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Place, Imaginary, Identity: Place Ethnography in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico

Tita Berger

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**PLACE, IMAGINARY, IDENTITY:
PLACE ETHNOGRAPHY IN
TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NEW MEXICO**

by

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B.A., Government, New Mexico State University, 1994

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DISSERTATION

Doctor of Philosophy

American Studies

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

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DEDICATION

For Sherry Fletcher and Annette Rodriguez

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ABSTRACT

“Place for me is the locus of desire,” writes Lucy Lippard in the opening to *Lure of the Local* (1997). This research project is about place. Two distinct sets of scholarship on place emerged in the 1970s and the 1990s. A third wave of place scholarship is evident today. Coming initially from geography and anthropology, the study of place is now ubiquitous across fields—in history, cultural studies, architecture, planning, health sciences, art and other disciplines. Despite the sustained interest in the study of place, one of the hallmarks of place is the ranging and contested contours of what place means. Place is defined, for the purposes of this study, as a describable location characterized by a shifting confluence of historical, material, political, cultural, economic, built, sensed and imagined qualities.

There are three distinct goals in this research project. First, this research project seeks to explore how place has been theorized, imagined, and understood. Second, this research project is an inquiry into how place can be studied. To these ends, I name, define, and refine a method I call place ethnography. Place ethnography is a methodological framework that blends ethnographic and historic research with a range of disciplinary techniques in order to study place. I develop several concepts in this project. These include the idea of a place imaginary, defined as a dominant place perception, the

concept of an historical vacancy, the perception of an emptiness in the historical fabric and settlement of a place or region—a particular kind of place imaginary—and topofabulas, a concept that describes a historically untenable place narratives that are accepted as historical truth and are place defining. The third goal of this research project is to apply place ethnographic methods to a specific place. To these ends, this research project recounts a place ethnographic study of a small town named Truth or Consequences, New Mexico undertaken from July 2012- August 2014.

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Introduction: A Study of Place *in Place*

This was a research project about place. It was partly an inquiry into how place is theorized, imagined, and understood. It was partly an inquiry into how particular places could be studied. To these ends and using an interdisciplinary method I called place ethnography, this research project was a study of a particular place—a small town named Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, population 6,000. The town is halfway between the 270 miles that separate the sprawling urban centers of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the twin border cities of El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico. Truth or Consequences began as a small squatter settlement on the banks of the Rio Grande River at the turn of the 19th Century. In 1905 the United States Government authorized construction of Elephant Butte Dam as part of the Rio Grande Project. Las Palomas Hot Springs, as the town was originally called, developed several miles downstream. Settlers resided on land removed from public entry by the United States Reclamation Service. Elephant Butte Dam was completed in 1916, the same year the town of 100 residents incorporated, and a year before town residents were afforded legal recognition.

The place is best known, by those who know it, for its pop culture inspired name change in 1950 from Hot Springs, N.M., as the result of winning a publicity scheme by the long-running radio quiz show and nascent television show of the same name. The community is known for its hot mineral waters. Its compact downtown historic bathhouse district has a mid-20th Century small town aesthetic. The lively arts and healing arts communities and its creative vernacular architectural renovation and public art are place defining. The town has strong countercultural traditions. The downtown pedestrian

environment dissipates into automobile landscapes with small-scale box and chain retail, and a few local businesses, at the two Interstate 25 exits. The large, man-made Elephant Butte Reservoir and extensive public lands holdings in Sierra County bring people to the region. The newly completed Spaceport America and Ted Turner's two massive eco-tourism and conservation ranches in Sierra County are beginning to contribute to the reputation and character of the town and region. The town is also one of New Mexico's poorest places, in a state that faces chronic poverty.

T or C is something of an enigma in New Mexico. A T-shirt made by one colorful local entrepreneur reads, "Truth or Consequences: We Are All Here Because We Are Not All There"—humor that does a lot to explain the sentiment that is shared by many people outside this place and by more than a few who live there. The idea that the town is an oddity in the state is present in many conversations. The town has a decidedly enigmatic place character. The town is surprisingly representative, however, and reflects a great deal of regional and national history. The turn of the 19th century into the 20th century marked great contests in New Mexico's territorial identity in efforts to achieve statehood. Those years also represented a shift to a new set of ideas about what it meant to be a modern place, graphed onto a very crowded field. Many similar contests about what it means to be a part of the world today reflect many similar themes 100 years later.

The history of the region illuminated persistent and evolving place perceptions in New Mexico and the wider region at the turn of the 19th century. I refer to these patterns of place perception as place imaginaries, a concept developed throughout this work. T or C emerged onto the New Mexico landscape at a pivotal time. It was a new place in a storied landscape. It was an uncommonly particular yet surprisingly illustrative example

of the how place was imagined in the region and by the nation at the 19th century. I did not propose to find the universal in this particular case. Rather, I held the particular case up to scrutiny to better see the details and patterns in how place was imagined, enacted, theorized, and could be studied. The town is a study in contradictions and paradox. I argued that these were defining qualities of the place imaginaries that emerged out of reclamation narratives at the turn of the century and remain persistent place imaginaries in the contemporary moment.

I looked closely at the confluence of historical narratives and contemporary ethnographical and phenomenological accounts. I looked at histories where the tensions, contests, and paradoxes of place were most palpable. I considered how thinking about place as an ephemeral and temporary phenomenon, albeit very persistent, rather than as a fixed and therefore knowable thing shifted the methods and conclusions of place research. I reflected on how these persistent characteristics, patterns, buildings, narrative retelling of historical events, and other features defined the town's place character and shaped personal place identity. I explored how place imaginaries emerged historically and how they persisted. The town's fluid and inscrutable place character made it a strong descriptive case.

Research Goals

Three goals shaped this project. First, the concept of place was given primacy. This was a theoretically and methodologically focused research project as much as it was a consideration of a particular place. I was interested in approaches to the study of place across and between disciplines. I wanted to know what a method that made place its primary focus might look like. I was interested in what the city of T or C and the history of this small region could tell me about place and other theoretical constructs, such as

identity and belonging. How places were imagined and understood from the viewpoint of people who live in them and travel through them were central considerations.

The second goal of this project was an effort to create a different kind of research method about place and to build a different kind of research narrative. I envisioned a framework rooted in dialogue and engaged in interdisciplinary methods, as well as history. One of the goals of this project was the naming, refinement, and grounding of a method I call place ethnography. I employed this methodological framework to consider theoretical ideas about place and attendant ideas about history, settlement, identity, belonging, place making, and other place considerations. I conducted place ethnographic research in T or C from 2012-2014. Disrupting the linear sweep of historical retellings, this text moves between the contemporary moment and the past between chapters and within chapters.

Lastly, I sought to explore how a particular place could illuminate repeated and shared place processes and place imaginaries. In this, I did not propose a big-picture-write-small argument but rather a wealth of illuminating details and patterns in the particular. The particular case has long served the purpose of scholars seeking more universal or culturally transcendent truths. The goal of amassing a wealth of detail did not serve a universal end in this research project. I did, however, make many gestures to the notion that place understandings illuminated a wealth of important considerations of self, location, community, history, and other human expressions. The ways places were being reconfigured and reimagined at the turn of the 19th Century, and the turn of the 20th Century as well, drew me to research in this peculiar yet ordinary place.

Choosing a Research Site

In 2009, I started thinking about doing my dissertation research in Southern New Mexico in a general way after an experience I had as an intern in the New Mexico Office of the State Historian (OSH). At a lecture given by one of the OHS scholars, I asked if Southern New Mexico had any patterns similar to those being described about irrigation in Northern New Mexico. “Southern New Mexico has no history,” this scholar replied. This statement was met with raucous laughter from many audience members, which included two elected officials. The humor was lost on me in my immediate bristling. My sense of place belonging was part of my bristling at the idea that there was no history in the region. Yet I would have been hard pressed to offer many historical narratives, aside from personal narratives, of my own.

It occurred to me, years later, that this comment illustrated one of the most persistent and contradictory ideas of modern places as a category of understanding. The tension between the modern and the traditional is a dominant binary place understanding. Modern places, however defined, are considered historically bereft when set against the places shaped by older traditions. On the one hand is the idea that modern places are the sites of progress. On the other is the idea that traditional places are rooted in ways that modern places cannot be. The pride of history is embraced, even as the blessings of modernity are withheld. Modern places move with time; traditional places are out of time—a paradox of grand proportions. Other contradictions and paradoxes rise to the surface in this place study, shared and repeated patterns of understandings that configure how places are understood. What does it mean to be a place without a history?

There seemed to be a persistent kind of vacancy in New Mexico’s south-central region. This imagined emptiness was present in the absence of historical narratives about

this region within New Mexico history. The absence of reclamation, for example, in the dominant narratives of the advent of New Mexico's turn of the 19th century modernity was puzzling. The railroad and statehood figured centrally in historical retellings. New Mexico's water histories were linked to the northern reaches of the state and traditional *acequia* systems. Northern New Mexico has figured prominently in New Mexico's place imaginaries. These place characterizations were dominated by Spanish colonial and First Nation interests. The other dominant historical place imaginary in New Mexico was a borderlands history. It was a history of a shared population, past, and boundary with Mexico. Deeply tied to reclamation, made visible in the chile, cotton, and onion fields of the Rincon and Mesilla Valleys in the southern part of the state, it remained an imaginary where reclamation was absent. New Mexico's striving to be a modern place at the turn of the 19th century through agriculture is systematically ignored as an integral part of the turn of the 19th century New Mexico modern, overshadowed by older Spanish Colonial histories, Pueblo histories, or border histories.

The perceived emptiness in the historical fabric of a place is a phenomenon I referred to as a historical vacancy. A historical vacancy is a particular kind of place imaginary. The idea that history is absent or negated was present in many conversations. This depiction of vacancy was tied to Apache settlement in the region, as well as the ways that New Mexico place imaginaries were configured during statehood. Historical vacancies were an important part of the place imaginaries of T or C and the small region where it was situated. This small region was simultaneously an exemplifier for the Southwest region, and an obscure place. The town and region were considered peripheral

places that were easily overlooked, but also places that were long considered a crossroads for waves of people and empires in the region.

There was a common disparagement about the town and the people drawn to it. These repeated judgments were countered by the deep and celebratory regard held by others. The contrast was strong and persistent. The town had a long history of being characterized as either being on the verge of greatness and fame or of being on the verge of ruin. Many people expressed both sentiments concurrently. The town had a reputation as a place inhabited predominantly by White people, who are rarely referred to as Anglos, in a state and region otherwise known for its ethnic diversity. Yet the insistence that the town harbors no racism or other isms was almost universally repeated in interviews. There were claims that the town was outside of the mad rush of modernity, often set against a historical pattern of being on the forefront of great technological shifts in national and regional landscapes.

The contradictions that defined T or C were present in inquiries about my dissertation research place site. There was great enthusiasm for my research site choice if the person was a fan of the cool-funky-quirky-affordable-laid-back-spa town. People acted as though I was about to split a geode to expose the sparkling center of what appeared to be an ordinary rock. Other people asked what I could possibly say in a dissertation about this strange white trash-dirty hippie-serial murder-meth town (or some other demeaning variation of this description). It was a strong and repeating contrast. Each had a passionate choir. The former opinions edged out the latter by a wide margin, but the criticizers were loud. Some of the town's most adamant critics lived in the town. A lot of people I talked to thought it was a fine little town and not really that uncommon,

except for the name, of course. The odd name of the town was the most prevalent topic of discussion, no matter the audience.

The 1950 name change reflected a frantic effort to boost tourism in an era when hot mineral water treatment for illness was rapidly receding. After World War II, many Americans turned away from natural and home remedies in favor of health care dominated by new models of science and technology. The flow of populations to the West in search of better health trickled to a virtual standstill by the middle of the 20th Century. Boosters grasped at the opportunity for a national naming ceremony. The second half of the 20th Century found a renamed town whose landscape was marked by episodic revivals that constantly pushed back the sense of declining fortune, as the town was continuously rediscovered as a place waiting to happen and a place waiting to be made. Many residents I talked to during my fieldwork hoped the town could be refashioned at the turn of a new century.

The newest wave of residents was made up of the restless, the ramblers, the artistic, and the fiercely different. They were relocated rural, urban, suburban, and small-town poor, working poor, and middle class. They were the addicted, the ecological refugees, the snowbirds and early retirees. They were physical, metaphysical and spiritual healers, the maimed, the disenfranchised, the mystics, and the small business-of-my-own dreamers. There were artists-in-residence and famous artists as residents. There were the people drawn to the desert, one of the great and persistent place imaginaries of the American Southwest.

There were the locals, born and bred, as varied and storied as anyone, but who seem much more at ease talking about the town as a typical small town in rural America.

There was Ted, of Turner enterprises, and his private conservation and ecotourism land holdings in Sierra County. There was the Spaceport. There was a small population of wealthy people from other places who bought ranches and old adobes in villages. One of my primary research interests was exploring why the town continued to attract people. The town was powerfully defined by its people, and always had been, and I wondered what brought them, what made them stay, and what made them leave.

The importance of technological promise has long served as a narrative foundation of modern place imaginaries. The newest modern has also always displaced the previous modern. This region seems to be simultaneously both ahead of the modern and left behind in personal and historical place narrative. These histories, cyclically repeated, also made this case fascinating. The tension between these gestures to the modern and the idea that the town will never be considered modern was a tension well suited to a discussion of modern place imaginaries, themselves full of contradiction and paradox. One of the defining characteristic of the town was the idea of becoming. The idea of becoming was also a central feature of modern place imaginaries. This modern imaginary was partly a narrative about a rapidly vanishing and often fictionalized past and partly a narrative about a splendid future. Sometimes this idea was founded, in a strange turn, on nostalgia. Becoming, in other words, what you might have been. There was a strong yearning that defined certain parts of the town.

People constantly warned me that people were not what they seemed, while simultaneously reassuring me that the town welcomed people as they were. People were friendly in a small-town and characteristically New Mexico way. The population peaked in the 1950s at just over 7,000 people and has hovered just over 6,000 since. While

several patterns and characteristics were place defining, the idea that the town was on the tenuous brink of greatness did more to capture the spirit of this place than any other narrative. In addition to these other qualities, there was a strong and recent preservation movement that fit well with my academic focus on historic preservation. There were also many strong examples of defining movements of history in the state, region and nation. Yet there was no clear a sense of triumph of any one moment, or any one characterization of what the town was or would be, except this odd reputation for otherness in a state that has always been a little off the map. One of the most intriguing characteristic of T or C seemed to be the difficulty of creating a strong place character in a place that was, paradoxically, so strongly imagined. This is changing.

The future-is-bright crowd had visions of the town becoming a regional healing center, an ecotourism epicenter, a noteworthy arts community, an off-the-grid sustainability center, a global Spaceport destination, a hunting and recreation region, or some combination of these and other hopeful futures. A small but vocal crowd of cynical residents project not-so-hopeful futures that ranged from a slow decline by way of corruption and incompetent leadership and the vagaries of seasonal habitation, to a place for cripples, misfits, and the addicted, as the town's rapid descent as a methamphetamine production center was realized. These convictions and conversations made for a very interesting and illustrative study. These, and many other qualities that will be discussed throughout this work, contributed to this research site as a dynamic location to study how a particular place was constructed, contested, narrated, and imagined, and how places, more generally, could be studied.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 sets out the major theoretical frameworks of this research. I explore theories of place that shape this work, as well as the major scholarly works that served as models to this research. Ideas on place identity and character, belonging, place imaginaries, narrative as well as other ideas are introduced. I include an overview of several place studies that shaped this work in order to create a foundation for the articulation of place ethnography. Chapter 2 explores the interdisciplinary mixed-method approach that I call place ethnography. I discuss the historic and ethnographic foundations of place ethnography as a research framework. In each section I introduce the elements of place ethnography attendant to the methods at hand, and the ways they were engaged on the field. I introduce ideas of phenomenology and explain the form that place ethnography takes in this research project.

Chapter 3 looks to the town's founding moments at the turn of the 19th century and the historical foundations of this project. I argue that understanding place in this region of Southern New Mexico, and the town itself, is impossible without understanding the narratives that emerged from the reclamation movement. It was a crowded field at the turn of the 19th century, populated by railroads and world's fairs, Wild West shows, migration and urbanization, statehood, and a frontier thesis that captured the imagination of the nation. But it was reclamation that rules this region in my study—reclamation created the narratives and imaginaries that are still discernable. Reclamations ties to the town of Truth or Consequences are tenuous, however, despite its origins as a squatter settlement on a reclamation reservation and despite the fact that the town owes its place foothold in its first days to the business the dam brought to the town. This paradox, of having everything and little to do with the town itself, was one paradox of many.

Chapter 4 explores the intersection of place, identity, and history through a phenomenon I call a historical vacancy. After continual questions about the town's origin story that were not satisfied with a squatter or reclamation history, I realized that the Apache history of the region was what a lot of new comers sought—the conquest of the prior occupants. I use two extensive case studies to consider history, veracity, and source. The first is about the Chihende woman Lozen. The Chihende Nde, or Red Paint People, or Warm Springs Apache, were the Apache band who settled Alamosa Canyon in Sierra County, prior to Spanish colonization. They were present at the onset of American colonization. Lozen emerged as a central historical figure in a contemporary promotional place history of the town during my fieldwork. The second case study explores the narrative of hot mineral springs as First Nation sacred places, ruled by systems of peace and neutrality—systems that are recounted by American settlers. This sacred spring's narrative is repeated in promotional literature and histories of hot springs sites across the nation. The local version is referred to as the 'Geronimo Soaked Here' narrative.

Chapter 5 explores four dominant patterns that emerged during two years of fieldwork in T or C. I discuss livelihood, poverty, place celebration, conservation, and historic preservation. Chapter 6 continues these themes, beginning with an exploration of the town's name change in 1950, before looking at individual place identity. This chapter concludes with an examination of the town's character, and the contemporary moment. The contemporary moment finds a reimagining of many histories in various bids to create a stronger sense of place and place character. Coupled with emerging developments, such as Spaceport America, a sustainable-living movement and eco-tourism, the town remains tantalizingly open to place creation in the eyes of many people I interviewed. Even as an

ongoing drought and resulting water crisis took center stage across the United States, the eyes of the town looked beyond, to the cosmos, to space and stars, which is, ironically, where many eyes in the town have been focused for decades.

Chapter 1: Place Ethnography: Theoretical Considerations

*The year's doors open
like those of language
toward the unknown.
Last night you told me:
Tomorrow, we shall have to think up signs,
sketch a landscape,
fabricate a plan
on the double page
of day and paper.
Tomorrow, we shall have to invent,
once more,
the reality of this world.*

Octavio Paz
(1958)

In his poem, “January First,” Octavio Paz deftly captures how place is approached and theorized in this study. The poem is a consideration of the start of the New Year. Paz writes, “The year’s doors open like those of language” (Paz and Bishop 1975, 15). The next day, the pair will have to “think up signs” and “sketch a landscape,” in order, Paz writes, “to invent once more the reality of this world.” Yet he continues to note that time, “with no help from us, had placed in exactly the same order as yesterday, houses in the empty street, snow on the houses,” and “silence on the snow.”

The protagonist’s lover must open her eyes to accept the inventions of herself and the world, Paz writes, then then would “walk among appearances, and bear witness to time and its conjugations.” In just a few verses, Paz speaks to the idea that place is a fluid phenomenon, shifting daily and constantly being remade by its inhabitants. He sets this invention against a time and reality that exist, already invented in houses and streets and snow. The world emerges when people bear witness. Paz does tremendous work without

theoretical bulk and the dense discourses about language that mark some of the best critical scholarship in the study of place. I am not so fortunate in my choice of medium.

This chapter is an exploration of the theories that populate the landscape of this research project. These theories inform the place ethnographic framework I propose in Chapter 2. In some cases, theories are tied directly to my research site or to specific histories I explore in this research project. In other cases, I discuss theories and defer their grounding to a later chapter. I explore several theories in order to develop my own concepts for this research project. I focus on several intellectual works whose influences guided this research and whose theoretical insights and methodological foundation fueled my own. There are instances where I briefly consider particular works because they illuminated important ideas about place. Place is the most powerful way we create the reality of the world. Place is where I begin.

Considering Place

Place is the intersection between the physical world the perceived world. Place is the sum of the persistent but momentary confluence of forces, material and imagined, that create experience. The argument that place is a fluid phenomenon, constantly reconfigured, is a central theoretical foundation in this research project. This emerges from the idea that place gathers people. People, like places, are persistent in their ontological being. Yet people, in feature, characteristic, action, and thought are changing constantly. Places are actively created and re-created by cultural and other processes. Capturing the moments that are considered place defining, the moment where persistent patterns emerge, is a goal of this research.

This project seeks to ground these ranging and complex ideas *on place in place*. In order to study place it is necessary to define it as a bounded location with describable

features. It is also necessary to set out how not only theoretical, but methodological concerns. To this end, the interdisciplinary method of place ethnography is a primary focus of this research project. The collections of material and data that are realized in this methodological exploration will ultimately be the marker of this projects success. This first part of this section begins this study *of* place. This section also explores attendant ideas engaged in this study, including phenomenology, identity, tourism, the idea of a place imaginary and place naming.

1.1 Defining Place

Place, for me, is the locus of desire.
Lucy Lippard (1997)

Definitions of place are varied, ranging, and contestable. This remains a hallmark in the study of place and is one of the few constants. I took my working definition of place from a longer definition crafted by human geographer Edward Relph, who claims place are the “centers of our immediate experiences of the world” (Relph 1976, 141). Place is both an external as well as an internal experience in this definition. Expanding his definition of place in subsequent works, Relph draws from Clifford Geertz’s (1973) famous elaboration of ethnography as thick description. Geertz claims “culture consists of webs of significance woven by human beings, in which we are all suspended” (Geertz 1973, 5). Places, Relph claims “occur where these webs touch the earth and connect people to the world” (Relph 1996, 24).

Relph’s most recent and emphatic place proclamations capture the currents and tone of contemporary place scholarship. Relph writes that place is “not a bit of space, nor another word for landscape or environment, it is not a figment of individual experience, nor a social construct,” but is “instead, the foundation of being both human and non-

human; experience, actions, and life itself begin and end with place” (Relph 2008, 36). Relph’s earliest work on place provided an initial foundation for the theoretical as well as the methodological work in this research project. He begins *Place and Placelessness* (1976) with the claim that place is a “profound and complex aspect of man’s experience of the world” (Relph 1976, 1). He notes a lack of sustained place-specific scholarship, although a footnote directs readers to a phenomenological work by Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia* (1974). This argument about place-specific scholarship was separate from the acknowledgment that there were very well-established traditions of philosophical place contemplation evident across time and cultures.

Relph outlines six major components that emerged from one “brief discussion” of place in the literature (Relph 1976, 1). These components provide a useful heuristic. They are location, especially in relation to other things; ensemble, the joining of nature and culture in unique ways; connection, the joining of unique places to larger frameworks of circulation, interaction, and transfer; localization, but always within a framework of larger areas; emergence or becoming, defined as the continuous historical and cultural change to places; and meaning, the idea that places are characterized by the beliefs of man. Relph sets out three basic place components that frame his theoretical and methodological considerations of place: physical setting; activities; and meanings. Meaning, Relph claims, is the most difficult to grasp, and the component he spends the most time considering in his text.

Relph claims that conceptual confusion stems from the fact that place is not just a formal concept to be defined. Place is an “expression of geographical experience,” rather than merely a thing with physical characteristics (4). I return to these ideas in the

phenomenological section of this chapter. The interchangeability of place, region, area, and location are also confounding issues according to Relph. They remain confounding issues 40 years later. John Agnew (1987) describes place as having three dominant characteristics, somewhat equivalent to Relph's components. Defining place as a combination of elements is common. Agnew's place characteristics are locale, location, and sense of place. Locale is the formal or informal setting in which social relations are constituted. Location is the physical setting where social interactions, which encompass economic, cultural, and political processes, take place. Agnew describes sense of place as the local "structure of feeling" (Agnew 1987, 28).

Place as a subject of sustained and focused study emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Refining and challenging understandings about relationships between place, landscape culture, perception, and experience was at the center of the first wave of place scholarship. Key texts emerged in the fields of anthropology, human geography, philosophy and cultural landscapes studies. Anthropologist Edward T. Hall's *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) is considered the foundational text of place and space studies in anthropology. Philosopher and social theorist Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974/1991) is a philosophical as well as historical examination of place, space and culture. Lefebvre explores struggles over the meaning and lived experience of space set against the cultural enactment of territorial relations. His philosophy reflects a double gesture to phenomenology and ethnographic observation. Other key texts include Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place* (1977), John Brinckerhoff Jackson and Ervin H. Zube's (eds.) *Landscapes: selected writings of J.B. Jackson* (1970), Donald Meinig and John Brinckerhoff Jackson's (eds.) *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (1979), and

Edward Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (1976). (See also: Buttimer 1976, 1983; Seamon 1979; Tuan 1971, 1974, 1979; Harvey 1969, 1973, 1985, 1989; Relph 1981, 1987; Buttimer & Seamon 1980; Seamon & Mugerauer, 1985; Lowenthal 1967, 1985; J.B. Jackson 1980, 1986, 1989)

A second wave of place-centered scholarship emerged in the 1990s. This body of work illustrates continued efforts across disciplines to explore and refine ideas on place. Noting this renewed interest, Yi-Fu Tuan (1992) pens a descriptive and characteristic reaction to place studies in a book review. He writes that “at a time when place seems to have lost much of its uniqueness of character, when being located in a specific part of the earth seems to matter less either sentimentally or in the conduct of economic activity, it is gaining high visibility as a subject of study—and almost as a key to the understanding of the human condition in an extraordinary range of disciplines, which include, besides geography, everything from fine arts and literary theory to sociology and theology” (Tuan 1992, 85). The ideas that the uniqueness of places was threatened and people were increasingly untethered to places were central to arguments in both academic and popular texts. The work of the second wave is diverse, complex and increasingly nuanced both theoretically and methodologically. (See also: Agnew 1987, 1989, 1997; Tuan 1993, 1999; Jackson 1984, 1994, 1994b, 1997; Massey 1994; Low 1999, 2000, 2003; Low and Zuniga 2003; Entrikin 1991; Bachelard 1994; Seaman 1993, 2000; Rodman 1992; Harvey 1990, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2009, 2012; Creswell 2004; Soja 1989, 1996, 2000)

Anthropologist Margret Rodman (1992) notes that the “problem of place arises, paradoxically, because the meaning of place too often seems to go without saying” (Rodman 1992, 640). Understanding that places are “not inert containers” but rather are

“politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions” is critical (640). Place can neither be replaced nor can it be easily grasped. Against arguments that place needs to be clearly defined, Rodman argues that complexity and contest are necessary. Place needs to remain at the center of theoretical and cultural debates. Replacing place with another concept proves as untenable as fixing a definition. Attempts to fix a standard and measurable definition of place, rather than its characteristics shifts attention away from the lived complexity of place and ignores the individual expressions of meaning and understanding.

Nick Entrikin in *The Betweenness of Place* (1992) captures the tension between the intellectual study of place and the lived experience of place at the center of many definitional debates. “Place,” he argues, “is best viewed from points in between,” the “decentered vantage point of the theoretical scientist,” and the “centered viewpoint of the subject” (Entrikin 1992, 5). He claims his theoretical and methodological task is “a better understanding of the narrative-like qualities that give structure to our attempts to capture the particular connections between people and place” (14). Entrikin criticizes the duality frequently expressed in the geographic literature between the real and imagined, the physical and ephemeral, and the internal and the external. The geographer, he argues, must translate the story of places in such a way that the “subjective and objective realities that compose our understanding of place remain interconnected” (58).

Philosopher Edward Casey’s (1993, 1997, 2000, 2002) canonical philosophical texts on the subject hold place as paramount in understanding society, history, and human experience. Casey argues that in the “past three centuries in the West—the period of ‘modernity’—place has come to be not only neglected but actively suppressed,” and

because of the “triumph of the natural and social sciences in this same period, any serious talk of place has been regarded as regressive or trivial” (Casey 1993, xiv). Casey stresses the primacy of place to “accord to [itself] a position of renewed respect by specifying its power to direct and stabilize us, to memorialize and identify us, to tell us who we are and what we are” (Casey, 2002, xv). This is possible, he claims, only through an awareness of “where we are (as well as where we are not),” and so “to be in the world is to *be in place*” (xv).

Philosopher Jeff Malpas (1999, 2003, 2006, 2011, 2012) explores place as a philosophical construct that grounds ontological being into a world often perceived as primarily material. His work extends many of the place conversation that defined continental philosophy, such as dwelling and existence, into the contemporary moment. He discusses the spatial turn in both geography and social theory at the turn of the 20th century. Malpas notes that “ideas of place and locality have become almost commonplace in much contemporary work in social sciences and the humanities” (Malpas 1999, 9). Place scholarship is vigorous across and between disciplines, which is often noted in works where place figures centrally. “Addressed by all of the social and cultural academic fields,” cultural theorist Felipe Gonzales writes in his introduction to *Expressing New Mexico: Nuevomexicano Creativity, Ritual and Memory* (2007), “the concept of place has come to signify the special qualities of any bounded and identifiable human habitat, including imagined ones” (Gonzales 2007, 27).

Common usages of place continue to have a tremendous range, even in a single text. Divergent and convergent epistemological traditions and a multitude of research aims contribute to the robustness of conceptual and philosophical ideas on place. The

lack of conceptual clarity in place is partly a reflection of the proliferation of meanings ascribed to place historically. It also is a reflection of the interdisciplinary work on place. Malpas (1999) takes issue with the idea of place as a mere social construction. While I argue that place is an ephemeral, albeit persistent construction—I do not contend that place is merely a construction. However place may be imagined, and this is a central consideration in this research project, place is a tangible and physical fact of human experience. Even imagined places have tangibility in narrative and naming. Place is difficult to define because it is a category of understanding and of being, a thing that both encompasses and is encompassed in the senses, simultaneously internal and external. Place is too important not to define, seems too broad to set into definition but is also irreplaceable—qualities illustrated in this short review.

I return to the fragment of Relph's early definition of place as the center of our immediate experiences of the world. I began with this partial fragment of a definition for three reasons. First, this definition shifted the vantage point to the individual people who populate places. I sought to name and articulate a method that allowed people in place to consider and define place experience. Understandings that emerged in the field were geographic, temporal, historical, imaged and physical. Second, I wanted to put place at the center of this study; however it was defined. Place should be defined in a way that makes sense of the topic, study, text or project. Third, I wanted to give primacy to the experience of place. Experience were likewise moored in imagination, in material expression, in relationships or feeling, in movement, rootedness, architecture, or any knowledge or understanding. For the purposes of the framework I propose in this study—place ethnography—I did set down a definition of place. Place was defined as a

describable location characterized by a shifting confluence of historical, material, political, cultural, economic, built, sensed and imagined qualities. For the purpose of this study, the place I ought to describe is town of Truth or Consequences and the region where it was located.

1.2 Place and Phenomenology

*Where you come from is gone,
where you thought you were going to was never there,
and where you are is no good unless you can get away from it.
Where is there a place for you to be?
No place...
Nothing outside you can give you any place...
In yourself right now is all the place you've got.*
Flannery O'Connor (1962)

*If I were to tell you where my greatest feeling, my universal feeling,
the bliss of my earthly existence has been,
I would have to confess: It has always, here and there,
been in this kind of in-seeing,
in the indescribably swift, deep, timeless moments
of this divine seeing into the heart of things.*
Rainer Maria Rilke (1987)

Phenomenological study is an interpretive study of human experience that holds place to be neither fully objective nor fully subjective but rather a lived experience.

Phenomenology's earliest articulation came from philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl sought to study the essence of consciousness through the subjective experience of phenomena. These ideas were expanded and radically reworked by the philosopher and well-known Nazi figure, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). *Being and Time* (1927) is considered one of the most influential philosophical texts of the 20th century. Place figures prominently in the fashioning of Heidegger's arguments. "'Place,' places man," he writes, "in such a way that it reveals the external bonds of his existence and at

the same time the depths of his freedom and reality” (Heidegger 1962, 19). ““Place,”” he continues, “is that which is revealed by this revealing relationship of the ontological and political dimensions” (21). Any “adjectival qualification, such as political social, or economic, is the description of only one aspect of his being” (19). Place, in this complex reworking of phenomenological and ontological philosophy is partly a political (or cultural, or economic, or so on) being, partly an ontological existential being, partly a physical world being, but ultimately remains open (20). As such, Heidegger’s work on place remains deeply attractive to scholars.

Following and departing from his mentor Husserl, the Nazi Heidegger conceived of phenomenology as a philosophical initiative that took ordinary experience as its point of departure but which, through extraordinary examination of that experience, sought to reveal the shape and structure of experience. More poetic than Husserl, Heidegger deeply questioned the technological and scientific foundations to the search for truth. His claim that ontological being (and the temporally bound being-in-the-world, or life-world) was the fundamental experience of man powerfully shaped Western continental philosophy. His work has proven amenable to extensive (re)articulation and development. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) broadened phenomenological considerations to include the active role of the body in experience, adding an additional iteration of bodily experience to phenomenological thought as well as the lived experience of being in place.

My study of continental philosophical, especially phenomenology, existentialism, and ontology, founded my initial attraction to phenomenological place study. Philosopher Edward S. Casey (1993, 1997, 2000, 2002) argues that place is a central ontological

structure of the human experience of being-in-the world. We are *in* place as embodied beings. He writes that “place, by virtue of its unencompass-ability by anything other than itself, is at once the limit and the condition of all that exists” (Casey, 1993, 15). Casey states that place “serves as the condition of all existing things,” and “to *be*, is to be *in place*” (16, italics in the original). Casey draws on Merleau-Ponty’s ideas on embodiment, claiming that we are “bound by body to be in place” (104). In a later work, Casey writes that the phenomenal particularization and abstractness of Heidegger’s formal and abstract “being-in-the-world” can be mitigated only by the “concreteness of being-in-place, i.e., being in the place-world itself” (2002, xv). To ground place study in phenomenology rests on the idea that place is an integral lived structure in human experience.

Guided by the works of Ted Relph (1976, 1990, 1992, 1993), Yi-Fu Tuan (1974, 1977), Anne Buttner (1976), and David Seamon (1979, 1992, 1993, 2000), I see phenomenology as a bridge between place philosophies, theories on place, the study of culture, and the built environment. The human experience of place is been the focus of a great deal of study and reflection in the branch of humanist geography. Much like Entrikin's betweenness of place, phenomenology bridges the positivism of science and the perceived relativism of poststructuralism. Relph’s place phenomenology is built on a conceptual and methodological reciprocity between the general and the specific and between the conceptual and the lived.

The aim of place phenomenology is to examine and to clarify human situations, events, meanings, and experiences as they are known in everyday life but typically are unnoticed beneath the level of conscious awareness (Seamon 2000). I see

phenomenology as a way of listening to people in the field. It is a method and process of paying close and careful attention to the ways people experience place. It is also a method and process for exploring my own perceptions and experiences of place in the field.

Geographer Donald W. Meinig claims that “landscape is composed not only by what lies before our eyes, but also what lies in our heads” (1979, 34). Cultural geographer Peter Jackson (1989, 1994) argues that place is where we choose to look and where those images are processed and thus is ultimately a mental construct, albeit one realized on the ground. Environmental psychologist Fritz Steele argues in *The Sense of Place* (1981) that people’s relations to places arise in a dialectic involving place qualities and the characteristics of people when they are in place. These definitions recognize place as both an external phenomenon and as a shifting and ephemeral experience both internally and in a world where the webs of the culture are constantly reconfigured.

Relph begins *The Phenomenological Foundations of Geography* (1976), a short discussion paper on Husserl’s lifeworld, with a quote by author William James. “The world of concrete personal experiences to which the street belongs,” James writes, “is multitudinous beyond imagination, tangled, muddy, painful and perplexed” (3). This is where phenomenologists direct their gaze, to the street that is multitudinous beyond imagination—the lifeworld, as it is called phenomenologically. In the “universe of science, with its carefully ordered patterns and relationships,” writes Relph, “a street is little more than a blank space between two lines on a map” (3). Relph acknowledges this characterization is far too simplistic. He still emphatically claims that in the drive to empiricism, too much detail and too much lived experience is lost. In the midst of experience and in the shadow of the human inscriptions on the landscape, in streets and

buildings and boundaries, the phenomenologist must be attuned to the deeper meanings and senses of life.

Tuan (1974, 1977) uses “topophilia” to describe positive affective or emotional place ties. Tuan sees rootedness as a feeling of being home in a place, and sense of place as an awareness of a positive feeling for a place. Architect and theorist Thorvald Christian Norberg-Schulz’s (1971, 1980, 1993) extensive writings of the idea of the *genius loci*, or spirit of a place, brings phenomenology into conversation in architecture in the same ways Relph’s work on the topic brought the idea into geographical discussion. Theorist Max Van Manen (2007) writes that phenomenology is “a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence—sober, in the sense that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful, and as much as possible, free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications . . .” (Van Manen 2007, 11) But, he continues, “phenomenology is also a project that is driven by fascination: being swept up in a spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning” (11).

The aim of place phenomenology is to examine and to clarify human situations, events, meanings, and experiences as they are known in everyday life but typically are unnoticed beneath the level of conscious awareness (Seamon 2000). In *The Poetics of Space* (1964), Gaston Bachelard claims that “the poetic act itself, the sudden image, the flare-up of being in the imagination, is inaccessible. . .” and so in “order to clarify the problem of the poetic image philosophically; we shall have to have recourse to a phenomenology of the imagination” (Bachelard 1964, xviii). Bachelard speaks to the love of place, topophilia, and the investigation of place, topoanalysis, as essential notions in the phenomenological study of self and memory. The life of the mind is given form in the

places we dwell. Places themselves, he argues, shape and influence human memories, emotions and thoughts. In this way, interior and exterior spaces are intimately connected.

Finally, Tuan (1979) claims that “place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people,” and as such, “place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspective of the people who have given it meaning” (Tuan 1979, 388). Place emerges in these works as the central ontological structure that gathers and binds together the human experience. People bind together places in their experiences. Phenomenology emerged in this study through the interplay between the ways it is possible to grasp the world and articulate these possibilities, individual accounts gathered in the field, and my own reflections on place and experience in the field.

1.3 Place Identity and Place Attachment

“Damn. It’s still the Midwest around here, no matter how many open-minded people you surround yourself with.”
Angela Johnson (2012)

Relph (1976) writes that place identity is the “persistent sameness and unity,” which allows place to be “differentiated from others” (Relph 1976, 45). Relph describes this persistent identity in terms of three components: (1) the place’s physical setting; (2) its activities, situations, and events; and (3) the individual and group meanings created through people’s experiences and intentions in regard to that place. He develops these ideas in concert with dwelling and identity and especially with the idea of home. Place identity and place attachment figure prominently in this project. Place identity most often defined as an individual sense of identification with places. Place identity in this sense is used to describe the ways that place and identities are linked. This understanding is

premised on ideas of attachment. Place attachment is defined as an emotional connection, a bond of kinship, interest, experience, or affinity (Relph 1976; Seamon 1979). I use place character in this study to differentiate between the personal place identity and town character. Relph, and most other place scholars, use the term place identity interchangeably.

Ideas about place identity first emerged in environmental psychology as the idea that identities formed in relation to environments (Duncan 1982; Rybczynski 1986, Altman and Werner, 1986). Place identity was taken up by scholars in geography, sociology, and history. Much of this interdisciplinary work has focused on dwelling—place as it emerged historically as a locus of sentiment and belonging in modern Western culture. Environmental and social psychologists Harold M. Proshansky, Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff (1983), argue that place identity is a substructure of a person's self-identity. Place identity is defined as the knowledge, feelings and character that develop through physical space experience. It is often presented as a mix of personal and historical narratives, present-day landscape and community features, and a future vision. Place identity, though difficult to separate from well-established categories such as kinship, social class or gender because of categorical blurring, has become a well-established category of identity studies.

Place Attachment (1992), a seminal collection edited by Irwin Altman and Setha Low, sets out four goals in the opening paragraph. The editors claim they are writing in order to illustrate the multidisciplinary foundations of place attachment and identity; identify the various aspects of place attachment and identity; highlight the potential importance of these concepts in research and environmental design; and lay the

foundation for a conceptual framework to guide future research. The collection exposes the problems with place as a construct. How to measure experience, looking to the phenomenological works discussed here, is paramount. This is especially true as place, place identity and place attachment are folded into qualitative studies. Altman and Low interrogate how the deeply personal and subjective experience of place explored by the first and second waves of place writing can translate into quantitative or empirical research.

Place attachment, “the bonding of people to places,” is often overlooked in research that focuses on the movements of people in the environment (Low and Altman 1992, 2). Place attachment is a “complex phenomenon” that has “many inseparable, integral and mutually defining features, qualities or properties; it is not composed of separate or independent parts of components, dimensions or factors.” As such, place attachment is well-suited to “holistic philosophical views” (6). Low and Altman claim that as human emotions about place become more relevant in studies of home, territory, community, development, crime and so forth, efforts to define and measure attachment and its attendant concerns become vital. Otherwise, they claim, attachment will be excluded from important studies.

The first stage of scholarly work, they argue, is the emergence of a phenomenon into scholarly work. The second stage is a rigorous debate about what a thing *is*, which is where they claim place attachment resides. The third stage is a proliferation of scientific and scholarly work. The fourth stage, and the ultimate goal of place attachment research, is the “development of systematic theoretical positions and clearly delineated programs of research and application of knowledge to the solutions of practical problems” (4). Low

and Altman write that “places are repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached”(7).

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1993) states that “identity is formed at the unstable point where the ‘unspeakable’ stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture” (Hall 1993, 135). Place-identity theory, in the more scientifically minded urban research, identifies place as a sub-identity of self-identity, along with categories such as social class or gender (Proshansky et al. 1970). In *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (1999) Jeff Malpas claims that the “idea that human identity is somehow tied to locality in a quite fundamental way seems to be given support, though sometimes in an indirect fashion, by a great many purely philosophical considerations as well as by recent work in other more empirical disciplines” (Malpas 1999, 7). This idea, furthermore, that “human identity is somehow inseparably bound up with human location,” is especially taken up in Western culture writes Malpas “particularly in its art and literature, over the last two to three hundred years” (8). Seamon (2012) claims that “place identity refers to how people living in a place take up that place, their world; how they unself-consciously and self-consciously accept and recognize that place as part of their personal and communal identity” (Seamon 2012, 13).

The question of when place attachment attains the strength to become part of personal identity has been explored mostly through survey and quantitative analysis, but there is a strong body of theoretical work as well (Altman and Low 1992; Becker 2009; Sandleberg 2003). Identity is generally equated with long-term connection to a place. I find this relationship to be far more temporally complicated in my own research.

Geographer Anssi Paasi (2003) begins his considerations on regions and identity by noting that “identity, a term that was not yet included in Williams’ important *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (1976), has become a major watchword since the 1980s” (Paasi 2003, 475).

Geographer Doreen Massey, in *Space, Place and Gender* (1994) defines place as layers of articulation. Place, like identity, she argues, can be thought of “in terms of an articulation of the social relations in which a person/group is involved” (Massey 1994, 179). Massey (1984, 1992, and 1994) explores place-based identity as a mutually constituted expression of interactions between the extra-local forces of political economy and the historical layers of local social relations. Massey argues that the over-deterministic focus on capital has precluded a broader understanding of place identities as reflections and reproductions of colonialism and imperialism—ideas useful in describing the complex place ideas and attachments in my fieldwork, especially in terms of how the past is leveraged in creating place identities.

The slippage between place identity as an individual expression and as a community expression troubles the analysis of each. The difference between individual place identity and collective place identity remains theoretically and conceptually underdeveloped. Relph (2009) distinguishes between *genius loci*, what he calls the spirit of place, and the more common sense of place. Sense of place is often defined as the feeling of a place that emerges from the character or meaning ascribed to it. Sense of place is defined as shared or individual perceptions of a particular landscape. Sense of place is also commonly defined as the spirit or feeling of place. Relph defines the spirit of place as the singular qualities of a particular landscape or environment that give it a

unique ambience and character. I use place character in this study to differentiate between personal place identity and attachment and the identity or reputation of a town or region.

1.4 Place and Commemoration/Place and Preservation

*starving there, sitting around the bars,
and at night walking the streets for hours,
the moonlight always seemed fake
to me, maybe it was,
and in the French Quarter I watched
the horses and buggies going by,
everybody sitting high in the open
carriages, the black driver, and in
back the man and the woman,
usually young and always white.*

and I was always white.

*and hardly charmed by the
world.*

Charles Bukowski (1982)

David Harvey (1989) argues that the “political economy of place rather than of territory” means a shift in focus away from the “kinds of economic projects (housing, education, etc.) designed primarily to improve conditions of living or working within a particular jurisdiction,” to projects that “make all benefits indirect and potentially either wider or smaller in scope than the jurisdiction within which they lie” (Harvey 1989, 6-7). “Place-specific projects of this sort,” Harvey claims, “have the habit of becoming such a focus of public and political attention that they divert concern and even resources from the broader problems that may beset the region or territory as a whole” (8). While the “ideology of locality, place and community becomes central to the political rhetoric of urban governance, which concentrates on the idea of togetherness in defense against a

hostile and threatening world of international trade and heightened competition,” the possibility of actual connection was eroded (14).

Harvey uncovers the public-relations revolution behind many place-based movements. Place-based projects, place marketing and place celebration take up too much time as well as too much money claims Harvey. These place-based projects divert resource and attention away from issues such as poverty, violence, and crumbling infrastructure. Harvey claims the rhetoric, accompanied by place-based projects, gives “the population at large some sense of place-bound identity,” and in this, “the circus succeeds even if the bread is lacking” (14). Harvey refers to the Roman “bread and circuses,” or “Panem et Circensus,” a political strategy of giving the people entertainment, food and spectacle to keep them occupied and satisfied.

Harvey claims a double triumph of image over substance in word and deed. He does not wholly discount the power of place or place-based movements. Harvey recognizes instances where place identities and place-based movements have been leveraged for social justice. Working-class movements, for example, “have proven historically to be quite capable of commanding the politics of place, but they have always remained vulnerable to the discipline of space relations and the more powerful command over space (militarily as well as economically) exercised by an increasingly internationalized bourgeoisie” (16).

Urban historian Judy Mattivi Morley’s *Historic Preservation and the Imagined West: Albuquerque, Denver, and Seattle* (2006) critically assesses and compares regional historic preservation efforts. Morley brings the tension between economic, cultural, and historical interests to the forefront. This tension reflects the common charge that

preservation efforts are not about preservation but rather about creating historical facades for consumption. The displacement of traditional communities in historical cores by moneyed interests—otherwise known as gentrification—is the most common complaint. Preservation is seen as a way for communities to tacitly embrace and encourage gentrification in their historical landscapes. Morley does not reject the charge of consumption per se but rather shows the complexity of preservation efforts on the ground. Morley draws on critics such as Michael Kammen (1999) and David Lowenthal (1999) to explore the tension between history as referring to verifiable events and heritage as referring to the often-invented historical meaning of places meant for branding and consumption.

In *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (1993), Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Michael Kammen points to the complex of influences on historical interpretations. Kammen argues historical interpretation is shaped by contests over meaning in contemporary landscapes. There is a distance between popular ideas about how historic preservation is shaped and who shapes it. Ideas about place are profoundly shaped by ordinary people, Kammen asserts. These contests are neither created by nor beholden to nationalistic agendas. Furthermore, it is a vigorous struggle that takes place on the ground. Folk advocates “valued the particularity of place, especially in terms of regionalism in art and literature.” Such advocates “pleaded for attention to non-literary sources of cultural understanding, such as the decorative arts, tools and especially memory (once labelled the ‘archives of the poor’)” (Kammen 1993, 408).

In *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (1999), geographer and historian David Lowenthal argues that the historical past is used as a source of identity and fortification. Lowenthal claims that as the optimism of progress at the turn of the century diminished and the rise of preservation efforts expanded so did the demands on history to narrate identity. There is always the danger in setting tradition, enmeshed in history and culture, as a foil against innovation, science, and progress he argues. He sees the emergence of picturesque, cleaned-up versions of history as a reflection of contemporary desires for present-day comfort and identity. The past should not be a “foreign country,” he proclaims, but rather should be vigorously “assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever changing present” (Lowenthal 1999, 411).

The idea that preservation is driven solely by economic interests, or from the top down to certain pre-determined ends, ignores the nuances of preservation. No neat dichotomy exists between the center and the periphery or between gentrification and maintaining traditional communities. Preservation’s messy center is as full of tension and contradiction as place narratives. On the other hand, a great many case studies and arguments do demonstrate the force of economic influences and the push to gentrify. Kammen sees the contemporary moment as “an age of consensus and heritage by compulsion that seems in our own time to satisfy an array of psychic needs, commercial enterprises, and political opportunities” (Kammen 1993, 13).

Delores Hayden’s *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes in Public History* (1997) grapples with this inclination to champion preservation at the expense of historical accuracy or more critical and nuanced renderings of place history. The tendencies to erase uncomfortable histories, or to create places dominated by a particular set of cultural

influences, are central considerations of Hayden's text. The power of place is generally cast as a positive expression that melds sense of place, place making, politics, preservation, public history, and a host of other place-specific activities. Place commemorations and celebrations are mainstays of global tourism and place revitalization. Preserving cultural landscapes or sites considered integral to dominant understandings of important history and cultural expression is a popular cure to the supposed flattening effects of globalization. Hayden makes a passionate plea to call preservationists, community activists, cultural historians, environmentalists, planners, artists, communities, individual residents, and others to work together to create a new civic place consciousness.

The power of place is often evoked as a tool to combat the steady domination of ubiquitous commercial strips and capital-driven touristscapes with supposedly authentic cultural expressions. Other histories—of settlement, violence, empire, kinship, and community—recede in many of these efforts, obscured or occluded in cultural landscapes. It is often the desire to be in authentic places that drives commodification and entrenches borders, from nations to hotel compounds. Where a body is placed is a powerful indicator of poverty, violence, and exclusion. Hayden claimed these considerations are integral to the creation of inclusive, honest, and meaningful places.

Editors Guido Licciardi and Rana Amirtahmasebi's collection of case studies in *The Economics of Uniqueness: Investing in Historic City Cores and Cultural Heritage Assets for Sustainable Development* (2012) captures the economic models and theories driving preservation research. Several of the essays devote considerable time to issues of poverty, access, wealth distribution, and global development. Yet the overriding theme of

this collection of essays is the powerful good that preservation does as an economically driven phenomenon. The force of economic arguments in heritage preservation and conservation is inescapable. Value is repeatedly stressed as an economic good that is measurable in tangibles, but is also recognized as a hard-to-capture phenomenon that goes beyond economic measures—beyond economics—a defense against the critiques offered by scholars such as David Harvey.

1.5 Place, Tourism, the Creative Class and the Popular Press

*“Is it lack of imagination that makes us come
to imagined places, not just stay at home?
Or could Pascal have been not entirely right
about just sitting quietly in one’s room?”*

*Continent, city, country, society:
the choice is never wide and never free.*

And here, or there.

*No.
Should we have stayed at home,
wherever that may be?”*

Elizabeth Bishop (1964)

Ties to tourism are everywhere evident in place narratives. Tourism is a driving force in preservation and in the policy and other civic decisions made by people in places. As geographers Gareth Shaw and Alan Williams (2004) note, tourism is increasingly at the center of policy and popular discourses on place. Tourism is “both demonized and idealized,” they claim, “as a destroyer and a creator, whether of valued environments, social and cultural practices, or wealth” (1). Tourism, they argue, is intertwined with many other forms of mobility, such as labor and retirement migration and knowledge and capital transfers, and is a resolutely globalized phenomenon. The supposed placelessness

of globalization has made particular places, and the character of particular places, ever more important to a host of concerns.

This is the most common theme in tourism scholarship, mirroring ideas like those expressed by Tuan (1992) about the turn to place study in general. Many themes and concerns central to place seamlessly merge in recent scholarship on tourism (Hall and Page 1999; Coleman and Crang 2002; Lasansky and McLaren 2004; Jaworski and Pritchard 2005; McIntyre, Williams and McHugh 2006; Meethan, Anderson and Miles 2006; Knudsen and Waade 2010). The fate of place, to borrow Casey's phrase, is increasingly narrated in the language of consumption of place and the production of a strong place identity for marketing. The materiality of place, set against ways that the ideas of place are created, is also a central feature of these discussions. The emergence and re-emergence of the language of the local and the regional as positional strategies is a reoccurring theme, as is the role of identity and the nature of the relationship between place and identity.

A huge number of texts on tourism are created by the U.S. government. I discovered one on Middle Eastern travel from the 1970s in the T or C downtown thrift store. I saw a similar book of a recent vintage at the Sierra County Soil and Conservation District office with *Rural Tourism* in the title. One of the earliest standardized models for local tourist guides and place narratives in the United States came out of the federal Works Project Administration (WPA). The Federal Writers *American Guide Series* employed more than 6,500 writers, editors, photographers, artists, cartographers, and researchers from 1935-1943. Guides were written for all 48 states. The *New Mexico: A Guide to a Colorful State American Guide Series* (1940) included place descriptions of

Hot Springs and the surrounding region immediately recognizable from the few culture histories of the region I found in scientific texts from the 1930s and 1940s. The WPA guides filled a void left by *Baedeker's United States*, the last major U.S. travel guide, published in 1909 by the Baedeker publishing house.

Government-issued tourism texts included titles such as *A Strategic look at the travel and tourism industry* (1989) and *Rural tourism handbook: selected case studies and development guide* (1994) published by the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration and Government Printing Office. More laborious titles in print books include transcript congressional hearings formatted with images, such as *Promoting travel to America: an examination of economic and security concerns. Part II: hearing before the Subcommittee on Interstate Commerce, Trade, and Tourism of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, United States Senate, One Hundred Tenth Congress, first session, March 20, 2007* (2010) published by the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; the Subcommittee on Interstate Commerce, Trade, and Tourism. There were similar international sources for tourism material, such as the United Nations World Tourism, which in 1946 replaced the International Union of Official Tourist Propaganda, established in 1934. The World Trade Organization prints a massive amount of readily available sources of print and online information, such as *Tourism 2020 Vision* (2000).

Geographers Meethan, Anderson, and Miles illustrated many of these themes in their introduction to the edited volume *Tourism, Consumption and Representation: Narratives of Place and Self* (2006). Tourism literature and promotion, they argue, “draws attention to the social and controlled aspects of discourse and representation

within modernity,” and although these approaches have “yielded insights regarding the social construction of tourist space, they nevertheless display a tendency to overemphasize the processes of production at the expense of consumption, as if consumers simply accept what is presented as a form of dominant ideology” (Meetham et. al. 2006, 7). By looking at the “narratives of place, the stories, histories, and myths that are associated with people and place, and by acknowledging the complexities involved in the ways in which people actively engage with their environment, together with the tensions between expectations and realization,” their volume promises a “more nuanced understanding of the production and consumption of tourist spaces” (7).

Shaw and Williams in *Tourism and Tourism Spaces* (2004) provide an expansive review of the literature on tourism. They draw on sociologist John Urry’s (1990, 2000, 2002) concept of scapes and flows for theoretical grounding. In *Sociology Beyond Societies* (2000), Urry looks to sociologist Manuel Castells’ work on information networks in order to develop the metaphors of scapes and flows. Networks create “complex and enduring connections across space and through time between peoples and things,” through flows of things, from people and money to information, moving across landscapes, producing complex but patterned events” (Urry 2000, 35). These flows are organized by scapes, networks of “machines, technologies, organizations, texts and actors,” through which flows move (36). Urry uses these metaphors to examine ideas such as travel, mobility, the automobile landscape, and the Nazi Heidegger’s ideas on dwellings. This text illustrates how place ideas have come together in the latest wave of place scholarship.

Shaw and Williams claim that there is a "need to look beyond cultural tourism, which is essentially concerned with the past and present, to 'creative' tourism; which is about the past, present and the future, and which, above all, is about experiences" (Shaw and Williams 2004, 274). Places, they say, faced increasing challenges. "Tourist practices, and the practices of local residents in response to these, contribute to the shaping of everyday lives, values and identities in places, just as much as place practices and identities contribute to tourism" (275).

Richard Florida's impact on the ideas shaping places, despite his vocal academic critics, is hard to overstate. Florida's *Who's Your City? How the Creative Economy is Making Where to Live the Most Important Decision of Your Life* (2008) illustrates the popularity of place in popular literature. Florida's background in academia means he wields census and economic data compellingly for popular audiences. His body of popular works included *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), *Cities and the Creative Class* (2004), and *The Flight of the Creative Class* (2007). Florida's ideas embrace a new global future-vision that seamlessly melds digital technology, culture, mobility, creativity, and the places where these qualities flourish. The places that embrace this new global future-vision will attract the people who Florida identifies as the creative class. The reason the creative class can claim any place as their own is because their creative work is no longer tethered to a particular place. Place, therefore, is theirs to consume. As political economist James Peck says, however, the "irreverent, informal, sometimes preachy, but business-friendly style is in many ways a familiar one, echoing as it does the lifestyle guides, entrepreneurial manuals, and pop sociologies of the new-economy era...familiar neoliberal snake-oil — insecurity as the new freedom" (Peck 2005, 759).

Peck, looks to Harvey's (1989) claim that cities must appear simultaneously safe, creative, and innovating to attract consumption. He argues that Richard Florida's work increases the embrace of tourism in places and by people, and decreases the possibility of real place development structurally, politically and economically.

Anthropologist Rachel C. Fleming's assessment of the literature as it relates to rural America in her article "Development, Sustainability, and Exclusion in Rural Areas" (2009) translates the overwhelmingly urban narratives on creative cultural discourses and applies them to a rural setting. Her work represents a middle ground between the bright bubble that is Florida's work and the dark cloud of many of the more sustained material analyses offered by Harvey and others. She notes that creative economy projects "appear appropriate for sustainable rural development, but the benefits and challenges of initiating a creative economy in a rural setting are not well understood" (Fleming 2009, 61).

Through a study in Chatham County, N.C., Fleming explores the ways the "arts-development discourse" is used "to envision the diverse rural community that artists' value," yet may simultaneously "work to obscure the exclusionary processes based on race and class that operate in rural gentrification" (61). Fleming explores issues of poverty as they relate to ideas of gentrification, desirability, and place making. She captures the tenor of the arguments in a quote from an "arts supporter," who says the county needs to attract innovative people through such amenities as "dark night skies, a rural landscape, a healthy riparian zone, recreational opportunities, and high-tech connectivity" (75). These amenities will "bring quality-people out" (75).

There is a growing body of work written for popular audiences that speaks to how these ideas manifest themselves outside of the academy in popular culture. Social critic

James Howard Kunstler (1993, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2012) provides a scathing indictment of place and landscape in an automobile-dominated post–World War II landscape.

Kunstler (1994) characterizes the built environment of the last fifty years as “depressing, brutal, ugly, unhealthy, and spiritually degrading,” and the built environment as a “destructive, wasteful, toxic, agoraphobic-inducing spectacle that politicians proudly call ‘growth’” (10). He argues that many people must share these sentiments but lack the vocabulary to articulate what went wrong with the world around them. Kunstler’s text was an early example of a growing body of popular literature written specifically about place that is attracting an ever-growing popular audience.

The history Kunstler provides looks to everything: from the rational, mathematical, abstracted, and topographically immune patterns of the grid-system that forged the first deep pattern of settlement across newly wrested U.S. territory; to fashion, world’s fairs, and industrial building techniques; to emerging ideas about how to build more meaningful, and shared, places. “We want,” Kunstler writes in his closing, “to feel that we truly belong to a specific part of the world” (1994, 275). Kunstler’s talk at the online site for the Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) conference is ranked among the top 100 on the site. The TED site is very popular site that translates serious ideas into engaging short presentations. The site receives millions of views.

Joel Kotkin, a fellow in urban studies at Chapman University and regular contributor to *The Daily Beast* and *Forbes.com*, focuses on the technological reshaping of the American landscape in *The New Geography: How the Digital Revolution Is Reshaping the American Landscape* (2000). He claims that the digital paradigm is rapidly replacing the economic and social geographies that defined the last century, which is not

necessarily a bad thing for place. “The digital revolution,” he writes, “not only accelerates the speed at which information is processed and disseminated, it also restates the relation of space and time within our communities” (3). Kotkin is as cheerfully optimistic in his writing as Kunstler is disgruntled. He sees the challenges faced by communities as opportunities to build grassroots activism, to remake places, and to reinscribe the values of shared space, with the addition of digital technology that will add new dimensions to these exchanges.

1.6 Place Imaginary

History is full of events that happened because of an imaginary tale.
Umberto Eco (1999)

*To understand what another person is saying, you must assume that it is true
and try to imagine what it could be true of.*
George Miller (1977)

I used the concept of a place imaginary to bridge the fluid and shifting but still-grounded concept of place and the ephemeral but persistent ideas and experiences that shape place perceptions. A place imaginary is defined as a place perception or understanding. Place imaginaries are ideas about what a place was, is, or will be. I look to semiotician Walter Mignolo’s (2000) use of Glissant’s imaginary as “all of the ways a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world” as the foundation of the idea of a place imaginary (Mignolo 2000, 23). Mignolo sketches a history of modernity that precedes the Enlightenment but also creates the conditions for the seemingly global triumph of Enlightenment ideas. This began, he argues, with the onset of Spanish colonialism and the “building of the Atlantic imaginary.” Mignolo argues that the modern-colonial world-system emerges in conjunction with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and the conquest of the Americas. This is the “imaginary of the modern/colonial world” (23).

I also used literary theoretician Edward Said's work on imaginative geographies in *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) to inform my idea of place imaginaries. Said argues that Western society had imagined the world through a range of disparate and encompassing practices and process in order to justify and advance its colonial ambitions and practices. Said claims "that none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from struggle over geography, that struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginary" (Said 1993, 7). Said's imaginative geography describes the ways colonial discourses reinvented landscapes by imbuing them with meanings that justified territorial control and subjection. We can only fully comprehend our own understandings of the world, the modern world, he argues, through an understanding of the imperial conquest. Conquest is the defining horizon of identity, and it is deeply connected to imperial creations of place.

Geographer Denis Cosgrove (1998, 2001, 2008, 2009) contends that landscapes are texts as deeply influenced by perception as by material content in their interpretation. Landscapes are unquestionably material, Cosgrove claims. They emerge into being as readable texts with cultural forces at work only in the gaze of an observer. Like Said, Cosgrove argues that landscapes are material realities, but our perception of them is fundamentally invented and imagined. Imaginaries shape geography, perception and identities in place. Imaginaries and places are inextricably bound.

Cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai explores the idea of the imaginary in *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996). "The image, the imagined, the imaginary—these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new

in global cultural processes: *the imagination as a social practice*,” he wrote (Appadurai 1996, 31; italics in the original). Former definitions of things are transformed and transcended. “No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is somewhere else), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity),” Appadurai argues, “the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (31).

David Harvey uses the term geographical imagination to describe “spatial consciousness” as part of the work of culture and capital (Harvey 1970, 48). Harvey’s ideas about the differences between the sociological imagination and the geographical imagination were useful in thinking about the emergence of place imaginaries historically. These ideas potentially link place and other cultural expressions in the contemporary moment with the historical landscape of the imagination. This is a central concern and goal of place ethnography. In *Social Justice and the City* (1973) Harvey looks to American sociologist C. Wright Mills’ *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). Mills defines the sociological imagination as the knowledge that “enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of the meaning for the inner life . . . the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself in his experience . . . the urge to know the social and historical

meaning of the individual in society and in the period in which he has his quality and his being (Mills 1959, 5, quoted in Harvey 1973, 23).

Harvey claims the geographical imagination “enables individuals to recognize the role of space and place in his own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him . . . to recognize the relationship which exists between him and his neighborhood . . . to judge the relevance of events in other places . . . it allows him to fashion and use space creatively and appreciate the meaning of special forms created by others” (24). Harvey sees the geographical imagination as “weakly developed” (25). Concepts of space and time are socially constructed, Harvey argues, but they operate with the force of objective fact and play a critical role in social in processes of reproduction. In a later work Harvey writes that the “historical geography of space and time facilitates critical reflection on who we are and what it is we might be struggling for,” (Harvey 1990, 432).

Editors John Agnew and James Duncan also considered these possibilities in *Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Social Imaginaries* (1989). This work ties the idea of place as a fluid, shifting but persistent phenomenon to material, physical and historical considerations. “The geographical imagination is a concrete and descriptive one, concerned with determining the nature of and classifying places and the links between them,” they write, whereas the “sociological imagination aspires to the explanation of human behavior and activities in terms of social process abstractly and, often, nationally construed” (Agnew & Duncan 1989, 1). As Agnew notes, a major theme of many influential writers in the late 19th century was the direction of history, “moving the world along a line of direction away from one point and toward another,” and from “one type of human association to another” (13). This form of the modern, he argues,

broke sharply with the dominant aspects of pre-19th-century life, giving primacy to time and space over place.

1.7 Place and Naming

*The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao;
the name that can be named is not the eternal name.
The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth;
the Named is the mother of all things.
Lao Tzu (6th Century BCE)*

Naming place and claiming place are inextricably bound. Rather than seeing place names as artifacts that stand as signifiers within fixed geographical landscapes, naming of places is understood as one of the primary ways place identities are constructed (Tuan 1991; Basso 1996; Rose-Redwood et. al. 2010). Thomas Thornton (1997) gave Keith Basso credit for reviving the tradition of place-name studies in anthropology in *Wisdom Sits in Places* (1996). Thornton claims place names are at the intersection of language, thought, and the environment, which he called the three fundamental domains of cultural analysis. “Place names,” Thornton writes, “tell us something not only about the structure and content of the physical environment itself but also how people perceive, conceptualize, classify, and utilize that environment” (Thornton 1997, 212). Thornton looked at anthropological scholarship from the turn of the 19th century that explored the misperceptions of Native place names. He quotes a 1916 work by Alfred Kroebe, in which Kroebe claims there no subject of information was fuller of rumor and uncritical tradition than the study of place naming, but that place names were an important means of identifying cultural sites, migrations, and land-use patterns and for distinguishing between the centers and peripheries of culture areas. Even the best literature dealing with this topic contained more errors than truths.

A growing body of scholarship emphasizes and recognizes place naming as a contested practice. As Ruben Rose-Redwood, Derek Alderman, and Maoz Azaryahu (2010) noted in their exploration of the literature that marks this critical turn in toponymic inscription, a “critical analysis of the politics of spatial inscription remains one of the most effective strategies for challenging essentialist claims to affixing stable identities to particular spaces” (Rose-Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu 2010, 454). The authors name three broad approaches to analyzing spatial inscription as a toponymic practice. They categorized most of the work as theoretical inquiries into semiotics and political contests and work on social justice, in addition to governmentality studies that view the spatial inscription as an integral strategy in regime building. Postcolonial scholarship often combines these approaches in the study of naming and power, exploring how language, memory, and identity intersects with contests over issues such as political control, authority, and authenticity and history. Maoz Azaryahu (1986, 2012) notes how the commemorative value of place names acts as a kind of cartographic text, an imaginative geography of public memory that embeds a palimpsest of history and shared identity into everyday geography.

Relph explores naming in a recent article. He does not spend time developing or illustrating these ideas. This short passage does bring the idea of names, and the importance of naming, back into the conversation on place. His standing in the field makes this gesture important. “Each place is a territory of significance, distinguished from larger or smaller areas by its name, by its particular environmental qualities, by the stories and shared memories connected to it, and by the intensity of meanings people give to or derive from it,” he writes (Relph 2009, 24).

History and Narrative

Edward Said (1993) contends “stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (Said 1993, xii). This is not a project of projecting a meaning onto a landscape, Said argues, but it is an example of active colonial subject creation. Said argues that imaginative geographies play a role in identity formation and sense of place. Place narratives are defined as the ways places are described, documented, and understood. What we say about place creates not only the conditions for tangible features of place but how we imagine places. Narrative in this research project encompasses both the telling and the tale. Material and cultural markers of belonging are narrated into being.

Jeff Malpas (1999) explores narrative, which he defines as a “concept that covers a broad range of different structures loosely organized around the idea of a temporally ordered sequence of events that are viewed as being themselves organized in terms of some overall theme, direction or ‘end’ and that can be deployed (indeed, necessarily are deployed) in giving unity to a life or to parts of a life” (Malpas 1999, 81). This is a kind of “integration of mental life over time” that is “achieved through the structure of narrative,” which does not demand a strictly rational connection but nonetheless serves to make some kind of “sense of memory, thought or experience” (84). Narratives allow meanings to emerge. Exploring historical place narratives is a central component of place ethnographic study.

1.8 Haden White and the Narrative Form

In an essay titled *The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory* (1984), Hayden White, a historian in the tradition of literary criticism, lays out some of the

foundations he developed richly in *Content of the Form* (1987). White suggests that “value attached to narrative in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary” (White 1987, 25). While this research project sought to challenge ideas about histories through contemplation on place and a study of a particular place, it was not conceived as a project devoted to questions of history. Yet I devoted considerable time to these questions.

The subtle, dense and theoretically nuanced reading of history as narrative offered by White’s illustrates the explanatory power of critical theory across disciplines. It also illustrates the ways that critical theory can often overshadow other considerations. White’s poses two questions in his concluding remarks: “How else can any ‘past,’ which is by definition comprised of events, processes, structures, and so forth that are considered to be no longer perceivable, be represented in either consciousness or discourse except in an ‘imaginary’ way?” White follows this query with a sweeping statement he also poses as a question: “Is it not possible that the question of narrative in any discussion of historical theory is always finally about the function of imagination in the production of a specifically human truth?” (33).

At issue are scholars who would like to see history striving to be a science, and in this desire, breaking from narrative. “Within professional historical studies,” White writes, “the narrative has been viewed for the most part neither as a product of a theory nor as the basis for a method, but rather as a form of discourse which may or may not be used for the representation of historical events” (White 1984, 1). What “distinguishes ‘historical’ from ‘fictional’ stories is first and foremost their contents, rather than their

form.” The content of historical stories is real events, “events that really happened,” rather than imaginary events, events that were “invented by the narrator” (2).

I extend these ideas to the study of place. Place is narrated into being, in other words, but the conditions are given, even as the conditions are themselves narrated into being. White claims “our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual. ” and it is in these “conflicting claims where the imaginary and the real are mediated, arbitrated, or resolved in a discourse,” that “we begin to comprehend both the appeal of narrative and the grounds for refusing it” (4). White’s critics defend the work of historians and the histories they built as seeking rigor through a collectively developed framework dependent on hard archival research. Historians seek to establish and assemble convincing evidence. An introduction to these ideas provides this project’s theoretical groundwork in how historical considerations are approached in this place ethnography. Issues of veracity and reliability became increasingly important to this project as I struggled with the historical narrative accounts that founded regional place histories.

1.9 Tuan: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach to The Study of Place

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan elegant and cogent article, *Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach* (1991), asserts that questions of how places are made are at the core of geography, yet scant attention has been paid to the role of language in the making of place. In stark contrast to White, Tuan does not trouble or interrogate the truth value of history. He instead seeks to establish the importance of narrative in the *study* of place. Privileging verbal communication was both common and hotly contested in anthropological scholarship decades before it became a regular feature in the second wave of place scholarship.

Tuan claims this neglect of speech represents a “curious gap in the extensive and growing literature on place” (Tuan 1991, 684). The habit to view place as the result of the material transformation of nature is deeply ingrained. Words, however, have the power to render objects and places visible and to give them character, Tuan argues. Tuan outlines three approaches to speech and place. The first begins with the nature of language itself, and the second requires a focus on the use and effectiveness of speech and social contexts. Tuan adopts a third approach, which he terms a “narrative-descriptive” approach to the study of place (686). He advocates an approach where speech and writing are integral to the study of both place-making and geographic inquiry. He favors an approach that explores “the varying ways by which different societies use speech and/or the written word to realize place” (695). This approach draws from and absorbs the first two approaches he claims.

Tuan does not offer theoretical overviews or excessive analytical detail. Theory, he explains, by its clarity and weight, often drives away countering viewpoints and understandings. “Indeed,” he writes, “in social science, a theory can be so highly structured that it seems to exist in its own right, to be almost ‘solid’ and thus able to cast (paradoxically) a shadow over the phenomena it is intended to illuminate” (685). In a narrative-descriptive approach, however, theories hover “supportively” in the background, while the object of study occupies center stage. Tuan believes a narrative-descriptive approach will be appreciated by scholars predisposed by discipline or disposition “to appreciate the range and color of life and world . . . whose best works tend to make a reader feel the intellectual pleasure of being exposed to a broad and variegated range of related facts and of understanding them a little better (though still hazily), rather

than, as in specialized theoretical works, the intellectual assurance of being offered a rigorous explanation of a necessarily narrow and highly abstracted segment of reality” (688).

1.10 Dialogue and Voice in Place History

Scholar, educator, and activist Paulo Freire (1921-1997) claims “dialogue is a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it” (Shor and Freire 1983, 13). Nicholas Entrikin in *The Betweenness of Place: Towards a Geography of Modernity* (1991) says that to ignore this fluid duality of self and nature, of perception and reality, and the tension between the subjective and objective nature of knowing “is to misunderstand the modern experience of place” (Entrikin 1991, 134). This process moves place as well as identity away from fixity and to a narrated articulation dependent on relational dialogue.

Scholar Ira Shor engaged Paulo Freire (1983) in a discussion on dialogue in order to frame dialogue as a theory as well as a method. They deftly illustrate and narrate how dialogue emerges in a dialogue they create. A dialogic pedagogy is defined as a turn to subjective experience that includes a “global, critical dimension” (Shor and Freire 1983, 18). “We don’t only look at the familiar, but we try to understand it socially and historically,” Shor claims, where the “global context for the concrete, the general setting for the particular, are what give students a critical view on reality” (18). Dialogic inquiry is situated in the culture, language, politics, and themes of the students rather than in the expertise of the teacher. Previous experience, explored through dialogue, created the space to make reimagining what students know and want to know possible. Shor and Freire believe familiar objects, coupled with unfamiliar critical scrutiny, create a space

where new knowledge emerges. This is what Shor refers to an “extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary” (18).

Margaret C. Rodman (1992) argues that the concept of place, as a politicized social and cultural construct, requires a concomitant rethinking of place in anthropology, in much the same way voice had been challenged. Rodman calls for more attention to multilocality in place to explore experience. This would be similar, she argues to the ways that multivocality brought in the different interpretations, meanings, or values to the idea of voice. Rodman examines how anthropology and related fields frame the relationship between voice and identity, status, power, history, and other subjectivities and attempts to translate these agendas and strategies to the study of place. Rodman defines mutivocality as efforts to examine places from outside of ourselves and to recognize the universality of degrees of otherness, as the comparative or contingent analyses of place, especially when looking at economic or political patterns.

Multilocality can refer to reflexive relationships with places. A single physical landscape can be multilocal in the sense that it shapes and expresses many meanings. Multilocality conveys the idea that a single place may be experienced quite differently. These dimensions of multilocality are predicated on connections, she claims. Connections describe the “interacting presence of different places and different voices in various geographical, anthropological (cultural), and historical contexts” (Rodman 1992, 647). Through this divergent set of voices and theories I find a confluence in challenges to historical narrative as well as a framework to consider history and narrative in place ethnographic study.

One strategy that effectively negotiates issues of historical veracity and reliability was interrogating place narratives as having value separate from truth value. Rather than embracing or refuting historical or contemporary place narratives as fact (a tactic I also engaged), I sought to establish a dialogue. Dialogue was a methodological interview strategy as well as a critical theoretical tool. I repeatedly informed my place ethnographic audience that I was not writing a place history, per se. I was far more interested in the contest and collusions of personal historical, community, and other narratives.

1.11 The Paradox of the Modern

Tuan (2004), echoing Mignolo (2001) and Said (1999), locates the modern imaginary of place as beginning with the arrival of the Spaniards in the New World. This is an imaginary that precedes, preconfigures, and casts aspirations on future geographical claims. Tuan (2004) writes that place, in the standard literature, is a product of the physical transformation of nature in this New World, occurring with the first European ax. This understanding misses a critical component of how place was imagined, he argues. The “the ordering of nature—the conversion of undifferentiated space into place—occurred much earlier . . . with the first ritual act of possession,” by the Spanish. The newly discovered country was “recreated” by the cross, he continues, “reinstated into God’s cosmos—as though it had no prior existence, or that its prior state was one of unredeemed wildness” (Tuan 1991, 687). The ritual creation of place was the first step, followed by other, such as journaling and naming, as explorers pushed inland. This creates a claim and record of ownership. It is seizure by survey and narrative. These narratives establish a timeline for historical accounts.

