It's a big economic stature here in El Paso so I try to target it as much as I can." The restaurant is located very close to Ft. Bliss and it has been in the same location since it's opening. In addition to the location, however, Pete states that appealing to a military clientele was very important for his father as well as himself. According to Pete, "My father wanted to be a soldier growing up." Pete's father's admiration for the U.S. military was passed onto his sons, and Pete himself is an Army veteran having served two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. His veteran status also draws him to target military personnel.

Stop Five: Restaurant Del Valle

Pablo has owned Restaurant Del Valle for 17 years. While the location was originally a Pizza Hut, it eventually became a Mexican restaurant. The original owners named their establishment Restaurant. At the time that the original owners of Restaurant were selling, Pablo was looking to find a location that he could afford, so as to keep his costs down. He purchased the location and with the help of his parents, who had both worked in restaurants in Juárez, he began composing his menu. According to Pablo he added "Del Valle" because his parents are originally from the Del Valle neighborhood of México City.

According to Pablo, anyone and everyone are welcomed to his restaurant. He stated, "Well, it's anybody who ... You know, thanks to them we're in business, so everybody's welcome." Pablo explained that he tried to give his customers "a good experience in Mexican food and just try to keep it Mexican-ish. We really leave politics out. We don't talk about that. It's just Mexican food. Every waitress we get we try to get them to speak Spanish and English." And while he relayed that he does have get customers "that can be just a little racist" he tries to "overlook that and just, you know, give them good customer service and that's it."

Stop Six: Garcia's

Lou Garcia's family has been in the restaurant business in El Paso for 65 years. Lou's family, as well as Frank Dominguez's family in Stop Seven, was part of a conglomerate of family owned Mexican food restaurants of the same name, Lionel's. The only way to become a part of the family of owners was to marry or be born in to the group. The Garcia's had been a part of one Lionel's restaurant prior to the family split that had three different locations. Roberto Garcia had the current site of the restaurant constructed in 1972 and specifically designed it to be built with adobe walls with a hacienda style look. According to Lou, in 1986 his uncle Roberto

was next in line to get a Lionel's, but instead the next Lionel's was given to a son of the Dominguez's. It was at this point that the Garcia's broke away and bought out their share from the Dominguez's restaurant business. Roberto went on to create his own family owned restaurant, Garcia's. Roberto is no longer a part of restaurant business, and his brother, with his nephew Lou next in line, currently run the restaurant.

When asked who he thought the main clientele of the restaurant was, Lou stated that it is attracts mostly families and an older generation crowd. Lou attributed this mostly to the advertising techniques, such as radio and church bulletin announcements, but stated he is trying different things to get a younger generation into the restaurant.

Stop Seven: Lionel's

As stated in Stop Six, a single family runs the Lionel's restaurant collaborative. At one point in time, there were nine Lionel's all throughout the city of El Paso and there were so many family members who wanted to become a part of the collaborative that the family created a rule that a Lionel's could not be opened within a three mile radius of another Lionel's. Currently, Frank Dominguez is the last remaining owner of Lionel's with only one location. Frank Dominguez's father, also Frank Dominguez, as well as, Lionel Large, Frank's uncle through marriage of his father's sister, created Lionel's in 1946.

In 1945, both men had just come back to El Paso after serving in the U.S. military. Frank worked a shoe salesman in a department store downtown, and Lionel owned a grocery store, Lionel's Grocery. According to family legend, at the time, there were only two Mexican food restaurants in El Paso. While this may seem unbelievable, Frank has looked up businesses of the time and has only been able to locate two. Due to the limited number of Mexican food restaurant, Frank and Lionel decided to try their hand at the Mexican food restaurant business. Neither of

them had any experience in the restaurant business, but with the help of Frank's mother and Lionel's stepfather, who was a cook in a restaurant, they put together a menu and opened their first location in 1946. The restaurant has tried its hand in a number of different ventures, such as a single food factory that manufactures foods of the restaurant as well as pre-made TV dinners.

Through his location and design of his restaurant, Frank tries to attract travelers coming through El Paso as well as families. Situated on I-10, Frank stated that he has a number of travelers that come in from Austin and Los Angeles. Frank stated he was one of the last of his family members to hold out on having a bar with the restaurant. While his current location has a bar in it, it is strategically separated from the rest of the restaurant to still allow the restaurant to have a family feeling.

Stop Eight: Casita

Originally from Guadalajara, Jalisco, México, Norma immigrated to El Paso in 1979. She grew up in a very poor household, and beginning at the age of 7 her grandfather would send her out to sell tacos, *gorditas*, and burritos on the street. According to Norma she was never shy about selling and it was during this time that she learned how to be a good businesswoman. At the age of 15 she married her first husband and together they opened a restaurant in Juárez. After her divorce, Norma's first husband kept the restaurant in Juárez. She later remarried and moved to El Paso with her second husband.

She worked in clothing manufacturing for a while, but in 1988 she decided to try her hand at another restaurant. She found a man who was selling his establishment, Casita, that specialized in burritos. The previous owner asked Norma to work with him during his last week of business so that he could introduce her to his clients. Norma kept the original name of the

restaurant so as not to confuse previous patrons, but she distinguished herself by labeling her establishment as “The New Casita”

At the time, the restaurant was a single tenant in a shopping strip and her building was no bigger than a 10 x 10 foot space. There was only room for two tables and so Norma had styrofoam dishes so her clients could take their food to go. Drawing on recipes she had learned from her grandmother, but later perfected herself, Norma made her food fresh daily, a key distinction from the previous owner who would microwave his food products. The work was very difficult at the beginning. There were days where Norma would only bring home $20 or $25; nonetheless she persisted, and five years after opening she was able to purchase the entire shopping strip that housed her restaurant. When tenants began leaving, instead of renting the space out to new businesses, Norma would connect their space to hers and expanded her restaurant into what it is today.

In regards to who Norma sees as her clients, she asserted:

Pues de todo. Aquí tengo clientes que los conocí desde el vientre, chiquitos, grandes, medianos, vienen ya con su familia. Todos, todos ya-- ya conocí que cuántos-- Viene mucho americano. Y siempre están: "Oh, señora, su comida es muy deliciosa". Está bien, tiene un buen sabor. Los americanos a lo mejor saben apreciar la comida, pero no hay como alguien de mi misma raza que me digan, porque, mira, yo voy a diferentes lugares en México, y yo digo: "No, para qué dicen que es comida mexicana, no tiene esto, no me gustó, no tiene este sabor, no tiene esto". Porque, realmente, la comida mía mexicana es que tenga sabor la comida, no que ahí se va.

[Well, everyone. Here I have clients that I met from the womb, small, large, medium, come with their family. Everyone, everyone already-- I already knew how many--

> There's" a lot of American coming. And they always are: "Oh, ma'am, your food is very delicious. It tastes good. The Americans may know how to appreciate the food, but there is nothing like one of my own race to tell me, because, look, I go to different places in Mexico, and I say: "No, why do they say it's Mexican food, It does not have this, I do not like it, it does not have this flavor, it does not have this." Because, really, my Mexican food has flavor, not that over there.

Also, throughout the last 29 years, Norma has never opened a bar within her restaurant because she has always wanted to keep it family friendly.

ORIGIN OF LOGOS

Now that we are familiar with each of the eight business owners, I provide you with a brief background of how they each constructed their logos. There were some commonalities amongst the different logos, but each had its own unique origin.

Jaime's logo for Old Place is a sleeping Mexican man in neon lights. The man has a *sombrero* covering his face. He sits on the ground leaning against a saguaro cactus. To his side is a jug. While Jaime was not entirely clear of the origin of the sign, he remembered that it came about during the 1960s when the second generation of owners, his parents, took over the restaurant. The logo is not only found on the sign outside the restaurant, but can be seen in different iterations throughout the restaurant in the décor as well as the emblem on the wait staff's uniform polo shirts.

Hector created his logo for Jalisco's Café when he took over his aunt's restaurant. Originally, his aunt had the image of the sleeping Mexican man. However, when Hector took over he decided to change it. The current logo is a prickly pear cactus with red ripening prickly pears.

David's restaurant, Man in White, has an image of a man dressed in white *manta* [cotton] fabric. There is a *sombrero* on his head and he has a tray of food in one hand a mug of been in the other. One foot is placed in front of the other indicating that the man is moving. For David, the logo is also inherited from the previous owner of the restaurant. While David made many changes to the restaurant, he stated he liked the image and decided to keep the original logo.

Pete's father, in collaboration with an artist friend, created the current logo of the Superman Burrito restaurant. The logo is of a wide grinning donkey with an exaggerated snout that shows the donkeys' large teeth. Atop the donkey's head sits a yellow, green and red *sombrero*. While Pete's father originally wanted to place the donkey in a superman costume to play off the name, he eventually agreed with his friend's suggestion and depicted with donkey with a *sombrero*.

Pablo's logo for Restaurant Del Valle is of a Mexican man wrapped in a *zarape*. He has a red *sombrero* atop his head and had his hands are clasped together in front of his chest. Pablo has had the image since a few months into the opening of his restaurant. The image originates from Pablo's friend. His friend, unsolicited, drew the image and gifted it to Pablo to use as his restaurant's logo. It is not only used as the logo on the marque but the wait staff inside wears a uniform polo shirt with the image embroidered.

Lou's uncle created the image for Garcia's restaurant. The image is the family's name in cursive encased in a red circle. There are green and yellow border decorations that border the circle and above the "'s" in *Garcia's* is a tan *sombrero*. While Lou is not yet the owner he has reimagined the logo without the green and yellow border but still keeping the s*ombrero*.

Like Jaime, Frank's restaurant, Lionel's, uses the image of the sleeping Mexican man. While not in neon lights, Frank's sleeping Mexican man has a large brimmed *sombrero* that

doesn't allow you to see his face and he is wrapped in a red green and blue *zarape*. Frank's sleeping Mexican man is sitting on the ground with one leg bent at the knee with the other extended and he is wearing *huaraches* [leather sandals] on his feet. This man is leaning back, but instead of learning onto a cactus or a wall he is leaning against the cursive L of *Lionel's*.

Norma's logo for Casita came about while doing some shopping in Juarez. In a store in the market on Juarez Avenue, she found a shop that sold woven fabrics. She came across one with a young girl pulling a donkey and when she saw it she immediately loved it. She purchased it brought it back to El Paso. While the fabric hung in her office for a while, she eventually took it to a design shop that replicated the image as her restaurant's logo.

RHETORICAL DECISIONS

Below I walk you through the different owners' responses to the interview questions to help make clear how they perceive their use of images and symbols. The moments highlighted below are a small snapshot of our conversation, but they represent the themes that emerged from participants' responses that address *How do business owners perceive their use of images and symbols when paired with Mexican foodstuff*?

"It works:" The Sleeping Mexican, the *Sombrero*, and the *Zarape*.

As stated above, five of the eight owners interviewed who utilized the images of the sleeping Mexican man, the *sombrero*, or *zarape* with their logo. While these images are not uncommonly used in conjunction with Mexican food products, I was most curious to see how the users of these images perceived their use. While at first owners disclosed that they simply used the images because they inherited it, they also eventually disclosed what the images meant to them.

C: Why do you choose to use it [the sleeping Mexican man] in conjunction with this restaurant?

Jaime: […] As a matter of fact, I thought ... I mean Mexican food, Mexican restaurant, it all works out for me. I wasn't a rocket scientist, so I just said, "Hey, it's there, let's use it." I looked around and there wasn't really much at that time being used. I said, "This we'll use and put it up."

At the outset of the interview Jaime undermined his ability to market his restaurant, stating he wasn't a rocket scientist and that he was simply using the image because it was there.

This type of response was not unique to Jaime, though. Pete, with Superman Burritos, demonstrated a similar thought process:

C: Okay. And when you took over the business did you ever think about changing the logo?

Pete: Oh no, no, no, no.

C: This is the established logo for here.

Pete: It's been here for 42 years so I don't want to change it.

C: That makes sense.

Pete: Don't change anything that ... that's not broken.

While it makes sense to continue using a logo that has gained name and image recognition, in the process there is a deliberate acceptance of what that image communicates by continuing to use it.

According to Jaime, there was one moment in 1988 when someone called in to complain about the use of the sleeping Mexican man.

Jaime: Believe it or not, when my wife and I took over in January of '88, shortly thereafter I did catch one call. Someone that was very disturbed about the fact that

> we had that image of the sleepy Mexican, and thought it was very degrading, being that we were Hispanics, that we would play down our own race and ethnicity. I said, "You know what, I'm so sorry it's the way that you feel, but I'm Hispanic," and I said, "I don't take any offense. You're the only one out of the population in El Paso that feels otherwise." I said, "I beg to disagree, *it's working* for my business." He said he was going to blackball us, and do what have you. Well I said, "You've got to do what you've got to do." He was very upset. I couldn't find out from him whether he was Hispanic or otherwise. That was just the one and only thing that I would ever encounter, but it was very early one. We continued the same icon, if you will, from my mother and father, who had been in business 20 years prior. I said, "Interesting." We moved forward with it. That was how it happened. (emphasis added)

While Jaime was not the originator of the current logo, and he acknowledged that some might find his logo offensive, he continued to use it. When pressed as to what this image means to him Jaime responded:

> Jaime: To me it's just ... It's no stereotype for sure, definitely not. I don't believe in the theory, like not to believe in the theory of, what is it, the *alacranes* [scorpions], where one Mexican holds the other one from advancing. Although I know it does exist. Stereotype? No. It's just very much in tune with what I see as Mexican food. Maybe the connectivity in my thought without really thinking about it, would be like to me, after a good hearty meal, I tell my wife, I'm ready for a little nap. It's tradition in Mexico.
>
> C: The *siesta*?

Jaime: It is, the *siesta*. […] So on the spot right that's what I would say about that, really to me the significance is, did you have a good experience? Did you enjoy your meal? Don't you feel like a little snooze? That's it, nothing more. I think that the culture hopefully has outgrown that. Discrimination exists, but nowhere as near as anything that was around here.

While Jaime acknowledged that the image could be seen as a stereotype, he did not "believe in the theory." For Jaime the image simply represented the satiated feeling after having a good meal. While this is one way to look at the image, as Chapter 4 demonstrates the image has a long and complicated history with multiple meanings. What was also interesting is Jaime's response, "So on the spot right that's what I would say." This indicated that Jaime had not really thought about the use of the image and what it might communicate to his consumers, but was able to recall pretty quickly the one caller who complained 29 years ago. Pete, however, had considered what the use of the *sombrero* with the donkey communicated to his clients.

C: With the super burro, what do you hope it communicates to your clients?

Pete: I have a lot of clients, especially military that will go back to the military, when they come and go but they take a lot of pictures in front of and around my logo. When I was in Iraq there were a couple soldiers who recognized me being me a soldier, you know recognize me from, "Hey super burro, I come in there why didn't you bring us any burros."

C: Wow.

Pete: The logo has stood out a lot.

It was really remarkable to hear Pete's statement that his logo was so distinctive that soldiers in Iraq, presumably who had gone through Ft. Bliss, had recognized him through his logo. This

demonstrates the far-reaching potential these images have due to the intersections that occur in the city.

When asked what he thought made his logo so attractive to customers, Pete responded:

Pete: I guess the original name and the first name. It, kind of, makes it sound funny.

C: Okay, yeah.

Pete: But *it works*. *It works* for advertising. This is something that you won't forget because it's funny. (emphasis added)

For Pete, his logo is effective because of its ability to make customers laugh which ultimately allows the image and consequently his restaurant to be memorable.

C: Okay and also I noticed that the burro has the *sombrero* on it, what is that trying to do?

Pete: Make it more Mexican. Make it more Mexican-style.

Just as Jesus demonstrated in Chapter 2 with "Tortilla Jose" the *sombrero* has become a signifier of Mexican identify. It helps to communicate that the product is Mexican.

Similar to the *sombrero*, the sarape also has the ability to signify that the product is Mexican. In this section I spell *zarape* with an "s" because this is how Pablo spells it when speaking about his restaurant. According to Pablo the "z" is used in Spain while the "s" is used in México. While I have not found any reference to this, for this section the word is spelled as Pablo spells it. Pablo's logo has a man wrapped in a *pancho*, but it is supposed to be representative of a *sarape*. When asked if he created that image, Pablo responded:

Yeah. I have a friend. He likes drawing. He's not into that or anything, but he's been drawing since high school so he kind of did that for us.

C: So you told him an idea and then he drew it? Or-

Pablo: No, he actually just did it by himself. And the sarape because it's called that, and that's why he put it on this guy.

C: And then it stuck?

Pablo: Yeah, it stayed like that.

In this exchange we have learned that not only was it Pablo who thought that representing a Mexican restaurant with a serape would work, but his friend did as well. Ironically, however, as I mentioned above the image of the man does not have a sarape. Instead, the man is wrapped in a poncho. The difference is minor but distinct. A poncho has a hole in the center so that you may place your head through it and allow the fabric to rest on your shoulders. The sarape is wide scarf/blanket that is wrapped around the shoulders.

When asked what he thought the logo communicates to his clients if it was just a visual of the name, Pablo responded:

Pablo: You know, really we just put in on there and that was it. Next thing you knew it was on the shirts and hats and-

C: Yeah. Became a logo.

Pablo: Yeah.

C: Alright. And so there wasn't kind of like-

Pablo: Like to do something for a reason? No. No, we just got it and it was real Mexican, so-

When pressed a little more, Pablo reaffirmed that the image was simply to let people know it was a Mexican place. He stated, “Well, just ... Trying to let them know it's a Mexican place.” It is interesting that the visual representation while meant to be representative of the name actually

depicts a separate clothing item. Much like the *sombrero*, the *zarape* is used to let clients know that it was a Mexican restaurant.

Deviating from the sleeping Mexican.

Hector, owner of Jalisco's Cafe, deviated from the rest of the owners who had inherited their restaurants. Rather than continuing to use their logo, because "it was there" and "it works," Hector decided to make a change.

C: Who decided to use the nopal cactus?

Hector: Yeah, it's been on there for a long time. We had a guy did the artwork once. Before that we had the amigo, the guy standing over there with a *sombrero*.

C: The sleeping Mexican?

Hector: Yeah, it was that one. It was that one, first. Then we changed it, like no, we don't want a lazy guy up there. We want something that, you know…

C: When your aunt first did it ... Or was that the original owners that had the sleeping Mexican?

Hector: No, it wasn't. It wasn't up there.

C: Okay, so your aunt had it at some point?

Hector: This is just recently, yeah.

C: Okay, that's interesting. Do you know why your aunt had that to begin with?

Hector: I don't know. I guess the artist just put it up there for her.

C: Okay, but then you all decided to change it?

Hector: "*Pos no quita eso huevón que está arriba*. [Well no, take that lazy guy off of there]"

C: Okay, all right. You didn't want a lazy Mexican on the outside?

Hector: No.

C: Was this because it was a stereotype?

Hector: It was, overrated. Everybody using it all over the place, Chico's Tacos and all that. They all use that, the *sombrero*. Yeah, they put the big old mustache and the *sombrero*.

C: Right, and you just wanted something new, something ...

Hector: Something different.

Hector's response demonstrates a deliberate change to the logo of the sleeping Mexican, an image that he did not necessarily see as a stereotype, but instead represented lazy and overused. When asked why it was changed to the current image of the nopal cactus, Hector explained:

Hector: No, just something like the Mexican flag. It's traditional. You know, *como es de Jalisco un nopal o un maguey* [like it's from Jalisco, a prickly pear or a century plant].

C: Okay, so some of the indigenous plants from there.

Hector: Yeah, just to keep them, something in relation to Jalisco.

When pressed for what he was trying to communicate with the image of the nopals, Hector responded, "It's more like ... It's not Tex Mex. It's more down Mexico, a real original […] This is more original […] Northern Mexico *mas bien* [even better]. Hector made this change from "lazy" and "overused" to something that was "unique," "original," and "represented northern Mexico." The nopal cactus was seen as the appropriate response, a way to still signify México, northern México, to consumers in a way that wasn't overdone.

The last exchange with Hector touches on the essence of this next theme, negotiating meaning and creating an identity. For Hector, using indigenous plants of the state of Jalisco

worked better as a way to ground the customer in the experience of the restaurant. The owners of Casita and The Man in White also inherited the names of their restaurants from the previous owners but they created an image for their restaurants that spoke to them.

Negotiating Meaning, Identity.

The next two excerpts demonstrate the work two business owners did to modify and use images that they thought best represented their restaurants. In these two examples we see where the owners negotiated the look of the images to create an identity for themselves.

Casita. In the interview with Norma, her daughter Angelica was also present. While Norma understands English, she is not quite as comfortable speaking it. I felt the same way but with Spanish. I am able to understand it, but am not as comfortable speaking it. Therefore, Angelica acted as a translator in the exchange, but since she grew up and currently works in her mother's business she was also able to provide answers to some of the questions.

I first began by asking Norma if the image of the little girl pulling the donkey was representative of herself. To this she responded:

Norma: No [laughs].

Angelica: *¿Te recordó a tí, mama?* [Did it remind you of you, mom?]

Norma: *No, no*. [laughs]

Angelica: No, I think she's just really liked the image of it. But—

Norma: *Que está jalando al burrito. Ay, en cuanto lo vi, dije: "Me lo llevo". Y lo tenía colgado allí donde tengo esa niña, ahí lo tenía colgado, por mucho tiempo duró ahí colgada*. [She is pulling the little donkey. Oh, as soon as I saw it, I said, "I'll take it." And I had it hanging where I have that girl, there it was hanging, for a long time.]

While Norma did not see herself in the little girl that has come to be the logo for her restaurant, her daughter Angelica sees the image as a perfect metaphor for her mother.

Angelica: But I think at some point it really represented who she was, because my mom has had a really difficult childhood. So ever since she could remember-- because my grandmother left her and my other two aunts, her two sisters. So they were really little and she says she was probably seven when she had to start to care of her little sisters. […] So I think it really does represent where she's coming from, this little girl always having to become an adult way before her time.

C: What do you think that [the little girl pulling the burrito] communicates to the clients?

Angelica: I think they right away assume it's my mom. They associate it with my mom, especially the people that we've known for many, many years. They know her struggles. They know what she's done. They know that she's still here. So I'm really, really sure that they associate with my mom, with what she's done, with-- because a burro kind of represents that stubbornness, that hard animal. And this is what the restaurant has been.

C: I like what you said right there. The burro itself was kind of a metaphor for the restaurant itself.

Angelica: Yes, just kind of like that load you have to carry, and that kind of-- you kind of have to kind of approach it a certain way, also, because then it'll kick you. And that's what it's been, the restaurant, to us, kind of having-- now we have a love for it, and I have my kids, and my kids-- my daughter, as a matter of fact, now in the summer she tries to come and help. […] So they've come to-- we've appreciated

we have a nice burro now, but along the way, it's kind of having to take care of it. But she's the one kind of having to pull that burro all along. Because like she said, "I'm the owner. I'm the manager." She is a perfectionist. It's been a lot of hardship.

In this touching exchange, Angelia demonstrates how the logo of her mother's restaurant is symbolic of the struggle she has had in her life as well as to keep her restaurant going.

Manta. Much like Norma and Hector, David inherited his restaurant from a previous owner but chose to modify his image. While David inherited the building, the concept inside is all his own:

C: What was your inspiration for this restaurant?

David: I saw a really nice Mexican restaurant in Cancun, México. It was called Los Pericos and that's when I come up with the idea.

C: Okay, and so why did you decide to keep the name?

David: I like it.

C: You like it?

David: I like the name. Yeah.

C: Why do you like it?

David: I like it because as Mexicans we use that word a lot. When we go, let's say for example, if you say, "Hey let's go have a party." "Okay *andale pues* [let's go then]" "Yeah, let's do it." Andale is like let's do it, let's go. Something like that, so we use *andale* a lot. I like it. I like the name.

C: Okay and what about the logo? Did you design it or that was his design too?

David: That was his [the previous owner's design. I just changed a couple of things. I just put the mug of beer in his hand in the place of the enchiladas or food in the other hand. That's the only that I changed, because the character was already like working or standing you know. I just decided to put ... so I can tell the people that we have a bar because of the beer mug and we also serve food. It's because of advertising purposes.

C: Okay, so kind of showing through him what you serve.

David: Exactly.

David's logo and the name of his restaurant, while still a caricature of a Mexican man, shows an alternate story to the sleeping Mexican man, one that tries to emulate movement, service, and excitement while also demonstrating what his restaurant sells. While David also explained that this logo was used because it "was already […] working" in the exchange below we understand what that meant for him.

When asked why he decided to keep the man dressed as he did, in the white clothing with a small hat, David stated:

> Not exactly Veracruz, but the people in Mexico in the old times everybody used to wear ... in the whole country, like white outfits. White was I think the only kind of material they used to find in those years, in those days. Besides it's called *manta*. I don't know if you know what manta means. That's the kind of material that they used to wear and that manta is fresh in the summer and is warm during the wintertime. That's why the people in Mexico they used to wear that manta outfits.

C: He has a little, not a big *sombrero*, but he has a little hat.

David: People in Mexico always, in the old years, everybody used to wear *sombreros* because most of the people used to work in the fields. The hat was to protect from the sun.

C: They also wear the white to keep cool in the sun?

David: Exactly.

While still a caricature of a Mexican person, David's responses to why he kept his logo dressed as his did touches upon trying to depict a snapshot of everyday life in México. By keeping the caricature dressed in white, David situates his image at an older time period in México when this was the fabric of choice.

These exchanges demonstrate the type of insight that can be provided when we as visual rhetoricians engage with the creators of the images. While we may not always align with their responses we can allow our analysis to be informed by their perspectives to create a fuller idea of what these images mean.

LESSONS FROM OUR TOUR

When engaging with the question, *How do business owners perceive the use of images and symbols*, it quite simply becomes a question of asking, does the image work? That is, is it effective? By viewing the interaction with the image as a single node in a rhetorical ecology where each actor (user, image and audience members) has their own individual cultural logic, we can understand that each of these images "work" on multiple levels. Looking at images as networked and dynamic is a first step into gaining a nuanced understanding of *how* they work.

Rhetorical Ecology/Ecosystem

To refresh our memory from Chapter 1, Edbauer (2005) proposed a shift in the way we view rhetoric. As opposed to looking at rhetoric as a single situation, Edbauer proposed that we

view rhetoric ecologically. By this she meant that we should look at the fluidity of the elements of the rhetorical situation, ethos, pathos, logos, audience, and constraints. These elements are not static but instead are constantly in flux. In her words, rhetorical ecological models understand that "public interactions bleed into wider social processes" (p. 9). Further expanding on this, she stated, "The contact between two people on a busy city street is never simply a matter of those two bodies; rather, the two bodies carry with them the trace of effects from whole fields of culture and social histories" (Edbauer, 2005, p. 10). Looking at a situation ecologically forces us to think about the network that is at each component of the rhetorical situation and complicate it to more fully understand how it works. Edbauer's (2005) theory of rhetorical ecology mirrors Lemke's (2004) description of networked literacies. According to Lemke (2004),

> We must understand them [literacies] as part of the larger systems of practices that hold a society together, that make it a unit of dynamic self-organization far larger than the individual. In fact, if we think the word *society* means only people, then we need another term, one that, like *ecosystem* includes the total environment: machines, buildings, cables, satellites, bedrock, sewers, farms, insect life, bacteria ... *everything* with which we are interdependent in order to be the complex community that we are. We couldn't be the community we are unless we did the things we do, and most of what we do depends not just on the physical and biological properties of all these system partners, but on what they *mean* to us. (p. 315)

Thus, it is by looking at the networked ecology of a situation that we can have a more complete understanding of how each component "works." In relationship to this study, a rhetorical ecology framework motivated me to move past analysis of the image from only my perspective and take

apart the complex activity that occurs when consumers engage with logos of Mexican food restaurants (see Figure 3:1).

Ecological frameworks present several interesting ways to view visual rhetorical analysis. First, an ecological perspective motivates visual rhetoricians to acknowledge that an image is created when the creator's cultural logic bumps into their perception of the audience's cultural logic. A cultural logic is the amalgamation of encounters everywhere and with everything that create a network of images/sign systems that help us make sense of past, current and future interactions. When we engage with creative agents, we can better understand their cultural logics, where they were coming from in the creation of their image, in short what meaning the image has for the creator as well as what they were hoping to communicate to their audience. While some may argue it is not essential to know this, according to Gries (2015) it is essential because "such intentions help disclose what meanings an image has for the designer and perhaps others in their culture," (p. 115). Second, an ecological framework affords the ability to see how, for example, appeals to authenticity can impact notions of ethos, pathos, all depending on the actor's previous interaction with signs systems (more on this to come in Chapter 4).

Previous methods of visual rhetorical analysis examine the image in its context, examine the author, the audience and present a hypothesis of the purpose by looking for moments of intertextuality, how it appeals to ethos and pathos and how it's design features affect the logos. Visual rhetoricians also take into consideration the medium of the visual and the location in which it was found. Again, these types of analyses do in fact provide insightful information. However, by engaging with creative agents we can understand their larger social process of meaning making, their cultural logics, to create a fuller understanding of how influential certain images are in certain contexts as well as the network of images the creative agent is operating in.

Within a rhetorical ecology framework, when interacting with a restaurant logo, there are several complex actions occurring. First, before the consumer even engages with the logo the business owner has created the image. The creation of the image in and of itself is a complex rhetorical ecology because the business owner had to perceive a future clientele and consider what image would best appeal to them. This forces the business owner to call upon their cultural logic, their network of images, and then consider the context of the image, i.e. target clientele, the restaurant's location, and most importantly what their clientele would most be most receptive

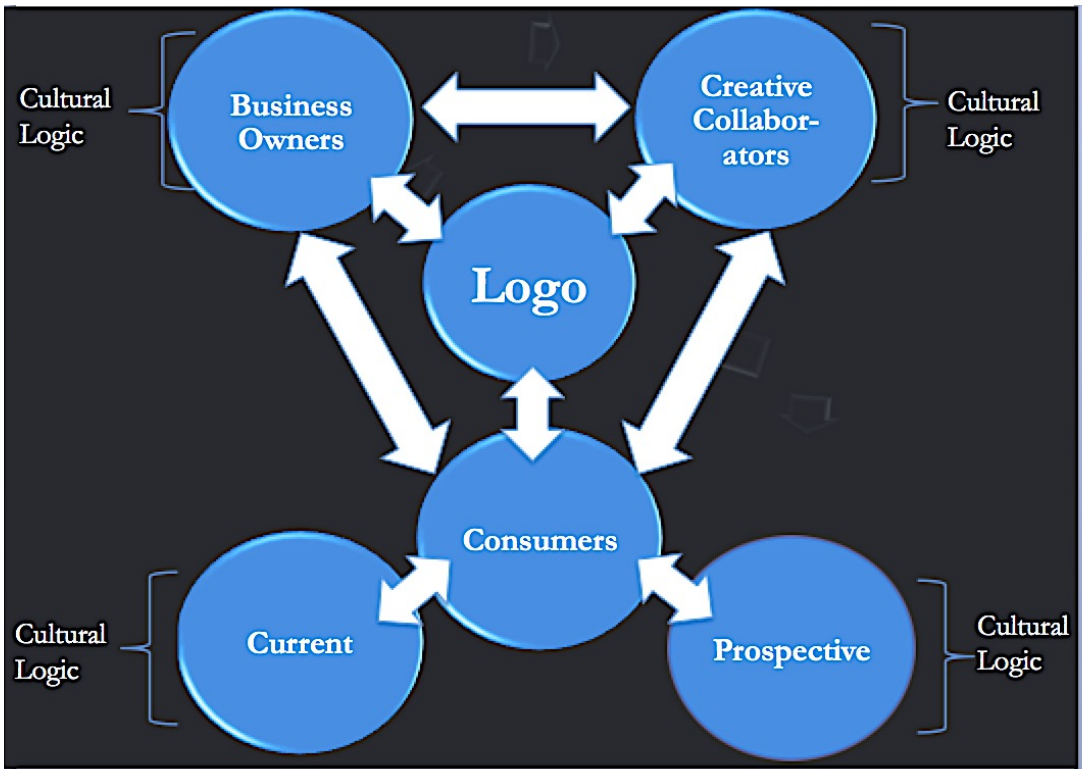

Figure 3:1 Logos in a Rhetorical Ecology

to. It is here that the business owner makes assumptions on what images the consumer will be receptive to, in essence what the consumer's cultural logic will be. Also, the process of creating a logo is usually not a solitary one. Logo creations whether for a local restaurant or a large chain are usually collaborative projects. In the event that more than one individual created the logo, as

is the case with Pete, Pablo and Jaime, we need to then account for the cultural logic of what I have termed the "creative collaborator." In the act of creating the image there is the vision of what the owner wants, considering the complexities outlined above, that now have to be placed in conversation with the creative collaborators, who themselves have to negotiate the complexities mentioned above. All of this is done within the context of historical time period that the logo is created. The *kairos*, the right or opportune moment, of the logos creation. As we know, the meaning of images evolves over time. The symbol # in Chapter 2 have evolved to mean "hashtag" in just the last eleven years. Therefore, the timing, the social historical context, will affect the person's cultural logic and ultimately influence the creation of the logo. By asking business owners to answer questions, such as

1) What was your process in creating the brand for your customer/restaurant?

2) What design choices did you make in the creating the brand?

3. What design choices did you make in the creating the brand?

4. Who is your target audience for your brand?

5. What do you hope your logo communicates to your consumers?

I provided the space for the owners to explain their cultural logic.

The most remarkable finding from this unit of analysis is that stereotypical representations of Mexican culture are still very prominent, and driven in large part by the consumer market. While there is some variation in the images used, stereotypes are still the majority. This was made all the more remarkable because of the location of the study. As mentioned earlier the city of El Paso is 80 percent Hispanic, and so it would be assumed that stereotypes would not be as prevalent. However, this conundrum is especially helpful in illustrating the multiple meaning these images have for various groups. Perhaps members of this

community are not as bothered by these images because the ideology that puts these images in a negative light is not a pervasive in this location. Additionally, as identified by some of the restaurateurs, there are very diverse clientele that visit these restaurants. As the next section demonstrates, interviews with owners of Mexican food restaurants provide us the ability to complicate our visual analysis to consider these creative agents' design processes.

Complicating the Stereotype

By having conversations with people outside the academy, we as academics can uncover some of the complexity of these visuals. The business owners from subheading: "It Works" use what I have previously called "stereotypical images" to represent that they are a Mexican restaurant (see Salas and Abarca, 2015). While it is difficult to talk about perpetuating stereotypes and even more so to have a conversation with someone who uses it as the logo of their restaurant, these conversations provide entry points into critical conversations with the general public. As I detail below, there are several advantages to incorporating this type of work within the field of visual rhetoric.