The division between what is past and what is ahead defines the modern, according to Bruno Latour, a modern French philosopher and sociologist of science. As

he remarked in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), modernity comes in endless versions, “yet all its definitions point, in one way or another, to the passage of time” (Latour 1993, 10). We use the adjective modern, he claims, to define “an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time,” against which an “archaic and past” can be defined. Additionally, the word denotes winners and losers, victors and vanquished. Latour argues that the troubled use of the word in contemporary debate occurs because “we can no longer point to time’s irreversible arrow, nor can we award a prize to the winners” (10). Latour claims Native Americans’ accusation that White people have forked tongues is a fair assessment. By separating “relations of political power from the relations of scientific reasoning while continuing to shore up power with reason and reason with power, the moderns have always had two irons in the fire” (38).

I located the advent of the modern imaginary in this project as the arrival in 1598 of the Spanish empire in the New Mexico landscape and the subsequent colonizing of people and places. Empire building, as Said, Mignolo, and others note, is always a claim to the modern. Subsequently, the arrival of a new empire takes up the mantle of the modern. The Spanish modern in New Mexico is cast off when the new modern of American empire arrives. The Spanish becomes the heroic past in subsequent retellings. The Spanish modern in the Southwest is centered on exploration, settlement, and violent religious conversion and exploitation in the name of faith, but always in the search for wealth. It is made tangible through replicated settlement patterns in missions, towns, irrigation systems, and other material and cultural production. The Spanish modern is built on communal land grants, land and resource speculation, and a steady stream of

revenue from the Spanish Crown (Bolton 1916; Spicer 1962; Bannon 1970; Fr. Chávez 1974; Brooks, 2002).

The American modern in the Southwest is also centered on exploration and settlement and on violence, in the name of Manifest Destiny. Progress and technology figure centrally. The search for wealth also figures centrally. These goals and ambitions are made tangible through settlement patterns in courthouses, land grabs, irrigation systems and other material and cultural production. The American modern in the region is built on military occupation, land and resource speculation, narratives of cultural identities that claimed a White-Spanish European history and an ancient but vanishing Native American presence, and a steady stream of revenue from the federal government (Spicer 1962; Jackson 1972; Nieto-Phillips 2004; Banner 2007).

New Mexico's extensive settlement and its prior colonial occupation complicate the emergent and existing ideas of modernity and progress. The pueblos and plazas of New Mexico do not accord with the geographical place systems being crafted in the East for and about the West. Systems of communal lands and land grants, long-lot land allocation and thriving centers, some centuries old, some merely hundreds, have an established order. The deep patterns and histories of the built environment reflect both contests and shared efforts to shape societies to particular ends. These dynamically evolving landscapes have long been places where the tensions and paradoxes between the local and the global are constantly negotiated. I refer to the contradictions and tensions in place and narratives as place paradoxes. Place paradoxes are features and qualities of place that are inconsistent, incompatible, or opposed. This is not the simple fact of complexity or multiplicity; place paradoxes are based on the idea that seemingly

incompatible and inconsistent or contradictory things exist simultaneously in a place. It is a central idea in the colonial imaginary of place—landscapes with ageless signs of settlement that are curiously and easily imagined as both empty and open to new settlement. These are unsettled places that are nevertheless full of souls to be claimed into the modern. The notion that certain groups belong to this modern world while others do not is a persistent place paradox. The modern, as a place in time, is a place quality as much as it is an idea about places—it is both a real and a not real thing—a paradox in itself.

On Scholarly Models, Regionalisms and Shared Patterns

My purpose in this project was not to look at the whole of place writ small in the landscape of Truth or Consequences but rather to explore how a particular place could illuminate the sweeping ideas about place that proliferate in the wide-ranging literature I engaged. I also sought to name and refine a method to study place with these same ends in mind. I was drawn to a specific geographical locale, the Southwest, by virtue of my own place perceptions, but I also sought to critically challenge narratives and histories. I was drawn to a particular town because I thought many of the tensions of place, imaginary, history, and region could be productively engaged there. I was drawn to articulate my own place ethnographic method because I sought to incorporate a wide range of experiences, interests, methods, theories as well as models into a single research study.

This last part of this chapter introduces several texts that I used as an intellectual foundation for this research project. I then introduce the last set of theoretical ideas that shaped my process. The first is on regionalism. The second is on scope, the specific and the general—a conversation well suited to a section on particular studies and emergent

and potentially shared regional place patterns. While I ascribed to the contingent and particular, the shared resonated. I found in the particular and shared a cascade of implication.

Truth or Consequences had qualities I was drawn to, including gestures to larger place patterns that developed during the past 100 years in New Mexico and the nation. There was a shifting, elusive, and yet strong sense of place and a very curious place identity tied to various place imaginaries of the town and region. There was also a commitment to historic preservation. I was drawn to the ways that this small place reflected larger patterns that emerged during the past century. I was often surprised by how often people's attachment to places created opportunities to critically engage a range of ideas, from historical veracity, to ideas about what makes good places.

1.12 On Ethnographic and Historic Models: Basso, Trujillo, Stewart, Low and Wilson

Anthropologist Keith Basso's call to make haste in the study of places in *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (1996) fueled my initial desire to locate and explore the connections between people and places. It was a foundational text in my study. The work was a continuation of Basso's ethnographic and sociolinguistic research about the Western Apache of Cibecue. Basso's research on Western Apache place names and the storied landscapes he studied were recounted with deep reverence, grace and humor. In an email to Basso about my interest in how I could study place from my own interdisciplinary field, ill-equipped though I was, he reassured me that academic skill would catch up to honest intention, but academic skill on its own did not count for a whole lot in the outside world. After a lifetime spent inside with philosophical texts, this slim anthropological volume launched me into the field.

Basso talks about place-making as a type of “retrospective world-building” practiced by all. It is in this spontaneous everyday practice, as “roundly ubiquitous as it is seemingly unremarkable,” Basso writes, that makes place-making the “universal tool of the historical imagination” (Basso 1996, 5). This is a decidedly ground-level and anticolonial vision of an imaginary. Place-making, Basso claims, “is a way of constructing history itself, of inventing it, of fashioning a version of ‘what happened here,’” a way, he said, “of constructing the past, a venerable way of *doing* human history itself . . .” (7). Everyone can add to what Basso called the “common stock on which everyone can draw on to muse on past events, interpret their significance and imagine them anew” (7). Basso notes that Apache history is socially constructed and has no authorities. Where and how things happened, furthermore, is more important than when they happened.

Basso claims the question, “What do people make of places?” the opening query in his preface, is “as old as people and places themselves, as old as human attachments to portions of the earth” (xiii). Basso’s final chapter of *Wisdom Sits in Places* begins with a relentlessly haunting list of the anguish confronting places and communities, efforts to protect places, stay on ancestral lands or to preserve sacred places, and issues of environmental destruction, poverty, despair, and massive inequality. He follows this litany with remarks on people’s adeptness at creating richly lived and sensed places. I was curious to see if this kind of focused place ethnography lent itself to a study of a more fragmented but nonetheless identifiable town. It seemed to me that historical narratives of what people “made” of the Southwest, for instance, remained powerful, contemporary dialogue shapers.

According to Basso, the task of ethnographers is to fashion a written account that adequately conveys his or her understanding of other people's understandings. It is a discomfiting business abounding with loose ends, he claims. Basso argues that with patience, good humor as well as perseverance, it is possible to achieve the ethnographer's task of determining what expressive acts might mean. It is a daunting task, but a worthy one, he claims. He writes that to "argue otherwise (and there is a bit of that around these days) is to dismiss ethnography as a valid source of cultural knowledge and turn it into a solipsistic sideshow, an ominous prospect only slightly less appealing than the self-engrossed meanderings of those who seek to promote it" (34). Basso contends that ethnography, although often painful and wrenching, is also a great deal of fun. Occasionally, he remarks, ethnographers "stumble onto culturally given ideas" (35) that were worthy of wider attention and connected to larger systems of thought. Places, and the way places are understood, he notes, are fertile ground for this kind of study.

Parts of this research project were mirrored on the experimental ethnographic essays Michael Trujillo creates in *Land of Disenchantment: Latina/o Identities and Transformations in Northern New Mexico* (2009). Trujillo's work in the Northern New Mexico city of Española was another intellectual pillar of this project's theoretical and methodological approach. Uncomfortably opposed at many junctures, these two texts taken together nonetheless created a framework for my own research. On the book's back cover, Basso's work is hailed as "a classic creative ethnographic representation." Trujillo, on the other hand, claims his goal is "to challenge ethnography" (Trujillo 2009, 209). He employs what he describes as the once-radical style of the modernist ethnography.

Representations of supposedly cohesive cultural groups have long been a mainstay of ethnography Trujillo notes. This is especially true in New Mexico. Not merely portrayed as cohesive, but outside of the modern, First Nation and Nuevo Mexicana/o communities have a long history with the ethnographic gaze, according to Trujillo. He seeks to engage the modernist ethnography through a series of essays, “a form designed to address such complex and often-indefinable subjects” (23). This form, he claims, captures the dynamic intertextuality between the ethnographic gaze and the ethnographic archive. It is a method “aware of the historical and contemporary connections that link the objects of its gaze” (924).

Trujillo explores the juxtaposition between the positive and negative, a cascading dialectical where “a thing is affirmed as what it is through a denial of what that thing is not” (21). To “evoke negativity is a political intervention and performs a political act and destabilizes illusions of perfection, presence and permanence,” in “such places, the positive and negative, form and excess, reasons and its other are imbricated” (20). Trujillo uses this framework to interrogate his own ethnographic accounts as well as past ethnographic accounts. Trujillo, like Basso, speaks to finding something sublime and fulfilling in ethnography. Trujillo notes that modernist ethnography is well suited to a time when “paradigms are in disarray, problems intractable and phenomena are only partly understood” (24).

Trujillo maintains that through this method, the ethnographer admits the challenge of bewilderment and incomprehension that accompanied observation as well as the constant presence of past representations of cultural groups that loom in any present ethnographic account. Unlike Basso, Trujillo eschews the “desire to unmask or defrock

some larger or deeper truth,” an approach common to many ethnographic representations. Yet Trujillo concedes that even as he strives to recognize the complex, partial, and subjective representations of ethnographic accounts, he still seeks “to paint a picture that is somehow more whole than previous ethnographies” (26).

Setha Low’s *On the Plaza* (1996) presents an ethnographic and historical narrative of plaza life and public space in San Jose, Costa Rica. Low seeks to address the cultural and political importance of public and civic space, the theoretical foundations of place, space, and culture, and how individual narratives and histories weave. These stands create “a loose fabric in which fragments of experience and memory are juxtaposed with theory and interpretation” (Low 1996, 35). Low interrogates how relationships between space, place, and culture can be theoretically and methodologically informed through ethnographic study.

Low explores how the “social production of the built environment,” can be viewed through the “daily routines and ceremonial rituals of the cultural realm and the phenomenological experience of individuals” (36). Low attempts to “spatialize” culture, “to locate—physically, historically, and conceptually—social relations and social practice in space” (127). In public plazas, Low finds a rich stage for the negotiation of local, regional, national, and global influences in the struggle to define community and identity, history and culture. Yet despite these struggles, much of the conclusion in the text illustrates the continuing drive to commercialization and consumption in Costa Rican plazas. Mythical and heroic representation of the past still dominates civic expressions. Low notes how “the creation of public space has become part of the “imagineering of a

city,” adopting Walt Disney’s term for his fantastical creations, a term also used by Relp as shorthand for the creation of commercial and nostalgic façade-places” (197).

There are precious few façade places in anthropologist Kathleen Stewart’s *A Space on the Side of the Road* (1996), which captures the tension in the ways that modernity and progress are constantly bypassing certain places, even as they seem to be always imminent. This theme resonates strongly in my own research. The town of Truth or Consequences, and its small region, have been consistently characterized as pass-through places—a place the world quickly passes by after an arrival that does not feel entirely complete. Stewart’s book looks, with a direct gaze and in a poetic narrative, to what she calls the spaces on the side of the road. These are the spaces where local practices of reporting things that happen along the way, things that “interrupt the ordinary flow of events,” are retold and recounted until meanings emerge and re-emerge (Stewart 1996, 37).

Stewart has an uncanny agility with narrative. Her analysis what she characterized as an endless reiteration of rural storytelling is sharp and evocative. She seems hesitant to claim the mantle of academic privilege, despite what seemed to be an even-handed acceptance of her own getting by, even as she builds a narrative that makes “something of thangs” (24, original emphasis and spelling). The point, she says, was not the complexity of culture but the idea that it cannot be “gotten ‘right,’”—it was a “constant beginning again, a search, an argument, an unfinished longing” (6). Stewart proposes that ethnographers seek to dwell in a similar space, outside of “American academic discourse” rather than in the well-trodden road of social science’s quixotic quest for

knowledge. Ethnography as a performance does not seem to sit comfortably with Stewart. My role as an observer was perhaps too immediately conformable.

I was reminded of Stewart's text when I saw a sticker that proclaims its truck's owners to be "Lake Trash" and her experiences of the "trashy" places. These places, "piled high with collections of used-up things still in use, the chairs outside where people just set, the distant smell of food cooking across the expanse of barking dogs" are the counter to the bright façade places of downtown Truth or Consequences (41). The constant negotiation between the idea that the town of Truth or Consequences was either a haven for artists and the celebrated free spirits or a desolate town for the downtrodden erupted continuously in my own research and in the town's history. There is something eerie and utterly fascinating about the places where striving is thwarted, but Stewart is careful to refrain from any celebration of that fascination, even as she situates it as her peripheral ethnographic center. In places named Red Jacket, Viper, Odd, Amigo, Twilight, and Decoy, Stewart uncovers paradoxes in American narratives of modernization and progress. There is an interesting similarity between place names that refuse to adhere to conventional standards of naming. Stewart's stories were part of larger patterns of narratives that embodied the contradictions in rural modernity. Modernity and progress in these places are as ruinous in their presence as they are in their supposed absence—they are evidenced in linear time but unrecognizable on the ground. They are always coming but never arrive, having already left.

In the *Myth of Santa Fe* (1996), architectural historian Chris Wilson traces the invention of the touristic myth of Santa Fe. Constructed in the late 19th century from a "constellation of arts and architectural revivals, public ceremony, romantic literature, and

historic preservation,” the city emerges as a place of fiction and fantasy that nonetheless provides “a unifying vision of the city, its people, and their history” (Wilson 1996, 8).

The regional architectural tradition in the case of Santa Fe is more aptly read as a history of economically, artistically and politically manifested fiction than as organic fact, but it is a defining and deeply compelling imaginary nonetheless argues Wilson. Wilson explores the invention of place traditions—the ways in which complex interactions of history, memory, commemoration, architecture, and geography were combined to create the global phenomenon that is Santa Fe.

Wilson locates the advent of this modern tradition in both the Spanish emergence into New Mexico’s First Nation landscapes but more importantly, in the way that turn-of-the-19th-century American residents cast and recast these building traditions, cultural traditions, and histories to fit into particular narratives. To this end, Wilson recounts a history that emerges in the arrival of the Spanish, the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, which successfully emptied the Spanish settlers from New Mexico for a short dozen years. He notes that the architectural style of flat-roof adobe buildings around a courtyard is a Mediterranean import by Spanish New Mexicans, and not an adaptation of the Puebloan flat-roof multistory compounds. A shared tradition of building materials and shared spaces exists between Pueblo and Spanish cultures, but are nevertheless distinct in the landscape and different than they have been historically imagined. The emergent style adopted by Anglos, iterated first with surface gestures and facades and later with gestures to deeper patterns such as interior courtyards, is often referred to as Pueblo Revival, but more accurately referred to as Spanish Pueblo Revival.

The U.S.-Mexican War in 1848, regional territorial cessation, and the status of New Mexico as a territory have a tremendous impact on the built environment. Santa Fe's architectural Americanization, and the cultural conflict that refuted the fictional ideal of a tri-cultural harmony, is accelerated by the arrival of the railroad in 1881. New Mexico's repeated denial for statehood also emerges in these histories. Wilson explores how tourism impacted the emergent aesthetics in the years after statehood. Santa Fe emerges during this time as a timeless city in stark contrast to the industrial modernization of the East. What was once "uncivilized" becomes, for a new wave of visitors, "picturesque, and even noble" (123). Qualities once disparaged reemerge as "quaint" and, paradoxically, "essential to the city's progress as a tourist center" (123).

The creation of a regional Spanish Pueblo revival is partly a result of the massive popularity of New Mexico's exhibit at San Diego's 1915 Panama California Exposition. The Exposition building, patterned after pueblo mission churches, can be seen today in the design of the Santa Fe Fine Arts Museum on the plaza. The town's founding boosters and myth makers quickly realize that the romantic Indian myth, not the Spanish myth, is the undeniable and powerful tourist draw. The Spanish romance does emerge, eventually, as the town's tireless, mostly Anglo, boosters actively create an extravagant myth of tricultural heritage and harmony in commemoration. This glorious past is founded on history as deep and wide as it is imagined and invented, a subtly the text carefully articulates. Commemorated in art, in rituals, pageants, parades and dances, in cookbooks and in kitsch, in tourist guides, and, especially, in architecture, the production of these regional aesthetics for a tourist gaze reflects a turn-of-the- 19th century nationalism and triumph of invented place identity.

1.13 Region, Regionalism and Critical Regionalism

The Southwest has a globally recognizable regional place identity. It is a place identity forged in the earliest days of the American colonial expansion across the region.

Regionalism, as a movement and self-conscious expression emerged with a force in the 1930s American landscape of the Great Depression. Regionalism was considered a significant and constitutive aspect of art, architecture, and literature. Regionalism emerged soon after in political and economic analysis—and has never left. Regionalism has remained a mainstay of American political, historical, and cultural thought.

Sociologist and folklorist Howard Odom (1884-1954) writes some of the earliest defenses of regionalism as a suitable unit for observation, interaction, and identity formation in cultural life. He is credited by many with crafting the term to explore American folk art. Regionalism emerged into a world where regions were accepted geographical places.

Yi-Fu Tuan (2004) begins his assessment on the state of cultural geography in the newest century with a story on regions. He describes the attempts of graduate students, including his own attempt, to define regions. The more theoretically inclined, he writes, “struggled to draw definitive boundaries around a region, as though it were a purely objective entity rather than a collage of geography, memory, and sentiment, welded together and burnished by art and ideology, which is pretty much how we see a region now” (Tuan 2004, 729). This new understanding, Tuan claims, marks “progress” in the field.

Political geographer Anssi Paasi (2003, 2009) defines regions as “historically contingent processes, related in different ways to political, governmental, economic and cultural practices and discourses” (Paasi 2003, 481). In his discussion of old and new

regionalism, Paasi contends that the newest wave of regionalism is no longer “confined merely to formal inter-state regional organizations and institutions” but is “characterized by multidimensionality, complexity, fluidity and non-conformity” (Paasi 2009, 127). “Strong senses of regional identity, often cutting affiliation to existing nations, have been reported around the world, but very little critical research and knowledge exists on this phenomenon,” he writes (131).

Critical regionalism, one of the new regionalisms, claims region as a specific and contested historical construction. Critical regionalists see regions as constructions that both reflect and challenge histories of settlement, colonial expansion, migration, legal and political histories, ecological understanding, environmental characterizations, and other forces (Herr 1996; Limón 2008; Powell 2007). Regions are theoretically characterized, in similar ways to place, as fluid, shifting, and ephemeral but also as persistent, patterned, and entrenched. The term critical regionalism was first employed in the early 1980s by architects Liana Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis. Their most nuanced overview of critical regionalism in architecture is presented in *Critical Regionalism; Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World* (2003). Lefaivre and Tzonis trace the critical regional tradition to the Roman writer, architect, and engineer Vitruvius. The many attempts to get rid of the regionalism as an architectural term, lest it be resurrected and employed as it has been historically, in war, exclusion, ranking, and violence, prove to be futile efforts, they claim. They surmise that the strength of the concept reflects “ubiquitous conflicts in all fields—including architecture—between globalization and international intervention, on the one hand, and local identity and ethnic insularity, on the other” (Lefaivre and Tzonis 2003, 10).

Lefavre and Tzonis nuanced lament on the continued power of regionalism nonetheless celebrates the regionalism embraced by historian and urbanist Lewis Mumford (1895-1990). Mumford's work is characterized as applied critique. Mumford (1941) embraces regionalism in architectural style as a way to simultaneously engage the universal and the local. Mumford recognizes the flexibility and fluidity of regional identity and place and in this made regionalism a cosmopolitan rather than a provincial expression. In the pre- and post-World War II era, regionalism becomes equated with the provincial—an insular and dangerous resistance or opposition to universal and global. It is seen as premised on an identity rooted in fictitious pasts and glorious futures based on homelands and blood ties. Mumford rejects this claim, and embraces regionalism as a “multicultural and cosmopolitan force,” and as a place where the local and the global can interact and be negotiated (Mumford 1941, 47).

José E. Limón (2008) offers the most thorough definition of critical regionalism to date. “Derived from the architectural thinking of Kenneth Frampton and a general Western Marxist transition,” he writes, “critical regionalism is simultaneously a theory, methodology, and praxis for recognizing, closely examining, fostering, but also linking cultural and socioeconomic localized identities, especially as these stand in antagonistic, if also negotiated, relationships with the late capitalistic globalization” (Limón 2008, 167). Local identities are not fixed practices, he notes, but often were maintained as distinct from a “globalizing ‘outside’” (168). Limón claims that these relationships are deeply implicated in geographical place. They are also theorized as relational and comparable from across local as well as global space. This manifestation of critical difference reflects the “complexity of local cultures in comparison to others in the world,

while recognizing that all are in constant but critical interaction with the global” (167). Through critical regionalism he sees “an alternative way to render literary histories” (167). Through the concept of critical regionalism, he writes, “a case seems to be developing for a renewal of regionalist thinking, not in any isolated sense but rather within yet in tension with globalization” (167).

Regions re-emerge into the literature and conversations about the contemporary world speaks to a cyclical preoccupation with geographical attachment, organization, and belonging—all central concepts in this research project. Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) explores the ways nations can be theorized as social constructions. Nations are “cultural artifacts of a particular kind,” and Anderson is curious why these “particular cultural artifacts have aroused such deep attachments” (Anderson 1983, 4). His work sheds light on the history and tenacity of the nation state as the most powerful category of modern belonging. Regions function in many of the same ways. These geographical attachments create a sense of connection with strangers—a community by virtue of location. The narratives that build these imagined communities are deeply woven into the topography of classification, into the architecture, into organizations and structures, and into the material and physical place features. They are also woven into the literature, histories, narratives, the imaginaries, and the expectations of what places are and have been and could be.

1.14 Shared Patterns: The Particular and the Universal Reimagined

Regions are both larger than any particular place including towns, cities and states, but smaller than nations. They allow a spatial identity that is broader than where you live, but not so easily lost to a national identity. David Harvey in *Spaces of Hope* (2000) explores

“the tricky question of the relation between ‘particularity’ and ‘universality’ in the construction of knowledge” (Harvey 2000, 15). Harvey follows his remarks on the “tricky question” with a robust denial of the choice between the particular and the universal. “Within a relational dialectics,” he claims, “one is always internalized and implicated in the other” (16). This is one tenant of his approach to a historical-geographical materialism, which takes as central in its study of place a sustained tension between the geographical global forces of capitalism, the bodies embedded in these global networks, and the practices of contest and conciliation in expressions of culture, activism, and creativity that mark place. The tension between local, state, regional, national, and global frames is constantly at work in this research, in histories, in interviews, in organizations, and in themes.

The modern is tricky in all of its incarnations, especially the tendency in the modern to cast the world into binaries. Theorist Max Horkheimer (1972) aptly describes theory as critical if it seeks not only to describe, explain, and predict, but to liberate. Horkheimer’s liberation challenges not only how the world operates, but how it is understood and challenged. Critical theory is well-suited to the study of place. This is evident Harvey’s extensive Marxist-influenced geographical works (1996, 2000, 2006). Harvey explores that ways that power is connected and embedded in institutional contexts and social structures. He maintains that place, as much as the relationships in place, is a product of the capitalist mode of production. Changes in place are the product of human agency, but individuals are embedded in social relations. Harvey seeks to understand and unpack these relationships in particular places. He brings a spatial dimension into his material analysis. His insistence on the mutual construction of the

smallest unit into the largest imaginary was a commitment I try to keep in my own research. It is also a commitment to relationships that recognized what happens in one place impacts far more than is immediately evident.

A similar conviction is adopted by James Clifford in *The Predicament of Culture* (1988). He claims his work “migrates between the local and the global perspectives, constantly re-contextualizing its topic” (Clifford 1988, 6). Broadly conceived as a critical ethnography of the West, Clifford seeks to rupture the hegemonic discourses that have shaped the study of culture. He claims that nostalgia for some unbroken and authentic past, set against the dislocations of modernity, is a theme that shapes the way Western trained scholars see, study, and evaluate the world. The questions Clifford asked are familiar in critical theory, including ideas on who has the authority to speak for cultural identities, ideas on how essential elements and boundaries of culture established, and considerations of the role of ethnographers as they are implicated in their own account of culture. “What narratives of development, loss, and innovation can account for the present range of local oppositional movements?” he asks (8). Clifford did not deny the idea that the forces of modernity are disconcerting. “People and things are increasingly out of place” he writes (6). By the turn of the 20th century, Clifford claims that a “truly global space of cultural connections and dissolutions has become imaginable,” and so the “ethnographic modernist searches for the universal in the local, the whole in the part” (4).

The study of place, and the concept of place, lies at a productive juncture of the particular and the general. I engage as well as defer this idea in this research project. I draw extensively from a wide range of scholars and theories in this research project in order to explore the particular. Harvey’s critical theory informed my own critical

theoretical stances for example, but I did not propose a materialist analysis of place. My research project was conceived primarily as fieldwork that sought to, in Tuan's words, leave theory hovering supportively in the background. I am content to let critical theory, for example, hover supportively in the background in this place ethnographic research project. I can see the addition of a critical approach, such as gender, easily commanding a central position in both the theory and methods of future place ethnography. My purpose in this project was to develop this framework and to take it into the field. I do not seek to craft a universal model. I do hope to create a useful model, if only for my own future use, that can be taken to any particular place. The wealth of detail in the particular is heady, and trying to untangle the meanings in place is deeply satisfying. To this end, I dispense with theory that guided and shaped the ways I considered place and turn to the methods and strategies that shaped my work in the field.

Chapter 2: Place Ethnography: Developing an Interdisciplinary Framework to Study Place

This project was an inquiry into the study *of place in place*. Part of this research was a theoretical consideration on place. Part of this research project named, defined, and refined place ethnography as a methodological framework for place study. Part of this research project was the application of place-ethnographic methods to study a particular place—Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. The previous chapter laid out the theoretical possibilities for this project’s place ethnographic fieldwork. This chapter overviews the development of the place ethnographic methods I developed and used to capture the shifting, ephemeral, and powerful lived reality of place.

Yi-Fu Tuan claims that “place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people,” and as such, “place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspective of the people who have given it meaning” (Tuan 1979, 388). This chapter describes how I grounded my theoretical considerations into field practice. This chapter is a reflection on a process. It organizes and summarizes the framework and strategies of place ethnography that emerged during two years of fieldwork. I argue that place ethnographic practice is an embodied and emergent framework based on reflection and exchange. Refining this methodological approach through ethnographic dialogue during the course of research was a central part of the methodological development. A clear and cohesive framework emerged from this process.

“Some people are not much interested in the world around them,” Relph writes, “and place for them is mostly a lived background.” Others, he says, “always attend closely to the character of the places they encounter” (Relph 2009, 24). What results when people are asked to attend closely to the character of place? How do we attend closely to the character of a place? In *Senses of Place* (1997), Keith Basso and Steven Feld (eds.) claim that place-based ethnographies seek to “locate the intricate strengths and fragilities that connect places to social imagination and practice, to memory and desire, to dwelling and movement” (Basso and Feld 1997, 8).

Place is defined as a theoretical construct as well as a physical phenomenon. How places are imagined, narrated, enacted, contested, celebrated, and embodied in the landscape by the people who give them meaning are central to this project’s central considerations. Place remains open to definition as both a theoretical and methodological gesture. Place is project specific and dependent. It can range from public art projects to public schools, towns to regions, streets to global social media landscapes.

Place ethnography is a resolutely interdisciplinary methodological framework. It is ideally a team-based approach to place study, an idea I hope to develop in future projects. As a single-researcher endeavor, however, place ethnography is capable of reflecting the strengths and interests of a disciplinary focus within an interdisciplinary framework. Place ethnography is open to a range of disciplinary approaches but remains resolutely field based. I did not want to do ethnography *of* place, however, which would have entailed applying ethnographic methods to specific place. I was also not doing a town history, which was the second default assumption for my academic project. I was

building a methodological framework that was committed to ethnography yet was equally committed to historical inquiry and theoretical exploration.

I include a phenomenological component in this research project. This reflects my interest in design and the built environment, environmental study and existential experience, as well as my philosophical background. This framework is amenable to the inclusion of other approaches that can be melded to this historical and ethnographic framework. Examples include archaeology, ethnohistory, statistical and survey analysis, economic forecasting and modeling, Marxist analysis, or literary theory. Interdisciplinary frameworks should accommodate the disciplinary interests and strengths of scholars, the specific needs of a community, or the goals of specific projects, such as grants or place amenity development.

The first part of chapter traces a brief history of place ethnography as it emerged into my intellectual work. I introduce the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process as a critical component of place ethnography at the University. I introduce core ideas of dialogue. Dialogue is exchange and challenge, but it is also a process of careful listening—recognizing interviews and everyday conversations as a source of place knowledge as well as methodological grounding. I define the core components of place ethnography as history and ethnography. The second part of this chapter focuses on place ethnography as history. The third part looks at place ethnography as ethnography. Part four looks at place ethnography as phenomenology. Core components of each approach, as well as examples, are included in their attendant sections.

Introduction to Place Ethnography: Initial Articulations

I was introducing myself and my work in a graduate seminar when I first used the term place ethnography to describe my research.¹ I used the term regularly thereafter. I came

to the study of place late in my academic career. I spent decades among the fields of political science, economics, philosophy, and American Studies. I considered the built environment exclusively in terms of public space and protest. When I turned my attention to place, I discovered excellent studies of particular places across various disciplinary fields. There were theoretical works on place in philosophy, environmental psychology, anthropology, literary studies, sustainability studies and history. I found place considerations in considerations of visual representations of all kinds, in writing on poetry, and in poems and music. Place was a consideration in scholarship that engaged Marxist social theory. There was an enormous body of applied work in architecture and historic preservation. Reading a magazine at the Whole Foods checkout I read an article about the sense of place in cheese, and listening to NPR I heard a story on using iPhone to map addiction, and the intimate ways that place and addiction were connected.

The term place ethnography became shorthand for the research I wanted to undertake. I wanted to be a place ethnographer. Place ethnography was a term I used to bring fields and methods together. Place ethnography as shorthand served me well as I developed and refined what I saw as the key characteristics of the method I wanted to use to study place. It was, in early explanations, a blending of theory, philosophy, and history into a field-based place study. I saw similar kinds of work in scholarship across disciplines that focused on place specifically or figured ideas of places prominently into research. I also saw a great and productive divergence in theories and approaches to study. This research project is my attempt to join this conversation about place that has emerged in the academy and in the popular consciousness.

In *On the Plaza* (2000), Setha Low remarks that her “project began with a methodological problem that was transformed into twelve years of ethnographic fieldwork and ethnohistorical research” (37). Low claims part of her focus is an exploration of how different disciplines study and represent public space. She notes the range of place studies, which include behavioral and qualitative studies, architectural studies describing built environments, historical studies, geographical studies and environmental studies. “Yet the theoretical questions I wanted to address required the integration of architectural, archaeological, historical, ethnographic, and phenomenological materials to construct a multilayered analysis and nuanced account” (38).

This chapter is a record of my articulation of field-based interdisciplinary place research, cobbled together from a range of scholars and clarified for this research project. In the sections below, I describe the framework of place ethnography and explain the elements in this study. I then illustrate how I took this framework, even as I was building it, and grounded it in a particular place. The analysis of the patterns and findings that emerged from my place ethnographic study of Truth or Consequences is located in the chapters that follow.

2.1 Institutional Review Boards

The initial articulation of what my particular place ethnographic research was set out in an Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission. This is a critical component of place ethnography in the university. It is a necessary component in creating a framework for research between academic scholars and communities. The IRB is a major reason many students and professors who might otherwise be interested in ethnographic or other

community-based work choose not to engage in these kinds of studies. The IRB process is exhausting and often defeating to qualitative researchers.

The language of IRB application is damning on its face for community-based qualitative research. The term human subject, as a very basic illustration, is off-putting. Many qualitative students and professors I talked to had thrown out peopled projects because of IRB requirements. The richness of community research is thwarted by the IRB at the University of New Mexico. The specialized jargon of quantitative language, based on classical experimental or statistical study, is overwhelming. My background in qualitative statistical methods and teaching statistics and research methods meant I was well equipped to understand the expectations. I was at a loss about how to navigate them in a qualitative language. Explaining the form and expectations to other graduate students exposed a quantitative language that was impossible to bridge. These are well-known flaws of IRB boards and are constantly shifting in the contest for qualitative research recognition.

The IRB's task, to check research methodology to ensure compliance with federal governmental guidelines for research involving human subjects, often precludes changes at the state institutional level. Guidelines are in place to protect institutions from harm as well, which also makes challenges difficult. I found that the IRB process undermined what I sought to do in the field. I could not have casual conversations in the field, for example, without a signed permission form. The IRB demanded that participants be anonymous, in another example, before they would grant approval. These requirements changed my research trajectories and the tenor of my project. There needs to be a system

for qualitative community research, in place, in order to encourage field-based, collaborative community research at all levels across research communities.

2.2 The Role of Dialogue

Dialogue and exchange were paramount in this research project. I sought to study place in a way that focused attention on the people who give places meaning, rather than to use interviews and observations to prove particular points I wanted to highlight about places. Scholar Annette Rodriguez demands that history be a history of bodies—a history of people—not of events that happened in particular places or during particular times. Place is a phenomenon of people. It is a phenomenon that is imagined and reimagined, which is fluid and contested but which nonetheless has persistent patterns, material qualities, and recognizable features. I wanted to figure out how people in my place named, claimed, and defined these features, patterns, and qualities. A key strategy in the development of place ethnography was figuring out how to make dialogue a central component.

I also sought to fold my background as a critical scholar and public space activist into the study of place.² Moving place from a backdrop where events unfold to the foreground of study often results in research where people are absent. Labor, for example, is absent in most discussions of the the built environment. Many philosophical meditations on sense of place privilege monumental landscape, beautiful physical landscapes, historic landscapes or other characteristics of a place without attending to cultural or economic histories. Critical histories of violence in its myriad of forms, from genocidal removal of indigenous people to legal land theft, for example, are not allowed to intrude on the sense of beauty or charm. Creating or maximizing a pleasing, inviting, or other fabricated sense of place is the aim of most assessments. Foregrounding places

as physical and not historical or cultural sites can obscure the histories of many for the privileges of the few. Dialogue creates room to critical consider these issues.

Dialogue was a vital methodological strategy. Allowing room for intellectual exchange was vital. I sought the expertise of residents and visitors—the lived experiences of people in place—in order to listen to the ways that people talk about place but also in order to ask them how they would study place or what they thought was important about places. This is the foundation of dialogue: recognizing the epistemological, ontological, and metaphysical understandings that people bring to the table and according them respect. Striving to spark the extraordinary experience of the ordinary requires dialogue. It requires reflection and rigorous self-analysis, as well as a willingness to listen to the wisdom of others. In place ethnography this means paying attention and respecting to the expertise of the lived-experience of others. Freire claims exchange between the teacher (researcher) and student (participant) is where critical comprehension develops. He writes that “the ability of the educator to know the object (place) is remade every time through the students’ own ability for knowing, for developing critical comprehension in themselves,” where dialogue is the “connection, this epistemological relation” (Shor and Freire 1983, 14).

Theory helped me strategize my methods in the field. Relph (1976) defines place as the immediate source of experience, for example, and so I foregrounded place experiences in interviews. I heeded Tuan’s (1991) advice to let theory hover supportively. I agree with his argument that theory can often overshadow the phenomenon it seeks to shed light on. While I enjoy works that set out to illustrate how, for example, public land and economic relationships are made legible through a Marxist analysis, I see in certain

works a tendency to present ethnographic data to further theoretical arguments. While this emerges in this research project, I strove to let the voices of my interviews shape my place perceptions. It feels impossible to separate theoretical considerations from analysis. Every effort was made in the field to ask questions about place and experience and allow the experience of place to be approached with as much objectivity as possible. Each section below explores the ways I set out to gather data and observations.

Through history, I hoped to capture the complex and contested memories of people and place. Through ethnography, I hoped to capture the shared patterns of behavior, values, beliefs, and language in my research town and region. Through phenomenological contemplation and exchange, I hoped to capture aspects of people's place experiences. This project's place ethnographic methods coalesced into three separate but overlapping approaches: historical, ethnographic, and phenomenological.

2.3 Place Ethnography as Presentation: Wikipedia

I gave several presentations during the course of my fieldwork. I was asked to introduce myself and my research dozens of times at meetings and other formal and informal gatherings.³ Several years into my research, I created a Wikipedia entry on place ethnography to use in presentations. I sought input from scholar SETHA M. LOW, whose work I used extensively as a model for my own research.⁴ She agreed via e-mail to review my entry. Lowe's email response was encouraging, claiming the definition "worked well" and the beginning efforts were "excellent."⁵ The Wikipedia definition read:

Place ethnography is a method that blends traditional ethnographic and historic research with a range of disciplinary techniques in order to study place. In addition to field-based observation, documentation and analysis, place ethnographic research design can include

phenomenological study, archaeological interpretation, the inclusion of critical race, gender, class and social theory, architectural surveying, cultural landscape studies approaches, spatial theory, mapping, visual analysis, quantitative, survey or statistical analysis as well as historical and other archival methods. This emergent interdisciplinary methodological framework allows individual field-based place exploration in specific localities as well as in conjunction with other place-specific scholarship and research. Place ethnography has roots in anthropology, geography, cultural resource and preservation planning, architecture, archeology and the humanities.⁶

Buoyed by this feedback, I wrote an entomological section and scholarship section. I included many of the scholars mentioned in Chapter 1 of this work, several articles that specifically use ethnographic methods to study place, and sections of my IRB, outlining the method. I linked a dozen online sites and discussed the emergent role of the digital humanities. A Wikipedia editor rejected my entry with the following comments: “While ethnography already has an entry on Wikipedia, I could not find a single academic journal article mentioning or discussing ‘place ethnography,’ and as such, this article submission can’t be accepted.” The editor also noted that my entry was “written like an essay and is quite mediocre at that,” and if the term “really existed” I would have to use it in context. The editor added, as a parting remark, that this was “not likely to be possible.”⁷

My failed efforts to create a Wikipedia entry provided a great story to share in presentation, especially the line about my mediocre writing. It allowed me to demonstrate key ideas about place studies that emerged in my own research—ideas about veracity and reliability. I got to talk about what meant to try something new in the field. It allowed me to talk about how important great models of scholarship and simultaneously allowed me to talk about how important it is to figure out your research interests diverge from what is

already in the field.⁸ The Wikipedia format had a powerful effect on student attitudes, even after a discussion on issues of reliability and veracity, and even after they knew it has been rejected. Students freely admitted the format was perceived as legitimate. This was the same attitude I experienced when I handed potential interviewees a thick stack of printouts from my research blog about the IRB when I wanted them to sign a consent form. They didn't care to look at it too closely, or challenge the source, me, or sources. Ironically, the ability to screen-capture the Wikipedia-formatted place ethnography definition entry was incredibly powerful.

2.4 Place Ethnography as Presentation: Conferences

In April 2013, I presented a talk titled "The Healing Waters Trail: A Case Study in Preservation Place Making," at the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Heritage Alliance Conference at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, NM. I discussed the Healing Waters Trail as a viable rural-community approach to preservation place making. My audience numbered 17. Several expressed interest in trails as a strategy of either place making or preservation. The term preservation place making was a catchy phrase they wanted to use, according to one audience member. My presentation was brief to allow for questions, comments, and time to fill out a handout. Several people were very interested in the preservation place making process, especially questions of stakeholders. A few audience members from local Main Streets, a preservation organization, wanted to know how to start projects.

When pushed to share what they enjoyed about their towns, and when asked to identify their favorite thing about their place, no one talked about walking on trails or going to festivals or downtown historic façades. Everyone offered particular experiences at places, such as meeting neighbors on the street, or the feel of being in a place, or the

sense of belonging. This is where I think phenomenology is so powerful in the study of place. I found throughout my fieldwork and in thinking about a place ethnographic method that the experience of place was so very often the description of an internal emotional response. My handout asked audience members, who I put in quick ad hoc groups, what kinds of projects they would like to see in their towns. I gave them an unlimited imaginary budget and turned them to their neighbors. Not surprisingly, many groups wanted trails or other outdoor amenities, but ideas ranged from better sidewalks to festivals, and yet the conversation never ventured too far from the idea that the best thing about living in small towns was the experience of *being* in a small town.

This brought conceptual disconnects in my methods into sharp focus. I was curious about tangible assets. Community members in attendance wanted tangible assets as well, but were focused on experiences. I was operating on the assumption that amenities create the place, in a literal and figurative sense, for experience. I began to understand that this relationship was far more complex. Experience also create the space for asset historic asset building There was a general agreement that you had to really like small-town living, and the consensus was that places needed to attract people who also enjoyed small-town living.

What I took away from the lively 20-minute discussion was the idea that people were more interested in trying to maintain the viability of their towns, presumably by bringing in amenities, in order to maintain the places of connection. This was an interesting tension. There was the specific, the desire for concrete action, the praxis of place making in actual places. There was the general, the idea that when many people

talk about places, what they talk about are relationships and experiences or expectations and desires. These two ideas, although distinct, overlap and blur.

Presentation as dialogue is foremost about exchange. I had several other opportunities to present in the community. I asked community members what they wanted to see in their places and know about their places. I asked community members what they used to pull projects together, what community or other sources were available to them if they were researching their own place, and who they reached out to, after I shared my own experiences in place. I repeated these questions and entreaties at many town meetings where I briefly introduced myself and my project. Time and again I told people that I studied place, and I was trying to create a framework to study places. Every time I asked people to be attendant to places, every time I sought their input on how I should study place, I was reiterating my commitment to place ethnography as a methodological framework committed to dialogue. People complied. If you want to understand this place, people would tell me, do, or look at, or talk to, or read, or try this—these many directives and suggestions helped me create this framework.

Place Ethnography as History

The comment that set off my regional choice—that Southern New Mexico had no history—led to a flurry of historical reconnaissance. The first component in place ethnography is history. This proved vexing in my initial exploration of the historical sources. The area's history in the region's standard historical texts is elided, fragmented, and subsumed into other histories. The south-central region of New Mexico is absent in New Mexico histories. It is glimpsed in a section on the Camino Real del Tierra. It is located in a passage on the *Jornado del Muerto*, where people died from the lack of water if the Apache did not kill them first. It is a brief mention of mining and ancient ruins to

the west. The land of Billy the Kid lies to the west. The Mexican border marks the south. Sparkling gypsum sands controlled by the Department of Defense, except for a small portion for recreation, lie to the east.

I started with what I knew about Truth or Consequences and Southern New Mexico. I was surprised to realize how little that was. I assumed I knew more than I did because of my personal history.⁹ Most of my historical knowledge, however, concerned Northern New Mexico or the far southern borderland. Early historical literature of the Southwest reflects a celebration of empire and nation building. The most famous includes Herbert Eugene Bolton's *Spanish exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706* (1916); and his protégé, (Father) John Francis Bannon's *The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821* (1970). Edward Spicer's *Cycles of Conquest* (1962) strives away from the heroic mythic past celebrated by Bolton and Bannon, but it also reflects an anthropological rather than historical mindset. David J. Weber, in *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest* (1988) attributes the persistence of regional myths of a romantic Spanish colonial past to an overreliance on texts such as Bolton's. Scholars such as Frederick Jackson Turner shifted the gaze of historians to American colonial expansion and frontiers, to the same end. The public's longing for a heroic past is easily sated in this regional history.

Years after these initial considerations and re-visitations of my Southwest history collection, after interviews and observations and reading anything I could unearth, I conclude that this historical vacancy, as I call it, has a lot to do with the Apache control of the region prior to the turn of the 19th century to the 20th. The dastardly and gloriously romantic history written by New Mexico territorial governor L. Bradford Prince, A

Concise History of New Mexico (1913), is an early illustration of this historical tradition in New Mexico history. Prince mentions the Apaches, who he claims kept the frontier in a continual state of alarm, but he makes no mention of reclamation in the same region. The Apache are merely foils against the Spanish. The south is a frontier—unsettled. It is a common motif.

2.5 Writing Local History

“There is scant literature about local history,” claims Carol Kammen (1996) in the introduction to *The Pursuit of Local History* (Kammen 1996, 11). This collection of reprinted essays from journals, speeches, and books, ranging from the 1820s to the 1980s, illustrates some of the tensions in the discipline of history and from the margins—the place to where local history is often relegated. Local history is family history and self-published memoirs. Local place histories are often written to commemorate events, and as such reflected the same kinds of partial and celebratory colonial narratives as national commemorative histories. Local history projects have strong ties to preservation efforts as well as commemoration. There is a scarcity of information about my town and region.¹⁰ The history of the small, south-central region of New Mexico is found in fragments pulled from other sources. The bulk of my historical information as well as my framework for writing a place history emerged in the field. Part of my method was being all over the map, so to speak, in my search for place histories, in order to assess the information available

The professionalization of history as a discipline at the turn of the 19th century separated academic history from self-published or civically driven histories. There were convergences. Local place histories written at the turn of the 19th century through mid-century about the Southwest, for example, celebrated a romantic past and that masked

violence and exclusion. These were written by local historians and boosters, by economic interests like the railroad, but also by a great many professional. Historians Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870-1953) and his disciple John Francis Bannon (1905-1986) founded Borderlands studies with romanticized histories of epic conquest and adventure. These are the place histories and imaginaries that emerged in the field.

I started this place ethnography in the archives. It is a default location for academics. I was looking for place narratives generally. I was not sure what I was looking for specifically. I was looking for anything that mentioned the town of Hot Springs, but I also wanted general place narratives. I explored Record Set 115.2, Records of Washington, D.C., Administrative Offices (1891-1987).¹¹ My exploration of these archives yielded little that I used in this final project analysis. I found nothing on the town of Hot Springs except for a few mentions of the basketball team, which played the dam-site team.¹²

I found one general place narrative—a cultural history of the region. I found it five, maybe six times. Titled “History of Irrigation in the Rio Grande Valley,” it is an epic sweep of history—timeless traditions of First Nation irrigation are folded into Spanish histories of settlement and community. Most of the historical conjecture on First Nation irrigation has been rejected. It was a history meant to illustrate the ways past cultural groups used irrigation to make settlement possible. Both groups were cast as part of a vanished or vanishing past. I did not find other place narratives. I did not find brochures or pamphlets from world’s fairs or promotional pictures. I did not find manifests with names of workers at the Elephant Butte camps or wages. Place narratives, place histories, cultural histories, and cultural narratives—all mostly absent.¹³ These

histories were not the kinds of narratives I was looking for about the place and landscape. They did reflect the common regional imaginaries of the Southwest.¹⁴

Michael Kammen (1993) argues historical interpretation is shaped by contests over meaning in contemporary landscapes. Folk advocates, Kammen claims, forward alternative sources. The archives I found the most useful were local—museums, self-printed histories, oral histories, and memory, which Kammen notes have been called the “archives of the poor” (Kammen 1993, 408). These however, are increasingly digitized. The calls to “do” local history are numerous, citing identity, sense of place, uniqueness, better tourism, creating a sense of belonging, and other values. The radical proliferation of digital history creates a new opportunity to challenge and invigorate history and to bring these arguments back to the fore.

Challenges to historical narratives emerged as a key consideration of place ethnography. Many local histories I encountered had a tenuous resemblance to legitimacy. Rather than discounting suspect historical narratives, which I do admit to doing as well, I tried to understand the work these historical narratives did in the community. Source was always an issue. Historical sources supposedly available to communities—such as governmental reports and planning documents—are key sources in place ethnographic research. These sources are generally unknown. Most people in the community get their history online or from other community members.

The digital universe of information is immense. There are historical sources such as newspapers, as well as access to databases and scholarly work that is reshaping how history is being imagined on the ground as well as from the university. The cultural histories of rural places in institutional holdings are scarce, but access to the historical

records that create these histories is growing at a phenomenal rate. American rural place histories are found in archives or special collections, and these are increasingly digitized. Federal and state offices, for example, as well as schools and public libraries, are repositories of the trove of the Government Printing Office (GPO).

Early Southwest imaginaries wrought through the dissemination of federal survey and the attendant illustrations, photographs, maps, and other government-funded exploration material. Government narratives and legally mandated research triggered by federal or state legal requirements are an extraordinary source of place narratives. These reports, surveys and other materials are consulted mostly by other practitioners. There is a global movement to open access to non-university residents. The shift to digital histories in the town is partial, but the rate of the increase and reliance on digital resources was evident in the town years I spent in town. Local newspapers in T or C, both the Herald and Sentinel, have excellent online access for example.

2.6 Architectural Surveys, Master Plans, Institutional Reports, Agency Reports, Etc.

My efforts to locate the histories of my town and region often led to local resource libraries, housed on shelves at local or regional government offices. Like acronyms in government work, and the avalanche of government publications on all manners of programs and topics, these sources are generally only known to practitioners. Most of these resources are government funded projects. Architectural and community surveys are the most useful and valuable resource. Community planning documents are also a tremendous source of information. Master plans or comprehensive plans are long range and almost always based on extended fieldwork. Reports by local, state, and government agencies hold a wealth of information. Private corporations create reports for public

entities, for a legal mandate that demands archaeological surveys, for instance, that get filed away.

The University of New Mexico's Public Bureau of Business and Economic Research creates data-rich reports and maps of all kinds for communities that should be part of visible and easily accessed community resources. I used architectural historian David Kammer's *National Historic Preservation Nomination* (2004), extensively. I discuss this preservation history in Chapter 5. It is the foundation of many of the town's historic narratives. The *City of Truth or Consequences Downtown Master Plan and Metropolitan Redevelopment* (2014) is completed during my fieldwork. My observation of the process contributed to my emergent framework. The same group writes the *The City of Truth or Consequences Comprehensive Plan* (2004). The plan, noted in the executive summary, is a compilation of public input, socioeconomic data, current conditions analysis, and recommended policies and actions.

Sierra County Comprehensive Plan (2006) has a wealth of ethnographic information from dozens of public meetings. The report also includes broad sweeps of history, economic and political data, and other information. The *City of Truth or Consequences Affordable Housing Plan* (2014) contains focused economic analysis as well as basic information on the housing infrastructure. The *Sierra County Economic Development Strategic Plan* (2008) has sharp economic analysis, drawn from a global mapping company. These reports reflect the efforts of teams of well-trained professionals and long-term collaborations that are local but also regional and national.¹⁵

There are capital improvement plans for the city and county, as well as for Elephant Butte and the nearby community of Williamsburg, along with a host of other

legally mandated planning documents. Local reports, despite their wealth of information, comparative analysis, and range and accessible summaries of all manner of data are massively underutilized. Most local officials I talked with say these reports are useful. But, as one remarked specifically, probably not used as much as they should be, especially because they cost so much. These resources seem to be used during relevant periods and then shelved. These reports run between \$50,000 and \$100,000 on average to undertake. They are not readily available to the general public. This is changing with digital archives.

The 2014 *Truth or Consequences Downton Maser Redevelopment Plan* was available at the local coffee shop Passion Pie. I asked the barista if people read it, and she says yes, constantly. Several copies were stolen. Copies of David Kammen's historic district nomination were also stolen, from the local library. Access to digital resources will be useful, but a larger budget for hard copies would also be helpful. The messy, incomplete, and haphazard vertical file of the past in the town's public library is still a powerful cultural and social archive, but storing and sharing history is changing.

2.7 Historical Considerations in Case Studies

Case study is used in this research project as an experimental element. Case study is proposed as a component of place ethnographic study for several reasons. A historical case is a phenomenon specific to space, place, and time but can resonate in contemporary landscapes. Case studies illuminate historical influences and patterns that a broad sweep of history potentially misses. Case studies with a strong methodological influence from historical research allow an efficient focus. Details can be fleshed out, and patterns on the ground are illuminated.

The fields of architecture and planning influenced my development of a place ethnographic framework. Case study has a special importance. Knowledge of specific cases—design, process, material, history, influence—all impact the ability to communicate illustrative or singular instances that are place defining. I argue the same is true in place ethnography as research in the academy and in professional practice. Cases create an opportunity to think historically, conceptually, and theoretically about the larger phenomena of place. Historical case studies combine events, histories, and structures writ small, creating spaces where of the past and present can be examined in detail.

2.8 I am Not Writing a Town History

This leads back to the role of history, to wrap up this place ethnographic history section.

What is the place history? *Where* is the place history? Why particular place histories have been written, or not written, are shared or not shared are critical considerations in a place ethnographic study. The kind of information available on place tells its own story.

Striving to tie a particular place to these various histories illuminates place in remarkable ways. So does challenging the histories of a place, which I discover in the field. I was not writing a history of the town or region but was deeply invested in grounding my place ethnographic study and research in history. Who writes these histories, if they are written down at all? Where did people learn these histories? Where to locate historical foundations is a choice made by scholars in the field. Some are more obvious than others.

All place ethnographic research is grounded in a history that stretches to some horizon beyond the established boundaries of the site, and both should be chosen with an eye to the historical narratives that shape the contemporary site. These can be mutually constitutive and are likely to shift. With regularity during my fieldwork, I told people I was not writing a town history. What *are* you doing, people asked? Place ethnography, I

answered. I am studying the town *right now*, in the field, *here*. I told people I wanted to know what kinds of histories people tell about the town, and what kinds of histories the town tells people. I looked to historical narratives are embodied in buildings and streets and reflected in promotional literature. You can't talk about a place without talking about history.¹⁶

History occasionally overtook this research project, which illustrates the pivot role history has in thinking about place. I was not writing a history, even though a history emerged from this study. I emphasized this repeatedly in the field. I was interested in how place histories emerge on the one hand—the *what* and *where* of place historical narratives. I was curious about how history manifested in the contemporary moment. This is what I told people. Historical understandings were constantly at work in field assessment. Place ethnography is grounded in history as much as it is grounded in fieldwork. This place ethnographic project included a lot of history. Historical grounding preceded ethnographic grounding. The historical research I did on reclamation and turn of the 19th century regional and national history allowed me to recognize persistent place process and place imaginaries in the field.

I did not understand these historical patterns until I was doing ethnographic fieldwork, however, which demonstrated the mutually constitutive process of history and ethnography. In other words, the history did not make sense until I was in the field. Patterns in the field, on the other hand, were recognizable because of my historical grounding. Neither of these methodological observations would have emerged without the constant dialogue in the field. I take peoples questions about what I am doing in town to ask them about their own history. What kinds of histories do they know about this

place? What are their place histories? What kinds of places did they imagine would be here? Where did these historical ideas come from? Do you mind, before we start, signing this official form so we can talk?

Place Ethnography as Ethnography

The primary method of place ethnography is a field-based exploration of place.

Ethnographic approaches to social research have diffused far beyond anthropology.

Ethnographic writing is storytelling. I sought to fashion a story of place through the narratives, from person to institutional to historical, that I found in the field. The elements of methodological emergence and of dialogue in fieldwork forced me to critically consider how *people* conceived of and fashioned understanding of place and what they imagined the study of place might or should entail. The central role of historical grounding in place ethnography was partly an attempt to explore historical narratives as they emerge in the field. Contemporary ideas about place are deeply intertwined in past accounts. Contemporary place imaginaries are wrought from the past..

How residents and visitors talked about history is a central question of place ethnographic research. How historical tropes and familiar regional historical place imaginaries emerged into interviews and other narratives, such as promotional literature, or events, such as festivals, is also a central consideration. My continued engagement with place histories during my fieldwork made me appreciate the intricate fragility of historical webs as well as the strength and stubborn persistence of certain historical narratives. The historical component of place ethnography brings a measure of cohesion to the fragments of past people, place, and events that shapes contemporary landscapes and narratives. Coupling the historical elements of place ethnography with the

ethnographic components of place ethnography illustrates the places where historic narratives collide and cohere with contemporary narratives.

2.9 Fieldwork: Being in Place

I describe the town in narrative in Appendix 2. I set down these descriptions in narrative as part of my place ethnographic method and process. In many of the town's oral histories the narrative descriptions of places allowed me to walk the streets, so to speak, of the town. Narrating place creates a different experience, both in writing and in reading. I watched students at a UNM Design and Professional Assistance Center studio in T or C (2011) spend their time behind the camera lens or smart phone lens, taking perspective photographs or detail photographs. Very few actively listened to the history provided by town historian and tour guide Sherry Fletcher. I followed students all day. Forcing students to write a narrative description of the town would be a nod to phenomenological methods and to a close and careful attending of place. Narrative figures centrally in place ethnography. One of the initial foundations of place ethnography was creating a place narrative.

Photographs, maps and visual representations are the second foundation in the transition from initial historic reconnaissance to ethnographic fieldwork. I look at visual representations throughout this project. Historical resources and digital resources are teeming with visual representations of place. I discuss several photographic works in this project. I tried, in my initial collection of town visual material, to get a sense of the built environment by decade. I looked at a fewer representations of people. The place ethnographic narratives I sought from people in the field did not include attempts to reconstruct past narratives of place identities. There was a tension between my focus on the built environment and my insistence that place be a story of people—a tension between

history and ethnography. I navigated this tension with a focus on the historic built environment and the contemporary ethnographic place understandings. The focus of place ethnographic research projects, like definitions of place, should be project specific. Historic built environment photographs, ranging from the turn of the century to the present, are located in Appendix 1.

My fieldwork began in July 2012 and ended in August 2014. My original intention was to conduct one year of fieldwork, which I extended to two years as the first year swiftly retreated.¹⁷ Fieldwork is deeply satisfying. After my first year, however, I was flummoxed by the multiple and contradictory patterns I had encountered. I was still actively defining place ethnography as a methodological framework. I extended my fieldwork and got an IRB extension and moved to town. I wanted to capture the thick description that anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously writes about when he discusses ethnographic fieldwork. Thick description is regularly used to describe phenomenological methods. I could not let go of the powerful idea that by living in the town of Truth or Consequences or the region, that the seemingly impossible task of comprehension might be within reach. My place ethnographic framework was coming into focus.

My insider/outsider ethnographic role and place choice meant that I went into the town with very strong memories and ideas about the place and people. Although my participant observation was influenced by these personal histories, my lack of ethnographic training contributed to my objectivity. My first day of fieldwork, noted in my first field book in stilted and halting language, began with several hours of driving.¹⁸ I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, and shared my quandary with the friendly counter girl when I stopped for coffee. She immediately introduced herself as a local with

a graduate degree in geography from UNM.¹⁹ She said she would set me up with anything I needed, poured me a cup of coffee, offered a host of ideas on who to talk to and where to go my first week, and gave me her number. That night, I attended a community work meeting, held before the regular City Council meeting. It was about the problems with the town's identity.

By the end of the day, I had visited, on foot and by car, most of downtown, the town's museum, the visitor's center, the downtown grocery store, Walmart, three convenient store/gas stations, one boutique, the community thrift store, a used-book store, the new bakery café, the local Western New Mexico University campus building, the recycling center, Ralph Edwards Park, Rotary Park, and the Veteran's Memorial Park. After the City Council meeting, I soaked for 30 minutes at the La Paloma baths and drove one last time through the downtown, which by 7:30 was a quiet and almost desolate version of small-town America picturesque. The Baptist church steeple and open Drive In burger place on Broadway were both brightly lit. Small pools of light puddled under the straight lines of streetlights. On Main Street there were were a few glowing neon signs, including the movie theater. There were no people, though, and all of the businesses were closed. Used to the visual complexity and busy fabric of urban places, I could see why people questioned my place choice. This history was harder to see in these landscapes, but it was vast, nuanced and exciting. Places, no matter the scale, are surprisingly rich, complex, unexpected and compelling. That's why a method to study place is needed.

2.10 Digital Places

The digital world is the first source of information for an ever-increasing number of people, and the only source of information for others. I met many travelers and place migrants during my fieldwork who did not rely on virtual information or use social

networks or social media. They were a decided minority. I did not meet any tourists who were not constantly digitally connected. I asked people in the field where they began their digital place experiences and the majority said they used Google or other search engines. Most people claimed they started with the maps that Google and Yahoo place at the top of their list of results. A few say they type in the place and see what comes up. Everyone agrees that place images are crucial.

Starting with place maps seems to be the default for online place research. Search engines map results are regularly illustrated with place photographs. Online maps increasingly include Wikipedia descriptions and place histories. Google Maps allows users to choose street views, satellite earth images or to even drop into a great many landscapes. Many people tell me they do all of their place reconnaissance and travel planning online before they ever step out the door. This is a decidedly geographical lens layered with a visual lens, and often narrated with common online encyclopedic sources. Short place histories are a ubiquitous feature. No one mentions government or municipal sites, but several people mention the Sierra County Tourism site. Eventually, of course, search engines tailor results to reflect the habits of users.

It is an interesting finding from a handful of interviews and street exchanges, but not surprising. The move to digital worlds influences every facet of life. Every recent book of tourism, place marketing and place branding stresses the critical importance of a strong online presence. The literature on the creative class holds that the world will soon be separated into places that either support a digital lifestyle or do not. The places that support a digital lifestyle—that are also culturally, geographically and physically rich environments—will be the places that thrive in the newest modern age. There is a

convergence in these arguments. On one hand in the argument that digital access is critical to all kinds of place development and will be the mark of success in both people and places, which mirrors the idea that tourism dollars and development is a social good for places. On the other hand are arguments about the creative class, evident in *Truth or Consequences*, and the reality that many people in the downtown historic core depend on online commerce for their livelihoods. A local business owner and real estate developer makes the argument that if you move to the town, an online consumer presence is necessary for retail success.²⁰ Travel blogs and other digital sources have created a wealth of information on places that must be assessed in any place ethnographic study.

2.11 Public Research Blog: Establishing a Virtual Ethnographic Dialogue

My public research blog was a key strategy in my place ethnographic method. A sample of a few posts is in Appendix 3. My public research blog proved to be one of my most effective and innovative tools for dialogue in the field. It served as an unexpected road map to my fieldwork, capturing some of the patterns that emerged during my research. I built a loyal base of regular readers. I got daily street comments, however, and by my third month in town I had a strong and regular readership. When I asked people why they read my blog, most told me it was because I gave them a business card and introduction letter, and they felt like they should. They were making good on the expectation to contribute and give time to me that constituted an integral part of the connection that is small-town place defining. Many of my readers slogged through my blog in order to talk back to me on the street.

My posts views were varied. They ranged from about 40 to 150 readers. One post was recently re-posted after the Lee Bell Center ceased to be the Senior Center and became the new Spaceport Visitor's Center. It had close to 200 readers. From July, 2012,

to December, 2014, I had over 5,000 page views. I reposted my research blog entrees to Facebook. Some were reposted by town residents, some by friends. Facebook accounted for almost 60% of my traffic. The rest was from Google and a few random places. I began my first post, on July 9, 2012, with the most overused phrase in the town's narrative records since April 1, 1950.²¹ The phrase is "Hello There! We've Been Waiting for You."²² It was the opening catchphrase from the radio quiz show "Truth or Consequences," the town's current namesake.

After a brief few sentences on my research, I explained the blog's purpose, "to create an on-line place where I can share some writing and research on the town in the next year as I do my field work," and my "ultimate goal," to be "compelling, useful and lively enough to generate readers and feedback." I was excited to be doing something new to connect with my research community, and it showed. I do not remember why I chose the image of Ralph Edwards posing by a road sign erected to celebrate the town's name change, from Hot Springs to Truth or Consequences, on April 1, 1950. The photo represents the first days of the town's new identity.²³ I provided my own place biography and briefly sketched out my scholarly background. I continued with a note on my methods, excerpted from my IRB to my blog. I ended my first post with a stanza from T. S. Eliot's (1942) "Little Gidding," from Four Quartets.

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our journeying
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

My second post, titled "What Am I Doing? IRBs, Protocols and Methods," began with a quote from Franklin D. Roosevelt. It was taken from a book Roosevelt had written when he was governor of New York, *Looking Forward* (1933). "It is common sense to

take a method and try it,” Roosevelt wrote, and if “it fails, admit it frankly and try another.” But “above all,” he commanded, “try something” (51). My efforts to ground my audience in history are everywhere evident. I lectured. I wrote, for example, that if “I fail to be clear please send me a comment,” before defining a protocol, in bold text, as a detailed plan of study. I wrote that “federal regulations define ‘research’ as a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge, and that Institutional Review Boards are legally required to provide research oversight. . . .” I referred to World War II research history and mentioned the 1970 Tuskegee experiments on Black prisoners. I cut and pasted extensively from my IRB application after this history.

While these IRB explanations seemed excessively detailed, two of the four veterans I interviewed referred to these histories. One served in World War II and one in Vietnam. I printed out my posts for the WW II veteran in large type. The Vietnam vet read my blog at a local public computer lab. I taught an online course at UNM during my fieldwork and was a regular at the lab. The veteran was also a regular. The size of the lab meant he was also always within comment range. He told me that he suffered daily from the Agent Orange defoliant, which he tried to soak out. He equated this suffering with the Tuskegee Experiment. I grew accustomed to his constant comments on my blog posts as I graded student papers.

My attempts at dialogue were well served by my research blog on a daily basis. A 16 year old in town, who I interviewed, sat in the computer lab one day and looked over a series of conference slides. He was featured in one slide, in a quote that captured how new people came to town and claimed the physical place while rejecting the locals. He

was a sharply funny and insightful young man who spent a lot of time downtown and studied people intently. I had been trying out a new theoretical framework, based on the idea of diaspora. He liked my definitions and considerations, such the idea that place was a historically contingent social construction with material attributes, but though the idea of diaspora was me trying too hard. I really thought about this comment for a long time. My efforts to fit the idea of a fluid place into a framework of diasporic migration and scattering was a reach. It did not ring true to a 14 year old. This was the power of dialogue in the field.

The strong insertion of my voice in narrative began in my public research blog. This was also where I initially located and developed the powerful interplay between ethnography and historical methods evident throughout this work. The shift from chronological and linear historical narrative to contemporary and topical considerations was experimental but worked well in this format. This format allowed disruptions and reorganizations of understandings, accounts, and personal narratives to be folded into a conversation about what I was doing as a researcher. One of the strengths of place ethnography is the ability to shift focus based on active dialogue.

The potential of place ethnography in collaborative place projects is based on this feature. My research blog was a large part of my effort to share intellectual sources, methods, and historical insights with my community. This was foundational to my project and my ideas about place ethnographic research as dialogue. My research blog, more than anything else, gave people who wanted to talk to me about my project a place to begin. It allowed a small group of people who were very interested in what I was doing an ongoing update about my fieldwork. They could read my current post and respond to me

on the street. Many would call me on the phone and talk for a bit, ask questions, offer insights. When my post about the Apache woman Lozen came out, I got a dozen voicemails and could not catch up with comments on the street.

The old men read the blog so they could tease me. They tell me this. Several people read my blog posts regularly and engaged in lengthy dialogue with me about my project. These were my favorite and most generative conversations. I do not know why other other people read it. I printed out 10 copies a week. Sometimes I ran out and needed to print more at the computer lab. They were always surprising long in print form, averaging eight pages. At the end of 2014, as noted, I had more than 5,000 page hits. I estimate that fewer than 10 people will read this dissertation. Several examples of my blog posts can be found in Appendix 3, and the blog remains accessible online. Dialogue is a central component of place ethnographic research, and digital dialogue proved an effective and powerful tool.

2.12 Fieldwork: Interviews

Interviews provided me with a foundation for understanding place, rather than a means to illustrate understandings I carried with me into the field. In this section, I introduce basic characteristics of the 68 interviews I conducted with town residents and others. Interview narratives and excerpts are featured prominently in the next three chapters. I was strongly encouraged by the IRB office to build anonymity into my research protocol in order to get approval, unless I could identify participants before I began my fieldwork. Despite issues this created, it allowed people to discuss the town openly. In a small town, this is a genuine concern. Although anonymity ultimately served me well, it also was difficult. Many of my participants wanted to be known. They wanted public recognition for their memories and histories, their knowledge of the town and people, their insights into place

and their own stories. Building in a mechanism for choice between anonymity and speaking publicly would have been ideal.

Some people did not mind having a conversation, but the request for a signature put them off. I referred people to my two blog posts on the IRB nearly every time I requested an interview. I also handed out a printed copy of the blog posts. I showed them to people on my laptop or phone so they would know the documents were accessible and online. This also gave me a chance to encourage my participants to read my research blog. Very few people did more than glance at the stapled sheets; a few spent some time reading through the academic sections. No one finished it while I was watching. The presence of such a lengthy post was enough for most people to convince them I was sincere in my effort; most people would have talked to me anyway. Many participants needed multiple reassurances that I would not share things they said about the town. This proved to be a huge concern.

If it came down to it, one interviewee told me, she would deny, deny, deny. I couldn't figure out what she would deny, and I so asked her what it might be that she would deny, reassuring her that interviews were completely anonymous. She told me she would deny anything she might hear back about what she said to me, true or not. The form's guarantee was no match for the idea that small-town gossip would be too juicy not to share. There also was considerable hesitation on the part of many people to speak poorly about the place. I experienced this hesitation. I have a hard time talking poorly about the place at the center of my place ethnographic research project. I have gotten better at navigating these expectations. Some people had no hesitation at all.

The impulse to recount devastatingly negative personal experiences after interviewees had been talking for an hour or so was a pattern that emerged in at least half of my interview. Some of these revelations were about the town; some were personal. Many people asked me to not record in writing the stories they shared. I was a witness to these stories. There were a number of stories about sexual violence. There were also stories about the other people in town, and events of all kinds. Stories of loss were the most prevalent kind of narrative. I would characterize the majority of the interview narratives as upbeat and cautiously hopeful, even many that contained interludes of grief. Some of my interviewees would no longer talk to me after the interviews. Some have become very close friends.

Many people said they felt compelled to start reading my blog after they were interviewed. I asked one friend why. She told me she felt like she owed me because she had agreed to be a part of my study. She said she would have felt badly not reading the posts because I was obviously trying really hard. She did not say this is a nice way. It was closer to an expression of feeling sorry for me. But it made me aware of one avenue for stakeholder and community buy in—the process of getting people engaged by asking them to spend time.²⁴ Only a few people flatly turned me down in the course of two-plus years. One person told me I sounded like a politician talking. He said I was pretty and smart but told me what I did mostly was “a mess of talk.” This phrase, “a mess of talk,” stuck in my mind. I still think of it often.

I did not record interviews with a recording device. Writing, and clarifying through writing and questioning participants on what they have said, was part of my narrative process. Anonymity was easier to guarantee as well, and my lack of a recording

device put people at ease. My process is closer to phenomenological impressions in this way, which is the primary reason I chose to interview such a large number of people. I captured my interviews in field books, choosing to record interviews and recount them as representations. Interviews generally ran about two hours, although most were longer.²⁵

In the following chapters I recount only a handful of specific interviews. I would like to recount them all—each could have been a chapter in the book of the town. I build my arguments on a synthesis of all of the conversation, observations and experiences. My interview participants said far more interesting things than I could possibly have said about place, the study of place and the ways that we think about the place world. I was astounded by my interviews. Dialogue is the foundation of place ethnography, and interviews are the foundation of dialogue. Although the interviews in this project are representations, I make every effort to represent conversations and observations exactly as I recorded them. My interview participants were my window into the town, and the lens I used to consider my own experiences. If theory hovered supportively in the background, my research participants were front and center.

My recounting of the interviews in the next several chapters seeks to convey the tone and mood of my interview subjects, using their own words but not as direct quotes. I did not record conversations, nor did I transcribe conversations, and thus cannot use direct quotes. I sought to capture the ways that people expressed themselves as accurately as possible, however. To this end, I used a form that mimics conversations as they occurred. I kept as close to possible to the original meaning at all times, as I understood it, of course. I often asked for clarification on a point that I found interesting and meaningful in order to capture narratives as faithfully and objectively as possible. I tried

to write in a way that captures the spirit of the interview and the interviewee, as well as the attitude and feelings expressed. I did use direct language from written records in my field books.

I had two overriding goals in my interviews. The first was to get an idea about how people thought about the role of place in their own life, by paying attention to the ways they talked about place in their own personal narrative. The second was to figure out what they thought about Truth or Consequences as a particular place and about the region more broadly. I began my interviews with general questions and the invitation to participants to tell me about their history and the places that shaped them—to give me a place biography—a specific question that grounded people in place. I asked how people came to the town and what kinds of ideas they had about the town or region before they came. I asked everyone how they would describe the town, to a friend or to a visitor, as well as the best things about the town, and the worst things about the town. I asked participants how they would study the town, and things they thought I should consider or study. I asked participants what they thought the biggest challenges the town faced were; what they thought would make the town better; and the most important things that residents, visitors, and people moving to town should know. I asked people where they saw the town in 10 years. I asked general place questions about what they thought made a place good or things that create a distinct sense of place and anything participants noticed about T or C as a place that they considered important.

There were 68 participant interviews; they ranged from single interviews of a few hours to repeated conversations over two years. A few conversations were formally extended; dozens were extended informally. The casual conversations I had with people

about the town were too numerous to count. I talked to tourists from a dozen different places. I talked to people at the lake and at the gas station. I talked to the young guy operating the Ferris wheel at the annual Fiestas for an hour.²⁶ I talked to people at meetings, town events, fiestas, on the street, at art openings, in restaurants, in the aisles of Walmart and the hardware store, at the park, and at other public and business places. I return to these places throughout this chapter, but do not include any direct material from conversations that were not sanctioned by IRB protocols and preceded by a signed waiver.

I interviewed 39 women and 29 men, ranging from a fiercely articulate and angry 14-year-old boy to an irreverent and comedic 82-year-old retired educator and administrator. Only two of my participants were younger than 18, largely owing to the necessity of getting a parent signature for IRB requirements. I handed out a dozen parent permission slips and got one back. The other was signed directly by a parent who also was a participant. Eight were younger than 20; ten were in their 20s; eight were in their 30s; ten in their 40s; fourteen in their 50s; eleven in their 60s; and seven were older than 70.

The median age was 44, which is younger than the 2010 census data on the city of T or C, where the median age is listed at 52.2 years. I also had a slightly higher proportion of women than the 2010 census: 57% for my interviews versus 50.4% in the census. Age distribution was also roughly equal, except for very young people, although I did talk to parents of young kids. According to the 2010 census, of the 6,475 people in Truth of Consequences, 18.9% were 19 and younger, 9.7% were in their 20s, 7.1% were in their 30s, 11.6% were in their 40s, 15.6% were in their 50s, 16% were in their 60s, and

9.1% were older than 70. My sample contained approximately 12% of participants younger than 19, 15% in their 20s, 12% in their 30s, 7% in their 40s, 21% in their 50s, 16% in their 60s, and 10% were 70 and older. Other information that I entered into a basic table included the length of time that people had been in town, from a week to a summer to a lifetime. Of the 68 participants, 63% had been in town for 10 or more years. About half of my interview subjects wanted to stay in town; about half want to leave; four did leave during my two-year fieldwork period; and a handful were unsure. The last question I entered into my interview table was a set of best/worst columns.

What I sought to uncover were patterns in how place was narrated. What kinds of perceptions about the town and region did people express? How did they talk about their past places? I considered differences between interviews based on several patterns that emerged. These included the amount of time they had been in town, what kinds of places they had come from, and their reasons for being in town. I asked people to begin with a place biography. We talked about place expectations they had about the town, and how those compared to the ideas they had now. If they were from the town we talked about how they saw the town, and what they thought about other places. I asked participants how they would describe the town to a really good friend, how they would describe it to a stranger, and how they would describe it to someone who was thinking of moving to town. I asked how they thought about themselves in the community, and their role, if any. After we had been talking for a while I asked how they would study the town and how they would define place. The definition was by far the most halting part of the interview. I asked people to describe the best things about the town, and the worst things, as well as things they would like to see in the town. I always asked if people planned on staying.

My interviews shaped the trajectories of my study. Exchange is at the heart of a dialogic method; it is what kept this method alive and shifting. If interviews are the heart, to extend this metaphor, the head would be theories about places, coming not only from scholars but from the people who keep a place alive. The body would be the connections between people: kinship bonds and committees, boards and elected officials and public works. We could cloth this body in policies and laws, dressed up in festivals. We could follow this body around and see how it moves through places, how it builds, where it congregated, wanders, works, plays, creates, and rests. The next several sections explore place ethnography as a dialogue between people in place: environments, cultural landscapes, and structures, institutions, and communities.