First, by having conversations with business owners we begin by not assuming what the purpose of the image is. To say that these three business owners are simply perpetuating a stereotype would be too simplistic of an explanation of their use. While these images have been used as stereotypes or as "single story" (Adichie, 2009) representations of Mexican culture, as demonstrated in their responses, these business owners were not deliberately trying to set forth a negative view of Mexican culture. As Dávila (2012) has stated, stereotypes themselves are not inherently negative or positive:

> What makes stereotypes so troublesome is not that they order and simplify information by reducing complexity to a few limited conventions, but that in doing so, they both

> reflect and, more important, engender social hierarchies. As a vast literature has clearly shown, stereotypes are never intrinsically negative or positive, but are always historically created and produced in conversation with social hierarchies of daily life. (p. 82)

As some participants from Chapter 2 demonstrated in the images they used for their tortilla package and Mexican restaurant, these business owners are operating within a rhetorical ecology that has a created a limited sign system of what images can be used to demarcate Mexican culture.

Second, instead of simply dismissing the image as a stereotype we can begin to complicate and uncover why it is so effective. As Chapter 4 explains in more detail, the images of the sleeping Mexican man, the *sombrero* and *zarape*, were created out of a specific context that has since been forgotten and yet the images still have life. It is a cycle. Certain images have become a code that represents a group. With this code established, using the code allows communication to be effective because the image has become a marker of the group. Using these images is a technique to ground the consumer's understanding that this was a Mexican restaurant. In other words, they are visual passcodes, ways of appealing to the authenticity of the product. The owners who use these images operate within a cultural logic that lends them to believe that the audience will be receptive to the images they have selected. Because these owners have not had negative criticism of the images they continue to utilize them, again because they "work."

While some may argue that this is simply perpetuating the stereotype, as these three business owners stated, "it works." If more than one person in the last thirty years had called to complain to "The Old Place" and if customers didn't simply recognize Pete because of his logo, perhaps these owners would reconsider using the images they do because at that point in time the

images would no long work. However, as stated by Lemke (2004), meaning making is not simply isolate to one individual but instead a shared experience: "Which connections we make (what kind and to which other texts and images) is partly individual, but also characteristic of our society and our place in it: our age, gender, economic class, affiliation groups, family traditions, cultures, and subcultures" (p. 314). This demonstrates the careful negotiation of meaning that comes with using images to communicate with a diverse audience. Each image can have plural meanings depending on the audience, but for a business owner, if the audience continues to accept the image there is no reason to change it, because it is still effective.

Next, doing this work does not mean that we as visual rhetoricians cannot be critical of stereotype use. Simply using these images does have its consequence. According to Dávila (2012), "Even when individuals may interpret these images and ideas differently or imbue them with an idiosyncratic meaning, these renditions are by necessity framed within dominant social conventions" (p. 82). Even if images are being used to signify that it is a Mexican restaurant, simply by using them there is a continuous cycle of only a few images being representative of Mexican culture. However, instead of directing criticism at the user, by engaging participants we can gain entry into the cycle, understand and acknowledge the complexity involved in their use, and begin to look for those that deviate from this norm.

Lastly, this type of work also allows us to engage with individuals who do not use stereotypes. These conversations only add to how we can begin to create more pluralistic representations of certain groups. This is where the dissenters come in. Hector, Norma, and David all presented differently images that still manage to ground the restaurant as Mexican. While their images are not commonly used, saguaros are more common than prickly pear cactus, very rarely are women portrayed as logos, and we hardly see the Mexican man in motion, they

still work. The use of the nopal also works because it appeals to issues of authenticity as it tries to place the consumer in the place of the restaurant, Jalisco, México. While the saguaro cactus is found in Arizona, it is not found in northern México or in the El Paso region. This was even demonstrated in Jaime's explanation of his logo of the sleeping Mexican man resting against a saguaro cactus when he stated: "[…] but somebody has told me on more than one occasion that the only flaw with that sign is that the cactus is not native to El Paso, to Arizona." Therefore the use of the nopal is in itself a visual passcode. To those that know the difference in the cacti, the image grounds the consumer in the place where the food originates, "northern Mexico, *mas bien*."

Slowing down and dissecting the small moment of a restaurant logo as a moment of interaction that places the user and audience members' cultural logic in conversation demonstrates a moment where we as visual rhetoricians can begin to untangle why certain images persist.

TO WRAP UP THE TOUR

Viewing interactions with restaurant logos as networked, dynamic and as a single node in a networked rhetorical ecology is a first step into gaining a holistic understanding of *how* these images work. By asking, *How do business owners perceive their use of images and symbols*, I provided the space for restaurant owners to explain their cultural logic of their restaurant images. Based on the eight participants' responses we are able to glean that each has had life experiences, both personal and professional, that has led them to use the images that they do. These experiences are unique to each owner, but there were commonalities and certain images that owners use to communicate that the restaurant is in fact a Mexican restaurant. This is important to recognize because, whether the restaurant owners acknowledge this or not, their use of images

continues to add to the cultural logics of all that interact with it. By their very nature, restaurants contribute to a system that visually represents Mexican culture to a variety of audiences and therefore their logos become a part of the images associated with this culture.

Seeing an encounter with a food product packaging as a rhetorical ecology as opposed to a static rhetorical situation pushes rhetoricians to account for previous interactions consumers have had with certain images that amalgamate in the moment of interaction. An interesting lesson to be learned from this case study is that largely we cannot precisely know *What networked, rhetorical influence cultural stereotypes have on consumers*. I can say with certainty that they have an influence. They appear in a number of different spaces and in a number of different context. For example, the *sombrero* is useful because it helps to demarcate that a certain image, product, person is Mexican. And it continues to work because there hasn't been enough dissent brought to the sign system. Further, business owners perceive their use of images as one that will allow the translation of the product to two audiences at once (familiar and unfamiliar) to be as seamless as possible.

While this chapter provided us with a view of business owners' reasoning and hypothesis of what their images mean and communicate to their clients, in the next chapter we engage with why these images work and have worked for so long. The next chapter traces the history of these images to further complicate why certain images persist when others do not. In Chapter 4, I also present Commodified Perception of Culture (CPC): how the term came about and what it means and how through iconographic tracking as well as inductive and deductive research I revised the theory into CPC 2.0—a framework for visual rhetoric.

Chapter Four

Evolution of Commodified Perception of Culture

The handful of images of Mexicans, and subsequently Mexican culture, such as the sleeping Mexican man, the *sombrero*, and the *zarape*'s constant presence in relation to food product packaging sparked the question of why these particular images continue to resonate with consumers and what these images communicate to them. In this chapter we consider and investigate why the images of the sleeping Mexican man, *sombrero*, and *zarape* "work" and have worked for so long.

While this image is very prevalent now, this was not always the case, and it is by uncovering its trajectory that we can help to make better sense of how it works in the moment. Through the work of this chapter, I showcase how Gries' (2015) iconographic tracking method provides a way to dissect the image of the sleeping Mexican man that have been replicated and re-mixed for close to a century. This work addresses the question of why these particular images continue to resonate with consumers.

The sleeping Mexican man is not alone in its category of stereotypical representations of people paired with food products. The image of the sleeping Mexican man has persisted just as long as the Aunt Jemima, "Mammy" figure, and Uncle Ben. Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben originated from representations of actual people. According to Smithers and Benhken (2015), "In 1890, Rutt and Underwood's R.T. Davis Milling Company had their hook. They developed a marketing campaign and hired Nancy Green, an ex-slave from Kentucky, to portray Aunt Jemima in advertising their product" (p. 29). Aunt Jemima then became the face of Aunt Jemima, the first ready mix. About 50 years later "The Uncle Ben character emerged as Aunt Jemima's male counterpart in the 1940s. He was the creation of Gordon L. Harwell and was

based on the visage of restaurant maître d' Frank Brown" (Smithers and Benhken, 2015, p. 32). To this day, Uncle Ben is still the face of Uncle Ben Rice products.

While there have been numerous studies on the Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben representations (see Manring, 1998; Goings 20008; and Smithers & Behnken, 2015), very few studies have been conducted with the image of the sleeping Mexican man. However, sociologist Maribel Álvarez, Chicano literacy theorist William Anthony Nericcio and museum curator Tey Marianna Nunn are notable scholars who have researched and analyzed representations of the sleeping Mexican and the visual stereotypes of Mexican people.

To build on the work of these scholars and address my second research question, *What frameworks for critical inquiry of advertisements exist within rhetoric and writing studies? How can a commodified perception of culture framework contribute to a critical inquiry by academics and consumers alike?*, in this chapter I demonstrate how the use of iconographic tracking (Gries, 2015) assists us in tracing and mapping the complicated rhetorical life or trajectory of the image.

As Gries demonstrated (2015) iconographic tracking can result in a book length project in and of itself; therefore, for the purposes of this dissertation and this section of the chapter, I showcase a projected origin of the image as well as four catalogs that appeared from my archival research at the Sleeping Mexican Lab at the University of Arizona at Tucson. It is by seeing where the image has come from that we can make better sense of how it works in the moment. After I present the results of my archival research, I demonstrate how my original theory of Commodified Perception of Culture (CPC), a framework that provides visual rhetoricians tools for engaging with ethnic stereotypes when we encounter them, was enhanced by the incorporation of iconographic tracking and participants' responses in Chapters 2 and 3.

ICONOGRAPHIC TRACKING: THE IMAGE OF THE SLEEPING MEXICAN

Iconographic tracking, according to visual rhetorician Laurie Gries (2015), asks individuals to examine the rhetorical life of an image. Gries, drawing on Jessica Enoch's (2005) work with historiographic tracking and well as Jenny Edbauer' (2005) ecological model of rhetoric, asks us not so much to look at the image in the moment, but instead to understand where that image came from, where it has gone, and what allows it to make sense when we encounter it. While the method of iconographic tracking cannot

> fully account for or keep up with all the rhetorical consequences a single multiple image cogenerates, it can at least help recover some of the most visible ways that a single image has influenced and continues to shape collective existence. In such recoveries, scholars must be careful not to generate asymmetrical accounts in which humans take on the center role of collective activities. (Gries, 2015 p. 126)

I use an adaptation of iconographic tracking here to help demonstrate how an image such as the sleeping Mexican man has still had life after 150 years of verbal and visual descriptions. As stated in Chapter 1, Gries' (2015) analysis and mine differ in two key ways. First, her tracking of the Obama poster "Yes We Can" began in the present (which at that time was 2006), and she was able to track the image and see how it evolved (stopping in 2014). I, on the other hand, begin in the present and move to the past, tracking the origins of the image of the sleeping Mexican man and interrogating the material conditions through its continued life. Second, Gries' data collection and analysis are grounded in high-tech methods. Because the image I am tracing began before electronic means of communication and continues to be reproduced as advertising clip art, I had to resort to archival, lower-tech methods.

Methods: Adapting Iconographic Tracking

As defined by Gries (2015), iconographic tracking follows the image through its evolution of forms and media. Through this methodology, the network of the image is traced and mapped across time, place and adaptation. According to Gries (2015) the methodology for iconographic tracking has four steps: collecting, assembling and uncovering the images' remixes. Labeling the steps as R1 through R4, she explains

> The initial research phase of iconographic tracking (R1) begins by deploying digital research to collect a large data set using basic search engines with image-search capabilities. […] Once a significant amount of data has been collected, a second phase of research begins – assembling the data into collections (R2) […] a process of sorting through massive amounts of saved data to locate patterns, trends, and relationships. Once folders with data are established and organized, the next phase of the research begins (R3). […] a recursive process that fluctuates between data mining and assembling a collection, a process productive in that it helps discover an image's specific remixes and unintended consequences as well as particular network of collectives in which the image has played a major role. […] During this fourth research phase (R4), researchers conduct a close study of specific collections to determine how an image intra-acts with humans and various technologies and other entities to materialize, spark change, and produce collective space. Such investigation entails attending to seven interrelated material processes […] (more discussion of this below). (p. 110-113)

Iconographic tracking is useful in that it provides a heuristic to follow the rhetorical life of an image; it acts as a research map when examining large amounts of visual data.

Iconographic tracking as a method works well if the same photo was uploaded to different sites. It allows researchers to track where the image was uploaded; however, it poses

certain limitations that constrain the types of photos that are trackable. For example, any slight variation in the image's electronic title or process of saving will not yield the same result. Additionally, if a photo is taken of an image, a reverse image search will also yield no results because search engine capabilities are limited to tracing the actual photo itself not other interpretations or renditions of the same content. Nonetheless, I hope it is clear that while this methodology is extremely useful for contemporary images, which are constantly being uploaded and remixed, slight variations need to be taken to account for images that do not have an electronic presence, i.e. older images or images of images.

This is why historical archival research of the sleeping Mexican man was a necessary complement to iconographic tracking. The same underlying principles of iconographic tracking, amassing a large data set and then sifting that into collections, were applied to the historical archival research of the image done through library research and on-site archival research. The process for this tracking was not linear or sequential (Glenn & Enoch 2009; Enoch, 2010; Hawhee & Olson, 2013). There was a great deal of back and forth and detours in the collection of this data. I simply went where the data took me and that included paths that had dead ends or that provided fruitful additions. In essence, my research consists of a historical trace of the image. I looked through travel log narratives and photographs by US travelers in México in the late 1800s. This was done by researching newspaper clippings and published travel accounts. I then followed the image through its various artistic representations beginning in the 1920's.

The archival research component of this study was conducted with Maribel Álvarez at the University of Arizona Tucson's Southwest Center. Álvarez has curated an extensive collection of sleeping Mexican items such as postcards, food boxes, photographs, business cards etc., within her Sleeping Mexican Lab. It is here that a note on the lab must be made. Jill Janice who lived in

the city of Tucson, Arizona, donated the Sleeping Mexican Lab to Álvarez. The Lab was created by the Janice family's personal lifelong collection of items that portrayed images of the sleeping Mexican man. One weakness of the lab is that the items in it are limited to where the donor and her friends traveled. While the lab is limited in this way, it is still the single most expansive collection of sleeping Mexican items. It was here that I quite literally looked through boxes and folders of artifacts and began the process outlined in Gries' article (2015) R2 and R3, assembling the collection and uncovering the images' remixes. A large aide in the tracking process was speaking Maribel Álvarez. Her knowledge and large collection of different types of items proved to be a very rich space to conduct this research. In speaking with Álvarez and viewing her collection, I was able to find connections and go down different avenues throughout the data collection process.

Throughout this process I followed the fourth research phase, i.e., R4, set forth by Gries (2005) to make sense of the data. In other words, I conducted "a close study of specific collections to determine how an image intra-acts with humans and various technologies and other entities to materialize, spark change, and produce collective space." Throughout this close study, I was looking for moments of "composition, production, distribution, circulation, transformation, collectivity, and consequentiality" (Gries, 2015, p. 113). To explain in more detail, Gries defines each component as:

> **Composition** "refers to an image's rhetorical design" (p. 114)
>
> **Production** "refers to the techno-human labor involved in bringing a design into material construction" (p. 114)

Transformation: "following an image via digital research and paying close attention to how a circulating image changes in terms of design, form, medium, materiality, genres, and function as it enters into new associations" (p. 117).

Distribution: "investigating the intentional strategies deployed to disseminate an actualized image as well as the collaboration between participating human and nonhuman entitles involved in that distribution process" (p. 121)

Circulation: "the concern with circulation is less about generating a coherent map of where something moves than about trying to account for how something flows" (p. 120).

Collectivity: "identify how different collectives emerge as human and non-human entities into various associations with an image" (p. 124).

Consequentiality: "it is important to study both intended and unintended consequences as well as to investigate as many consequences as possible to recover the nuanced ways an image contributes to collective life. […] it is best to account for how different events are generated via an image's collective actions." (p. 125)

Due to the material constraints of this study and the varying lenses that Gries (2015) and I employed, i.e., futurity versus historical, I was most concerned with the composition, production, transformation, distribution and the consequentiality of the image. In other words I looked at the various depictions of the sleeping Mexican man, and grew increasingly interested in the electronic transformation, distribution and circulation of the image in the 1980s.

While I was able to collect a great deal of interesting and surprising data, for the sake of space in this chapter I only highlight few newspaper clippings to provide a historical context along with two collections gathered from the research conducted at the Sleeping Mexican Lab to analyze the image itself. Next, I demonstrate how one particular "type" has be replicated and

remixed since the 1980s.

Historical Context: The Troubling Origin

As Salas and Abarca (2015) have asserted, the image of the sleeping Mexican man has a contested origin; however, one theory is that the image originated out of representations of everyday life during the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship and the Mexican Revolution (Salas & Abarca, 2015; Álvarez, 2016; Jimenez, 1990). In a personal communication with sociologist Maribel Álvarez (2016), she stated:

> The origin of the sleeping Mexican is in the Mexican Porfiriato era. Where there is a readjustment of the agrarian question. Where the indigenous people are sort of considered now. They're going to have to play a role within the emerging Mexican capitalism.

As highlighted by Álvarez (2016) the image comes about once indigenous groups are seen as having a role in México's emerging state of capitalism that began in the late 1880s and early 20th century. The image of the sleeping Mexican man, like Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben, is modeled after real people. Unlike Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben, however, the sleeping Mexican man is not associate with any one person but instead an entire group of Mexican people.

Before going any further, I find it important to contextualize who the sleeping Mexican man is. To begin, he is a Mexican Indian, an indigenous person. His palm fiber *sombrero*, as opposed to the felt *sombrero* we see with *charros* [horsemen], and the white pants and shirt he wears made out of *manta*, white cotton cloth, are characteristic of indigenous attire. The white cloth was emblematic of a cheap but durable fabric. When looking at travel photographs during the time there is a consistent difference in the clothing material wore by the poor and indigenous and those with more resources available to them. Therefore, the origin of the image itself is highly classed and racialized (see Figure 4.1 from .

A PEON AND HIS WIFE

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Figure 4.1: The Peon and his Wife; *Mexico and Her People Today p. 185*

In the fourth edition of *Barbarous Mexico*, acclaimed travel writer and journalist John Kenneth Turner (1914), provided readers with a scathing account of the conditions for a large number of Mexicans during the early part of the Mexican Revolution. During the Díaz regime large populations of indigenous Mexicans were forcefully moved into the cities and into the labor force. City infrastructure during that time was not equipped to accommodate such a large influx of people. Accommodations were often unaffordable and the conditions of the *fondas* [inns] were terrible and dangerous (Turner, 1914, p. 117). Additionally, Turner (1914) explains the slavery and indentured servitude of the Mexican people at the hands of Porfirio Díaz and the role of the United States in this system:

The slavery and peonage of Mexico, the poverty and the illiteracy, the general prostration

> of the people, are due, in my humble judgment, to the financial and political organization that at present rules that country in a word, to what I shall call the "system" of General Porfirio Díaz." […] It was under Porfirio Díaz that slavery and peonage were re-established in Mexico, and on a more merciless basis than they had existed even under the Spanish Dons. Therefore, I can see no injustice in charging at least a preponderance of the blame for these conditions upon the system of Díaz. […] Not the least among these commercial interests are American, which, I blush to say are quite as aggressive defenders of the Díaz citadel as any. Indeed, […] these American interests undoubtedly form the determining forces in the continuation of Mexican slavery. Thus does Mexican slavery come home to us in the full sense of the term. (p. 120-122)

Turner (1914) detailed the extent to which Díaz's regime extended into México:

> Debt and contract slavery is the prevailing system of production all over the south of Mexico. Probably three-quarters of a million souls may properly be classed as human chattels. In all the rest of Mexico a system of peonage, differing from slavery in principally in degree, and similar in many respect to the serfdom of Europe in the Middle Ages, prevails in the rural districts. Under this system of labor is compelled to give service to the farmer, or *hacendado*, to accept what he wishes to pay, and even to receive such beatings as he cares to deliver. Debt, real or imaginary, is the nexus that binds the peon to his master. Debts are handed from father to son and on down through the generations. (p. 110-111)

Conditions for the people of México during Díaz's time in power were horrid, and the indigenous and poor of México received the worst treatment of it.

Unlike Turner, travel writer Nevin O. Winter, writing from México in 1907, provided an identity attached to the peon that described him as less than desirable. Winter began by comparing the "Mexican peon" to African American slaves in the United States: "Most of them are in about the same category as the southern negroes, - a race without ambition. Content to be the servants of another race they neither court nor welcome change" (p. 185). Here, Winter (1907) made the assumption that the "Mexican peon" has no want or desire to change is station in life. This further continues in his characterization of this group:

> A natural laziness, ignorance and a lack of interest will probably always keep down the peon's efficiency as a worker. The few and simple wants of his nature and his general contentment eliminate to a great expense the desire to improve his condition and accumulate property. […] The little brown man in the tall, broad-brimmed hat which seems to give an unusual height to his sturdy frame is a picturesque figure and the landscape is not complete without him. […] He will wrap his tattered shawl about him with as much dignity as the Spanish cavalier his richly-embroidered manta. […] Gambling is a natural trait and he loses or gains with a stoicism worthy of greater things. His money is likewise spent freely at the *pulque* [un-distilled tequila] shop so that his finances are never embarrassed by a surplus. A little money will make him very full of liquor, and a little liquor will sometimes make him a bad man to handle. (p. 185-188)

The description of the Mexican peon provided by Winter gives way to several concerns. First, it presents an a-contextual characterization, neglecting to consider the material conditions of this group of people during this specific period of time. By doing so the individual's illiteracy and inability to garner property is then not an account of the conditions he faces under the Díaz regime, but is instead a moral failing on his part for not overcoming his obstacles. Second,

Winter's description of the people provides us early versions of the imagery we see associated with the image of the sleeping Mexican man. The tall *sombrero*, the *zarape* and the *pulque* were prominent enough in his encounter to use them in his description. This is further continued in his description of people in the state of Oaxaca:

> The *Indios* living in the hills took undisturbed possession at night, and groups of tired *Indios* wrapped themselves in their *sarapes* or shawls, and stretched their tired limbs out on the cold stones; or propped themselves against the walls of a building to rest." (p. 117)

I hope that these two different accounts, Tuner and Winter, demonstrate two very distinct ways of representing the people of México during this particular period of time. While it is not to say that Winter's (1907) account of his experience in México is wrong, it is troubling because it is completely absent the historical and socioeconomic context of the time. However, it is his imagery and painting of the "everyday life in México" that has stood the test of time and has translated visually into a marker for Mexican men, culture, and identity.

I reinforce what Salas and Abarca (2015) argued, that while the visual representation of the sleeping Mexican man originated from this particular socio-historical context, the image was able to "stick" because it provided a visual representation of a previously held ideology of Mexican people, particularly of Mexican men, as lazy. Through archival research of newspapers, I found that this sentiment began as early as the U.S.- México war (1847-1848) when U.S. soldiers wrote home to tell of their time in México. In one letter written April 10, 1847 and published in the *North Carolinian* of Fayetteville, North Carolina, one soldier stationed in Vera Cruz [*sic*] recounted, " The Mexicans are a lazy, black looking set, and it makes me mad to think I came so far to fight the cowardly rascals." The tone of this letter is biting and racially charged as it describes the people of Veracruz.

Twenty-three years later, in 1870, Mexicans are again depicted as lazy; however, this time there is a distinctly different tone. In a travel narrative, A Trip Across the Plains to Santa Fe New México, published on July 21, 1870 in the *Gallipolis Journal* of Gallipolis, Ohio, W.H.N. wrote:

> Los Vegas [New Mexico] is second in size and proportion to Santa Fe, the largest town in New Mexico. It is a Mexican town in every sense of the word, with its Plaza and one-story *adobe* buildings surrounding, and narrow streets, more like alleys, leading in every direction. A Mexican town or city without its Plaza would be the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet omitted – in other words it would not be Mexican. The Plaza is an open square, more or less ornamented by means of trees, shrubbery and flowers, where your Mexican, lazy and shiftless, loves to loll beneath the shade when the sun shines hot.

In this small excerpt, W.H.N. glaringly limits his characterization to Mexicans in New Mexico, not Mexicans in the country of México. This is an important distinction to make because by 1870 the people of New México were U.S. citizens but are still being characterized an "other." Also, we can see that the imagery of the Southwest beginning to bloom. The necessity of the Plaza as an indicator of a Mexican town is asserted, and there is a sleepy tone in the description of the Mexican who "loves to loll beneath the shade." What is interesting about this piece is that it doesn't appear to have malicious intent. While W.H.N. still has an ideological perspective and his depiction is still laden with assumptions, this narrative does not have the biting tone of the first letter. This description of the people of México continued into the 1880s. The article, The New Mexico Idyl, that appeared in the *Osceola Times* of Osceola, Arkansas on June 12, 1880, recounted a picnic the author had in Santa Fe, New Mexico:

> Now and then a Pueblo Indian strode silently across our way, and a Mexican in

> picturesque striped blanket saluted us in Spanish fashion with a "*Buenos dias senoras* [sic]," as he drove his cruelly loaded donkey toward the city. Lazy Mexicans squatted in rows sunned themselves against the low walls of their houses.

Again, these characterizations portray, as sociologist Maribel Álvarez has stated, a "representation of everyday life" of the Mexican people. While still problematic to not disclose the conditions that might lead to the people of México to recline on walls, these writers are simply recording what they see, albeit with their ideological lens.

This tone, however, changes at the turn of the century. On November 28, 1897 the Editor of the *Arizona Trailer*, Bonney, wrote

> What a Mexican would do without a burro, or burro without a Mexican, is more than I can tell; the Mexican is lazy and burro is slow; then the burro is lazy, and by spells of sixteen to twenty hours of the day the Mexican is slow; then by a remarkable coincidence they are, by spells, both slow and lazy at once, and when this occurs they are both happy, for the Mexican will lie down and sleep and the burro will graze contentedly on any old tin can that happens to lay around handy. I consider it a peculiar dispensation of Providence that the Mexican and the burro were both placed in Arizona at the creation.

This account focuses its scathing review of Mexicans as lazy, not as the previous depictions of everyday life, but of the Mexican as in relation to their economic capability. This trend only continues. In the article "Back from Mexico. Iago Jones Experienced Action as Foreman Over Mexican Minors" that appeared in *The Union Leader* of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on Friday April 22, 1892 we hear of Iago Jones, "an old time miner and labor leader of Ashley" who "has just returned from Mexico, where he has been for five months employed as a foreman for the Coahuila Coal Company, in Coahuila, a corporation belonging to the Southern Pacific Railroad

Company" (para. 1). In this column, the readers are told: "All of Mr. Jones' miners were Mexicans, lazy and thieves by nature. They will steal anything, he says, they can get their hands on (para. 2). This sentiment continues into the time period of the Mexican Revolution.

As demonstrated in Turner's (1914) account American capitalists had a large interest in keeping Porfirio Díaz in his position of power because this meant economic gains for the United States. In the story, "Seen in Mexico: H. F. Shipley Tells of Visit to That Country: Calls Mexicans a Lazy Lot," that appeared on March 14, 1911 in the *Frederick Post*, of Frederick Maryland, the reporter writes,

> Mr. Shipley [a prospector] said that when he was there practically all the country that was developed had been developed by Americans and that this had caused a feeling against the Americans. He describes the Mexicans as a lazy and indifferent class, with but few persons of intelligence among them. (para. 3)

While early travel writers depicted Mexicans in their everyday life settings, which included taking a midday nap, the *siesta*, this depiction began to change as the turn of the century wanes closer. The description of everyday life evolves from a recount and description into a judgment of character of the people of México as laborer. Again, these newspaper clippings do not go into the socio-economic conditions of the laborers. This sentiment continued through the next several decades, but was confronted with dissent.

By the 1930s and 1940s it is obvious that Mexicans being viewed as lazy is a pervasive ideology. In 1935 and 1937 the *Los Angeles Times* ran two articles speaking to the "not lazy" nature of the Mexican people. Timothy Turner (different from Kenneth Turner above), in the November 19, 1935 article "Recovering Los Angeles," wrote:

> People from Wisconsin who have bought souvenir post cards on the Mexican border will

> tell you about the "lazy Mexican." Some Mexicans are lazy, especially those living in the hot country where all animal life is lazy, where it is suicide not to be lazy. But generally Mexicans are not lazy. Peons from the high plateau are among the best labor in the world. American railway men and farm operators will attest. (para. 1)

In this piece, Turner demonstrates the plurality of the Mexican people. Some are of course lazy, but more are hard workers – a clear argument against to previous sentiments that Mexican workers were lazy. Again in 1937, Turner in "Mexicans, First Here, Leave Mark of Customs on City: Local Colony Impresses With Charm" writes:

> Economically, the Mexican from the first have afforded large supply of common labor. "The Lazy Mexican" is a fiction, except down in the hot country where everybody is lazy. The Mexican peon is known as the best of laborers. He is found working in construction camps as far north as the Canadian border. Wherever you see a man swinging a sledge or a shovel in the hot sun, he is likely to be one of these bronzed, muscular fellows. (para. 2)

Jay Franklin of the *Valley Morning Star* in Harlingen, Texas on September 13, 1942, authored "Mexicans Are Getting Picked? After Years." In the article Franklin, like Turner, pointed a critical finger at those who criticized Mexicans as lazy:

> It is said that once when Il Duce (Musso) asked a Fascist crowd, "Which do we Italians want guns or butter?" - there was an answering roars of "butter!" The Mexicans have never been given their choice until the last few years. The decision always lay in the hands of their lords and masters, who were the original get-rich quick artists of the New Worlds. These masters have always called the Mexicans "lazy" and have compared

> Mexico to "a beggar sitting on a treasure chest," But have not explained that their idea was to have the "beggar" work like mad to enrich them. (para 1-2)

Franklin explained that Mexican laborers are anything but lazy, and instead argues that there are specific conditions that have positioned Mexicans at a disadvantage. Despite his lack of recognition of the role of the United States role in these conditions, Franklin gave context to the conditions of México.

On December 13, 1951, Kenneth Knowlien wrote "A Summer With The Friends In México" for the *Springville Journal* of Springville, New York. In this piece Knowlien recounted his time in México. His article denounced the stereotype of Mexicans as lazy, and in doing so allows us to see that this was obviously a pervasive ideology of the time:

> It is too easy for people in this country to adopt some simple stereotypes into which all the people of Mexico are automatically classified. It is too common for those of us who have never met the Mexican people to assume that the Mexicans are in general lazy, shiftless, perhaps untrustworthy people. Of course, this same sort of generalization works in reverse: the average Mexican may think of the American as a wealthy tourist who passes through his country in a flourish, spending limitless amounts of money, and showing the most indigent sort of disrespect for him as a person. […] The impressions of the Mexican people, which we have brought back with us, cannot be evaluated concisely. We can, however, denounce such generalization as those which say that all Mexicans are lazy. Consider the farmers of our small community, for example. Many times these poor men were working in their corn fields and plots of beans before our morning camp chores were done. They worked with primitive tools, perhaps using no more than a hoe, and yet working almost the whole day hilling corn. […] No, these farmers do not accomplish

> much by our standards of tractors, corn pickers, and wide expanses of fertile land, but our sympathy is with them. They are not lazy.

Knowlien acknowledged that Mexican farmers are not as productive as their American counterparts, but instead of leaving this statement there, Knowlien accounted for the context of the situation that made this situation a fact of life for Mexican farmers. Knowlien explained that the lack of technological advancements prohibited Mexican farmers from producing as much, but this does not in any way mean that they are lazy.

Even as recent as 1969, there were attempts to break down the stereotype that Mexicans were lazy. The article, "Pupils Learning More about Mexican Customs" appeared in *The Cumberland News* of Cumberland, Maryland on March 15, 1969. In it, the unnamed reporter recounts of an assistant professor at Allegany Community College, Harry Miele, teaching sixth graders at the West Side School about México. According to the unnamed reporter, Mr. Miele stressed becoming acquainted with the people of México:

> Many Americans do not understand the Mexicans. Many consider Mexicans lazy because of their customs of an afternoon siesta. But be cautioned that the oppressive heat there makes it necessary for a quiet period. Because of poverty, many Mexicans are poorly educated. Many who can not [*sic*] read nor write are excellent craftsmen whom make pottery and baskets of high quality. "Know the Mexicans so you can get along nicely with them whenever you have the opportunity to visit" [direct quote from Miele].

From these articles it is clear that within the United States, beginning as early at 1847 there was an overwhelming sentiment that Mexicans were lazy. Further, this sentiment gained enough momentum that there became a need to speak against it.

In spite of the counter stories to the idea of Mexicans as lazy, the ideology stuck. In Salas

and Abarca (2015), we attribute this ideology's pervasiveness to what historian David J. Weber (1989) calls the "Black Legend" (p. 210). According to Weber (1988)

> a belief in the Black Legend, combined with a belief in the inferiority of mixed-bloods enabled Anglo Americans to predict erroneously what Mexicans would be like (that is to construct a stereotype) even before coming into significant contact with them. […] Anglo-American stereotypes of Mexicans, then, did not originate in the border region. […] There can be little doubt, however, that the growing number of travels, merchants, trappers, and settlers who entered northernmost Mexico after 1821 nourished the stereotype and through writing and conversation, encouraged its growth throughout the United States. (p. 300)

Previously held ideas about Spaniards transferred to the people of México and influenced that way they would be viewed.

Weber's (1988) of Black Legend contributing to the perception of Mexicans, is also supported by historians Behnkin & Smithers (2015):

> At the time of the Mexican American War (1846-1848), a flurry of novels tapped into popular prejudices and contributed to the solidification of negative images of Mexican people […] George Lippard's 1847 pulp novel *Legends of Mexico* drew inspiration from anti-Mexican sentiments in the United States. […] The result was a jingoistic novel that echoed the nationalist fervor for the United States manifest destiny, and in which Mexicans existed for two reasons: first, as the enemy of U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere, and second to represent a disappearing breed of mongrel savages. Lippard elaborated on these points, writing that 'as the Aztec people, crumbled before the

> Spaniard, so will the mongrel race, mouldfed [*sic*] of Indian and Spanish blood, melt into, and be riled by, the Iron Race of the North…" (p. 14)

The ideology of Mexicans as inferior and lazy was simply too great to be overcome with a few counter stories. I argue that this ideology in combination with a visual depiction of the sleeping Mexican man allowed the ideology to persist and spread far beyond the border region of the United States and México.

The Sleeping Mexican Man: A Visual

Archival research has led me to two conclusions: 1) The image of the sleeping Mexican began as a representation of everyday life in México; 2) The image was taken out of its historical social and economic context and has become a marker for Mexican culture. Through the early technology of photographs, individuals could be depicted absent their historical social and economic condition.

Travel photography captured representations of everyday life in México during the late 1800's and early 1900's, as demonstrated in Figure 4:1 <Figure 4.1: A Peon and His Wife>. In a personal correspondence with Maribel Álvarez (2000), acclaimed art historian Shifra Goldman asserted:

> I know the name of the Mexican artist [Mardonio Magaña] who made the original image, and have information about him, which should be helpful to your research. As you will see in the enclosed materials he did not invent a stereotypical image but an honest rendition of the peasants whose life forms the basis of the sculpture. I would imagine the image was kidnapped at some point and perverted by a North American visitor or tourist or one of the many *curio* shops at the border with México itself.

According to Álvarez (2016) Goldman (2000) is wrong:

> But she is wrong. The sleeping Mexican does not come from this image. By the time Mardonio Magana does this in the [19]'20s we already had evidence of that, and we have it even before that like Jimenez says in the Porfiriato in the late 1800s. She does get it right in this sense that […] it was kidnapped.