2.13 Interview Sites

My observation sites emerged during my fieldwork. I spent a lot of time at Passion Pie café, a coffee shop I frequented regularly. It was a small, one-room café across from the El Cortez movie theater. The interior of the café captured the art currents in the town. The round and square tables that sat two or four were decorated by local artists. The walls were covered with art by local artists. Music played steadily in the background. Depending on who was working, the music ranged from oldies to jazz to hip-hop. Despite the total lack of privacy, I conducted 16 interviews in the café. People were animated there. It brought out sharp place awareness with its lively mood, art, small interior, and great food.²⁷ The coffee was good too, fancy and urban and pricey. It was a thoroughly comfortable place for downtown-loving academic urban dweller. I was a regular observer at this café.

Here, like every other public space in the town, people greeted each other constantly. This was the defining feature of public space interaction. There was no

hurrying the hellos. This fact, truth, pattern, and trait of greeting as stopping and visiting, at a leisurely pace, was place defining. From the bench outside the Passion Pie café, you could watch traffic, which was sporadic. Because of the café, the sidewalk traffic was heavier. The sidewalk was several feet above the road, which was a state highway. This tall sidewalk is topped with an iron-pipe barrier fence that was very difficult to climb over. I imagined it was to keep the massive floodwaters from the storefronts, but I never asked. This safety feature provided a place to lean against and stick a foot through at various heights.

Another interview site was Denny's, across from the Walmart and Holiday Inn Express. It was the default location for more than a dozen of my interviews, chosen by my interviewees. Most people who met me at Denny's would never pay \$5 for a cup of coffee. Most of the regulars I met at Denny's would go booth to booth to visit their friends before sitting down. This was a slow and pleasurable journey. Denny's was a drive-to place, next to the Comfort Inn, McDonalds and Motel 8, just off an Interstate 25 exit. La Cocina restaurant sat on top of a hill just north of Denny's and was a much fancier interview site. The entrance is marked by a welded black-iron arch with silhouette images of cows and native plants. Several similar pieces of silhouette metal cut-outs with desert scenes grace the museum wall and private residences. I went to a board meeting here and met a local politician because he liked the steaks. La Cocina used to be on the corner of Date Street and Third Street, by the cluster of WPA buildings in town, and it once enlivened the quiet intersection with its steady business. The custom-built restaurant had a lot of art and heavy wooden furniture, two large rooms and a patio, as well as a small gift shop area by the register. It attracts a lot of tourists. This is also true of the Los

Arcos Steak House, where I observed a strong local as well as tourist presence. The bar was always lively.

A handful of interviews were held at Bar-B-Que on Broadway, downtown, where everyone knew everyone. A handful of interviews occurred at the public library. My daughter and I spent an inordinate amount of time in the single room that was the children's section. My daughter loved it there. The rest of my interviews were at various locations around town, from the downtown drive-in, to the town's two parks, to the expensive Italian restaurant in the middle of downtown. I interviewed people on benches on the street and in old, foldout chairs on the sidewalk edge outside of small apartment buildings. I interviewed people in bathhouse lobbies and in the town's remaining dive bar. I got a strict warning email from the IRB about interviews in private residences. A few of my interviews were homebound, however, and there were many houses I very much wanted to see around town, which created a tension.

I stopped and interviewed people who were just sitting outside their houses, striving to a representative sample. I went to many meetings at local homes for various events and committees. I did several interviews at the popular deli that was the counterpart to Passion Pie on Broadway. I interviewed on a few tailgates and at a few functions in odd buildings in the town. One interview was conducted in the old rock pergola built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) at the Elephant Butte Marina. I did an interview in the entrance room to the town hospital, where I bought and toasted bread for 50 cents.

2.14 Observation Sites and Participant Observation

I observed at all of my interview sites, in addition to dozens upon dozens of others places.

Identifying spaces where people congregated was the first step in observation. I asked

people were I could find people. I also engaged in repeated circulation. My endless driving around and endless walking around were methodologically-driven. Going to public events was key, and most events are posted in various places, from the restroom bulletin board in Passion Pie to the local event board at Walmart. The town's newspapers and the other local guides also included events. I signed up to any and all listserves, group emails and digital bulletin boards. Invitations to other events were forthcoming after a time. Asking a person for invitations is quite effective, as well as asking to tag along.

Walmart was unexpectedly strong local observational site and an incredibly popular hangout. I regularly went to Walmart with a friend from the village of Placitas who was very well known. Every other person we passed stopped to chat. A chat could last 5 or 10 minutes, sometimes 20 minutes. People congregated in the isles. It was a weekly reunion. One of the store clerks told me you could tell who does not live in the area because they move so fast. I immediately noticed that only people who looked harried were those who were obviously from out of town, or people with children, but kids also visited with one another in the isles, making their parents stop. The Sonic was a mainstay for observation, especially of teens. The two hardware stores teemed with individuals who had lengthy conversations about place. Customers discussed weather, crops, road conditions, livestock, projects, kids, and other life events.

After the first few months in town, I started to recognize people at the Circle K and the other gas stations. It was common to see people pull over to give someone a lift from the top of the hill down to the downtown area. I did it fairly often myself. Everywhere I went, I talked to people, endlessly, and they talked back, patiently.

Everywhere I went, I listened to people talking. People stopped and talked to one another everywhere, small islands of conversation that others flowed around or joined. I spent a limited amount of time at the town's schools. Although I put together a curriculum to talk to the schools, my requests were never granted by the superintendent of the consolidated school district.

I drove extensively through the residential streets. The streets were mostly in a grid pattern, with some hills that lend character. Houses were modest and unique, most a southwest vernacular, but with a tremendous amount of variation. There were small, cheap apartments on the west side of the main thoroughfare, but also nicer houses. There were smaller houses on the east side of Date Street and more trailers. These roads were gridded, but the north/south roads slowly inclined down to the river, past Third Street, where there were apartments and trailers, many riverside and small homes, and a few much larger homes. On the east edge of town was Campo Espinosa, a wetland that was being restored for habitat and conservation. It was common to drive slowly and stop and talk to people on the streets or sitting in their yards.

The stretch of town on the north side, including Williamsburg, where there was definitely an edge-town feeling—more run down than the north side of town, but interspersed with lovely blocks down by the river and back by deep water erosions in the low bluffs—the *barancas*. I drove around this section often. It initially felt much less welcoming than other sections. It also looked more hard-scrabble working-poor, mixed with a stay-out-of-my-business gazes. The people I stopped and talked to on the streets, however, were decidedly friendly. Most of them, but I also met a lot of people who walked inside when I approached. I concluded that it was more blue collar and rural than

the other sections. It was more private and less place-defining than the other parts of town, more of a mind your own business place.

I spent a great deal of time downtown, and it was a prevalent focus of this research project. Downtown was where preservation was happening, and where the tourists were, and the bathhouses, and festivals, and so on. The original town site plat was developed on marshes that were drained between the river and Water Tank Hill, the limestone hogback that Main Street is built into on the north side of the street. This small tidy neighborhood, between the river and downtown, is full of small houses. My last sites were all of the places outside of the town, from villages to the lake, from BLM and forest lands to ghost towns, and from the spaceport to the gigantic ranch spreads that belong to Ted Turner. These public and private lands are persistently place defining.

I focused on three distinct sets of observation over the course of my two years of fieldwork. The first were events. These were public events, such as festivals and regular art and cultural happenings, and private events, such as parties and political events. The second were organizational meetings. I sat in on public government meetings and other civic meetings, board meetings, planning meetings and charrettes, organizational meetings, institutional meetings, not-for-profit meetings, and other formal and informal gatherings of people. These also were private meetings, small gatherings of like-minded individuals coming together for various reasons. I had an agenda at these gatherings. I presented my project asked questions or. I was often a participant observer, or volunteer, or otherwise doing something. The third type of observational phenomenon was the daily observations of people in public places. This was observation as sitting and watching or walking and watching. I also listened. I took notes and made sketches. I photographed. I

talked to people often but without an agenda. I let others lead the conversation. I did not seek to insert myself into these moments but actively sought to background myself.

I bring up specific events in later chapters. I provide a sampling here, however, for illustration. I attended a tourism board meeting where I listened to a Google report on website visitors. I was delighted by a discussion about buying potential domain names for the inaugural space flight, including anything that Las Cruces might lay claim to. I went to many Truth or Consequences MainStreet board meetings and events. I am a preservationist and very close to the local and state organization. This also is an organization I think could use place ethnography effusively, and I wanted to understand how it operated in the community. I went to planning meetings for events and festivals. I went to charrettes. I went to school sporting events. I attended rodeos and roping's. I went to festivals and fiestas and to holiday events in town and at Elephant Butte Lake. I attended second Saturday Art Hop, gallery openings, fiddle contests, church meetings, and dances.

I went to parties, lake gatherings, carnivals, and theater performances. I went to the old movie house on Main Street and saw every new movie that came to town. I went to library events and dance lessons for toddlers and farmers markets and jam sessions and museum events and bingo. I went to yoga and the municipal pool. I went to the Elks Lodge and Moose Lodge. I went to fundraisers and boat races and county fairs and parades. I went to events and presentations at the senior center and Veteran's Center and Civic Center. I went to birthday parties and lectures and fire dances and drum circles. I went to memorials. Despite the common claim that there is nothing to do in small towns, I was solidly booked. I discuss these places, and my observations, in the chapters ahead.

2.15 The Body Politic/ Boards and Organizations

One element of building a place ethnographic method is addressing the basic structures of government, as well as the boards, not-for-profits, volunteer organizations, and various committees in the town and county. This is a deceptively simple task. A quick perusal of the town and county websites gives a good overview of the political organization. The city has a commissioner/manager form of government with a five-member City Commission. Elections are by district and staggered. The mayor is chosen from commissioners. Departments included the city manager, public works, clerk, treasury, library, community director, water, electricity, electric, wastewater, solid waste, fleet manager, finance, and police. Boards include Airport Advisory, Public Art, Golf Course Advisory, Public Utility, Library, Recreation, Lodgers Tax Advisory, Veterans Memorial Park, and Planning and Zoning. The County Commission has four members elected at large in staggered elections. Departments include the county manager, assessor, clerk, development coordinator, DWI programs, emergency management, finance, flood commission, detention facility, human resources, indigent health care, building maintenance, probate, procurement, road department, sheriff's office, and treasurer. Boards include Lodgers Tax Board, Planning Board, Protest Board for the Assessor, Recreation and Tourism, Sierra Joint Office on Aging, Sierra Vista Hospital Governing Board, Sierra Vista Hospital Joint Powers Committee, and the Solid Waste Task Force.

In many ways, these two governing organizations, the city and county, are similar to units of local government in most New Mexico communities. There are incredibly qualified and hard-working people who do great work in the day-to-day running of the city and county. On the other hand, charges of malfeasance, graft, corruption, and ineptitude were reoccurring during my fieldwork, which I discuss in Chapter 5. I worked

in New Mexico politics for many years. The good ol' boy network is still alive, and there is a tendency to nepotism and favor granting for things such as road work. The skill and professionalism of the staff similarly reflects both ends of the spectrum. The Municipal Court and Sierra County Court have also had many issues in the past several years, discussed in Chapter 5.

There are quasi-governmental organizations, which include economic development organizations, not-for-profit organizations such as Main Street, the Sierra County Arts Council, New Mexico Housing and Community Development Corp., the Rotary Club, and so on. I revisit these elements throughout this work. The organizations are people, and the hundreds of people represented above, are some of the town's primary stakeholders.

Place Ethnography as . . . Phenomenology

To borrow from the language of ethnography, phenomenological research in place ethnography seeks a thick description of the individual experience of place. The aim of this method is to describe the nature of the phenomenon, whatever it may be, in its presence and meaning. This is both the embodied experience of the researcher, or research team, as research participant experience and participants in the research.

Ultimately, phenomenological methods are highly personal and interpretive.

Phenomenology as method demands that we be attendant to the world around us. This method demands an openness to experience in order to potential discover unexpected meanings. The phenomenological approach to a particular phenomenon must be developed creatively and allow for a fluidity of methods and research process. In many ways I brought in phenomenological methods and theoretical considerations as a methodological experiment. There were two reasons for this choice. First, I wanted to

consider how the addition of a disciplinary focus impacted the historic and ethnographic framework of place ethnography. Second, I sought to include a method where I had experience. I had no training in either historic or ethnographic methods, yet was committed to a framework that was founded on these methods. I am comfortable and conversant in philosophical methods.

The goal of phenomenological engagement in place ethnography is to cultivate empirical place awareness, and to wed this awareness to the emotive, poetic and analytical place awareness that attending to place brings to the surface.

Phenomenological investigation is applicable to things or events that people can see, touch, hear, smell, feel, taste, perceive, discern, recognize, or engage. Physical things as well as events are amenable to phenomenological study. Examples include landscapes, homes, or architecture, travel, tourism, or connection, belonging, preservation, or any of the major concerns of this project. The end goal of phenomenological research, however, is to use these descriptions in order to explore underlying commonalities that mark the essence of the phenomena. To this end, I engaged an ongoing internal conversation and place awareness, as well as external efforts to deeply explore the place experiences of people in the field. The trustworthiness and truth value of phenomenological interpretation often rests on hard-to-measure qualities, such as creating a sense of vividness, honesty, believability, richness, and elegance.

2.16 Walking, Sensing, and Conversing

The phenomenological method incorporates uncertainty and spontaneity into a framework of strategies. This creativity and fluidity ultimately is meant to be transformed into patterns and understandings. The phenomenological methodology of bracketing is a strategy that seeks to set aside the researcher's experiences and preconceived notions of

the phenomenon in order to be open to the experience under investigation. To this end, I walked, again and again, through the same places. I walked through two sets of seasons at different times of day. Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) said that to “walk is to lack a place” (Certeau 1984, 103). Although he was talking about walking in a city and the search in the modern world for a place of rootedness and belonging that he concedes is ultimately unfindable, lost, if it even existed, the idea of movement is paramount. In walking, he claimed, we are “haunted by a nowhere or by dreamed-of places” (104). In striving to contemplate Truth or Consequences as an unknown place that I wished to know. I sought to impose randomness in my wanderings. This method was incredibly productive. I also attended to phenomenological expression in my interviews. Experiences of identity, attachment, connection, belonging and position emerge as the most relevant categories of exploration.

The major themes and patterns that emerged during my place ethnographic fieldwork through dialogue and phenomenological place experiences—in interviews, dialogue, participation, and observation—are explored in the following chapters.

¹ UNM School of Architecture and Planning. Preservation and Regionalism: ARCH 579, Fall 2008. Professor Norman Crowe.

² I was a graduate student in the Government Department at New Mexico State University from 1999-2001. During this time a group of graduate students (of whom I was one) successfully sued the NMSU for its speech policies after a protracted engagement. Prior to the successful arrest of a student for leafletting, our end-goal, the movement began with funding and publishing a free speech newspaper and staging dozens of events. After the arrest we successfully sued the University. The successful lawsuit forced NMSU to rewrite public place regulations in conjunction with students from the movement and other interested parties. The same group also showed weekly documentary movies, held consciousness-raising events and performances, conducted workshops on non-violent direct action and organizing, and held community-based workshops on the work of educator and theorist Paulo Freire. All of these movies, workshops and activities were held in public spaces, without the prior permission of the University, which made them illegal activities.. This was how I became conversant on public space legally, politically and socially. A separate but connected activism of this group was the founding and development of *Amigos de la Mujeres de Juarez* in conjunction with faculty, students, and community members. The organization was a political and legal action group. We raised money for office space, bus fare and lodging for mothers and other activists who sought to bring attention and justice to the slaying, torture and mass murders of

over 900 young women in Juarez. We conducted evidence searches in Juarez, as well as attending and organizing rallies and public awareness campaigns. We raised money for activist in Juarez through films, reading, workshops and performances in Las Cruces and El Paso. A collaboration between these two NMSU groups and student from Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juarez utilized the tactics of Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, to stage multiple performances on both campuses and at events and rallies to raise awareness of border issues.

³People were not necessarily interested in what I was doing, but they were always accommodating. The response I most often got when I told people I study place was a moment of polite expectancy. People would wait patiently for me to explain what I meant, and what I am doing. Place, as discussed in Chapter 1, was too broad, vague, and common. If I told people I study places, the reaction is markedly different. Places seem to be concrete things, specific and locatable. Place needs qualifying; places need describing. People have experiences with places, but not with place. So this is where I begin. I ask people about their places, what components of place interest them, to things they like and do not like about places. I ask people to think about how they narrate stories themselves. Then I move back to place, and what it might mean.

⁴ Low is an anthropology professor at the City University of New York (CUNY), is a preeminent authority in the development of space and place studies in anthropology. I used her 2010 CUNY syllabus on the "Ethnography of Space and Place" as self-directed reading list when I was starting my own articulations.⁴ I used this syllabus in my early development of my methods for my IRB proposal as a kind of directed reading list.

⁵ Private email correspondence, March 21, 2014. Low recommended looking at Lawrence and Low's 1990 annual review for earlier references, as well reviewing her other work with Lawrence (2003), "Towards an Anthropological theory of space and place" (2009), which she would send. She claimed her own place ethnographic history started with Edward Hall (1968) and Hilda Kuper (1972), as well as with Lisa Peattie (1970).

⁶ Wikipedia: draft/Place Ethnography, June 2, 2014.

⁷ "This entry is written like an essay and is quite mediocre at that, rather reading like a random collection of terms and thoughts without a coherent encyclopedic thread. If this term really existed, you'd have to present it in its context, using clear and concise language and appropriate references. That's likely not going to be possible." FoCuSandLeArN (talk) 23:03, June 12, 2014/wikipedia: draft/Place Ethnography.

⁸ It was a good teaching moment for class presentations. Students told me they rely on Wikipedia as a foundation for basic research. Students were vocally enthusiastic about how legitimate my method looked in its Wikipedia format. Willing to concede to the shortcomings of Wikipedia, students insistently defend its use as the most basic and handy research tool available. Students are lectured constantly about these issues yet freely admit that it is a first and often last stop for information. They admit that seeing place ethnography defined in a Wikipedia format gives it a commanding veneer of legitimacy, rejected or not. Issues of veracity and reliability aside, Wikipedia is trusted. Another point I made in my place ethnography presentations to students was the importance of preparation, even if preparation led mostly to error and failure. The IRB process forces a pre-field accounting of proposed research projects. I asked students to write down basic questions about what they wanted to study, why, and when and where they want to study their what, and to essentially provide a draft IRB.

⁹ My grandmother's mother, Ruth Bundy Isaacks, settled with her family in the late 1860s. Her father, Emmit Issacks, homesteaded in the 1880s in Southern New Mexico's Oregon Mountains. My grandmother, Imogene Gladys Issacks, was a two-time junior rodeo champion. She liked to tell the story

of riding her horse from Las Cruces to El Paso, straight into the Camino Rael Hotel and into the lobby under the famed Tiffany Dome. She met my grandfather, Bob Berger, at a University of Texas at El Paso football game. He and ASE fraternity brothers shot off the Miner's canon when the Aggies scored a touchdown, and hid themselves among the ZTA sorority girls. This is the story they liked to tell about how they met. My grandfather was a cattle inspector for New Mexico and spent a great deal of time on the road. My grandparents moved from Las Cruces to the village of Monticello (Alamosa Canyon) in the early 1980s. My uncle had a working farm in Alamosa Canyon in the late 1970s, which at one point had a thriving commune. He and his wife now live in Animas Canyon, a settlement 15 miles southwest of Truth or Consequences. I returned to the region in the 1990s. I was a third-generation college student at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces and drove the 75 miles north to Monticello several times a month during my undergraduate and graduate years. I spend countless hours at the town's baths and once-lively bar scene with college friends. I also have spent untold hours at Elephant Butte Reservoir. My grandmother passed away in Monticello in 2003. My grandfather spent his last days at the State Veteran's Center in town and died in 2004. We still have a small house in Monticello, which afforded me a place to stay as I conducted fieldwork.

¹⁰ Despite my experience and training in navigating University of New Mexico information databases, I was immediately confronted with several issues. The most immediate issue is with the town's original name, Palomas Hot Springs, which belonged to another nearby community several miles south along the Rio Grande. It was the nearest town when a military report on an Apache attack was recorded at an unnamed hot spring. I learned this in the field much later but was often confused in my early research. Truth or Consequences adopted the name Hot Springs when it incorporated in 1916, dropping the Palomas. In another later discovery, I found out this change occurred after a post office of the same name near Las Vegas, N.M., closed. When other places with a "hot springs" designation in New Mexico are eliminated, I have a handful of local newspapers and a few articles on the town's subsequent name change to Truth or Consequences. In my research to explore the history in T or C, I started in the present and moved back through history, tracing sources, which often led me to other histories. I saw the same process in my interviews as well: the way we initially set out to make our stories linear, and the ways this linearity is often thwarted.

¹¹ History: Reclamation Service established in the Department of the Interior, under the jurisdiction of the Geological Survey's Division of Hydrography, July 8, 1902, to administer the reclamation fund established by the Reclamation Act, also known as the Newlands Act (32 Stat. 388), June 17, 1902, which set aside revenues from the sale of public lands to finance irrigation projects in arid and semiarid regions of the western United States. Separated from the Geological Survey, March 9, 1907. Given bureau status as the Bureau of Reclamation, June 20, 1923. Redesignated Water and Power Resources Service by Secretarial Order 3042, November 6, 1979. Name reverted to Bureau of Reclamation, 1981. Textual Records (in Denver): General administrative and project correspondence, 1902-45 (1,917 ft.), with indexes and a microfilm copy of a file classification guide. Project and feature histories, reports of engineering boards, reports to the Board of Army Engineers, project operation and maintenance reports, and other special reports, 1902-60. Summary cost reports and narrative statements concerning construction at reclamation project sites, 1916-49. Records relating to bureau oversight and administration of Civilian Conservation Corps activities, 1934-43. Maps (1,932 items): Western region of the United States, showing Bureau of Reclamation regional boundaries, precipitation, and locations of federal irrigation and hydroelectric projects, 1934- 87 (26 items). River basins, including the Colorado, Columbia, Gila, Missouri, and Yakima, showing land classification, irrigable areas, and proposed irrigation and dam development plans, 1908-50 (40 items). Specific reclamation projects (arranged alphabetically), including detailed plans of the Columbia River Basin Project, 1904-85 (546 items). Farm unit plats of townships in federal irrigation project areas, 1907-55 (1,320 items). SEE ALSO 115.7

¹² I initially locate the historical beginnings for my research project in turn of the 19th century regional reclamation generally, and in the building of Elephant Butte Dam specifically. This is a practical as well as theoretical choice. The town at the center of my place ethnography, Truth or Consequences, grew by virtue of its proximity to the dam. T or C incorporated in 1916, the same year the dam was completed. In my parallel historical search on Elephant Butte Dam and regional reclamation, I am overwhelmed by information. I was interested in the role of reclamation as a narrative of modern place making and how reclamation place narrative emerged in the history of New Mexico and the region. I explore these histories in Chapter 3. The archival information, however, is largely technical—placeless in critical ways. This is a finding for a later project. The histories of reclamation project dams are meticulously well documented, but place and cultural narratives are mostly absent. The town was not present in the archives except in a few passing mentions. Other regional place histories I discovered were also part of the body of scientific reports—on geology, geography, archeology and the like. This is a deep pattern of the region. It is a pattern established in the first American surveys of the region, a pattern that defines the archives of federal reclamation. Cultural histories of a place are offered, if they are offered at all, as a precursor to the business of describing the natural resources of a defined region. Places are often absent altogether, subsumed by scientific or natural resource descriptions.

¹³ What I found were troves of letters, technical specifications, material lists, timelines, photographs, and reports. These were focused almost entirely on technical specifications, material lists, and timelines. The Rio Grande project files were full of troves of historical tidbits that made a fascinating legal or cultural history, but these were far removed from the dam site itself. They were located in Washington, D.C., or El Paso, the site of the regional office. The project files of the dam could easily be switched into any other project file so uniform was the material. The photographs showed different landscapes and backdrops, but close-up shots of features also were interchangeable. The maps were uniformly blue topographic maps labeled with few geographical place names, but only on major geological features. There were a great many unique political and legal papers about the Rio Grande project.

¹⁴ I found these, rather, in the papers of the National Irrigation Congress. I realize part of this absence was a result of the absence of town at the center of my study—project files are not concerned with the larger landscapes. I was looking for a regional overview and was confronted with bureaucratic specificities. I also realize that part of this absence was a profound disconnection between debate on reclamation as a technological water delivery system and any other features of reclamation once the Reclamation Act of 1902 had passed. The archive illustrated the profound fragmentation of the cultural and historical elements of reclamation as a policy. Technical issues abound, and are treated as problems that have engineering or technical solutions. The archive is a record of these solutions. Economics are itemized cost sheets. Labor is a line item, for example—there are no records of actual workers. Political issues do surface in letters. The concern about repayment is the No. 1 issue in project correspondence. Otherwise they are a record of about construction, or proposed fixes for issues such as extreme alienation or silt buildup, or geological descriptions of place provided in order to craft technical or engineering responses.

¹⁵ See, for example, 2004: City Comprehensive Plan, http://www.torcnm.org/comprehensive_plan.html.
 2006 Sierra County Comprehensive Plan <http://www.jkagroup.com/Docs/clients/sierracounty.pdf>.
 2014 Downtown Master Plan,
<http://www.torcnm.org/downloads/Final%20Approved%20TorC%20Downtown%20Master%20Plan%2010.2014.pdf>
 2014 Affordable Housing Plan
<http://www.torcnm.org/downloads/Final%20Approved%20TorC%20Affordable%20Housing%20Plan%20October%202014.pdf>
 Sierra County Economic Development Strategic Plan
http://www.torcnm.org/downloads/Economic_Development_Strategic_Plan_Final-compressed%20pdf%206-08.pdf

¹⁶ I am very interested in historical invention, and was initially surprised by how much bad history I read in my archival research and historical reconnaissance. History is a narrative we invent from fragments. But great histories are detailed and rigorous. They amass many fragments, relics of the pasts, searching for reliable and verifiable fragments of what *was*. These histories take these fragments and create a compelling narrative that illuminates these pasts. I am not writing one of those histories, I say. I made gestures to these kinds of histories in this research project, however. I was much more interested in the historical invention that was poorly wrought. The bad histories, in the sense that they were creations without a foundation, were much more compelling to me. My argument, that these kinds of narratives have a lot to say about a place, was well served by the town of Truth or Consequences.

¹⁷ My initial year of fieldwork consisted of a weekly trip to Truth or Consequences from Albuquerque, N.M.—a 300-mile journey. My daughter, 2 in 2012, traveled with me. I drove to our house in the village of Monticello on a Sunday night. On Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays I drove the 20 miles to “town.” I returned to Albuquerque on Wednesday nights. Often I stayed over on weekends for events or meetings. I also had part-time child care while I was in Truth or Consequences, which I did not have in Albuquerque. After my first year of fieldwork, I moved to the town of Truth or Consequences. I lived in T or C from September 2013 to February 2014. I then moved to Monticello from February to July 2014. I returned to Albuquerque in August 2014.

¹⁸ I was unsure of where to begin, despite a very detailed IRB protocol about the many things I would do in the town. I made a dozen passes through the town, taking a different route each time. I looped around the town twice via Interstate 25, going both north and south. I took the dirt road that heads west from the Interstate exit, past the freeway underpass where we smoked cigarettes in middle school. I could see the golf course and the middle and high school. The dirt road abruptly turns into paved road and becomes a neighborhood. I took Fock Street south. It was the only street I knew by name. I recognized my best friend’s house from elementary school. Fock, a wide residential street that runs straight north/south, is bounded by the town’s 9-hole golf course on the north and the river to the south. Fock runs the whole length of the ten residential blocks to the north of downtown, before dropping steeply into the downtown area. Like the other north/south gridded streets of the downtown historic district, Fock hits a dead-end at Riverside Drive. Riverside Drive parallels the Rio Grande, curving along the edge of downtown, with houses on both sides. Riverside turns back into a dirt road after Rotary Park and follows the river behind the bluffs of the mesa. On top of the mesa, just out of sight, is the former Carrie Tingley Hospital, now the New Mexico State Veteran’s Center. The road emerges into the residential area on the south side of town, poorer than the other residential sections. I ended up by the church that I went to as a youth; its single, small building is now dwarfed by giant prefabricated structure. I stopped in to see an old friend, the daughter of the minister who still headed the church at the time. She had come back to T or C a decade before to visit and had seen the massive need for child care and other services for children and parents. She and her family moved back to build a small empire of services, including day care, a boys and girls club, family outreach, several AmeriCorps programs, and various other ventures. I signed her up for an interview and signed up my daughter, Emagen, for day care. I drove across the street and took a dirt road that leads to the back of the residential area north of downtown, past the golf course again and out again on the dirt road that lead me back to the T or C exit, Walmart and McDonald’s. I drove back down the hill on the main drag into town, went west on Third Street at the only other light in town (the newest light was at the Walmart/McDonalds intersection). I drove up the gentle rise and around a bend where the town disappears. Here was the Pine Knot, a fantastic country bar that has since burned down, where I country-danced too many times to count. I continued west for 10 minutes, climbing out of the river valley. I drove past the old Hatchery and picnic area by the river, past the small power plant at the bottom of the curving vast concave rise of the dam. At the top of the ½ mile road that sharply inclines, I stopped at the lake overview. To the south is the road, now closed, where we used drive across the Dam. Access to the Dam has been denied since 9/11. The treacherous narrow curving road to the dam was thrilling. It

emerged onto the road at the top of the dam. The Dam's five foot high walls are several feet across. One side is punctuated by tall narrow art deco streetlights topped with round globes. The side with street lamps had a 300 foot drop; on the other side is the lake. We would regularly sit or walk along the edge, an excitement denied to the current generation of residents and visitors. The remaining road out to the Dam (and beyond) splits directly before the look out. One road curves around a small group of houses. The other goes straight to Elephant Butte Marina. The lake stretches as far as the eye can see to the north. I drive through the Marina, which is unexpectedly closed. I drive up to hidden park, constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) workers stationed at the lake in the 1940s. The rockwork is beautiful but crumbling in many places. Everything looked slightly seedy and untended. The Marina has moved hundreds of feet away from the long rock stairway, following the receding waters of the lake. I returned to the road and I continued east. I emerged out of the steep canyon onto the sweeping plains of the *Jornada del Muerto*. It is an awesome sight, this endless sprawling landscape. I drove as far as one of the new Turner Ranch headquarters, which was once the train stop at Engle. I crossed the Railroad tracks and turned around. I drove back downtown. It was not even lunchtime.

¹⁹ Destiny Mitchell wrote a thesis on the White perception of the town and the racial characteristics of the county. "Determining Historical and Ethnic Changes in Sierra County and New Mexico from 1870-2000. It was approved by the UNM Department of Geography in 2010.

²⁰ Schmitt, Joseph. "The Small Town with a Big Future." *Passport*, February 2013, pages 58-63. <http://gay.passportmagazine.com/business-class-february>.

²¹ <http://titaberger.blogspot.com/2012/07/brief-introduction.html>

²² The entire phrase is "Hello There! We've Been Waiting for You," which stills strikes me as a powerful branding catchphrase for a town. In a very unscientific survey, most residents I discussed the phrase with liked it and thought it expressed an old-fashioned welcome. A few thought it was decidedly sinister.

²³ I think that the photo of Edwards was an unconscious gesture to a "compelling reason" to study the town. Even now, I am surprised how often people people asked me why I studied Truth or Consequences, rather than what it is I sought to know about the town. People immediately assumed my study was about the town's strange name or was a town history. In the course of my fieldwork, there were more than a dozen instances of people coming to town or making inquiries about the town because of its name.

²⁴ <http://titaberger.blogspot.com/2012/07/what-am-i-doing-part-ii.html>

²⁵ I recorded interviews in large-format moleskin notebooks. I temporarily lost one almost-full notebook, which was beyond devastating. I left it in the dining room of the nursing home. I helped one very old lady back to her room after an interview, then sat and talked for a spell, and then rushed to pick up my daughter. The next day when I went to retrieve my field book, no one knew a thing. It had, however, been given to the director of the nursing home by by one of the nurses. The director was a friend from Monticello, so she took it home. Then she forgot about it. She remembered it five months later and I got it back. One field book, however, half full of sketches and meeting notes, taped business cards and other odds and ends, with perhaps three or four interviews, disappeared from my car, which I never locked, along with my fountain pen, several books, and a hooded San Francisco 49ers sweatshirt that were all in the front seat. In total, I filled three large-format moleskin notebooks and several partial notebooks.

²⁶ I learned, in my research on world's fairs, about the Ferris wheel. I shared this history in passing with the young man who was operating the Ferris wheel set up in the Southwest Bank parking lot during annual Fiestas, 2013. He told me that he was trying to get a job at a big theme park in California. He grew up in Alhambra, Calif., a Los Angeles neighborhood. He hoped to work his way up in the theme park

entertainment industry and said that running a traveling fair was a hard and crappy job, and that yes, a lot of ‘carnies’ did drugs, but at least he was getting experience. He liked seeing the small towns in the Southwest. I was reminded of talking to him when I came across a discussion of the term “Imagineering,” coined by Walt Disney and discussed by Edward Relph (2001). While I have spent a lot of time decrying the Disneyfication of the built environment, it was perhaps the first time I considered theme parks as critical sites of work, aspiration, and creativity. As I aspire to take my own kid to as many theme parks and midways as I can, considering them magical places for her, I still manage to hold very classist attitudes in general. This is a joy of fieldwork, discovering how many ways your own biases are constantly at work.

²⁷ Reviews on Yelp and Travelocity unanimously praise the waffles. The Elvis has bacon cooked in the center, topped with melted peanut butter, bananas, and whipped cream. A common review, written by Howie K from Albuquerque, who has written 828 reviews and has 1,800 followers, reads like this: “There’s a surreal quality to this cafe/bakery/breakfast/lunch joint that hits you the second you enter. It’s housed on a street that could easily be a filming location for the latest Hollywood remake of a Clint Eastwood western: desolate, sleepy, basically empty on a Saturday morning, you expect a few tumbleweeds to bounce down the blacktop. . . . In the humble confines of Truth or Consequences, Passion Pie is salvation.” (<http://www.yelp.com/biz/passion-pie-cafe-truth-or-consequences>). I heard that characterization, that people expected tumbleweeds to blow through town, often enough to grow weary of it.

Chapter 3: Reclamation and the Creation of a Modern New Mexico Place Imaginary

This chapter is an argument about the role of reclamation narratives at the turn of the 19th century in the creation of regional place imaginaries. The promise of regional transformation through the capture, storage, and use of surplus surface waters created a strong imaginary about both what the region *was* and what it could *be*. The place history of Truth or Consequences is inescapably connected to reclamation narratives and the place imaginaries they create. Palomas Hot Springs, as the town was first known, began as a squatter settlement on federal reclamation reservation land withdrawn from public entry in preparation for the construction of Elephant Butte Dam. The Dam, part of the Rio Grande Project, was going to be the second largest dam in the world. Despite its proximity and foundational impact on the town, the waters of Elephant Butte irrigated no ground in the town. This was a fitting paradox.

At the turn of the 19th Century and into the 20th Century, the place narratives emerging with irrigation in the region were paradoxical. They were future-settlement narratives that ignored centuries of past and present settlement at the turn of the 19th Century in the larger Southwest region. They were narratives premised on the notion that an empire of small, independent, and self-sufficient landowners would emerge in the wake of massive federal public infrastructure projects. These small landowners would build this new empire using modern methods and technologies of agriculture rather than the tools of war. They were narratives that celebrated the unlimited potential for prosperity and growth in agrarian landscapes against the realities of economic depressions and urban unrest in the decades leading into the new century. They were

narratives about vast desert wastelands transforming into Gardens of Eden through the beneficial use of waters that otherwise would be wasted.

These narratives of contradiction and paradox heralding a modernity that was both already arrived and constantly deferred to the future—places waiting to be transformed with the application of otherwise wasted waters into a paradise of production and wealth.¹ I argue that these contradictions are part of modern place narratives and place identities in the region. The paradox of settling and bringing order to landscapes ordered by centuries of settlement, for example, illustrates this tension in reclamation narratives. Reclamation narratives illuminate the often elusive and conflicting regional place identities and imaginaries that emerged at the turn of the 19th century in south-central New Mexico. Reclamation narratives create place imaginaries that are shifting, fervent, mythical, and deferred.

The places of reclamation narratives were not grounded in specific landscapes. They were places loosely bound to region but only in the sense of being imagined in this particular part of the United States. They were celebratory places, where urban immigrants could claim homesteads and become fruitful citizens. They were not places that could be located on a map. The imagined places of reclamation's earliest narratives were set against the absence of already existing places. Later, in lieu of these imagined places of settlement, project sites emerged as the center of reclamation narratives. The place narratives that emerged with the passage of reclamation as a national policy in 1902 represented a fundamental break with early narratives of reclamation champions. The revelatory rhetoric of early irrigation narratives became a narrative of bureaucratic management. Project sites were almost wholly described in the technical language of

standardized infrastructure, engineering, and in the language of bureaucratic management.

Many of these narratives were familiar, preconfigured in the earliest surveys of the area and the fictional accounts of the area found in dime novels and other narrative accounts. The role of reclamation in the making of the newest version of a modern New Mexico also was often overlooked. In order to understand the ways that reclamation narratives shaped the place identity of Truth or Consequences and the region, numerous histories are brought together in this chapter. I begin this history in New Mexico, in a fictional account of Elephant Butte Dam published in 1909 by the *Saturday Evening Post*. The bulk of this chapter explores reclamation narratives themselves, coming from the records of the National Irrigation Congress meetings, books written by prominent leaders in reclamation, and Reclamation Bureau reports. These historical accounts traced the ways that the region and places were imagined. The second half of the chapter explores several water of the the Rio Grande, to bring the focus back to the small region of this research project, Elephant Butte Dam. Place ethnography is a framework built on historical grounding. The histories I explore in this chapter illustrate potential ways that history can be engaged in place ethnographic study.

Place Ethnographic History: Locating T or C in Reclamation History

This very small region of south-central New Mexico became the stand-in for a larger Southwest region. In this one small region, vast differences in the state's climates and cultures were erased, just as the idea of a Southwest region erased vast differences in climates and cultures across many states in many early reclamation narratives. Instead, there was only the desert. It was not just any desert, but the *Jornada del Muerto* desert, so

named by the Spanish empire. It was translated by the colonizers of the American empire as the Journey of the Dead Man or Journey of Death—a waterless wasteland.

There were ancient pueblo people in reclamation's narratives, as well as savage nomadic Indians. Reclamation narratives drew on these ancient histories of past people, ignoring their contemporary presence in the landscape, to illustrate ancient traditions of irrigation in the region. These vacant reclamation desertscapes of the 19th century were wide open to settlement. Settlement was possible, given the right conditions. The inhospitable, vacant, and unsettled arid wasteland could be transformed. The coming American empire had technological and scientific mastery that would harness the abundance of wasted waters in the region and make the massive region a place of abundance. Permanent, prosperous, and extensive settlement would be possible. Unlike the vanished settlement of the past, that were in fact still present, these newest settlements would remake the region beyond recognition. The Southwest was a desert waiting to bloom into an empire.

Reclamation narratives and imaginaries built on already established ideas about the region. Reclamation's place narratives of empire and exceptionalism, for example, were deeply intertwined with established regional imaginaries wrought by war and territorial expansion. Reclamation narrative also created new ways to envision the region and future nation. Reclamation champions promised a new kind of modernity and progress for the region, premised on an empire built from small homesteads rather than forged in battle. These were imagined places—fluid and shifting. But these also were specific and contested places, a reality that disrupted these imaginaries. These were physical places where settlement, colonial expansion, migration, legal and political

histories, and ecological and environmental characterizations were located in tangible landscapes. These physical places were most ignored. As the history in this chapter demonstrates, even powerful detractors were effectively silenced by the fevered narratives of reclamation champions.

The place imaginaries that emerged from reclamation's early narratives were characterized by the idea of places waiting to be made. It was a particular kind of waiting where the past, or what passed for the past, ferociously clung to the present, and the striving to the future often overrode the present. The idea that something new and amazing was on the horizon tied these regional place narratives together into a present that could not be fully realized. It was a future imaginary that had to create a past imaginary. Physical examples obscured these imaginaries by shifting the gaze to tangible assets in the present moment. This shift represented a shift in reclamation's narrative of place to narratives of water management based on science, technology and bureaucracy. These future imaginaries were quietly replaced by the physical assets of reclamation.

3.1 A Squatter Settlement on the Banks of the Rio Grande

The land surrounding the site where massive Elephant Butte Dam is slated to rise and create a massive reservoir is removed from public entry by the newly formed Reclamation Service at the turn of the 19th century. The Dam, over 300 feet, was to be the tallest dam in the US, but was eclipsed in size midway through construction. Downriver, land is also removed from public entry. Aside from a single homestead, and a few structures, the area was unpopulated. Most of this region was sparsely populated due to the strong Apache control and settlement in the region. This was true even in the fertile Rio Grande valley that wound through this vast and mostly arid plain ringed by high desert mountains. Elephant Butte Dam was authorized in 1905. The small but bustling

town of Engle was a stop on the Atchison and Topeka and Santa Fe (AT&SF) Railroad, and a supply spur was built to the dam site construction area. The Elephant Butte construction camp population reached 3,000 during the 10-year period between authorization and the dam's completion.

Downriver, on the withdrawn land, a squatter settlement sprang up around an extremely popular resource at the turn of the century—hot mineral water. These few hot mineral water mud pools were not the only draws. Other amenities available in the small squatter settlement included alcohol, gambling, and possibly prostitution. The town made a strong contrast with the dam-site construction camp. The construction camp, with its precise linearity of buildings and its strict regulations, was both a foil to the town and a manifestation of the visions that shaped reclamation policy as a modern marvel of science, technology, and engineering. The healing qualities of hot mineral were not tied to this modern imaginary. Given the regulations of the camp, neither were spirits or other cheerful vices. I return to these histories at the end of this chapter and throughout this research chapter.

The town that began as Palomas Hot Springs, became Hot Springs, and later became Truth or Consequences, rarely enters this chapter's narratives directly. It was occasionally mentioned in the historical record of the Elephant Butte construction camp. The town was peripheral ephemera. It was a side story. It was a potential danger to the well-regulated reclamation camp. In addition to the fear of contagions, its temptations distracted from the business of building the future. It was a squatter town that hinged itself on the narrated dreams, fancies, schemes, and workings of larger place exploits. And although this description does not lend itself readily to shiny tourism magazines that

speak to heroic pasts, I believe it helps to explain the tenacity of this town. It is not a gallant past in the traditional imaginary of the state, built on various narrative fictions that range from White European Spanish conquerors to First Nation imaginaries of all kinds. Most of these familiar narratives were written by Anglo settlers or by people outside of the region and plotted on a linear historical. Most are nothing more than a distant echo of the cultural groups that are imagined.

It was a hard-scrabble lifestyle that nevertheless was based on great visions of future possibility. There is a decidedly fierce perseverance and stubborn obstinacy that characterizes Truth or Consequences. It is a resolutely optimistic town that has always created narratives replete with imminent opportunity and possibility. It is also a place characterized as being slightly removed from reality. Many people celebrate this characterization. Many note the tendency to duplicity. All of these characteristics can be seen in early reclamation narratives. They are narratives founded on promises of things to come. I argue these narratives and imaginaries still linger in contemporary place imaginaries, narratives, practices, and identities of the town and the region.

These are narratives founded on the great promise of opportunity, made possible by water. The town's ties to reclamation and Elephant Butte were and remain tenuous and marginal. Yet the town would arguably not exist without Elephant butte Dam. The history and character of the small settlement known as Palomas Hot Springs was inexorably tied to regional and national reclamation histories. There is a persistent and contradictory idea that the town has always been a magnet to people who would escape the boundaries of modern society but who also are seen to embody the coming modernity. Squatters were the vanguard of the modern nation, living without the full

commitments of ownership, encroaching on the settled places, or set aside places, such as the reclamation reservation. Squatters settle without benefit of legal entitlement.

The idea of being outsiders with tenacious dreams, even if it was merely to be left alone, attached itself to the notion of squatters in the imaginary of Western settlement. Into this heady mix is the mineral water underneath this small settlement, and the narrative of another chance, itself a version of opportunity. Whether wealth or health, or other desires, these narratives are what I seek to explore in this project—the imaginaries and histories that create a sense of place and identity of the town began to emerge. Squatters were also known to go where the gold was, and the gold in this story was water.

3.2 Star of the Empire: Fiction and Imaginary of Southwest Reclamation

I begin my exploration of reclamation narratives with a story written by Eugene Manlove Rhodes. This chapter begins here, in my research place, before tracing this history across the larger regional and nation in the sections ahead. I return to back to this place and small region at the end of this chapter. Rhodes coined the State Motto, “Land of Enchantment.” He is considered a local famous person in T or C’s historical narratives. He is represented in both a mural and a bronze at the Geronimo Museum in downtown Truth or Consequences. Both likenesses were created by acclaimed artist and contemporary town resident Delmas Howe. Rhodes was known for writing local residents and well-known citizens into the stories he wrote. He used both real and fictional place names, but most of his story locations are recognizable places.

The story recounted below, for example, is located in Engle, today little more than a few buildings that serve as the headquarters of Ted Turner’s Armendaris Ranch. It was once a bustling stop on the AT&SF Railroad. The rail spur to the dam was built from the Engle stop. As a teen, Rhodes worked on the Bar Cross Ranch, a ranch whose cowhands

were supposedly responsible for building the first sheltered mineral spring in what is now Truth or Consequences. Rhodes documented his friendships with such New Mexico notables as Albert Fall and George Curry in his fiction.² His story below neatly captures reclamation's place narratives. It is a tall tale that counts as fiction, passes along a good amount of history, and captures many of this chapter's considerations with aplomb.

"The Star of the Empire: The Men of the Bar Cross Stand Their Last" is published in the September 4, 1909, *Saturday Evening Post*. Rhodes, known as the the "cowboy chronicler," narrates the themes of the region with shameless delight. The story begins with an "artist," in the region to illustrate the "larger aspects of Elephant Butte Dam" for the "text of our Special Correspondence" returning to the nearby railroad town of Dundee (Rhodes 1909, 8).³ The artist sets up an easel to paint the old adobe headquarters of the Bar Cross Ranch. He is immediately caught up in a reverie of fancy about the old adobe. The building is slated to be demolished to make way for an armory. This Spanish monolith may have once been the center of the cow town, in a time before "the big dam," but those days were gone (8).

The artist's decision to paint the old adobe instead of the new and gleaming town draws local scorn. The townspeople took "as a personal affront that the artist had willfully omitted all modern environment whatsoever, restoring the infinite recession of desert, its limitless bare horizons," lavishing his time on the "one blemish on the otherwise blameless city" (8). A young boy emerges into the tale, who "wishes it was then now." This sentiment is shared by the artist, who adds that the real estate market, however, would not agree. Stage and theme set, the story shifts locations to the

Armendaris Hotel, “owned by the Armendaris Land and Cattle Company, owners also of the Armendaris Land Grant and the townsite of Dundee” (8).

First to make an appearance into the emergent action is the once red-headed and now grey-haired and mustached rancher and homesteader Hiram Yoast.⁴ Yoast proclaims that the town is the best in New Mexico. He notes the high-pressure water systems, schools, banks, an opera house, a sanatorium, six miles of sidewalk, a fire department, “automobile Stage lines to the Dam and Hot Springs,” and is only “just beginning” to grow (8). Yoast’s speech on the coming modern trails off when he turns to the subject of water. “I tell you, Dundee has a great future, perfect climate, soil will grow anything, with water. When it gets here—” (8). For completion,” the story continues, “he waved his hands over the grounds of the Armendaris, where all manner of fruit trees, interspersed with lawns and flower beds, bordered with trees of mushroom growth: the whole serving the double purpose of decoration and of advertising what the soil would do—with water” (8).

The boasting of the story, like the characters, is lifted from emergent narratives of the region. The regional imaginary that Rhodes creates— beautiful and romantic ruins abandoned by the Spanish, commandeered by cowboys who work for massive ranches, now turned into American town sites with all of the modern amenities—is quickly becoming the accepted history of the region. There is even a beautiful *senorita* imagined on the balcony in the artist’s reverie. Rhodes masterfully captures the idea that the coming modern and the march of progress was unstoppable. There is a single caveat for progress and regional growth—water. These are the themes of early reclamation narratives neatly rendered.

The story continues to spin out its particular mix of political history and fictional creation, including the almost-true story of the formation of Sierra County as well as the wholesale invention of a greatly successful Jornada soap industry.⁵ Water, says Yoast, was the “the beginnings of troub—of progress,” (8). The lack of water was a blessing, a natural detractor to growth. The railroad brought some newcomers, but it will be the dam, the “biggest in the world,” that will make settlement possible and bring with it modern society. Water’s “sure gold—when it comes” (9). Modern agriculture is no longer dependent on the weather, he continues. Nature, and the landscapes of the arid region, could be transformed into modern places, like Dundee.⁶

In another nod to emergent regional imaginaries, Rhodes describes a fabricated western scene the artists creates for a painting, complete with men dressed as cowboys, poorly saddled horses and a badly knotted ropes on a tethered calf. What follows is a western-style comedy of grand proportions. The two old-time former cowhands are joined by the town sheriff, Frank Bojorquez, and a newly elected state representative, the Honorable Robert Martin, who are, unbeknownst to the started crowds, also former cowhands of the Bar Cross Ranch.⁷ In the morning, after a fine adventure running a massive ghost herd, in which the modern is temporarily shed and civilization abandoned for authentic adventure, Martin and Bojorquez are back in the Armendaris Hotel lobby, sitting with “serene and untroubled dignity that none ventured to question them, and as for the other two, “Dundee knew them no more” (41).

Rhodes neatly captures the place imaginaries that typify reclamation narratives and imaginaries. They begin and end in empire, populated by those who benefit and those left behind, those who knew it then and those who are new, and the few who bridge what

is past and what is now. The Spanish empire is cast in ruins. The wild west of the open range is the setting empire, soon to be vanquished by the new American empire. The new empire would be created by irrigation, and promised a lasting settlement on a grand scale. Habits and traditions of the past age were fading into the distance, even as they stubbornly persisted just beyond the edges of the new town. In the story, the town ended abruptly in a well-ordered and landscaped street abruptly gave way to desert. Rhodes also deftly captures how the places and histories are staged and re-created, while giving a nod to the work of capturing, in detailed illustrations, the very real construction of the Dam.

In these modern landscapes, technical majesty is the newest sublime. Some characters can prosper in this new world; some cannot. Rhodes did not bring in a single reference to a First Nation presence. This is an interesting omission for a “western” story, but one that figures centrally in this project. The Spanish were the only past empire. They were an empire that never settled the region because of Apache control. The Spanish named the *Jornada del Muerto*, Journey of the Dead Man, however, a stretch of arid land that came to represent the region as an almost waterless wasteland. Water is the imaginary that ties these narratives together. Only the most massive gestures in the massive landscape—the fictional Spanish outpost, the ranches—were possible, and only because they could commandeer what water resources were available. The newest gesture was likewise massive.

The dam, just outside of the frame of the story, promised growth, modern amenity, settlement, and civilization. It would bring prosperity, wealth and security, and possibly even permanence. Reclamation would transform a desert of sand and scrub brush into a well-ordered and bountiful garden. This was progress, but progress, as Yoast

noted, would bring its own set of troubles. Whatever these may be, they were deferred in the story, subsumed to progress. The boundary between the new and the old was abrupt and sudden. On one side was the civilizing promise of houses, streets and settlement. One block away was desert, unsettled land and an arid wilderness. The region but still unknown to the nation, but was deeply imagined. This story deftly captures reclamation's narratives. The regional imaginaries in Rhodes stories, however, were founded in the earliest attempts to capture this region that were undertaken by this new American empire. These attempts would lead to a confluence of forces that would shape the region and shape regional perceptions, regional place imaginaries that persist today. This place ethnographic history now turns to these foundational histories.

The Great Surveys: Founding a Regional Imaginary

This exploration of regional place imaginaries takes its departure from Walter Mignolo's use of Glissant's imaginary, as "all of the ways a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world" (23). Surveys shaped the perception and conception of the nation's newest region. They laid the groundwork for land policies and led to the creation of a vast network of economic, political and cultural institutions in the region. The U.S. government commissioned four surveys between 1867 and 1879 to map the new territories of the American West, collectively known as the Great Surveys. Richard Bartlett (1962) writes that the surveys were "great in the sense of the vast territories they examined, in their breadth, embracing topography, geology, and the natural sciences, and in the span of years, in which they operated" (Bartlett 1962, xiv). To a voracious public, the surveys were a great source of many things. The surveys signaled the intent of the government to settle the country. They transformed an unknown wilderness into tangible artifacts—reports, maps, illustrations and photographs. By 1861, telegraph lines crossed

the nation, and the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad opened the West to a new rush of commerce, settlement, and marketing. Fifer (1988) argued that this period started the most rigorous advertising campaigns and “regional promotions” the world had ever seen (Fifer 1988, 11). These ideas were perpetuated in a dizzying array of commercial items, from dime novels to stuffed lizards. The Great Surveys were a grand contribution to the construction of the region. Emergent reclamation narratives during this period reflected and contributed to this ongoing project of regional construction.

Critical regionalist see regions as constructions that both reflect and challenge histories of settlement, colonial expansion, migration, legal and political histories, ecological understanding, environmental characterizations, and other forces (Herr 1996; Limón 2008; Powell 2007). Regions are characterized theoretically in similar ways to place—as fluid, shifting, and ephemeral, but also as persistent, patterned, and entrenched. Paasi (2003) defined regions as “historically contingent processes, related in different ways to political, governmental, economic and cultural practices and discourses” (Paasi 2003, 481), wedded to Tuan’s more poetic definition of region as “a collage of geography, memory, and sentiment, welded together and burnished by art and ideology” (Tuan 2002, 729) and together they do a fine job to captures this era of regional creation.

The political, economic, and cultural practices that make up the collage of geography, memory, and sentiment being welded at the turn of the century about the Southwest region began in 1867 after the end of the Civil War. The exploration and survey of the nation’s newest territories founded some of the earliest narratives, practices, and imaginaries of the vast area soon to be the globally renowned American West. These were great contests of discovery, funded through different federal departments and

leading to the creation of new one. They inspired great rivalry. They were part epic adventure, part scientific inquiry, part resource assessment, part military reconnaissance, part promotion, part nation building, and a whole host of other parts. Their scale was massive and their impact enormous (Bartlett 1962; Fifer 1988; Goetzmann 1959, 1966, 1986; Tyler 1994).

Ferdinand Hayden's expedition from 1867 to 1879 was originally funded by the General Land Office to survey Nebraska. Within two years, his exploration had become the *United States Geological Survey of the Territories*, overseen by the Secretary of the Interior. Hayden's entourage of artists, photographers, and newspaper reporters created the region for a nation keenly interested in the newest spoils of war and purchase.⁸ In 1871, the Army Corps of Engineers inaugurated its own survey. This investigation was premised on the idea that scientists and civilians were usurping the Corps' traditional cartographic role. This was a role they had established in the survey and settlement of the United States before the Civil War.

One of the earliest regional characterizations was established by the Lt. George Montague Wheeler. Wheeler's first survey in 1869, covering a portion of Nevada to navigable waters of the Colorado, was commissioned to create a military map of site for forts and infrastructure. In 1871, the Corp of Engineers sent Wheeler to explore and map the area south of the Central Pacific Railroad in eastern Nevada and Arizona. Following several successful mapping expeditions, the not yet 30-year old Wheeler, a West Point Graduate, proposed plan for to map and explores US territory west of the 100th meridian, on a scale of 8 miles to the inch. Congress authorized the 15 year, \$2.5 million project in

1872.⁹ The deep patterns of western survey are recognizable in Wheeler's regional expedition maps (See Appendix 1, Figure 1, page 376).

As Goetzmann notes in the *West of the Imagination* (1986), the Western region was created through a vast network of stakeholders with disparate agendas. These interests generated a vast conglomeration of resources, as well as projects that sought to depict the region for particular ends. Government interests were shaped by a confluence of political, economic, military and scientific agendas. The Corps of Topographical Engineers, for example, was created in 1838 to explore and map the continent. In the Corps is an almost seamless joining of manifest destiny and government-sponsored military and scientific assessment and survey of new territories. The Corps was adamant about reclaiming this role, arguing that the maps being produced by other surveys were considered unsuitable for military purposes. The Corps combined the new sciences, emergent technologies, and the mapping and survey of natural resources and features into a military expedition of a massive scope. The Pacific Railroad surveys undertaken by the Corps produced 17 volumes of official reports.¹⁰

Ron Tyler's (1994) analysis of the 18 illustrated federal government publications on Western exploration from 1843 to 1863 noted the national impact of these reports. Several surveys had publication runs of more than 50,000 copies, attesting to their tremendous popular appeal (150). Tyler also noted the variety of narrative and visual accounts. There were more than 1,600 prepared illustrations, for example. In his review of periodical literature in the 19th century, Kenneth Price (1995) notes that by the mid-1870s, furthermore, "over 4,000 weeklies with more than 10 million readers" in the United States regularly reprinted this government trove of material. There was a

rapacious appetite for representations of the new territories (Price 1995, 3). National and international periodicals, newspapers, and journals regularly reprinted report excerpts, maps, paintings, and photographs. These newest representations joined an already popular body of work on the West.¹¹

Photography of the region, for example, captured the American fascination with technology and the conviction that photographs are true-to-life representations of the landscape in ways that paintings are not. Photographs emerged as a favorite medium to capture place and has never been budged from its prominent position. Famed Civil War photographer Timothy O'Sullivan accompanied both King and Wheeler. O'Sullivan was known for his depictions of First Nation people purportedly engaged in ordinary daily activity, rather than in staged scenes. His images are considered some of the earliest attempts at realism in ethnographic representation and contributed to the idea that the information in surveys was a literal rather than fictional representation of the region.

The extensive photographic renderings of the region were also widely disseminated. It was a landscape that was magnificent but almost incomprehensible to audiences in the East. These photographs, including awesome landscape renderings, depictions of First Nation lands and people, as well as the depictions of Spanish architecture, created a regional imaginary that existed on a daunting and almost terrifying scale. Photographs created a place that was unfathomably foreign but also full of nostalgia and romance (Davis 2007, 2011; Jurovics 2012). These persistent imaginaries, like the regional romanticisms, are still being crafted in the contemporary moment in these images (See Appendix 1, Figure 2, page 376). A 2012 news article from the UK

DailyMail is titled, “How the Wild West REALLY looked: Gorgeous sepia-tinted pictures show the landscape as it was charted for the very first time.”¹²

3.3 John Wesley Powell

David Worster’s (2000) biography of John Wesley Powell is a powerful biographical case study. Powell created some of the most enduring and powerful narratives shaping the emergent national imaginary of the western and southwestern regions. Powell is a looming figure in regional histories. His early surveys and exploration captivated the nation. Worster noted that one of the most authoritative maps of the region was in Volume 11 of the 1855 Army Corps of Topographical Engineers Pacific Railway Reports and “blazoned in the middle of its four-foot expanse was that word ‘unexplored,’ a gap that Powell had proposed to set right” (Worster 2000, 128). In these efforts, as Worster notes, “Powell heightened his own adventures with a dash of romance, embellished a few anecdotes to dramatize his personal heroism and disregarding his own notes, exaggerated the dangers” of his expeditions to further the causes of scientific exploration and survey he held dear (201).

Wallace Stenger (1992), in *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West*, writes that Powell’s expedition report was to some extent a “work of the imagination.” Powell was incredibly cognizant of the power of epic narrative as well as visual images on the public and in Congress. He brought artist Frederick Dellenbaugh as well as photographers E. O. Beaman and John Hillers on his second survey of the Colorado River. Painter Thomas Moran joined Powell in the Grand Canyon. Popular magazines such as *Harper’s*, *Scribner’s Monthly*, and *Atlantic Monthly* in the 1860s and 1870s competed to provide frontier narratives and statuses of survey expedition updates. In 1875, *Scribner’s Monthly* published Powell’s 1869 expedition

account. His official report to Congress, *Exploration of the Colorado River of the West*, was released at the same time and “sold out almost immediately” (Stenger 1992, 130). Powell often combined expedition accounts for dramatic effect and “wrote partly with an eye on the scientific reader, partly on the persuasive power the narrative might have on appropriations committees and partly on the public impression he would make” (149). A *New York Times* editorial from July 26, 1869, claimed that the entire country was interested in Powell’s expedition and that newspapers eagerly printed every item they could get ahold of about the expedition.

A professor of geology at Illinois State Normal University, John Wesley Powell had undertaken several small private surveys in the late 1860s. These eventually led to a government funding for a survey of the Colorado River. There were four concurrent surveys in the western region by the 1870s. This created tension between the Department of the Interior and the War Department. Powell actively lobbied to consolidate the surveys and in Congress asked the National Academy of Sciences to consider the issue. The academy recommended consolidation under the Department of the Interior. A new agency, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), was established in 1879 to carry out the work of survey, mapping, and assessing the vast resources of the new territories, duties laid out by the Land Ordinance of 1785. During this tumultuous time, the public lands commission was established to assist in the policy work of public domain lands, including surveys, classification and economic analysis, and assessment and entry settlement of the more than 1 billion acres of public lands in the West. King was the first director, and he was replaced by Powell a year later in 1881. Powell headed the organization for the next 23 years.

3.4 John Wesley Powell: Report on the Lands of the Arid Region (1878)

The first duty of the USGS was the classification of the public lands. Powell's 1878 *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region* classified most of the lands west of the 100th meridian as arid, receiving less than 20 inches of rain. The meridian line 100 degrees west of Greenwich, England, known as the 100th Meridian, roughly divides the North America into two parts. It cuts directly through the US Great Plains, through the middle of North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, the panhandle of Oklahoma, and down through Texas. The line marked by the 100th Meridian is the line that divides land that can be characterized as semi-arid or arid lands in the US. There are physical, climatic and geographical differences that this line captures, such as average rainfall of less than 10 inches in the arid lands. With a few exceptions, most of the land to the west of the line is above 2,000 feet in elevation. The regional imaginary created by the 100th Meridian was a heady mix of material, physical and scientific understandings layered with political, cultural and economic understanding of the region. The regional imaginaries of the West are embedded in this line, geographically, culturally, politically and historically.

Using the Rio Grande River and watershed and as a critical case, Powell argued that the region would support limited settlement and irrigation projects. He argued for the creation of watershed-wide federal water districts, pragmatic planning and limited growth. He proposed irrigation rights and responsibilities, organized by irrigation districts with boundary-crossing watershed areas in communal landscapes. Powell claimed that his proposals were based on scientific evidence and years of experience in the Southwest. Worster wrote that it was Powell's experiences at a base camp in Kanab, Utah, that remade Powell's ideas on regional reclamation.

Mormons travelling to Santa Fe in the mid-1800s traded with local populations observed irrigation practices of New Mexicans. The resulting Mormon irrigations systems are strikingly similar to New Mexico *acequia* communities. Mormons were convinced of the superiority of “time-tested methods of building community ditches, or *acequias*, brought from Spain to the new world” (Worster 2000, 352). Powell too became convinced, publicly and vocally announcing his support and admiration for the region’s Native, Spanish, Mexican, and Mormon communities.

Report on the Lands of the Arid Region was the origin of Powell’s fall from power. He departed from the dominant regional place narratives in radical ways. The *Report* was a manifesto of sorts, calling out popular narratives about widespread irrigation and settlement as treacherous and ill-conceived. His report was part scientific assessment and part reflection of his experience in the region. It also was a public recognition of established settlement patterns. The idea that all the good lands were already taken was a common sentiment. This idea was held in tension with the idea that the West was a vast and vacant place that would be amenable to settlement given successful irrigation schemes. The absence of First Nation and Hispanic settlers in almost every reclamation narrative, except as testament to the ancient method of arid irrigation, was common. Mormon communities were used for illustrative purposes in popular reclamation narrative—but as models of productivity, not as examples of communal necessity and adopters of Hispanic methods. Powell’s report was revolutionary in many ways.

His pronouncements in the *Report* brought him in direct conflict with the National Irrigation Congress, which had powerful supporters in Congress. The National Irrigation

Congress, described below, had once championed Powell. It now stood against him. He eventually paid for these convictions with his career. In 1888, Congress appropriated \$100,000 for a hydrographic survey of “lands susceptible of irrigation” in response to the idea that regional settlement was limited by aridity. The claim that “arid lands” could be “redeemed” by irrigation and millions of acres transformed into productive agricultural lands became the rallying cry of reclamation supporters (Sterling 1940, 427). Congress appropriated an additional \$250,000 in 1889. In 1890, however, Congress cut its funding for the irrigation survey, and Powell found himself under attack.

In 1889, speculators in Idaho trailed Irrigation Survey parties, staking claims on prospective reservoir sites. The secretary of the Interior authorized the withdrawal from settlement of all lands within the arid region, a step that effectively halted any settlement on hundreds of millions of acres and voided claims filed in the previous 10 months. The promise that settlers would be granted legal title once lands were returned to the public domain galvanized public support for large-scale irrigation projects. Powell thus had lost congressional as well as popular support. The final break came on Oct. 13, 1893. Powell stood before the second National Irrigation Congress in Los Angeles in 1893. The LA Times carries an illustration of the “Arid Region,” in an article about the Congress (see Appendix 1, Figure 3, page 377).

Powell called for a radical reconsideration of regional reclamation. Diverging from his prepared speech, Powell erupted. “Not one more acre of land should be granted to individuals for irrigating purposes,” he told the Congress. “When all the rivers are used, when all the creeks in the ravines, when all the brooks, when all the springs are used,” he told the crowd, there was “still not sufficient water to irrigate all this arid land.”

“I tell you, gentlemen, you are piling up a heritage of conflict and litigation over water rights, for there is not sufficient water to supply these lands.”¹³ He was shouted down from the podium. Delegates approved a platform calling, for the first time, for a massive federal role in furthering reclamation schemes in the region. The break with the Irrigation Congress marked the final break with popular support for Powell. He resigned from the USGS on May 8, 1894.

The Popular Movement for Reclamation

The earliest place imaginaries that emerged from the regional reclamation narratives are run through with exaltations of land abundance and water scarcity. Abundance would be made possible through science, technology, engineering coupled with rugged ingenuity. Narratives of places laid vacant and waste, transformed through irrigation to places of lush abundance, dominate. Reclamation narratives merge effortlessly with empire narrative. Empire is always partly built on the fervent belief in the righteousness of deed and rhetoric, the emptiness of the land to be settled, even when local populations are recognized—in addition to material resources and wealth. Reclamation narratives forged a regional geographic place imaginary at the turn of the century. The place imaginary crafted by reclamation supporters obscured the deeply rooted settlements already in place—unless they were useful to the argument that settlement was possible.

Nonetheless, reclamation narratives cast the region as a *tabula rasa* for American settlers where the triumph of progress would remake the landscape and bring people to the land. Powell’s dire warnings were resolutely rejected by politicians, capitalists, and boosters. He faded almost completely from the national stage—the stage he had dominated for decades. In the decades ahead, irrigation supporters would recast themselves as reclamation supporters. This would denote the move from private to

public, from past to present, and from small scale to a scale that was almost beyond reckoning. These imaginaries would come to dominate and refine the regional place imaginaries at the turn of the century.

3.5 National Irrigation Congress: Crafting a Regional Place Imaginary

The National Irrigation Congress crafted many of reclamation's earliest place narratives.

The rhetoric and promotional work of the organization created persistent regional place imaginaries. The National Irrigation Congress held its first meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1891. Its last meeting as an official body was held in El Paso, Texas, in 1916. The highlight of the final meeting was the dedication of the newly completed Elephant Butte Dam. Delegates at the first meeting of the Congress came from 20 states as well as from the New Mexico, Arizona and Utah territories.

The public and publicized aim of the Congress was to incite public support for irrigation in the region. The Congress provided and promoted a vision for this new American region. The preface to the first official report of the National Irrigation Congress was striking. Fred Trimmer, a delegate from Utah and a fellow in the Royal Geographical Society, was its author. He began with a reference to the patriotic American. This often-repeated phrase established reclamation as an American project and an American duty. Reclamation was actively cast as a part of the manifest American destiny of settlement during the three-day Congress.

Trimmer describes the reasons why a "study of the history of the world and the progress of mankind" would give both pause and consolation to the well-known regret that such a large part of the United States laid in the arid region. The region is not only capable of settlement but is favorable to the "highest development of the human race," Trimmer exclaims (*Report* 1891, preface). The greatest "nations on the earth and most

aggressive people, Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Carthaginians, Greeks and Romans,” he continues, were nations of the arid region, lands where “art, science, poetry, statesmanship and war-like attributes” flourished and where the Christian religion was founded (preface, n.p.). In India, however, “where there is abundant rainfall the contrary to hardy enterprising men and fine soldiers flourishes.” Trimmer ended this brief but sweeping racially charged comparison with a note that “greatness of these ancient races,” and their “their valor, poetry and philosophy” cannot with absolute certainty attributed to living in arid regions—although his speech cast little room for doubt (preface, n.p.). This history lesson comes in two short paragraphs.

This opening statement of myth and fancy and racial denigration captured the religious undertones in reclamation’s nascent regional narratives. The idea that the arid region was an oasis ready to spring into being, and those who dared dream it into being would become creators of the new American empire, was reverently exalted by those present. Vast fortunes would be made in the arid region. The power of the nation would shift accordingly. The welcome addresses by the governor of Utah, the mayor of Salt Lake City, and the local Chamber of Commerce president embraced similar themes while building new narratives.

Foremost was the idea that public land capable of settlement had run out and that the greatness of the nation was in peril. This included urban unrest on both coasts. “In the case of the great west,” Utah delegate Thomson proclaimed in his opening remarks, that “the western ocean has been reached and the tide of immigration has been turned back in search of new fields, and these new fields are to be found in the arable lands of the arid West” (3). The arid lands, delegate C.C. Wright of California said, were capable of

“supporting a greater population than is now living east of the Mississippi River” (12). Nevada delegate C. W. Irish claimed that the nation saw the “sterility of one million seven hundred thousand square miles of territory in the Unites States” but also the “water sufficient in that territory to convert it from aridity to fertility,” which would be the “equivalent of adding a vast territory of area to the Unites States without conquest.” (15).

Delegate Francis G. Newlands of Nevada, who would eventually carry the Reclamation Act of 1902, claimed that settlers could not “expect much from the Federal Government” (20). Newlands, not yet a congressman, claimed the federal government, “knows nothing of our country” (21). Without water, the land was worthless, he exclaimed, and the government was effectively “giving away practically nothing.” Reclamation champions would fight, however until the great West “blossomed as a rose” (25). Day three of the Irrigation Congress speeches was much the same. In the closing comments of the Congress, delegate Anson Mills turned the attention of the Congress to the 1893 World’s Fair. There, he said, “the genius of all modern civilization is to be displayed” (126). The Congress hosted a display at every World’s Fair.¹⁴

The second meeting of the Congress was held in 1893 in Los Angeles. It was there that Powell made his heretical break from the movement. The *San Francisco Chronicle* noted that Lionel Sheldon, former governor of the territory of New Mexico, suggested the federal government be given the direct responsibility for constructing irrigation projects.¹⁵ The call for federal intervention was not included in the Los Angeles platform. It was an idea described by the Congress’ secretary and irrigation champion, William E. Smythe, as a radical turn. The radical turn to federal intervention in arid land

reclamation, however, was embraced by the Congress and soon became the center-piece of promotion and lobbying efforts.

Speeches at the Los Angeles Congress urged a greater role for the government. From the very opening remarks, the emphasis was placed on the need for a vast arid settlement and colonization program in order to relieve urban distress. The meeting was held at the Los Angeles Grand Opera House. The hall was at capacity, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. The *Times* also reported that an appeal from the U.S. State Department brought delegates from across the globe.¹⁶ The upcoming World's Fair in Chicago was mentioned repeatedly in reports on the Congress as a showcase of how modern irrigation would transform the region.¹⁷

3.6 William Ellsworth Smythe and the *Irrigation Age*

The unofficial head of the irrigation movement was newspaper publisher, publicist, and delegate William Ellsworth Smythe. He published the *The Irrigation Age* (1891-1918), a powerful platform for the movement. Smythe, known for his strong objections to federal involvement, did an about face. From the podium in Los Angeles, he declared that “there is something in this world more precious than ditch stock and irrigated land. It is human liberty. It is the progress of the race.” He continued:

We are laying today the cornerstone of the Republic of Irrigation. It shall not be laid in avarice and cemented with greed. That would not be fitting; for a people living in sunlit valleys guarded by eternal mountains have ever been the defenders of liberty. We will lay the superstructure of this edifice by the plumbline of justice and equity. We will write upon its white cornerstone “Sacred to the Equality of Man.” We inscribe upon its massive arch those two synonymous terms, “Irrigation and Independence.”¹⁸

Smythe took up the role of public ambassador of irrigation interests when Powell broke from the official narrative. Although Powell captured the public's imagination in his

explorations and reports from the field, his ideas were increasingly out of line with the nationally popular utopian vision that marked reclamation narratives.

These were created in no small part by Smythe himself.¹⁹ Smythe published *The Conquest of Arid America* in 1900. Historian Lawrence B. Lee noted that Smythe took it upon himself to “build a great popular base of support for promoting state and congressional legislation” and established and furthered the “popular crusade that culminated in the adoption of the Newlands Act in 1902” (Lee 1972, 290). Crusade is a fitting term for these early reclamation narratives, as demonstrated in these histories. These narratives flowed seamlessly into the ideas of the western region as a place where fortunes could be made and people and places could be radically remade. The familiar narratives of reclamation were shifting, however, as the federal government seemed more and more likely than private enterprise to bring reclamation to the region.

Federal Irrigation: From the Politics of Promotion to Political Bureaucracy

Reclamation’s early place narratives created imagined places. These were places unmoored from the physical contours of the land, its people, and histories. These were waiting to be made. Hayden White suggested that he has “sought to suggest that this value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary,” (White 2002, 24). White touched on something fundamental to reclamation’s earliest place imaginaries and narratives, even recognizing they are promotional, and not historical, narratives.

Narratives of what *was* and what *could be* became the foundations of the “real events” at the turn of the 19th century. Early irrigation and reclamation narratives captured an “image of life” that had physical examples on the ground, but were

simultaneously wholly imagined. These narratives were startling and fantastical. They were, simultaneously, narratives so deeply ingrained in the imaginary of the region by the turn of the 19th century that were somewhat unremarkable. The history of the region was actively written by boosters of all kinds. Historical narratives mixed real or verifiable histories, coupled with historical creation, conjecture, desires and fantasies. The “desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life” had a special meaning in these regions, where the image of life itself was so deeply embedded in the imaginary.

These narrative accounts were often the means to an end: They narrated place imaginaries where the confluence of politics, economics, culture, and other forces that created places emerge in particular places. The real-world tangibility’s that these imaginaries wrought are undeniable. Elephant Butt Dam emerged in grand-scale in the landscape. The water and the crops that it irrigates exist in measurable ways. The physicality of reclamation’s place making is undeniable in the dams and diversion canals and in the huge culverts and sprawling agricultural enterprises that define the legacy of reclamation in the landscape. The high rhetoric of early reclamation narratives disappears into these landscapes.

The place imaginaries they created, however, left an equally indelible mark on the landscape. These ideas still shape contemporary narratives and place imaginaries. Following the passage of the Reclamation Act in 1902, reclamation became a technical, scientific, and engineering endeavor, increasingly removed from the popular discourse of the region. I explored a few of these narratives to illustrate how reclamation’s fantastical reverie became an exercise in modern bureaucracy. The transition from one era to the

next was captured in the work of Frederick Haynes Newell. I end this chapter with a return to the Rio Grande, Elephant Butte Dam, and my research town. The themes of the first part of this work, however, emerge regularly in the ethnographic chapters ahead.

3.7 Frederick Haynes Newell

Frederick Haynes Newell's *Irrigation in the United States* (1902) was published just prior to the passage of the Reclamation Act. Newell was a hydraulic engineer and chief of the hydraulic branch of the USGS and became the first chief engineer of the Reclamation Service, all noted on the title page. In the text is a small, italicized quote from President Theodore Roosevelt from his first annual message to Congress on Dec. 3, 1901, that reads, "The forest and water problems are perhaps the most vital internal questions of the United States" (front matter). The book's dedication is to John Wesley Powell, Newell's mentor and teacher, who died in 1902. Powell is heralded as "the pioneer in scientific conquest of the arid lands of the national domain" (front matter). The book's introduction lays out the new dominant narrative of reclamation, without letting go of more familiar tropes. The text ends with a very technical assessment of irrigation methods and an overview of various projects in the western United States.

The photographs, located on glossy paper at the book's center, are the most intriguing subject of the book. They provide the visual transition from early reclamation narratives to federal reclamation narrative. None of the pictures are dated or located. The first plate in the book is titled "The Isolated Home on the Wind-Swept Unirrigated Plain." It is a desolate picture. The foreground of earth with sparse grass gives way to a vast sky that is sepia gray in the reproduction. Earth and sky meet in an unbroken line interrupted by no feature save one miniscule rectangular smudge in the very center of the horizon—the isolated home. Yet to have built a home must evidence some water nearby.