I align myself with Álvarez. Magaña did create the well-recognized sculpture of the man [see Figure 4:2 <Figure 4.2: Mardonio Magana: Man Wrapped in a Sarape>], with a *sombrero* on his head and a *zarape* wrapped around him, but this is not the origin of the image. The origin of the image comes from written and verbal depictions of life in México that then were taken up for artistic purposes.

Figure 4.2: Mardonio Magaña, *Man Wrapped in a Serape*

The first artistic representation appears in acclaimed Mexican artist Diego Rivera's *El sueño* (La noche de los pobres) [*The Dream* (The night of the poor)] created in 1928. In 1932 a smaller black and white lithograph was created for Weyhe Gallery in New York City. In the image we see six people huddled together sleeping. On the left top corner of the image is a

depiction of a figure wearing a *sombrero* with a *zarape* wrapped around him. Mardonio Magaña, a student of Diego Rivera, crafted the first sculpture in 1933. In 1948, Diego Rivera exclaimed:

> Desde que empezó, apareció en México el primer escultor, de los tiempos actuales, que estuviera dentro de la línea de la tradición plástica de Anáhuac. De portero pasó a profesor y de profesor al Maestro: porque Mardonio es el único Maestro Escultor realmente mexicano durante el período 1921-1947 del "Renacimiento Mexicano." […]Tallas en piedra y madera; dejó esculpido a su pueblo contemporáneo. El campesino mexicano de estos tiempos permaneceré en la obra de Mardonio. (para 7-8)
>
> [Since it began, the prime! sculptor, of the present times, who preserved the lineage of visual art tradition of the ancestral Valley of Anáhuac (México City). From porter passed to teacher and teacher to Master: because Mardonio is the only really Mexican Sculptor Master during the period 1921-1947 of the "Mexican Renaissance." […] Carvings in stone and wood. He sculpted his contemporary people. The Mexican peasant of these times remains in the work of Mardonio.

Magaña was born in the station of a "peon" but grew to become an artist of his people. It seems fitting that Magaña would be the first to transform the image of everyday life in México into a physical sculpture as he was of the people he depicted. From the 1930s forward there are various artist drawings of the sleeping Mexican. One example is Xavier Cugat's *Too Much Tequila*, date unknown (see Figure 4:3 <Figure 4.3: Xavier Cugat Too Much Tequila>). Additionally, we see some variations of the image in some of the restaurant logos from Chapter 3. As Frank's family restaurant demonstrates, by 1945 there is an image of the sleeping Mexican from a side view with one leg outstretched with a *zarape* wrapped around his shoulders. And later in 1968, as Jaime's family restaurant illustrates, the image has now moved to neon signs.

From the version used in Jaime's restaurant in 1968, I want to move forward 15 years and take us to the 1980s. During the 1980s, the invention of the computer plays an interesting role in the distribution of the image of the sleeping Mexican. Prior to the invention of the computer, the image was hand drawn or reproduced via photography. This type of "production" (Gries, 2015) made it difficult to trace given that the image cannot be searched for electronically. However, in the 1980s, computer-generated image software allowed for the standardization of variations of the sleeping Mexican man, thus allowing us to trace replications of the image more easily.

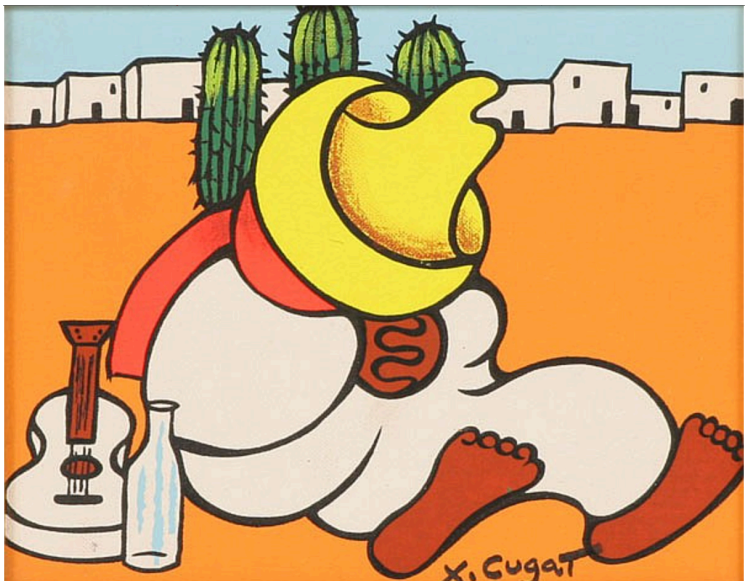

Figure 4.3: Xavier Cugat, *Too Much Tequilla*

COMPUTER-GENERATED SLEEPING MEXICAN.

By the 1980s the image of the sleeping Mexican man had become such an essential element of U.S. cultural logics that during the invention of computer-generated image software the image became a stock photo in the computer programing industry (see Figure 4:4; Figure 4:5; Figure 4.6). While Figure 4:4 has a copyright logo at the bottom dating it to 1990, it appeared as early at 1983 (see Figure 4.7). The original program used to create the image in Figure 4.4 is unknown, but there is a slight variation to it in Figure 4.6 (which I expand on below), and Figure

4.6 is currently owned by Getty images, a U.S. based stock photo agency. However, in 1990 Clip Art published a software promotional booklet, and in this booklet we can see the original typeset of the image in Figure 4.5 that is later seen as promotional material for a mattress company (see Figure 4.8). Lastly, Figure 4.9 shows another variation to the image of the sleeping Mexican man. In this image we see the sleeping Mexican from the side and he has one leg extended and the other one bent at the knee. For the next few pages I concentrate on the transformation and distribution of these four images. To begin, I introduce you to "RetroClipArt" the original copyright holder of Figure 4.9 and their parent company, CSA Images.

RetroClipArt is a sub-collection of CSA Images. According to their website, CSA Image Collection is

> considered one of the world's leading modern design resources for the creation and preservation of print and pop culture. CSA Images capture the authenticity and detail of hand-drawn illustration, and digitally preserve the legacy and artifacts of ink printed on paper. CSA Images contain tens of thousands of illustrations and design elements, including icons, ornaments, patterns, borders, and illustrated words, all searchable by keyword.

CSA Images houses hundreds of thousands of images that were either once Clip Art or cartoon drawings. They have said that they spent a staggering amount of time curating their collection

> searching through every conceivable type of historic printed material to find the small percentage of images out of millions that are aesthetically interesting enough to be considered for inclusion in the collection. These images are then simplified and made more graphic for impact, and in some cases redrawn or combined with other elements to change the context and convey new ideas.

CSA Images and Getty Images, mentioned above, are what I have come to call a visual culture curator. Because of the large collection of images they have generated as well as their deliberate effort to keep some images alive versus others that they have chosen to discard, they have positioned themselves as an entity that contributes to the visual cultural logic of U.S. and international audiences. It is from these sources that the images we associate with certain objects, people, and places have found their home and launching point for reproducibility.

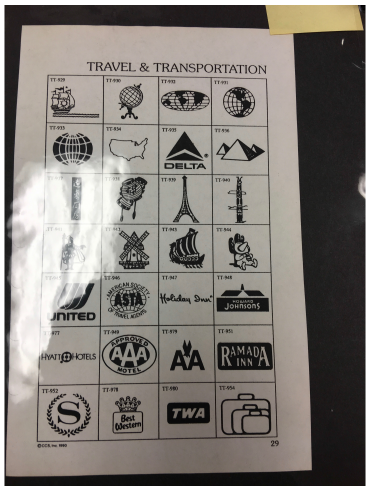

Figure 4.4: Sleeping Mexican Man with His Arms Folded

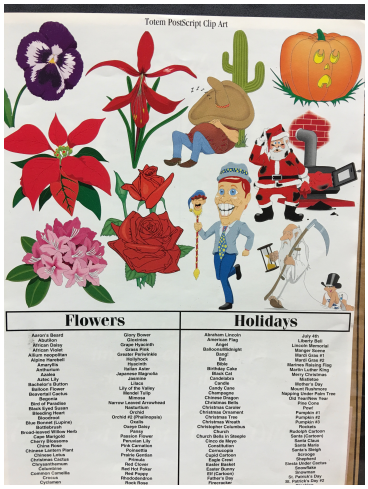

Figure 4.5: Sleeping Mexican Man with a Big Belly

Figure 4.6: Sleeping Mexican Man in Color, Getty Images

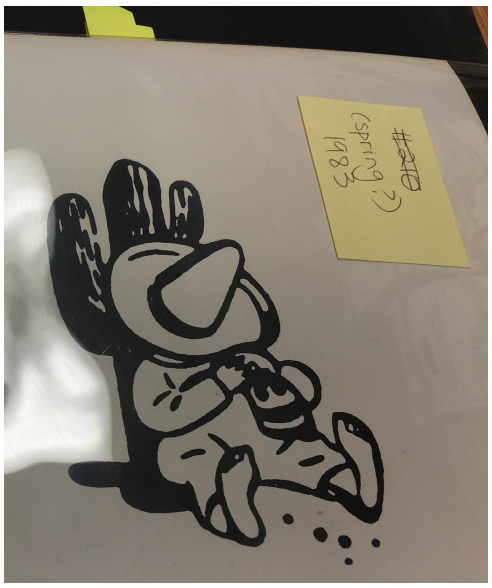

Figure 4.7: Sleeping Mexican Man 1983?

Figure 4.8: Big Belly Clip Art in Print

Figure 4.9: Clip Art Sleeping Mexican Man, One Leg Bent

As I will show these three images (Figure 4.6; Figure 4.7; Figure 4.9) are used for a number of different purposes and in a number of different genres. They appear as the logo of motels, mattress stores, restaurants, food products, and *curio* [figurine] shops on the U.S.-México border. They appear on business cards, food product packaging, matchbooks, advertisements,

and menus. While I only present a limited view of the remix and distribution of each image, what I want to emphasize is the potential for wide-scale distribution that was afforded because of computer-generated software. I provide Google map images to demonstrate the far reaching potential these images had, and while I only showcase a few products, I hope it is clear that these images had the potential to be paired with a number of different products and genres in a variety of places.

I have created four different collections that stem from three of the images mentioned above. Collection One, is the black and white image of the sleeping Mexican man with his arms folded Figure 4.7. Collection Two, is the colored image of the sleeping Mexican man with his arms folded Figure 4.6. Collection Three, is the Clip Art image of the sleeping Mexican man with one leg bent Figure 4.9. Lastly, Collection Four is the non-clip art version of the Mexican man with his leg bent, Figure 4.10. Below I use Gries' lenses from the fourth phase of iconographic tracking to walk you through each of the collections' compositions, transformations, and distribution.

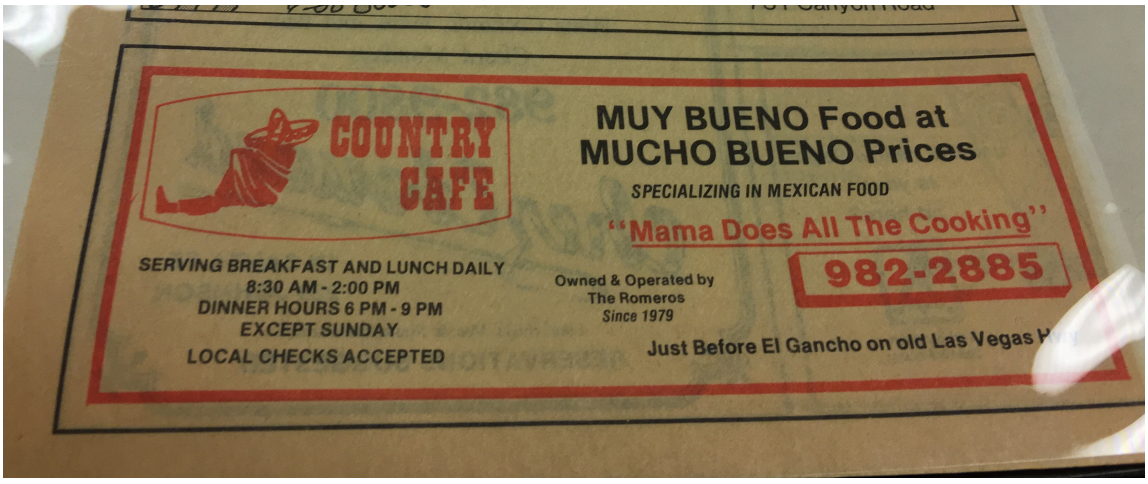

Figure 4.10: Sleeping Mexican Man, One Leg Bent Variation

Collection One

I would like to point out a few features of Figure 4.7. First, I want to draw your attention to the saguaro cactus that the man is leaning against. The height of each arm of the cactus is fairly close. While the arm to the left drops a little lower the center and right arm are fairly close in height. Next, I would like to point out the folds in the man's arm. You can see three lines that indicate that the arm is bent. Following this, I want to draw your attention to the man's feet. His feet are bare and he neither has sandals nor shoes on. This is an important distinction to make as other renditions of this image, not included in this chapter, depict the man with shoes. Lastly, I ask you to turn your attention to the five dots just below the character's feet. Looking at Figure 4.11 – 4.18, we can see that the image is exactly the same but replicated in different contexts for different uses. While there are few minor design changes, Figure 4.11 adds a donkey to the image, and Figure 4.13 and Figure 4.17 include the dots while the others do not, in each of the Figures 4.11 - 4.18 the characteristics of the man are the same.

Here the image has been reused to be the logo on the business card of one Mexican food restaurant in Tucson, Arizona, the logo in a white pages advertisement for a hotel in Tombstone, Arizona, the border decoration for El Sombrero Restaurant in Las Cruces, New México, the carton logo for a salsa company based out of Anaheim, California, the box logo for a pre-made taco shell company based out of Santa Fe, New México, an image on an advertisement of a "Mexican arts" store in Phoenix, Arizona, the logo for a bar in Tucson, Arizona, and the menu logo for a restaurant in El Paso, Texas. Again, these images were gathered from the Southwest Center's Sleeping Mexican Lab. Figure 4.19 illustrates that while this is a small sample size the image traveled a great distance as it was incorporated into these company designs.

Figure 4.11: Margaret's Authentic Mexican Food

Figure 4.12: Hacienda Huahuca Motel

Figure 4.13: Sombrero Mexican Food Menu

Figure 4.14: Rojo's Salsa

Figure 4.15: Josie's Best Taco Shells

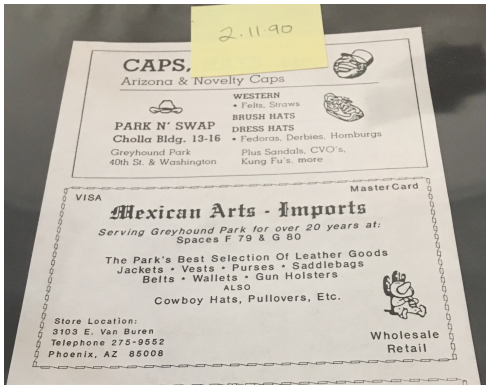

Figure 4.16: Mexican Arts Imports

Figure 4.17: Lazy K Bar Ranch

Figure 4.18: L&J Cafe Menu

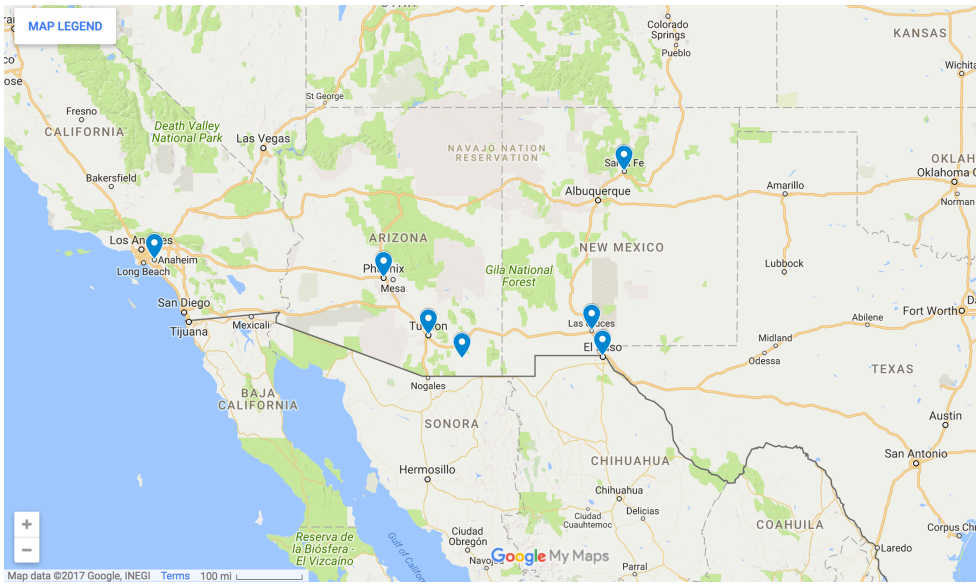

Figure 4.19: Distribution Map Collection One

Collection Two

The differences between Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7 are minor, but still significant. Beginning at the top, Figure 4.6 has a much greater difference in height between the three arms of the cactus. The arm to the left is drastically lower than the other three and the one to the right is much lower than the center. Additionally, the center arm is much taller in Figure 4.6 than in Figure 4.7. Moving down there is more detail on the *sombrero* with the placement of the dots. Still even further down, the three lines on the arm are thicker and in slightly different places. The same can be said of the lines marking the creases in the pants. They are very similar but slightly different. Lastly, in this image there are a total of six dots as opposed to five. There are now two to the left of the man and four between his feet. The dots also appear slightly different, they are more linear than circular. Looking at Figure 4.20 – Figure 4.24, the placement of the linear dots helps solidify the origin of the image throughout the five uses. It is unclear when this image originated or what original computer program it belonged to, as stated earlier it currently belongs to Getty Images. However, Figure 4.23 has the sticky note that marks this image as being from

either 1978 or 1979. While that date may be too early, it cannot be said with certainty when the image originated.