The second plate, “A Home Made Possible By Irrigation,” looks down from a good vantage, a windmill perhaps, ironically, on a tidy single-story wood home with a few young trees next to a small furrowed and planted field. Although there is a large sweep of featureless flat land stretching behind the house to the horizon, and no neighbors in sight, it is a friendly and even prosperous picture.

Plate three shows two separate houses. One is a melting adobe ruin and the other a low-slung wood house with sagging door and window frames. There is nothing else in these landscapes except earth, and what appears to be fairly lush grass in both photos. The title of this plate is “Results of Attempts to Make Homes on the Public Lands Without First Providing Methods of Irrigation.” The point of these photographs seems to be that the arid region is a ruinous place for those who would settle there without irrigation. Yet the presence of homes proves water was somewhere nearby. These small details are telling.

Between these first two plates is a map of “Vacant Public Land” (see Appendix 1, Figure 4, page 379). In the map, the western region is clearly separated from the eastern region by a solid black mass that stretches from the top of Texas north to the Dakotas before abruptly changing to white, indicating “vacant” or, more precisely, government lands. It is a continuation of representations of the western half of the Nation as arid and unpopulated. Large blocks on the map are marked as Indian Reservations, Forest Reservations, and Railroad and wagon grants. The Pacific coast shifts gradually back to the dense black of population, albeit with several vertical stretches of vacant land the entire length of the coast. The map conveys several messages. The eastern land is represented as a solid mass of humanity. The far western shores are full but never far

from a stretch of ‘vacant’ space. The railroad and road infrastructures are in place. Established populations are represented but eclipsed by the vacancy. The blank canvas of “vacant” white dominates the map. These are places waiting to be made.

Newell claimed it was not just the farmer who wished to be productive, and thus reclaim the land. Reclamation was also a subject of critical interest to the “great landowners” of public lands—which is the whole of the nation. As such, he wrote, it was “unquestionably a duty of the highest citizenship” to ensure these lands were settled by a hundred homes of independent farmers rather than by great stock ranches that were not only controlled by absent owners but employed only nomadic herders to boot (14). Newell wrote that “home-making is the aim of this book; the reclamation of places now waste and desolate and the creation there of fruitful farms, each tilled by its owner, is the object” (Newell 1902, 3). This is a matter not “merely of local interest to the West, but is of even greater concern to the East, and all who are dependent upon the manufacturing and transporting interests, as well as to the farmers who supply all of the workers with food” (8). These narratives merged seamlessly with the early reclamation narratives of empire without war but with water and hoe. This empire of small and tidy homes was no threat to the powerful interests of the East. It was a potential market and food producer. It was also the maker of “good” citizens (16).

The themes of progress and technical prowess emerged with vigor. Water, Newell said, ultimately had the greatest direct influence on man’s capacity to make the land productive. Too much water and the land was a marsh; too little, and nothing good grows. Newell described the “narrow range between the excess and deficiency of water,” which spoke to a new age when farmers would have to rely on exacting plant science and

research (23). Public lands, he said, were open to settlement under the Homestead Law to those who would use the “capital of . . . their labor” to become landed citizens, albeit modern landed citizens guided by soil and plant science (12).

Newell claimed that the very stability of the nation was dependent on “this outlet for superfluous labor” and “opportunities for the making of homes” (15). Homemaking and labored self-determination joined forces with the application of scientific methods to create these modern agricultural bounties. The idea of American exceptionalism persisted in public land ownership in imagined whole and realized part, as do ideas of modernity and progress, although they are increasingly seen as part of a modernizing project in agricultural projects. Empire, however, as the battle cry of the National Irrigation Congress, was quietly replaced by homemaking in one short text. Homemaking would be even more quietly replaced by the bureaucracy to come—an army of technical, engineering, and scientific experts. The sweeping rhetoric of western empire and transformation beyond measure of a great desert into a lush garden of Eden quietly faded as reclamation became a federal project.

3.8 First Annual Report of the Reclamation Service (1902)

The *First Annual Report of the Reclamation Service* to the 57th Congress covered a mere five months of activity. As such, it was part historical report on irrigation in the United States and individual states under the purview of the Reclamation Act of 1902 and part propaganda narrative. Submitted by Chief Engineer Newell, much of the text was familiar. It was drawn directly from his irrigation text and also was a reiteration of well-known irrigation and reclamation narratives. The newly created Reclamation Service was still housed under the Department of the Interior’s USGS. In his letter of transmittal, USGS Director Charles D. Walcott made several points about reclamation as both

activity and policy. The first concerned field work, which was carried out by “skilled engineers” (*First Annual Report* 1903, 12). The conviction that scientific and technological control of the environment and natural resources were possible because of the expertise and technical prowess of its corps was the most powerful new narrative to emerge from this report. It was the narrative that redefined reclamation.

The second point Walcott made was the great importance that arid lands had to the nation as a whole. This was where the nation would look to realize its greatness. The third point Walcott made was that the Reclamation Act was passed by Congress in haste. The fate of the arid lands was so critical to the nation, he said, that action had to be taken. As such, the “law is so general in its term that its success or failure may be said to rest almost wholly upon its administration” (12). Newell’s focus on the men in the service illustrated the largest shifts in reclamation’s emergent narratives. These men, he said, have “twenty years of field work” on average (16).

These field-tested experts would survey, design, and engineer reclamation’s projects. Newell continued for some time about the benefits of the engineers and other civil servants who staffed the newly created service. They would also troubleshoot and solve the many issues that reclamation engendered, especially issues of salination and silt build-up. Newell’s conviction in the power of that scientific methods applied to agriculture was evident everywhere. Reclamation and plant science were the future. The agriculturally modern future would be built, managed, and directed by government expert. The actual homemaker, it seemed, would still grow the crops but under the guidance of the expert advice.

The report moved briefly onto the history of the irrigation movement, beginning with Powell's irrigation and other surveys, the Senate Select Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation of Arid Lands, the Census of 1889, and the National Irrigation Congresses and Association, before quickly mentioning party platforms and the president's first message to Congress. The purpose here was decidedly political, offering a broadly sweeping account of the ascendancy of irrigation into the national spotlight and reminding Congress of the reach of its champions.

The report then moved into federal legal precedent on water rights in arid lands, a complex and layered body of law and custom that began with the concerns of the use of water in gold and silver mining. Part of a general act relating to mineral lands, the act, "as held up by the United States Supreme Court, [is] a recognition of the rules and regulations that had grown up in the West, as declared by the local laws, customs, and decisions of the courts" (46). Other notable developments came from desert land acts and subsequent provisions to the sale of land in arid regions, which held that irrigation and reclamation would hold the same measure as other patent requirements for homesteading and ownership. This is noted because of the persistence of individual efforts that are highlighted in each section. The report notes that over the course of 25 years of arid land laws, the "effect of the results has been strikingly meager" (60).

The question of land withdrawal got considerable attention. Newell noted that the service was established with \$165,000 set aside under the auspices of the Interior for the purpose of surveys and examinations required by the law. The act required the temporary withdrawal of lands to be reclaimed to "prevent speculative filings" (15). This was the practice of parties following survey parties and buying land that would increase in value

by proximity to a reclamation project. Reclamation creates the conditions for an additional legal definition of squatters. The expectation that lands will be restored to the public domain is well established historically. It is a common settlement expectation.

The withdrawal of lands is contentious in Western states and territories. This process has led to what Newell describes as an unfortunate condition where settlers were filing homesteading options on lands that might not be reclaimed. Efficient and competent, these men were familiar with not only the arid regions but also with the way of government work and the methods and precedents established by the Reclamation Service. The funds for this work were derived from the sale and disposal of public lands from the 13 states and three territories that made up the entire western half of the United States, excepting Texas, whose federal public lands were disposed of in 1841. Newell remarked that to complicate matters, “not all of the arid lands which may be reclaimed are still vacant” and listed Spanish land grants, grants to railroads, land donated to states for other purposes, and existing homestead around sources of water (18). Excepting timbered areas, Newell wrote that “practically all of the land now remaining in the hands of the Government is arid” (18). The report then turned to the general mapping and description of the arid region, from land to weather. The arid region, despite a few mentions on the vast variation in the area, was characterized as a single place.

The modern hydraulic society built on the foundations of science, engineering, and law. The ground beneath this foundation was the idea that “employing the best of all three met a societal obligation to dominate nature and make it better serve the needs of man” (81). Reclamation’s place narratives and imaginaries grew from the narrative of the citizen landowner who would dominate the arid nature of the region to serve the needs of

settlement of this benign empire. This became the defining characteristic of the projects. As such, it was a paradox of grand proportions. The control of small landowners, however, could not be achieved without massive federal reclamation projects. The idea that modern methods would transform nature and create prosperity reached a fevered pitch in reclamation. The nation's financial crisis fueled these narratives, as did immigration and urban unrest. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner's (1861-1932) much-heralded thesis on the closing of the frontier added to this unease. The idea that reclamation could remake the frontier folded neatly into these narratives.

3.9 Squatters and the Coming of the Modern Age

Payson Jackson Treat earned Stanford University's first Ph.D. in history in 1910. His dissertation explored the national land system from the late 1700s to the early 1800s. He primarily covered legal aspects. I depart from the histories of reclamation and the imaginaries they crafted to consider this idea of squatters—which was the legal definition of the residents in the town of Palomas Hot Springs. National history is a history of land Treat claims. Nothing was as important to “American identity and prosperity” as “extending regular settlements into the wilderness” and establishing “sound title for all time” in these vast new lands (Treat 1916, 92). The twin themes of imposing order and asserting title continually reinforced each other in this narrative.

Treat simultaneously ignored and regularly acknowledged the long histories of settlement on these vast tracts of land. Treat noted that only a relatively small portion of people were settling on legally defined public land in the Southwest. “Fully one half had taken up land in regions which never had come under the land system,” he wrote (Treat, 200). These lands fell under foreign title or were the remainder of Indian lands whose title had not been extinguished. Foreign land titles were the more difficult, he argued,

necessitating a period of confirmation. This delayed both survey and sale. “Indian lands” were considered a nuisance more than a legal problem in this text and thus were given little consideration. Foreign lands fell under British, French, Spanish, and Mexican title. Confirmation of land ownership was beset by corruption, land speculation, and an almost “complete lack of oversight” (201). In the “old Southwest,” however, Congress did establish a system to ascertain ownership, “the first carefully drawn act for the confirmation of foreign title” (210). Most claims, however, remained undecided or favored new settlers through law or graft. Congress stayed mired in details of particular claims said Treat. In the failure to pass general acts, speculators and false witnesses triumphed, and “respectable settlers” were “forced to become squatters” he claimed, in order, it can be assumed, not to lose the land to others who would also be inclined to illegally settle (229).

The tension between the narratives that land was so plentiful that surveys could not keep up with the wave of settlers in its wake and the narratives that the best lands had already been lost to settlement emerged constantly in Treat’s accounts. Treat considered squatters a logical conclusion to the question of land distribution, which he claimed drove the “squatting evil” (372). Treat noted that the first instance of the use of the word squatter in the congressional record, in early 1806, was put forward as a legal definition of occupation without title. The squatters, “a most interesting character whose position was gradually changing throughout these years during the course of the years,” who just a few years before had been counted as a land-hungry settler and thus denied the new government revenue, were “law breakers to be sure, yet in many cases,” they were “estimable criminals” (388). Treat argued that circumstance drove this habit of claim

without deed, title, warrant, or survey. The delays resulting from private land claim arising from foreign title and the slow pace of survey generated squatter settlements, he argued.

This narrative is important to this particular history for two reasons. It is a narrative about abundance beset by scarcity. It is a narrative that emerged most fully in reclamation, to shape the place imaginary that reclamation narratives constructed. The obvious connection to the town that became Truth or Consequences was that it began as a squatter settlement. More interesting in terms of place narratives in general were the tensions that adhered to the idea of squatters as law breakers, as opportunists, as losers, as pioneers, ultimately as necessary to empire building as armies in the region, despite their less-desirable qualities. Though squatters were harbingers to progress, they remained outside of the modern. The hope of preemption and eventual claim for lands proved a good bet for squatters, despite congressional warnings.

Eventually, lawmakers capitulated to the ownership claims of squatters, Treat said, as goals shifted from debt relief to settlement. During a half century of land legislation, squatters transformed from “a trespasser, a violator of the laws of the Union, to a public benefactor, a man whose bravery and sacrifices opened up great areas to peaceful settlement and who merited well of the nation” (386). The system ultimately offered the squatter the choice between becoming a settled citizen or moving on “in advance of the civilization he could not endure” (390). Treat’s squatter narrative was very similar to reclamation narratives. Abundance and scarcity were in constant tension. Modernity was central but unfixed. A necessity and curse, progress marched ruthlessly across the landscape. Reclamation’s proponents evoked the ancient and the modern at

once, while either ignoring or beating a mourning drum for the people and places whose continuity bridged both narratives. In this way, empire allowed a past and future vision of place that justified the present enactment of colonial empire making.

Returning to New Mexico: From Irrigation to Reclamation

In 1889, the USGS established the first stream gauging station in the United States in Embudo, N.M. This was the first quantifiable reading of the water in the Rio Grande. Performing this task were the young hydrologist Powell with junior engineer Newell. These eventual titans of reclamation measured water flow in the cold depths of the Rio Grande gorge in Northern New Mexico. They missed the flood water, however, leaving before the winter snowmelt rushed down. These were the “wasted” waters that became the focus of regional reclamation. These were the waters that would make settlement possible and prosperity inevitable, the waters that would make the “desert bloom” (Worster 2000, 76). The idea that the region was a desert emerged as the most persistent and trenchant imaginary.

New Mexico’s striving to statehood was part of this history. “Mr. Roosevelt tells New Mexico to Grow,” reads a *New York Times* headline from May 6, 1903; the headline continues in bold type, “Says That Irrigation Will Make it a Great State.” Reporting on the president’s visit to the New Mexico territory, the *Times* report notes that the topics of Western settlement, forest preservation, and irrigation, are heralded by the president as the most important elements in New Mexico’s efforts to achieve statehood. Speaking to a large crowd gathered in front of Albuquerque’s Alvarado Hotel, President Roosevelt proclaimed that “when New Mexico had a little more irrigation” it would be welcomed into the Union. Irrigation was the means by which New Mexico would achieve modern ends and transition from territory to state.²⁰

3.11 New Mexico Water & the Spanish Colonial

John O. Baxter's (1997) slim history of water administration from the Spanish colonial period through of the 1600s to New Mexico's statehood in 1912 argues that water administration during both the Spanish colonial and Mexican eras focused on reconciliation rather than on legal enforcement. The emphasis during this era was on sharing access to resources. Ideas about water as property right or a legally governed commodity emerged at the turn of the century with the influx of particular Anglo settlers. Prior settlers of all kinds had been folded into this system of shared access prior to turn-of-the-19th-century changes in the water code. The right of prior appropriation, Baxter argued, was a system instituted to further the value of shared resource equity. New Mexican settlements along the Rio Grande were vulnerable to floods and drought, as well as to Indian attack, and the settlement and resettlement of the land created a system where local resolution of claims to land and water sought to ensure that all parties involved had some access to water. This included newcomers, a point Baxter stressed. Prior appropriation was understood more as a matter of equity than of property rule or prior appropriation.

Baxter argued that flexible but powerful systems of water governance allowed residents to resolve water conflicts locally. Problems seldom reach needed outside or higher order political interference. Growing population numbers and competition for New Mexico's water did increase water struggles. Baxter contended that during early American territorial period, from 1846 to the arrival of the railroad in 1878, residents continued local dispute settlement with a great degree equity and common good as the standards of use and allocation. Rigid interpretations of ownership were rare. Water-use customs were governed by custom as well as by territorial control. These were regional

patterns developed over centuries. During Spanish colonialization and the intensification of agricultural settlement from the mid-1500s to the mid-1800s, a system of enforceable rights was established for both building water infrastructure and allocating water. The right to reasonable water use was attendant to the land under the Spanish colonial system and was governed by law. In practice, as Baxter contended, disputes over water use were seldom resolved by courts and officials based on legal right or title alone. Disputes also took account of factors including notions of equity, common good, need, Pueblo desires, prior use as well as the needs of the new waves of settlers in the mid-1800s.

Baxter argued that the greatest change in water occurred at the turn of the 19th century, when long-standing community codes and methods of apportionment based on reconciliation were increasingly challenged by American settlers. Although traditional rules of apportionment from earlier eras were still present, shaping cultural landscapes and argued in contemporary court cases, the shift of power and control of water constituted a massive disruption in territorial New Mexico. The railroad “linked the territory to the national economy for the first time” (106). Baxter tied this massive economic upheaval to the move to large irrigation systems. This was the move from irrigation to reclamation. The booming populations brought land speculation and federal engineers. Dispute resolutions increasingly moved from communities to courts. The legal system put both communities at a disadvantage to Anglo settlers familiar with the system. Baxter examined the Incorporation Act of 1887, which gave large-scale irrigation ventures the right to enter private property and condemn any lands needed for right of way, as well as court decisions allocating water rights and rights of way to irrigation companies.

This emergent legal framework relied on allocating precise quantities of water rights in places where they were not only unknown but often were unknowable from year to year. New rights in fully appropriated systems, coupled with an emergent conflict resolution system that commodified water rights, saw increased hostility in the north. Changes in the 1907 water code, shaped by the public land survey, shifted more power to incoming speculators. This increasingly separated the water from the land, politically, legally, and economically.

3.12 Lifeblood: The Rio Grande at the Turn of the 19th Century

The federal government's role in the management of natural resources emerged with force at the turn of the 19th century. These policies had a profound and lasting impact of the Rio Grande basin. "The machine set in motion by Roosevelt, Newell, and Pinchot slowly replaced the old dominance of the natural-resource robber barons by rational, efficient, scientifically-based management but also incidentally squeezed out the centuries-old life ways of many Rio Grande villagers" (Phillips et al. 2009, 96). Gifford Pinchot was the first Chief of the United States Forest Service, appointed in 1905. This observation of the "incidental" squeezing, probably not meant to diminish the place destruction that these changes wrought, given the nuance of the text, still lingers on the page. It is a reminder of empire's march to inevitability in the histories of the region. Much like the doom of the indigenous dwellers along the Rio Grande foretold for more than a century, the squeezing of traditional communities was brutal, but the old lifeways persist today in communities across New Mexico.

The Rio Grande at the turn of the century suffered from too much water and a deluge of sediment coupled with years of drought. The sentiment was the result of clear-cutting and grazing activities in the north, washed down in spectacular floods. The lack of

water was the result of the great diversions in the San Louis Valley in southern Colorado. The Rio Grande, always subject to periodic floods as well as drought, a well-known phenomenon to its valley dwellers, had suddenly become an extreme of extremes. By the “mid-1880s, the valley began to experience intense flooding and damage on a regional scale,” strengthening the demand for government intervention. (72). Extensive flooding in the middle Rio Grande Valley, affected “nearly every village between Albuquerque and El Paso, Texas” (72). This excess water also brought salt to the surface, producing a salt-encrusted alkaline soil unsuitable for agriculture. The traditions of small community farming and subsistence agriculture were about to end.

Reclamation promised to transform the Rio Grande Valley at the turn of the 19th century, joining a crowded field. Railroad barons’ profited from land, cities, goods, and markets, as the railroads remade the landscape. Timber barons amassed great wealth stripping mountains bare. Many of the new Anglo farmers in Rio Grande Valley had access to capital as well as to land not ravaged by flood and salinization. Only the original inhabitants of the valley bore the weight of environmental and economic devastation wrought by the river. Hispanic and Pueblo valley farmers could not maintain harvests in the constant onslaught of flood, drought, and salt. Long supporting villages of subsistence farmers, they wrote, the Rio Grande “had been transformed from their ancient friend, the lifeblood of the region, to an unstable and dangerous enemy” (79).

Douglas R. Littlefield remarked in finely detailed social, political, and economic history, *Conflict on the Rio Grande: Water and Law, 1879-1939*, that “writing a book on the history of water conflicts on the Rio Grande was a little like most water disputes in the American West—it seemed to go on forever” (Littlefield 2012, 7). This opinion

captured an important shift in how water in the area was imagined. The idea that water was for fighting over, and that these battles were as timeless as the history of settlement, became the predominant imaginary. Littlefield's history offered a perspective from the south of the state. The creation of the reclamation service was triggered in part by the conflict emerging in the Rio Grande corridor that included water demands in Colorado, New Mexico, and Mexico. El Paso developer Anson Mills proposed building a dam just north of El Paso in the early 1890s. Mills was a member of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBEW), a joint commission emerging in the wake of both the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the 1853 Gadsden Treaty in order to survey and map the new border between the United States and Mexico.

Shifting Rio Grande waters, and with them boundaries, was troublesome. Far more troublesome was the lack of water in the Rio Grande from extensive settlement upriver, especially in Colorado. Dr. Nathan Boyd made a bid for irrigation works further upstream and formed the Rio Grande Dam and Irrigation Co., with shares selling in England. Boyd developed a plan for a huge dam in a canyon near the small town of Engle, 90 miles to the north—the site of the future Elephant Butte Dam. This would, in effect, give control over the whole of the river to a private irrigation company. This possibility had fierce opposition on both sides of the border. Years of political and legal wrangling later, the Rio Grande Compact emerged. The plans to build a federally funded Elephant Butte Dam eased the tense conflict between irrigators on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border.

3.13 Elephant Butte Dam: Building a Modern Marvel

A review of the Elephant Butte Campsite, written by camp physician Dr. J. Dale Graham in 1914 and published in *Engineering News*, offers a thorough accounting of the camp's

physical aspects. It also hints at the perceived character of the nearby town of Palmoas Hot Springs and other places in the region. The modern marvel that is Elephant Butte Dam, a concrete gravity dam standing 302 feet high, is eclipsed in size before completion. This reflects the success in regional reclamation. These public infrastructure works were a monumental undertaking (see Appendix 1, Figure 5, page 378). Graham notes that the camp had a population of 3,000, of which 1,200 were reclamation workers. Reclamation camps were managed by a small group of engineers and bureaucrats. These were the men in the archives. Graham described the camp as divided into an upper camp where the engineering and office force lived and a lower camp where the foreman, mechanics, and laborers lived. The lower camp was further divided into separate Mexican and American camps. Graham noted that workers, American and Mexican, lived in sturdy tents well suited to the climate.

Camps were built to reflect an orderly structure (see Appendix 1, Figure 6, page 378). Conduct was strictly regulated. The upper camp included a main office, quarter house, mess hall, chemistry laboratory, and cottages. The quarter house had “steam heat, electric lights, bath and sewer connections, a card, reading, and billiards room, and a large dancing floor” (Graham 1914, 1300). The lower camp included a “commissary, mess, and mechanics quarters, bunk house, moving picture theater, churches, school houses, accommodating 420 students, and a large number of cottages, government and private” (1300). The rest of the article dealt with sanitation and waste, cumulating in a series of observations about lifestyle choices. Graham claimed that three years of service at the camp had taught him many lessons, most having to do with maintaining efficient workers. Diversions other than work were critical. They could be found in the theater,

YMCA activities, croquet, pool, tennis, dances, the ice cream parlor, group exercise and competition, moving pictures, and secret societies. Liquor, Graham stressed, was both useless and undesirable. He claimed that while the camp was fortunate to be removed from large cities, “there are some nearby small villages which have menaced the usual good health of the camp” (1300).

The menace of one of these nearby villages, not specifically called out by name, but whose identity is assumed to be Palomas Hot Springs, had a population in 1910 that was a mere 148 people. By the Dams completion in 1916, the same year the town incorporated, the town had grown considerably. Graham inferred the threat was more than a matter of hygiene. Specifics were left to the imagination, but menace is a loaded word. The dam was rising to great heights, and, I can only surmise, the townspeople hoped their boats would also rise.

The massive dam construction at Elephant Butte must have seemed like the promises of reclamation’s narratives made real—a testament to the idea that modernity was coming, and the change would be massive. Downstream in the town that would eventually become Truth or Consequences, the world had changed. The last of the Apache had been taken by train to spend decades as prisoners of war. The idea that something grand was soon to come was the character-defining feature of the town. It is not possible to understand the identity and character of the town without understanding reclamation’s narratives at the turn of the 19th century.

3.14 The Bureau of Reclamation: Persistent Imaginaries

The Bureau of Reclamation’s Robert Autobee (1994) wrote a digital history for the Rio Grande Project. Elephant Butte Dam was a feature of this massive project, authorized in 1905. The Rio Grande Project runs along the Rio Grande River in New Mexico and

Texas just over 200 miles. The Project includes five diversion dams, about 140 miles of main canals, about 450 miles of smaller canals or laterals, about 450 miles of drains, and one hydroelectric plant.²¹ I was struck by how well this official BOR history illustrated the the persistent regional place imaginaries established over 100 years ago. He writes:

At the twentieth century's first light, just as the Rio Grande Project reached completion, the mythic legend of the American West was beginning to wrap its two fists around the collective national conscious. Over the succeeding decades, the words "Rio Grande" still inspires images to most Americans of badlands, badmen, and the last stand of the law before crossing the United States-Mexico border...Historically, the river is a turnstile, as Indian planters, Spanish conquistadors, Mexican tenant farmers and migrants, and Anglo homesteaders all have contributed and taken away during each of their intervals of control. In a place where there has been four centuries of confrontation, Reclamation wrote the first page of the Rio Grande's modern chapter. The Bureau's mission along the Rio Grande was not to erect paradise, but to introduce a measure of productivity where turmoil has often been the norm. Never a peaceful crossroads, the valleys of the Rio Grande, stand as islands of green growth bracketed by the stony soil, sagebrush, and rattlesnakes of the surrounding desert.

Not too much changed apparently, in the 100 years between the earliest reclamation narratives and this officially-sanctioned digital history from 1994. Modernization, productivity, a brief nod to the idea of paradise, the terrible endless conflict and a dream—all set down in the rattlesnake infested desert—and so the story goes. I am especially taken with the ways that the Indians planted, the Spanish conquered, the Mexicans were tenants and migrants (in Mexico no less, prior to 1848), and the Anglos made homes.

Labor is elided in reclamation histories. These histories are slowly emerging. The cultural histories and artifacts of the Mexican American and First Nation and Chinese workers and the families who populated reclamation construction camps, for example, are the focus of A. E. Rogge's (et al.). *Raising Arizona's Dams: Daily Life, Danger, and Discrimination in the Dam Construction Camps of Central Arizona, 1890s-1940s* (1995). Questions about histories, and the lack of histories, are important in place ethnographic research. Reclamation is often left out of accounts of how New Mexico became modern at the turn of the century, eclipsed by the railroad and urban settlement. The book of the modern, however, is written over and over in history. The modern is written, again and again, as imaginaries shift, recede, emerge and reemerge into the popular landscape of history.

Reclamation narratives found the imaginary of this region and town. It is impossible to understand this place, the town or small region, without reference to these narratives. The nostalgia for a time past that has not arrived, but will, wiping out what present exists, and the promise of a bright new future, when it comes, is as strong as ever. This is the new world, a turn of the 19th century modern New Mexico, full of contradiction and paradox. Despite the persistence of the place imaginaries in reclamation narrative, reclamation is not one of New Mexico's celebrated histories—it is mostly ignored, even in the town. This is one of the lessons in place ethnographic historical foundations I learn in the ethnographic component of my research. The next chapter explores a certain kind of place imaginary, a perception of historical emptiness in a place. This vacancy is a reflection of reclamation's imaginaries of regional vacancy in the

Southwest. It is also tied to the particular history of cultural settlement in the region that prefigured these imaginaries, in New Mexico's place histories and place imaginaries.

¹ This is a sentiment that defines the region—that the places were ready to be created. This is an interesting sentiment theoretically. It embodies the idea that places are constructed as well as the idea that place emerges from space when it is claimed and transformed through labor. This, as Tuan (1996) notes is the common sentiment that emerges in the US under both Spanish and the American colonialism. There is also a shared religious sentiment. In *Unity Magazine*, the official organ of the Congress of Religion, published from 1905-1917. The essay's author admonished eastern ministers to look west rather than bemoan any lack of ministries. Consult the "records of the post office," if you have no place, he said. The people were few and far between in the West, but "are there not hundreds of places waiting to be made," the author asked. Chester Covell' "Thirty Years in the Western Ministry," *Unity and the University* no. 17-18, (1886): 153. , Volumes, pages 152-155.

² These two friends later collected Rhode's remains from California, brought them back to New Mexico, and created a small gravesite memorial that sits a mile inside the White Sands Missile Range Trinity site compound. This secured site of the first atomic explosion is opened yearly for a tour of Rhode's grave, or at least a locked gate is opened. Rhodes' poverty was well documented, as was his extraordinary love from New Mexico.

³ Dundee is a fictionalized Engle, the small but lively railroad town whose population never exceeded 500 people. The branch railroad from Engle to Elephant Butte Dam was completed in 1911. The town's remaining buildings now house Ted Turner's Armendaris Ranch headquarters.

⁴ The character was based on Sierra County rancher and cattleman Hiram Yoast (1861-1936), hair-color unknown, who appeared in several of Rhodes stories as a sage and exuberant figure.

⁵ Yoast is recounting all of this history for the benefit of an audience of one, identified as "the auditor." An "elderly stranger of quiet and conventional appearance, he is said to have caused much mirth at the Armendaris by registering as 'John Doe,' a passing reference to the trope regional anonymity. Yoast told him there was a railroad stop, yes, and old-timers, and a ranch. The town of Dundee was emphatically new, and only a few old-timers lingered. The auditor apologized for interrupting, but claims he has to do it, "for the facts" of history (8).

⁶ John Doe was revealed at this point to be Rhodes' character, a famed author and former cowhand, 20 years gone from the ranch. After he received a hearty kick from Yoast, he joined him in a drink.

⁷ The historical counterpart to the sheriff was Francisco Boroquez, a well-known, well-liked and extremely skilled vaquero, or horseman. Boroquez was also, variously, a ranch foreman, a county commissioner, and a state representative. A brief summary of a presentation by historian and archaeologist Karl W. Laumbach of a presentation of "the Cowboy Sheriff of Sierra County," for the Hillsboro Historical Society in 2013, includes a brief biography of Boroquez, who came to Sierra County in the 1880s from Sonora, Mexico, although he was originally born in California. <http://hillsborohistory.blogspot.com/2013/03/francisco-bojorquez-cowboy-sheriff-of.html>. The historical counterpart to the honorable Robert Martin, was better known as Bob Martin, who moved to Engle in 1900 and in 1902 purchased the stage line running between Engle and Chloride. Martin was also a state representative and part owner of the First National Bank of Hot Springs

⁸ Clarence King's survey of the region within 100 miles of the 40th parallel, roughly the route of the transcontinental railroad, culminated in a seven-volume report and atlas. John Wesley Powell also sought

funding for an expedition during this time. Although he received only minimal funding, the wildly popular exploits of his 1869 expedition down the Colorado River secured him additional funds, resulting in the "U.S. Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region."

⁹ "The Four Great Surveys of the West." <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/c1050/surveys.htm>

¹⁰ Henry Beers described the early mission and duties of the Corps in a brief 1942 history, which gave an idea of expedition fieldwork deemed important for the War Department. The charge to survey of all military potentialities was the primary objective, "to make plans of all military positions which the army may occupy and of their respective vicinities, indicating the various roads, rivers, creeks, ravines, hills, woods, and villages to be found therein," and to make "sketches of their routes, accompanied by written notices of everything worthy of observation therein; to keep a journal of every day's movement when the army is in march, noticing the variety of ground, of buildings, of culture, and distances, and state of roads between common points throughout the march of the day; and lastly, to exhibit the positions of contending armies on the fields of battle, and the dispositions made, either for attack or defense" (Beers, 349).

¹¹ As Price noted, almost 75% of dime novels, a ubiquitous and wildly popular source of entertainment, were set in a mythical West. One publisher was said to have reported sales of over "5 million copies between 1860 and 1865" (91).

¹² "These remarkable 19th century sepia-tinted pictures show the American West as you have never seen it before - as it was charted for the first time," reads this article "The photos, by Timothy O'Sullivan, are the first ever taken of the rocky and barren landscape." The article also notes that "federal government officials were travelling across Arizona, Nevada, Utah and the rest of the west as they sought to uncover the land's untapped natural resources. *UK Daily Mail*, May 25, 2012. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2149899/The-American-West-youve-seen-Amazing-19th-century-pictures-landscape-chartered-time.html#ixzz467Usde91>

¹³ *Official Proceedings of the National Irrigation Congress* (1893), 111.

¹⁴ Historian Robert W. Rydell (1987) argued that the fairs celebrated progress through exhibitions of material and technological advances, on one hand, and through a negative contrast between modern societies and culture and other kinds of places and people on the other. He argued that an anthropological spectacle of people and places created the necessary understandings of what it meant to be a modern nation. Rydell's overreaching but historically compelling world's fair history argued that American modern empire was made possible through the conquering of the old world to the new. This emergent empire was on display and shored up both through the past, in artifacts, and the future, in imaginings.

¹⁵ *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 14, 1893, page 1.

¹⁶ *Los Angeles Times*, April 1, 1894, page 18.

¹⁷ Other regional imaginaries offered strong challenges. Buffalo Bill was denied space in the official fairgrounds for this Wild West show and subsequently set up his Wild West show next door. The tour had just completed a European tour. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner first presented his famed paper on the significance of the frontier in American history, at a meeting of historians held in conjunction with the fair.

¹⁸ *Official Proceedings of the National Irrigation Congress* (1893), 107.

¹⁹ The Panama–California Exposition was held in San Diego, California. It ran from January 1, 1915 through January 1, 1917. According to a report on how Nevada would benefit from the irrigation exhibitions at the exposition, taken from the *Irrigation Age*, the exhibition on reclamation would “prove beyond all question” that the area was “capable of supporting a large population, of developing a well-rounded and prosperous industrial life, and of adding a new and splendid territory to the domain of civilization.” The exhibit would showcase the “widespread and diversified agricultural industry, more profitable to individuals than in most other parts of the world” (*Nevada Irrigation Report* 1916, 27).

²⁰ *New York Times*, May 6, 1903, page 1.

²¹ The numbers on the laterals, etc, diverge by 5-10 miles within BOR records and between BOR and NPS accounts, hence the ‘about’ rather than precise numbers.

Chapter 4: Historical Vacancies, the Apache Lozen and Sacred Springs

This chapter is an argument about a particular kind of historical absence in the place imaginary of the small region of my research project that I call a historical vacancy. A historical vacancy is a perceived absence or emptiness in the history of a place or region. Historical vacancies are constantly at work in any assessment of place meaning about the town and the region. I argue that the place character and historical place imaginaries of Truth or Consequences and Sierra County are typified by this perception of emptiness. Elephant Butte Dam was meant to usher in the modern age of agriculture. Regional imaginaries of a vast, arid and empty wasteland are typified, as the Rhode story of the last chapter illustrates, by this smaller region. Reclamation is a lost narrative in the creation of what was to be a modern New Mexico, which is connected to its emergence into a region typified by vacancy. My place ethnographic research sought to explore the ways history emerged in the town and region, and this chapter furthers the investigation into place and history.

These imaginaries of a vacancy are neither replaced nor mitigated after Elephant Butte Dam is completed. This is partly because the landscape changes, but not in the way that reclamation's early narratives promised. The massive reservoir lake creates a recreational area, and power is generated at the dam. Any water meant to make the desert bloom, however, is allocated farther south. It is also partly because there is no well-established history that reclamation's new modernity displaced. This newest iteration of the modern has nothing to adhere to in this vast region of seasonal settlement and small villages far from established transportation routes.

Years after these initial considerations and re-visitations to my Southwest history collection, after interviews and observations and reading anything I could unearth, I conclude that this historical vacancy has a lot to do with Apache control of the region prior to the turn of the 19th century to the 20th in my specific region, which is roughly the present day boundaries of Sierra County, New Mexico. This vacancy is also the product of concerted efforts of boosters and promoters, whose attention and focus has always been the North. The far south, the borderlands, emerges as well. This region is not part of New Mexico's historical place imaginary, perhaps because it is modern, and perhaps, paradoxically, because it is not modern.

I used two case studies illuminate how the idea of a historical vacancy manifests in the historical narratives of place and identity. The first case study is about the Chihende woman woman Lozen. The Chihende Nde are more commonly known as the Warm Springs or Red Paint Apache. One of the Chihende settlements is Alamosa Canyon, which is at the border of Sierra County and Socorro County. The contest over Lozen's place in the historical record is its own study. A new place narrative featuring Lozen's emerged during my fieldwork and illuminated ideas about place, history and ethnography in powerful ways. This case also illustrates how the lack of historical records complicates the claim that places have no histories.

The second case study explores what I call the Sacred Springs narrative. It is a historical narrative that defines the promotional literature on hot springs across the United States and has migrated to become a mainstay in local histories. It is the idea that hot water mineral springs are First Nation sacred sites. This narrative is generally accompanied by a neutrality narrative, the idea that mineral springs are noncombat zones

or places of mutually agreed upon peace between warring First Nation tribes, or often between First Nations and Spanish. This case illustrates the ways that the settlement and promotion relied on creating a fictitious historical pasts about prior settlement and conquest.

Defining Historical Vacancies

The term historical vacancy describes a place characterized by the perception of an unoccupied past or emptiness in the historical narrative of a place, as well as the ways history is created and projected onto places. It is a concept, like place imaginaries, I created in order to consider the particular ways history, narrative, and place came together in my place ethnographic research project. I used the term historical vacancy because it suited the patterns and narrative characteristics of the histories that emerged into places that were perceived as unsettled or empty.

Historical vacancies are characterized by two qualities. First, they are imagined cognitive ephemera. Historical vacancies are perceptions of place histories. There is a shifting quality to the idea that Southern New Mexico has an empty historical landscape. This is not an attempt to describe a reality. A defining feature is the repetition of historical narratives without recourse to historical record and documentation. This results in historical narratives that are both temporary and stubbornly persistent. This phenomenon, this perception of emptiness, leads to a kind of looseness in the historical fabric, which lends itself to a particular kind of historical creation. Historical vacancies emerged from these places. Questions of veracity either disrupt historical narratives or are ignored. Histories narrated without apparent regard to veracity are a defining feature of Truth of Consequences.

For many centuries, the larger region was settled by groups that were characterized as nomadic. Many established historical conventions about pre-Spanish colonial settlement in the area are being challenged by recent archaeological research. Apache presence kept the Spanish from establishing settlements in the region that were comparable to other parts of New Mexico. This area has also been sparsely settled because of resource scarcity. This is one way reclamation narratives are so powerfully illustrative in the place imaginaries of the region. The particular blending of physical and imagined places and historical fact and fantasy were well suited to the region. Reclamation's arid wasteland, for example, was a founding place imaginary in the region. The physical landscape of this region thwarted the idea that these were merely rhetorically conjured projections.

The fantastical imaginary of a vast, unsettled wasteland spun by reclamation champions that defined early reclamation narratives, for example, created many conditions for the perception of historical vacancies. The narratives that emerged at the moment gained power and currency as they were rearticulated in other places and other histories. The region became a paradox of meaning and character. Historical vacancies implicate power and memory. They invite considerations about how history is crafted and who has the authority to write history. They allow debate on source, conjecture and paradox. Popular place imaginaries of the Southwest were a born as much out of the wildly inventive dime-store westerns as they were out of early survey reports on the region in the 1800s. Commercial and marketing schemes were also common sources. Claiming a historical vacancy invited a careful consideration about how, and from where, place histories emerged.

The second dominant characteristic of historical vacancies is that can be rejected or remedied. Historical vacancies were part of the place imaginaries wrought by empire, but they also were local expressions, and often shared across places. To settle supposedly unsettled places, colonial place imaginaries must claim emptiness in the presence of already-peopled places. The idea that concrete facts or empirical observations are the cure to historical vacancies is persistent. The notion that you can fill a historical vacancy with history negates the central thrust of this idea, that it is a perception that shapes the ways place is understood. Historical vacancies disrupt and obscure history to particular ends. Historical vacancies are a useful way of understanding where patterns of place imaginaries shift, where histories are elided, displaced, buried, or ignored. This is part of colonial settlement. It is also part of how place promotion works in projects of colonial settlement. Historical recovery is a different kind of work.

4.1 History and Vacancy in Sierra County

The imaginary of vacancy was foundational to the place imaginary crafted by reclamation. In 1852, Governor William Carr Lane toured the Rio Grande Valley and noted the absence of settlement in present day Sierra County. J. Paul Fitzsimmons writes and introduction to the New Mexico Geological Society 6th Annual Fall Field Conference Guidebook (1955) that illustrates the tenacity of this narrative. Fitzsimmons does not provide any pre-colonial Apache history. Apache history is folded into the Spanish history of the region, which is common. Fitzsimmons begins with quote from Isaiah 23:1, “The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in” (55). Fitzsimmons muses that Sierra County was perhaps cursed by Tyre as well, “for it was a land of waste, and there were no habitations within its borders” (Fitzsimmons 1955, 55).

This imaginary of a wasteland is also an important reclamation narrative.

Fitzsimmons muses that the ancient Puebloan people, seeing the desolation of the Jornada del Muerto before them, came no further south. Fitzsimmons claims the Apache, a “wandering marauder,” was the only “visitor” (56). He muses that the ancient Puebloan people, seeing the desolation of the Jornada del Muerto before them, came no further south.¹ Into this vacant place he turns his consideration to the uncertainty about the “first white man” to see this area and pass through. The history he recounts establishes the region as a pass through place, and recounts the important passages through the region.² Fitzsimmons discusses the extensive mining and ranching history of the “unsettled” area before claiming that ranchers brought the first “permanent settlements” (57) and considering reclamation histories.

Fitzsimmons pens an early example of type of history that typifies the small region. Fitzsimmons jovially notes, a paragraph that is titled “Cities and Towns,” that the subheading is misleading, and might cause people to think there are cities and towns in the county. He proceeds to write about Las Palomas a “bustling health resort,” where “Indians, Spanish colonists and cowboys stopped here before there were any accommodations at what is now Truth or Consequences” (57). The village of Las Palomas was a settlement 7 miles south of Truth or Consequences. It was the nearest settlement to the first mineral springs used in what is now Truth or Consequences. It was the first settlement the Spanish reached when they left the high plains of the Jornada Del Muerto, came west through a gap in the Palomas Mountains and forded the Rio Grande. There is no history of any tri-cultural interaction at this site. There were certainly many different nations who came through this region—the Spanish were a mixed crowd, and

Apache roamed the whole area. It was most certainly never a bustling health resort during the era of conflict between Apache, Spanish and later American era.

The Las Palomas Fitzsimmons refers to is Las Palomas Hot Springs, which became the town of Hot Springs, which was, at the time of Apache settlement in the region and Spanish passage through the region, a single hot spring on a hill above a flood-prone marsh on the Rio Grande. Fitzsimmons departs from the established histories of the larger region to pen this place history. He pulls relevant historical facts or historical conjecture into his narrative prior to this moment, building a solid and obviously well-research history of the region from the available sources. He then relays a historical fancy, one that is logically and factually at odds with the history he has just recounted, as a historical fact. This is the kind of history that characterizes the town and region. It is startling here, coming at the end of the well-grounded history that precedes it.

4.2 Place Imaginaries in New Mexico

Chapter 1 recounts the comment, made at a scholarly presentation on water history in Northern New Mexico, that Southern New Mexico had no history. The perception that Northern New Mexico had history and Southern New Mexico did not intrigued me, even if it was the off-handed remark of a single historian. It was familiar. People in the room laughed loudly. New Mexico's southern region is not a focus in New Mexico history books. This is especially true in the south-central region of New Mexico. The cultural, political, economic, and other histories of this region are elided, fragmented, and subsumed into other historical accounts. The south-central region of the state is a thoroughfare in standard historical texts or, just as often, ignored. It is glimpsed in a section on the Camino Real del Tierra. It is located in a passage on the Jornada del

Muerto, where people died from the lack of water if Apache did not kill them first. The dense cultural history of mining in Grant County might get a paragraph.

New Mexico's histories and place imaginaries are continually cast and recast, but all are almost immediately familiar. The modern place imaginaries of Northern New Mexico are characterized as landscapes of pueblos and missions, the romantic ideals of Santa Fe and Taos, persistent even as they are being challenged and deconstructed (Wilson 1997; Phillips 2007; Meléndez 2001; Nieto-Phillips 2004; Trujillo 2009). The place imaginaries of Southern New Mexico, similarly challenged by scholars who sought to bring the complexity and contests to the surface of these imaginaries, are characterized as an agricultural landscapes of chile, onion, cotton, and migrant laborer; a borderland where New Mexico and Mexico blur together (Anzaldúa 1987; Fox 1999; Villa 2003).

These two imaginaries share an uneasy alliance to form the whole. Nomadic First Nation histories do not emerge with much into New Mexico histories in either the North or the South. James Brooks' illustrates how nomadic First Nation histories can be written into the larger cultural, political and economic histories of the region *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002). New Mexico history elides these First Nation histories as much as it elides the history of the southcentral region.

Truth or Consequences and the larger south central region do not fit into either of these dominant New Mexico place imaginaries. This particular part of the New Mexico landscape does not carry the same evidence of empire as other parts of the state—there are no pueblos, no old towns; there is no national border. Truth or Consequences should, by geographical and cultural rights, be part of the southern imaginary. The town owes its

existence to the regional reclamation that made the southern imaginary possible. It is a reclamation town, after all, built on a reclamation reservation, despite the fact that there are no irrigated fields in the town. The southern-borderlands imaginary extends from Juarez, Mexico, as far as the agricultural fields of the Rincon Valley. Despite a Border Patrol station just north of Truth or Consequences, which at the time of this writing remained open but was no longer a traffic stop on Interstate 25, the town has no strong association with the borderlands of the south. Tourists often comment that the bright hues of the town and sleepy, dusty midcentury-downtown are reminiscent of Mexican towns.

To the east of the town is the massive 3,200-square-mile White Sands Missile Range, the largest military installation in the United States. It is closed to tourists and traffic. The potential historical vacancies embedded in Cold War and contemporary military sites are outside of the scope of this project but present a tantalizing future research project. To the west of the town is the 4,200-square-mile Gila National Forrest, not often associated with the desert imaginary of the south-central region. This large sweep of largely uninterrupted land opens up south of Socorro. Sierra County is a place of fantastically varied topographies. It encompasses a former privately held Spanish land grant, the Armendaris, which is the largest ever deeded in New Mexico. The Armendaris belongs to Ted Turner and has become, in addition to the Ladder Ranch in Sierra County, a private conservation area that covers 515,082 thousand acres in Southern New Mexico. The few mining camps, settlement ruins, and (mostly inhabited) ghost towns in Sierra County are set in mountainous areas of spectacular scenery.

The imaginaries of Northern New Mexico used to dissipate in the sparsely settled stretch of land to the south of the city of Socorro and the village of San Antonio

(Interstate 25 mile marker 139), vanishing into the distant *Jornada del Muerto* to the east. They now arguably reach further down the interstate to mile marker 115. The El Camino Real International Heritage Center, opened in 2005, refigures the geographical reach of the Spanish colonial era in this part of the state. This beautiful building and grounds are five miles from mile marker 115, east of Interstate 25. The Spanish presence in the south of New Mexico does figure into historical narratives of the region, especially in narratives on the Camino Real and the region. The museum ties the imaginaries of the north and south together in powerful ways.

The El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro National Historic Trail will also create a more cohesive regional place imaginary between the North and the South. The designation of El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro as a National Historic Trail in 2000 “tracks a different European settlement story of the U.S., one that emphasizes the shared history and heritage of Spain, Mexico and the American Southwest,” whose “16th-century origins pre-date both Jamestown and Plymouth Rock, while its historic faces, places, and three-century legacy as a multiethnic point of cultural connection and exchange offer new touchstones of American history.”³ Place-making activities such as museum and trail building, the placement of historical markers and interpretive signage, and the distribution of information online, maps, and other promotional literature will embed in the landscape a new iteration of a national imaginary of the region. Places that can narrate themselves into these histories have access to economic, historic and cultural assets.

Origin Stories

I was asked for a town origin story at least weekly by my second month in the field.

American place is understood as a linear progression with a beginning point of settlement

in vacant land, but place is also deeply understood as the end of other settlements. Settlement by a handful of a few squatters was an incomplete narrative. It was not a satisfying origin story when people asked me about the history of Truth or Consequences. People wanted to know about the before time. Gigantic mason heads were displayed in the museum for those who liked their history to include the before time of human inhabitation. Grinding slicks worn into the rocks by the pond at Ralph Edwards Park were evidence of seasonal inhabitation, if not permanent settlement, that stretched back to prehistoric times. This was not the story people sought. What people were looking for when they approached me to ask for an origin story was how the squatter town downriver and Elephant Butte Dam was related to the history of people before and the conquest of the land.

Elements of both the sociological imagination and the geographical imagination as discussed by Harvey (2000), as well as Agnew and Duncan (1989) were at work in requests I received for origin stories and historical accounts of the town and region. How and when and why was the land wrested away from some other force? How did they seize the land? The desire for conquest stories is evident, and seizure by survey is not satisfying. The story of Apache is satisfying. People assumed if I was writing about the town, I should know these basic facts.

During interviews, people would often tie their movement to the town or region to the history of western migration, open space, the romantic lure of the Southwest and desert, the opportunity to claim a new destiny in places once inhabited by First Nation people. Settlement of First Nation people stretches from coast to coast, but is very important to New Mexico's place imaginary. The settlement of the West was such a

powerful narrative that the geographical imagination is not easily separated from the sociological imagination. The settlement story many people wanted was not settlement necessarily, but the moment when settlement was made possible through conquest. People wanted to situate themselves in the era, both historic and contemporary, but they also wanted to situate themselves in the mythical landscape of the American Southwest and American conquest.

The geographical imagination plays a strong role in the contemporary place identities in *Truth or Consequences*. Ties between the geographical imagination and the sociological imagination are forged when the concrete experience of being in place and the place attachments that adhere to place are coupled with the social and historical meanings of an era. Historical vacancies happen when the geographical imaginations or social imaginations are fractured or, conversely, when they are contrived. These disruptions and contrivances were common in colonial encounters. The first two case studies in this chapter illustrated the tenacity of both historical vacancies and the place imaginaries that were deeply implicated in these vacancies.

4.3 Key Ethnographic Informants, or, Historical Confidants

I began my focused research into regional Apache history when Sherry Fletcher, infuriated, showed me a story that begins *Truth or Consequences'* place history in the *Sierra County Official Visitors Guide 2012-2013*. I will return to this history and the case studies themselves after an introduction to Sherry Fletcher. An educator by profession but historian by passion, she was elected to the Sierra County Commission in 2014. She was widely known as the town historian. Fletcher created an extensive body of historical narratives, videos, brochures, presentations, oral histories on the town and region, and had co-authored three published historical image books—one of T or C, one on Elephant

Butte Dam, and one on the Rincon Valley and Hatch. Fletcher's personal archives were immense.⁴

Fletcher was blunt when she thought people were not fulfilling the obligations they claimed to hold. These ranged from community, work or education commitments to standards of values or critical thinking. She was also exceptionally generous, charitable, encouraging, lively, and kind. She was asked regularly for help with some project, history question, and I never saw her refuse a request. Fletcher stood her ground with such tenacity that it often infuriated others, however, especially when it came to questions of historical accuracy. Fletcher had no patience with people who created history, which we discussed often. She asserted that historical creation was a trait that characterized the town. She had theories about this identity marker. When new people moved to town, one of the first things they tried to do was write their own history and the town history she claimed. People create their own understandings of the town and area, and, with little or no idea about the history, politics, economic or other systems in the area.

Fletcher contended that people were willing to discount history because they did not understand its importance, or because it interfered with their own agendas. People in the town were willing to accept a good story over a true one she claimed. The reasons—personal gains, entertainment, lack of interest, ignorance, faith in the teller, ease, and so on—did not matter. She argued that good history made stronger communities and better places. Fletcher realized the troubles with history and considered history a dialogue. Many people in have no desire to critically assess their beliefs. New people, for example, are quick to point out the many ways things should change, or tell you how things are or should be, without knowing what went on before or having any historical grounding.

4.4 Topofabulas

One of the stories about the town Fletcher could not stand was the idea that reclamation buildings were floated down the Rio Grande. This probable historical fancy is repeated in many publications, including David Kammer's (2004) historic district nomination and a new book of photography on the historic district. The buildings at the camp were purchased, verified by a news article. It was the policy when federal work camps were closed to auction off buildings. There is a documented photograph of a building purchased from the Elephant Butte Construction Camp disassembled on a wagon. After a month of research, I concluded the story of floating houses was not very likely and verged on impossible.⁵ When I shared this thought with a local resident, I was accused of having gone to "Fletcher's camp."⁶ During a town tour Fletcher and I led, a local bathhouse owner told the crowd that some of her rooms were old damsite buildings floated down the river, and the crowd loved it. People have a lot invested in some of these histories. Fletcher held her tongue at my entreaty.⁷ Fletcher liked to tell people to put their money where their mouth was—to get abstracts, get DNA samples, get records—to get proof, in other words.

The story of the floating houses is a particular kind of historical narratives I call a topofabula, or place fable. Topofabulas are part oral history, part myth, and part invention, but claimed as historical truth and central to place history and place character. They are a complicated mix of history, longing, inventiveness, and other qualities. Topofabulas are constantly at work are part of the shared lexicon of place history. Topofabulas are taken as true events or representations of historical phenomenon do not hold up to scrutiny. This claim to historical truth sets these narratives apart from folk tales. People are deeply and fiercely attached to topofabulas.

The word topofabula is derived from the Greek topos, or place, and the Latin fabula, or narrative, fable, discourse, or story. The Spanish fabular, to make up, is also an important influence. These are the place fables repeated often enough to become place defining. I wanted to distinguish these types of stories from the everyday place stories people tell about a place. I also wanted to stay away from the idea of folk tales, which are theorized as components of oral history. These are stories having a shared cultural tradition of being passed down through generations through telling and re-telling. There are important differences.

There are two distinctive elements in topofabulas that make them crucial. The first is their reoccurrence in ethnographic interviews. They are widely shares stories about place. The second distinctive and necessary element is their acceptance as part of the historical record of a place. They are reverently believed and defended. I am interested in the work that particular stories do. There is something about particular stories that make them powerful enough to be both widely shared and taken as true. I developed the concept of topofabulas in order to consider the ways that historical creation operated in the town. These stories were place defining enough to warrant naming.

I identified four major topofabulas in Truth or Consequences during my fieldwork, and two emergent topofabulas. The first begins this chapter. It is the complicated story of the Apache woman Lozen, who was a historical figure in the region. Historical vacancies and topofabulas are closely related. The complexity of the Lozen narrative lies in her fact of her existence. The second is the Sacred Springs narrative. This is the idea that mineral springs are Native American sites of peace and neutrality. It is a regional topofabula, present across the Southwest and adopted in dozens of town

histories. In T or C, it is tied to the more specific claim that the Apache leader Geromino frequented the town springs. This narrative has been proven in a separate case, described in this chapter, to be a settler colonial narrative. It is a created narrative, originating with American colonial settlers and place boosters, embraced as a historical truth. The deeply embedded racism of this narrative is elided by the idea that people are celebrating the “sacredness,” of the water. There is absolutely no historical grounding for this narrative, but the details in every retelling, and they are frequent, are astonishing.⁸

One toposfabula I hear dozens of times is that the state mental institution gave newly-released inmates a one-way ticket to Truth or Consequences. It even makes an appearance in a new book on off-grid living set the town that is reviewed in the conclusion. I try to trace this history. The New Mexico Behavior Health Institute was built in 1889 and originally called the Territorial Insane Asylum, and later the New Mexico Hospital for the Insane. It is located in Las Vegas, New Mexico. I talk to a few several people at the hospital, who assure me this is not nor has ever been the policy of the hospital. They do not put people on busses with one-way tickets to anywhere. I also hear that the story is not uncommon in other places in New Mexico.

When I asked people why they believed it, they told me they had not thought about it. It just seemed true. I asked why it seemed true. People said the town was crazy. I think some of the work this story is doing is a way of pushing back against the charge of craziness leveled against them. I also think it does some work in explaining the undercurrent of crazy that people constantly remark is palpable in the town. An important role in these toposfabulas is the creation of otherness. The creation of otherness does not automatically establish privilege or superiority. The counterculture narrative of otherness

is celebrated in the town. So is the idea of inventiveness, and this is on display in the vernacular architecture and art today. Truth or Consequences residents are known, among themselves at least, for celebrating being different. The idea that by knowing history, you can be a part of the history you narrate also emerged in these retellings. The act of narration puts the narrator into a position of belonging.

There are two emergent toposfabulas I identified in the town. One is the idea of “floating pleasure palaces” on the lake during the 1940s. It is mentioned in one news story discussed in Chapter 6, and repeated to me recently by a resident. There was, in this (re)telling a certain kind of excitement and earnestness that is very characteristic of toposfabulas. The idea of floating meth labs on the lake also seems to be gaining popularity. The argument that these things may, in fact, exist, or did exist, or are fervently believed to have existed, despite the lack of empirical evidence, is one of the major defining characteristics elements of toposfabulas. People are deeply invested in these histories—especially in terms of place celebration and promotion. The Apache woman Lozen certainly existed, for example, which makes these particular kinds of place fables so compelling and complicated.

Creating Local History: The Case of Lozen

This chapter’s first case study emerged from a confluence of events in the field. I was interested in what I perceive to be a historical vacancy in the southcentral region of New Mexico. The relationship between history and place is a central consideration in place ethnographic research. I was very interested when Fletcher showed me the article on Lozen in the *Tourist Guide*. I shifted my place ethnographic research away from downtown historic preservation and back to regional history. I documented current research focuses and fieldwork experiences in my public research blog. The first post of

2013 was a very long reflection on history, veracity and place. Titled “Writing History,” the post was about Chihende, or Red Paint, or Warm Spring woman Lozen, and the ways her history had been fabricated in two local publications.⁹ I call her the Apache woman Lozen in the post. I also talked about Apache settlement in the region. The intensity of the feedback I received about the post was startling.¹⁰

I concluded that this was a part of the origin story I had been failing to provide. It was a part of the local and regional place identity that had not been fully developed. The argument that national identity is forged through conquest is evident in New Mexico’s place imaginaries (Said 1978; Anderson 1991). This story pulled the geographical and sociological imaginaries of the region together in way the turn of the 19th century narrative about squatters did not. The desire to create an origin story that went beyond the town’s initial settlement and growth on reclamation lands was evident in the small but intense controversy over this narrative.

4.5 The Colorful Character Lozen

This is the story as it appeared in the 2012-2013 edition of the *Sierra County Official*

Visitors Guide:

One of the most colorful characters was Lozen, an Apache woman said to have ridden as a warrior with her brother Victorio, and later, with Geronimo himself. According to accounts, she fell in love with a Confederate deserter who had been sheltered by the Apaches. When a wagon train came along headed to the California gold fields, he left, breaking Lozen’s heart. She never married, devoting herself instead to using her unusual powers to sense danger and heal people. (*Sierra County Official Visitors Guide* 2012-2013, 12)

The guide established a new place history. There were familiar elements that I was loosely aware of, and new elements like the Confederate soldier. I imagined a 14 year old

reading about the heartsick Indian maiden and her doomed love affair with a Southern soldier. I was seeing a place history emerge. I was watching as the historical actors were placed on history's stage. It took me a few seconds online to track down the source of the passage on Lozen.

The story in the *Visitor's Guide* was copied, verbatim, from page 205 of *Spirits Of The Border IV: The History And Mystery Of New Mexico* (2011). Ken Hudnall and Sharon Hudnall wrote the *Spirits of the Border* series, promoted on Amazon as an invaluable guide to ghost hunters and paranormal enthusiasts alike. The book was a collection of place history and lore. There was not a single reference or footnote in the book. Several other passages of the town history were similarly copied directly from *Spirits of the Border* into the *Tourist Guide*. The histories in the *Tourist Guide* did not credit Hudnall. I made several efforts to contact Mr. Hudnall via email and phone. My requests for clarification and sources for the assertion went unanswered, as did my question of whether there was permission to use his work.¹¹

I began my post noting that there was little on Lozen in the historical record, which was one of the few undisputed historical facts of her life. I wrote about the difficulties in writing history, and noted the American habit of using First American histories to shape a national identity. The intellectual pillar of the post was Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999). I spent a good deal of time writing about Smith's arguments, and her call for a systematic critique of history. "The study of place narratives brings fiction and history into constant tension," I write, and "the line between the two is decidedly blurry." I claimed this was especially true in the Southwest, "where so much of what people thought they knew what part myth,

part bullshit, part conjecture, part survey and high adventure tale, part imperial project, part romance, part dime store novel, part longing, and so on. . . . and yet there is a line crossed when history becomes fiction, and sometimes it is pretty clear.” These ideas brought the back to Lozen. I confessed that I knew very little Lozen, before turning to the *Official Visitor’s Guide*.

I also wrote about a similar story, about Lozen, that appeared in the January 2012 *Chaparral Guide*, a free local monthly newspaper magazine published by the *Herald* newspaper. The *Chaparral Guide* contains information about events, history, and other stories on the town and region. This article provided a lengthier history on Lozen, partly based in the the extensive collected oral histories that were recorded by amateur historian and educator Eve Ball. Ball was a public school teacher who moved to the edge of the Mescalero Apache Reservation in the early 1940s. She conducted and recorded scores of oral interviews at her home. She interviewed not only Mescalero Apache but other Apache who had been relocated to reservations, including Chihende Apache. This was long before oral history was accepted as a legitimate historical method.¹²

There was a major problem in the *Chaparral Guide* history, I wrote. Embedded in the story was a quoted fictional account of Lozen’s life. The author of the *Chaparral Guide* story quoted directly from Tom Diamond’s fictional story *Apache Tears* (2008). It did this in a way that presented the material as though it came from a historical or biographical account of Lozen’s life. History may be blurry, I contended, but this was a case with sharp lines. History is drawn from observation, I argued, or from a record of observation. History may be fiction, I wrote, but fiction cannot serve as history. I returned in my post to Tuhiwai Smith’s ideas on how society privileges certain accounts and

sources and how this affects the history, research, and writing. I ended with a note on veracity, struggle and how writing history forged commitments were strongly compelling, even with people who were long past knowing what was being written.

The *Visitors Guide* article sparked my interest in Apache history. I located the historical foundations of the town in reclamation of this place ethnographic project, but this post and its reaction made me aware of an immense layer of history I had ignored—Apache regional history. The debate in the academy over Lozen, however, was a complex and dynamic introduction to the problems with writing histories in places where the historical record is sparse.¹³ It was also an introduction into the region's histories that founded the historical vacancy I claimed was at work in the town and region.

I was motivated to research this particular area of the state because of what I perceived as a persistent historical vacancy in the place imaginary of this small region. The historical vacancy at work reflected reclamation's place imaginaries of regional vacancy. They also reflected the very real sparseness of historical settlement in the land because of aridity. Part of what I what I saw at work, however, emerged from the Apache history in the area. Their particular settlement patterns and their refusal to become Spanish subjects meant they were mostly absent from New Mexico Spanish colonial history. The also brutal American colonial history of interaction is also largely absent from New Mexico historical accounts of settlement, except in passing.

4.6 Controversial Histories and Historical Vacancies

At the center of Lozen's controversy are the twin topics of veracity and source. David K. Dunaway writes about ethnography, anthropology, and the trouble with history in a brief recounting of a fascinating moment in New Mexico and regional history. Dunaway writes that in "1978, at a New Mexico conference on local history, a historian from the

Chiricahua Apache stunned both audience and fellow panelists with a statement about his tribe's attitude toward anthropological and historical research" (Dunaway 1978, 411). He revealed that the tribe "eagerly cooperates with Anglos" who were sent to interview specific tribal members coached to lie.¹⁴ The Apache historian claimed that "an elaborate system" allows history to be kept within the tribe. "Oral history?" the Apache historian asked the crowd before he recounted a story about 30 oral interview tapes of an elder made by the tribe. "We burned them all, of course, after she died—it is the Apache custom" (411).¹⁵

The official website of the New Mexico Mescalero Apache Tribe contains familiar elements of Lozen's narrative.

Lozen (late 1840s-1886) was a Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache and a skillful warrior; a prophet and an outstanding medicine woman. She was the sister to Chief Victorio. She was also known as a "shield to her people." History has it that Lozen was able to use her powers in battle to learn the movements of the enemy and that she helped each band of Apaches to successfully avoid capture. After Victorio's death, Lozen continued to ride with Chief Nana and eventually joined forces with Geronimo's band until she finally surrendered with the last band of Apaches in 1886. She died of an illness in Mount Vernon Barracks in Mobile, Alabama. Today, Lozen's descendants reside on the Mescalero Apache Reservation.

The webpage included a famed but possibly discredited image of Lozen from a train photograph that shows the final band of Apache, captured with Geronimo, on the way to prison camps for almost three decades.¹⁶

Historian O.K. Davis (1912) castigated the government for this travesty at the turn of the century. He notes that in the "1886 the United States made prisoners of war 506 Apache Indians men, women, and children, and in the quarter of a century since then the status of those Indians has not been changed." (Davis 1912, 356). "During the campaign

against Geronimo, General Miles came to the conclusion that it would be the best thing for both whites and Indians to remove all the remainder of the Chiricahua and Warm Springs the latter from Ojo Caliente Apaches from that part of the country” (361).

“President Cleveland and the War Department favored sending these Indians also to Fort Marion, but General Miles opposed it,” he continued, “Miles argued that as they were a mountain people, accustomed to high altitudes and dry air, sending them to the low land in Florida, with its humid climate, would be equivalent to sentencing them to death” (361).

Davis quoted Asa Daklugie directly, who is one of Eve Ball’s primary sources about Lozen. Another direct quote from a general council meeting at Fort Still is used by Davis. It described Alamosa Canyon, 20 miles north of T or C, where the warm springs that were this band’s namesake are located.

My people long ago had something that belonged to them. That is why I think and act good. Ojo Caliente! I was born close to there and raised there. That is a good country. There are mountains on this side and on that side and on the other side. In the middle there is a wide valley. There are springs in that valley, fine grass, and plenty of timber around. Dig a well and get water in forty feet! These people who want to go there will get old pretty soon. They want to be there and get settled so their children can grow up there. The soil is good there you can raise anything. Even when I lived there and planted seeds by digging a hole in the ground with a stick, the corn grew up very high, and pumpkins got very large. Horses and cattle will not freeze there. It is a healthy place for man and beast. Women nor children get sick there. Neither do animals. Do not send me any place but there. For years I have been on other people's ground, and trouble has always come of it. Somebody has always bothered me. That is why I want to go to our own country. That is why I have always been a friend to the white people. I thought that when the time came and I would ask something I would not be refused (365).

The site described, in a firsthand account, is many miles north of the tiny hot spring on the arid plain that surrounds the marshy Rio Grande bottomland where Truth or Consequences grew into a town.

Many local histories about T or C claim that “Apache,” who would be this groups, Lozen’s people considered the town’s springs sacred. This would only extend to the one small hot spring at the base of Water Tank Hill, as the other springs in the town were under the Rio Grande before the 1900s. Lozen’s case study is a disquieting illumination of the idea of regional history and the idea of historical vacancies and the perceptions we have about history. The final years of Apache settlement in the region was part of a well-documented military campaign. The accounts and records were those common to the American empire from official government documents. Newspaper accounts also were foundational to this narrative. At the turn of the century, the majority of these sources, like the settlers, military men and settlers in the region, were viciously cruel and unsympathetic to all Apache. The stories of Apache people adhered to the people who carried them. Some were shared in the 1940s with a school teacher, and other were shared with some anthropologists in the early and mid- 1900s.

The ongoing debate in western history circles about Lozen illuminates the idea of regional historical vacancies. The perceived emptiness in the fabric of history, does not discount how little history there is to work with in this instance. But it does also not discount that there is important place history.¹⁷ Current debates in who to write regional history, especially in this region and given Apache oral history traditions, are troubling.¹⁸ Into these considerations of place and history, is the digital avalanche of information of all kinds, about people and ancestry, about places and histories.¹⁹ The landscape of

sources is plentiful and scarce at once. The case study on Lozen exposed the continued desire to use Apache histories to fashion contemporary place narratives.

4.7 Indian Warriors Maidens and Place Identities

The *Visitor's Guide* history was also a troubling indication on how regional place narratives were being crafted in the contemporary moment at the intersections of history and identity. My place ethnographic research focused my gaze on these intersections, and this case seemed both exceptional and familiar. In the months that follow my post and my research on Lozen I read the same information about her across dozens of books, blogs, articles and websites with almost no variation.²⁰ Lucy Lawless, of *Xena, Princess Warrior* (1995-2001) television fame, produced a 5 part mini-series on famed woman warriors in global history that includes an episode on Lozen. In the series Lozen is depicted as a young and beautiful light-skinned woman in a red-checked Gingham headband with a serious look on her face and war paint. The films, according to the website's own descriptions, are a "heady mix of historical sleuthing and provocative reconstruction," where each story "investigates the intimate, gritty details of the life and times of these real women and celebrates the popular mythology that surrounds them a popularity that has grown exponentially in our zest for Hollywood-sized depictions of these iconic heroines."

I was caught off-guard by how much interest there was in the Lozen post and Apache history in general. One woman told me it was romantic, the confederate story in the *Visitor's Guide*. Maybe a little romance, even make-believe, would be *good* for the Apache history, she suggested. I started to understand Flecher's issues with local attitudes about history. One reader of my posts suggested that people need to bring Lozen down by making her a weak and sad woman, which was why she went violent. Men can choose to

be warriors, she claimed, but not women. This was what she thought the tourist guide story would do. A downtown business owner told me it was just the way of boosterism, grandly sweeping her arms out and offering me welcome, to the Wild, Wild West.

No story of the West is complete without an Indian Maiden, one interview told me in the weeks following the post. I was sharing with her the avid interest the post created, after she told me she was very interested in Lozen and the Apache history. She said my post really made her think. I told her her comment about an Indian Maiden reminded me of a scene from the movie *Into the Wild* I showed in my Introduction to Environment, Science and Technology class. I told her how I used it to illustrate the desire for native woman that is always part of the narrative of imperial conquest. It is a scene where two characters talk about how no trip south of the border is complete without a Mexican senorita. But that's true, right, my interviewee asks me. In this town, said said, you have to fuck a hippie or healer to go native, she added, cracking up at her own local joke. She went on to say that the men who run the tourist guide were clueless dickheads, and adds that is is true of most of the men who came west.

She had no idea who they were, either of these groups of abstract men. She said she based her assumptions on 20 years in the town, what little she knew about settlement of the West and the great deal she knew about men, she said. She stood by her truth, she said. People who have something good going elsewhere wouldn't come here, she claimed. If they left something good, they had something wrong with them. She said she stood by this truth too. It's too beautiful for words, she said, but people really should not be here. This was small settlement land, she said (H., Jan. 22, 2013).

One of the regulars at the sandwich shop characterized what she “might know” about Lozen. After reading my January 2012 post on Lozen and Apache, the people that I interviewed and talked to were very emphatic about prefacing their remarks with disclaimers. This was a reflection on the judgment I seemed to have passed in the post. A woman in the café said Lozen may have been a lesbian. She said off-handedly told me not to write down what she said.²¹ I told her about Lozen’s namesake wine from an Arizona winery. We looked it up on my phone as we sat out on the patio. In the “about the wine” section was this text: “Strength of a Warrior and Complexity of a Nurturer. Rarely do these contrasting qualities find the balance in their intersection as seamlessly as they do in Lozen, the Cheyenne-Chiricahua Apache warrior, shaman, and seer. Her brother, Bedoya, was quoted to have said, “Lozen is my right hand . . . strong as a man, braver than most, and cunning in strategy. Lozen is a shield to her people.”²² The wine sells for \$40 a bottle.

The interest in Lozen faded as suddenly as it began. After a month, the dozen of conversations I had about her trickled to none. Two years later, in 2014, I was standing in the new headship downtown and listening to a few people talk. They were planning to create a Lozen poster from what is supposed to be her only known image, which may or may not be Lozen. It occurred to me that the photograph might drive the narrative in part as I listened to them talk about how fierce and fine Lozen was. It also occurred to me that the poster would probably sell. The group sitting on a couch was looking at a website that sold posters with the the image of Geronimo and three other armed Apaches and the words, “Homeland Security . . . Fighting Terrorism Since 1492.”

4.8 Playing Indian in Sacred Places

Phillip Deloria, in *Playing Indian* (2002), argues that embracing Native American identity makes American identity possible. It is a paradoxical relationship he claims, which allows the simultaneous erasure of actual Native Americans from the landscape and the mourning of their disappearance with remorse or responsibility, and the simultaneous celebration of Native Americans and a historical Native American past, without the recognition of their presence in the contemporary landscape.

“Playing Indian is a persistent tradition in American culture, stretching from the very instant of the national big bang into an ever expanding present and future,” Deloria asserted (Deloria 2002, 2). Deloria supported his arguments with powerful examples that range from the Boston Tea Party to the Boy Scout movement, to Hippies to the New Age healers. Playing Indian, then, reflects one final paradox” he write, the “self-defining pairing of American truth with American freedom rests on the ability to wield power against Indians—social, military, economic, and political” through which Americans “construct for themselves a more secure identity” (191).

Many of my interviews embraced the idea that Truth or Consequences and the surrounding region somehow embodied the Apache spirit. There is a powerful paradox in imagining the land as Indian land, without any acknowledgement that there is no land in Sierra County that belongs to ancestors of the Warm Spring Apache. There is a current movement to secure land, with some very troubling aspects.²³ One vigorous retiree in his 70s knew a daunting amount of American and Apache history in the area, especially the history of warfare against the Apache. He regularly went out with others, many who came to the region for this purpose, to travel Apacheria. This was the common term Apache enthusiasts used to describe territory once controlled by various Apache people.

A retired biology teacher, he longed to write a book. The place he moved to, from the corn-region he tells me, was Apacheria, not T or C. The town was a convenient place to live, but he came for the historical geography. (J.N., Aug. 8, 2012).

The most common sentiment about Apache presence in the region is that walking in their places allows people access to sacred sites. Lozen's access to prescient power is a sacred narrative. She embodies the sacred, the warrior, and, as a medicine woman, the power to heal with the earth. She was also gorgeous and available a downtown business owner says, and she was local. Local controversy erupted when landowners attempted to close access roads to the Alamosa Canyon warm springs that Chihenné (the spelling as it appeared in this publication) Apache considered their homeland, captured some of the tension in how these histories are being organized. One visitor who is off-roading through the canyon claims that "Warm Springs," are the "place where the Chihenné Apache creation story of White Painted Woman, and her children, Child of Water and Killer of Enemies emerged."²⁴ When told this story, people on this trek asked for more, she claims. "I believe there is a hunger for connection to place and wild awe."

Another visitor says "The Indians probably didn't appreciate the cavalry going through their territory with 200 horses and wagons, their tracks still visible today," but "they couldn't stop that progress any more than we can today." One of the story's photograph illustrations is Geronimo and three other armed Apaches and the words, "Homeland Security . . . Fighting Terrorism Since 1492." The argument in the second part of my chapter is about the Sacred Springs narrative, a narrative about the use and sacredness of the regions hot mineral springs. A friend of mine, who drives the

bookmobile in the region, tells me that the Sacred Springs narrative allows people to own their own little piece of the American dream of conquest and ownership.

Sacred Springs, or, Lay Down Your Weapons, the Water's Great

The second case study in this chapter examines what I call the Sacred Springs narrative, the idea that hot springs were First Nation sacred sites. The idea that First Nation people considered hot springs sacred as well as neutral grounds, in the past, sums up the narrative. The Sacred Springs narrative is a foundational identity narrative in the town of Truth or Consequences. In contrast to Lozen's narratives, this narrative ventures deep into historical fancy. It is also emphatically, vociferously and repeatedly claimed as real and true. The local incarnation was the "Geronimo Soaked Here" narrative. It was hard to fight against this ubiquitous narrative in town. Almost every single T or C history mentioned this narrative. Most bathhouse histories mentioned it. The sacred spring's narrative is also a ubiquitous narrative at hot mineral spring sites across the nation, from coast to coast. Every book on the history of mineral waters and hot springs notes the sacred tradition of aboriginal use. A 2008 on the town in travel section article in the *New York Times*, was titled "Geronimo Slept Here" and claimed that the "biggest lure" of the town were the "hot springs that the Apache leader Geronimo" is said to have "enjoyed."²⁵ I had the "Geronimo Soaked Here" exchange in a coffee shop with a local bathhouse owner. The bathhouse owner claimed that just because there was no evidence that Geronimo was here doesn't mean he was not.²⁶

Like the Lozen narrative, there are fragments of historical records that exist in the archives and in the landscape. There are also some interesting contemporary studies of the use and medicinal use of hot water and steam that consider traditional healing practices. These are very site specific and limited in their claims. Narratives about the

sacredness and use of natural springs by Native Americans are untethered to these fragments. These histories are characterized by an almost complete lack of archaeological, historical, or other evidence. There are no footnotes, no references, and no sources in the several dozen texts I have read. “Oral tradition” is the foundation that builds this narrative. This is not the oral tradition of preliterate people who used oral tradition to maintain history, landscape information, complicated kinship connections, food, medicinal and survival knowledge, cultural understandings, and vast stores of other information. It is the “oral tradition” of modern historical accounts. Phrases like people claim, or people say, history says, tradition holds and similar phrases are the only references.