This particular image in this collection is placed on two business cards for "Mexican arts" both in Nogales, Sonora, México. Just in Collections One and Two, we have come across three cards with the similar image for this type of shop, which generally attracts of number of tourists to the U.S. México border. This image has also been placed with a hotel and a Mexican food restaurant in Tucson, Arizona. Remarkably, the image has also found itself on a matchbox for a Mexican restaurant in New York City, New York. Figure 4.25 demonstrates that the image is mostly isolated to the Tucson, Arizona, Nogales, Sonora area but the image also being found in New York drastically demonstrates the limitations of this collection. If the image was able to find its way in New York, however, the image most likely was used in a number of different contexts not revealed by the collection in the Sleeping Mexican Lab.

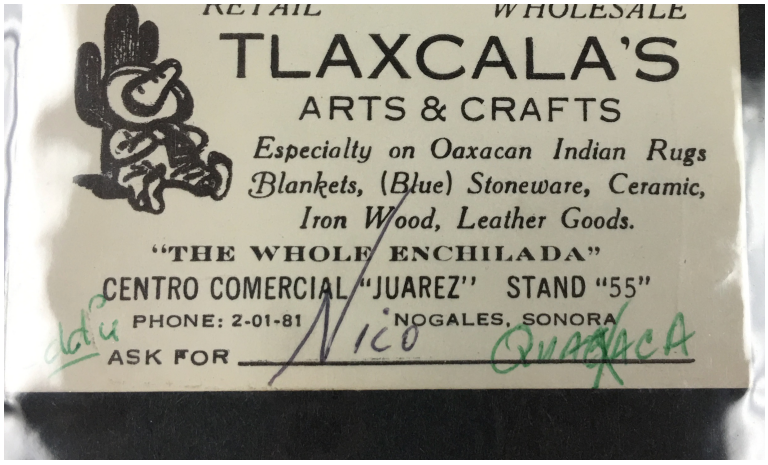

Figure 4.20: Tlaxcala's

Figure 4.21: El Taquito Mexican Restaurant

Figure 4.22: Good Times Authentic Mexican Food

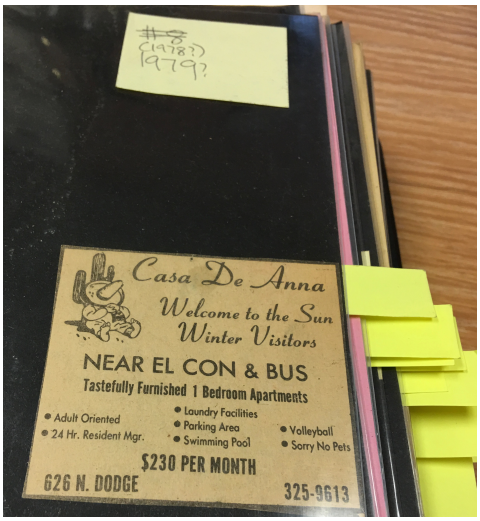

Figure 4.23: Casa de Ana

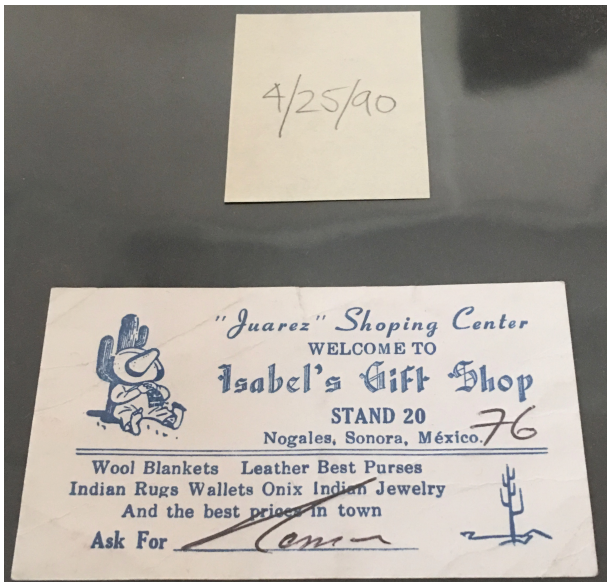

Figure 4.24: Isabel's Gift Shop

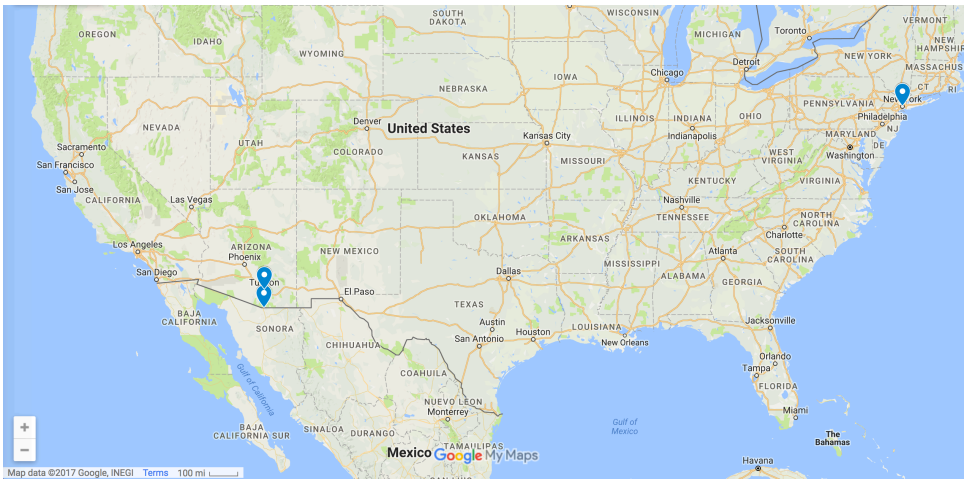

Figure 4.25: Distribution Map Collection Two

Collection Three

This collection shows an entirely different representation of the sleeping Mexican man, but yet it still originates from computer-generated software, Clip Art. Figure 4.9 is distinct in that it is side view of a man sitting on the ground with one knee bent. This image is a bit more distant than that of 4.6 and 4.7 The image presents the man in a view as if the viewer is simply walking by him. The jagged edges of the cactus help to distinguish it from other images that present the same view.

The two images in this collection, Figure 4.26 and Figure 4.27 illustrate that this image was used as the logo of a motel as well as food product packing logos. It was surprising to note the date for Figure 4.26. The date shows July 22, 1978, and Clip Art was not created until 1983. This leaves two possibilities to be explored at a later date: 1) The labeling is incorrect and the image was used in the early part of the 1980s; 2) An early software used the image and was eventually acquired by Clip Art. It is not possible to answer this question at this time, but it presents places for further inquiry. What was most striking about these two images, as demonstrated in Figure 4.28 is that while there are only two accounts of this image here on is in

Tucson, Arizona, and the other is in Paducah, Kentucky. Again, this simply demonstrates that while we only see a limited number of representations in this collection the image was able to move a great distance.

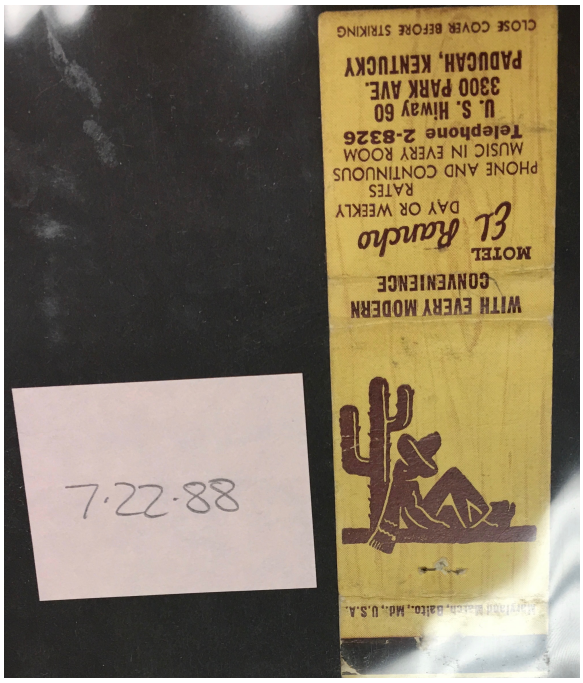

Figure 4.26: Motel El Rancho

Figure 4.27: La Tortilla

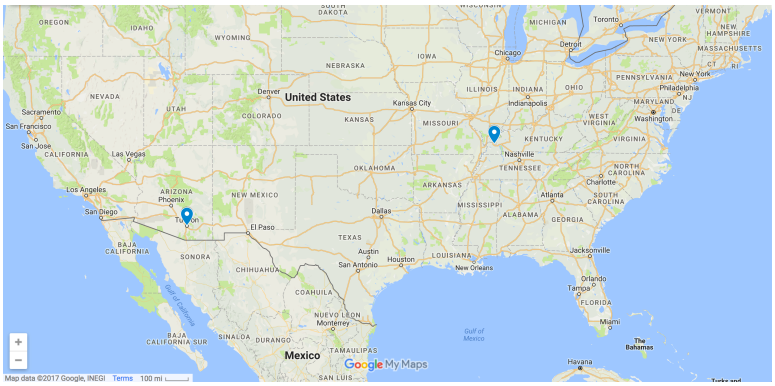

Figure 4.28: Distribution Map Collection Three

Collection Four

Much like Figure 4.9, Figure 4.10, Figure 4. 29 and Figure 4.30 present the side view of the image of the sleeping Mexican man. However, these images are distinctly different from Figure 4. 9, Figure 4.25, and Figure 4.26, due to the lines of the saguaro cactus being smooth as opposed to jagged and the type of *zarape* used. While Figure 4.30 is slightly altered with the inclusion of the saguaro cactus, the three images in this collection display identical features. The man sitting on the ground has one leg extended, but he has a *zarape* that is covering him in the same pattern in all three representations. Additionally, in Figure 4.10 and Figure 4.29, the pant leg on the extended leg is in the same spot. The image in 4.30 is very small and so it appears as though the ink has blotted, but the pant leg would also be in the same spot. The image in this collection has a small distribution pattern and is paired with two Mexican food restaurants, in El Paso and Santa Fe, and a hotel in Tucson.

Figure 4.29: Leo's Mexican Food

Figure 4.30: La Siesta Motel

Iconographic Tracking and Global Movement

Now, how are the categories of these images related to visual rhetorical analysis? Conducting an adapted iconographic trace of the image of the sleeping Mexican man by moving backward and looking at newspaper clippings we can see where, when, and what the historical circumstances were that influenced the perception of Mexican men to be seen as lazy. By doing this trace we see where this ideology moved from verbal and written accounts and began manifesting themselves in visual representations. It is through this trace that we can demonstrate how the sentiment expressed in the travel narratives in 1847, when the U.S. soldier wrote home

that Mexicans in Veracruz were "lazy," became so pervasive that in a the age of computer-generated image software program, the sleeping Mexican warranted a spot in the collection. And how even now, 34 years after the initial representation in the computer generated programming, the image is still alive, continuously given life by what I have called the visual cultural curator. This analysis is valuable because it pushes us to move past analyzing the image in the moment and instead provides a method to understand how the image came to make sense in the moment.

Additionally, throughout this section I have provided a distribution map of these images. While these maps are limited to what was available in the Sleeping Mexican Lab archive, the different uses as well as the different locations of its use is still representative of the ability these four particular images had to travel given the electronic medium of which they were a part. If we think of this in a networked sense, these images had the power to reach millions of people and become a part of their cultural logic as being representative of Mexican culture.

These images are, however, a reduction of a period in time that had a social and historical context. Seeing the image on the box of taco shells eliminates that historical narrative and instead transfixes the image as a marker of Mexican culture. When the consumer encounters this image they do not necessarily think of the time period the social-historical socioeconomic conditions, the pervasive ideology of one group of people that allowed this image to flourish; however, this does not mean that the images are absent the narrative and ideology. The image has become a marker of Mexican culture, but what the image represents is still carried with it. This is a unilateral encounter. It is indeed cyclical. The image is what consumers are accustomed to seeing and so it is kept alive to keep that norm and to not cause dissonance. Keeping it alive, however, allows it to influence new generations and the cycle of associating this image with Mexican people continues.

ICONOGRAPHIC TRACKING AND COMMODIFIED PERCEPTION OF CULTURE

So far in this chapter, I have analyzed the image of the sleeping Mexican man from a historical vantage point, tracing its trajectory from the perspective of Gries' (2015) iconographic tracking concepts of composition, production, transformation and distribution. Gries' (2015) iconographic tracking contributes to the work of Commodified Perception of Culture framework by allows visual rhetoricians a method for tracking the evolution of images and emphasizing the ecology of images. Incorporating iconographic tracking into the theoretical and methodological foundation of CPC, provides the ability to see how an image has come to life and is actualized. The incorporation of iconographic tracking with the image of the sleeping Mexican man across it's different historical context provides us a theoretical and methodological framework that assists us in gaining a better understanding of how the image works in the present. This is an essential component of CPC because it helps answer the question of how certain images came to be so effective in the moment. Knowing how images came to be so effective in the moment provides us with an opportunity to challenges those images, expand our repertoire and eventually contribute new visual representations of certain groups.

What follows is a narrative that describes the evolution process of the CPC framework. I demonstrate how through inductive and deductive analysis with the inclusion of participants' responses in Chapters 2 and 3 and the inclusion of iconographic tracking, I arrived at a CPC framework that better equips visual rhetoricians to analyze images paired with food products. ,

COMMODIFIED PERCEPTION OF CULTURE EVOLUTION: FROM 1.0 TO 2.0

Below, I present an overview of the original Commodified Perception of Culture (CPC) framework, CPC 1.0, as presented in Chapter 1. I then continue on to the inductive and deductive

methods I took to refine this theory. Lastly, I demonstrate how CPC 2.0 evolved based on deductive and inductive research methods.

CPC 1.0 Inception

I conceptualized CPC in the fall of 2012. Sociologist and social anthropologist Erik Cohen's theory of emergent authenticity was the germinal piece that set into motion my formulation of CPC. It provoked the first instance of paying critical attention to ethnic stereotypes associated with food images. Cohen (1988) explained emergent authenticity as follows:

> 'Emergent authenticity' stresses one aspect or refers to one manifestation, of the wider phenomenon of invention of tradition,' … In principle it is possible for any new-fangled gimmick, which at one point appeared to be nothing but a staged 'tourist trap,' to become over time, and under appropriate conditions, widely recognized as an 'authentic' manifestation of local culture. (p. 380)

While emergent authenticity began the conversation, I questioned the situation and condition that led to the "gimmick" arbitrary constructions of cultures and cultural memories to be the ones remembered. I questioned the formation of the "tourist trap" or the "new-fangled gimmick," and questioned how such manifestations were even possible to begin with. In other words I grew curious to the material conditions that would allow emergent authenticity to even be possible. It was because of that dissonance that I ventured down the path of examining conflicting theoretical understandings of authenticity.

In my examination of notions and understandings of authenticity I came across Arjun Appadurai's (1996) concepts of "imagined nostalgia," and "ersatz nostalgia." Appadurai defined "imagined nostalgia" as "[…] nostalgia for things that never were" (p. 76) and ersatz nostalgia as

"[…] the simulacra of periods that constitute the flow of time, conceived as lost absent, or distant" (p. 78). Baudrillard (1981) defined simulation as "no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (p. 2). Baudrillard argued that due to simulation, all that remains is nostalgia, the longing for something that is now gone. Simulacra is the static image that is a result of simulation. The notion that mass marketers could, through their visual representations, teach consumers to miss something they had never experienced and to long for that authentic experience was mind altering. However, after critical thought, I began to see this phenomena play out in daily advertisements. One such advertisement that really drove home this point was Blue Bell ice cream. Its television commercial is worth discussing at length as it touches on a number of the issues addressed by CPC. The imagery of the commercial has a warm glow as the sun is setting off in the distance. Children are running through tall grass and suddenly the narrative says:

> I remember our old country home, clean fresh air and flowers growing in the fields along the path beside our swimming hole. Momma hollering through the screen, "Would you kids like some home made ice cream?" That was a simpler time and place. Blue Bell tastes just like the good 'ol days.

These four simple lines are effective because they situate the consumer in a place and time. Even if the audience member never grew up in a country setting or swam in a swimming hole, the tone of the narrator, the music, lyrics, and most importantly the visual that accompanies this text grounds the viewer in the setting. It seems like a good "simpler time" and so even if we have no association with this setting or experience, we begin to long for this type of joyful warm sentiment. The solution to this, according to Blue Bell, is to eat their ice cream. Eating the ice

cream will fill the void of missing or lacking this experience.

Within these constructions of nostalgia or simulation the common thread is the idea that memories are constructed out of false perceptions of occurrences. When discussing "imagined nostalgia," Appadurai (1996) highlighted the phenomena that mass merchandisers have actually created nostalgias because they do "not principally involve the evocation of a sentiment to which consumers who really have lost something can respond. Rather these forms of mass advertising *teach* consumers to miss things they have never lost" (emphasis mine, 76). The concept that mass merchandisers can "teach" consumers to miss something that they never lost is integral when considering the selling of cultural representations on a national and global scale. This positions images in such a way that they are removed from the real conditions under which that nostalgia was originally created.