There are three basic elements that coalesced in the Sacred Springs narrative. They are healing, peace and discovery. These qualities are interchangeable across sites and across First Nation groups. The springs provide miraculous healing for wounds. Peace is used interchangeably with neutrality. These sacred sites are places where otherwise warring tribes will lay down their weapons in order to heal wounds inflicted during battle. The healing powers of the springs are arguably the foundation for sacredness. The idea that because they are sacred places they must necessarily be peaceful places is interchangeable. Often these narratives are about inter-tribal peace and harmony at these sites, but it extends to Spanish and occasionally American interaction. Discovery is an exchange between a native guide, occasionally a chief, who shares the secret of the location of a miraculous and sacred site with murderous Spanish or American colonizers. It is a very symbolic moment, as one empire passes to another. This narrative simultaneously celebrates and erases the First Nation presence in the landscape.

I begin this section with an overview of the first report on mineral springs in the United States, which illustrates the ways springs were seen as economic resources in the region. This report also illustrates how even in this endeavor, a nod to the emergent Sacred Springs narrative is evident. I then discuss the only sustained study on the Sacred Spring narrative I have uncovered. It is an excellent and highly informative history. I then explore these elements through a sampling of online promotional, blogged, and personal travel writing literature. These accounts are about mineral springs across the United States as well as in Truth or Consequences specifically. These histories are not grounding in any standards of veracity, replicability, or consensus. They are undeniably racist as well, yet continue to be embraced as true. They also, according to many people I talk to, reflect a reverence for First Nation as well as the sacred things that used to be theirs.

4.9 Early Efforts to Quantify Mineral Spring Resources

There was federal interest in mineral hot spring resources for medicinal and economic purposes at the turn of the 19th century that mirrored other federal resource assessments of region resources and the ever-present desire for settlement and development. The first large-scale accounting of the mineral springs in the United States came from a USGS bulletin written by Dr. A. C. Peale in 1886. Early government attempts to account for mineral resources in the United States began in 1883. It was a systematic accounting for resource potential that created a massive amount of data on the physical landscape. Prior to these efforts, it was the American Medical Association that sought to take a measure of these resources in an 1880 publication. This is telling. At the turn of the century, the interest in mineral springs for healing and profit was vigorous. Peale listed a handful of prior publications from the early, mid- and late 1800s in the introduction. The earliest pamphlet listed 21 baths, and the AMA publication listed 500. Peale's report listed 2,822

mineral springs in the United States. Every state except North Dakota had at least one recorded mineral spring. Peale also included the Sixth Report on British Association for the Advancement of Science published in 1836. "From a therapeutic point of view," Peale wrote, "all waters that have an effect on the animal body are mineral waters, no matter how feebly mineralized they may be" (Peale 1886, 138).

These comments prefaced a short paragraph that explained the wide breadth of the acceptable mineral content for inclusion. It was a nod to waters that seemed to have very little mineral content yet were nonetheless included if they had been improved specifically for medicinal use, itself a nod to the economic role these health springs played in the development of the West. For popular but unproved waters, it was enough that "their medicinal value is recognized and they are sources of profit to their owners, and also indirectly an addition to the wealth of the localities in which they are located, seems sufficient reason why such springs should be noted" (139). Peale claimed that not enough was known about the benefits to cast potential aspersions on these "feebly mineralized" waters, before moving briskly to a quantitative account of how mineral waters were counted and classified. For several reasons, attention was paid mostly to the Western states and territories. Mineral springs were greater in number in the region, and had higher output as well as temperature and mineral content. Despite the "newness of the country," the number of resorts was large (175).

Each state had a very short place narrative, no more than a paragraph in most cases. New Mexico's and Nevada's short place narratives mentioned a Native American presence at mineral springs, and there was a short paragraph on known mineral springs in "Indian Territory," including the Creek, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Chickasaw nations.

New York, Kentucky, Georgia, Indiana, and Missouri all had “Indian Hot Springs.” The brief narrative on New Mexico said “the mineral springs that are utilized for medicinal purposes are numerous, and some of them were used years ago by the Franciscan and Dominican friars, and the Indians prior to the advent of Europeans” (321). Nevada was also said to have springs used medicinally, and “many of them were so used by Indians long before settlements were made by the whites” (325).

4.10 A Sacred Springs Case Study

National Park Service archaeologist Mark Blaeuer’s *Didn’t All the Indians Come Here: Separating Fact From Fiction at Hot Springs National Park* (2007) is a slender, 80-page volume. Blaeuer interrogates the claim that the hot springs in Hot Springs National Park, located in Arkansas, were Native American sacred sites. Blaeuer notes that the 12 years he spent compiling and interpreting information for this slim book were aided by an array of professionals and experts on both history and in archaeology, in archival research, and in Native American culture in Arkansas and the wider region. The text explores and summarizes historical evidence for the First Nation presence at the Hot Spring National Park in Arkansas. It is a work of exceptional historical precision.

Blaeuer’s finely rendered study offers tremendous insights into the work of a particular body of Sacred Springs narratives in Hot Springs, Arkansas.²⁷ Blaeuer notes that the “entire corpus of ‘Hot Springs (Arkansas) Indian Folklore’ as most people know it today, was born out of the European-American mind and first written down in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (71). Blaeuer claims that these “types of myths prevailed at other U.S. spas as well, during the extensive mineral water boom of the nineteenth and early twentieth century” (45). He identifies similar elements in Sacred Spring narratives across places. These include Spanish Conquistadors, often searching for

the Fountain of Youth, Indians who shared the springs with colonizers, and idealized landscapes that healed the mind and body. Most arguments about the Native American presence and use of the hot springs across the nation bear an uncanny exactness to the ones that Blaeuer examines, including those in T or C.

Sacred Springs narratives were a boon to all manner of Western promoters. Many originated with specific industries. The Iron Mountain Railroad serviced Hot Springs, Arkansas, for example, employed J. W. Buel to create historical travel narratives for the springs. Buel wrote numerous “top selling travel books,” but was best known for creating the “larger-than-life reputation for ‘Wild’ Bill Hickok (46). The stories survived fairly intact stripped only of flourishes and language “obviously of non-Indian coinage” that would be questioned by modern listeners. “Romanticization of the Indians was in full flower in Hot Springs by the late 1800s, though this process had a longer history elsewhere,” produced by “resorts and spas, popular theater, authors” (49). There was also a vast, new market for the “romantic images of the new territories Spanish past,” feeding the desire for history and commodity (28). The first fictional narrative concerning the Spaniard’s Hernando de Soto’s expedition through Florida, Georgia, Alabama and, perhaps, Arkansas was published in the 1858. Written 10 years after the Mexican-American War fueled interest in the Spanish Colonial past, this narrative ignored the Mexican influence.

Boosters are the source of many of these place histories. Blaeuer recounts the exploits of a 1939 state-funded commission that sought to establish de Soto’s route through Arkansas. He notes that a French “translation” of the de Soto expedition, which proved to be a forgery, repeated these same tropes. Blaeuer used this history to illustrate

the continual influence of “politics and tourism schemes in the region it covered” in the creation of historical narratives (26). The economic, political and cultural issues at stake when you seek to challenge place identify beliefs are much more complex than merely crafting well-researched histories. The thin veneer of legitimacy is remarkably resilient. Blaeuer’s insistence throughout the text that the folk histories he explores are very important hint at some of the pressure he seems to meet when challenging these histories. This issue emerges as a central consideration in exploring place imaginaries and historical vacancies.

The “proprietors of springs resorts invented, adopted, and promoted their own histories in hopes of attracting travelers who shared this ideals of a romanticized past” whose utility “lay not in the veracity of the visit but in the romantic image if Indians” as well as in the relationship between Indians and Spanish (34). Blaeuer points out that “Indian folklore functioned as free advertising,” another instance where the “human capacity to create and perpetuate myth fit hand-in-glove with the desires of various promoters who recognized a powerful marketing tool when they saw one” (53). Imaging the Native American experience and presence at mineral prongs seems to be an integral part of the experience of historic and contemporary visitors to mineral baths he argues. “Numerous people,” Blaeuer added, “have ‘played Indian’ in Hot Springs, from the 1880s down to the present day” (71).

The neutral ground narrative emerges in the same period as the arrival of European-Americans, writes Blaeuer. In Texas, the neutrality narrative “rang false to a current representative of the Caddo tribe, who says that he is “not familiar with any stories of the Caddos bathing with the Karankawas or Tonkawas at Sour Lake,” and that

he finds the story hard to believe, doubting that a Caddo would have reason to “travel down to south Texas” for a bath. (53). “Recorded Caddo myths do not refer to any hot springs,” writes Blaeuer (37). Blaeuer rejects the ideas that hot springs are sacred, guarded, shared, or otherwise central to Native American culture in Hot Spring Arkansas, given the archeological evidence. He asserts the hot springs are “unique features of this region, and were probably considered important by all tribes—and people in general—who came into the contact with the water” (71).

The idealized image in these narratives illustrated how “nineteenth and early twentieth century bathers viewed the springs—and how business owners promoted the springs” (45). Blaeuer includes several narratives from other places to illustrate his argument. Blaeuer notes that the narratives, though fictional creation, do provide valuable insight into the period in which they emerged. Beyond this, the “stories and customs serve to unify any local community” (68). The body of historian fabrication that emerged with American exploration of the colonization in the early 19th century mixed a few verifiable historical events with the needs of an American population that sought not only a livelihood but identity, history and a sense of community. Why these stories still linger, and are so fiercely defended today, seems to be a reflection of many of these same qualities.

4.11 On Sacred Sites and Ancient Histories

Blaeuer’s text does not address one critical and necessary part of the appeal of the sacred spring’s narrative, the idea of the sacred. It is part of a larger melding of the belief that First Nation populations had access to the healing properties found in nature. This reflects a racialized understanding of First Nation people as a vanishing landscape feature of the new American nation whose premodern lifestyles and belief systems would be wiped out

by the modern age. First Nations groups were not considered autonomous self-governing people. In *God is Red* (1973), Vine Deloria Jr., analyzes and rejects the idea that Native American religious traditions were cultural artifacts from the past whose survival is perilous. Genocidal practices of both Spanish and American colonizers gave rise to the idea that Native Americans were soon to be gone from the lands. This became a persistent imaginary.

Deloria claims that Christianity, written in the history of manifest destiny and western movement, belonging to all places. Native American religions, in contrast, are place specific. “Tribal religions,” he writes, “are actually complexes of attitudes, beliefs, and practices fine-tuned to harmonize with the lands on which the people live” (Deloria 1973, 70).²⁸ Deloria’s career as a lawyer, professor, scholar, and legal scholar gave him the capacity to emulate arguments and style of the Western scholar as well as level them with a wit, irony, and ferocity that defined his style. His book *God Is Red* (1973), along with *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969), are cited extensively in legal decisions, briefs, articles, and reviews concerning the establishment of legal definitions of what characterized “sacred” First Nation places under United States law.

As a legal question, the idea of sacred sites is incredibly complex and tricky and has a legal and political history that extends back to the first colonial encounters. A sacred site is not necessarily holy, but are historically conveyed places that are deserving of respect or culturally essential. The Western idea and emphasis on sacredness as a holy designation means that sacredness is often adopted strategically. Strict protection under the law is more easily achieved under this definition. What counts as sacred was exactly

what I am confronted with in Truth of Consequences as people argued against my claim that the springs there are not sacred sites.

The people in town I talk to about this idea consider the springs because they are healing places. This is assumed to be either a self-evident trait, because that is what people are using the water for in the present moment, or part of the loose body of knowledge that people who use mineral healing refer to as historical fact. The idea that ancient races of First Nations people used the waters adds to the appeal—the waters, in other words, are timeless. People also tell me the springs are sacred because they are peaceful healing places, places that are, paradoxically, used to heal battle wounds. This is a subtle nod to the brutal histories that mark regional and national landscapes, and also a nod to the understanding that First Nation people were warlike and violent.²⁹ These arguments are fluid, unmoored but emphatic.

This faith in nature to cure, by mud, water, or climate, was as Kammer notes (2004) an often overlooked part of Western migration in America at the turn of the 19th century. There is confluence between the narratives. The shift to medical science after World War II undermined the health claims made by boosters. The town of Truth or Consequences, for example, when it was still called Hot Springs, declared itself a city in 1947 in anticipation of the boom of World War II soldiers. World War II, however, shifted healing to medical science and experts.³⁰ As the faith in the spring's medical properties waned at mid-century, however, boosters could still proclaim springs' as spiritually and historically sacred.

Janet Valenza's *Taking the Waters in Texas: Springs, Spas, and Fountains of Youth* (2000) writes that "Spanish rule over Texas also adds a romantic allure" (Valenza

2000, 45). The Spanish settlement of Texas and accompanying myths “give the waters a patina of age and hence a historical continuity to their value” (46). Newspapers recounted pioneer claims that Ponce de Leon searched for the “Fountain of Youth” in addition to gold in the New World, both common elements “of Spanish involvement in the New World” (50).³¹ As Valenza notes, Roman built extensive baths as well as military hospitals at springs. In promotional literature, hot springs joined these well-documented antiquity histories to America’s Spanish and First Nation antiquity histories. The element of sacredness is included to bolster the meaning of these histories.

Gene Fowler’s (1991) history of mineral springs contained a great deal of conventional sacred spring’s lore. One of his quotes referenced an 1884 report. It reads that “old signs and trails leading into the springs indicated that the Indians held the virtues of the streams as the people of old Biblical times held the Pool of Siloam” (Fowler 1991, 9). The Sacred Springs narrative offered a way to link between the great civilizations of antiquity and new springs in the United States and from our own supposed antiquity to the turn of the century settler. Early promotional literature in *Truth or Consequences* in the 1920s referred to the town as America’s Karlsbad, referencing the famed baths in Germany (Fletcher and Carpenter, 37). Healing, sacredness and history are impossible joined in the waters.

4.12 Contemporary Hot Springs Narratives Across the Land

A brief online perusal ascertains that the Sacred Springs narrative, with all of these shared elements, vigorously persists. The two-paragraph page on “Native Americans and Hot Springs” on Wikipedia, for example, begins with the assertion that Native Americans “have a long relationship with hot springs.”³² Supporting this relationship is the claim that “artifacts near some of these hot springs that support a history of human activity that

extends back thousands of years,” followed by the sweeping claim that Native Americans “revered hot springs as a sacred healing place.” The jump from relationship to reverence is rapid. An example refers to hot springs in Tonopah, Arizona. Although “there are no ruins or evidence of dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the hot springs,” nearby “grain-grinding mortar holes, pottery shards, and other man-made objects in the area suggest that this site was frequented for many years by native peoples such as the Hohokam.” This was a common rebuttal in *Truth or Consequences*. The argument that mortar holes at Ralph Edwards Park proved people were close to the springs was used as evidence that therefore they *must* have used the springs.

The second paragraph concludes with the claim that Native Americans “always used these natural shrines,” and if “opposing tribes, even those at war, arrived at the same spring, all conflict ceased because they believed they were walking on sacred ground.” The one footnoted source directs reader to Oregon Geo-Heat Center (GHC), located at the Oregon Institute of Technology, and a bulletin published in 1995 by John W. Lund.³³ Lund published a history of *Truth or Consequences* written with James T. Witcher of New Mexico State University’s Southwest Technology Development Institute. It is also a GHC Bulletin, published in 2002 and available online. Several of my interviewees showed me this paper. It was on the coffee table at a popular local bathhouse sitting area and available at several others.

After a brief explanation of the town name change that began the four-page bulletin, the authors wrote that it “is said that Indians in the region used the springs as ‘neutral grounds’ long before Europeans settled the area” and that these “Indian tribes no doubt gathered here without conflict for trading, religious purposes, to bathe, and to

alleviate ailments” (Lund and Witcher 2002, 4). A perusal of hot springs resort websites or locational websites for undeveloped springs evidences all of the elements: sacred ground, neutral ground, healing properties, Indian use, and later Spanish and American use after a goodwill gesture by a native guide. This narrative is also present in many local history books published by historical societies.

The Balneology Association of North America (BANA), an organization that promotes mineral bath and hot water healing held its annual board of directors meeting in Truth or Consequences in February 2013. The section on the etiquette of hot springs bathing in the periodical BANA brought to town claimed a ubiquitous, (lowercase) native tradition of peace. BANA was more specific about weapons, which, the handouts asserted, were laid down along the periphery of the springs. The organization asked that in this tradition, both hostility and weapons should not be taken to hot springs.

One of the best recent narratives online is from Pagosa Hot Springs in Pagosa Colorado. This narrative shows evidence of an evolving but still-familiar narrative. The tourism site claims that Ute Indians “were one of the American Indian tribes that once claimed ownership of the Great Pagosa Hot Springs.”³⁴ The ubiquitous unreferenced place history contains claims that the Utes “called the springs “Pah gosah,” a term which has been variously translated in recent years as meaning “boiling water” or “healing water.” However, the site continues, “a Ute elder once suggested that a more accurate translation would be “water that has a strong smell.” The “Native Americans of the Four Corners area,” furthermore, “staged numerous wars and skirmishes over the ownership of the Hot Springs, so highly did they regard the importance of its healing powers.” Despite this supposed warfare, there is no evidence of any First Nation settlement in the vicinity.

4.13 Geronimo Soaked Here

The sacred spring's narrative was present in Truth or Consequence's mineral spring's promotional literature and history as well as contemporary accounts in T or C. It is a foundational place narrative. Similar to the Lozen's narrative it contains a handful of elements repeated with little or no variation. David Kammer's historic nomination narrative has a sacred springs narrative. "Oral tradition," Kammer writes, "holds that Victorio, Geronimo and other Apaches regarded the hot mineral springs as a healing place, using the hot waters and mud to cauterize wounds, resulting in various bands respecting the area as a neutral zone" (Section 8, page 23). Kammer cites a genealogical source in reference to the "oral tradition" of the area of Apache. It is a single unauthorized paragraph in a 1979 genealogical survey of Sierra County. This paragraph describes the "magic waters" and mentions this peaceful site of response as, paradoxically, a place to heal wounds in the water or pack them with mud.

Students at El Paso Community College wrote a local history project on T or C for the Borderlands, an online source for faculty-edited student work.³⁵ This story is linked to several blogs as well as a local bathhouse. They began the history in the 1700s, noting the Camino Real, the principal trade route from Mexico to Santa Fe, passed near the springs. The narrative continued with both familiar and novel details in this unsourced narrative. "Legends say that they were unnoticed until an Indian introduced the Spanish to the springs," the history says. It makes sense that the springs would go unnoticed, because the nearby passage of the Spanish was on the other side of a mountain range. The unnamed Indian transforms into a chief in the next sentence, who "showed them a large, flat movable rock placed over the main spring and told them of the great powers of the

water under it.” This chief also told the Spanish about the curative power of the “white mud.”

This story continued with the claim that Apaches did not allow weapons near the springs because they were a “sacred place of natural healing . . . a neutral site where all Indian tribes could bring their sick or wounded to soak in the water and apply the warm mud as salve for wounds.” The students claim that “Geronimo and his warriors were among those Indians from all over the area who traveled many miles to bathe their wounds in the springs.” American settlers emerge into the story, when “soldiers,” at “Fort McRae,” in 1864 learned of the medicinal value of the hot springs from the Indians.”

A *Silver City Sun-News* article on the town by Melissa Martinez claimed that “only one thing could have made warring Apaches and Spanish settlers put down their weapons—soothing, hot springs.”³⁶ It is a comical claim. *Old West Trail*, a magazine-styled supplement to the promotional *New Mexico Traveler* that is widely available in the south-central region at hotels and tourist centers included a place history of Truth or Consequence that begin by noting that “Apaches and early settlers” recognized the “healthful aspects of the hot mineral waters as far back as the 1800s” and that “Apache Chief Geronimo is said to have bathed in the healing water, thus lending his name to the Geronimo Springs Museum and Geronimo Peace Days Fiesta.” The use of the Geromino is a nod to the presence of the Apache leader in the region and in nearby Alamosa Canyon which begins in the town sometime in the 1940s. This is when boosters or others in the town, a record has yet to be found, change the name of Government Springs to Geronimo Springs.³⁷

The *Chaparral Free Guide* carried a story in April 2012 on the history of the mineral springs. There was no author byline. This is a common phenomenon in place histories found in promotional material. The “Apache Indians knew about the water, as did their ancestors before them, and told the Spaniards who traversed and settled the area before the American cattleman and farmer moved in for their benefits,” it reads. “Some of the tales about the medicinal qualities of the baths undoubtedly were exaggerated,” the story continued, “but they couldn’t have stretched the truth any more than the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, the cities of gold which attracted the Spanish.” There was “no doubt,” however, “that the Apache war chief (Geronimo) was in this area and knew of its existence.” The springs were so important to the Indians, the story continued, that the area surrounding them, “by unwritten law, was considered neutral territory,” and “no matter how often the different tribes warred with one another, the fighting ceased within the areas where the springs are located.”³⁸

The website for Riverbed Hot Springs claims that the town’s water, “long considered sacred by the Apache and Mimbres tribes of southern New Mexico . . . has been relaxing and rejuvenating warriors and peace-seekers alike, for centuries.”³⁹ The Sierra Grande Spa had a somewhat unique take. The narrative began with the ubiquitous claim that the region has for centuries had been an important place of healing and gathering by Native Americans; the necessary battle that preceded the need for a neutral healing place was unwritten. The site noted that Native Americans referred to the “springs as ‘Grandmother’ because of the soothing and beneficial properties of the waters,” which is something entirely new. No one at the Sierra Grande Lodge in T or C knew either where it came from or who wrote the passage.⁴⁰

The Sierra County Genealogical Society's place history claimed that the "area around Truth or Consequences was known for its hot springs long before the arrival of Europeans. According to legend, the Indians treated it as neutral ground. They laid aside tribal differences when they came to soak their wounds in the magic waters which flowed from earth."⁴¹ A local yoga studio website claimed that "The hot healing mineral waters were sacred to Native Americans for many centuries and are still revered today."⁴²

Deborah Stone wrote a special travel section about Truth or Consequences in a weekly paper in Woodinville, Wash., in 2014 that contained every element. The title was "Truth or Consequences: A Tale of Geronimo, Hot Springs and Hollywood."⁴³ "For hundreds of years," she wrote, "Native Americans met at the hot mineral springs that flowed from the ground where the town is now located," where they "bathed, socialized and cared for their wounds and ailments, discovering that the waters had inherent healing properties," and "it is believed the famous apache warrior, Geronimo, soaked in these springs."

An online travel blog about T or C claimed that "artifacts found in the area indicate that for hundreds of years, Native Americans gathered here to socialize and care for their wounds and ailments," and "legend has it that the famous Apache warrior, Geronimo, soaked among them in these healing waters." The end of this post made me smile. This was the exact argument I heard from so many people in town who did not like my argument. It shifted the burden of proof to me to prove beyond a doubt that Apache did not use the springs. "True?" the author asked. "Well," she continued, "I didn't find anywhere on the internet where it IS the truth, but I couldn't find anywhere saying it wasn't." According to the author, the "locals certainly believe it and there is no reason

you shouldn't!"⁴⁴ The idea that Apache would *not* soak was greeted with an incredulous disbelief. The majority of the residents I interview did not soak. This paradox was not even part of the conversation.

There is evidence that this narrative might be changing. A 2013 story on the town in *True West Magazine* had a parenthetical aside that “they called the springs ‘Place to Pray,’ and some say—but many disagree—that Geronimo bathed here.” The New Mexico True site claimed that “The Chiricahua (Warm Springs) Apaches named these springs ‘Place to Pray’ and considered them a sacred place for healing,” followed by a parenthetical aside that “many locals repeat the ‘Geronimo Soaked Here’ tale, but it is thought by local historians to be wishful thinking, not fact” —although their own facts on place names, perhaps referring to the original Las Palomas legends, were tenuously factual. A 2010 retrospective on mineral spring stories in *New Mexico Magazine* noted that by 1980, the “lofty language about ‘fountains of youth’ has disappeared from the Magazine.”⁴⁵

My favorite description came from the pages of *Vanity Fair* (December 2007). It was a one page article on the town becoming an influential art enclave. It included what I believe will be one of the town’s newest place narrative—the town as an early sin city. This narrative at least reflected more historically verifiable town roots in gambling, drinking, and prostitution. Mineral spring healing, while present in the town’s foundation, emerged with force after the damsite labor camp was closed. That a handful of bars with backroom gambling and several believable oral histories on known incidents of prostitution are being spun into a fictional narrative of sin and lasciviousness on a Western scale is not surprising. “To the Spanish it was Las Palomas del Ojo Caliente—

Doves of the Hot Springs—and an Apache stronghold to be avoided; in the late 19th century it was known as Geronimo’s hometown, and by the early 20th as the original Las Vegas—a place of speakeasies and brothels for men working on nearby Elephant Butte Dam.⁴⁶ The original Las Vegas, or Geronimo’s hometown—either would make a fine tee-shirt.

4.14 Might Have Probably

A retired gentlemen who owned a regional agriculture business for many years and moved to the town in the late 1980s told me that the whole idea that Indians sat around and soaked in harmony was new-age bullshit as fake as the people who wore new boots and fancy cowboy hats downtown. Cowboys wear caps, he told me. He does say that the Apache “might have probably” used what was available. I liked this phrase, might have probably, which I told him. He said it covered the bases. I told him about the past half year of controversy and research. He had no opinion on the woman warrior, he said, but you shouldn’t underestimate anybody. Government learned it the hard way, he said. People moved here thinking it would be easier to get by in a small place, but that’s not always true. We do not get to what is true, sitting on his front porch, watching the late summer thunder clouds gathering, but he told me there are a lot of things we just can’t know but are still worth thinking about. (G. Aug. 6, 2013)

The connection between the nomadic Apache and the perception of vacancy in this region is strong. Does the idea that history will not tell give power to the impulses of telling tales? The impulse to dramatize and fabricate, to fill in the story with desire or project qualities from self to other emerges strongly in the town of Truth or Consequences. Forging a local identity is part of this narrative, but so is forging a regional identity against the nation or recrafting a national identity where the savagery

and otherness of past empires or untamed frontiers. Lozen demonstrated the futility of trying to fill a vacancy. Here is the paradox in my own research. I too strove to fill these empty places in the historical imagination. I too constantly looked for the fragments to cohere to consensus—even as I deferred historical truth.

There are many things at work in these narratives of woman warriors and Sacred Springs, in floating houses and crazy houses. How people got by, spiritually, economically, culturally and in other ways is one way to think about it. By my project's end, I want to rid the town of the sacred spring's narrative. The Lozen narrative still troubled me. The floating house narrative was less troublesome to me, probably a slippery slope argument. Art critic, historian and writer Lucy Lippard (1997), begins her book by noting that place, for her, is the locus of desire. On the cover of *Lure of the Local* is a house, a small white clapboard house with a pitched roof, floating in a body of water. There is something magical about a floating house. People tell me there is something magical about the waters too, and that's why the idea that they are sacred persists so strongly.

Historical vacancies and are about far more than historical fragments, historical absence, or historical creation, or attempts to make fragments of the past adhere to one another in the present moment. Place has always been created from promotion and lore—these are not new things, these are not remarkable things. The remarkable things I discovered as I both built this framework and tested it in the field are how little history is reflected in place histories and how many other things are reflected instead. These place narrative reflect emotional responses to politics and economics, culture and history; they speak to desire, longing, and celebrations tied to these histories. They create personal

place identities and town character. They reflect understandings at every level of place identity: the local, state, regional, national, and global.

Place ethnographic research is meant to be a useful framework across communities. By the end of my fieldwork in 2013, I longed to take what I had learned from my research and use it to promote the town in new ways. I embraced an economic argument in my own efforts to talk people out of the sacred spring's narratives. I think these two case study narratives are insidiously racist and sexist, even if they are embraced with honest intension. I framed the need to abandon the argument in economic terms to a few people I was trying to convince. I also used the idea of not wanting to look ignorant, especially if attracting high-end clients was the goal.

Let's move to 21st-century narratives, I said to one bathhouse manager. Toxic cleansing and stress reduction, a rejection from the perils and failures of modern Western medicine, organic and holistic and revitalizing sacredness, I continued. Not the false historically racist claims about sacredness. The bathhouse manager told me that the people who came liked the idea that springs are sacred. Were sacred, I corrected her, before I went to take my soak. I got a discount, because I was a local.

¹ This is increasing challenged in new archeological evidence of extensive First Nation settlement in Alamosa Canyon based in a dozen years of fieldwork and analysis. <http://www.canadaalamosaproject.org/>. A review of the first exhibit of this research, in the July 2013 *Monticello Messenger*, written by messenger staff, reads, "The exhibition, "The Cañada Alamosa Project: 4000 Years of Agricultural History", opened April 4th at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum in Las Cruces. Over 300 people attended the evening event...Some of the display areas are particularly noteworthy. "Early Corn in the Cañada Alamosa and the Southwest" displays fragments of 4000- year-old corn found at the Montoya Site. This is some of the oldest corn ever found in the American Southwest. "Evidence of Mesa Verde Migrants" tells the tale of one of the project's chief discoveries (3).

² He writes that Paul Horgan believed the first Spanish passage through modern day Sierra County was Cavaza de Vaca's expedition, but could have also been members of the Coronado expedition. This illustrates the tension between a historical vacancy as part of a place imaginary and absences in the historical record. Fitzsimons follows Onate's route, noting the importance of the Camino Rael before turning to the American colonial movement in the region. Zebulon Montgomery Pike was probably the

first citizen of the United States to travel along El Camino Real he writes and notes that route was also traversed by a Mormon Battalion led by Captain Phillip St. George Cooks in 1846, establishing the the first transcontinental wagon route. The history that the region is a thoroughfare is repeated.

³ <https://www.nps.gov/elca/index.htm>

⁴ They included books, photocopies, records, postcards, phonographs, and everything in between. These documents might relate to tracing the lineage of a town family, or property abstracts, or an architectural field survey, or it might be a book on Apache food ways that caught her interest on eBay, or an old photo or postcards. Fletcher creates enormous three-ring binders with every scrap of information she can find on a subject. She was determined when she wanted to find information. When she was interested in a new idea, for example, she would order several books from Amazon and somehow in a few days have them marked up and cross-referenced with her internal card catalog. Her interests were wide-ranging and her gathering of material zealous. As a teacher and administrator she pushed student and teachers to engage with history and to know their local history. She had many works of local history created by students and others under her guidance.

⁵ My research into this one small history, which included consulting experts, was a lesson in history, veracity and trying to tell people that their favorite town history might not be true. Two common methods of moving structures at the turn of the 19th century were to take buildings apart and reassemble them at a new site, or to load the structure whole onto a wagon. I found exactly one article in *Popular Mechanics* about floating a house. *Popular Mechanics* was the YouTube of its day for how-to advice. The article, written in March 1905, was a front-page account of floating a two-story brick house down the river. The barge that carried the house was enormous. The labor that the endeavor took was incredible. It was, the article said, “certainly a feat of its kind” (2). The absolute lowest estimate I found for house weight was 20 pounds per square foot, so even a very small 100-square-foot house from the damsite labor camp would have been a minimum of 2,000 pounds. This would be a house with balloon construction, a lightweight wooden structure that was evident in a recent picture of a reclamation camp house purchased by Fletcher on eBay. I researched historical house relocation. Every contractor and engineer who I talked to told me it would be a terrible idea and no one with any common sense would do it. And one house mover told me that it was possible, but it would be difficult, and he did not have time to talk about the logistics. It would take a lot he said. When pressed he said he would have hauled it on a wagon, but he didn’t know the details and not to quote him. I learned to think differently than I used to about historical claims in this exercise.

⁶ I countered that perhaps someone did float a small one—lifted the house with a half dozen men onto logs and carefully rolled it on logs down to the river, transferred it to a barge, floated it downstream—avoiding the sandbars and shallow water that defined the river even when it is full—hoisted it off the barge and lifted it on a wagon, drove it on a wagon to a new site, unloaded it and set it onto a new foundation. I was trying to be funny, the idea of going over to the Fletcher’s ‘camp,’ also tickled me, given the subject. I quickly realized that my challenge was considered a defection to a very hostile camp when it came to town history. Residents are very sensitive about Fletcher’s challenges to veracity. By siding with Sherry on this issue I was making a political stand, not a historic stand.

⁷ On other occasions, however, Fletcher has requested that the woman get her history straight. This would mean that one would have to pay to collect building abstracts and conduct title searches on the structure the ‘cabins’ are built into, and to use other methods, such as an inspection of material, engineering studies, historical dating, or similar methods to verify the historical accuracy of those narratives.

⁸ A recent town video on New Mexico True Television has a recently arrived “local,” talking about “counting croup,” at the springs that is, in so far as I have been able to determine in my two years of extensive research, completely fictions. It was fun to see a new iteration of the Sacred Springs narrative however. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mcq7V3YOxPA>

⁹ http://titaberger.blogspot.com/2013_01_01_archive.html

¹⁰ The post on Lozen was a very lengthy post. If it was paper that was double-spaced in 12 point Tine New Roman font, it would run over 10 pages. It was read by more than 100 people in three days. I had so many conversations about Lozen and the Apache in the weeks following the post I lost count. This was the only time I posted anything about my research that created any sustained interest or generated feedback. I had a handful of very committed readers, but this post was reposted several times. People talked I did not know talked to me about the Apache and Lozen.

¹¹ At the time, Hudnall had a conservative talk radio show out of El Paso that combined elements of a conservative talk show format with a dash of conspiracy theories and conjecture on paranormal activity. Kenhudnall.com is the Internet home of the Ken Hudnall Show, which is in its 23rd year on the air. Starting out with a one-hour show on KORG AM in Anaheim, Calif., Ken has grown the show to three hours per night. With a content that consists of interviews, stories of the strange told by Ken, and news/current events, there is something for everyone. The Ken Hudnall Show is heard around the world and has a large listening audience in almost every English-speaking country. The guest list has ranged from such notables as Jesse Ventura, to Mary Higgins Clark, Karna Small Bodman, Stanton Freidman, and Zacharia Sitchin. It is also the platform for the release and sale of Hudnall’s 62 books.

¹² Ball’s belief that important history was being ignored and that Apache stories needed to be recorded before they were lost is mentioned in all of her biographies. Ball never argued that First Nations were vanishing. She regularly attended dances and events that by all accounts represented a thriving cultural landscape. She did seek to gather stories of people who lived in the region prior to American colonization. All of the biographies on Ball’s work note that her use of oral histories to write historical accounts predated the general acceptance by historians as a legitimate method. In this respect, Ball’s histories are incredible feats. They are the first interviews and historical accounts from the Apache viewpoint. It was Ball who first wrote about Lozen, who she learned about through her interviews. The first accounts seemed to come from Asa Duklugie, who talked to Ball only after being asked for many years and at the urging of his wife, who was Ball’s friend. It is recorded that Ball often got groups of woman together to help her translate her notes. She was trained in shorthand, so appeared to be well-suited to oral history recording. Duklugie was the son of Juh, chief of the Nednhi Apache. Juh lived and fought after Victorio. Duklugie was also the interpreter for Geronimo between 1905-1906, as Geronimo recounted his life to Col. S. M. Barret for the as-told-to autobiography, *Geronimo: His Own Story* (1906). The text of this book is provocative in its personal and first-person narrative form. It is also starkly different from any historical and anthropological accounts previously written. Apache history is generally full of archival detail of military campaigns and dates, taken from archives written by military men, newspaper men, and the occasional settler. Duklugie initially mentioned Lozen in a battle story, according to Ball. Lozen was identified as Chief Victorio’s sister who, with a man identified as Sanchez, “swooped down on the (US army) horse herd and drove a bunch off” during an exchange of gunfire (54). The battle and participants Duklugie referred to were well-documented by traditional archival sources. Duklugie said that after he became a scout, he read American books on the same battle in order to compare the American and Apache versions. The next mention of Lozen occurred in a chapter on Apache religion under a “Power” subheading. Power was described by Ball as the “mysterious, intangible attribute,” that “was, even above his courage, the most valuable attribute of a chief” (61). It was a male-only passage until Lozen appeared. Duklugie was quoted as saying, “Victorio’s sister, Lozen, was famous for her Power. She could locate the enemy and even tell how far it was. Many of the old Apaches today are convinced that,

had she been with Victorio at Tres Castillos, there would have been no ambush" (62), he is quoted as saying. Charlie Smith, whose father was a Chiricahua scout at Fort Stanton, also talked about Lozen to Ball. Smith said, "Lozen, sister of Victorio, was called the Woman Warrior," who may have not been as strong as the men but was as "good as any of them" (103). Other sources for Lozen's history in Eve Ball's accounts came from Apache scouts Martine and Kayitah, who were implicated in Geronimo's final surrender. Included in Ball's text was a transcript of an interview of these men given to an unnamed visitor. This was a separate account, then, than those recorded by Ball, but was included in her writing. The account was about Lozen and another Apache woman. "The two Indian women who were there were Mrs. Hugh Coonie," the transcripts read, "and Lozen who is dead now" (107). Geronimo's nephew, Jasper Kanseah, gave testimony about Lozen in Ball's text. Lozen was said to be part of Geronimo's band, mentioned with other warriors and separate from "women and children who must be defended and fed" (110). Recalling the warriors assembled with Geronimo, Kanseah claimed that "Lozen, too, was with the men" (111). Eugene Chihuahua, son of Apache Chief Chihuahua, mentioned Lozen's death from coughing sickness at Mt. Vernon. The last mention of Lozen in Ball's text was a retraction in a footnote about the claim that Lozen was married, having been mistaken for another Lozen. Ball's oral histories were the foundation for nearly every popular and academic account of Lozen that followed.

¹³ Historian H. Henrietta Stockel was one of the figures at the center of the academic debate over Lozen. She has a dozen published works on Apache culture and history to her credit. Nine deal specifically with Chiricahua Apache history and culture. Her work compiling biographies and source material about the Apache is also expansive. She discussed the tensions between oral and written narratives often, not surprising given her scholarship. A chapter on Chiricahua in *Salvation Through Slavery: Chiricahua Apaches and Priests on the Spanish Colonial Frontier* (2008), for example, noted that oral history was one of the oldest forms of reproducing history. She highlighted conflicting historical accounts of western scholars concerning the date of the Apache migration to the Southwest region. Stockel provided a series of optimistic speculation about friendships, kinship ties, possible cultural arrangements, and events in the unrecorded journey to the Southwest. She conceded that she had found no collaboration about her conjecture. It is not hard to imagine why this would be vexing to historians. Stockel built this historical argument, however, in order to consider the role of Apache legend and myth. She argued that historical legends and creation myths do not warrant the same standard of academic proof that historical, archaeological, or geological records do. The role of legends is to "communicate and explain; they satisfy and interpret" and as such they do not "have to be logical or similar," nor do "they do not require evidence" (8). Legends and creation myths are narratives that pass on tribal heritage. They are stories that "live in the hearts and minds of people and are testimony to the enduring power of language to mold and shape belief" (8). They do still count as an important part history, and in the scramble to assemble empirical evidence, we lose the power of history and the role it plays in identity and community. Stockel entered many conversations at once in this passage about culture, knowledge, access and methods, the role of history, and the celebration of a masculine militarized history. The narrative Stockel produced in her own book about Lozen came from Ball's notes and interviews. Stockel claimed that "Lozen is herself the most familiar and the woman herself surely the most intriguing" of Apache woman warriors, before conceding that scholars have spent "years trying unsuccessfully to learn more" about Lozen, to little avail (70).

¹⁴ Dunway quoted the historian directly, although he did not name him.

¹⁵ This story brings up huge issues about veracity and ethnographic authority in New Mexico. The story shocked and delighted me, and saddened me too, but seems to have had little impact on Apache scholarship.

¹⁶ The site invites visitors to learn about the tribe. “The Mescalero Apache Tribe welcomes you to familiarize yourself with our history, traditions, and the current vision of our Tribe...”
<http://mescaleroapachetribe.com/our-culture/>

¹⁷ There are two additional accounts of tension between scholars central to the Lozen debate that illuminate the ideas of historical vacancies. Retired accountant Edwin R. Sweeney’s *From Cochise to Geronimo: the Chiricahua Apaches, 1874-1886* (2010) is a sweeping historical narrative runs more than 700 pages. The chronological narrative concentrated on names, dates, numbers, weapons, routes, raids, and battles. Sweeney’s archive-driven narrative recounts a fearsome history of brutality and treachery. The pages of this tome painstakingly document how misunderstandings, political savagery, and a bloodlust marked U.S. and Apache relations. Violence flowed from both sides throughout this history, although in the final battles with the U.S. nation, the Apaches were outnumbered sometimes 1,000 to 1 or more. The war between an emergent empire and a loosely knit band of tribes still captures the nation, a fact that I became intimately aware of in my fieldwork. Sweeney’s narrative attempted to incorporate Apache accounts but does so sparingly. The record is sparse for such a traditional historical account. But there is still a persistent tone in the text that celebrates the idea of objective history, even if the sources are American and Mexican soldiers, governments, and anti-Apache citizens. Apache were fearsome warriors and deft raiders who committed atrocities. This was well-documented by Spanish, Mexican, and American accounts. Those accounts centered on retaliation, settlement, protection, and national honor and did not capture the ruthlessly homicidal dealings from colonial powers with the same aplomb. Sweeney did not seek to craft a deeper understanding of the cultural, political, economic, and other forces that shaped either this history or its archives, but this archival labor and attention to detail is obvious. Henrietta Stockel wrote about the omission of Lozen from this 700-page history. Published in the *Journal of the West* directly after the publication of Sweeney’s tome, the article spoke to the current state of the conversation in scholarly circles. Stockel’s *Lozen—Oral History, Oral Tradition, Selections and Omissions: A Debate* (2010) took umbrage with Sweeney’s conclusions about Lozen. She wrote that in “this 700+ page volume, by claiming ‘skepticism,’ he (Sweeney) ultimately denies the accepted achievements of the warrior woman Lozen” (3). This was despite witness testimony that refuted Sweeney’s conclusion that Lozen was neither present nor active in any of these exclusively male histories, Sweeney wrote. This was a “history written only by the victors” (3). Stockel said she was “intrigued by Sweeney’s regressive approach” (3). Sweeney used the archival records of anthropologist Morris Opler (1907-1996). Opler’s ethnographic work with Mescalero Apache was part of the early canon of Apache studies in the Southwest. Sweeney cited Opler’s claim, in a footnote, that the “Chiricahau raid and war complex was normally a male enterprise” and “despite repeated efforts I could not uncover instances of Chiricahua women who joined war parties” (Sweeney, 615fn). Sweeney claimed it had “become fashionable” to place Lozen at these battles (615 fn). Stockel took umbrage, claiming that Sweeney mistook oral history for oral tradition and placed far too great a trust in a man who was not, perhaps, as well-trusted as Sweeney’s deference suggested. Sweeney did seem to dismiss Lozen outright because “all of her exploits originate with Eve Ball” (659fn). Stockel scathingly replied that Ball might have been the first to talk about Lozen claims, but Lozen originated with the oral histories Ball recorded, not Ball with herself. Sweeney, in a footnote that ran from the middle of page 659 to the top of page 661, defended his choice, which he obviously recognized would come under attack. In the past 40 years, he wrote, Lozen had become a “legendary icon as a woman warrior,” with a “spate of hagiographical books and articles extolling her achievements as a warrior, her supernatural powers and her clairvoyant powers” (659fn). Sweeney conceded that it was conceivable that Lozen accompanied Victorio between 1879 and 1880. “From this point forward,” Sweeney wrote, “she remained on the reservation” (559fn). Sweeney disregarded Ball’s histories about Lozen because there was not enough historical evidence, or the evidence was considered suspect, yet Sweeney brazenly asserted Lozen’s location with no evidence at all. “No Cheyenne were with Geronimo at the final surrender,” he also asserted, noting the surrender photograph (660fn) but making no reference to the party that was with Geronimo. O. K. Davis notes in *Our Prisoners of War*, published in 1912 in the *The North American Review*, that women and children, one only a year old, were among

the 30 others who were captured with Geronimo in 1886. None were in the famed surrender photograph, and only a few were seen in also well-known train photograph. Sweeney talked about the probable misidentification of Lozen in an iconic train photograph of those who were captured with Geronimo, based on other oral histories. Sweeney noted that “even contemporary Chiricahua’s and Americans fail to mention her” (660fn). “Now I am not suggesting that Lozen was a figment of someone’s imagination,” he said. In the National Archives, Register of Indian Prisoners at Mount Vernon, a note dated June 17, 1889, reads “female Lozen died” (660fn). This was, he said, the only evidence that could be ascertained. Stockel also asserted that Sweeney’s “backward stance and implicit gender language is bewildering and worrisome” and that Sweeney’s “silence as proof” diminished more than oral traditions and oral history; it drove the discipline backwards when “male Anglo-Europeans considered themselves to be supreme authorities and wrote what they pleased about Native Americans” (8). Stockel claimed that Sweeney seem to preferred “omissions in Osler’s interviews to first person declarations” (Stockel, 6) and that he relied on newspaper archives, an “inappropriate reliance,” that Sweeney claimed was odd, given his “respected mentor’s (Dan Tharp) learned opinion about newspapers of that era” as untrustworthy (6). “It is a given” Stockel wrote, “that rumors, hearsay and sensationalism often compromised hyperbolic exclamations” about Apache (7). The news stories of the time were prone to heady sentiment, evident by even the most casual perusal of news accounts. She took Sweeney to task for rejecting the historical memory of Lozen’s nephew because he was a boy of 3 or 4 when the events he narrated took place. It was not his memory as a boy the man drew on, she argued, but a traditional of oral history derived from a cultural training not many people could grasp. Ball made this point numerous times, recalling her astonishment at the skill her Warm Spring interviewees displayed in recollection. It was a skill that she marked as bordering on unbelievable. To merely consider the landscape maps Warm Spring and other Apache kept in their heads was an awesome feat. Compare this store of knowledge to a smart phone population that can hardly find an address in a gridded city. In addition, there was a 27 year-long period of captivity in military forts as prisoners of war, during which historical accounts, while not written down, were most certainly shared.

¹⁸ Sherry Robinson began her narrative in *Apache Voices: Their Stories of Survival as Told to Eve Ball* (2002) by recounting her desire to “write about Victorio’s sister Lozen, the woman warrior” (Robinson 2002, xi). She looked to Eve Ball’s papers, 17 boxes of unsorted notes in poor condition, which she sorted and pieced together. She listed several issues with the archives as they related to Apache history and the story of Lozen. Ball, a teacher, wrote in a style that was “first person and somewhat fictionalized,” as well as dramatized (xiii). A fellow scholar told Robinson that in history, “you cannot invent, say, conversation, facial expression, weather—not anything” because what results would be “not history, but excellent historical fiction” (xiii). As a journalist, Robinson said that Ball’s dramatic history caused her concern and that Ball’s “penchant for sprucing up her friends speech” was troubling. Robinson also noted that Ball’s mixing of history and anthropology “annoys the academics” (xiv). Robinson reminded those who claimed Lozen was merely a myth of the fact that that Lozen would be the first myth to die as a prisoner of war. She ventured to say that the events recounted by Ball were dramatized but were well corroborated in Ball’s interviews. While it was true that “esteemed Apache scholar Morris Opler never wrote of this woman warrior or recalled that his informants had mentioned her,” Robinson claimed that this did not seem uncommon, given his interests and furthermore did not discount Ball’s accounts (xiv). Opler was distant from his Apache subjects, Robinson argued. Ball, in contrast, earned their trust and lived a life on the outskirts of their community. Robinson relied extensively on Eve Ball’s archives and interviews, but her footnotes evidence a handful of different efforts to confirm her accounts, as well as a few additional sources of oral narratives. It was a review of Robinson’s work that caught my attention as I considered this history in the context of historical vacancies, place imaginaries, and the region. “Never have I encountered a book that is as difficult to review as this one,” wrote Claire R. Farrer, when she was at the California State University at Chico, in 2002 (Farrer 2002, 131). Farrer was best known for her ethnographic work on the Mescalero Reservation in Southern New Mexico. I personally found Farrer’s anthropological accounts unsettlingly and disturbingly full of what I can only describe as nativist longing.

Farrer noted that Ball had vision problems, which was known. “I suspect,” she added, although she did not include the reason for her suspicion, “hearing problems as well” (131). For someone who was offering a scathing critique about proof to throw out a comment like this, of which I found no other mention, anywhere, seems suspect and disingenuous. Robinson acknowledged in her introduction that Ball’s style, “first person and somewhat fictionalized,” was “problematic” (p. xii). “Indeed!” wrote Farrer, who said that “rather than problematic, Apachean scholars call it virtually useless” (134). Many Apachean scholars used Ball’s work extensively, unique in its time, despite its flaws, so I can only assume they did not find it virtually useless. “Unfortunately,” Farrer wrote, “most of those who spoke to Ball were the displaced Apaches . . . the survivors and children of the so-called Ft. Sills, or Chiricahua, Apaches, along with a few Warm Springs Apaches, who had been rounded up at the time of the final surrender of Geronimo in the 1880s” (134). Why this was unfortunate is unclear. Farrer then made a leap of historical fancy that was beyond anything I read in Ball. She wrote that after a 27-year incarceration-status as POWs, “they had many truly sad stories to tell and virtually no one to listen to them, but Ball. And she wrote what she heard—more or less” (134). To equate the first-hand accounts of the family and community massacres and almost three decades of POW status with “truly sad stories” that “no one will listen to” is a leveling claim. Who is “no one?” I would use other language in a different setting. Ball’s translations, as noted in a previous footnote, were known to be products of collaborative transcription from a group of Apache women and other friends and acquaintances from the shorthand Ball used—not tape to be sure, but insofar as written field notes was not a bad method by any stretch. Farrer noted other historical inaccuracies that should have been remedied with other records. “If this is history,” she wrote, “then none of us can trust any historical document and we may as well dismiss journalists as well” (134). To use Professor Farrer’s own word: indeed.

¹⁹ The the immensity of historical narratives, including digital narratives is daunting. There is a nation of self-styled historians, commentators, and other interested parties who practice this craft of historical sleuthing and craft historical narratives.

²⁰ There is not a single mention of a confederate lover, but I expect it will join the digital universe in time.

²¹ Her comment about Lozen being a lesbian reminded me of a Native Out website that celebrates Lozen as a “two spirit” or a “male-bodied or female-bodied person with a masculine or feminine essence” who can “cross social gender roles, gender expression, and sexual orientation.”
<http://nativeout.com/twospirit-rc/two-spirit-101/historical-two-spirits/>

²² <http://www.azstronghold.com>.

²³ This included the partnership with Neil Greg of Hot Springs Land Development, who has since left the area. A few of my interviewees know something of the town or regional history.

²⁴ Kristi Moya. “El Espíritu de la Cañada Alamosa. Monticello Messenger. July 2002. The narrative that begins the story, made up of photographs and quotes, reads, “A 4x4 raiding party hit Cañada Alamosa on June 22. The convoy was made up of 55 rugged vehicles and over 100 people. More than half were Veterans and Soldiers from Fort Bliss ... the following comments are reactions and statements of purpose for this present time mode of cross country trekking through the last of the wild wild Southwest” (6).

²⁵ *New York Times*, Travel Section. Oct. 3, 2008, page 5.

²⁶ He added that Fletcher was overzealous in her demands for proof. In my head, I countered that it was very unlikely that Geronimo would travel such a long distance to soak in the one or two hot mineral springs and mud pools that were around before the 1907 shift in the river uncovered the majority of the current sites of the bathhouses. Geronimo’s local place was at the far end of Alamosa Canyon. There is a

beautiful warm spring associated with his group, which is a couple of hours away by car, much less by foot or horseback. But this was in my head. I had no desire to start any conflict.

²⁷ Hot Springs National Park is a United States National Park created by an act of the United States Congress on April 20, 1832. It represented the first time land had been set aside by the federal government, 40 years before the first national parks were established. This attests to the power and regard for mineral healing in the early 1800s.

²⁸ Deloria also critiqued the singularity of anthropological, historical, archaeological, or other Western understandings of time as linear. This led Western history to its value-laden claims of progress. Past people, the object of study in this chronology, are not part of the present. Deloria claimed that Native American ideas of past, present, and future were often subsumed into a present understanding and thus often would reject an academically generated past. There are profound connections between landscapes and individual Native American groups, but the ways they have been characterized reflect the biases and bigotry of a Western worldview.

²⁹ The wounds are a jarring element in this narrative. This allows the imaginary that First Nation people were essentially warlike to persist. The sacred springs were designated natural hospitals for tribes—the sacred place they could heal after returning from the warpath. The brutal histories between the Spanish and First Nations were not present in sacred spring’s narratives. There is, instead, a romanticized version of contact at the springs. In the most common narrative, Spanish conquistadors are shown springs by ubiquitous local tribes or tribal chiefs. There is a sentimental and romantic sense of resignation and defeat. Local First Nations, realizing they had been vanquished, shared their most sacred sites with the violent colonizing Spanish. Against murder, enslavement and genocide is this last gesture, a healing moment where everyone could lay their weapons. In this moment, a new identity was forged and also made historically legitimate in a particular place.

³⁰ Ron Cockrell (2000), a NPS regional director, drew on Hot Springs National Park as an example of both issues of veracity as well as issues of interpretation in the voluminous writings and remembrances of longtime director Horace Albright. In response to comments by Albright that Hot Springs never seemed like a national park, Cockrell reflects that these comments were more reflective of an “anti-Hot Springs bias . . . characteristic of the post-World War II era.”

³¹ John Nieto-Phillips, in *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish American Identity in New Mexico 1880-1930s* (2004), notes how the popular press created a quixotic version of the “Spanish Southwest,” bolstered by “novels, history texts, travel journals, and tourist brochures make known the Spanish History . . . where one could witness firsthand the last vestiges of Indian tradition and Spanish chivalry” (Nieto-Phillips 2004, 151).

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Native_Americans_and_hot_springs

³³ Lund wrote several papers on mineral springs, easily accessible online. The GHC is the at the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) in Klamath Falls. Lund is professor emeritus of civil engineering and co-founder and director of the GHC. The Wikipedia entry is linked to a paper first presented at the 1995 World Geothermal Congress in Florence, Italy. I looked at the sources cited in the bulletin paper and consulted the text *Ancient Native Americans* (1978), edited by Jesse D. Jennings. This sprawling collection accounted for six of the 15 texts Lund lists in the bibliography. I consulted the book-cited article, written by regional archaeological and anthropological experts. None cited any direct or even circumstantial evidence of First Nation use or regard of hot springs. Only the vaguest proximities were mentioned. Lund also cited historical society publications, early geological survey publications, and resort publications Lund cited the fountain-of-youth narrative from Arkansas Hot Springs. He used the statue found at the

Arkansas Hot Springs as one of his illustrations. This statue, installed in the men's bathhouse in 1916, is of a young Native American girl kneeling in front of a conquistador and offering spring water in an animal shaped bowl. Many visitors to the springs have posted pictures online of the statue from behind, which make it appear that a sexual act is being performed. As Blaeuer noted in his Hot Springs text, the statue probably "resonated" with bath growers because "it incorporated early twentieth century race and gender stereotypes" (Blaeuer 2007, 25). Lund claimed his sources were legends passed down in oral history as well as those recorded by early European settlers, but he sources only oral traditions the recount other oral traditions supposedly uttered by early settlers. Lund use archaeological evidence of the proximity to First Nations, a criteria that essentially covered the whole continent.

³⁴ <http://pagosa.com/pagosa-hot-springs/>

³⁵ Theriot, Jodie, and Bracken Alaine (2011). "Hot Springs Have Long History" *El Paso Community College Borderlands*. <http://epcc.libguides.com/borderlands>.

³⁶ *Silver City Sun-News*. Aug. 18, 2010, page 6.

³⁷ The place history titled "*Truth or Consequences*," has no author, which is typical of the tourist magazines and guides in the region. *Old West Country* is a supplement to New Mexico Traveler's *Old West Trails*. 2005-2006, 11. www.oldwestcountry.com.

³⁸ *The Chaparral Free Guide*. April 2012, page 12.

³⁹ <http://www.riverbendhotsprings.com>.

⁴⁰ <http://www.sierragrandelodge.com>.

⁴¹ <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nmscgs2/TorC.html>.

⁴² <http://www.mothershipyogalounge.com/about%20t%20or%20c.html>.

⁴³ <http://www.nwnews.com/index.php/feature/travel/9256-truth-or-consequences-a-tale-of-geronimo-hot-springs-and-hollywood>. March 10, 2014.

⁴⁴ <https://onthegowithpatty.wordpress.com/2014/06/28/hello-there-weve-been-waiting-for-you-its-time-to-play/>.

⁴⁵ <https://www.newmexico.org/true-relaxation/#article80907>

⁴⁶ <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2007/12/truthorconsequences200712>.

Chapter 5: Modern Place Paradoxes and the Ambiguity of T or C

The division between what is past and what is ahead defines the modern according to Bruno Latour, a French philosopher and sociologist of science. As he remarks in *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993), modernity comes in endless versions, “yet all its definitions point, in one way or another, to the passage of time” (Latour 1993, 10). We use the adjective modern, he claims, to define “an acceleration, a rupture, a revolution in time,” against which an “archaic and past” can be defined. Additionally, he says, the word modern denotes winners and losers, victors and vanquished. Latour argues that the troubled use of modern in contemporary debate arises because “we can no longer point to time’s irreversible arrow, nor can we award a prize to the winners” (10). This idea of being at the defining horizon of the modern is a characteristic feature of the town of Truth or Consequences. Yet the idea that the modern is always arriving, but never arrived, is also part of historical and contemporary narratives in town. There is also a decidedly elusive quality to the place character in Truth or Consequences, which I argue is connected to the ways that the place character of T or C reflects the paradox of modern places.

These points speak to several key theoretical ideas that I advance in my investigation of the town’s place meaning and place identity and consider over two years of place ethnographic fieldwork. The first and most important is the contradictions and tensions that are common to the place narratives and identities of the town and surrounding area. I refer to these contradictions and tensions as place paradoxes. Place paradoxes are defined as place qualities that are contrary to expectations, existing belief

or perceived opinion. Place paradoxes are features and qualities of place that are inconsistent, incompatible, or opposed. This is not the simple fact of complexity or multiplicity; place paradoxes are defined by the seemingly incompatible, inconsistent or contradictory elements that exist simultaneously in a place. I begin this chapter with an introduction to some of the paradoxes that define the identity and character of the town.

The return to place, as an idea, a movement and a study, makes sense against as a way to push back the contradictions, paradoxes and confusion of the newest modern. As cultural geographer Edward Soja (1996) suggests, the reengagement of place is also a way to challenge modernity. It is not merely scale, but is also the concreteness of place when set against the abstraction of the modern, or the nation or region. This is what Henry Lefebvre (1991) means when he talks about the lived experience of place way to escape the often abstract and dehumanizing expressions of a modern space. The” critique of everyday life,” Lefebvre writes, “will involve a methodological confrontation of so-called modern life, with the past, on the other—and above all—with *the possible...*” (Lefebvre 1991, 251).

So Modern Yesterday, and Other Common Place Paradoxes

A German couple in 2012 tells me they love the very small historical places in America.

They are so modern yesterday, says the wife, with great enthusiasm. This phrase perfectly captures the paradoxes evident in this turn of the 19th century town at the turn of the 20th century, whose striving to the newest modern is character defining. What does it mean to be so modern yesterday? Place is a generative site to explore paradoxes and contradictions of the modern in its continual reiteration. The regional narratives emerging with reclamation were grafted onto a very crowded imaginary at the turn of the century. This new modern landscape embodied conquest and colonialism of a different sort than

the military imperialism of the previous decades. Modern landscapes would be remade by the forces of industrial and agrarian capitalism. Rational and scientific landscapes would emerge. There was a mournful lament about loss, of both people and places, in these narratives.

The paradox of the modern, captured in the town and small region, is that it never arrives, even as it is noted as departing without leaving the promised riches and rewards. The modern, illustrated in the town and small region, changes everything and nothing. It is the idea that nothing will ever be the same even as it stays the same. One of my participants thinks the town is appealing because it reminds people of a world that still made sense, the world before WWII. Modern was agriculture was still agriculture. After the war, and the atomic bomb, the world did not make sense in the same way. He talks about the movement of people after the war, and the ways some people are trying moving back (T., July 26, 2012).

5.1 Place, Paradox and Persistent Patterns

Place paradoxes are evident today in ways that Truth or Consequences is imagined by residents, as both removed from the larger current of a fast-paced global outside world, and simultaneously ahead of that current. The place character of the town and region emerged from the paradoxical narratives of reclamation. These narratives created persistent regional imaginaries about a future that would arrive, with the reclaimed waters, and remake the landscape. These narratives created persistent regional imaginaries that obscured the massive government presence in public land ownership and management and created a dominant regional imaginary of self-sufficiency. These narratives created persistent regional imaginaries about vacancies in peopled landscapes, while simultaneously asserting that the First Nation and other people in the landscape

illustrated the potential to irrigate and settle, but that these prior settlements and lifeways would vanish with the arrival of the new modern world.

These paradoxes emerged into the contemporary landscapes. They were evident in ideas expressed by rural populations, aware and often suspicious of a massive government presence in Sierra County in public land ownership, but also aware of the revenues, services and access that public lands created. Many people I interviewed who counted themselves as part of the rural population were strongly assured of their place in the modern world. The paradoxes emerged as newcomers to the region lamented vanishing “traditional” rural lifestyles. Meanwhile, many in town population sought to build a solid place character and assert strong place identities, but often by asserting allegiance to an imagined future or fictional past.

Paradoxes are found in how newcomers to the town held certain ideas about locals. Many newcomers said they came because recognized the town’s rare attributes, its uniqueness. While this often included affordability, it was overwhelmingly a vision based on the town’s future potential. Widespread poverty was recognized, but often casted as choice, either by virtue of not leaving if the poor were local, or as a lifestyle choice embraced as part of an individual’s arrival to the town. There was a particular kind of pity coming from the new residents directed at people born and raised in the town. It was rarely articulated but present nevertheless. People who never left home were rarely included in the modern claim to the town as a unique place full of potential. Yet the local population asserted the strongest and most stable claim to place and identity, repeatedly articulated in kinship, historical and personal narratives, but rarely in celebratory claims about the town as an up-and-coming place.

The notion that certain groups belong to this modern world while others do not was a persistent place paradox. To exist in the same time and place meant a shared place and time frame, yet many new residents characterized established residents as belonging to another time and place. People also referenced themselves in this way, as not belonging to this time and place. The modern, as a place, is both a place quality and is an idea about places. It is real, existing and evident in the contemporary moment, and not real because it is can be deferred or denied. I also wondered how much of the modern was held in tension by the history of mineral waters as miraculous healing places, a narrative overthrown by the advent of modern medicine and quickly decried by empiricists. This was manifested in paradoxical ways as well, both as a claim to ancient or traditional healing techniques, or as a cure for the modern world.

At the turn of the 19th Century, the new modern world was based on science and expertise. Western conservation efforts demanded large-scale public works. The idea that places and practices were being lost to the modern became a defining narrative of all strands of the conservation movement. Efforts to preserve tradition or the use of traditional methods were cast in the shadow of the past—outside of the new the modern. In the contemporary moment, traditional practices are being celebrated as the cutting edge of modern. The modern world is said to be killing both people and places. In keeping with the newest iteration of the modern, people and places are looking to the past to reclaim their vitality. There is a paradox in back-to-the-land movements popularized by cultured hipsters who embrace all things local and celebrate finely crafted hand-wrought local goods, who abandon urban lifestyle and recount their every move online, and a rural population that still practice many subsistence lifeways but embraces the

access to goods found at Walmart. This desire to be rooted and live sustainably in place intersects with the ways people who are rooted live in place.

Truth or Consequences' shifting and capricious place character is often blamed on the mid-20th Century name change. The name change is another example of the modern paradox in the contemporary moment. I take up these ideas in my conclusion, including my review of a book on urban homesteading written by a couple who moved to T or C as an experiment in a postmodern, going-back-to-the-land narrative. The idea that agricultural programs in rural America are somehow representative of an idyllic past is a common sentiment.

Reclamation was meant to herald the modern both as a technological and scientific control of nature and as a testament to the power of the nation and the power of man over nature. The lawless mining camps and wild frontier would be settled by agriculture, and reclamation would further render the landscape amenable to control. It is a central idea in the colonial imaginary of place—landscapes with ageless signs of settlement that are curiously and easily imagined as both empty and open to new settlement and full of souls to be claimed into the modern. Latour says that Native Americans' accusation that white people have forked tongues is a fair assessment. By separating “relations of political power from the relations of scientific reasoning while continuing to shore up power with reason and reason with power, the moderns have always had two irons in the fire” (38).

I was struck by a shared agreement that emerged in my interviews. There was an uneasy tension between modern methods and traditional approaches that was strikingly similar to ideas about conservation and preservation that emerged at the turn of the

nineteenth century. The idea that knowledge about place used to come from working the land and from a shared resource pool is common—talking to your neighbors, in other words, and learning from others as part of your work, and learning from experience. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the new modern expertise was based on science. Conservation efforts demanded large-scale public works and massive bureaucracies of experts, meant to create a nation of small farmsteads that embraces agricultural modernity. Today, the internet often stands in for the neighbor, making talking over the fence a global phenomenon. Paradoxically, the digital age has seen an explosion of sites that celebrate traditional methods.

Similarly, today there are many versions of what a turn of the century world modern will look like. These are captured in a live-small movements currently popularized by hipsters, rather than hippies, in the center of T or C, who I characterize as off-grid and on-line. There is a return to self-healing and a small revival in bathhouse restoration, a migrant landscape, where communities are fluid and seasonal or short term, living small by forced choice. The newest modern is also captured in the massive eco-tourism ranches owned and operated by Turner Enterprises, a company which also owns the finest remodeled bathhouse in the town, and the promise of nearby Spaceport America. In scale and imaginary, these movements reflect well-established historical patterns.

The idea about what kind of knowledge people need in the contemporary world is part of this conversation in town. It is also a dialogue of haves and have-nots. The have-nots are often cast as similar to squatters in some ways, a characterization both positive and negative—positive in the sense of making do with little and remaining free from the

burdens of modern life, negative in the idea that making do with little leaves most people ill-equipped to thrive in modern society. It is a narrative about a level of self-sufficiency that is hardscrabble and sometimes just plain hard, simultaneously admired and disparaged, depending on how it is cast. There is a celebration of global information network and open-sources technological gadgets that mimic old-tools and methods. There is a celebration of holistic healing. There is a nod to the scientific management, scale and wealth necessary to restore fragile but robust arid ecosystems.

Livelihood in Truth or Consequences

Place as position is a theme I am using to understand two different but closely related ideas of place position that emerge in the field. The first is position as economic standing. The second is position as geographical centering. Economic standing is the most prominent expression of place ranking and measurement. Economic standing is one of the most fundamental ways that place as social standing is established. Truth or Consequences is a poor town. New Mexico is a poor state. Poverty was expressed in a multitude of ways during my fieldwork, but so was wealth. Position as geographical centering is how the center and periphery are imagined and negotiated. I begin with an assessment of the economic conditions of the town and a consideration of economics in the town before moving to the rural peripheral core.

The town is a poor town, but, like most other things in T or C, poverty is cast in many different ways. Several views on place poverty in the town and county coalesced in interviews and observation. Poverty is linked with national and global economic systems in interesting ways, as a reason why people move or don't move. It is cast or as a general malady, a hard-all-over mentality. The increasing power of the federal or even world government was mentioned a few times. People mentioned chronic poverty, and the lack

of opportunity and role modeling available for young people. I also see patterns in the experiences that people talk about most frequently when they talk about money that coalesce around being uprooted by losing a job or a relationship. People talk about losing their way or never having a way to follow. People talk about wealth as separate from economics, but this narrative often obscures the ways the periphery and core of economic systems are not chosen.

The public sector is the largest employer in Truth or Consequences, with Sierra County, the City of Truth or Consequences, and the Truth or Consequences school district employing between 100 and 200 people each. The health care industry also employs a large number of people in Truth or Consequences with the Sierra Health Care System, the NM State Veterans' Home and Sierra Vista Hospital each employing 100-200 people. Other medium-scale employers include restaurants, hotels and grocery stores. Data also indicate that none of the major employers in Truth or Consequences represent the manufacturing sector. The primary source of Municipal and County revenues is gross receipts from spending at local businesses.¹

Musings about why money is so scarce in this area also tend to coalesce around a few key ideas. The first is competition. Competition for funds has increased while available money has decreased, that the need for basic services is set against shrinking budgets. The second is that the decrease in revenue has to do with a reliance on tourism rather than industry in the town. Tourism and public sector jobs are the only industries in town. This is coupled with the broader idea that things are hard all over—that manufacturing and other base industries that build strong economic bases are absent. The third idea concerns the specific geography of New Mexico, and of Sierra County, and of

Truth or Consequences. New Mexico is the second poorest state in the country after Mississippi. Census figures showed the median income in New Mexico was \$43,872 in 2014, compared to a national median income of \$52,250, with 21.9% of New Mexico residents lived in poverty in 2013, compared to the national rate of 15.8%. The median household income in Truth or Consequences was \$21,862. Per capita income in Truth or Consequences is \$13,673, compared to \$16,667 in Sierra County and \$22,966 in the state. The median value of a home in T or C was \$83,000 versus a statewide median value of \$160,000. The rate of bachelor's degrees or higher is 21% in Sierra County, versus 26% in New Mexico. In the town of T or C the percentage with a college degree or higher is reported to be 16%.

A notable difference that sets Truth or Consequences apart economically is the low percentage of income coming from earnings, which is 46%. The number of people who are 65 or older is startling, at 29% versus 13% for the state. A greater percentage of household income is coming from Social Security and retirement income. The report also highlights the higher percentage of Truth or Consequences households receiving food stamps/SNAP benefits at 18.6% versus 12.3% for Sierra County and 10.0% for the state.² Compared to 15% the nation as a whole, over 50% of single people in the town had an income less than \$20,000.³ Other income brackets are more comparable, with almost 20% of people earning \$20-\$30,000, compared to 10% of the nation. The next \$10,000 increments are steady between the nation and the town, with each comprised of roughly 10% of the population. At \$60-\$70,000, however, the numbers in town fall to 3%, compared to a steady 10% for the nation.

The town's poverty level is among the highest in New Mexico, but many in the town rejects this identifier as a poor place. The town character is cast in other narratives. The affordability of Truth or C was a dominant theme in my interviews, as were ideas that economic necessity forced people back, brought them in, or kept them in town. Affordable was a keyword in many of the marketing materials of the town. The idea that the town has always been poor is connected idea was that the key industry, mineral water healing, had always attracted people who did not have the money for other services. If everyone is poor, it is not so noticeable I hear often.

People, for example, who are living as America's newest migrant landscapes travel to both increase the quality of life. They wear the badge of choosing quality of life over more traditional economic stability proudly. Others in American newest migrant landscapes are not there by choice. I talk to younger people who want to leave but do not have the means, skills or support network to go other places. Former residents come back so their kids can have a quality of life with family as the marker. A few people I talk to do not want to be seen as down and out in their old communities, and judged in other places. It is both easier and harder to be poor in familiar places. There are many nuances to livelihoods in town.

5.2 Rural Histories, Livelihoods and Public Land

Place was most frequently defined by participants in the language of physical, geographical places. This is a default category—the mapping of places onto a geographical landscape. I carried several map with my during my fieldwork, ranging from atlases to local tourist maps. The map I used most frequently was the basic street map torn out of the phonebook before it was recycled. I got a lot of grief for my old fashioned map, but it was easier to share and work from in person than a phone or google

map (see Appendix 1, Figure 29, page 390). The infrastructure of land ownership in the county reflects some of the deepest patterns geographical, physical, economic, and material established in American regional colonization. Reclamation is the hidden narrative of Western regional modernity. It was the infrastructure meant to create modern places. Land has long been understood as colonial infrastructure (Said 1978; Harvey 1973, 1990; Anderson 1999).⁴ This is the infrastructure that allows nation to form, founding the patterns of the places above and systems of organizations. Considering place as infrastructure, and infrastructure public land, made sense of a lot of the place ethnographic field experience and observations.

A discussion of public lands brings many place paradoxes to the surface. Most interviews were easily connected to the public lands in the region. The reference to the wide-open spaces is made constantly by newcomers and life-long residents. The abundance of recreational opportunities and public lands is mentioned in over half of my interviews. These ideas are still pivotal in personal narratives of western migration. The idea that you can be left or have space alone reflects not only the specific quality of the geography of the area that limits natural settlement, but the idea of solitude as well as escape. Place as infrastructure is an inescapable pattern in rural areas. Truth or Consequences remains curiously distant from the histories that shaped the region, even as qualities of public lands are evoked in interviews, place celebrations and promotions. Job connected with the management of public lands are the some of the best paying in town, although nationally they are some of the lowest paid public positions.

D. W. Meinig (1986) claims that few decisions were more permanent or prominent in the cultural landscape than boundary setting in the United States. He also

notes that “few, if any decisions of this kind were so free of local precedents and constraints” that the public land survey of the western states, “especially given an almost complete disregard for the recognition of indigenous order on the land” (Meinig 1986, 127). Meinig identifies three dominant land-ordering types existing in the colonies prior to the widespread adoption of the rectangular grid for western land. Survey and of lands mapping of public lands in the west represented the adoption of 19th century British colonial technology which completely undid the territorial boundaries that had been imposed prior to American colonization. The gridded precision created the dominant and deep pattern of Western lands. Regional reclamation was championed as necessary to regional settlement. Survey and reclamation created physical places dependent on systems of federal oversight and management of resources.⁵

Gifford Pinchot (1865-1946), was named the first first head of the newly established U.S. Forest Service in 1905. He promoted the scientific and federal management of forestry that emphasized the controlled, profitable use of forests and other natural resources so they would be of maximum economic benefit. In Pinchot’s book, *The Fight for Conservation* (1907), he wrote that the “thing we ought to leave them (future generations) is not merely an opportunity for equal happiness and equal prosperity, but for a vastly increased fund of both” (Pinchot 1907, 76-77). Pinchot neatly summarized how vast material wealth and resource extraction had made this possible for previous generations, while tacitly acknowledging the devastation that extraction had wrought in the opening of his text. At the other end of the spectrum were naturalists such as John Muir (1838-1914), who sought wilderness preservation as a maker of personal and national identity, free from material expectations and open to all. This set up a

tension that still exists today in how public lands are imagined, managed and experienced.

My considerations on the materiality of place began with my work in the Federal Bureau of Reclamation archives. The region's rural economies at the turn of the century, prior to reclamation, are rooted in mining. Reclamation's champions saw the Southwest's agrarian potential as a cure for a great sweep of political, social and economic ills, including the ebbing fortune of silver mining. "Silver subsidies represented yet another form of federal paternalism and control," influencing settlement and development in the West, patterns well established by "military protection, Native American relocation, the Homestead Act, railroad land grants, the creation of forest and resource reserves, and massive public works projects" (Young 1995, 258). The promise of the Rio Grande Project shifted hope to a new future. The massive new natural resource management bureaucracies became major economic pillars in the West. Mining receded in historical narratives, replaced by the promise of modern agriculture.⁶

Natural resource management and the legacy of public lands became and remain, in salient ways, the economic foundation of the region. It is an economic system founded in vast immensity of federal conservation and natural resource development and management programs and funded in whole or part by federal monies, but focused on small individual projects on the ground that are characterized by an imaginary of rugged individualism. Federal, state and local government jobs remain the foundation of economic activity in the town, coupled with the tourism that is partly based on recreational activity. Rural histories, especially the imaginaries of a ranching that have

long dominate the region, are rooted in access to public grazing lands. Even the largest ranches depended on access to grazing rights.

The turn of the 20th century argument about the need to better manage ecologically threatened public land resources mirror arguments laid out by Pinchot at the turn of the 19th century. In the summer of 2013, a group of Forest Service workers, whose office is in a strip mall on upper Broadway on the far north side of town, sat together at the the popular café BBQ on Broadway. They talked to an adjoining table of firefighters in town for the massive Silver Fire, a fire covering nearly 217 square miles in the Black Range. The fire created an eerie landscape in the town, filling the air with hazy yellow smoke. It sent a voluminous white column of smoke miles into the air. It looked almost like a huge summer rain cloud, only larger, and tethered to the mountain range. At night, you could see the glow of the fire. It was one week after 19 young firefighters, all from Prescott, Ariz., died in a wildfire. A memorial at the Elephant Butte Fire Station drew a large crowd. During the same summer in 2013, Elephant Butte Lake drops to the lowest level in forty years. Farmers in Southern New Mexico face the shortest irrigation season on record.⁷ The Rio Grande provides almost half of half of El Paso's city water, and the severe drought in New Mexico prompted city-wide efforts to shifts dependence from Rio Grande to well water.⁸

5.3 Sierra County Public Lands

The rhetoric of public lands—their use, management and ownership—periodically reemerges. Western wildfires, increasingly more dangerous and massive in scale and scope, emerge into this imaginary every summer. Narratives on climate change and global warming and editorials on regional drought make dire predictions and issue calamitous warning, and then fade from the landscape. The federal government owns

approximately 640 million acres of public land, about 30% of the land in the United States. A mere 4% of this land is east of the 100th meridian. Four agencies administer 608.9 million acres of this land. Under the Department of the Interior are the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service. Under the Department of Agriculture is the The National Forest Service. The Department of Defense, a fifth agency, administers a comparatively miniscule 14.4 million acres in the United States, although that includes the White Sands Missile Range that is the western border of Sierra County. . Numerous other agencies administer the remaining federal acreage.

The *Sierra County Comprehensive Report* (2006) noted that the New Mexico Land Office owns and manages 284,097 surface acres and 344,619 subsurface acres in Sierra County. Revenues are generated from these lands through sale, rents from sand and gravel operations, oil and gas leasing, grazing, rights-of-way, billboards, business leases, and water and royalty income from mining activities. The U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management manage 48% of the total land base in the county. Maps of New Mexico, like Sierra County, are a veritable patchwork of interests. Public lands create economic resources that extend well-beyond the wide-open spaces and recreation that are hallmarks today. The legacy of public land is immediately visible on the map of land ownership of Sierra County (see Appendix 1, Figure 37, page 394). Sierra County contains 2,700,160 acres under three broad categories: private (18.9%), federal (67.7%), and state trust (13.4%).⁹ It further noted that the “limited quantity of private land in the County has been a challenge throughout Sierra County’s history” (*Report* 2006, 11). Revenues, the plan noted, were not tracked by county, but “almost all the revenue

generated from state lands in Sierra County is from grazing, and the approximate annual revenues in Sierra County from state land leasing is about \$250,000” (19).

The *Report* report lays out five major themes that I find repeated in my own fieldwork. Themes were described as “attitudes, perceptions and values that are shared widely throughout a community,” that are “repeated frequently and casually in daily conversations and are reinforced in daily routines in community life” (2). The first was “spectacular beauty,” followed by five quotes on the landscape features, weather, skies, and solitude. The second theme was a “friendly, small town, rural feeling,” followed by three quotes on the tight-knit neighborhood feeling of the town and the county. The third theme was “there’s no bureaucracy!” with quotes highlighting the lack of meddling, ending with “live free or die!” The fourth theme was “we do with less here and that’s okay.” The fifth theme was that the “culture is about getting along,” illustrated by “People here have an attitude of ‘live and let live,’” and a quote, “We’re sort of pioneers out here and we have to take care of each other” (3).

The lack of private lands is mentioned as a detriment to county economic growth. This is a nod to public lands, but also to the massive private land holdings concentrated in the county. There were several large cattle ranches and land holdings in Sierra County, including the Victorio Land and Cattle Company, which sold 30,000 acres to the US Reclamation Service.¹⁰ Ranching was, and remains, one of the strongest place imaginaries of the region. Ranching is both nostalgic past, as evident in the Rhodes story in Chapter 3, and the emphatically desirous present, as evident in place promotion. The promotion of the region has always been tied to persistent regional place imaginary of cowboys. This is as emphatically true today as it was when the *Saturday Evening Post*

published Rhode's story in 1909. Ted Turner's massive eco-tourism ranches are the newest iteration of this persistent imaginary.

The report claims that "ranching, grazing, mining, guiding, and outfitting have been traditional and historical activities on federal lands for many generations" (27). I wonder how long have there been outfitters and guides. I showed this claim to a friend who was a professional outfitter and elk hunter. He claimed that his commitment to guns, local liberty, and the Republican Party did not contradict his making a livelihood on federal public lands. Although he thought the state should have control of the lands, he believed the common trust lands were his legacy as an American.

5.4 Federal, State and Local Livelihoods

One of my longest interviewees was with a federal public land employee. She was new to the town, but had worked similar federal jobs on public lands in Nevada and California. The town was not very different from the town at the center of the rural place where she grew up. All the ranchers and farmers back in her home state of Texas knew what's what and who's who, she told me. They were politically active, and even if they weren't politically active, she said, they still knew when there was something to get in on from others in the community. I asked her what she meant by getting in on something. Subsidies, assistance, funding, rebates, credits, good grazing leases, she said. Trees or plants for breakers, irrigations rebates, building rebates and those things she continues.

She said that anybody who works the land, even if they have never done it before, learns pretty fast that it is really hard. It takes a lifetime to know the land, but living on the land teaches lessons very quickly. Most people new to the lifestyle don't make it past the first few years she continued. She talked about how rural people were really conservative and didn't think about the help they got as being welfare. They were people

who knew how to fix things and grow things and care for things, even if they were high school dropouts. She characterized rural people as smart, hard-working and proud. She listed a half a dozen agencies that she interacts with, all part of the legacy of public land ownership and management. There is regularly interaction between these local, state and federal agencies and rural populations. Because of this, rural populations have developed a better understanding of the histories and contemporary impacts of public land ownership.

When she talked about rural, she meant the very small ranching or subsistence-farming families who identify as ranchers and farmers, even if they have other jobs to make ends meet. She did not mean wealthy ranchers—rich people who buy a ranch and run cows on public land. Many of the families she knew did very well financially, however, breeding horses and outfitting during hunting season. She also talked about blind spots, especially the environment. She said a lot of traditional farmers are coming around to strongly support environmental issues, but a lot of farmers and ranchers still deny there is a problem, even with the huge wildfires. She opined that some of this is part of an attitude that says if I can't fix it, I don't know what to do with it. This is not the case with some of the newer farms in the area, whose owners are very ecologically informed. She believes in public land programs, and likes what she does. She interacts with ranchers and farmers, but also does a lot of basic land management and resource assessment. Her family has been ranching and farming for three generations. She is the first one in her family to go to college. She told me that a lot of people are worried that this way of life is disappearing. She does not see it going that way (F., June 17, 2013).

The *2012 Census of Agriculture* lists 256 farms in Sierra County, with an average acreage of 120 acres.¹¹ Full-time farmers run 173 farms, and 83 are run by folks with other full-time occupations. There are 18,769 cows and calves on 142 farms in Sierra County. These figures are set against a total State of New Mexico inventory of 1,354,240 cows and calves, on 24,721 farms representing a total of 43,201,023 acres, with an average acreage of 1,748 acres. There have always been very large ranches in the state, however, that skewed the statistics considerably. In the 1940 agricultural census there were 379 farms in Sierra County. The median size farm was 30 to 49 acres, and 126 farms were listed as owning 16,709 cows and calves, mainly for beef production. The data shows that Sierra County has had a fairly steady number of farms and livestock over the past sixty years, given the range of dates.

The guys in the Sierra Soil Conservation District, in cowboy hats and ironed button-down shirts tucked in to sharply creased Wranglers, told me they would have nothing to do with a Lobo, which is the mascot of the University of New Mexico. I assured them I was an Aggie from New Mexico State University in Southern New Mexico, and I sang the fight song about drinking until I wobbled in my shoes. One said I was “OK, then.” People used this idiom often, “She’s OK, then,” to refer to being acceptable, or accepted. This is a short-hand for the long tracing of family, kinship or place connections, or just recognition that your identity has been vetted and found acceptable.

I was reminded of my grandmother every time I interviewed older people who had grown up in the area. They always began by tracing their family and your family in order to establish a connection between your people and their people. If you have people

before you in a place, you are assured a very basic level of place connection. It was a surprisingly effective way to establish connections. It takes a deep place memory and a deep people memory. This method of connection seems tenuous until you go to a local rodeo and the kids tell you whose kid they are, or someone else tells you, and then tells you how whatever kid was just there is related by marriage or family or some other strong bond to someone standing next to you. It used to end in where their people came from—what part of the county or state. This is fading, although people still tell you where they live if they do not live in town. The idea that some people still belong in the landscapes is not fading. There is a confidence that adheres to the people who claim the rural as a place identity, a connection to both the land and community that is fiercely protected and defended.

The idea that the modern will displace people is a regional place imaginary with a long history. It is a nostalgia narrative that laments the passing of the old to the forces of the new. None of the people who are said to be vanishing, overtaken by the latest global placelessness, express any fear of being wiped out. There are too many rodeos to lament the vanishing cowboy. There are too many Future Farmers of America livestock displays at the Sierra County Fair to worry that the rural life is vanishing (see Appendix 1, Figures 35 & 36, page 394). Rural people see a lot of changes, but they see themselves as part of these changes. Some of their trucks are decked out with satellites so they have phone and internet connections anywhere they go. Rural kids spend as much time staring at their phones as other kids.

Questions of who gets to be a part of the newest modern iteration of place are not asked by people who are well-centered in their place. Even if they are economically

struggling, the connection to their communities and places, evidences in regular get-togethers and outdoor activities, creates a strong sense of identity. Self-identified rural people, even those who work or live in town, do not have a lot to say about downtown Truth or Consequences; they do not spend much time downtown. The perception that traditional ranchers and farmers who have long held sway in this region are on their way out is very rarely by someone who self-identifies culturally as rural.

Place Celebrations & Creating a Shared Place Narrative

The history and imaginary of public lands shape the place identity of the people who identify with the rural periphery in much different ways than the downtown historic core. There is a strong disconnection between the historic core of the town and the rest of the town, as well as the region. There is a disconnection between the economic struggles of the town or county, even as economic development, often centered on tourism, dominates conversations. There is a disconnected with the regional histories of public land and reclamation, even as wide open spaces and recreation emerge as reasons people come to town.

The downtown historic core strives to be a very celebratory place. Place celebration is seen as a way to engage community, create a sense of place, build good will, and make people feel like they belong. David Harvey's (1989, 2000) claim that place celebration distracts from real problems pushes against the emphatic embrace of place marketing strategies that seek to boost the economic and cultural capital of places. "Place specific projects," Harvey claims, "have the habit of becoming such a focus of public and political attention that they divert concern and even resources from the broader problems that may beset the region or territory as a whole," (Harvey 16, 1989).

5.5 Branding and Marketing T or C: City Commission Community Work Session

My first public forum in Truth or Consequences on Tuesday, June 25, 2012 in the City

Commission chambers was billed as a community work session. The narratives that emerged at the meeting, “Branding and Marketing T or C,” illustrate these ideas and serve as an introduction to the ideas presented in this section. One out-spoken City Commissioner dominated the conversation for the first half of the meeting. The official minutes summarize his arguments. “He stated branding and marketing is one thing... that he wants to determine what separates us from every other community, and we want to separate ourselves from everyone else...we want to stand out, and we want to hear from you what you think our main asset or assets are, and hopefully be able to move forward for an RFP for a PR and/or marketing firm that specializes in working with municipalities to create a tourist destination...a marketing campaign...which will create GRT (Gross Receipts Tax), and give us more exposure, and help us build our population.”¹² This is the essence of a 30 minutes speech which centered on the insistence that the town did not know what kind of place it was.

This claim that the town could not figure out its identity was repeated five or six times by this Commissioner. Eventually, with no gesture to yielding the floor to the posted community work session, a general grumbling by several participants emerged. One loudly claimed the town knew damned well what it was about—hot mineral waters—and that the Commissioner was the one who didn't know what it was about. This is met with laughter. Others in the audience, including a bathhouse owner, were nodding however. The first speaker claimed the “biggest asset we have is that we are a spa community, that that is what makes us different from Hatch...and we should really be promoting that, and give the community a facelift.” A bathhouse owner said the

community had “our festival roots, and I would like to go back to that, and just have fun with something...our greatest asset is our unusual name...it always has been, and that is where we always got our positive publicity.” There is only time for a few speakers before the meeting ends with a presentation from the director of the Sierra County Tourism Board. The tourism director showed an image of new highway billboards that featured the slogan, “Hot Water/Cool Town,” with an image of a beautiful woman soaking on one half of the billboard, and a shot of the historic downtown, taken from Water Tank Hill, on the other.

It was a complex phenomenon, this persistent defiance of fixity that marked the place character of the town. The Commissioner implied that if the town could figure out its identity, the rest would follow. Many in the audience seem assured that the hot mineral waters were the foundation of this identity, but it was not a representative crowd. In the course of my two years of field work I experienced more narratives that lent themselves to other place identities than the mineral waters. The attractions, within an hour or two drive, are too numerous to list, and many want to sell the town as a base camp for recreation. The drifters like the mineral water, and they claim to be a broken down lot. They are mostly too broke to soak, which at \$6 for a ½ hour or \$10-\$15 for an hour, is a legitimate claim. One bathhouse in town gives free soaks with their small camper spaces. The people who come for healing certainly know the town for its water. The tourists in town come for the water, because there is not a whole lot else to draw people into the town. The Spaceport has started to bring a trickle of people into town. The religious individuals I talk to do not even mention the water. Addicts are not in town because of hot mineral water, nor are retirees or snowbirds or most of the artists I

interview. Real estate agents talk about the recreational lifestyle and proximity to area attractions. The rural population is not here because of the hot water. Many admit they have never even taken the waters. Marketing and branding a place identity is meant for outside audiences. The community good is seen as an extension of money brought into the community.

Relph's asserts that place identity is "persistent sameness and unity," which allows place to be "differentiated from others" (Relph 1976, 45). This is the issue at the heart of the Commissioner's lament about identity is not that the town does not have a narrative; it is that it there has not been enough a successful effort to create and market a strong place character. The town has too many narratives. Hot mineral waters and festival roots, and the name change that triggered the comment about the festival roots, are part of this, as are the counter-cultural movements the town is known for, as well as the shady reputation the town carries, as well as the reputation as a poor place. The Commissioner takes up half the meeting has very valid points about identity in terms of marketing the town.

Place celebration, marketing and branding are cast as ways for communities to build a cohesive identity. These ideas are premised on a how well as community can craft and adhere to a common narrative. You have to be able to tell a good story, in other words. These ideas have percolated through enough popular texts on place, marketing, branding preservation and tourism to emerge at a community work meeting. The common narratives about the town's place character are not only fluid, making it a good case study, they illustrate sharp tensions and persistent paradoxes.

5.6 Corruption and CAVE People (Citizens Against Virtually Everything)

If there is a persistent sameness and unity in the town, one of the few features I have found is the idea that T or C is a contrary place. This feature itself is very is contrary to the idea of peace and healing, which, like many contradictions in the town, is fitting. It is a paradoxical place—this too is a persistent feature. There are equal measures of hope and defiance and of fortunate and desperate circumstances. And there is the name. The name change marked the beginning of the town's festival roots referred to at the meeting. This was the beginning of a struggle over identity and place, creation and celebration. There are many people in the town who work tirelessly to build a celebratory place identity. There is a strong and vocal opposition who, as one interviews suggested, were the consequences of the mid-century efforts to create a new place identity.

I interviewed a woman who left town in the wake of a scandal that started out as a small act of defiance. It devastated her, this fracture in her recently established belonging narrative and her emergent place identity. Her disappointment in Truth or Consequences was intense. She was horrified that people would not listen to her about the corruption in the town, especially at the Sierra County Jail. Months after our interview, in October 2013, incendiary scandals closed the County Jail.¹³ She did not understand why people immediately discounted her claims and called her crazy. She was so badly maligned for her attempts to expose these abuses after she was arrested that she left town, she said. She also said she was repeatedly threatened by community members. She was accused of fabricating experiences for attention. (L., Oct. 2, 2013).

I was surprised at the virulent animosity that colored remarks about anyone who publically challenged the authority of the town or claimed corruption or even low-level ineptitude. According to one of my participants, this was how New Mexicans were

trained. He said he was initially surprised at how blithely corruption was treated by New Mexicans, but he quickly began to realize that this was part of why corruption flourished in New Mexico. This particular interviewee, who came from a small town in the East, was livid when I casually agreed that these kinds of experience were hardly new. I was pulling a bullshit excuse, he said, while at the same time basically creating the environment for corruption. By not standing against corruption, I was standing with corruption, he said. These challenges were repeated throughout the interview. The stories I heard about the town were deeply unsettling. This person was gone, and the interview was via phone. He said his own sense of identity was compromised by the town and community (G., Sept. 18, 2012).

As I attempted to trace these histories of murder, sexual abuse and political corruption, I was asked by a friend why I was perusing these particular histories. I told her that I could not tell her, based on interview confidentiality. She replied that it probably was information from one of the “cave people.” That was the first time I had heard this phrase. When she told me what it meant, I thought it was hilarious. My initial reaction was precisely what my interviewee would consider part of the problem. The CAVE people—Citizens Against Virtually Everything—are a loose group of individuals who consistently offered challenges in the town. They challenged policymakers, boards, committees, and other community members.

This group posts terrible things about the town on community and place-based websites such as city-data. They were not always friendly people. They were often effective in shutting down projects or demanding change and knowing the rules well enough to make it happen. The shared rejection of a group of individuals was powerfully

disconcerting, however. The activism of the group is critical theory on the ground, in a fashion. Wikipedia has an article on CAVE people, so this is not a singular phenomenon.¹⁴ The online encyclopedia page illustrates how place contrariness is currently characterized in communities, and also how the tendency to outcast people who do not contribute to place celebration.

The argument that the town will always be corrupting, violent, and cruel was told with such relentless insistence by many in this faction that I did start to tune it out. The opposition party in town did not earn its moniker without some serious conflict. This is undeniable. The idea that these people are to blame for the fortunes of the town seems extreme. I interview several people who are worn down by the negative attitudes in the town, and want to move somewhere more positive and less factitious. This current incarnation is creating its own imaginary in the town of T or C, and, it appears, many other places. Even the most cursory online search of small town discussion boards turns up contrariness as a defining characteristic of small towns today. This partly reflects the contest over how small towns will survive and thrive in the newest century.

An important role in person-identity formation and town-character formation emerged from this factionalism in T or C. This group also galvanized the opposition to their opposition. They were a common enemy, they were a source of gossip, and they roused people into action. They had staying power, and are ruthlessly persistent. The so-called CAVE people were as committed to place as any I had seen. They were deeply connected and attached

The Creative Class Meets the Distressed Classes

A sense of place, according to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is comprised of those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from

anywhere else—much the same as Relph’s definition. The keyword in the Trusts’s definition is special. People who decry the CAVE people claim that they derail efforts to create a sense of place in the town by stalling projects. The most common complaint is that they stand in the way of people who are trying to make positive contributions. Positive contributions are considered actions that contribute to the economic and cultural viability of the town as destination for travel or a place to live.

The popular literature on place has grown rapidly alongside the academic texts on place. Many of these ideas have been popularized by the work of Richard Florida (2002, 2004, 2007, 2008). Florida’s ideas seamlessly meld culture, mobility, creativity, and the places where these qualities and things flourish. These places attract the creative class whose creative work is no longer tethered to a particular place. Place is theirs to consume. Place is increasingly narrated in the language of consumption of place and the production of a strong place identity for marketing (Hall and Page 1999; Coleman and Crang 2002; Lasansky and McLaren 2004; Jaworski and Pritchard 2005; McIntyre, Williams and McHugh 2006; Meethan, Anderson and Miles 2006; Knudsen and Waade 2010). The issues facing places, from poverty to crumbling infrastructure to other issues brought to the attention of the community by the non-celebratory factions, are often elided by efforts to create pleasing places for certain people. Government issued reports on rural economic development, affordable housing or comprehensive planning resolutely champion preservation and place making efforts as a viable and necessary economic strategy.

5.7 The Creative Class

Rachel C. Fleming’s (2009) assessment of the place promotion and cultural class literature as it relates to rural America is especially applicable in T or C. Her work

represents a middle ground between Florida's relentless claims that place is an cultural identity marker that must be careful and thoughtfully considered, and only the most pleasing place will will, against the sustained material analyses offered by Harvey, Massey and others who look to how issues of poverty, race, class, and exclusion are often set against against preservation, art and culture, and gentrification. Fleming discusses ways that issues of poverty and basic community needs are navigated by people who also desire to create pleasing and attractive places. She concedes that the desire to create pleasing places is often seem as a way to circumvent other economic issues or create a rising tide that supposedly lifts all boats. This included creating amenities that a rural art-supporter claimed would "bring quality-people out" (Fleming 2009, 75).

One of my research participants with whom I spent a good deal of time was a creative-class champion. Hers was a particular mix of globalism and localism, culture and commerce, marketing and branding, where technologically was ever-present. Where people are placed geographically has always been a marker of race, class, gender and other common identity measures. In this new iteration of modern places, where people chose to place themselves is a reflection of cultural affiliation. A superbly well-educated woman, she often mentioned Marfa, Texas as what T or C would become. She said that T or C just needed more people with vision, and the vision she talked about could have come straight out of one of Florida's books.

Ideas about cultural capitol infused a lot of conversations about the present and future fortunes of the town. There is a very strong arts movement in town and a strong preservation movement. People talk a lot about what will attract the quality people and bring them to town. This is true at board meeting and volunteer meetings and events like

the monthly Art Hop, where people exchange ideas and encourage the sense of a cohesive downtown cultural community. Everyone I talk to wants people who want to be in town. They want people who chose the town because they see the potential for the creative classes. This includes ideas about affordability, but excludes ideas about poverty. People who came back because—to paraphrase many interview responses—they could not make it anywhere else, or came because it was cheap and or because they were poor were quality people. People who have never left are judged by their wiliness to get involved in place celebrations and champion the cultural class, People who chose to move to town because of choice or fate are celebrated as building a unique and distinct place.

There is a vibrant and sustained art community in the town. The Sierra County Arts Council is a powerful presence. The well-designed Sierra County Tourism site claims that Sierra County is “home to an extraordinary and eccentric group of artists,” where “traditional arts and crafts flourish alongside cutting-edge contemporary art, creating a lively creative environment.”¹⁵ There are dozens of galleries in the town that show a phenomenal range of work. Downtown murals and artwork are numerous. A 2013 article on the travel, art, and cultural scene and in T or C mentions the real estate developer and bathhouse owner Sid Bryan, whose “imprint on downtown,” is “impossible to miss.”¹⁶ This is reflected in reflected in the vivid shades of Bryan’s restored and refashioned buildings, apartments and bathhouses. Bryan’s aesthetic is strong. Bryan’s intense color palates have become place defining in the downtown historic core. His contributions to public art and prolific support of the arts community are integral in the development of the creative downtown core.

The *2015 TorC Downtown Master Plan* claims the town “already has some important elements in place to build upon and strengthen its position as an arts and cultural based community,” that include “the monthly Second Saturday Art Hop, which attracts residents and visitors to mingle and view art in the Downtown galleries, the Sierra County Arts Council, and numerous galleries and art studios occupying Downtown buildings” (*Plan 2015*, 61). The report includes a page on the the small arts community of Marfa, Texas as an example of what the town can become. This reflect desires professed by several new residents, and I do not know if the comparison emerged from the residents are is a standard filler in the master revitalization plans of smaller town who imagine a change of fortune. “Compared to Marfa, Truth or Consequences has similar assets and potential,” including “good ‘bones’; attractive commercial and historic buildings available for purchase and redevelopment at affordable rates,” and a “strong resident artists' community,” (74). “Truth or Consequences,” the report continues, “also has two potential patrons in Sir Richard Branson of Virgin Galactic and Ted Turner, new owner of the Sierra Grande Lodge & Spa,” a sentiment that also reflects the desires and hopes of many in the downtown historic core.

Truth or Consequences is several separate places. This is true of every place I have ever visited or lived. The powerful force of theses contrasts, and their proximity, is part of the reason why the town is such an enigma. These places are not separated by the same distances that are apparent in other places—they exist in the same place. One is a town that was cool and funky and hip, an undiscovered gem that was slowly being revitalized. It is a place to soak and art-hop, get a massage, meet really wild and interesting people, eat at a couple of very good restaurants and drink latte. It is a super

cute place that is relaxed and restorative. It was a place waiting to be discovered, bounded on three sides by amazing conservation areas where Ted Turner is building an ecotourism empire and surrounded by wilderness areas and small revitalizing villages. It is funky, affordable and delightful.

There are other places, both in town and surrounding the town, that push against the art colony funky still undiscovered historic core. The narrative of discovery in the town is strong—many people I talk to claim it is the last undiscovered place left in New Mexico—a paradox of colonial proportions. Anyone who lives in New Mexico for any length of time recognizes this narrative. One of the biggest fears of the town is that it will turn into the next Santa Fe—it is also one of the biggest hopes.

5.8 The Distressed Class & Narratives of Loss

The other Truth or Consequences is a town where poverty, drugs, and drinking are prevalent, starting at a very young age. It is a place where trucks proudly display “Lake Trash” bumper stickers. It is a place where violence, corruption, and sexual violence have never been uncommon. It is a small town that struggles with a high poverty rate. There are many people who are getting by, and some people who are doing very well. The town is marked by these extremes, however, especially in terms of its reputation and character. In *Land of Disenchantment* (2009), author Michael Trujillo spoke about his efforts to illuminate the narratives of poverty, drug use, and loss that New Mexico’s romantic-place imaginaries can wholly obscure.

The narratives of poverty, drug addiction, and loss in Truth or Consequences are markedly different from those in Espanola, N.M., which has its own harrowing narratives and histories of poverty, drug addiction and loss. Perceptions about poverty in T or C are mixed. It is perceived as a poor town. Conversely, it is perceived as an art-town, where

poverty is a lifestyle choice, or alternately, where you can have a beautiful gallery space and charming downtown at a fraction of Santa Fe gallery prices. Conversely, it is perceived as a place where you can have a fairly good quality of life on a fixed income.

Many residents I talk to who frequent the downtown core embrace the signs of an emergent romantic place identity and downtown gentrification, albeit one that is small-scale, funky and cool, in order to maintain a the town's counterculture character. Drugs rarely entered the conversation except as an anecdote, except on a few occasions during my two years of fieldwork. There are a few signs about neighborhood meth watch programs and one giant sign admonishing people not to "meth" with kids in the community. It is not a topic of discussion that people brought up in interviews. The connection between poverty and addiction is part of our shared knowledge in society. There is a loose but firm conviction in causality, common to shared knowledge. The June 2013 New Mexico Department of Public Health Substance Abuse Epidemiology Profile Report listed Sierra County as above the New Mexico average in many categories of drug and alcohol abuse in a state that ranks above the U.S. mean in every category.

Sierra County ranked third per capita in alcohol-related deaths and injuries. Sierra County had the top ranking in smoking deaths. Sierra County ranked behind Rio Arriba and Mora counties in drug-induced death. In the state of New Mexico, Sierra County was above the mean in unintentional drug overdoses, and number two in binge drinking by high-school teens. Almost 40% of high school students reporting binge drinking at least once in the previous 30 days, compared to a state average of 22%, and the county ranked third in high-school drinking-and-driving rates. In almost every category of youth drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, Sierra County ranked higher than state averages, from

youth marijuana-use to the 11% of high schoolers using painkillers, 7% report methamphetamine use and 4% report heroin use. The study noted that New Mexico as a state “has the highest drug-induced death rate in the nation” (viii).

Perceptions about need and about loss in the town are complicated. There is constant loss of young local people both to other places, because of a lack of opportunity, and to a life of drug use and underemployment. A case study of a newer, hipper off-grid, on-line sustainable-living lifestyle is offered in this project’s conclusion. One part of the couple who blogged about their T or C adventures gave a talk based on the book she published on their experiences. Watching a video of this talk, I was struck by the comment she made that “nobody had jobs, and we did not want jobs,” which is a lifestyle choice for this couple. Like many other people in the downtown core make their living selling art and other goods to people from other places. A great many people who move to town are retired, and even if they are not on a fixed income, they are not creating opportunities. The loss that forced individuals into the town as part of a migrant class is also connected to poverty, but it was loss located elsewhere.

Again and again, I heard that the backbone of the town was its volunteers. According to an interview with a town leader and connector, the new model of grant-funded social services was dangerous. It was a model that could create deep connections and could turn out a fine Fiesta, he said, but could not be the only way to meet community needs. There are basic services that need to be in place for a place to prosper, he maintained. It was not only hard to get ahead in the town; it was hard to stay afloat. Support networks can be fragile, especially if they are entirely dependent on volunteers. People may know your business and may try to keep you from falling through the cracks,

but sometimes there are not cracks but chasms (K., July 12, 2012). Many of the small apartments and rooms, meant for longer convalescent stays, built in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, are inhabited by veterans or an older population on fixed incomes. These populations need more services and attention than they are getting.

The town residents claim they take care of their own, a much-loved saying of a core of people who are long-time residents. A lot of people in the town, however, are nobody's own. Basic social services cannot be funded through grants. I saw several programs shut down during my two-years of fieldwork in town because funding had been cut. The need eventually gets met. Usually in the form of taxpayer-funded welfare programs, emergency room visits, hospital rides to psychiatric wards further south, jail time and other stop-gap measures that are very expensive in the long run and eat up hard money budgets. The local corruption that results in shutting down the county jail, which is a different issue, but tied back into the drug use in town, and the ways it is ignored, will cost millions of dollars.

5.9 America's Newest Migrants

There is another kind of poverty evident in the town. A chasm of poverty cracking through America is sending people out of place as part of a new migrant class. This is a new American migrant landscape that speaks to larger patterns of what is characterized as the newest modern America. There are small trailer parks where people live year-round in miniscule travel trailers and old trucks with campers in the middle of town. They are full of people down on their economic luck. Some travel-trailer dwellers are not cheerful at all. They radiate a get-the-fuck-away-from here vibe before ducking out of sight. Some of these sites are mobile places that have settled into permanence, both filthy and stagnant. This is true of some of the small rented rooms, built for longer coalescent stays.

During the five-month period when I lived in town, a couple moved into the yard next door to my own house. They lived in a minuscule pop-up trailer with their very large dog in the front yard. They were somehow related to the old woman who lived in the house there, who I liked very much. I wanted to have them evicted but didn't want to start something which would turn into more trouble than they were or to upset my neighbor. Many comments left on city-data.com, for example, are part of an online conversation that I do not hear in town. One reads, "Please dont come to T or c. This town has way too many RVs crammed in together as it is. maybe thats the expected norm for RV life I couldnt say. i have learned in my short time here that this town is crawling with crystal meth addicts. I wouldnt want to park my RV, if I had one, on a lot next to some drug addicts living in the back of their truck camper for \$200 per month (sic)" Another post said, "sorry to be so pessimistic but im telling the truth about truth or consequences new mexico, bland food, drug problems, cramped rv parks that resemble mobile slums, lots of closed down store fronts, very little cultural diversity and limited low paying jobs."¹⁷

There are many fine distinctions, however, in this mobile society. Many of the small rented rooms built for longer coalescent stays have been remodeled and are small art spaces, bright and cheerful. Beautifully remodeled trailers are featured on Airbnb listing, an online site where consumers can bypass hotels and the like and rent directly from one another) In T or C you can rent a small single room for \$34 a night (or Ted Turner's ranch house at the Ladder Ranch for \$6,000 a night). Many say they chose to live small so they can live well on little money, and are cheerful and friendly. They are poor but decidedly quality people. They eat out and go to galleries, and write travel blogs

about camping and great places. Truth or Consequences has a phenomenal online reputation as a place to go and stay if you are a dedicated full-time or part-time migrant. There were always steady streams of new arrivals to the town, people who were passing through or staying longer. This has been a defining feature of the town since its inception.

An RV-living snowbird from Georgia gave me a tour of the enormous fifth wheel she shared with her husband, which had a bay window and hardwood cabinets and was color coordinated in rust and gold and red. She maintained that the Wild West, as she called it, was real. She had seen a rattlesnake and loved cacti. She exchanged teaching work for a place to park her RV. She was a retired educator who felt a deep bond with Truth or Consequences, but she preferred not to get involved. We were not transients, she said. She did not need to say this, given the opulence of her RV, but it obviously bothered her. She had heard there was a lot of drug use in some of the older trailer parks but had not witnessed any in the places they stayed. I learned from her that you can take an RV across America and trade work for rent at KOA campgrounds. They had an opulent RV, but had still chosen early retirement and a fixed income. She told me about the joy of being on the road and the joy of finding places like T or C, where you can set yourself down for a while, regroup and connect, but without the bother of living in a town (G., July 30, 2013).

5.10 A Different Kind of Poor

One of my first interviews was with a University of New Mexico student from Arrey, N.M., a very small town 20 miles south of T or C. Elementary-school kids from outlying rural areas were bused to T or C for middle school. Town kids were still known (she graduated in 2010) for their partying. The rural kids always lost friends this way, she said. She talked about how the middle school kids—girls, mostly—partied with guys in

their 20s and high-school dropouts. Many of these friends still lived in T or C or eventually moved back to Arrey. It's hard to get out, she said. She ended with a reflection on how charming she thought Truth or Consequences was, the physical appearance of it, but she claimed she would never raise her own kids there, nor would she move back to Arrey, because her kids would end up going to school in T or C (T., April 27, 2012).

She offered an introduction to a friend, also from Arrey. The friend now lived in Truth or Consequences. She was working as a waitress at a chain restaurant connected to a chain motel on the outskirts of Truth or Consequences. She was in her late 20s. She was married, ten years, with two kids and another on the way. She told me she was taking online classes at Western New Mexico University, which had a small campus on the far west end of Truth or Consequences. She received her GED after her second child. She liked it here, she said, and was glad she was raising her kids here, too. Her mom was still in Arrey, so her kids got the benefit of rural life: they rode horses, got to be on the farm, went to rodeos, and ate large country meals with the extended family. She had food stamps and medicaid for her kids. People took care of one another here, she said. It is a good community she tells me (B., April 29, 2013).

This interview reflected one kind of poverty that is common in the town. It is the poverty of low paying work is coupled with welfare in order to get by, but tempered by community connection and a sense of belonging. My interviewees expressed satisfied with life and their places—as economic standing, as position and as geographical location. There is a strong sense of community and a deep place rootedness that is, unlike the literature on place identity claims, unconcerned with place identity of the town. People express a sense of belonging with the landscapes outside of the town—a

belonging rooted in place activity, get together and to be out in places. The richness of lived experience and connection disrupts narratives of poverty and loss. The local town kids find other pastimes for the empty hours. The great empty spaces are good places to get away with a lot of unhealthy and illegal behavior. This group seems to have the disproportionate burden of a tenuous place identity that is strongly imagined from the historic downtown core and rural periphery, and from people in faraway places, but is tenuous in the landscapes of the town, where opportunity and amusement are in short supply.

There is a community of town residents, business owners and professionals, financially stable and established, who have steady and deep connections to the town. This group is not very visible in the shaping of place identity. They have seen too many people come and go to get excited about all the new things an old friend tells me—they will wait and see what sticks. My favorite person in town likes to say she will piss in their tracks, talking about newcomers, a saying both crude and hilarious. There is a richness of lived experience narrative embraced by a subset of migrants that is also embraced, or tolerated in other groups, such as the poor by choice artists in residence. People I interview associated with the historic downtown express as a deep identified with the town in terms of a sense of self and community. The most recent arrivals consistently expressed a strong connection between place and identity, a connection they perhaps they carry with them, as they seek out places with the amenities that bring the quality people out.

Conservation, Historic Preservation, and Mid-century Place Branding

These conversations come together in the final section of this chapter. The small region and small town at the center of this place ethnographic study illustrate an internal place

logic that is deeply paradoxical. The massive government projects that opened the region to settlement in the form of the railroad and promised to subdue the aridity of the region in the form of irrigation are elided in the continued rhetoric of self-sufficiency that ignore the role of technology and the history of dependence on federal works. The imaginaries that are deeply rooted at the turn of the 19th century about the great arid desert and the wild open spaces are still embraced, while the infrastructure of reclamation and public lands ownership is largely ignored. Apache territory was already surveyed and claimed as public lands in the region, and it is the wealth of these public lands, in mining, ranching and recreation, that also made regional settlement possible. Settlement was only possible after the slow and halting defeat of remaining area Apache by a massive and well-armed American military effort, a history that also simultaneously ignored and celebrated as part of this regional imaginary.

The politics of place, especially the economic and environmental politics, are illustrated in several current projects in *Truth or Consequences* that tie 19th century to 20th century histories, as well as several texts that seek to create new histories and imaginaries of the town conclude this chapter. The ethnographic portion of my place ethnographic research on *Truth or Consequences* began in 2012. The first several months I focused my fieldwork on the town's historic preservation efforts.

Prior to my fieldwork, many people who were involved in preservation and downtown revitalization mentioned that there were plans to build a historic plaza in the center. Every New Mexico town should have a plaza, a *Truth or Consequences* resident told me at a quarterly *MainStreet* preservation meeting held in Las Cruces. A center plaza mirrors historic Spanish Colonial and Pueblo design patterns, but a center square is also

part of the Anglo building tradition (Wilson et. al. 2011). Very few people realized the irony of building a contemporary historic plaza—they just saw this important to place making. This illustrates some of the tension in these histories and illuminates the complexity of contemporary strategies for place revitalization, conservation, preservation and celebration.

The marketing and promotion of place has always been at the heart of colonial settlement, but the idea of branding and marketing a place is reiterated in each new era. The turn of the 19th century found some of the most unsettled place identities in New Mexico, as the territory tried to secure statehood. In the quest for statehood and identity creation, New Mexico leaders, boosters and residents created an imaginary that left the southcentral part of the state out of the geographical imagination.

T or C has aligned itself with every gesture to modern places in the 100 years since its inception. Evidenced by early photographs and census records, Hot Springs was a small but steadily growing place from its 1916 incorporation through its first several decades (see Appendix 1, Figures 7-17, pages 379-383). It derived its economic base from many ventures, including vice and healing, a stop-over place for travelers north from El Paso and Las Cruces or South from Albuquerque and Santa Fe, as well as people who moved to town to try to carve out their own livelihood from this mix. The town has always been on the periphery of great changes. It was a bustling place for a small town. The town celebrated in a very general way with modest but sustained promotions, small town growth, good times, affordability and healing since its inception.

WWII marked the town's decline. Hot Springs's reputation as a miraculous healing place was rejected by new paradigms of modern medicine New Mexico became

both a cold war economy and a state that celebrated its own ancient traditions. Effort to realign itself as a modern place emerged in the mid-century. The town changed its name in a bold gesture to shed its old identity and invent a new modern identity. It was, in a particularly paradoxical way, both its downfall and its saving grace, depending on who you ask. The shadier aspects of the town, the drinking and gambling that had always been economic pillars, were replaced by efforts to create an image of a Southwestern resort town that was ready for national renown. The town as it was—a place for gambling and drinking, a place where people desperate for healing and limited funds came, a place where desperate parents brought their children, a small town that did not know where it fit into a rapidly industrializing nation, could be remade overnight. The small town that was limited by natural and geographical limits would now be connected by an airline route. The town's people had born witnessed to the promise of irrigation technology that would overcome the limits of nature, and now the town's people would witness the new era where limits of size would be overcome with a national audience. It had sunshine, leisure and hospitality, and it had a resource widely recognized as miraculous. Natural and geographical limits proved too immense to conquer, much like aridity.

5.11 Historic Preservation and Writing Town Histories

An important change in the political, economic and cultural landscape of Truth or Consequences was the creation of a downtown historic district. The bulk of contemporary place histories in Truth or Consequences come from “The Hot Springs Bathhouse Commercial Historic District in Truth or Consequences,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination written by architectural historian (2004) David Kammer. The successful nomination was the result of a 25 year-long effort. Historic preservation is championed by scholars and local practitioners as a tool of place revitalization and an

economic engine of growth. Historic preservation efforts have been widely embraced as a viable strategy for tourism and heritage travel. While the effects are less obvious outside of the historic district, and often not too apparent within the district, the impact on the city has been vitally important.

The attitudes about preservation are mixed, but mostly positive. The majority of the people I interview like the preservation efforts, a few are indifferent or unaware, and a few think the town's focus on preservation distracts people from dealing with the town's other issues. The people who thought it was a threat included people on fixed incomes worried about gentrification. A few residents do not like the town's interest always focused on new people or the historic core. Putting on airs was how one interviewee described downtown efforts, while another long-time resident claimed the town might put on its fancy city clothes, but its country ways would still shine. This is similar to the fear that preservation brings gentrification. At the present, the infrastructure does not exist to be upscale in the historic downtown district. The Sierra Grande, the two-story bathhouse and spa currently owned by Turner Enterprises, is the closest to upscale that is available. It is lovely, but decidedly modest. The majority of the people I interview are overwhelmingly positive about town's preservation efforts. A third of the people I interview, over twenty, are unaware of the district or effort.

The history of historic preservation as a grass roots local movement is in tension with its history as a practice that emerges in times of national identity crisis that celebrates romantic place imaginaries and an often exclusionary nationalistic identity. Judy Mattivi Morley's (2006) critical assessment and comparison of regional historic preservation efforts brings in the the tension between economic, cultural, and historical

interests and explores how these dominant themes are negotiated on the ground. David Lowenthal (1999) explores the tension between history as referring to verifiable events and heritage as referring to the often-invented historical meaning of places. The past is used as a source of identity and fortification, which can, Lowenthal argues, also be a powerful source of community building.

Michael Kammen (1993) similarly points to the complexity of influences on historical interpretations. He asserts that ideas about place are profoundly shaped by ordinary people, who struggle with one another to create historical narratives. He sees in contemporary preservation movements efforts to “satisfy an array of psychic needs, commercial enterprises, and political opportunities” (13). The most common charges leveled against preservation are the tendency to uncritical place celebration, uncertainty about how preservation will impact affordability and local property control as well as the fear that preserved places will be frozen in time and façade places (Harvey 1989; Kammen 1993; Hayden 1997, Lowenthal 1999; Morley 2006). As these texts also demonstrate however, historic preservation projects are extraordinary opportunities for starting conversations about how to bring in critical perspectives and begin a dialogue.

There are two major impacts of historic preservation in town. The first is building a cohesive place history. Kammer’s well-researched history pulls together regional histories, the few published local histories in the town and other historical sources. Kammer creates a compelling statement of historical significance for the town, from its 1916 incorporation to the name change in 1950. Some places have a wealth of available place histories. Some places are not so lucky. Kammer pulls together a rich history from a sparse record. There is a nod to the evidence of prehistoric use in the town proper,

found in deep mortar holes in the rock formations by Ralph Edwards park. These grinding slicks have never been specifically dated. Nearby pithouse villages along the Rio Grande, El Paso Phase villages, evidence settlement from 400-1100 CE and continued to be occupied until the mid-1400s.¹⁸ Kammer locates the arrival of Athabascan-speaking people, regional Apache, between 1300 and 1400 CE. The Apache in the region made any substantial settlements by Spanish, Mexican or American colonizers impossible until the late 1800s.

Kammer located the town's nascent beginnings in 1863, when Fort McRae was established on the east bank of the Rio Grande, between Fort Selden to the south and Fort Craig to the north. An Army report filed by 2nd Lt. Charles M. Hubbell in 1868 detailed an Apache attack at the springs at a location "8 miles to the south" of the fort. The report, which detailed the death of several people at the hands of Apache, also noted the springs "are supposed to possess some medical qualities" (Kammer 2004, 24). This evidences early use of area springs, but does not make clear where the particular spring in the report was located. Las Palomas was a small Hispanic Village settled in 1856 and located seven miles downriver south of the springs by Water Tank Hill, and the nearest settlement to the original spring. The springs have been used by "soldiers, cowboys, miners and other settlers in territory," Kammer writes, providing a seemingly ready-made tourism quote (22).¹⁹

Kammer writes that rise of health-based migration was a "significant but often overlooked factor in the growth of the American West in the late 19th and early 20th centuries" (27). According to Kammer, the completion of the AT&SF railroad to Deming in 1881 linked the "hot springs area more closely with development occurring throughout

the Southwest” and, he wrote, brought in the first health seekers (24). In 1884, he claims, Sierra County was established in response to these developments and increased settlement.

In every history I have read on the town, cowboys from the John Cross Cattle Company are credited with building the first bathhouse. This is the same ranch that Eugene Manlove Rhodes describes in the *Saturday Evening Post* story in Chapter 3. I cannot track down a definitive source of this history. By 1900, there were a handful of very modest frame, adobe, and canvas tent structures in the town evidenced in photographs. The “impetus for the development of Las Palomas Hot Springs into a southwestern health resort community,” however, was the promise of a massive government reclamation project (25). Plans to dam the waters of the Rio Grande drew the first population boom to the area, who settled even as the land was withdrawn from the public entry and set aside as reclamation. In contemporary histories, the town is often misidentified as the labor camp for the dam.

The only accessible spring at the turn of the 19th century was at the base of Water Tank Hill. A 1907 shift in the river channel exposed the town’s current downtown springs. Prior to the flood, much of the “historic district consisted of woodland, or bosque, and tule swamps.” The damsite camp, in comparison, had many recreational amenities onsite, including hot water for bathing, but outlawed alcohol and gambling. The draw of the downriver settlement most likely included alcohol and gambling. Until 1914, the growing squatter settlement carried the name Palomas Hot Springs. In 1914, resident Otto Goetz petitioned the postmaster general for a designated name change to

Hot Springs after he discovered the Hot Springs post office in Las Vegas, N.M., had been shut down. This was the town's first name change.

The *Sierra County Herald* in 1916, referring to the long process of legal incorporation, claimed when the “worst is over, we will have one of the best hot springs resorts in the world.”²⁰ The town's two newspapers publishing anecdotal stories of miraculous healings as well as lists of visitors and their hometowns, a practice that “would become a mainstay for the promotion of Hot Springs well into the middle of the century both in newspapers and booklets periodically published by the Chamber of Commerce and other booster groups” (Kammer 2004, 27). Census data showed 455 residents in 1920. Kammer claims there some uncertainty about role “gambling and prostitution played from the 1920s through the 1940s when Hot Springs enjoyed a reputation as an open town, a reputation that ended only when enforcement of laws became more rigid after 1950” (29). This reputation is part of the established but undocumented history of the town. It was well-documented in newspaper accounts in later years.²¹

The 1930 census showed that the formal economy had become oriented toward health seekers. The population reached 1,336, a rate of growth that was heralded by town promotional literature as phenomenal. Hot Springs benefited from several large New Deal construction projects during this era. Iconic New Mexico architectural styles of Spanish Pueblo Revival and Territorial Revival were adopted for several public buildings. Booster activities increased during the 1930s and 1940s, as the village, designated a town in 1929, sought to increase its national exposure as a health resort (see Appendix 1, Figures 7-17, pages 379-383, for historic photos through 1940).

The *Sierra County Advocate* and the *Sierra County Herald*, as well as “the Chamber of Commerce and other boosters carried on a tireless campaign that sought to improve the village, enhancing its amenities and then advertising them” (33). The town’s modest bathhouses could not compare to hot springs resorts around the country that had much grander accommodations. Town boosters continued their efforts in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s to promote the town as an affordable health resort however, bolstered by the improvement of Highway 85 in 1932 and the building of Carrie Tingley Hospital in 1937. A 1931 *New Mexico Highway Journal*, the forerunner to *New Mexico Magazine*, claimed that Hot Springs was rapidly gaining a national reputation as a health center. Otto Goetz, a tireless booster, penned an article for *New Mexico Magazine* in the 1940s that claimed the dam workers were “first effective advertising group” for the mineral springs and town.²² In 1940, there were 19 bathhouses and 51 hotels and rooming houses listed in the New Mexico Business Directory. The late 1940s also saw the increase of material promoting recreation at Elephant Butte Lake and a new catchphrase, “Health Capital of the Southwest,” that blended soaking and outdoor recreation (see Appendix 1, Figure 18, page 384).²³ The 1940 population was just less than 3,000.

Kammer discussed the growth of the town as read through the text of streets and buildings. The “irregular alignment at the foot of the hogback (Water Tank Hill) was determined in part by the location of the natural hot springs and the early buildings that appeared around them” (6), while the historic district’s streets on the south side of town represented the draining of wetlands, platting, and devilment, especially the Palomas addition in the 1920s. Kammer classified the architecture of T or C’s historic district as late 19th century and 20th century revival styles, including the iconic New Mexico pueblo

style; the late 19th century and early 20th century American movements, identified as bungalow and craftsman; the modern movement; the streamline modern movement; as well as other styles. The advent of car courts in the late 1920s and 1930s is discussed as a feature of the changing landscape as well as a way to meet the need for longer stays by families with children at the children's hospital.

Kammer describes the physical and geographical landscapes in the nomination. The contours of the 56-acre proposed downtown district town are described as lying along the flood plain of the Rio Grande, "extending over varied topography . . . suggestive of the Mexican Highland section of the Basin and Range Province in which it lies." Water Tank Hill, at 4,400 feet, "afford a unobstructed view southeastward across the historic district to the Rio Grande and the Sierra Caballos, forming a dramatic backdrop along the river's eastern bank." North and west of this feature are "arroyo-creased foothills," while the southern portion of the city is "situated on a floodplain of the river at an elevation of 4300 feet"; to the southeast, the "Rio Grande cuts sharply to the west as it emerges from a steep narrow canyon through which it passes just below Elephant Butte Dam" (5).²⁴

In 1945, the town declared itself a city in anticipation of a post-war boom that never materialized. The end of the World War II saw an increased reliance on medical science and new technologies that contributed to the diminished importance of both climate and thermal waters for health. Kammer describes shifts in medical care and technology following World War II and the subsequent decline in mineral-water resorts. The population of Hot Springs in 1950 was 4,563. Photographs from late 1940s and early 1950s show an attractive and bustling small town (see Appendix 1, Figure 19-22,

385-386). Kammer established the period of significance as beginning at the time of incorporation in 1916 and ending when the town changed its name in 1950. The name change in 1950 was pivotal in establishing the period of significance. It was fitting and ironic that the name that sought to revive the base so dramatically and neatly ended the historic narrative in the preservation nomination. Kammer concludes his narrative with a brief town history outside of the period of significance.

The construction of Interstate 25 in the 1960s contributed to the further decline of downtown. Interstate 25 through New Mexico replaced or directly overlaid Highway 85. Highway 85 came through Truth or Consequences—the new interstate completely bypassed the town. These decades see a shift in the look and feel of the town. Photographs show an increasingly auto-mobile oriented town (see Appendix 1, Figures 23-26, pages 387-388). Efforts to rebrand the town are evident in postcard imagery from the era (see Appendix 1, Figures 27 & 28, page 389). The persistent economic downturn also attempts to create a western board and batten façade and wood shingled shed-roof portales in parts of the downtown in the 1970s. This attempt at revitalization left little more than a movie set patina that is currently being removed to expose some well-preserved mid-century storefronts.

The razing of the Arizona Hotel and sections of two other blocks during the 1970s and 1980s serve as examples of failed and unfortunate attempts to revitalize the downtown. These actions, however, spur the town's first downtown preservation efforts. These efforts have contributed to the revitalization of the downtown district (see Appendix 1, Figure 30, page 391).

Historic districts and historic preservation efforts pay off economically. This fact is well-demonstrated in the literature. Having the basic structures of a recognized historic district in place is critical to place making effort. A historic district can be a foundation for a coherent place vision. This does not imply a singular vision, but rather a singular vision. The historic district nomination provides accessible set of themes and accessible historical narratives. This galvanizes smaller projects. Organization can cut and paste narratives and histories to more effectively and efficiently write grants and request other types of funding and support. A historical district demonstrates a level community commitment which makes grantees and other organization, both public and private, more amenable to new ventures. Having a group of people and organizations who have worked together creates its own institutional history. Individual stakeholders may come and go, but there are generally enough people on the ground with an experience in collaborative efforts between smaller stockholding communities.

I identify and interview many pivotal economic or cultural leaders in the town, place makers, to learn more about why they move to town, what they see as the town's strengths and weaknesses, and how they think about preservation and revitalization. Some have long-time commitments to the town; others have moved recently to the town, all have invested a great deal of money or time. Most seem to be sticking around. The successful preservation efforts contribute to these narratives in notable ways. The time it takes to get things done in T or C is mentioned repeatedly. The lack of a coherent town identity, as repeated in other places in this project, is an issue. The town's other problems, like poverty and drug use, are mentioned incidentally. Tourism seems to be the sole focus of many downtown residents and elected officials, a dangerous focus for long-

term sustainability. Preservation is seen less as a way to celebrate history and build a local identity and more as a tool for economic growth.

5.12 The Healing Waters Trail and Preservation Place Making

I presented my work on the Healing Waters Trail as a case study in preservation place making at several different venues, including a conference. Preservation place making describes place-making activities that seek to highlight, complement, or generally add value to historic preservation efforts. Many communities and individuals were interested in preservation place making in general, especially trails. My three separate public research blog posts on the Healing Water Trail spark inquiries from people in communities in New Mexico, Arizona, Nebraska, Tennessee, and Florida. One photographic essay post was shared widely on several sites. The trail is an excellent case study in the workings of small-town politics, group dynamics, and ideas on what makes for successful collaboration.

The trail was a 10-year commitment, made possible by the sustained involvement and leadership of the Sierra Soil and Water Conservation District. Community-wide projects need leadership and collaboration. The research material on the trail is contained in three of the extra-large three-ring binders. Every piece of paper ever generated in envisioning, planning, and building the trail was organized and filed by Sierra County District Manager Merry Jo Fahl. She was a dynamic leader and a fearsome taskmaster. She was relentlessly cheerful and claimed to know nothing about what it was she was making you do, which was why it was imperative you got it done. Without her stewardship over a decade, the trial would never have become a reality.

The idea of the trail emerged during planning efforts surrounding the Rio Grande Corridor in the early 2000s. Conservation along the Rio Grande consists of many

interrelated projects, overseen by a host of agencies. The mission of the multiagency effort was restoration, revegetation, and conservation along the 14-mile strip of the Rio Grande from below Elephant Butte Dam to the headwaters of Caballo Reservoir. This included the removal of invasive species. It was not conceived as a preservation project or connected to historic preservation, but rather to conservation. The project got off the ground in 2007, however, when it became linked to preservation as well as to conservation. During the summer of 2009, Lisa Roach, a preservationist in the UNM Preservation and Regionalism Program, wrote an extensive, meticulous report for the trail's steering committee as a thesis project for her master's degree in community and regional planning. Roach used a cultural-landscape approach that recognized how "the interaction over time between people and the natural geothermal resources in the hot springs artesian basin have contributed to a unique sense of place in Truth or Consequences" (Roach 2009, 15).

Roach included topography; natural systems and features; the river and the wetlands at Rotary Park; storm-water drainage ditches; vegetation; special organization, land-use, and built environment patterns; circulation; buildings; water features; sidewalks; views and vistas; and archaeological sites and cultural conditions. She conducted an exhaustive listing and analysis of the town's cultural landscape elements. Her approach allowed her to integrate trail design; preservation of historic buildings, sidewalks, and sites; and conservation goals. Her proposal suggested a three-segment, semi-urban trail system that ties the town's cultural, historic and natural resources together. The design ties together the town's assets as well as its stakeholders. It was also a reflection of the author's professional and intellectual background. Roach's orientations

to existing regional strategies as well as to local and statewide projects were evident. The presence of the Rio Grande, for example, automatically triggers the involvement of a great many stakeholders. Local and state strategies and goals become regional, federal, and transnational in terms of stakeholders, impacts, and policy decisions.

I interviewed several key people involved in the trail, in part because I was curious about why they thought the project was successful. I asked how and why the trail was successful. Commitment was mentioned repeatedly. There was a long-term commitment by a strong steering committee and a collaboration of stakeholders. The collaboration between professionals, local leaders, academics, and agency personnel was essential. The final component was vision, which is a where the foundation of preservation emerged as pivotal. The completed trail opened in 2013.

The trail is magnificent, in the same way the town is. It is a small scale magnificence where the captivating, the charming, the unexpected beauty of the place come up against the glimpses of poverty and disrepair. The trail marks a shift to a new kind of place. This is why I spend such a great of time on it in research and in person. It is an example of the kind sustainable infrastructure amenity that will add to the value of the historic district and draw people to town. It is also an amenity that is increasingly used by the town for events, such as color runs and health awareness walks. It is a reflection of what T or C has always been, small and hand-hewn, trying very hard, and often succeeding (see Appendix 1, Figure 31, page 391).

5.13 Campo Espinoso: Preservation of Natural Habitat and Cultural History

Sherry Fletcher emerges into this narrative often. Since 1999, Sherry and her husband, Baxter Brown, have been restoring and conserving land on the east side of Truth or Consequences, just north of the Rio Grande on East 3rd Street, or Highway 51.²⁵

Enchantment, the online magazine of New Mexico Rural Coops, featured an article about Campo Espinoso by Sally Bickley.²⁶ She writes that for “many years this was a wasteland below the Elephant Butte Golf Course, barely visible through the salt cedars along the highway between Elephant Butte and Truth or Consequences, consisting of “90 acres of brackish Mims Pond hidden behind the thick salt cedars, plus wetlands and overgrown floodplain covering the rest of the 157 acres”—the result of years of neglect and a takeover by invasive species (Bickley 2003, np).

Bickley writes that Sherry had ridden horses under thick cottonwoods near the Rio Grande as a child before the area had been taken over by salt cedar, and describes the labor intensive efforts necessary to tear out an estimated 10,000 salt cedars. To prove water rights, Fletcher and Brown had to use their water, and by the summer of 2002, there were “19 fields ready to plant” with foxtail millet, chocolate flower, pigweed, lambsquarter, purslane, verbena, wild zinnia, lizard's tail, and wavyleaf thistle,” as well as “400 pounds of sunflower seeds, purchased from an old mill in Belen” (np)

This massive undertaking began when Fletcher was assistant superintendent of the Truth or Consequences School District, and continues unabated. Fletcher gathered up surviving pieces of the historical record relentlessly in her conservation efforts at Campo Espinoso, which reflect her style of historical research. Sherry’s research included Spanish archives and journals recorded during the entradas into New Mexico, archives that included records of landscape the Spanish encountered. Her research also included Elephant Butte Dam records, newspaper articles, census records, abstracts and oral histories. The conservation and preservation efforts at Campo Espinoso have been nothing short of spectacular. It is a federally recognized wildlife preserve.

The success of the conservation and restoration of this area has attracted the attention of local and global conservation groups. Fletcher recognizes how closely cultural, political, economic and environmental histories are linked in the contemporary landscapes of the region. She is constantly striving to bring awareness of these relationships to her work on the ground and in the community. This does not always result in the kinds celebratory articles like the one written by Brikley. Fletcher brings a historical awareness that is often characterized as daunting, excessive or far too exacting by the local community, but is highly prized elsewhere. She is one of the few people I meet in the field who can link the place histories of the region together without recourse to the place imaginaries and historical fabrications so common to regional narrative.

5.14 Historic Images and Visual Histories

Over a period of 40 years, Sherry Fletcher has amassed a large collection of historical images. She used this extensive collection in the book *Images of America: Truth or Consequences* (2010). Her project partner and collaborator was Cindy Carpenter.

Together they have published two additional Arcadia books, one on Elephant Butte Dam and one on the Hatch Valley. The books are part of a series published by Arcadia, a publishing company that has created a successful niche market in creating thematic visual history books. The books, according to the Arcadia website, “transform dusty albums and artifacts into meaningful walks down memory lane,” and each book in the series “features more than 200 vintage images, capturing often forgotten bygone times and bringing to life the people, places, and events that defined a community.”²⁷

Fletcher and Carpenter’s *Truth or Consequences* book is a sweeping visual history. The back-cover copy quotes the April 4, 1950, issue of the *Gallup Independent*: “Hot Springs, New Mexico, Ain’t That Any More.” The book’s short narrative begins

with the story of the town's name change and the publicity that brought to the town, and then traces earlier place histories. The authors note that territorial newspapers listed names as well as ailments of these turn-of-the-century health seekers. A brief history from the turn of the century to the present includes water conflicts with Mexico, subsequent construction of Elephant Butte Dam, the town's first public bathhouse, opened in 1919, and the first school, opened in 1923. The book describes how the Carrie Tingly Hospital for Crippled Children made use of the mineral water in its treatment programs. This cogent history ended with a nod to Sierra County's newest attraction, Spaceport America. The photographs are well-curated and captioned, as well as wide-ranging—a good fit for a generation brought up on social media and visual images. There is a solid historical narrative. The book is appealing to tourists and residents.

There are several more recent photobooks on the town. An early one is Nick Waplington's *Truth or Consequences: A Personal History of American Photography from the Last Century* (2001). The book is an uncaptioned collection of photographs of Truth or Consequences taken between 1993 and 2000. In the unnumbered introduction to the book, the entire book lacks page numbers, writer and critic John Slyce said that “as towns go in New Mexico—the Land of Enchantment—Truth or Consequences is on holy ground: it is held to be sacred by the Mescalero Apaches who still call it home, and it is cursed all the same” This fictional history is followed with a nod to the sacred spring's narrative followed by a narrative that Geronimo “put a curse on the area in disgust at the defilement of white men” (n.p.).

Slyce mentions Walker Evans' *American Photographs* (1938) to situate Waplington's photographic tradition. I consider both books' photographs side by side for

more than a year. Fletcher gives me the Evens book after reading the introduction. The richness of Evans' work feels evident in even a casual perusal. In comparison, Waplington's photographs are, at their very best, passably interesting. I am no expert, so I take his book into the field with me for a few weeks to get a crowd-sourced opinion. The best review from this crowd source is that they are distant, as though he sought to capture a desperate backwater as he drove through in his car, taking pictures out the window, on his way to someplace better. The book ends with a few photographs of Las Vegas, Nevada, to commemorate Waplington's "desert journey." Most of the photographs seem to embody the idea that the town is a trashy place, and kind of sad, which may have been his point. This collection is very placeless, however, which is the primary complaint.

There are a few standout photographs in Waplington's book. A man and his daughter at the lake, looking bright, secure, and at ease; a man in a bright orange shirt with a bandana around his head and long ponytail in profile, headed around a corner in his wheelchair affixed with a Hatch chile bumper sticker, half of the picture dominated by a vintage foldout calendar of a nude woman; a curvaceous woman in red pants caught surprised in an aluminum doorway, a small dog just inside, a handful that show how people can shine through even in poor photographs. There are many odd detail shots, uncaptioned, that may tell a story about modern life, or poverty, or fading luck, or aridity, any number of tales—I cannot tell. The photographs seem strangely placeless—a boring, sad, washed-out town in small fragments that cannot be put together to make a whole.

Local photographer Judd Bradley has a photography studio that sits on Broadway. He and his wife and child are off in the world at the moment. His wife is now in the Foreign Service. In his windows windows were half dozen large-format photos, mostly

portraits and landscapes. There were more inside. These few photographs are stunning in their strident beauty, unexpected angles and vistas, their sweeping sense of place and evocation of community. I bought a small, self-published book of Sierra County photographs from East Coast transplant Moshe Koenick, whose store, Dust and Glitter, is full of city-cool vintage goods. Koenick's images are also a contrast with Waplington's. They are sharply rendered and clear. They are textured and subtle, sly and joyful. They create a visual place narrative that is layered, complex and cohesive.

On the far end of the spectrum, where Waplington sits on one side in a kind of prurient revelry and scorn of small town people and landscapes, is the recent *Hot Springs District: 87109 New Mexico* (2013). Written by Michael Honack and photographed by Kyer Wiltshire, with design and layout by Eli Morgan, the bulk of the photographs are a collection of portraits and selected images from the bathhouse district. The photographs are gorgeously rendered celebrations of small town life.

The book is divided into four sections: people, waters, art and architecture, and the region. The text boldly claims that "few areas in America have as many artists and galleries per capita as the District" (67). The works of local artists Delmas Howe and Mary Welty are showcased. Close-ups of brightly hued doorways, murals, galleries, jewelry, collections of ephemera, remodeled houses, pottery, sculpture, and the vernacular art common to fences and buildings in the area are packed onto these bright pages. The final part of this book contains sweeping panoramic townscapes and a few regional photographs, including White Sands, the Spaceport, and Bosque del Apache. The photographs are like a tourist advertisement come to life, a New Mexico True

campaign-worthy piece of promotional material, with a staged authenticity that is far too polished to be authentic. The book is almost too bright and lovely.

The historical narrative is more than questionable. The authors located the town's heyday in the 1960s, which is incongruous given the district's 1916-1950 period of significance. The 1960s also marked the first town population decline in the census. Maybe they are talking about the heyday of countercultures moving into town. The authors also claim that the story of the town begins in 1920, four years after its official incorporation. There is a sidebar on floating houses down the Rio Grande. The vagaries of the text are as bright and whimsical as the photographs.

The most photographed image of the town, however, the image that graces Waplington's book cover, is the interstate sign that reads Truth or Consequences (see Appendix 1, image 32, page 392). The town's name change came long before the branding was a catch phrase in the literature on tourism. It was a gesture meant to revive the fading fortunes of the town. The town's name remains a source of perplexity, pride, interest, skeptical ridicule and hope. The town, like these two books, seems trapped between these two dominant two narratives, in a space where dozens of conversations are being held simultaneously.

¹ <http://www.torcnm.org/downloads/plan/5.EconDev.pdf>

² Final Approved TorC Comprehensive Plan October 2014
<http://www.torcnm.org/downloads/Final%20Approved%20TorC%20Comprehensive%20Plan%20October%202014.pdf>. Source: 2006-2010 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

³ <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/index.html#acs>

⁴ This seems to be the primary argument of settler colonialism, from what I understand, which is little. If I had been a few years later into the American Studies program, I would no doubt use this theoretical framework. As it stands, I like to say it with a poor British accent and leave it alone theoretically. Perhaps it is a later work, if I have any wish to be academically relevant in the next few years.

⁵ Place history is deeply embedded in the land. Place philosopher Edward S. Casey (2002) argues United States mapping is a reflection of both economic and nationalistic desire. “As imperialistic as Rome in its attitude toward the uncharted territories, the United States turned in the late eighteenth century to the systematic surveying of these territories,” he wrote (Stevens 202, 156). Public land scholar Paul Gates (1968) notes that although “the power to own, manage, grant, and otherwise dispose of the public lands was to be one of the most nationalizing factors in the life of the federal republic, that power received slight attention in the new Constitution” (Gates 1968, 45). This massive power was confined to “a mere “twenty-six words in Article IV, Section 3: The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States” (45). “Never was an important land law adopted,” he wrote, “that was not subject to varying interpretations by officials in the General Land Office, the local land officers, and by the courts” (52).

⁶ Mining remained a core industry in Sierra County. A 1934 report, *The Geology and Ore deposits of Sierra County, New Mexico*, issued by the New Mexico State Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, notes that Sierra County “has been its third largest producer of mineral wealth,” and despite a large-scale closure of small and large operations, “to those who are interested in seeking out and operating small mining properties, the potential mineral wealth of this area is still a matter of great interest” (12). The report illustrates how many federal programs, as well as state and local counterparts, focused on very small-scale rural economic activity.

⁷ An article in the *Albuquerque Journal*. July 23, 2013, discussed the low water levels, and an article on July 23, 2012, discussed the irrigation season.

⁸ *El Paso Times*. February 2, 2013, page 3.

⁹ New Mexico has a legacy of state trust lands, which set aside four sections in each township to fund schools and other basic services. Publicly owned and managed, state trust lands are public lands, but not in the same ways as federal public lands. They are managed for clearly specified beneficiaries.

¹⁰ Fletcher and Carpenter 2015, 13.

¹¹ *2012 Census of Agriculture*, USDA National Agriculture Statistical Service, Government Printing Office, 228. <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov>.

¹² www.torcnm.org/downloads/minutes_cc/2012/ccmtg120626.pdf

¹³ A KOB-TV article that ran with an Oct. 30, 2013, report on the jail included an interview from a guard, who made incendiary claims about rampant abuse and corruption. He claimed he told county officials when his supervisors did not listen but was told to remain silent.

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CAVE_People

¹⁵ <http://www.sierracountynewmexico.info/attractions/art-in-truth-or-consequences-hillsboro-and-more/>

¹⁶ Schmitt, Joseph. “The Small Town with a Big Future.” *Passport*, February 2013, pages 58-63. <http://gay.passportmagazine.com/business-class-february>.

¹⁷ <http://www.city-data.com/forum/new-mexico/535169-rv-living-new-mexico-truth-consequences-4.html#ixzz3kvYbkH1U>.

¹⁸ Richard Lozinsky, 1885. *Geology and the Late Cenozoic History of the Elephant Butte Area, Sierra County New Mexico*. Socorro New Mexico: NM Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, 14-16.

¹⁹ A phrase I also use, with credit to Kammer, on text interpretive panels in the downtown Healing Waters interpretive project.

²⁰ *Sierra County Herald*. Aug. 9, 1916, p. 1. On Sept. 17, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson issued a proclamation that restored the lands of the townsite of Hot Springs to public entry, providing pre-emptive rights for those who had squatted and already settled on the former government reservation lands. This was a common practice and the expectation of many squatters in the West.

²¹ The *Las Cruces Sun News*, April 20, 1950, claimed an April 17 raid by State Highway Police on the “bars and taverns of Truth or Consequences . . . came up with about \$8000 of gambling equipment.” An article in the *Hobbs Daily News* noted that the “raid resulted from complaints of open gambling in the community.” Similar stories appeared in the 1930s and 1940s, including charges of bootlegging. These histories also emerged in my fieldwork interviews. A Saturday, Jan. 17, 1931, story in the *Albuquerque Journal* on criminal conspiracy in the town reported that government prosecutors “painted a picture of wide open gambling and bootlegging in the town” Jan. 17, 1931, p. 1; quote, p. 4.

²² Goetz, Otto. “City of Healing Waters,” *New Mexico Magazine*, Vol. 22, No. 12, September 1944, pp. 9-11, 29-31, 31.

²³ Undated brochure, circa 1940s.

²⁴ I quote this description when commissioned to help create a series of interpretive panels in the downtown district for the Healing Waters Trail. Sherry and I requested that a citation referring to the nomination and its author, Kammer, be part of the interpretive panel text; I return to the trail as my final case study of this chapter.

²⁵ Highway 179, which ends at Highway 51, ascends on the eastside of Campo Espinoso and Mims Pond out to the town of Elephant Butte and the Lake. Highway 51 continues past Campo Espinoso and Mims Pond past the Dam and Damsite Recreation area, and ends several miles away at Engle. Several miles further south on County Road A-13 is Spaceport America.

²⁶ “Life without Salt Cedars,” by Sally Bickley.

²⁷ <http://www.arcadiapublishing.com/series/Images-of-America>

Chapter 6: Becoming Truth or Consequences

The histories of place naming, place renaming, and place promotion are central components of colonial movements across time, space, and place (Tuan 1990; Said 1978, 2000; Kearns and Berg 2002; Rose-Redwood 2008). This last part of this chapter explores the moment when the town's place-name past was cleaved from the past and a new place name was embraced. The town's name change invited a riotous reconsideration of what was real and imagined, and I draw from newspaper accounts across the state and country to consider the public commentary on the name change. In the post-war landscape of World War II in this small region of south-central New Mexico, it seemed like an exciting and novel idea, according to the people who remembered the time. The argument that naming and thus claiming place in colonial movement stretches back centuries was not a consideration in the days leading up to the name change. Some people remembered it as being a preposterous undertaking. They still hold the same opinion.

The region's romantic Spanish past is one of the themes that emerges in the the Rhodes story in Chapter 3. In addition to the old adobe hacienda, taken first as the headquarters for the Cattle Company and soon to be razed for an armory, there is the desert, the Jornada del Muerto, who name in embraced as a chilling reminder of the regions perils. There is also a fictitious soap factory named the Jornada Soap Factory. The ease with which the colonial past is romanticized, appropriated, and folded into the new colonial imaginary is striking in this story. The appropriation of recognizable or

established place names is a common colonial practice. Changing place names to reflect new power structures is common.

Political, cultural, and economic systems exert pressure. The idea of a thing however, the imaginary, is also powerful. The idea that a landscape or person or town could be radically remade is a persistent regional imaginary. The idea that greatness was imminent—looming just beyond the horizon—persisted. And the idea that you had to dream big persisted. These imaginaries defined the region at the turn of the century. The name change might have seemed like an exemplary narrative, but it was better understood as a continuation of a long history of regional expectation and a longer history of naming. The official story of the town's name change was a striking illustration of the themes running throughout this research project. This was the most unexpected finding in two years of field work. The

Origin Stories of a New Town

The official story of the town's name change, like a lot of history in the town, does not stand up to careful scrutiny. The official narrative is that the town won a national contest hosted by an immensely popular radio quiz show *Truth or Consequences*, hosted by the immensely popular Ralph Edwards. In exchange for changing its name to the name of the radio show, the town won a few specific prizes. The show would do the anniversary broadcast from the city that changed its name. The promises of recognition, fame, and fortune were less tangible prizes. The radio quiz show ran for 38 years. It aired on the radio from 1940-57 and on television beginning in 1950.

This familiar story was featured in the January 2000 *Chaparral Guide*. I use it as the most recent representative narrative. The story begins with a quote attributed to Edwards, that he wished a town liked and respected the show enough to change its name.

Although the themes are familiar, this direct quote is new, which makes this story an excellent representative narrative. The New Mexico State Tourist Bureau relayed the news to the manager of the Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, the late State Sen. Burton Roach. Although many applied, as the story goes, Hot Springs stood out, an obvious truth as the winning town.

The town was said to embody the same philosophy as Ralph Edwards and his show. It was a friendly place, Edwards was a friendly person. He was committed to doing good work. There was good work going on in the town, most notably the Carrie Tingley Hospital for Crippled Children (now the New Mexico State Veteran's Home). The town, furthermore, had the healing tradition of the hot springs, a pleasant healthy climate, Elephant Butte Lake and many other recreation areas nearby, and the genuine western hospitality of the people. On March 31, 1950, the story continues, residents voted 1,294 to 295 in favor of the name change, and the day after, Edwards and his crew flew in to do the first live coast to coast radio broadcast. The story ends with a nod to the many ways that the name change brought national attention that continues to the present.

The story on the Sierra County New Mexico tourism repeats this story with a few more flourishes. I deeply enjoy the irony of the "New Mexico True" official brand on the site.¹ "The very next day," the site continued, "on April 1, 1950, Ralph Edwards flew in with his wife Barbara, members of his staff, and press crews to conduct the 10 year anniversary broadcast of the game show "Truth or Consequences" from the City of Truth or Consequences," where the "city received an avalanche of nationwide publicity." The idea that such a feat could be executed in the very next day—that Edwards and his crew would wait for the good word and jump on a plane, disembark in the newly minted Truth

or Consequences and put on a live coast-to-coast show—is unchallenged in almost every telling.

That this would be and considered unremarkable, and remains unnoticed, is worth noting. On April 3, 1950, the El Paso Times ran a story with images that gave a different timeline to Edward's presence in the town. There is a photograph showing Edwards electioneering on Election Day. The slippage between the official narrative of the town and this one photograph that refutes the accepted story is small but telling. You can't let truth get in the way of a good story, one of my regular commentators at the deli tells me. This is something I hear often.

The name change vote, victory, and next-day appearance of the whole Hollywood crew made for a decidedly exciting story. The narrative arc of the story does not have the same suspense if Edwards was in town with a crew of technicians, waiting for seemingly already guaranteed vote to be tallied, rather than waiting in suspense in California. The veracity of this particular story is not the central concern here but certainly reflects general themes of this research project. Paradox, contradiction, and fabrication emerged with regularity in this place ethnographic research project. So do tenacity, boldness and creation.

The national exposure was meant to create a strong place imaginary of a health-resort town in a landscape crowded with places named Hot Springs or some derivative. The town sought to create a dynamic, new place identity. It was meant to highlight its hot springs mineral assets but also to create a vision of a town that offered much more than mineral springs. This included small-town charm and belonging, outdoor recreation in a temperate climate, a real chance to be a contemporary part of the old West of roping and

rodeos and cowboys, and, of course, the springs. A biography of the radio quiz show, which was known for its outrageous stunts, claimed that the “show was so popular that in 1950 a New Mexico town performed the biggest stunt of all: It renamed itself Truth or Consequences, NM.” The fact that Edwards attended the annual Truth or Consequences Fiesta for 50 years speaks volumes to his character (see Appendix 1, Figure 33, page 393). Early images illustrate the size and popularity of Fiestas.(see Appendix 1, Figures 34, page 393). Attendance at an annual parade was a promise made by Edwards, but 50 years of uninterrupted attendance was a reflection of something far deeper.

6.1 Rebranding Hot Springs in the National Press

I found no mention of the town’s well-known and well-documented past of gambling. The reputation as a good-time town had vanished. The town’s many bars, the site of gambling raids, fade from view. This was a soon-to-be-made-for television 1950’s-era good clean fun kind of fun. There is ample evidence in photographs of people and places and churches and the good church-going people of the town, the nurses and doctors at the hospital, friendly bath attendants who would sit by bathers and ensure their safety and wellness. The regular good times of rodeos and hunting, fishing, and boating recreation were a nice fit with this image of good work and good times. I did not find a single charge that the town was ill-suited to be a spoketown for the show. The idea that the town was crazy for such an attempt, however, or daring, or grasping, or savvy, or bold, however, these ideas are all present.