At this theoretical juncture, I brought Abarca's concept of "food consciousness" (Abarca, 2007, 2013, 2015) into my analysis. According to Abarca and Pascual Soler (2013), food consciousness "demands an analysis of the material conditions surrounding food production, distribution, and consumption" (p. 5). In a later conception, Abarca expressed that we must be aware that food is "a commodity vested with symbolic and metaphorical substance" (Abarca & Salas, 2015, p. xxx). The theoretical underpinning of food consciousness, looking for an analysis of the material conditions, was applied to the images that are paired with food products in an attempt to engage the material conditions under which these images work and make sense in the moment.

Also, early in my exploration of these ideas I was innately aware that mass communication played a large role in the distribution of images. It is through mass communication and technology that the hyperreal in the form of a memorial nostalgia for

something that never was can now be shared on a global scale. Rhetoricians Kendall Phillips and G. Mitchell Reyes' (2011) notion of global memoryscapes "captures the intersections between memorial practices and global forces" (p. 2). "Global memoryscapes" are "a complex landscape upon which memories and memory practices move, come into contact, are contested by, and contest other forms of remembrance" (Phillips and Reyes, 2011, p. 5). This demonstrates that memories, much like nostalgias, have become socially constructed concepts that have moved beyond local and national boundaries due to electronic forms of communication. (Much like the Clip Arts image's ability to move wide spaces.) It is necessary to keep this in mind as the discussion of the perpetuation of the image of the sleeping Mexican moves from various locations.

Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996) offered a way to identify and analyze the "hyperreal" found in visuals by providing their "grammar of visual design." Kress and van Leeuwen were most concerned with the unspoken but powerful rules of representation within a Western context. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) define "grammar of visual design" as a "general grammar, of contemporary visual design in 'Western' cultures, an account of the explicit and implicit knowledge and practices around a resource, consisting of the elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication" (p. 3). As such, Kress and van Leeuwen looked at images as networked and meaning is made because of our previous interactions with sign systems allows it to be so.

Through my synthesis of these theories and my growing exploration of images, I saw a strong need for an analytical framework of images paired with food products that examined the material conditions through which these images came to be. I knew that without such a framework current levels of analysis were neglecting the historical, cultural, socio-economic

conditions in which the images arose. Beginning in Salas and Abarca (2015) and continuing on into Salas (2017) I presented a commodified perception of culture analysis of images paired with food products (see Figure 2.23). In Salas (2017), I concentrated my analysis on representation of Mexican women with Mexican food products. I examined the history of representations of Mexican women as either the "hot Tamale" (Cofer, 1993) or as the subdued Madonna figure. In Salas (2017) I analyzed one jar of salsa that presented a demure woman in a *rebozo* [scarf] outside a *hacienda*. While the analysis achieved its purpose in identifying which parts of the image appealed to authenticity and nostalgia, and how these had been commodified outside of the historical context of their representation, I felt as though something was missing. I felt the need to test the theory outside of the academy.

While the framework made sense to me, I wanted to see how it would pan out in the spaces where these images function, in the spaces where the images lived, with people that interacted with these images on a regular basis. It was then that I embarked on the journey of constructing a case study that would allow me to test my theory, i.e., to see where CPC would be held true to the various components and where it was lacking.

Deductive and Inductive Analysis

In order to test CPC 1.0 I combined deductive and inductive approaches to research. According to media and cultural studies scholar Deborah Gabriel (2013):

> The main difference between inductive and deductive approaches to research is that whilst a deductive approach is aimed at testing theory, an inductive approach is concerned with the generation of new theory emerging from the data. (para. 1)

Therefore, my preliminary conception of CPC (CPC 1.0) was derived inductively. I placed scholars from visual rhetoric, new materialist approaches to visual rhetoric, cultural rhetoric,

sociology and visual sociology and consumer studies, in conversation and created a new theory that would assist visual rhetoric in analyzing imagery (what I presented above). I then wanted to test the theory I had constructed by including "everyday people" and gathering their responses to these images. The testing of this theory, by engaging participant responses from questions 1.a and 1.b, Chapters 2 and 3 in this dissertation, respectively, was the deductive component of this research – seeing where the theory diverged and converged with the results of what participants had stated in their responses. It was here that I was able to reaffirm that appeals to authenticity and nostalgia were in fact integral to the analysis of how these images work. Specifically the results of the two embedded units of analysis in the case study provided the knowledge of where to look to see how an image was being effective. From participants' responses I learned to look for appeals to authenticity in images of everyday life, through appeals to home/home cooking/grandma, as well through linguistic and visual passcodes, and how these appeals work as to provoke a sense of authenticity but also as forms of real and imagined nostalgia through the form of commodification. The inductive component of this research has now come back into the purview with this chapter as I take participants' responses from Chapters 2 and 3 and synthesize them to revise CPC 1.0 into CPC 2.0.

So far in this chapter, I have analyzed the image of the sleeping Mexican man from a historical vantage point, tracing its trajectory from the perspective of Gries' (2015) iconographic tracking concepts of composition, production, transformation and distribution. What follows then, is a revised CPC framework—CPC 2.0. Of which, the first revision was the inclusion of iconographic tracking in order to understand how certain images work.

CPC 2.0 Evolution

Through participants' responses in the two units of analysis, chapters 2 and 3, I was able to locate nuanced perspectives I had not considered in the first iteration of Commodified Perception of Culture (CPC 1.0); therefore, I was able to evolve it into CPC 2.0 (see Figure 4. 31). In CPC 2.0 you will notice that the skeleton from CPC 1.0 is still intact. CPC 2.0 still accounts for notions of authenticity, nostalgia, and global memoryscapes in order to eventually arrive at Commodified Perception of Culture, but there were some revisions. There is now the inclusion of "images of everyday life," "iconographic tracking," and the entire framework must always consider the "construction and negotiation of meaning."

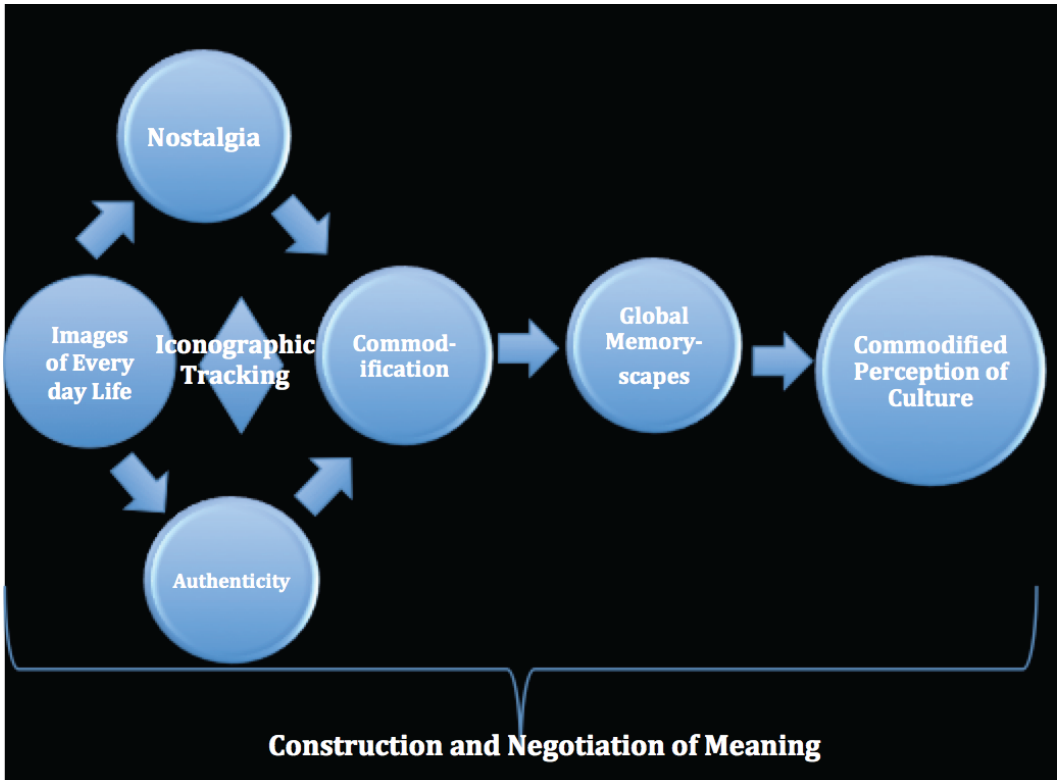

Figure 4.31: Commodified Perception of Culture Evolution

I want to take a moment to explain the far left side of the image and explain the inclusion of the diamond shape with "Iconographic Tracking" at the center. This section of the image is

represents the largest adaptation to the CPC framework because it helps us to see the networked ecology we must untangle when engaging with images. What I now call the networked ecology was originally influenced by Abarca's (2013) "food consciousness," "the material conditions surrounding food production, distribution, and consumption" (p. 5). However, I chose to instead include Gries's (2015) iconographic tracking because it provides the methodology and theoretical framework that asks us to examine the conditions that lead to image production. In order to interrogate and understand how images work, we must track the image. We must look for where the image comes from and situate it within its historical context. While not every image will be able to meet this component, the image may be an abstraction not grounded in any real experience, it is essential to investigate if the image has an origin and uncover the intertextuality of the it. Tracking the movement of "images of everyday life," allows us to see how they move, flow, transform and possibly become commodified. The analysis of the commodification of images may eventually come to include more components, but based on the deductive research with participants, appeals to authenticity and nostalgia were the most prominent in helping to create an image that would work, and therefor they have been included. The diamond shape is meant to represent the networked way of looking at these four components and how iconographic tracking can bring them together as interconnected.

This visual representation should be seen a framework and not as an order of steps since there are multiple entry points into CPC 2.0. However, at the completion of the CPC analysis, all components of the framework should be accounted for. Using this project an example, I began at the end. I saw the image of the sleeping Mexican man used as a logo for food companies and restaurants. Asking how the image got here, was the first mode of inquiry. It was then that I engaged with participants in order to understand what this image means to them, which is where

the issues of nostalgia and authenticity appeared. Being able to conceptualize the progression of the image as being grounded in a very specific socio-historical economic setting came towards the very end of the project.

Like an ecological framework, each of these components is networked and untangling the network may be difficult at times as each component is interrelated but they must be pulled apart in order to glean the larger picture of the images we interact with. While the visual representation of CPC should not be seen as a linear steps, I want to direct your attention to the center line of the image: Images of Everyday Life -> Commodification -> Global Memoryscapes all leading to CPC. This sequence of as the center was deliberate. Through this work, I hope I have made it clear that images of everyday have been commodified and distributed on a global scale and this is what leads to a commodified perception of a culture.

Another essential difference in the new iteration of CPC is that CPC 2.0 requires an ecological view. When I had constructed CPC 1.0, I had not yet come into contact with rhetorical ecologies. Latour's (2005) actor-network theory inspired me to account for the movement of the image from rhetor to audience across different spaces, but had not considered the network embed in both the rhetor and the audience, their cultural logics. Therefore the encapsulating bubble of the construction and negotiation of meaning is meant to remind us to always consider the various cultural logics at hand that influence the uptake or rejection of certain components of the analysis, the social semiotic nature of visuals.

This framework asks visual rhetoricians to dissect these components when conducting a visual rhetorical analysis. While each component could be analysis in and of itself, I argue that putting all these conversations together, presents the larger story of why these images are so effective. Looking for moments when images of everyday life, (taken outside of their historical

and social context) are created into markers of nostalgia and authenticity and commodified and distributed on a global scale takes that small moment in a grocery store or when entering a restaurant and complicates it just enough to where we can understand why we are taken in my the imagery and setting created for us.

CONCLUSION

This chapter combined iconographic tracking with historical analysis to demonstrate how the history of the image of the sleeping Mexican man can further complicate why this particular image persists when others do not. This component of the research adds to visual rhetorical analysis of images by understanding that images are networked, not only the sense of intertextuality, but that they have a history that can help us better understand them when we come into contact with them in the present moment. Through the incorporation of participants' responses from the two embedded units of analysis in my single case study as well as the incorporation of iconographic tracking, I also presented the evolution of Commodified Perception of Culture (CPC) 1.0 into CPC 2.0. Through these steps, iconographic tracking, testing consumer interactions with, and explanations of use, that we as visual rhetoricians are better prepared to engage with the visuals we encounter, to acknowledge how they have become persuasive in the moment of interaction. The final chapter concludes the findings of this study as well as advocates that CPC is a framework that can help visual rhetoricians (scholars, practitioners, and students) examine how food advertisements communicate with their desired customers/audiences.

Chapter Five

FOOD IMAGES AND ETHNIC REPRESENTATIONS: CONCLUSIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF CPC

Throughout the course of this dissertation you have joined me on a journey that has left the academy and ventured into the public spaces where visuals live and work. We engaged with everyday people, consumers and users of images as well as business owners from the City of El Paso, Texas, to better understand the influence these images, specifically ethnic stereotypes, have when paired with food products. Additionally, you have come back into the academy with me as I placed the voices of the everyday people in conversation with theoretical frameworks to provide us, visual rhetoricians, a way to better engage with images paired with food products. As I hope I have made clear, the images paired with food products play an essential role in the production and consumption of culture. The images we come in contact with continuously add to our visual repertoire and allow us to make sense of future interactions. Therefore, we should slow down moments of the "everyday" and understand how images, especially those related to foods, assist us in creating an image of the group it represents. This work highlights the small moments that do not individually account for constructions of cultures but collectively and over time lead toward a macro understanding of certain groups and cultures. It calls attention to how the product packaging and logos used to demonstrate that these interactions, no matter how small, continue to contribute to a collective understanding of the people of the food.

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

The first part of this dissertation presented an exploratory case study with two embedded units of analysis. The exploratory case study looked to develop the necessary definitions, frameworks, and hypotheses for the subsequent" (Streb, 2012, p. 372) theory building on the use of images paired with food products. This case study did this by 1) by seeing what images

consumers paired with food products; and 2) engaging business owners to understand how they perceive their use of images paired with food products. In the second part of the dissertation I placed these results in conversation to create a framework for visual rhetoricians to examine images paired with food products.

Throughout this work I have sought to answer two main questions:

RQ 1. What networked, rhetorical influence do cultural stereotypes have on consumers? How does pairing a food with a commodified perception of an ethnic group affect the group's cultural capital?

a. What images do consumers associate with Mexican food products and restaurants and why?
b. How do business owners perceive their use of Mexican images and symbols when paired with Mexican foodstuffs?

RQ 2. What frameworks for critical inquiry of advertisements exist within rhetoric and writing studies? How can a commodified perception of culture framework contribute to a critical inquiry by academics and consumers alike?

In regard to Research Question 1, sub research questions 1 a. and then 1 b. will be discussed first. From this, a holistic response will be provided to RQ 1 overall.

RQ 1a: Consumers

Within the focus groups, participants overwhelmingly portrayed images they perceived would communicate a sense of authenticity. More specifically, this sense of authenticity for Mexican food was communicated by appealing to consumers' sense of nostalgia and portraying images of women, the home, and active acts of cooking. Depicting linguistic and visual passcodes, such as the *trompo* or a *molcajete*, also portrayed this sense of authenticity.

Additionally, they portrayed images that they believed provided an experience of Mexico. This came to mean a mix of actual representations of places and things of Mexico, The Sun Pyramid of Teotihuacán, but also more stereotypical representations of margaritas, *sombrero*s, and folklorico dancers. Even though participants were tasked with creating logos that would appeal to them, many had an outside audience in mind. Images of home were used more when the participants followed the instructions and created a logo they would be drawn to, and stereotypes were brought in when it was for an audience outside themselves. This unit of analysis reaffirmed that appeal to authenticity and nostalgia were areas that we as visual rhetoricians needed to further explore in order to be able to fully understand how certain images stick as being representative of certain groups.

RQ 1b: Business Owners

Business owners use images to communicate a sense of their establishment to their customers. Through their visual representations, they attempt to indicate that their place of business is in fact a Mexican restaurant. The continued use of the sleeping Mexican man as well as the *sombrero* and *zarape* demonstrated that business owners operate within a limited sign system that constrains how they can communicate their identity and their restaurant's brand to others i.e. using stereotypes. However, some business owners take the risk of expanding the sign system and are successful when using visual passcodes that they perceive will ground consumers in a sense of place that the restaurant tries to present. Slowing down and dissecting the small moment of a restaurant logo as a moment of interaction that places the user and the audience members' cultural logic in conversation demonstrates a moment where we as visual rhetoricians can begin to untangle why certain images persist.

RQ 1 Overall: Networked Rhetorical Influence of Cultural Stereotypes

At the outset of this portion of the study I set out to test how images paired with food products influenced consumers**.** While it was difficult to discern what influence these images have, it is with certainty that they do have an influence. Consumers operate within a sign system that dictates what images are used to demarcate Mexican. This is demonstrated by the simple fact that certain images replicated themselves in the participants' drawings and business logos. For example, if the image of the *sombrero* and margarita had not been previously instilled as a marker of Mexican culture and consequentially Mexican food, it would not have appeared in the drawings. While it is still not clear how consumers are influenced, it is clear that images that appeal to a sense of nostalgia and authenticity play a large part in whether or not the image is considered effective.

When utilizing a commodified perception of an ethnic group, the culture's capital is limited to a single story. Restaurants contribute to a system that visually represents Mexican culture to a variety of audiences and therefore their logos become a part of the images associated with this culture. Even if there is no mal intent in the use of stereotypical images, by their very use, they continue to add and reinforce previous cultural logics and limit the available sign system to represent Mexican culture.

These two embedded units of analysis within this single exploratory case study allowed me to understand where to look to begin untangling why certain images persist as representation of Mexican culture. From participants' responses I was able to affirm that by analyzing images of everyday life, appeals to authenticity through visual and linguistic passcodes, as well as depictions of nostalgia, visual rhetoricians have entry points to begin untangling why and how certain images persist and stick as representations of Mexican culture.