Newspapers across the nation ran the story of the name change. “It’s a little long, but that’s the way most of the folks here want it,” began the article in the El Paso Herald on April 1, 1950. The radio program of that name promised the town continuing publicity, it added, and quoted Mayor J. G. Mims. “Newspapers of our neighboring towns

have been taking considerable number of potshots at our name changing” and “creating difficulties which don’t exist concerning the name change,” Mims said. “Most of the newspapers, however,” he continued, “have been doing us good instead of the opposite, as the greatest majority of our citizens resent this outside interference.” From out of state, Mims said, the town was “receiving wonderful wires complementing our move and requesting immediate information about real estate properties and so forth.” The Herald noted Edwards’ presence in the town since the previous Thursday, the 30th of March. An Associated Press story, carried in newspapers across the nation, began by noting the dateline “Truth or Consequences, N.M.” had been born. The Indiana Kokomo Tribune, read, “What’s in a Name?” The paper noted the length of the name, a length that did in fact cause issues with the U.S. postmaster general. “Citizens,” the story continued, “voted to toss out the old and bring in a new name” for the promise of “continuing publicity for the action.”

A story ran in the Haywood California Daily Review that claimed “this ancient southwestern New Mexico town dropped its past and set out in the quest of a glamorous new future.” There is always an obligatory comment on the length and difficulty of the name. Thirty-four years seems a little shy of ancient, but coupled with the Southwest reference, it fits the imaginary of the region. The population count in most articles was 8,000 residents, although a few claimed 7,000. Both numbers were well above the census count of just more than 4,500. Residents cast their ballots “to drop the time-worn name of Hot Springs and adopt a moniker inspired by Ralph Edwards’ radio program” the story continued, dropping the ancient angle. Everybody was said to be happy, except one “elderly prospector” who asked: “Now who in thundersation can spell this consequences

thing anyway?” The prospector, 85-year-old R. S. Keiser, was said to have “started panning for gold in the area during the time of Geronimo.”

The narrative that protests came only from “a few old-timers” was repeated in other papers. The El Paso Times ran a photograph to compliment this old-timer foil against the modern-suited men, including Edwards and Burton, all shown on Election Day. His long-bearded visage was a testament to bygone days. The Charleston Gazette used a take on the name to create a headline, claiming that the consequences of the poll may put truth on the map. This story too claimed that the population was 8,000. The townspeople “were reported anxious to capitalize on the publicity attendant on their move, pointing out that Hot Springs, Ark., always got credit for their previous efforts.” Several month later, as the news faded completely from view, The Hobbs Daily News Sun on Oct. 6, 1950, ran a brief story titled “They’re Gonna Do it Again.” It began: “Hot Springs, New Mexico, a town with a nice name that advertises what it’s got, was rescued from the plight of being ridiculous by a court ruling.” The town, however, did not accept the “decision gladly” or look upon the name change “as a bit of folly.” Another election, the paper mused, would probably result in the same folly.

On Dec. 3, 1963, Will Harrison ran a few bleak and damning lines on Truth or Consequence in his “Inside the Capitol” column, a well-known syndicated column in New Mexico newspapers he wrote from Santa Fe beginning in the 1940s. The title “Soap Town Going Backward” was a reference to sponsorship of the quiz show. Harrison began by noting that on March 31, 1950, the residents of the town of Hot Springs voted to change their name in “anticipation of a great boom from national advertising at Ralph Edwards Truth or Consequences Radio Program.” The town had a population of 4,563 in

the census year 1950, the “fastest growing place in New Mexico,” he wrote. Ten years later, the “soap program town” was down to 4,260, and the residents were set to vote to change the name back to Hot Springs. Harrison spared no feelings in his scathing assessments. He claimed the town, which “deliberately took on the clown role,” had “phenomenal growth” until the name change and was “regarded as one of the most likely to succeed communities in the state.” Harrison conceded other factors were at play, including the levels at Elephant Butte Lake during the long drought of the 1950s and the loss of population in general from small towns across the state. There were 16 towns at his count in the 1950s census. He ended his column by noting how Proctor & Gamble, the soap company he recalled sponsoring the show when the town changed its name, was doing well, with shares that sold for \$30 in 1950 when the “clownish name was adopted” now worth \$370 after several stock splits. Harrison implied that companies do well in endorsements and advertising but not in places.

There was a curious absence of articles in the town’s papers. There were a few appeals to the public. There was an excellent editorial on looking to the future that also talked about the need for more shuffleboards to meet the demand of the modern tourist. I am perplexed by the lack of coverage in general, however. A short commentary in the Herald mentioned the incredible opportunity the town had been offered. But that was about it. I expected front-page headlines and stories. I expected something other than a few editorials. I heard from a few people that this was because the vote was guaranteed. Everyone knew the town had already won. Coverage would have made it seem like a topic worthy of debate.

On Aug. 24, 1967, the Herald reported the numbers from the fourth name change election. The first vote passed on March 31, 1950, but a technicality forced a revote in November 1950. A third election was held on Jan. 13, 1964, with a 129-vote margin in favor. The fourth vote was reported as 839 to 735, the smallest margin yet. On July 15, 1971, a short Herald article tucked into the ads on the back pages laid out the familiar narratives. Why did we change our name, the unnamed narrator asks? To be known, to be recognized, to stand out from a crowded field of little towns around the nation. The town, it continued, had received more national publicity via TV and radio than any city of its size in America. The article noted that there were no facilities to attract big money, recreation was undeveloped, and that “the type of housing to which moneyed people were accustomed was not available.” The name gave the town something. The town was “lost among hundreds of other little ‘Hot Springs’ scattered all over the United States; the name indicating nothing more significant than there were probably some hot springs in or near the city.”

The town’s merchants and businessmen were said to be accustomed to the slow pace that had marked commerce since the town began, content to reap small profit in a sleepy, little-known village. Others, however, were aware that the “city had resources to offer the nation,” resources that would bring in “thousands of tourists, health seekers and recreational enthusiasts, if these resources could only be made known.” The exciting news spread like wildfire the story continues, especially because of the chance to advertise the city and its resources for free. Mostly, however, it gave the town a chance to differentiate itself from the other Hot Springs around the nation. A parenthetical aside

mentioned that California had “something like 22 towns” with some variation of Hot Springs.²

An online story from 2006 shared similar sentiments. The residents of “Hot Springs were experiencing something of an identity crisis,” although economic crisis might have been a better word. Although the “town offered hot mineral baths for tourists and locals, fresh air, history, the Rio Grande and, since 1916, nearby Elephant Butte Reservoir,” Hot Springs “just wasn’t an original name for a town.” “Arkansas had a Hot Springs that not only had hot springs, but also history, lakes, hills, horse racing,” and “South Dakota had a Hot Springs in the Black Hills, not far from Mount Rushmore.” You could find hot springs in the mountains of Colorado, and “California had some 30 towns called Hot Springs” (3) with a lot more to offer. The name change might not have been much, as outrageous as it might have seemed, but it was something.

6.2 Contemporary Conversations about the Name Truth or Consequences

I was initially surprised by the strong attachment people have for the town’s name. The tone has changed in the past decade. Even people who think it a strange name do not think it is the kind of strange that is bad. It is the artistic brand of funky, rather than the smelly kind. People still think it is strange, but they seem more interested in the strange than put off by it. There is very little of the derision I used to hear. It has become, to quote my own blog, vintage hip, even as the town still struggles to create a strong place identity. One of my interviewees, in his early 80s, told me I could not possibly imagine the excitement in the town.

He was in his 20s when the name change happened, his recollections were sharp. His parents had moved to town because his brother was a patient at Carrie Tingley. His brother had palsy and seizures. The family stayed on when his brother passed because his

mother could not bear to leave his brother's grave. They came from Oklahoma City, where his father sold insurance. He told me the people thought they were really doing something with the name change. The feeling was like the war, it gave people a purpose he said. It was a new world after the war, though, he said, and we all knew that. It was a big thing to happen to us, he told me, and then he talked about all of the beautiful women and Edwards on his big white horse.

He told me about a world moving as fast as it is today, even though people don't see it that way looking back now. He told about how his great granddaughter, who was 3, was already playing with his phone. He told me his father told him that the world kept moving, and you either moved with it or you got left behind, and he told his older grandchildren the same thing. He also told me the most important thing was to be adaptable. The town of Hot Springs was getting left behind, he told me. Businesses were closing. None of the soldiers who were supposed to come after World War II showed up. Nobody was using the mineral water like they used to, he told me, and the town thought that the show would be the way ahead. When I asked him what he saw as the future of the town, a question I ended all of my interviews asking, he told me he thought the town would do OK. The name brought in interesting people, he said, and interesting people tended to be interested in the world. They were adaptable.

Another interview I conducted with a woman born after the name change told me her mom loved the annual Fiesta parade. She told her stories about how fun parades used to be, with thousands and thousands of people lining the streets and going to rodeos. As Kammer noted, there were more than 10,000 people in attendance at the first parade celebrating the town's name change, and the city was "inundated with thousands of

letters, and civic leaders remain convinced that the unusual name continues to prompt passing motorists to visit” (Kammer, 38). “Until 2000,” Kammer wrote, “Edwards appeared annually at Fiestas, accompanied by television and motion picture celebrities at the city’s Ralph Edwards Fiesta, portions which were later broadcast on his television show” (38).

A bathhouse owner told me that the name Hot Springs would do nothing for the town now. He would never change it back. The name makes us money, he told me. People from over the world love the name. Ask a lot of people, and they will tell you that the name is the reason they came here. I have asked a lot of people, and this is true. He said he didn’t think the name change did what people thought it would. People really thought it would make the town a big fancy resort and bring in big money people, he said. He thinks people have the same idea about the Spaceport and about Ted Turner. These are the people who would end up being disappointed in the town. He thought the name kept the town alive then, and would keep the town alive now.

Another woman told me about her mom, who passed away in the 1980s. Her mom told her it was a thrilling time. She said her mom was sad to see the town dying, which is what it looked like in the 1980s. She said she thought her mom would be happy with all the new things happening in town. I asked about the name and the future. If the town was still Hot Springs, she said, the papers would hardly mention it when they talked about the Spaceport. It brings to mind a German newspaper I saw when I was in Rome in 2011 with a story on the Spaceport. My traveling companion and I were delighted with the map. It identified Chaco Canyon, which she studies, and Truth or Consequences, my dissertation town, and the Spaceport. ³

Truth or Consequences is being rooted in the landscape in new ways, and perhaps this is a critical point. It is conjecture to speculate what kind of recognition Hot Springs would receive by virtue of its proximity to the Spaceport, but it is a common theme when I talk to people in town, especially business owners. The name is never far from conversations about the past and future. I consider whether the same experience I mention in my series on preservation is at work in the town. After the initial fashion of the name change, regardless of its portents, perhaps there is an inevitable period when the style goes out of fashion. And too, given enough passing time, when the refashioning begins. I will save these musings for my final thoughts in my concluding chapter, as well as for several international projects that are directly tied to the name. I asked a young interviewee who had a very important ceremonial role in Fiestas what she imagined it was like back when the Truth or Consequences was young. Awesome, she said. It was probably like reality TV, where everything was more real because it was so fake. I asked her to elaborate a little more because I thought it might be a really interesting insight. You know, she told me, people believed it more, even though they knew it was fake. They didn't really believe it more because it was true, she said, punctuated with exuberant "you know" queries. She said it was like when my daughter Emagen is playing make-believe (she teaches at my daughter's school). Make-believe is so intense and fun. That's why she liked to play with kids, she said. She planned on going into early-childhood education. She said her friends were happier when there was drama, because it made life seem more real and important. She was not a fan of drama. I tell her that her argument, that you have to believe in make-believe, is closely related to many sophisticated arguments on place perception. We agreed that when the town changed its

name, people did believe. She also said her friends thought the name was cool, which was very surprising to me. I do not remember ever thinking the name was cool, or my friends in town either. I do remember how much fun the kids in Albuquerque made of the name, however. I consider the idea that my own associations with the name in the 1980s have closed me off to the virtues of the name in the contemporary moment.

Some people did not agree, of course. A blog post on traveling through the Southwest, a regional writing genre with a long past and a robust showing online, called T or C “a town so desperate for recognition that in 1950 it sold its soul to a game show.” The recognition the town got was considerable, yet the in the more than half a century since the name change, that knowledge has faded. What was a thrill, or folly, then novelty, has become a quirky historical story, bereft of the romance that seemed to imbue the narratives of people who experienced the events at the time. The excitement faded, however, and by the decade’s end there was a new challenge to downtown obscurity. The construction of Interstate 25 in the 1960s contributed to the further decline of downtown. Interstate 25 through New Mexico replaced or directly overlaid Highway 85. Highway 85 came through Truth or Consequences—the new interstate completely by-passed the town.

The town, despite being so strongly imagined in so many places, struggled to create a cohesive town character. This was true before the name change. The efforts to name, define, narrate and designate a historic district created a cohesive history of one particular history—mineral waters. The name change severed many strands of the web of culture connected to the physical and imagined landscapes, to borrow from Relph and Geertz. But it also represented attempts to create a new town character. The image it was

seeking to displace was the other town reputation as a good time town that was a little shady. Some new town narratives fold in this history. A feature article on the town in *New Mexico Magazine* (October 2012) claims it was once one of the wildest and wickedest towns in the Southwest. This portrayal veers into the Wild West saloon town territory with very little nudging. I return to these currents, and the town character, in this project's conclusion.

The attempt to spin new webs with a name change seemed disingenuous to many at the time, but seemed thrilling to the people I talked to in town. There were a few I talked to who thought and still think it was a stupid move. A lot of people today think it was a cool and quirky and a little risky, in a good way. Looking at all of those bright 1950s faces is an exercise in national nostalgia, which there is no room at all to discuss in this research project. In a post-World War II landscape where the world had seemingly moved on from agricultural modernity, western settlement, closed frontiers, the wondrous healing powers of water to science, atomic warfare, and automobiles and television, the city of Truth or Consequences sought to stake a claim in the new world.

The nation never moved away from these histories or themes, they merely recast them into the newest moment. New frontiers in a Cold War-funded suburbia emerged as people moved west yet again, and the nostalgia for western themes colored Cold War rhetoric. The name change broke with the long established imaginaries and tropes of the regions but reified them as well, portraying the town as a quaint dusty little Cowtown resort. The town has never played up its New Mexico roots very much—this was just emerging in the 1940s with the renaming of Government Springs to Geronimo Springs. The name change allowed the town to stake a quick claim to the regional past, just

recently invented as a town feature, and then turn to the future—a direction it had always seemed to be set on moving.

By the 1960s, a strong counterculture was moving into town and the county. In the 1970s, town boosters were counting on the resurgence in western nostalgia and fashion to save the day. In the 1980s, the downtown was in a decline, but by the 1990s it seemed to be revitalizing with a new wave of retirees, artists, and hopefuls charmed by this quaintly named town with amazing mineral waters, just as whole health and holistic health was becoming mainstream. Now it is spaceflight and sustainability and ecotourism. As the author of a new book about a post-consumer self-sufficient lifestyle, a book set in Truth or Consequences and reviewed in this project's conclusion, said in a recent YouTube video, "Yes, it is a real place." The town might be powerfully defined by its name, but it is far more powerfully defined by its people. Place, no matter how it is defined for any particular study, is always the study of people.

Place Identity

Irwin Altman and Setha Low (1992), argue that "places are repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached" (7). Place attachment is generally defined as an emotional tie to a place. It is also generally equated with long-term connection to a place, according to Altman and Low. In my two years in the field I find place attachment to be one of the most interesting and contradictory elements in my fieldwork. Place identity describes individual sense of identification with places, premised on ideas of attachment, defined as an emotional connection, a bond of kinship, interest, experience, or affinity (Altman and Low 1992, Malpas 1999). Massey (1994) explores place-based identity as a mutually constituted expression of interactions

between the extra-local forces of political economy and the historical layers of local social relation.

Edward Relph (1976) argues that place bonding is a kind of universal connection and fulfills a basic human need. I use place character in this study to differentiate between town character and personal place identity. Place identity is used interchangeably to refer to personal as well as collective identity. This creates challenges for place scholars and practitioners. Relph writes that place identity is the “persistent sameness and unity,” which allows place to be “differentiated from others” (Relph 1976, 45). Relph uses three components to assess place identity: (1) the place’s physical setting; (2) its activities, situations, and events; and (3) the individual and group meanings created through people’s experiences and intentions in regard to that place. Place identity in this sense links individual identities and the character of places.

Place is shaped by individual identities. Place is also shaped by a plethora of other influences—including geographical, economic, cultural, social, political, and ecological features. I argue in this research project that place imaginaries, the persistent and strong pattern of place perceptions, also shape place in remarkable ways. Truth or Consequences, and the region and state as well, are all strongly imagined. These place imaginaries—cities of gold, desert Eden’s, harmonious exchange amid savage conquest, the next big thing—have been cast on the landscape for centuries. In the city of Truth or Consequences, more people embraced the imaginaries than pushed back against them. This is perhaps why the town’s place character is so enigmatic while simultaneously being so strong imagined.⁴

There is an intensity of attachment that many new to the town express. I hear from others how much they loved the town from the very first moment of their arrival. I hear from people, born and raised in the town, how much they hate these people who love the town so much when they arrive and then poof, they are gone. Some of my interviewees are so in love with the town they swear they will never leave, yet at least five of these newly and deeply in-love residents decamp during my two years of field research. And I hear from others, born and raised, how much they love the vibrancy of new energy and excitement, because they like the town fine, but not with the kind of intensity of new people, which they do not quite get. They were used to people coming and going. Anyone who has been around long enough, which is about five years by general consensus in my interviews, is accustomed to this phenomenon.

6.3 Small Town America

In April, 2013 I gave a talk titled “The Healing Waters Trail: A Case Study in Preservation Place Making,” at the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Heritage Alliance Conference at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales, New Mexico. I discussed the Healing Waters Trail as a viable rural community approach to preservation place making. I spoke to a woman who was a new resident in a small community outside of Albuquerque. It was smaller than T or C and closer to a larger city, but a small town just the same. She didn't understand why the community was so hesitant to include her. She had time and energy and talent, but no takers. She was a pretty woman in her 40s. I could tell this matter vexed her.

I told her that the people she wants to give her time, energy, and friendship to have probably seen three or four similar kinds of people in the last three or four years. They are exhausted I say. It is no small task to take in a new resident, get them involved,

form connections and give them your friendship, only to have them leave in a short few years. I remind her that the trail took ten years from inception to interpretive signage. And a trail in her community was a great idea. One of the central points of my talk, I repeated, was the time that many place making projects take. How long had she been around? Was she committed to staying for the long haul and returning the investment that it would take to include her in their lives? My questions made her pause; she hasn't really thought about it like that she said. I later learn that she has since moved to another small town in New Mexico.

There were many contrasts and tensions in the personal narratives that emerged in discussion of identity and place that mirrored the contrasts and tensions in the place history and place character in the town. The narrative that the town drew people, the town itself, was common by my second year in the field. Fate versus choice emerged in this conversation as a paradox: people expressed a strong conviction that fate brought them to the town but also that it was a choice they actively made. Many of my interviewees expressed a deep metaphysical rootedness because of this idea of town agency, held simultaneously against a freedom to express their own agency in claiming these connections. Another example of this tension was the desire to deeply belong to a place while at the same time wanting to be free of the ties—to enjoy a community without the commitments and expectations that accompany these attachments. There was an idea that community and belonging would organically emerge when a person chose to move to a small town, set against the idea that there was an insider localism that excluded new people in small towns. It is one thing to move to a small town, and another to be born in one or return to one is an idea I heard often.

Over the course of almost 70 interviews, when asked what the best feature of the town or region was, more than half of my participants claimed some variation on connection. Connection as a structure of experience emerged primarily as a sense of place belonging. Connection was defined as a human connection, rather than a sense of place connection. Community was the number one response. The strong sense of belonging and camaraderie in the ease and frequency of interaction was place defining. The community, or the people, also emerged as a frequent answer to the question of the worst characteristic of the town. I counted connection with the physical landscape (wide open space/sky/recreation/weather) as a sense of place connection. This accounted for another eleven best-feature responses.

Evidence of connection was easy to find in the town. It was immediately observable as a structure of small-town experience. This connection is visible on any morning at a busy downtown café that is frequented by the many different communities and social groups in the town. Incoming or outgoing people are welcomed or seen off by boisterous named greetings and smiles. The occasional out-of-towners are immediately recognizable by their slight hesitation at the door, and their lack of a table scan—the quick but thorough table assessment that community members make to see who they know, and acknowledge, with a nod, smile, or quick chin lift, the acquaintances who are present. This is often followed by an invitation to join the table.

Connection was offered as a ubiquitous reason people wanted to live in a small town. People told me this repeatedly for two years. This was what small towns are about, even when those connections are stifling or cruel. This was why they came or stayed, or even left. People said they wanted to find a place they belonged and were accepted for

the people they were into a community. I saw this yearning all around me, to find a place where connection meant belonging. A lot of people told me they thought they could find connections in a small town they could not find in a city. Connection is particularly strong and place defining imaginary of small towns.

6.4 Born and Raised

People who were born and raised in T or C were not nearly as concerned with place identity as other I interview. Most were conservatively upbeat about the town character, although there were very vocal exceptions. Local residents talked about expecting ups and downs, spoke positively about the future. There was a strong concern about the economy of the region, but also a shared sentiment that these problems were part of the landscape and they would always have to contend with if they stayed. This group envisioned the town's as not too much different from the past or the present. The future would be about ups and downs, in mostly manageable increments, with the occasional catastrophe. People born and raised in T or C spoke about being happy, or not, in the town. Some had left and returned and some wanted to leave. Most if this group, in interviews, talked a lot about the ties they had to the area—families and friends, the histories and events that had shaped them in this landscape. Many people who tried to get involved were discouraged by the strong personalities of the downtown crowd.

There were many people I talked to who liked the reality of a small town, but don't feel strongly about the town one way or the other. Several professional, federal workers, state and city workers, and blue collar workers I interviewed, considered the town nice but unremarkable—another small town in American landscape. They like the proximity and the connections that proximity forges. They enjoy the slow passing of time and the familiarity. This group of people was mostly satisfied with the town—they

worried about many issues, but were not invested in the idea that their place was shaping their fate more than they were. Place identity was a much more general sense of specific places, like livelihood, or a general idea about being small town people.

6.5 Small Town Returnees

The idea that positive and strong place and personal identity are mutually reinforcing is a central in literature on preservation, revitalization, place branding, and heritage-based economic growth. Place pride is cast as a desirable and necessary feature in successful places. In *Factors Affecting Former Residents' Returning to Rural Communities* (2015), U.S. Department of Agriculture researchers focused on patterns of in-migration as a strategy for small-town revitalization. The article begins with a discussion of rural versus urban poverty. Noting the persistent patterns of rural poverty, the authors claim it is a pattern that has existed since the 1960s—when poverty rates were first officially recorded.

Lack of opportunity has also been traditional associated with out-migration. The article noted that out-migration caused a median decline of 28% among 20-24-year-olds in non-metropolitan counties from 2000-2010. This was compared to an 8% decline in metropolitan counties. Young people, as is widely known, leave small towns. Pushing against this idea of rural poverty are equally persistent ideas about stronger family networks and the lure of small-town affordability, which make small town a viable choice for many families. The authors claim that migration narrative should shift to include a broader life-cycle migration. Stemming rural population loss and spurring economic development may depend less on retaining young adults after high school, they argued, than on attracting them back with families in tow.

According to the report's data, gathered from 300 interviews at high school reunions in 21 small towns, returnees were local gold. Retirees wanted to move back to a familiar place and make a positive contribution. Working people desired to raise kids in the small, tight-knit community where they grew up or similar to where they grew up. Both groups used education, skills, and experiences acquired elsewhere to start businesses and fill leadership positions, according to researchers. A follow-up study on this sample of 300 would be fascinating.

I met four couples who reflected the first cohort. All departed before my second year of fieldwork was finished, although one family has moved back. The idea that returnees come back with education and businesses is also touted. The general idea was that returnees come back to their hometowns with all kinds of capital, especially cultural capital, echoes arguments made by creative class champions. It was a returnee, Dr. Pat Rocco (EdD), who spearheaded and galvanized the long-running efforts to establish a downtown historic district. Under her leadership, the project was realized after 25 years. She has since moved away again, to be closer to her children.

There is another kind of returnee that does not bring skills or cultural capital back to town, but do bring their children back. One of my study participants is two years away from retirement from a federal public land job and lives by the river in Williamsburg. It is a beautiful early spring day, one day past the spring equinox. It is warm and windy day with huge cumulous clouds and dappled sunshine and budding trees. This participant was born and raised in the town, and returned to work after he finished college. His litany of complaints about newcomers is long, but foremost is the lack of basic skills they bring. Used to be if you moved here you had to know a little something about everything, he

says. That's not the case nowadays; you don't need to know much to get by anymore. He claimed there are good services for poor people, but that was only part of it. It was the basic stuff that people didn't bother with, like fixing broken things, or saving to buy things, instead of buying things with credit. He claimed that most people who moved to the town were not surviving the bigger towns, for whatever reason, but mostly it had to do with a lack of money and a lack of skill. He told me about his own daughter moved to California but didn't make it out there. She is a returnee back in town with two kids and no job, no skills, and a few college classes. He said her kids don't see anything but TV and people who drink and smoke all day.

People in town who want to make T or C the next big place just focus on people like Ted Turner he said. He doesn't even live here, he continued. He may have investments, but if there is an issue on his lands, Turner's people have access to bigger guys than me to solve them. When people don't need you, or think they don't need you, there is less pressure to keep small programs funded. A lot of people don't realize how much of our work here is small he told me. We're federal and state, but mostly we're about as local as you get he claimed. He thought the bureau would do away with his job instead of hiring someone, or contract work out, no benefits, bad pay. It's like a race to the bottom and we're digging our own hole (Q., March 21, 2013).

6.6 Town and County. Or, The Rural Core and Downtown Periphery

Sherry Fletcher often commented that a dominant characteristic of T or C was the lack of vertical integration. There was only horizontal integration, she claimed, an idea she illustrated with stacked lists of social groups boxed on a page: the downtown/Art Hop crowd, downtown businesses, businesses outside of the historic district, rural families, retirees, rural poor and town poor, newcomers, blue collar workers. She maintained that

there was very little movement—and not a lot of interaction—between these kinds of groups. I perceived the most persistent gulf between the people who keep to the downtown area and those who grew up in other parts of town or in the outlying rural areas. I heard this in almost every interview I conducted. There is some exchange between the two demographics, but not a great deal.

There are very few people who bridged the downtown core and rural periphery, or, as many in see it, the rural core and downtown periphery. The division between the urban and the rural is an ever-more defining feature of of American political landscapes. What I see in Truth or Consequences illustrates this divide. The people in the small historic downtown core are very urban. They are just urban on a very small scale. They are liberal, celebrate art and culture, have traveled widely, and often come from other places. They have more in common with my friends in Albuquerque than the people who live near to them in the rural areas of the county. Similarly, my rural friends have much more in common with my rural friends in Bernalillo than they would with people in T or C. There are also people in the rural periphery who have much more in common with the downtown urban core and the city urban-core lovers; they just want to live in the actual country or in small villages. A lot of people I meet who live in town identify as rural. A word I hear often by people who self-define as rural is the word country.

This was not *the* country as defined by my youth, i.e. the place that is not the city. It is a geographical affiliation, but not necessary where you live. It referred to the places and people you claimed, however. Saying you are country is similar to saying you are Hispanic, or a mom, or a teacher. An example is when people say, “I may live in town, but I’m country.” It was an identity marker and cultural affiliation, associated with a

geographical periphery that is understood to be the American core. Country stood for a lot of things. Country was variously defined as a great love of home and country and strong military pride, coupled with a general disregard for government. There was a strong sense of allegiance to duty and traditional values, expressed as hard work and honesty. It was a very Republican and Christian identity, with a wide streak of wild—tear it up, have fun, drinking and partying are celebrated, as long as you were up in the morning. Laziness is not tolerated. Money did not come up much—some people who are country do quite well financially, some scrape by on very little.

Regardless of all else, country means real and genuine. One interviewee told me the two groups only get together at the country-inspired street dance held during Fiestas. She refers to this division as town verses country. Town people are downtown people, affiliated with art, preservation, mineral springs and tourism. These people are not real, and cannot be counted on when things get tough. Country people are very community-minded, expressed in a lot of shared events and a lot of mutual support and assistance, and are there for you when you need them. We work for a living, she says. She favors big, sparkling, county-style belts, Wranglers, and ropers. There is nothing for us down here—indicating the downtown area—she tells me over coffee (A. Dec. 13, 2015).

6.7 A Place to Be Myself, or, Don't Ask me Who I Am

There is a fiercely protected idea in Truth or Consequences that you are allowed to be who you want to be, at least if you live downtown. People who were trying to figure themselves out, or in some measure be who they imagined they were or were meant to be, or might still become, or who they have always been but have never been recognized as being were common. The pervasive idea that there was an easing of expectation was a familiar sentiment. A lot of new people I interviewed expressed a deep place attachment

and a strong place identity. This group strongly identified with the town, and said the town reflected their desires to be themselves or to be who they always knew they were or always wanted to be. They seemed very happy to find the town, with its odd name and odd people and easy contours of acceptable personal expression. If you were country, you are who you run with, or what you do, or who your family is, or some variation on this theme. If you live downtown, you are whoever you want to be.

The urban downtown dwellers in this small town had strong ideas about place. The town emerges as a central component in their expression of self-identity, or at least who they imagine they will be in the town. This was why people come here, looking for a place to call their own. The town, with its name and its reputation, draws people who seek to define themselves by their place and their choice of place. Making the choice to come to the region was still perceived as a rigorous personal journey. This was a persistent theme that emerged again and again in interviews. This fit with literature on the creative class and other popular culture books about place. It fit with long-established place imaginaries of the region as a place where a person could invent or reinvent themselves, make their fortunes or find themselves a home.

The mother of a 16-year-old who I also interviewed told me she chose T or C after living in Albuquerque. She visited the town with a friend from Santa Fe who was in town to sober up. Drunkenness and sobriety are both dominant town themes historically and in the contemporary landscape. She realized that she had been living her whole life removed from who she really was. She didn't explain this idea very well, but she did say that she felt at ease in T or C in a way she had never felt in any other place (B., May 16, 2013). Her friend, who she originally came to visit, now visits her in T or C. He loved the town,

like a lot of artists. In a similar fashion, a former professional who lived outside of the town, and spent a lot of time with this woman, said he got to be exactly who he was too, as he joined our conversation without an invitation and took it over. Who were you before? I asked. Some other guy, he said. Some asshole, he continued. The girl at the counter of the coffee shop where we were talking chimed in, very quietly, but loud enough for him to hear, that he was still an asshole. They both laughed.

Her 16 daughter, on the other hand, was a self-described church-going conservative. She thought that her mom and her mom's friends were delusional. This was a reflection of her teenage outlook, but she was also very astute. Her observations about her mom and her mom's friends are spot on; she captured how the insistent yearning to sincerity that often came across as insincere (L. May 18, 2013). One gorgeous woman told me she moved to make something real out of her life in the most unreal place she could find. She loved telling people where she was, she said, and having her friends come to visit her. She loved the Southwest; the freedom that has been missing from her life was here, she said emphatically. It was in the town. She was gone within the year (L. Dec. 4, 2012).

The idea that people can *become* in T or C emerged as a key element of the town's individual place identity. The idea that the town is also becoming is a part of this narrative. This is also the central defining element in the town's character. This was why people came to town. It is also what they expect of the town, that it will become something more I was very interested in people new to the town. I defined that as living in the town for five years or less. Place played a much more powerful role in their expression of identity. The stronger the perceptions about the town and region, and the

stronger the expectations about what moving to this place meant personally, the more disappointment people were with the town.

The town does not live up to people's expectations. There are many people who still expect the town to be something better, soon, which is a defining imaginary, and many local people who are deeply involved who see the town as better all of the time, visually, culturally and economically, although they note that it is a fight to try to create the place they imagine. There are strong positive perceptions about the town as a place to stop and rest and unwind, but people are continuously cautioned against getting trapped.

Against the common and celebrated narrative was that people could be themselves in the town, was the equally ever-present warning that people were not who they seemed. There was a shared agreement that a lot of people in town were scammers, grifters, and con artists. This idea persisted in the minds of locals and newcomers alike. Partly this was because people accepted who you were in this town, said a long-time resident, and that meant people could get away with making up the people they were. Partly, she said, the town had always been loose, and those reputations stick around (G. Aug 30, 2012).

One of my interviewees lived in the town in the 1940s but left before the name change. He attended to 3-7th grades. His dad worked for a few of the bars around town doing off-the-record work. He's not sure what kind, but they had plenty of money and his friends had very little. He tells me about the politicians down from Santa Fe who used to stop to gamble and see the girls, back when the highway ran straight through town. He could run Mexican food to the Buckhorn to the politicians they would tip him half dollar

pieces occasionally. He showed me one. The the edges were smoothed by age and it glowed with a heavy luster.

I tell him that this history is great, and we should record some of it. It is brand new history to me and heady stuff. He says he remembers it as tense and mean, but fun. But he also remembers it is ordinary and much better looking downtown than it is today. There were a lot of bars he tells me. And churches he says, as an afterthought. He was young. He had no desire to put himself on the permanent record. Some of those people are still around in the state he tells me, but won't say anything more.

He thought the town was dull but improved in some ways. He described it as quieter than it was. He remembered leaving almost overnight with no chance to say goodbye. He did not go back to school after Hot Springs. He still does a lot of odd jobs. He is in his 70s. He came back a dozen years ago when his wife left him and lives in a small apartment by the Circle K. He has a lot of close friends. The town, he tells me, has always been full of shifty people who take advantage of where it is, so close and yet so far away. It's easy to make contacts here, but just as easy to break them he claims. (R. J., 2 October 2012).

In September of 2012, I approached a woman in a new-looking and very fancy RV for an interview. She had parked her huge RV next to a bathhouse where she also worked most days. She had been in town seasonally for years. She was in her mid-fifties, short and wholesome-looking, no makeup, a warm smile. I asked for an interview and she readily agreed. The next day when I went back she was gone. She and her husband had pulled up stakes in the middle of the night. The information the bathhouse owners had about her was, they discovered, completely bogus. No one seemed to take this very

seriously, even the bathhouse owners. I found this more startling than the middle-of-the-night disappearance.

I told a lot of people this story in the weeks that followed, and no one seemed to find it remarkable. They did find it entertaining. A few people told me I had a good cover story for snooping around. The idea that people want to be left alone and that they come to T or C so they don't have to relive the past comes up as part of their being who they want to be. It took me a while to shake the feeling that I was breaking a big town protocol after this encounter. I was interfering in the personal privacy of a resident, which was not okay. And yes, people exclaimed, it is a small town where everybody knows your business, but that doesn't mean you should go messing in that business. People have a right to be left alone.

A beautiful European woman who has been in town for several years tells me it is a stinking shithole of a place full of broken people, and that she is starting to feel like one. She is displaced from her home, and yearns for a place far away. I hear from many others that after a lifetime of being broken, physically, spiritually or emotionally, they are finally learning how to be whole in the town, that they feel like they have found a home. The idea that town is full of people who, like the tee shirt says, are all here because they not all there, is celebrated and bemoaned. There is the 'not all there' that captures the lighthearted delight in the feeling that people can be themselves, a little odd perhaps, but well-meaning.

There is also the 'not all there' of the crazy people who are mean, or dangerous, or broken. I hear these arguments time and again, but I do not think the town is markedly different from other places I have known. I do think the contrasts and tensions in the

town, the paradoxes of the modern, are remarkably visible. These contrasts magnify complexities of place identity and place character in this small place, and potentially illuminating place. The town, both enigmatic and representative, illustrates ways that place is emerging at the turn of the 20th century.

6.8 Passing Through

I interview one couple who had just moved to town in the summer of 2012. They had visited for many years, and were ready to settle down. In their initial description of T or C they used words like “quirky,” “cool,” “laid-back.” They couldn’t stop talking about the things they liked—the people, the art, the soaks, the rocks, the sky, and so on. The idea that they had finally found their place was repeated in celebratory unison. Three months later I saw them again—on the day before they were going to leave town. Their pending departure surprised me, and I asked why they were leaving.

One of the women talked about how the town draws you in with the mineral soaks, the small pretty downtown, and how everything seems great—until, her partner interjected, you wake up and it doesn’t. She likened it to finding yourself in a stranger’s bed and not remembering how you got there. Her partner said that people are crazy in the town, and perhaps that is why they liked it in the beginning. The town appears to be a beautiful place, but the downtown is really a stagnant cesspool of negative energy that soaks out of people in the hot water. (S. & J. 28 August 2012).

One of my favorite people in town was a sharp-minded, keenly observant veteran and former newspaper man in his early 80s. We shared many conversations because he sat outside his apartment. I saw him there regularly and regularly stopped to visit. During my official interview with him, he said something about people and places that filled me with melancholy. Places move on, he said. He claimed that he had been in many places,

all over the world, and they had been his places. But he had left was T or C, a place that tolerated him, with his small pension, but was not his own. He said that place wasn't his, but he was still in it.

I countered this assertion with the idea that the town depended on all the old soldiers like him to rent out the small apartments and sit by the sidewalk all day long. How else would the nurses at the veteran's center and the home-care nurses make a living? But that wasn't what he was talking about; he was talking about his ideas about the world mattering, about being able to shape the world. He had been a newspaper editor for many years, and I said there was nothing to stop him from writing still. I have nothing to say to this place, he told me. I did not know if he was talking about the town or the world in general, but did not ask (J. Jan. 17, 2013).

In *The Predicament of Culture*, anthropologist James Clifford (1988) said that “people and things are increasingly out of place” (Clifford 1988, 6). I always took this as a critique of globalization and, simultaneously, urbanization. This impulse is sound—global capitalism displaces people. But this interview made me rethink what it meant to be out of place. What this man was talking about was being part of a place in the sense that you matter, that you contribute to the place's vitality, that you are a necessary part of the daily life and economic base of the town. When a place is not your own, the identity you have is looser—it is historical, grounded in a place that no longer exists, even if you can still see it.

I did not know how to group the beautiful woman from Israel who rode her bike around town and had a young daughter, both of whom lived in an old travel trailer parked in a backyard. She cooked on a small grill and bathed with a garden hose. She hung

colorful scarfs around and made it a magical-looking place. She took her girl to piano lessons that she traded for fruit she picked around town. She got many favors and a lot of help for the fact of her beauty alone. This did not change the fact her daughter was not in school, and she was 6 years old, and temperatures were over 100, and they were living outside, just this side of homelessness. She was a drifter and free spirit, but I worried about her and her daughter. There was a migrant landscape of nontraditional stakeholders in the town. They were like modern-day squatters but less involved in town building than their historical counterparts. The migrant landscapes of the town, from RV to campers and travel trailers to old trucks and parked cars, speak to a temporary landscape. It is a landscape, however, populated with some 5, 10 and even 20 year residents.

What is This Place? Familiar Narratives

The *New York Times* published an article in Nov. 1, 2006, that began with the headline “Town Looks to the Future, Again, for an Identity.”⁵ The article was full of the same kind of invention that defined this town—a narrative that veered deep into historical creation. “Odd little Truth or Consequences is the closest community of any size” to the Spaceport, the article claimed, a community of “7,000 to 10,000 people varying with the season.” In two years living there, I could not find the extra 3,000 people, unless the author referred to the tens of thousands who crowded the lake on holidays. The downtown was not especially crowded on these holiday weekends. Walmart busted. The town was “a rich salsa of snowbirds, retirees, dropouts, sportsmen, fundamentalists and new-agers, where art galleries daubed in sunflower yellow and Frida Kahlo blue sprout beside thermal spas, massage studios, churches and cowboy bars.” The cowboy bars should have been singular.

The article claimed that 50 years prior, this “onetime roughneck boomtown . . . hitched itself to the futuristic technology of television.” The town, now “finds itself on the threshold of another new age and unlikely new identity: gateway to the cosmos.” The article quoted a display at the Geronimo Springs Museum from Lew Wallace, the Union general, author, and New Mexico Territorial governor from 1878 to 1881. Wallace said that every “calculation based on experience elsewhere fails in New Mexico.” There is a passing mention to a “villa-ringed golf resort,” since gone bankrupt, and developers “moving ahead with a huge Nascar racetrack,” which never materialized.

The familiar historical narrative followed. “In an area long revered by Indians for its bubbling warm waters,” the writer claimed, “Hot Springs sprang up in 1911 as a labor camp for the Elephant Butte Dam, which created a 40-mile-long lake and recreation area—and a sin city of gunslingers, saloons, gambling halls, and brothels, including a floating pleasure palace on the lake.” The town was not a labor camp. I have seen it misidentified in other places, but these were usually personal blogs. There are no records of brothels, in town oral tradition or otherwise. Narratives of prostitution are common. There are new stories of small caches of gambling equipment in the back rooms of a few bars. There is a decidedly hot tub feel to the bubbles. The *New York Times* writer joined an HBO-themed *Deadwood* Wild West imaginary to the small desert town. There were always a handful of downtown bars. According to individuals who lived in the area, there were plenty of opportunities for paid female companionship. According to news and police reports, there was gambling in a few back rooms. The leap, however, to a sin city of gunslingers, brothels, and gambling halls was straight out of dime novels. The claim of a floating pleasure palace was an entirely new narrative.

A *New York Times* article from Oct. 3, 2008, whose headline read “Geronimo Soaked Here,” began by noting that “calling your town Truth or Consequences is pretty much a cry for attention,” which was what the fading town wanted in 1950, but “it’s the excitement over Spaceport America, the world’s first commercial spaceport, which hopes to open in 2010, that’s recharged the mojo.”⁶ The article claimed that the announcement caused property values to soar, which I found no evidence of on a quick review of home prices on the home-buying website Zillow. It also claimed the excitement caused a handful of galleries to open. Art galleries open regularly. No gallery owners I talked to said the Spaceport brought them to town. These galleries may have come and gone. The Italian restaurant mentioned in the article as coming to town was opened by a local girl.

The article’s other claims were unremarkable. “Yet there’s still nothing fancy about the sunbaked hodgepodge of bungalows, mobile homes and ranchstyle houses sprawled around the tiny downtown,” the article claimed, in this community “between a stretch of highway and the Rio Grande and is bordered by mountains and desert that’s mostly part of Ted Turner’s 358,643 acre Armendaris Ranch.” That the “stark beauty and quirky local vibe are catnip for stubborn individualists” is decidedly accurate. The article wrapped up with a nod to the ways that history emerges when history is written by place boosters. “For most, however, the biggest lure in T or C is underground—the hot springs that the Apache leader Geronimo is said to have enjoyed.”

One interviewee thought the new wave of New Age healers and the Spaceport believers were not much different from the groups that came before them—even the meth heads, she added. She has lived through these waves. The town had hipsters, we concluded, and thus was hip. The Ted Turner presence was subtle but moneyed. The

gays, she continued, brought the best gentrification of all. The snowbirds were boring, but they ate out a lot, which was good for downtown. She liked the way the people who came here thought that fate drew them. She thought it created a stronger place attachment than the other draws, at least in the short term, she said. She thought the name made people think it was fate. We are talking about why people come and why they go.

Her favorite group was the city people who came to rough it and learn country ways, made slightly easier with latte and Wi-Fi, she said. This newest wave of individuals was going back to the old ways with some new twists. Nothing new there, she said, except they were much better looking. They want to learn them a little survival, she told me, and started singing Hank Williams' Country Boy Will Survive. This woman is terrifically observant and also hilarious. She was my typology sounding board. She has been in the town for over 30 years. Her house is in the very rural periphery (L., Jan. 7, 2013).

The popular gay travel magazine *Passport* wrote an article in February 2013 titled "Truth or Consequences: The Small Town with the Big Future."⁷ One place maker of considerable might mentioned that the town chose him, rather than the other way around, and a local business owner said the town felt like it was on the verge of something interesting and exciting, and the scales could tip easily, but part of what held the town back from greatness also lent to the appeal of living there. This comment captured the town character, T or C is an unremarkable regular small town, struggling to survive and trying very hard to thrive, that has been made remarkable, in small ways, by a lot of things. The hot mineral water was and is the town's greatest asset for the revitalization of the downtown area. This will bring new people to town. It will bring urban people, and

creative-class people, and artists and others who like their small towns to be hip and urban. The lack of hipness and screaming lack of an urban fabric will send most of these people away, but enough always seem to stick around and commit to the town's futures.

I do not think the town will grow considerably, and I do think it will have the same kind of cyclical periods of decline that have always marked its history. Overall, however, the town seems to be on a very slow and steady incline. It will be a small, affordable, quirky and laid-back spa resort. It will be dump to many and a charming little getaway to others. T or C will be passed by on the interstate by the overwhelming and vast majority of people. People will come to see the Spaceport. They already do. They will take the tour from the center of the downtown historic district because they are not allowed to drive into the Spaceport. This is good news. The Spaceport Visitor Center is now housed in the historic WPA Lee Bell Center in the middle of downtown. This is despite the efforts of town citizens, supposedly against most things, to keep it a community senior center.

The town is not really a bastion of small-town affordability. This is the argument of many, but I did not find that to be the case in my fieldwork. Rent for a one bedroom is equivalent to Albuquerque. Rural utilities are not cheap either. There are some super cheap places to live. The really-bad apartments and Section 8 housing are within walking distance of the cool art houses. Everything is in walking distance, if you have an afternoon. People will always pick you up walking to or from Walmart. People can live in their car or truck or small travel trailer and park it in one of the trailer courts in the center of downtown. People can retire early and live in a huge RV and park it at a nearby KOA campground or on a few lots in town or on the periphery of town. It is a cheap

place to stay for a resort-type town. It is a grindingly poor place, like all of New Mexico, obscured by landscape, architecture and people who create a uniquely charming sense of place. New Mexico is still a real place, and not a façade place. Every wave of colonizers and newcomers tries to command New Mexico, but ultimately only add to the cacophony.

There is some very nice high-end art in some of the galleries. A few local artists have a solid following in the art world. The bright-color palate of the town, the copious artwork and murals and sculptures are place defining—it has become an art town. It is a Santa Fe for the poor. I heard this often during my fieldwork. In a recent review of several artists from the Rio Bravo Gallery the town is described, in a typical fashion.

Truth or Consequences is no idyllic destination. It's run down; it's bare bones. The sun-bleached, peeling paint that pervades downtown rings with the city's emptiness like a long, sighing exhale. However, underneath the fallen-on-hard-times crust is an eccentric hardiness and happenstance charm that is relished by some, lost on others... For those willing to look under the skin of things, Truth or Consequences offers a special kind of romance involving eccentric charms and gravity. Truth and Consequences sounds more appropriate.⁸

The wealthy and the determined triumphed in the creation of a strong and globally renowned place identity in Santa Fe. No one triumphed in T or C, despite repeated efforts. This is one of the reasons I think the town remains so tantalizingly open to all of the people who come to town and want to make it over to their own vision. Many people in the course of my fieldwork perceived the town as something different from perhaps what it *was*. They perceived it as an extension of what they would become in the town. People are repeatedly disappointed in the town because it does not live up to what they think it should be.

The creation of the historic district has impacted the long-term sustainability of the town. The town is emerging as a more visually and thematically cohesive. This is something people did not think about before the second half of the 20th century. It is something they must think about now. Branding and marketing campaigns will define the future of place. In ways they always have—critique has just made people more aware of these histories. Sierra County’s largest landholder is Ted Turner, who is also the second-largest landholder in the nation. In addition to a 900-square-mile ranch in Northern New Mexico, he owns the Armendaris and Ladder ranches in Sierra County. Together, they cover more than 800 square miles. The Armendaris is on the east side of Truth or Consequences, at the northern edge of the Mexican grasslands. The Ladder Ranch is west of Truth or Consequences, at the southern end of the northern grassland. A New Mexico Magazine article notes that the “state’s largest landowner is opening his two enormous ranches near Truth or Consequences to eco-tourism,” and that it could be a “pretty big deal.”⁹

Sustainability will be, at the very least, a small economic boom to the town. It is a new incarnation of becoming—restoring the land to what it was. This is also the narrative of the newest wave of hot mineral waters healing. It will restore healthy functions to a body, also ravaged by the modern world. This is the newest modern becoming. To fans of the town and current boosters, it is a town on the verge. It has always been a town on the verge, in real and imagined way. It is a very hopeful vision, which I fully share. There are some serious caveats to this cheerful booster-driven outlook.

6.9 Not All is Well in the Land of Hot Water, Sunshine and Sustainability

My first case study was a short observation. The methamphetamine problem is much worse than almost anyone was willing to admit. People talked about it, and there were a

few signs about neighborhood meth watches, but there was no sustained community dialogue. Most people I know in town knows someone personally who smokes meth, and smokes it daily. A lot of these people have no idea they knew an addict. I do not share even this confidence, because people will push you to tell them who, exactly, they know. Many confidences are shared with me. I do one extended interview with a hard-core methamphetamine user. People drift in and out all day. I am there all day. Everyone who comes in and out of the apartment, dozens of people over the course of a single day, tell me the drug is everywhere in town. When you know this fact, it becomes obvious.

You can smell the sweet odor in low-income housing units like Puesta. People are careful. You get kicked out of subsidized housing if you get caught. You can smell it walking down the street. I hear about certain trailer parks, trailers and run-down apartments on the edges, and begin to watch the transactions when I pass by these places. I start to recognize addicts at Walmart, K Mart, the park, and at some local businesses. The too-thin bodies and discolored teeth, the strange evasiveness, the missed dates for coffee—these are signs. Sometimes there are no signs. People told me they smoked. Signs were probably not far behind.

Several people tell me there are houseboats on the lake where people cook; one girl says she had been on the deck when they cooked inside. We are talking about this at the pond at Ralph Edwards Park. We sit on a picnic table and look at Ralph Edwards Lake. For some reason is empty and extremely ugly. I had no idea if there is any truth to this. She tells a lot of crazy stories, but I have heard a few collaborated. People still ask me, all the time, how I can be so sure that Apache did not soak in the springs. I can show them a lot of proof, but cannot say for certain that Aapche did not travel through grueling

and dangerous landscapes to soak in a hot mud pool. They might have done it for the chloride, which is a known disinfectant. I can say I am 99.9% certainty, however, that these stories originated with White settlers to the area. That was what I tell people. There may have been an enormous floating pleasure palace that remains a ghost in the archives. Who am I to say that impossible stories are not real?

There is a looming crisis of old people who are too old to be on their own without people. A lot of people know this is true. There are a lot of meetings about this problem. I interview several veterans at their homes. This is against Institutional Review Board protocol, so it should not be publically mentioned. These veterans didn't get around very easily. I go into one home so filthy it makes me gag. I call a friend at the veteran's center, who calls people she knows, and get him help. It makes me wonder how many similar cases there are around town. A new executive director is brought in in 2014 to lead the Sierra Joint Office. Several years of fiscal issues, sloppy record keeping, and other discrepancies has left the agency in poor shape. This is an issue the town will have to reckon with, as well as addressing the lack of basic services that are grant funded and perilous.

There is a tenacious optimism in the town that pushes against a stubborn pessimism. The optimism is a future-looking optimism. It is based on the belief that the town has so many attributes that it is bound to be successful. The pessimism is a past-oriented pessimism. It is based on what is perceived as a history of failing and corruption, and a continuous record of struggle with decline that haunts the region. Place of all sizes are faced with the similar issues in the current moment. The loss of population and crumbling infrastructure, ecological and environmental devastation, poverty, drug use

and other social ills crowd into an already crowded field, pushed back by efforts to create places that are healthy as well as vibrant.

It is a monumental task on a daunting scale. The conversations evoke early and federal reclamation narratives in the region. There is a reckless optimism and hope about potential that was made possible through massive federal intervention and huge influxes of federal money—creating systems both fragile and tenacious. The entire region, built on public lands and federal dollars, is fragile and tenacious. Truth or Consequences never shared in the modern promise of reclamation. The town had its own small base economy in mineral waters and escape, mixed with a small regional economy of mining and subsistence farming. These economies are being reworked into the newest modern. There is a scrappy obstinacy that defines the town and region. It is shared by the pessimists and optimist alike.

There is some middle ground. Most of the middle ground is held by people in the rural periphery. Although the rural periphery is a mash-up of subsistence ranching and farming families, gentrified city people who create beautiful places and people who set up trailers and propane tanks, they nonetheless deliver a consistent message that the town is just another small town, even if it does tend to attract the more elaborate kind. Many people in the town occupy this middle ground. Extremes are more visible in town's landscapes. This is true in the region.

The alarming disappearance of Elephant Butte Lake was mitigated by a few less-than-severe drought years. The visual evidence was captured in NASA images that compared the body of bright blue in 1994 and in 2003 (see Appendix 1, Figure 48 & 49, page 400).¹⁰ A 2011 year-long moratorium on drilling new wells was lifted after the latest

study on the town's mineral spring resources. The city updated the 1940 geological study of the mineral waters undertaken by the state engineer's office, which identified 35 artesian wells, springs, and sumps in the district. The study, an "Assessment of the Sustainability of Geothermal Development within the Truth or Consequences Hot-Springs District, New Mexico," was conducted by the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (October 2013). Very little quantitative change was found in the measurement of similar variables. This was despite the insistence of at least one vociferous bathhouse owner who had been tracking output at his artesian well for years.

6.10 Eco-Tourism and Space Tourism

Sierra County's largest landholder is Ted Turner, who is also the second-largest landholder in the nation.¹¹ His land in Sierra County encompasses a former privately held Spanish land grant, the Armendaris, which is the largest private land grant ever deeded in New Mexico, and the Ladder Ranch, a private conservation area that covers 515,082 thousand acres in Southern New Mexico. Together, they cover more than 800 square miles. The Armendaris is on the east side of Truth or Consequences, at the northern edge of the Mexican grasslands.¹² The Ladder Ranch is west of Truth or Consequences, at the southern end of the northern grassland.

There are mixed feelings about Ted Turner in town. A lot of people I interview do not know much about Ted Turner, except that he owns a lot of land nearby. Longer-time residents know more about Ted Turner and his two Sierra County ranches. Turner's purchase of the Sierra Grande Lodge in April 2013 was big news downtown. A press release given out at the Lodge included a short narrative that bolstered confidence about the town's future by many downtown enthusiasts, and noted that Turner was broadening his presence in the hospitality industry. Turner is known "for his vision and

entrepreneurial acumen,” the press release notes, and he “believes the Sierra Grande has unique business potential.” The Sierra Grande, the press release continues, “is well known for its unparalleled combination of luxurious accommodations, rustic charm and relaxing spa and mineral baths,” and “is also a launching point for exploring the area’s exciting recreational, eco-tourism and artistic opportunities including ancient hot springs, hunting and fishing, hiking, boating, bird watching, historic ghost towns, fine art galleries and world class golf.” The press release includes a quote from Turner, who says he visited in 2014 and “fell in love” with the property. “It has a rich history and rustic charm that is hard to find these days.”¹³ The press release refers to bathhouse hot springs that “honor the legendary healing traditions first established by the region’s Native Americans.”

The press release notes the strategic location of the Lodge, and by extension the town, to the ranches, “where we’re expanding eco-tourism opportunities for guests,” and the “Spaceport my friend Richard Branson is developing.” The Turner/Branson presence in Sierra County County is tangible and tantalizing. Spaceport America is by far the more well-known presence in the county due to its press coverage. As the Turner Ranches receives press for their “eco-conscious journeys,” where guests can “experience their own, exclusive “national park,”” their presence in the place imaginary as well as their local impact and reputation will increase.¹⁴ Not many people in town can afford even the \$200 starting price of the half-day tours on either ranch. The wide range of outings include paleontology and mountain biking tour, a geocache summit trek, a heritage and photography tour that promises majestic landscape that have witnessed the “the passage of countless Spanish pioneers along the Jornada Del Muerto section of the historic El

Camino Real,” and “Ted’s Vision Quest Hike, that “leads you along a unique path once used by ancient Native Americans cultures for their sacred vision quest ceremonies.”¹⁵

Fewer in the town can afford the Spaceport America and Armendaris Expedition tour, which promises a “a full day of adventure, gazing into the future and discovering the past, while exploring two of New Mexico’s inspirational landmarks: Spaceport America and Ted Turner’s historic, 363,000-acre Armendaris Ranch.” This \$900 first guest and \$475 for additional guests’ outing offers a behind-the-scene tour of the Spaceport and a guided tour of the ranch. Guests with private aircraft can opt to land on Spaceport America’s two-mile-long Spaceway for an additional landing fee. I do not know who in town, unless Ted is at the Lodge, can afford the \$200,000 dollar ticket to space, when and if spaceflight comes to Sierra County. The Spaceport has generated a global attention. There is considerable backlash over the tax dollars that have gone into this project launched by Sir Richard Branson and former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson. There was considerable grumbling in town, but citizens aligned with a specific well-known group in town, when the WPA downtown Lee Bell Center was named as the new Spaceport Visitor’s Center in summer 2015. Tours to the Spaceport, which is a locked facility, now depart from downtown Truth or Consequences. Plans to build a Visitor’s Center at either the Williamsburg exit or the Truth or Consequences exit were ultimately unsuccessful. This was a boom for the historic core and downtown businesses.

Contemporary Spaceport narratives include familiar imaginaries. “During the journey out and back from the remote spaceport site, surrounded by the scenic beauty and rugged high desert range of New Mexico’s Old West,” reads the narrative of the the official Spaceport site, “visitors learn the history and evolution of the regional Spanish

and Native American pioneers of the past to the space pioneers of the future and the dawn of the second space age.”¹⁶ The Anglo presence of this narrative seems to be delegated to the “Old West,” or just ignored. The press release on the opening of the Visitor’s Center claims the “historic adobe building with original features from the 1930’s,” the Visitor’s Center “offers a wonderful contrast of the old frontier meeting the new.”¹⁷ The center is said to offer “exciting educational and interactive space exhibits,” where “visitors can reserve or purchase tour tickets and official Spaceport America merchandise prior to journeying out to the Spaceport America site.” City of Truth or Consequences mayor Sandra Whitehead is quoted as saying that the town is delighted to “visitors from across New Mexico and the globe to the City of Truth or Consequences, and that the “educational and economic benefits to our community will be significant and we value the opportunity to be a part of this inspiring, futuristic offering.”

I sat in on a Tourism Board meeting where planning for the inaugural space flight is brought to the floor. The group discusses how the town will plan for execute the inaugural private space flight, and the prospect of paying someone to organize the event. Potential costs for an event organizer reach \$50,000 before the Board moves onto other business. These two private business ventures illustrate the town’s persistent characterization as a place on the edge of massive happenings; events and phenomenon are shaping the real and imagined landscape in extraordinary ways. The town remains a very very small part in these schemes, but is none-the-less a part of them. There is a constant tension between celebration and distrust of the Spaceport. These two ventures will bring in a new era of small-scale revitalization that appears both long-term and

sustainable. That they are both private-ventures is a departure from historic projects, and an interesting development.

6.11 The Newest Pop Cultural Expressions

Two recent creative popular culture ventures capture this project's arguments in marvelous ways. Louris van de Geer is a lovely young Australian play write who spends several days in the town during Fiestas 2013. She sounds and looks stunningly foreign. She reminds me of a turn of the 19th century east coast anthropologist on the rez. She takes delights in her surroundings while still seeming ever-so-slightly repulsed, but her well-mannered eagerness to engage mostly triumphs. The play she writes is based on the town and the town's name change. "Hello There, We've Been Waiting for You," claims to "investigates the politics of identity, tradition and community."¹⁸ Det "within the elusive confines of a television studio during the town's annual Fiesta," and "examines the quest of a small town attempt to stand out in the world," and "the universal quest for significance, ways we re-invent history, construct our own stores and create rituals to believe in." A short video in the play in production, contains an interview with Louris van de Geer. She says the play "it essentially revels what defines a community and our desperate need to belong or be relevant."¹⁹ She claims she "met the whole town," during her week-long stay.

She says the name change was to promote the television show, however, rather than the radio show. This probably accounts for the prominence of televisions sets in the play and the reality-show feel of the play excerpts. I don't think anyone in town would have an issue with her created historical license—it si a celebrated tradition. The video previews available show montage footage of laugh tracks, gags, grasping beauty queens, glib announcers and a palpable but doomed yearning. There is no yearning at all in the

yearly Fiesta Queen pageant, except the yearning to win by a bunch of very lovely high school girls. van de Geer herself follows a fine tradition of using the town as a means to become. Posted review excerpt claim “van de Geer draws on David Lynch's self-conscious mannerism, as well as his offbeat humour, hinting at the secrets behind the picket fences,” and if “you’re looking for humour and heartache in equal measure, *Hello There...* is not to be missed.”²⁰

A crew of Belgium documentary filmmakers is in the town the next year during the May 2014 Fiestas. A small group of spends a few weeks filming in town, joined by a crew of at least 25 who show up for the last few days of filming. One of their noted collaborators sources of inspiration is Nick Waplington, who book I level a scathing review about on my public research blog, as well as this chapter. The film biography page describes the name change. “As with many small American towns,” the site proclaims, “they hoped to finally live up to their potential and turn an economically depressed place into a world-class destination.” The narrative continues, not far from my own, that “sixty years later, the same endless optimism and disillusioned frustration is playing out as the world’s first commercial Spaceport is built 20 miles outside of town... Similarly drawn to the remoteness of the New Mexican desert, both the residents and the Spaceport seek the freedoms of isolation and the age old promise of the frontier.”²¹ The town comes across as a small, rural, desert community. A few of the stills are from the rural periphery with some decidedly fierce characters and lots of ordinary people, in a small town, rural, desert way, who live in a town called Truth or Consequences. These two projects illustrate how the town attracts people because of its name. I see what people tell me during my fieldwork firsthand in these projects and a few others—the name

brings attention. People will keep writing feature stories that feature the town because of its name. They will note the standard and familiar desert, western, southwestern, off-the-grid, quirky-cool-odd-etc. place tropes. A few more businesses will open up, a few more will stay open, people will come and go, and some will stay.

6.12 On-Line and Off-Grid

In 2006, the same year the *New York Times* was claiming the tiny town of Palomas Hot Springs, whose population was about 100 people, was a veritable sin city of western delight, the newest arrivals to the town made everything old new again. The newest familiar strangers were a couple who moved to Truth or Consequences to escape the mindless, soul-crushing consumption and pace of urban life. The couple, Wendy Tremayne and Mikey Sklar, left their high-stress and well-paid marketing and Wall Street jobs to “build an off-the-grid oasis in a barren RV park” in downtown Truth or Consequences” (back cover). The duo meticulously records their experiences in a blog called *Holy Scrap Hot Springs*, which becomes the model for the book, written by Wendy Tremayne, *The Good Life Lab: Radical Experiments in Hands on Living* (2013). T

The blog and book recount how and why the couple learned to garden and weld, invent, forage, craft, design, soldier, build, and make connections with others who were trying to do similar thing across the nation and globe. The couple made all manner of things, from wine and shampoo and coffee roasters out of popcorn makers they found in the local thrift shop, to guesthouses out of papercrete (a recycled building material), to handmade devices that let you do your own making, and so on and so forth for many pages.

A friend who is a nurse told me she thought the author, Tremayne, should come and learn how to keep someone from dying. I told her the author seemed like the kind of

woman who would be willing. She would no doubt be an excellent student, probably end up dramatically saving a life, I said, which would be captured on video and become a YouTube sensation. Another friend adds to this conversation. She says that poor people have always made their own curtains. This is in response to the almost giddy delight the couple demonstrates in learning what this friend calls basic poor-people skills. This New York couple upgrades the subsistence lifestyle to an expression of finely-wrought artisanal living.²² An actual off-the-grid life is not the glamorous dirty-fun that the book makes it out to be, but maybe it is when it is all you do, and you do it with the style of these urban refugees.

“In late 2006,” Tremayne writes, *Truth or Consequences* is “booming,” awash with couples from all over the United States out in “search out a simpler way of life,” (77). Many who were starting businesses in the town “*Pioneers!* I thought,” Tremayne writes (italics in the original), “flashing a look of excitement at Mikey” to describe the scene she sees (76). She described the rest of the town of “under 10,000” as “made up of poorer folks, families who had lived in the area for several generations, ranchers, people let out of mental hospitals when the state stopped funding them, war veterans, and the standard fare of American meth addicts.” “I would learn that southwestern desert towns are for people who don’t want to be found” she writes (77). “Eventually,” she writes, “the town grew to include a Buddhist stupa (shrine), which seemed to me a metaphorical cherry onto of an alien-themed carnival cake” (77).

She includes a note on the “talk of the town” about Geronimo’s curse, which “had an expiration date of 2004,” which was, she says, about the time people start moving in to the town. She ends the chapter with a few observations about the concinnity of the town.

T or C is “growing slowly, one property at a time,” each a “particular harmonizing of unmatched parts,” the “whole place seemed to have been constructed piecemeal from what could be plucked from dumpsters,” (79). T or C, she says, “is part Mad Max and part Burning Man, with remnants of the Wild West strung together in avant-guard fashion and tethered to third world simplicity” (79). She constructs a grid in the book to create a visual check-list that she titles “What’s in a Place: Truth or Consequences, New Mexico” (78). This list includes a low cost of living and the possibility of debt-free living, water, a newly merging community, a healthy lifestyle, high-speed Internet, flexible building codes, a culture of new people as well as culture shock, which encourages personal growth, and modern pioneering.

I do not interview this couple. There is a tremendous wealth of online access to their life in town. I avoid issues of anonymity that will come into play with an official interview. I want to try to look at what they are doing without the pressure of liking them. But I meet them in passing. It is impossible not meet them, and equally impossible not to like them. They are genuine, sincere committed, and enthusiastic. I think they are a perfect fit with the town. They are dreamers who see in T or C a reflection of what they can be in the town. They are working their asses off. The town represents cheap land and water, a cool name, hot water, a vibe. It is a chance to create a small empire of self-sustainability—material and goods for consumption to free people from so much consumption. This is a paradox that fits happily into the historical and contemporary landscapes of the town.

An early video of the couple, titled “Green Pioneers,” showed them describing the RV park they bought cheaply in the center of downtown, hoping to build not only a place

for them to live but for others to come and stay, a “hotel made out of garbage.” This video, uploaded on April 24, 2007, included Mikey’s assessment that “Truth or Consequences, it’s going through a sort of growth period, we’re seeing a lot of people who are from big cities, so kind of like us, the big city kids, New York or LA mostly, so it’s kind of strange to come here, and see a scene, you know, where there’s people who are making cool environments, and art galleries, and doing interesting things, in what is basically the middle of nowhere.”²³ The blog has become a fantastic spectacle of high-end Internet beauty, rendered with an eye to design and layout. They offer an array of post-consumption consumer goods that they make themselves, from technological tools to natural smoke. Daily events are shared in detail, ranging from making cheese and picking cauliflower to health issues and metaphysical musings. They take their off-the-grid on-line sustainability to a level that is genre-defining, but they also do it in a town with running water, electricity, and other the basic services.

An August 13, 2013, video interview on You Tube showed Wendy, giving a talk on her book, describing the town. She mentioned the name, followed by the comment, “that’s a real place,” and went on to describe how they found “a whole population of 7000 people in the middle of the desert, kind of like an island,” and “all the structures and buildings looked like they were just slapped together with bits of things found next to dumpsters,” but, she countered, “it was beautiful in a way, it was like really harmonized.” She continued that there was “lots of nature and lots of raw material and no one has a job because there are no jobs, and that worked with our pledge, because we weren’t going to have a job, and it was really really cheap, and we were like, this is perfect. . .”

The communal vision of sustainability leaves a lot of people out. Most of the new people I meet in the town, and most of the people I interview, know nothing of this project. I talk to different people in and around the town. Most think it sounds cool. They do not really care ultimately. These are people who tend to think the opinion of others has no bearing on what people want to do on their own land. They are decidedly in the ‘live and let live’ category laid out in the *Sierra County Comprehensive Plan* (2004). A few people do not see how it does other people much good. One local leader tells me that pretty soon the couple will be telling others in town why what they’re doing is wrong-headed. It’s the way of new people I hear—they all think they know better. There are a core of dedicate fans in town who see Wendy and Mikey as the future of the town. I continue to be surprised at the fan club the couple has in Albuquerque.

I wonder if I will know Wendy and Mikey in 20 years, when we will all be in our sixties, or if they will be long gone from the town. Some of this crowd may have trekked in for a while. I can see their small sustainable empire as part of a creative communal renaissance. They are achieving a similar level of success in their post-consumer lifestyle as they achieved in their previous life. They are still incredibly hard-working and driven creators of brands. They have just become their own brand. Their brand, the good life, stands for better things, ecologically and spiritually, than what they used to sell. They have already drawn people to the town and region, which may be their economic contribution. This is no small thing. I can also see them, like waves of other “*pioneers!*” moving on to greener pastures.

I think about the friend who tells me this is small settlement land. This was the dream of reclamation champions, small settlements. This dream was made possible

through massive federal projects, which makes me think of Ted Turner and Sir Richard Branson. The scale of the town and region, miniscule and massive, persists. In a recent posting Trey writes this great lament about the town not being as cool as it was when they came to town ten years prior. Then she rewrites her post before I cut and paste. Tremayne does a solid job, in her rewrite, of explaining the attraction for every new wave of people who see their own image in a recent post.

This town is about as weird as a place can be. It runs without rules and it's rhythms are its own. You can neither predict it nor can you prod it into what you want it to be. All that you can do is be clear, because it will surely reflect you. You can dream and imagine here and with a little pixie dust or luck you can even launch your wishes and ideas as far out into the world as you want them to go. I see now, because I left for six months and returned, why this town repels or attracts people with equal intensity. Yes there is truth in a name, and Truth or Consequences is a doozie. What frightens or lures people is that the town is like a mirror, it is their reflection... It is funny how the media has hitched this place to Virgin Galactic's Spaceport. They don't know that to people who live here, (not the speculators that ran off when the Spaceport went off rails) the Spaceport is a trinket, not a center of ground. T or C is rich with something neither transitory, nor for sale. Whatever its magic charm is, you can't name it to catch it. It has to do with a way of life that's virtually extinct in America. If the town ever does grow, and I admit that I think it would benefit from growth, it'll be interesting to see if these charms can hold their power. I think they can. For me T or C is a living example of what a good life can look like post big big big crash, which may yet come. All one has to do, as we've proven here is allow life be simple, easy, creative, and we have to share...It is a day later and I have come back to this post to amend it. I was walking along the Rio Grande when I realized that this hard to grasp, impossible to manipulate, indescribable thing that sets this town apart is realness.²⁴

The lament about the lack of rules is a ridiculous claim in any American landscape. The lament about a vanishing way of life is always present in any articulation of the modern.

The idea that poverty is charming is probably far from what Wendy meant but not entirely off point either. The claim that pixie dust or luck are what it takes to make it, rather than the capital the couple emigrated into the town with, coupled with hard work and a dogged persistence, are all bothersome to a critical assessment of this narrative.

The idea that the town is still “real” seems to speak to the lack of the branded façade place identity, or perhaps the lack of success in creating a strong place character except on a small scale. She comes up with a new narrative that is better in ways than her simple laments that all of the cool kids are gone, and the CAVE people remain. The rewrite captures the longing, yearning siren call of the modern vanishing, lost to development, appreciated by a few who can see charm in the dusty poor streets. It captures the the idea that the town is separate from structure—a thing reflecting only the image of the individual gaze. I think of the advice photographer Miguel Gandhert, that the photograph is not the thing itself. The image is not the thing itself. It is perhaps a reflection on the idea that the town has not been discovered by critical mass of people. This couple might change that in a small way. Despite the endless narrative of big changes, small increments are the historical norm of this place.

An artist in town told me he created a camper from the original Holy Scrap blog site. He and his girlfriend lived and travel in the camper. Circumstance and wandering brought them to the town. This global duo of un-lost wanderers, tall and kind, beautiful and incredibly talented, decided to settle down for a spell in the town. They soon befriended the couple. They did not realize that their camper was the result of a how-to tutorial on the couple’s blog until much later in time. This is the kind of cool coincidence story that is common with people who move here. He talked during his interview about

the deep connections we have in this world, even when we think we are not connected like we used to be.

He and his girl traveled extensively, but have owned property in the town for a few years. They sold art online, on Etsy, like many of the town's creative residents. They did well enough financially to travel and not work for someone else. They swapped houses with people in places they wanted to go. A lot of people want to be in Truth or Consequences. It's a hip place. He envisions walking away from his home someday; he told me, leaving shrines full of the stuff we amass anytime we stay too long in a place. He told me a story about how he added on an addition to his home in the middle of the night, without a permit, and how he painted it a bright shade of orange. When people noticed, which they did immediately, he remarked on how a new color really made you notice things. Everyone agreed. I thought about this story often as I wrapped up this research project. How a bright orange loft, built the night before, became part of the historic fabric of the town and fit right in to this place. Insofar as stories about the town go, this one struck me as perfect.

¹ A recent article captures the spirit of the New Mexico True campaign. According to Tourist Department Cabinet Secretary Rebecca Latham, "New Mexico True" illustrates how things that are "just an activity somewhere else . . . in New Mexico are true experiences because they are immersed in the landscape; the culture; the people. . . . We wanted to bring to life the feeling you get from a New Mexico vacation...the message of true, the word true meaning authentic and real, it just resonates with New Mexicans, and there's just so much pride and passion that we feel about our state being authentic and offering authentic experiences that can be found nowhere else." <http://krqe.com/2015/05/07/new-mexico-true-tourism-flourishes-on-instagram>

² A 1980 report by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "Thermal Springs List for the United States Key to Geophysical Records Documentation No. 12," listed 1,661 active hot springs in the United States. I counted 125 place names and towns that begin with the phrase "hot springs" and more than 1,000 that incorporated hot or warm springs in their place names.

³ I tucked the paper away in my other papers, but I was the only student who printed out and brought the course reading to Italy, and it floated away as the readings get passed around.

⁴ I do not talk about the perceived whiteness of the town. This is a characterization held by New Mexicans about the town, and borne out by the census, perhaps contributes to the lack of resistance to place imaginaries imposed from afar. As Kammer (2004) notes, early census data shows most people in the town are from outside of New Mexico. This has shifted in the past three decades. These patterns are much less evident in the County.

⁵ *New York Times*, Nov.1, 2006. Travel Section, page 4.
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D01E4D6123FF932A35752C1A9609C8B63>

⁶ *New York Times*. Oct. 3, 2008. Travel Section, page 5.
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/05/travel/05Surfacing.html?_r=0

⁷ Schmitt, Joseph. "The Small Town with a Big Future." *Passport*, February 2013, pages 58-63.
<http://gay.passportmagazine.com/business-class-february>.

⁸ Lauren Tresp " Noël Hudson Ornamental Abstraction." *THE magazine*. April 2015.
https://issuu.com/flavorgrafix/docs/_the_april_issue-web/53?e=1811192/12202256

⁹ <http://www.nmmagazine.com/article-list/?iid=90752>

¹⁰ These images are embedded on the Elephant Butte Reservoir Wikipedia page,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant_Butte_Reservoir

¹¹ Ted Turner is the second largest individual landholder in North America with approximately two million acres of personal and ranch land. Turner also owns a 900-square-mile ranch in Northern New Mexico. His holdings are publicized as "innovatively managed to unite economic viability with ecological sustainability," that operate as "working businesses, relying on bison and hunting/fishing/nature tourism as principal enterprises." Turner ranches "support many progressive environmental projects including water resource and timber management, and the reintroduction of native species."
<http://www.tedturner.com/turner-ranches> to the land.

¹² The Pedro Armendariz Grant is No. 33 and No. 34 were the focus of many lawsuits in the 1970s. The federal court ruled that Pedro Armendariz Grant No. 33, which lies less than a mile from Truth or Consequences, could not be partitioned into smaller pieces under the 1846 Treaty of Higuera. The Oppenheimer Corporation and the Armendariz Ranch, who jointly owned the ranches, were forced into bankruptcy. The federal court became the receiver of the Armendariz Grants. In February 1994, Ted Turner purchased all of Pedro Armendariz Grant No. 33, the original Fra Cristobal grant on the east side of the river, and portions of Pedro Armendariz Grant No. 34, the Valverde Grant, which included land in and around the former San Marcial town site.

¹³ "Truth or Consequences, NM — April 4, 2013 — Renowned businessman, conservationist and philanthropist Ted Turner is broadening his presence in the hospitality industry. Turner purchased the historic Sierra Grande Lodge and Spa in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, via a wholly-owned entity. The Sierra Grande is well known for its unparalleled combination of luxurious accommodations, rustic charm and relaxing spa and mineral baths. The Lodge is also a launching point for exploring the area's exciting recreational, eco-tourism and artistic opportunities including ancient hot springs, hunting and fishing, hiking, boating, bird watching, historic ghost towns, fine art galleries and world class golf..." Press Release, April 4, 2013. Turner Enterprises.