RQ 2: Iconographic Tracking and CPC

Laurie Gries' (2015) iconographic tracking is the most comprehensive framework for critical inquiry of advertisements that I am aware of. A commodified perception of culture framework contributes to the work of Laurie Gries by emphasizing the ecology of images. This is done by bringing critical awareness of the life images, not focusing on the end product but on the journey that the image has taken to get to where it is and how it is portrayed now. Overall, a commodified perception of culture framework pushes visual rhetoric to interrogate how the image came to have the life that it does now. This type of framework is useful when paired with ethnic stereotypes. By understanding where the images have come from we can begin to have more diverse representations of the group. Certain minority groups, such as Mexicans and Mexican Americans as well as African Americans and Asians, have for long period of time been represented by a limited number of images.

Commodified Perception of Culture is a framework that provides visual rhetoricians with a guide on how to untangle the images of these groups by looking for how representations of everyday life become commodified and then distributed on a global scale. By incorporating iconographic tracking into the theoretical and methodological foundation of CPC, the ability to see how an image has come to life is actualized. The incorporation of iconographic tracking allows visual rhetoricians a method for tracking the evolution of images. This is an essential component of CPC because it helps answer the question of how certain images came to be so effective in the moment. Knowing how images came to be so effective in the moment provides us with an opportunity to challenges those images, expand our repertoire and eventually contribute new visual representations of certain groups. A CPC framework has the potential to expand the images we used to represent people so that we can begin to expand how those

individuals are viewed in the world.

IN SUMMARY

This dissertation was an exploratory case study with two embedded units of analysis. The purpose of this dissertation was to test the preliminary theoretical framework of Commodified Perception of Culture, which calls on visual rhetoricians to examine not just how an image is effective in the moment, but to delve into how the image came to be effective. Based on the results of the two units of analysis, Commodified Perception of Culture evolved. Below I walk you through this evolution.

As the focus groups from Chapter 2 progressed and themes started to emerge through constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) it became very apparent that "authenticity" was a massive driving force for the participants. It was clear that visuals that appealed to some form of authenticity were most desirable by the participants of the groups. However, to say that authenticity was the theme that emerged did not uncover the complexity of the results. How participants chose to visually depict authenticity varied, and yet there were similarities. As stated in Chapter 2, one way to appeal to authenticity was to depict "home," "homemade" and "grandma." Additionally, participants utilized what I termed as "linguistic and visual passcodes" to also appeal to this sense of authenticity. Further, "nostalgia" represented through images of everyday life, also represented a major theme: longing for home cooking or grandmother's cooking, were primary driving forces of what types of visuals would best work for these participants.

What I was then able to inductively discern was that this unit of analysis reaffirmed that appeals to authenticity, by looking for those linguistic and visual passcodes, as well as appeals to nostalgia were essential to the CPC framework. This is because by examining these components

in a visual we would be able to understand how an image was "working" i.e., being effective toward achieving an end. However, simply saying that to analyze food images we need to look for moments of authenticity and nostalgia is not sufficient. According to van Leeuwen (2001)

> authenticity cannot be seen as an objective feature of talk […] Authenticity is about validity. […] the question of authenticity is closely related to the question of modality […] modality, in social semiotics, refers to the semiotic resources we use for expressing 'as how true' or 'as how real' a given representation is to be taken. […] To ask, not: "How authentic is this?', but 'Who takes this as authentic and who does not?', and 'On the basis of which visible or audible cues are these judgements [*sic*] made?'" (p. 346).

By focusing on an ecological model that examined authenticity and nostalgia as opposed to rhetorical appeals in a rhetorical situation, we can untangle what about the image is provoking it to resonate as authentic or nostalgic to certain people and why it is not to others. It was then that Jenny Edbauer's concept of rhetorical ecologies began to be applicable to the study.

Edbauer's (2005) concept of rhetorical ecology pushes rhetoricians to complicate the component of the rhetorical situation. According to Edbauer (2005) rhetorical ecologies, "add to the dimensions of history and movements (back) into our visions/versions of rhetoric's public situations" (p. 9). The ecological model of the rhetorical situation provided a way to account for the complexity that occurs when looking for appeals to authenticity as well as nostalgia within visuals. Previous methods of visual rhetorical analysis examine the image in its context, examine the author, the audience and present a hypothesis of the purpose by looking for moments of intertextuality, how it appeals to ethos and pathos and how its design features affect the logos. However, if I limit my purview to looking for appeal to ethos, I can lose out on the intricacies of the image for the audience. By switching my purview from looking at rhetorical elements and

instead looking for appeals to authenticity and nostalgia, the complexities of the image come into full focus.

I ground this in a specific example. I want to bring in Figure 2.2 from Chapter 2.

Figure 2.2: CASERAS

Looking at Figure 2.2 we can see how visuals can help us untangle who the image is authentic for as well what cues are pressed upon to evoke this sentiment in various audiences. Looking at the top of Figure 2.2 we see a woman in a kitchen setting making tortillas. Looking at the bottom of Figure 2.2 we see *papel picado* flags hanging in the background with a woman dressed in a folklorico dress and a *sombrero charro* to the right. In Lucy's explanation, the brand name for both images is Caseras [homemade]. In both representations Lucy was attempting to evoke a sense of authenticity through an appeal of homemade food products. However, how she chose to visually communicate this sense of authenticity and homemade varied depending on her

audience. I will now walk you through how this participant's response helped in the evolution of CPC.

First, Lucy stated she has presented images of everyday life. For the image at the top of Figure 2.2, the image of everyday life is of Lucy's grandmother. For the bottom, it is of a folklorico dancer. Now both images are in fact grounded in actual activities that are a part of Mexican culture. For some people from Mexico as well as people of Mexican descent and people of non-Mexican descent seeing someone making tortillas by hand may be just as rare as seeing a folklorico dancer. Both of these images, while grounded in actual experiences, may be more or less common or foreign than others. Nonetheless, Lucy, drawing on her own experiences, has depicted her grandmother in the kitchen as well as folklorico dancer. Next, Lucy's identification of her audience demonstrates an example of the construction and negotiation of the images used. For someone who, like herself, enjoyed homemade tortillas, not tortillas that were manufactured, Lucy asserted that the top image would resonate with their sense of nostalgia and provoke them to try her product. The image at the bottom of Figure 2.2 was meant for those who did not have that experience, but Lucy still attempted to appeal to them by grounding them in familiar images that would resonate a sense of Mexico. Both of these are visual passcodes depending on the cultural logic of the audience member.

When Lucy constructed her images she had a very clear idea of what visual cues would be effective for certain audiences. Her cultural logic, her previous interactions with images, provided her with the knowledge that physically representing a woman in the kitchen making tortillas would appeal to those who had that experience. But for those who did not, the visual stereotypes of Mexican culture, a folklorico dancer, a *sombrero*, and *papel picado* would work equally as well. Lucy's method of drawing on images of everyday, attempting to appeal to a

sense of authenticity and nostalgia through those representations of everyday life, negotiating which images would work with what audience, and then using them to sell a product influenced the revisions of CPC. This is in large part because what I have described to you above was not exclusive to Lucy. Each of the participants demonstrated this same kind of method in creating their logos and therefore a framework that accounts for all these steps was deemed necessary in order to fully understand the complexity of why these images work.

Now, if I was doing an actual CPC analysis of these images, through the process of iconographic tracking, I would investigate the trajectory of representations of women making corn tortillas form grinding *masa* on a *metate* [stoneware grinder]. To demonstrate how we arrive at the image that Lucy has presented us of a woman making tortillas on a stove, we would follow the evolution to what socio-historical conditions changed tortilla production from corn to flour. I would do the same with the image of the folklorico dancer, untangling the tradition of folklorico dancing as well as how this image has become representative of Mexican culture. Additionally, if I had access to Lucy I would ask her to explain her design choices so as to not make assumptions about her use. Without knowing that the top part of Figure 2.2 was Lucy's grandmother I could potentially make some erroneous assumptions of the use of the image. Therefore, if possible I would engage with Lucy as the creator of the image. It would be through these traces that I would hope to uncover how, in the moment of being prompted to create a logo for a tortilla company these images had already become a part of Lucy's cultural logic in way that made their use make sense.

I would then look to see how these images worked as appeals to authenticity and nostalgia. I would also argue that even though Lucy has made a deliberate choice in which images would best appeal to certain audiences, that nostalgias can be real and imagined.

Therefore, even someone who did not have the experience of having fresh homemade tortillas might be drawn to the image at the top of Figure 2.2 because it appeals to a sense of imagined nostalgia. I would also investigate the images from their stages as images of everyday into a commodified symbol that is now distribution on a global market. The value of CPC in this analysis is that it is not simply asking to dissect the rhetorical elements to see if it is effective or not, but instead looking at the interaction as ecology, putting all these voices together, to question who would take this as effective and what has occurred that allows it to be so in the moment.

As a note, this type of analysis of the images was not conducted in Chapter 2 or Chapter 3 because the responses of the focus group were meant to simply inform how the CPC framework could be revised. Now, at the completion of the study, however, I felt it would be beneficial to ground the evolved and finalized (for now) CPC framework in an example of the study. Testing the framework and crystallizing it in Chapter 4 allows others, from researchers to students to advertisers, to use it in their analyses of images, particularly images paired with food.

This dissertation makes two key contributions to current scholarship in rhetoric and writing studies. It presents new ways of examining visuals by combining critical theory and iconographic tracking into CPC and by engaging with individuals not usually considered in the academy. Additionally, this dissertation turns its attention to a space that has not been given much attention in our field, food product packaging. While other disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology have already begun engaging in these spaces, visual rhetoric is missing out on a valuable space that contributes to the construction of a culture. Our attention needs to turn to images paired with foodstuffs because they are the "mundane practices [of the everyday], not one of which is important but each of which, taken together, are the concrete

materials of which we constitute our selves" and others (Dickinson, 2001, p. 23-24). A CPC framework enables a fuller understanding of how influential certain images are in certain contexts as well as the network of images creative agent operates in. This work is important because it provides a way to interrogate the "single stories" that can be created by the visuals paired with food products.

APPLICATIONS: ACADEMIC AND BEYOND

The research presented here is provisional and requires further study (as mentioned above). However, here I propose ways in which practitioners, theorists, and teachers of professional and technical communication might immediately use and apply Commodified Perception of Culture in their writing, study, and teaching. I end with a brief proposal for the use of CPC in advertising and marketing.

CPC as a Pedagogical Framework

CPC is a valuable framework for instructors who teach visual rhetorical analysis. First, the ecological model of CPC shifts our framework for visual analysis. Instead of advocating that students interrogate if the image is effective in the moment, considering the elements of the rhetorical situation, CPC pushes then to interrogate why the material conditions that allows it to be so. Additionally, instructors can push students to interrogate their own cultural logics in their analysis of the image. Calling on them to question their previous interactions with images that help them to make sense of the image in the moment. On a practical scale, students can be tasked with visiting their campus food court and taking note of the various font types and images that are paired with the various restaurants. This activity would ask students to question how these images work to ground the type of food with the visual representations. Additionally, depending on the level of the course, instructors can ask their students to trace the image throughout its

history, where it came from and where it has moved. This would provide the opportunity for students to understand the intertextuality of the image as well as to see its adaptations. This activity in particular can begin to open up students minds into seeing the influence certain representations have can in the creation of certain cultures and groups.

CPC as an Analytical Tool

For scholars who conduct visual rhetorical analysis, CPC provides a framework that can be used as a heuristic roadmap to expand current visual rhetorical analysis. Similar to the teaching application, the ecological foundation of CPC calls on visual rhetoricians to move past analyzing the image in the moment and instead interrogating the material conditions that allow it to be effective or not. Additionally, I hope that the results of this study and the participants' responses of how these images influence them can encourage more of this type of primary research so that the field can continue to amass more data on how the images we examine in the academy work in the places that they live. Overall, slowing down and dissecting the small moment of a restaurant logo as a moment of interaction that places the user and audience members' cultural logic in conversation demonstrates a moment where we as visual rhetoricians can begin to untangle why certain images persist.

CPC in Advertising and Marketing

While CPC is a valuable framework for students and researchers, CPC is also a valuable framework for advertisers and marketers. It is my hope that CPC can influence advertisers and marketers in two key ways. First, through iconographic tracking and historical analysis this work communicates the danger in isolating whole groups to visual representations taken out of their historical and social context. Advertisers and marketers should make themselves aware of the historical and social context of the images they use so they can understand the full weight of the

images they are putting forth. Second, by demonstrating that images that are not stereotypes still work, CPC also presents advertisers and marketers a framework to approach expanding the types of images used to represent various groups. They can begin to brand products more ethically by demonstrating the plurality of the people they choose to represent. Advertisers and marketers have the capability to research wide audiences. If they can understand the weight of the images they use and begin expanding their images, they can use their influence to expand the society's cultural logic and eventually how certain groups are seen.

LIMITATIONS

My research in this case study is limited because of the one research location. While the nonpurposive snowball approach proved to be especially fruitful in recruiting participants for research question 1 a., this recruitment style also had several limitations given the location of my project. Even though I conducted focus groups with fourteen participants and interviewed eight business owners, the location of the study was still limited to one location, El Paso. As explained in Chapter 1, El Paso is a very homogenous community – even with the influence of the military as well as I-10. The demographics of the city were replicated in the study participants, causing a homogenous participant sample.

Additionally, while one-on-one interviews were used within the second unit of analysis proved to be helpful ways of engaging busy restaurant owners, having one-on-one interviews called on participants to respond immediately to something they may not had previously considered. While it may be challenging to have restaurant owners engage in focus groups that ask them to conceptualize a new logo for their restaurant, the discussion from this may solicit responses that allows for a more in depth view of their cultural logic in either the creation or continued use of their images.

Lastly, due to current technological limitations related to the image of the sleeping Mexican, I was unable to amass the large data set of visuals as done by Gries (2015). While what I had access to at the Sleeping Mexican Lab at the Southwest Center proved to provide valuable points of entry to the iconographic tracking of the image, more extensive searching will need to be done to complete the picture begun in this project.

EXTENSION OF RESEARCH

The results of this study have provided useful and interesting results, but, as stated in my limitations, in order to create a fuller picture of the data the case study needs to be conducted in different locations as well as with more diverse populations. This is to test how differences in cultural logics depending on cultural heritage and location influence the outcome of the study. In the next iteration of this data this will continue to be an exploratory case study. Even though I have amassed enough data that provides a solid foundation of the study, it is necessary to continue exploring how a different location as well as a more diverse group will influence the data.

Something to consider is the ethnicity of the group using the image. I have had to ask myself what my subjectivity would be if I conducted this study with business owners and consumers who did not self-identify as Hispanic or Mexican American. Would this have changed how I interpreted their use? Communicating oneself to another using stereotypes to ground their understanding is one thing, but I question if it is it different if the business owners is using a stereotype that they think represents the group to communicate what it is. How is this different how does this get duplicated? This is why the different case studies are essential with more diverse groups so that we can see where this takes this.

Additionally, more archival research sites need to be included in future iterations of this

study. The time period between 1930 and 1960 is very difficult to access. Postcards where a primary genre for visually representing the people of México during this time, and so future expansions of this study will look for more postcard collections to see how the image of the sleeping Mexican man evolved during this time period.

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Appendix

PERMISSIONS

Portions of this dissertation have appeared in previous publications, but all works were used with permissions of previous publishers. Portions of Chapter Two will appear in Chapter Eight: Unlikely Dinner Guests: Inviting "Everyday" People to the Table of Visual Imagery of *Visual* Imagery, *Metadata*, *and Multimodal Literacies Across the Curriculum*, published with IGI Global set for release Fall of 2017. Portions of Chapter 1 and Chapter 4 appear in Chapter Thirteen: The Commodification of Mexican Women on Mexican Food Packaging in *Food, Feminisms and Rhetorics,* published with Southern Illinois University Press, released June 2017. Figure 4.6 has been purchased and licensed for use from Getty Images. Image Number: 165515622. Figure 4.10 has been purchased and licensed for use from 123RF. Image Number: 28345448.

Vita

Consuelo Carr Salas earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in English and American Literature and Master of Arts Degree in English and American Literature from the University of Texas at El Paso in 2009 and 2011, respectively. She is co-editor of *Latin@'s Presence in the Food Industry: Changing How We Think About Food* with Southern Illinois University Press (2015) recipient of the 2017 Gourmand World Cookbook Best in the World Award in the category of Professionals. Her works can also be found in *Food Feminisms and Rhetorics* (2017) and *Visual Imagery, Metadata, and Multimodal Literacies Across the Curriculum* (2017).

Consuelo is the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships. She was the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement in Service, Outstanding Achievement in Research, and Outstanding Achievement in Teaching awards from the Department of English. She also received the Hunter Strauss Fellowship for Dissertation Completion in 2017 and Outstanding Doctoral Student Strauss Research Fellowship from the Department of English in 2014. Consuelo was the first UTEP recipient of the Scholars for the Dream Award from the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

While pursuing her degree, Consuelo presented at numerous national and internal conferences, including the 2016 and 2017 Conference on College Composition and Communication, the 2017 International Writing Research Across Borders Conference and the 2017 International AFHVS/ASFS Conference.

Consuelo worked with the UTEP Rhetoric and Writing Studies undergraduate program for six years. During this time she taught first-year writing and workplace writing. She served as Assistant Director to the University Writing Center from 2016-2017 and Assistant Director to the Rhetoric and Writing Studies program from 2013-2015. She will continue her career as an

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