¹⁴ <http://tedturnerexpeditions.com/expeditions/>

¹⁵ <http://tedturnerexpeditions.com/expeditions/>

¹⁶ <http://spaceportamerica.com/experience/>

¹⁷ Spaceport America Experience Tour Opens Welcoming Visitors from Around the World. June 24, 2015 by spaceportpr. "Ribbon Cutting at the new Spaceport America Visitor Center in New Mexico Officially Opens the Experience Tour," Spaceport America, NM – June 24, 2015 – Spaceport America – the world's first purpose-built, commercial spaceport announced today the new Spaceport America Experience tour is open for visitors. Guests gathered to create a celebratory atmosphere in the street outside the new Spaceport America Visitor Center located in the historic hot-springs district of the City of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

¹⁸ <http://www.pozible.com/project/25283>

¹⁹ HELLO THERE, WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU. Kickstart Creative Development Interview , St Martins Youth Arts Centre, July 2013. <https://vimeo.com/77111260>.

²⁰ <http://www.lourisvandegeer.com/#!hello-there-weve-been-waiting-for-you/ct2d>

²¹ <http://hannahjayanti.com/truth-or-consequences/>. See also, <https://instagram.com/torcmovie/>. © Helical Films, 2014

²² That these are "old ways" is a fact mentioned repeatedly in the book. Wildcrafting, aka foraging, is old news, but it takes on a new life in this text. I discuss this book and this couple with many of my peers, because they seem to embody the town in almost uncanny ways. Theirs is a very modern take on what are very traditional ways, for example. One of my friends thinks this couple should try it with kids to up the ante. We get a big kick out of the idea and decided we are exposing our small-town jealousy and a streak of mean when we wish our communal kids on this ridiculously good-looking couple for the weekend. We have to concede, however, that the kids would probably come home with some gorgeous art project, in the tradition of lands arts, having had a great and meaningful time. There is something about this newest incarnation of the modern that is refreshing and hopeful, but that also illustrates a picturesque, perfect and branded place project that is unsettling.

²³ www.youtube.com/watch?v=xO6YZa2ZB44.

²⁴ <http://www.thegoodlifelab.com/2015/11/home-at-last.html>

Conclusion: A Study of Place in Place

Charles Magee Adams' article, "Exit the Small Town" (1935), captures trends in the early years of the 20th century that are startlingly familiar in the early years of the 21st century. "Despite the centripetal forces which have concentrated population in larger and still larger cities, several facts warrant the now widely expressed conviction that the village is regaining something of the same status it enjoyed prior to the era of intensive industrialization" (Adams 1935, 154). Adams was talking about the Great Depression refugees forced from the cities, but also about the trend before the economic crises and great exodus to the city of a "feeble counter-current" to urbanization. "Artists and others whose livelihood is independent of place made up the vanguard of the centrifugal movement" back to small-town America, Adams wrote (155).

The small town, Adams is quick to note, is no longer the small town of yesterday. The small town of today is part of a national network of cities and suburbs, linked transportation route, dominated by chain department stores, marked by regional planning, codified industry and controlled agriculture are only a few of the manifestations of an increasing purpose to solve our problems by joint effort. "Perhaps the best way to indicate the nature of this loss is to say that the chief effect of modernity has been to suburbanize the small town," Adams writes (156). The small town is an independent community only in the sense of physical detachment he claims, mostly due to the forces of technology. "Every present-day social problem can be reduced to the struggle of man to adjust himself to the headlong rush of technological change," claims Adams, and "the small town constitutes perhaps the ideal laboratory for studying this struggle" (156).

Adams talks about the small merchant, the buy-local movement, the strength of character and commitment forged in small towns and the immeasurable loss to the national character if small towns were to fade from the landscape. "Exit the Small Town" illuminates the persistent patterns that adhere to places even as places are constantly recontextualized. Adams illustrates the way the small town as a place is reconfigured as new and old, as in peril and yet entrenched, as revitalized by new forces and as a place of decline, both by virtue of modern technology. It is a modern manifesto written 80 years ago. The only thing missing element is the threat of wholesale environmental destructions. I heeded Adams advice to look to the small town as a laboratory. I sought to explore the contemporary historical moment in place.

I set out to do three things in this research project. The first was to move place to the center of my research. This was the impetus that shaped this project. I sought to explore how place has been theorized, imagined, and understood. In this endeavor I was immensely successful. There is a wealth of emergent and established scholarship on place. It is a rich field that is currently experiencing a renaissance. The first body of scholarship emerged in the 1970s, and the second wave in the 1990s. The third wave of place scholarship currently emerging illustrates several persistent themes. Place is seen as imperiled by the flattening forces of globalization that make every place the same, it is seen as imperiled by the global migration of people, it is seen as imperiled by material, economic, and environmental destruction. Worry about places has had the effect of invigorating the field and of inciting local action. People are paying more attention to place. Place is a concept that has proven well-suited to critical and popular assessment and sustained focus from divergent fields.

Place is a complex phenomenon that is difficult to capture. It is also a common concept that defies capture because it is bandied around daily. Despite 50 years of sustained scholarship across fields, however, one of the hallmarks of place has been the contested and ranging definition of what place *is*. I began the theoretical overview of place with a fragment Ted Relph's early definition of place as "centers of our immediate experiences of the world" (Relph 1976, 144). The definition, I claimed, centered place in my study, shifted the vantage point to the individual people who populate places and gave primacy to the experience of place. Experience, I claimed, could be moored in imagination, in material expression, in relationships or feeling, in movement, rootedness, architecture, or any knowledge or understanding. As a former social scientist, I then offered my own definition of place that was more amenable to measurement and capture for the purpose of creating a framework to study place. Place is defined as a describable location characterized by a shifting confluence of historical, material, political, cultural, economic, built and imagined qualities.

The second goal of this project was to create a framework for the study of place. In order to study the shifting confluence of historical, material, political, cultural, economic, built, sensed and imagined qualities I sought to create a method exclusively for the study of place. I argued that the study of place deserves an interdisciplinary framework of its own. I called this framework place ethnography. I sought to identify, name, and define place ethnography in this research project. I began to use the term place ethnography as shorthand for the kind of work I wanted to do many years ago. I claimed place ethnography as an emergent method, evident in many studies. This project forced me to articulate that claim fully. Place ethnography is defined as a method that blends

traditional ethnographic and historic research with a range of disciplinary techniques in order to study place.

Place ethnography is part history, which demands a robust engagement with local history, as well as the ways that local history reflects and informs regional and national historical narrative. The historical component of place ethnography demands an assessment of the historical trajectories of place. Place ethnography as history grounds project in place and in time. Place ethnography is part ethnography, which demands fieldwork on the ground. It is a method based on a foundation of dialogue between people in places and the scholar or practitioner who seeks to understand a place. I envisioned place ethnography as a community-based dialogical method. Place ethnography emerged as a relational framework that sought to connect places to the people, history and the contemporary landscapes of place.

In addition to dialogue in interview and other field-based observation, place ethnographic documentation and analysis includes a basic analysis of the built environment, political and economic structures, as well as reflections on place identity and character. Place ethnographic research design could include phenomenological study, archaeological interpretation, the inclusion of critical race, gender, class and social theory, architectural surveying, cultural landscape studies approaches, spatial theory, mapping, visual analysis, quantitative, survey or statistical analysis as well as more detailed historical and archival methods. This emergent interdisciplinary methodological framework, I argued, allowed individual field-based place exploration in specific localities as well as in conjunction with other place-specific scholarship and research. Place ethnography had roots, I wrote, in anthropology, geography, cultural resource and

preservation planning, architecture, archeology and the humanities. I claimed that the places of place ethnography should be defined in the process of the place ethnographic study.

My centering and exploration of place in my research as well as the naming and defining of place ethnography as a framework for place study, my first two research goals, were concluded in a final research goal, the application of place ethnography to a specific place. For the purpose of this study, the places I sought to describe are the town of Truth or Consequences and one is the small region within New Mexico where it is situated. I also considered the wider Southwest region as it has been imagined and created. A central theme that emerged was how modern places as they have been imagined, identified and described since the turn of the 19th century through the lens of this places. In this final goal I realized a great success by some measures.

The third goal of this project was a place ethnography of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. I was drawn to his particular place for reasons recounted in this body of this work. I described and discovered many place qualities, histories and ideas about this place in the field. They are recounted in the body of this work. The material gathered in this research was the judge of its success, and in this measure, this project was inordinately successful. Place, I claimed, was so rich and complex that a framework specific to its study was necessary. To this end, this research project is far too expansive and ambitious on many levels. It succeeds, however, in its goals. Place emerged with a particular force in this study. Place ethnography proved well-suited to the complex phenomena of places. The town and region emerged with clarity. Many contemporary

and timely topics were engaged. I wrap up this brief conclusion with a few closing remarks and reflections on the town and region.

The very strongly imagined but still enigmatic place character of the town was one of the initial draws to this place. The idea that that town needed a more emphatically well-defined place character, one that was positive, was a common lament. There is a strong sense that the town was one of the last undiscovered places in New Mexico was also strong. It is not an undiscovered place to the rural or local populations. It is a small New Mexico town that is poor, but also vibrant and well-grounded in traditional lifeways. It is, for various reason, always being discovered as undiscovered, and because of this is always attracting new people. People come to town for a variety of reasons, but art and affordability, coupled with discovery, are strong. Most will come and go, but a handful will stay.

The idea that art and culture, coupled with digital infrastructure, will be the economic engines of the places that survive and thrive was evident in dozens of conversations in T or C. It is one of the most prevalent topics in popular literature on place and academic and popular literature on place and tourism. The focus on tourism, place branding and promotion and attracting the creative class is often set against conversations about poverty and a lack of access to basic services. In my place ethnographic research, this claim often set against the equally persistent and vocal claim that the art and culture people would come and go, but the mainstay of the town, blue collar workers and and rural populations , service providers for retirees some of the very poor, for example, would remain. The tie between these conversations is infrastructure. There is a great convergence in the conversations about what the town in infrastructure.

The longer people stayed the more concerned and knowledgeable they became about issues of infrastructure, and the less concerned they become with issues of identity. The build it and they will come narrative roved between the ephemeral perceptions of building a strong place identity set against the material physicality of building a strong place. I think the mid-century name change created an excellent case study on how efforts to create a strong place identity in name only, literally in this case, did not succeed. It was a good time, but like love-struck newcomers to the town, it was fleeting. The hard work of the last half a century has been a study in pushing back against declining fortunes and periodic revival. The material physicality of building a strong place required long-term commitments and collaboration to building or maintaining physical place infrastructure.

This is why New Mexico's place promotion and branding have been so wildly successful—they were built on an infrastructure that was incredible. Boosters, raised or, as was often the case, transplanted to New Mexico, used existing infrastructure to create their imagined places. This infrastructure existed in the cultural production of indigenous First Nation people and the Spanish colonial populations and the children of these cultural traditions, mixed with countless cultural influences from German to Japanese to Pilipino. That the cultural production was commodified and repackaged did not negate that the cultural traditions were rich, beautiful and desired globally. This infrastructure existed in the landscapes, seized by survey and set aside as public, or gobbled down in land grabs of former community land grant so the rich could have their own ranches.

The tourist infrastructure was built on the actual infrastructure. Now the infrastructure is crumbling while the advertisements are getting shinier. I think this is

why there is often an outcry when the efforts to market New Mexico are portrayed as a way to rebuild infrastructure—the money goes back into a tourist infrastructure—the amenities, facilities and attractions that draw visitors. Tourist infrastructure and local infrastructure are different things. They are intimately related and have always been dependent on one another, but in many ways the relationship has been reversed. You can build tourist infrastructure off of local infrastructure, but you cannot build local infrastructure off of tourist infrastructure. Or, in other language, you can build a good brand off of strong physical local infrastructure—you cannot build strong local infrastructure off of a good brand, no matter how many people come and spend their tourist dollars. This means adopting many strategies, but keeping a clear focus on local infrastructure.

This is what I see in Truth or Consequences, writ small. The digital infrastructure needs to be in place for the local populations, not as a nod to some ephemeral class of global migrants. People can no longer thrive without digital infrastructure. The rooms that people book in town are the result of an individual and sustained physical commitment to bathhouse renovation. Travelers also increasingly look to other travelers. People are branding places. Google image searches and Instagram hashtag searches are part of the social media presence in any contemporary place character assessment (see Appendix 1, Figures 44 & 45, pages 397-398). People come because they search online, look at pictures from travel bloggers and read articles in magazines (see Appendix 1, Figure 39, page 395, & Figures 40-43, page 396).

People stay in town because they have a connection to the town. Not because of a strong place identity. Place identity was not a positive tie. Most often it was. Regardless,

the stronger ties between all kinds of people and communities in the town, the stronger the character of the town. Creating inclusive and long-term commitments between stakeholders across the county would be a better investment than branding the town. I saw a dozen different efforts to reach out to people and include them in downtown planning efforts at downtown galleries. Not once did I see any efforts to bring these efforts to Walmart or the hardware stores or the Sonic or the schools. Forging a connection, for instance, between local school children and the arts community, is a way to bridge the gap between the creative classes and the distressed classes in the town—these kinds of community bridging programs need to happen or neither will thrive as well as they could.

The focus on supporting the local infrastructure should be paramount in civic decision. People come to town because there is art to be seen and bought, and public art and private and public murals, not because the town has been branded as a hot art spot—this is a tourist narrative built on the physical place assets. Support the arts; do not support the branding of the arts, in other words. The actual arts draw people to the town, not the idea that it is an art town, but this sometimes gets lost in translation. There is a strong arts presence in the town that is place defining in the historic core (see Appendix 1, Figure 46, page 397). The mineral waters bring the small but steady tourist trade—people who have a connection to the town. My connection was forged by regional family connection. She contributed several original paintings of the town to this project (see Appendix 1, Figure 50, 51 & 52, pages 401-403). But my love for the town was created by a life-time of soaking started by my mom. My own 5 year old loves to soak in town.

People come for recreation, but the lake is first and foremost a reservoir. The shrinking lake brings many stakeholders to the table (see Appendix 1, Figure 48 & 49, page 398). The burning of the national forests in the area brought attention to environmental issues. It also brought funding for infrastructure projects, like restoration and management that build collaboration and create the human and physical recreation infrastructure that will support future tourism. Building these systems in crisis is not ideal. Limited budgets and issues that stretch beyond the borders of one place will make more collaborative efforts necessary. Volunteers are the backbone of the community. I hear this mantra over and over. It is a poor town, but there is a wealth of resources if people collaborate. This is how grant money works today. It's a small steady climb. It is not a rocket ship to the stars. Collaboration is long, hard work

There is a wealth of community-funded planning documents in the town that receive scant attention after publication. There are dozens of studies carried out by government agencies going on at any given time, and dozens more filed away on a shelf in various agencies. Local government and government-funded studies should be aggressively utilized and disseminated. Most are hardly known and barely considered in policy making and local history. I do not know if this is true in all places, but the city and region would benefit from having these reports collected, summarized, accessible, searchable, and downloadable, in once place, on line. Reports, from planning documents to affordable housing documents to archeological digs, should also be in physical form in a special section in the local library and in schools. It would not hurt to have copies printed out of various reports and available at coffee shops and tourist spots. Local leaders need to make the small pieces of the bigger readily available.

As budgets continue to shrink and needs continue to grow, the focus on tourism should be one small part of a bigger picture. It is easy to see why people want tourist dollars. The tourists who come, however, are often disappointed in the small, crumbling facades of the closed down places downtown, even as they delight in the renovations in other places. The beautiful pictures of travel bloggers, visitors and others are similar to the bright and beautiful townscape featured on the Sierra County Tourism—these images fit an expectation of beautifully rendered places captured in pretty pictures (see Appendix 1, Figure 53, page 404). The town is powerfully beautiful and aesthetically compelling from many angles, but seems to shine especially at a distance (see Appendix 1, Figure 38 page 395).

Nick Waplinton attempted to capture the sense of declining fortunes in the town—a sense that is always present. It is a poor town in too many ways to ignore. Efforts to define the town beyond this single marker set up a tension in place that mirrors the divisions on the creative class found in the literature. The idea that tourism will bring money into the community is an easy narrative that ignores the complexity of community dynamics. A downtown business owner tells me that she does well in the town, but has no interest in getting involved. I imagine if the downtown continues to decline she will pick up and move her gallery. I hope she does, and is replaced by someone who recognizes that the fortunes of the town are dependent on building a strong community across stakeholders. The ubiquitous empty store fronts in small downtowns are exceedingly difficult to fill for very long. This is probably not the best wish. Successful efforts to create a better place—economically, culturally, socially and politically—are the ones that ones that have the most involvement.

I focus on the Healing Water Trail as a study in preservation place making and an example of how place ethnographic methods can be used to think through place and its attendant considerations. The reason I think the trail works, given these arguments, is because it creates an infrastructure that is local, but also serves as an amenity to visitors. The trail was the result 10 years of collaboration, made possible because of a 25 year commitment to preservation. It was a stunning combination of imagination, hard work, collaboration, tenacity and multiple interests, on a small scale. It is an asset that can be used to market the town as a good place to live and work and visit, in the tradition of healing and beautiful vistas.

It is a small step, but a good one. The trail brings together local infrastructure and tourist infrastructure, stakeholders, different parts of the town, other sites, history, recreation and environmental awareness. Maybe if new residents start seeing kids on the trail they will realize they need to support the families in town they may not see downtown. Maybe the beautiful exposed WPA rock retaining walls will inspire more local building in a sustainable material that has deep historical traditions. Maybe seeing the Rio Grande River will encourage people to think about the lifeblood of the state and finite resource. Maybe reading an interpretive panel on mining will inspire people to learn about the history of southern New Mexico rather than rely on tourist narratives. And maybe seeing the bright orange loft of a small downtown house will make people identify with this small town as a place where grit, community, land, art, fierce individuality, family, tradition, healing, creativity, becoming, being, and, above all, inventiveness, are celebrated.

Appendix 1: Images, Maps & Photographs



Figure 1: 1878, Progress Map Of The U.S. Geographical Surveys West Of The 100th Meridian. To accompany the special report of 1st Lieut. George M. Wheeler Corps Of Engineers, U.S. Army. To Brig. Gen. A.A. Humphreys, Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army. in response to resolution of House of Representatives, March 8th 1878. West Of The One Hundredth Meridian. Seasons of 1869, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876 & 1877. 1st. Lieut. Geo. M. Wheeler. Corps Of Engineers, in charge. U.S. Geographical Surveys. Author: Wheeler, G.M.(1878)This historical cartographic image is part of the David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, www.davidrumsey.com

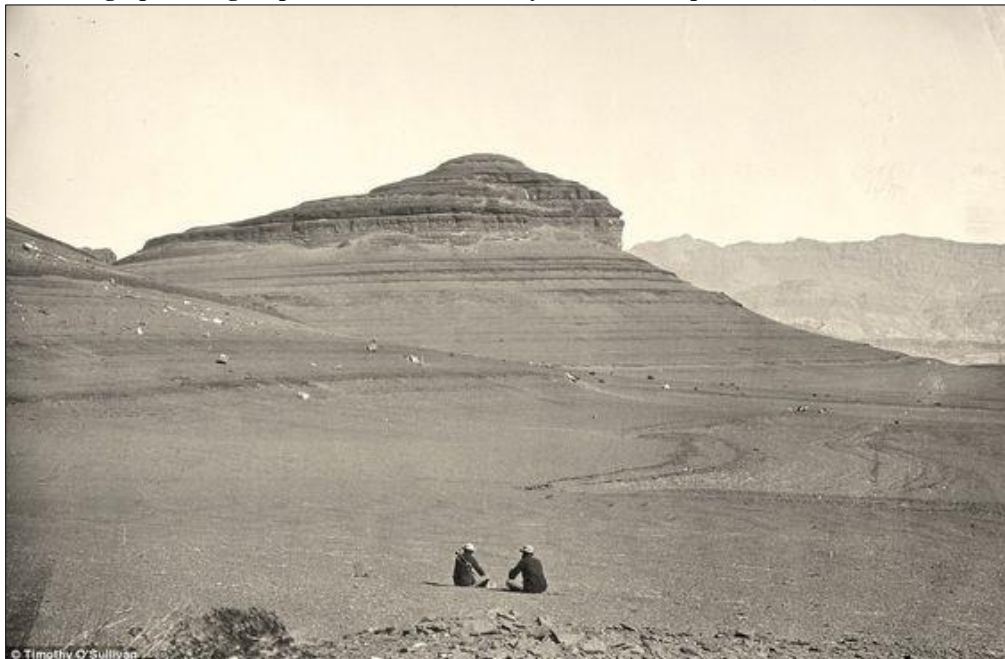


Figure 2: “How the Wild West REALLY looked...” Gorgeous sepia-tinted pictures show the landscape as it was charted for the very first time” reads this May 25, 2012 headline from the Daily Mail, a British newspaper.



Figure 3: United States "Arid Region," as published in the *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1893. This map is published during the 1893 session of National Irrigation Congress in Los Angeles.

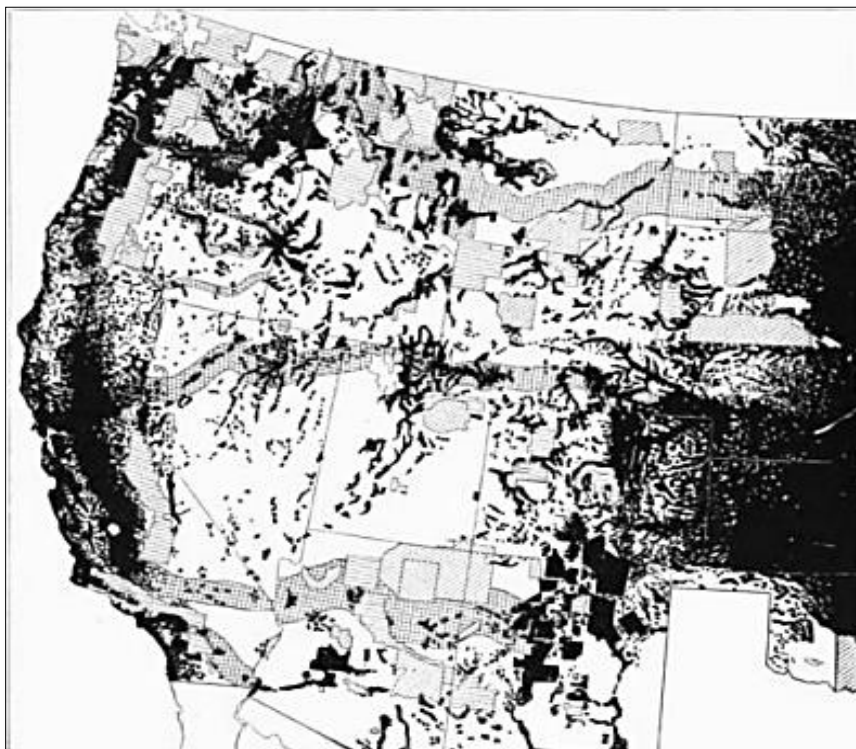


Figure 4: "Vacant Public Land," Frederick Newell, *Irrigation in the United States* (1902), 56.

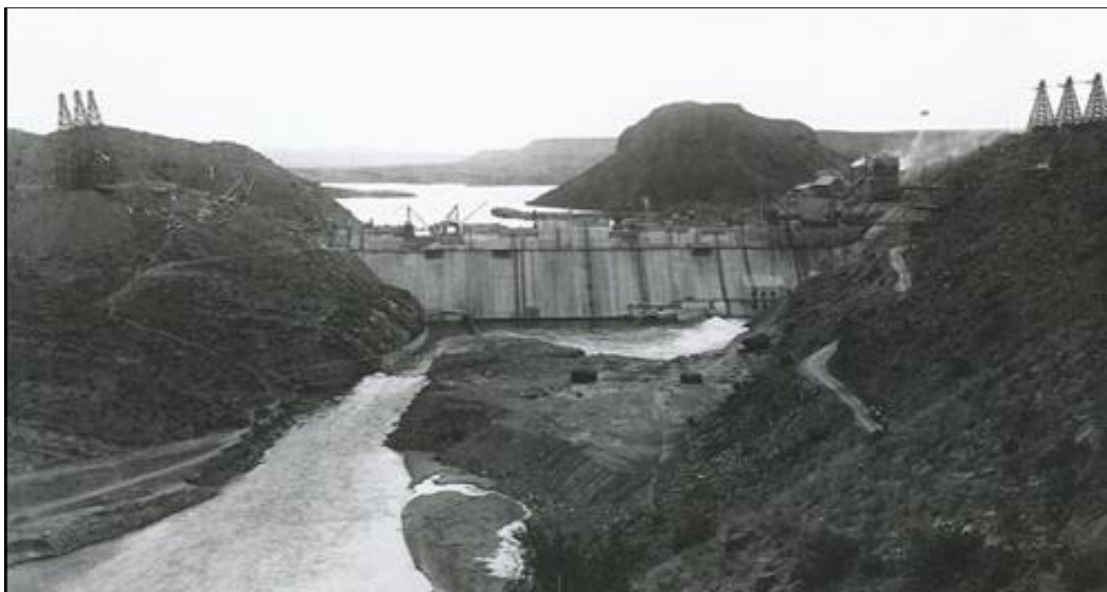


Figure 5: Elephant Butte Dam Construction, 1915.

Making the Desert Bloom: The Rio Grande Project. Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan. National Park Service
<http://www.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/141RioGrande/141RioGrande.htm>

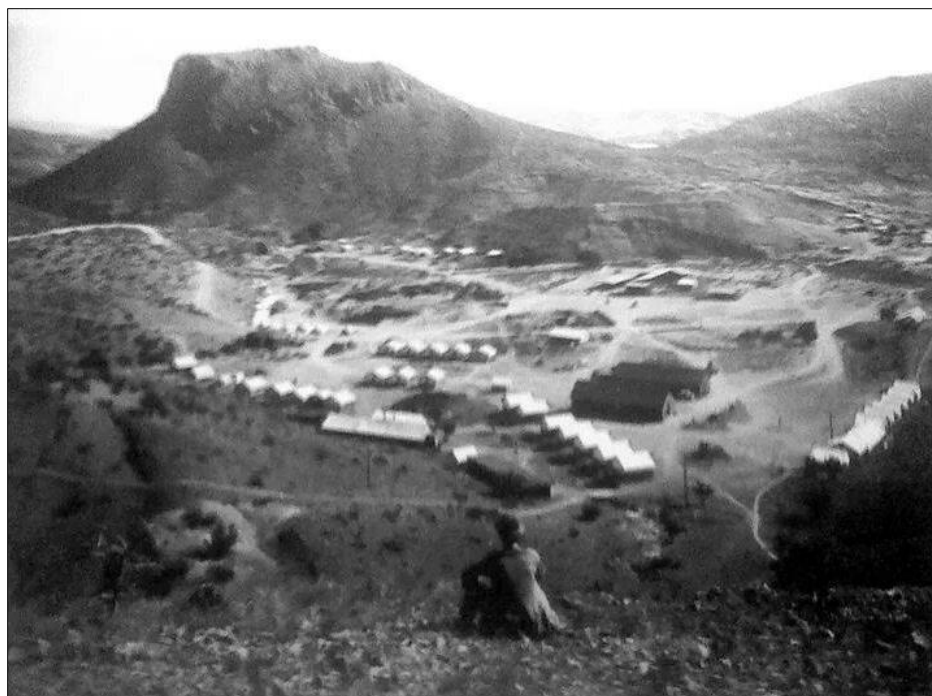


Figure 6: Campsite at Elephant Butte Dam.

According to an article by camp physician Dr. Graham (1913) the camp's Lower Town contained a commissary, mess hall, mechanic's quarters, schoolhouses, a moving-picture theater, churches, and cottages and bunkhouses. There was an American quarter and a Mexican quarter. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 7: Early bathhouse at Palomas Hot Springs, c. 1900. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 8: Palomas Hot Springs Settlers, c. 1911. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 9: Early Bathhouse and Inn at Palomas Hot Springs, c. 1910s. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 10: View of Main Street, Hot Springs, 1918. Sherry Fletcher Collection.

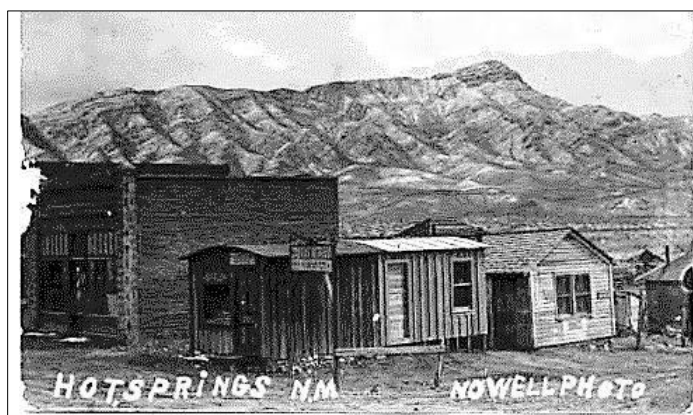


Figure 11: Hot Springs Postcard, Motel, C. 1920. Center for Southwest Research, ZIM CSWR Pict Colls PICT 995-027.



Figure 12: View of Hot Springs, New Mexico, 1918. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 13: View of Hot Springs, New Mexico, 1922. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 14: The State Bath House, in the foreground, below the two-story Vera Hotel c. 1920. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 15: Health-seekers drink from the drinking springs near the James Apartments (now razed), c. 1920s. Sherry Fletcher Collection.



Figure 16: View of Hot Springs, 1930s or 1940s.



Figure 17: View of Hot Springs, c. 1940.



HOT SPRINGS, NEW MEXICO

is on U. S. Highway 85 some 110 miles south of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and 120 miles north of El Paso, Texas. Albuquerque is a major point on the Santa Fe Railway and on TWA and Continental Air Lines. El Paso a major point on the Southern Pacific and Rock Island Railways and on American Airlines. Santa Fe Trailways furnishes excellent bus service to Hot Springs from both Albuquerque and El Paso.

HOT SPRINGS NEW MEXICO

HOT SPRINGS, NEW MEXICO

Traces of Primitive Man show that the Indians bathed in the healing waters of these springs long before the first White Men saw the vapors rising in the cool winter air. The early Spanish settlers built a stockade here and called this place Los Ojos Calientes de Las Palomas (Hot Springs of the Doves). Today, Hot Springs, New Mexico, is a thriving little city of some 4,700 people, with hotels, apartments, tourist courts, trailer camps and cottages available to the many hundreds of visitors who come to enjoy the fine climate and bathe in the healing waters. Hot Springs has churches of eight denominations. Elementary and high schools are of first-class standards and fully accredited by the North Central Association and State Accrediting Association. The city is growing rapidly, many visitors returning to settle and make their homes here. Among the clubs and organizations active in Hot Springs are: The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Lions, Rotary, Masonic Lodge, Pilot Club, Odd Fellows and many others.

NEW HEALTH FROM HEALING WATERS

Thousands of people come to Hot Springs each year to bathe in the waters of the natural hot mineral springs for relief from rheumatism, arthritis and other diseases. The combination of highly mineralized hot springs and mild, dry

...and sunny climate is unique in the United States. Hot Springs offers a variety of accommodations for each visitor, and measures and technicians are available as well as physicians experienced in using the waters.

| MONTH | January | February | March | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | Annual Total |
|--------|---------|----------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|--------------|
| High | 52° | 57° | 63° | 70° | 77° | 83° | 87° | 90° | 88° | 80° | 68° | 58° | 718° |
| Low | 25° | 27° | 30° | 33° | 37° | 41° | 43° | 44° | 42° | 35° | 25° | 20° | 318° |
| Normal | 38° | 42° | 46° | 51° | 57° | 62° | 65° | 67° | 65° | 57° | 46° | 39° | 478° |

FOR BETTER HEALTH

The climate of Hot Springs is mild, sunny and bracing the year around. The altitude of 4,200 feet is high enough to insure cool summer nights and not too high for those who are in ill health. Hot Springs receives more than 85% of the total possible amount of annual sunshine. Rainfall totals only 7.1 inches per year. Humidity is consistently low. The high mountains which lie on each side of the Rio Grande help deflect severe storms and provide cooling breezes to summer. A quality of the clear lakes will show how pleasant Hot Springs weather is in any month of the year. Nice cool summer nights and warm winter days.

SPORT AT ELEPHANT BUTTE LAKE

Hot Springs is just four miles South of the famous Elephant Butte Dam and Lake and 15 miles North of Caballo Dam. Erected by the U. S. Reclamation Service to impound the waters of the Rio Grande, Elephant Butte provides control of irrigation Southwest along the valley for some 200 miles. The lake is the second largest artificial body of water in the world, ranking next to Lake Mead. This great lake, 44 miles long and one to eight miles wide provides boating and fishing the year around and swimming in summer. Giant bass are caught there and crappie are plentiful. Speedboat races are a holiday feature. Duck shooting on Elephant Butte and Caballo Lakes is excellent in season. There is good trout fishing in the Rio Grande between the two dams, including the stretch that runs thru Hot Springs.

In the Great SOUTHWEST

Hot Springs lies in the heart of the vast Unsettled Empire that is New Mexico. The foothills along the river and the broad mesas that sweep out to the mountains are the haunt of the beautiful big Gambel quail. Deer roam the forests of the higher elevations and Hot Springs is a favorite headquarters for New Mexico and Texas deer hunters. Mountain lions prey on the deer and give good sport for experienced hunters. Antelope hunting is open for a short annual season on the ranges near Hot Springs. There are unlimited scenes of unusual interest—old mining towns, an occasional mine panning gold as in the Days of '49, the vast cattle industry at work, mountain highways that wind along deep canyons and through great forests. Roping, horse riding and horse racing contests are held periodically throughout the fall and winter months. There is plenty for the visitor at Hot Springs to do and see.

Many picturesque scenes are to be encountered in the country around Hot Springs. There is an interesting spot. The hatchery keeps the waters panning gold in a tiny stream.

The large fish hatchery located near Hot Springs is an interesting spot. The hatchery keeps the waters panning gold in a tiny stream.

Figure 18: Hot Springs Tourist Brochure, c. 1948. <http://www.sierracountynewmexico.info/blog/vintage-brochure-hot-springs-new-mexico-city-of-health/>



Figure 19: Truth or Consequence Main Street, c. 1950. Sherry Fletcher Collection.

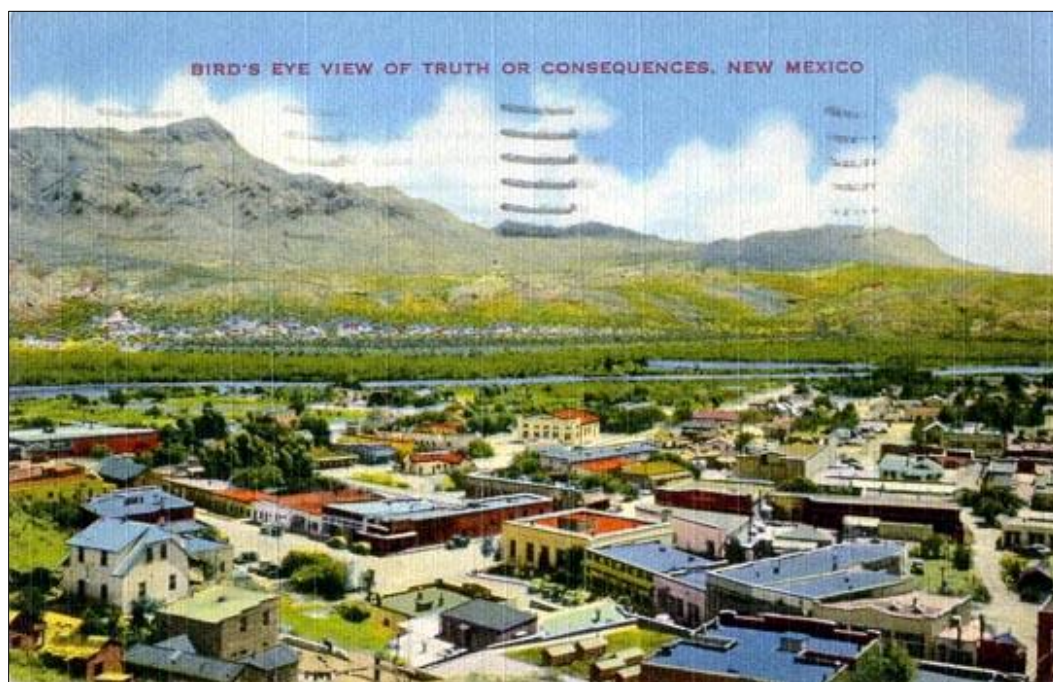


Figure 20: Truth or Consequences postcard, c. 1950-1960: Bird's Eye View Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.
<http://www.usgarchives.net/nm/ppcs-nm.html>



535
 In the care, Sir, You would have enjoyed the country
 I hope I will have come with me.

**MAIN STREET
 TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES, NEW MEXICO**

This scene shows the new highway thru Truth or Consequences and part of the business section of this modern city. On the right is "Geronimo Springs" where the famous Apache leader used to camp. The hot springs was a gathering place for Indian tribes centuries ago, before the coming of the white man — the hot mineral water was good for washing and also healing battle scars of the braves. On the left is the United State Post office.

Color Photo by F. J. Schaff
 Illustrated by F. J. Schaff

PLACE
 STAMP
 HERE

Post Card
 Hi, Honey + John, Many thanks
 for nice visit + such good dinner. arrived here Thursday
 at 1:20 noon, good trip over nice + cool till I crossed the
 desert in Texas. Rain coming over made it cool. Pants fit
 real good. nice breeze in back yard today. Have a good vacation
 You + John at Helen, as ever Clint

34 N. Church St.
 Wainersboro
 Pa.
 17268

Figure 21: Truth or Consequences postcard c. 1950-1960.



Figure 22: Hot Springs now Truth or Consequences postcard c. 1950-1960



Figure 23: Truth or Consequences postcard, c. 1960. Sherry Fletcher Collection



Figure 24: Truth or Consequences postcard, c. 1960-1970. On Back: Hot Springs, N. M., now Truth or Consequences N. M., near the famed elephant Butte Dam and Lake, is famous itself as a health resort, having many curative Mineral Springs within its boundaries as well as the Carrie tingly Hospital for the treatment of Infantile Paralysis. Hundreds of Persons from various parts of the country visit Hot Springs annually to drink and bathe in the curative waters.

<https://www.cardcow.com/46616/greetings-from-hot-springs-new-mexico>



Figure 25: Truth or Consequences postcard c. 1972. On Back: 1814 North Date ST. 37 units—first class accommodations—hot water heat—refrigerated air—free room T.V. newspaper, coffee, golf and mineral bath—game room, children's playground and boat parking on premises <https://www.cardcow.com/198115/ace-lodge-truth-or-consequences/>

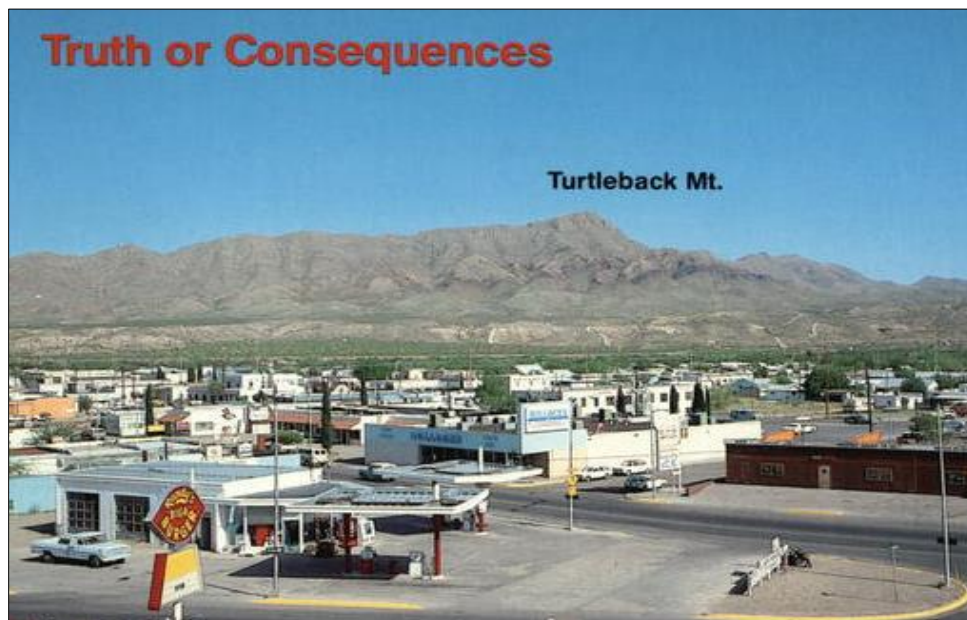


Figure 26: Truth or Consequences postcard n.d. On back: Downtown Truth of Consequences. In the background Turtleback Mountain which towers above the Rio Grande River. <https://www.cardcow.com/367271/downtown-street-scene-turtleback-mountain-truth-or-consequences/>

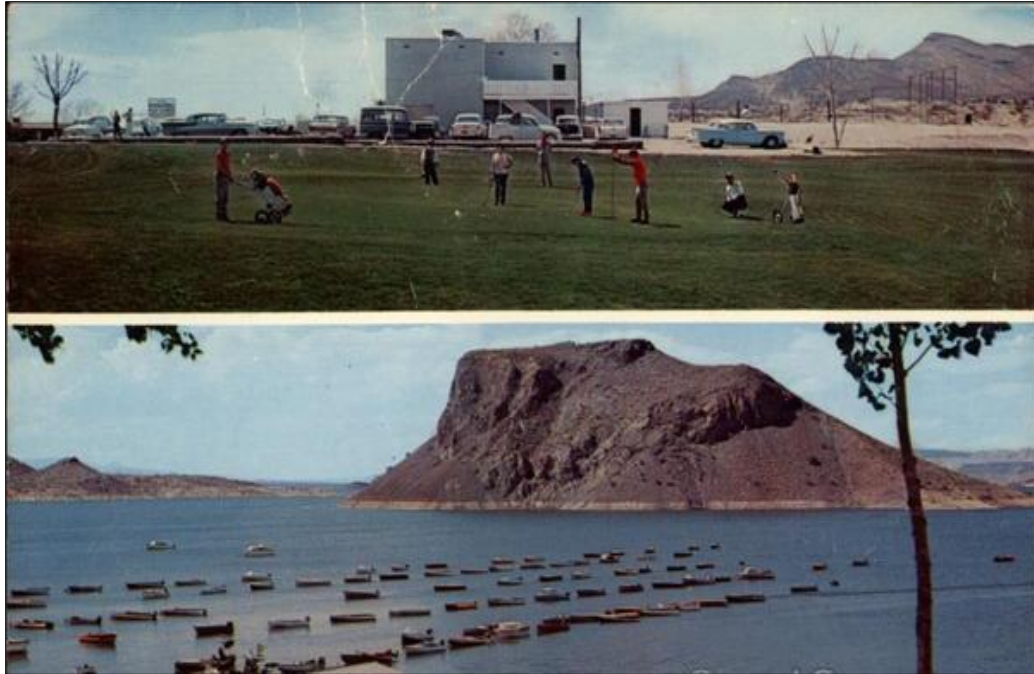


Figure 27: Truth or Consequences postcard n.d. On back: The resort capital, Truth Or Consequences, N. M., besides being a health and winter spa, boasts one of the world's largest man-made lakes, Elephant Butte. Stocked with game fish. Skiing and boating center for thousands. A well engineered, grassed golf course is provided for all year playing.

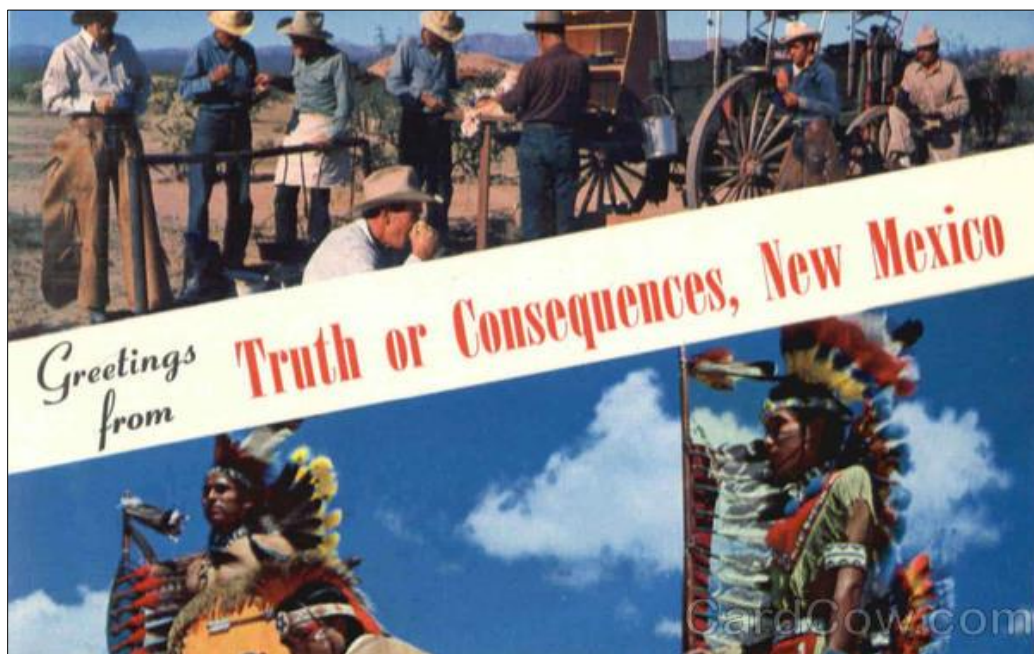


Figure 28: Truth or Consequences postcard n.d. On Back. Blank.

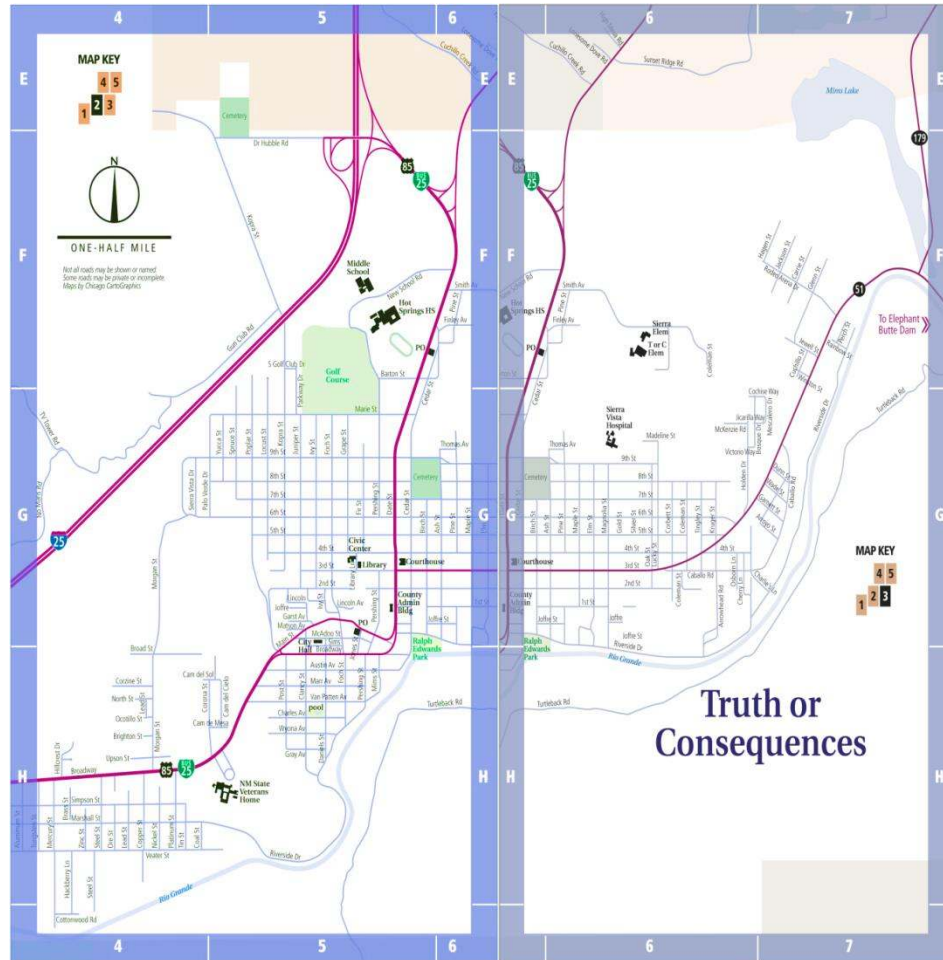


Figure 29: Phonebook Street Map. <http://www.directoryplus.com/book/truth-or-consequences>.

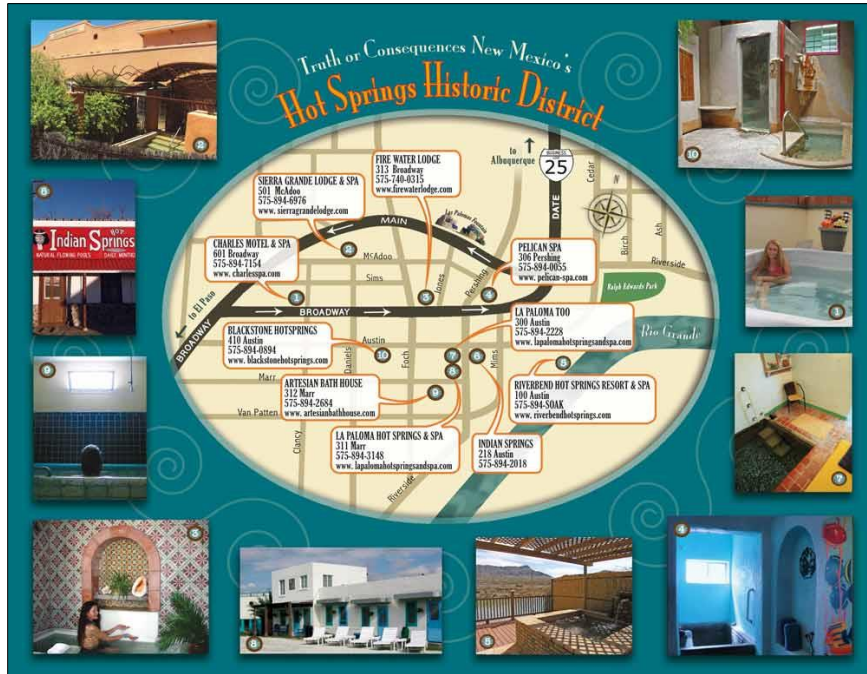


Figure 30: Truth or Consequences postcard & tourist map, “Hot Spring Historic District,” c. 2010.



Figure 31: Healing Waters Trail Map, c. 2010.



Figure 32: Truth or Consequences Highway Sign.



Figure 33: Ralph Edwards by a Welcome Sign, C. 1950. <http://annualtorcfiesta.com/past-fiestas/>



Figure 34: Truth or Consequences Rodeo, c. 1954. Courtesy New Mexico State Records Center and Archives.



Figure 35 & Figure 36: Annual Fiesta Rodeo & Sierra County Fair c. 2012.
<http://www.sierracountynewmexico.info/annual-event/truth-or-consequences-fiesta/>
<http://www.sierracountynewmexico.info/annual-event/sierra-county-fair/>

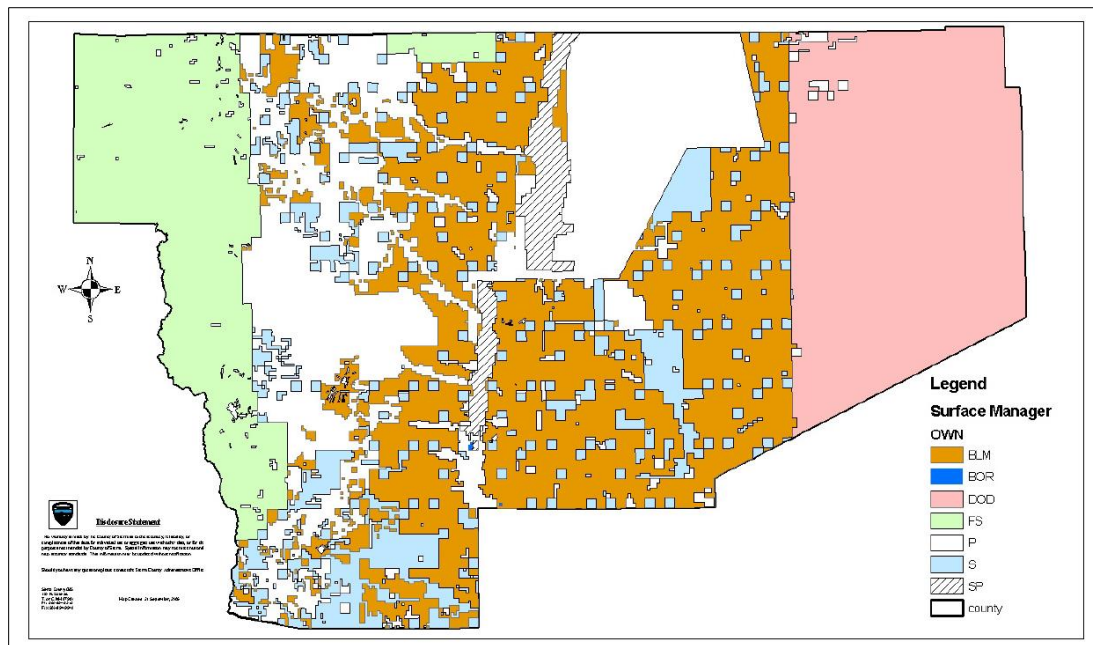


Figure 37: Sierra County Public Land Map.
<http://www.jkagroup.com/Docs/clients/sierracounty.pdf>

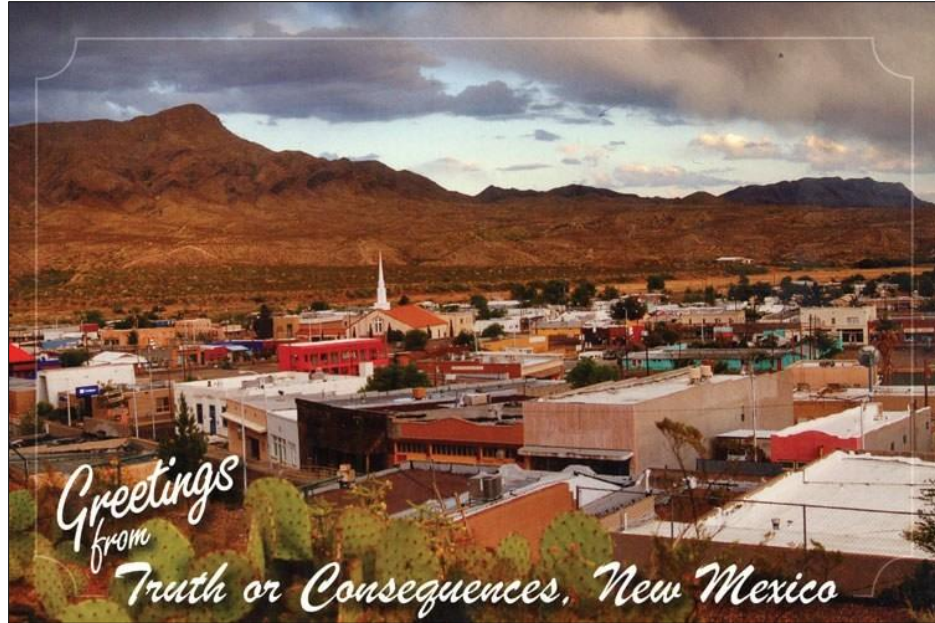


Figure 38: Truth or Consequences postcard c. 2010.

<https://www.newscastic.com/news/10-new-mexico-towns-with-really-cool-names-1368589/>



Figure 39: Article on Downtown T or C, “Retro Romance.”

By Judith Fein. *New Mexico Magazine*, March 2009.

<http://www.sierracountynewmexico.info/press/hot-springs-soak-up-the-scene-in-truth-or-consequences/>



Figure 40 & Figure 41 & Figure 42 & Figure 43: Downtown Truth or Consequences, Travel Blogger, "The Good Luck Duck." <http://www.thegoodluckduck.com/2014/06/colorful-truth-or-consequences-new.html>

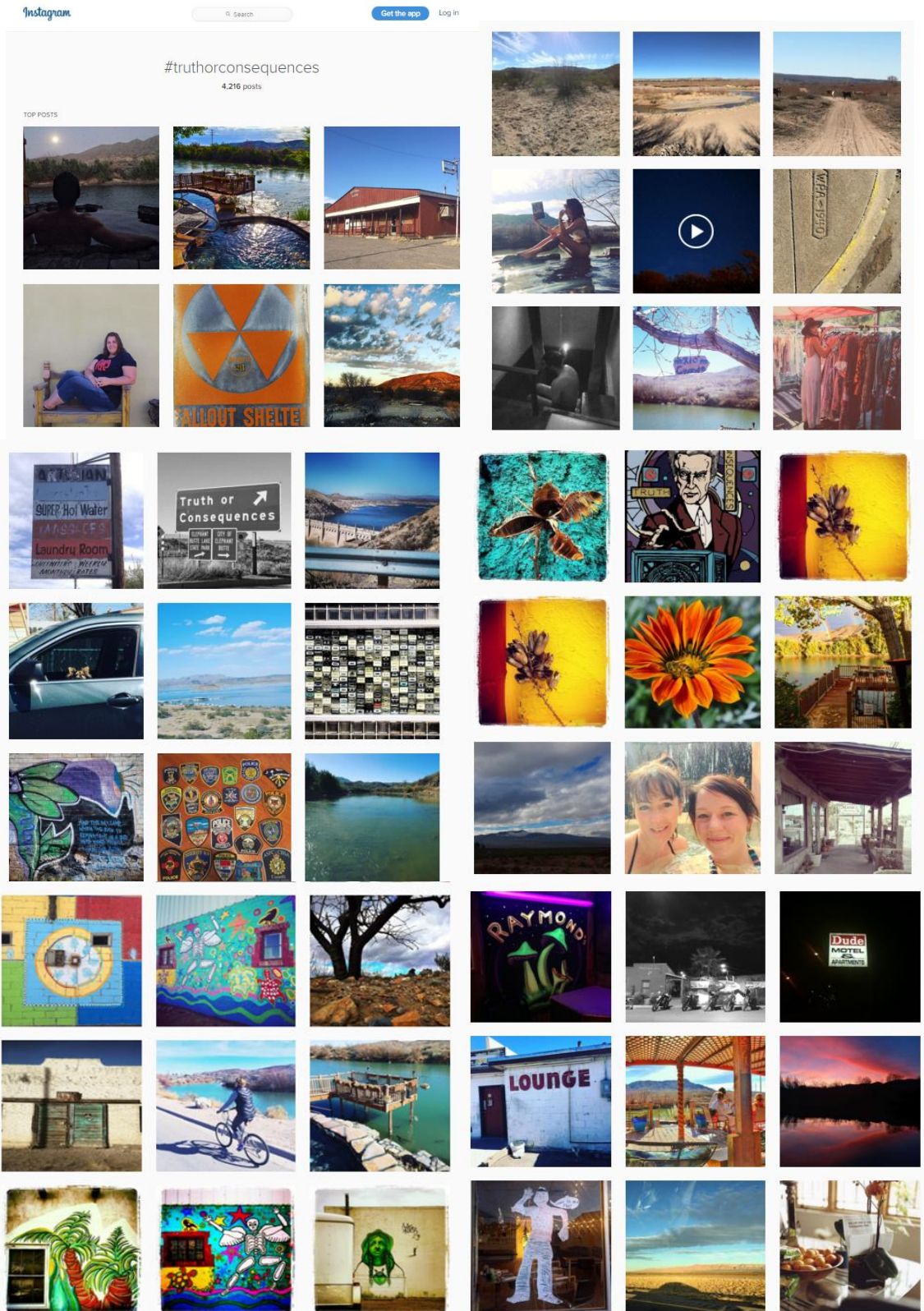


Figure 44: Instagram. #truthorconsequences. <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/truthorconsequences>

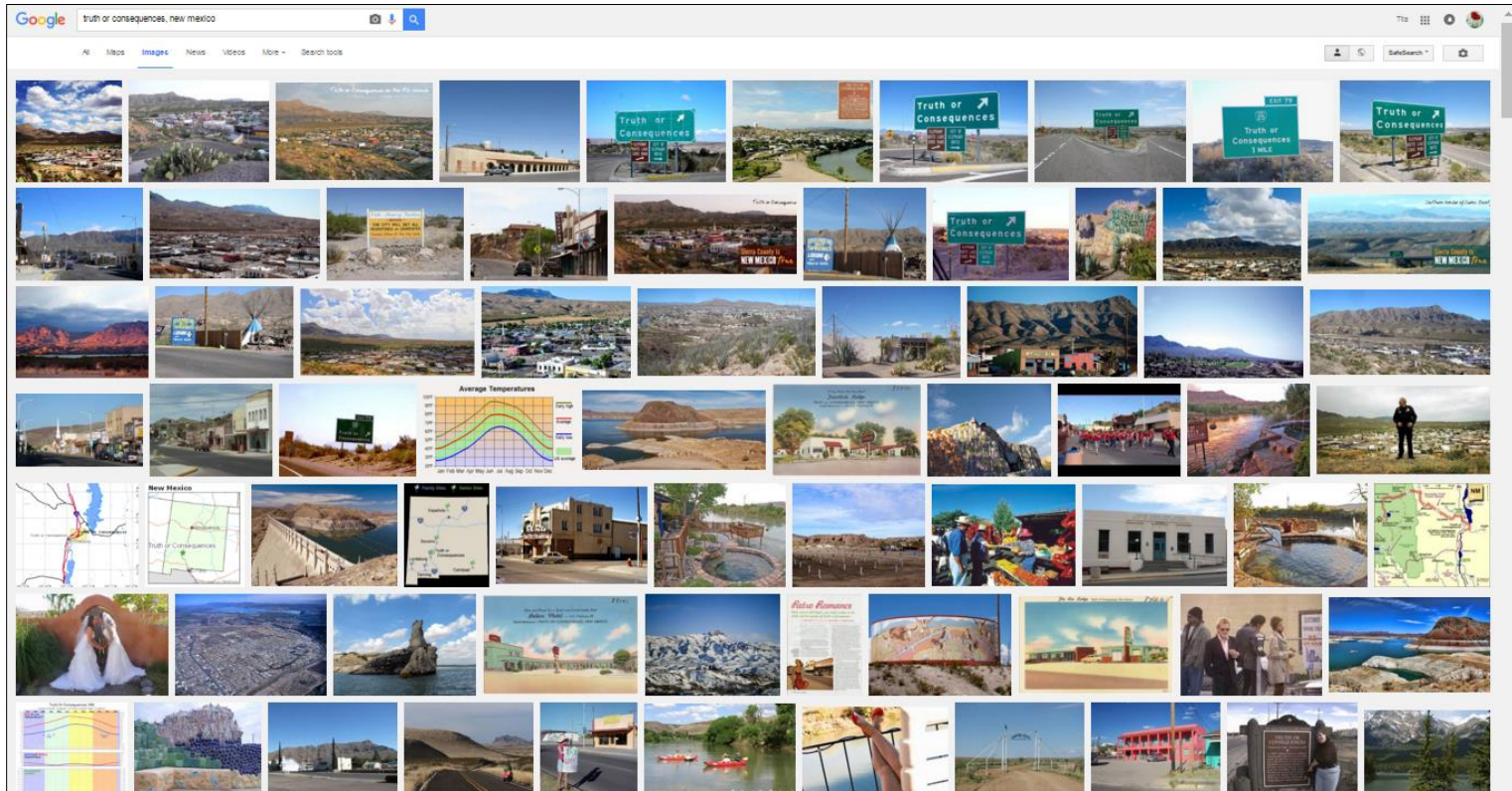


Figure 45: Google Image Search, "Truth or Consequences, New Mexico"

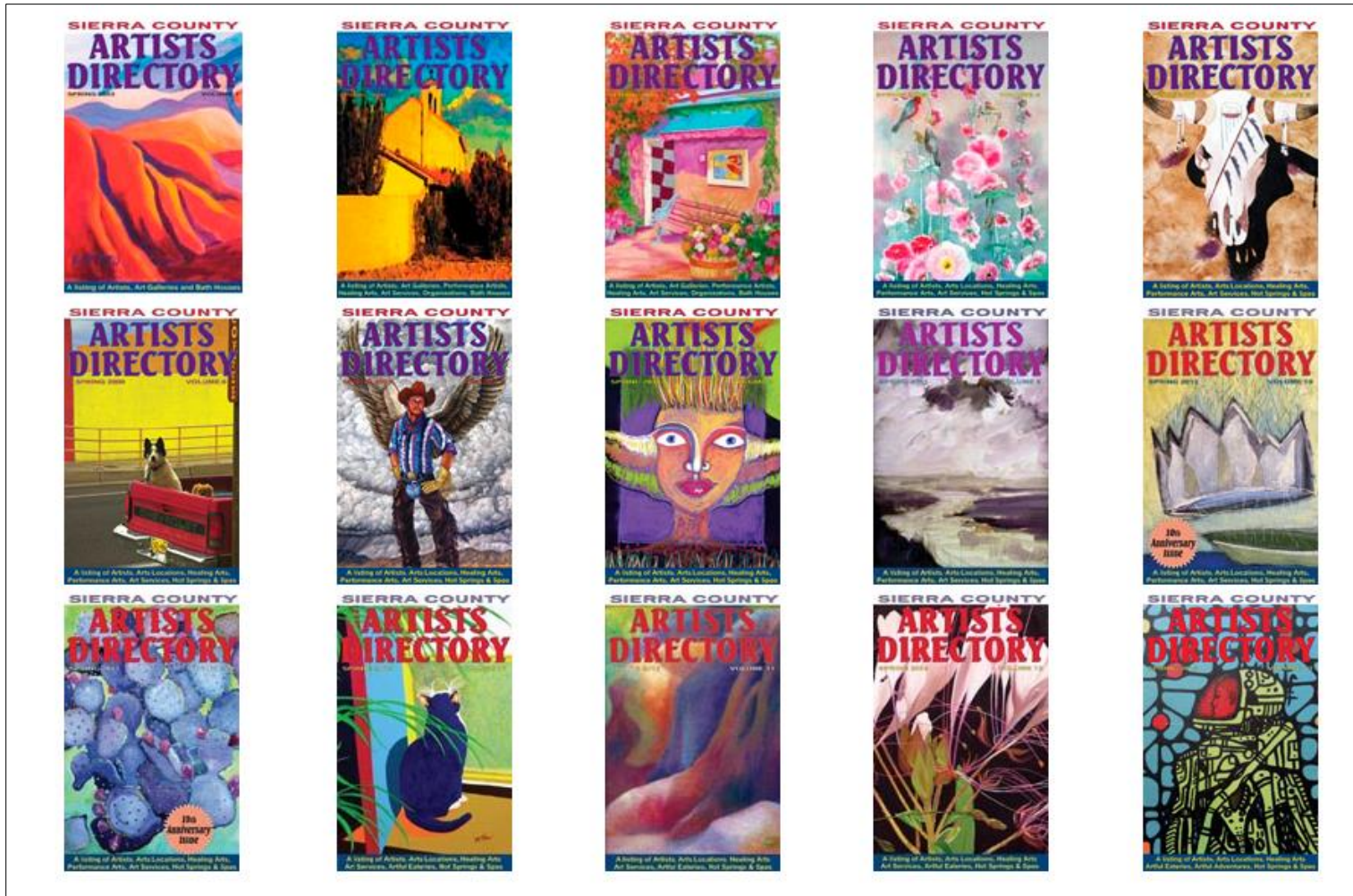


Figure 46: Truth or Consequences Artist's Directory Cover Sampling.
<http://www.sierracountyart.org/>



Figure 47: View of Truth or Consequences from Turtleback Mountain.
 Campo Espinosa & Mims Pond are the visible arc of water west of Elephant Butte in the distance.
<http://torcchamber.org/>

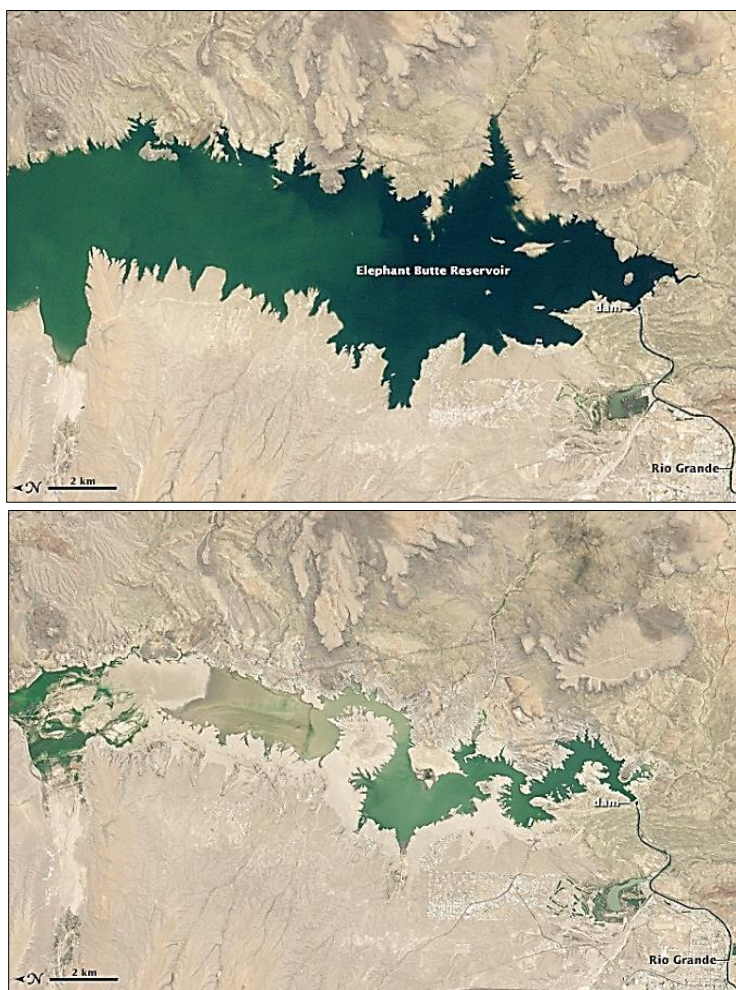


Figure 48 & Figure 49: Elephant Butte Reservoir in 1994 & 2013.
 NASA Earth Observatory image by Jesse Allen and Robert Simmon - NASA Earth Observatory image using Landsat data from the U.S. Geological Survey.

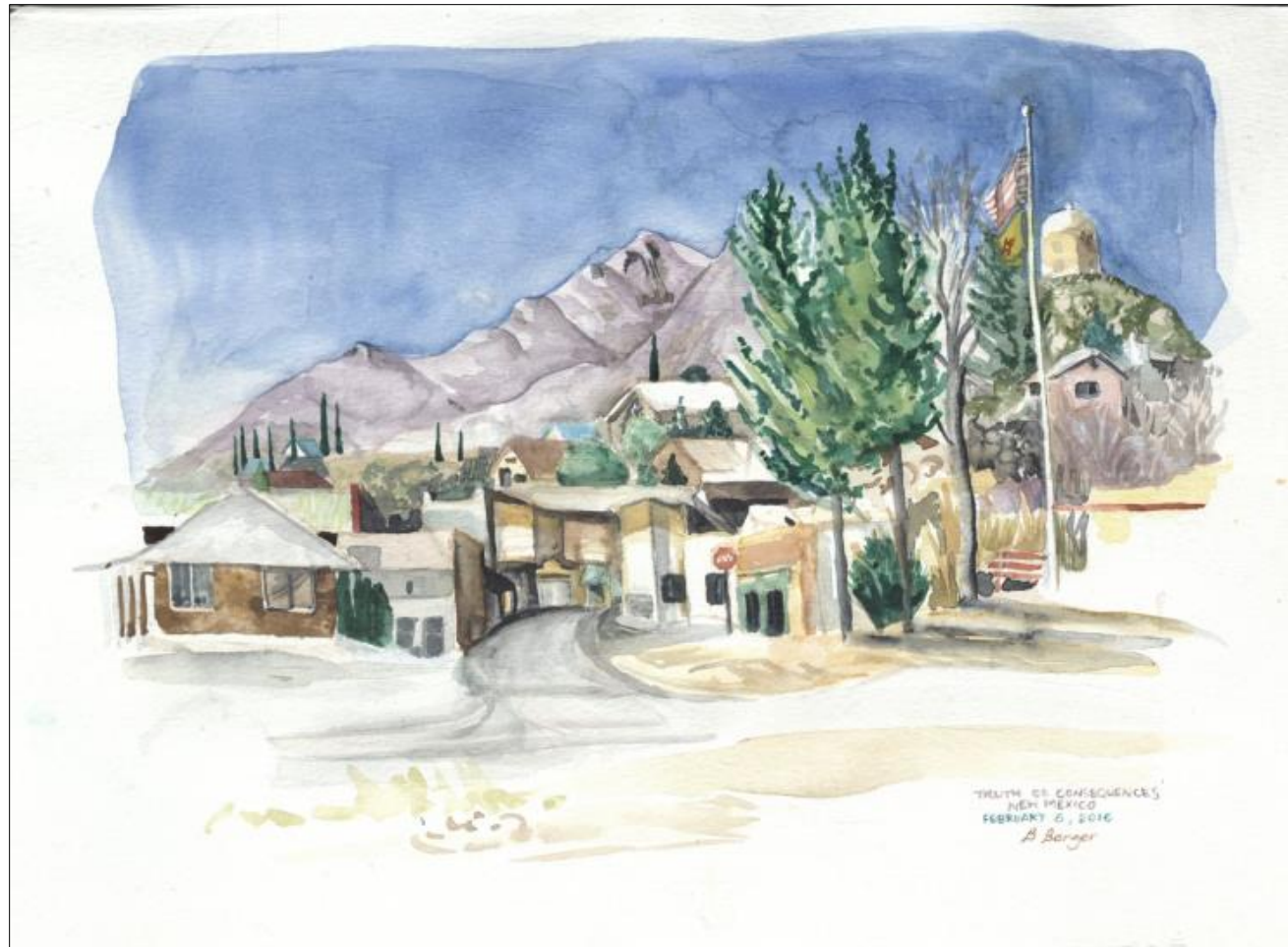


Figure 50: Painting, "Truth or Consequences," Barbara Berger



Figure 51: Painting, "Mineral Baths, Truth or Consequences," Barbara Berger



Figure 52: Painting, "Truth or Consequences, "T," Barbara Berger



Figure 53: Sierra County Tourism Truth or Consequences Official Photo.

Appendix 2: Narrating Place: A Place Ethnographic Site Tour

The boundary for this ethnographic study was the town itself, defined by the political boundaries of the city. The political map of Truth or Consequences has an odd shape. The city covers 12.8 square miles. The southern portion is a rough square that juts in here and out there. It encompasses what most people would consider the town. Interstate 25 runs diagonally from the southwest corner through this lower square of town. The political boundaries then narrow into a long corridor that runs parallel to and just west of Interstate 25. The far west boundary of this corridor is plumb, but the interior of the corridor looks like a line of uneven boxes. The top of the city's political boundaries bulge out into a long narrow rectangle that narrows at the far north end of the city limit. This boundary includes the interstate highway. This long finger of city land encompasses the city airport, opened for commercial flight in 1950. The airport, once a regional stop for Continental Airlines, brought the B-list movie stars who brought glamour to the yearly town fiestas hosted by Ralph Edwards, the radio and television producer who prompted the town's name change. Today, you can spot the occasional small private jets and small airplanes that use the facilities

The town of T or C lies between these two exits that mark the north and south ends of town. Signs to the now-defunct high-end community, with a country club and golf course and a dozen upscale houses that are not all empty, still stand at the road that cuts east just past the Sonic Drive-In. This road is one of two that take you out to the lake. Back along the main drag, high school girls in huge sparkling country belts and square-toed boots and boys in Wranglers and baseball caps sit on tailgates at the Sonic

listening to rap and hip-hop. Other teens mill around in roving packs. Families sit at the outside tables. The traffic at Sonic is always steady. Date Street is a double-lane road with center islands. This one major road through town splits into the one-way streets downtown and comes back together before the hill up to the Veteran's Center. This commercial strip lines both sides of the road from the top of a long hill from the interstate's T or C exit all the way to the historic downtown.

The town's one official exits leads immediate to a ubiquitous American commercial strip. There is a Walmart Supercenter, a Holiday Inn, a Comfort Inn, a Denny's, a Super 8, McDonald's, a K-Bob and older hotel, and gas station. If you look east from the Walmart parking lot you can see the dam, in tiny concrete miniature, three miles away. This cluster of buildings is as far as many people who exit Interstate 25 travel. The elementary, middle, and high schools are also on the east side of town on the top of the rise. The middle school and High School are across the street from one another, just east of the golf course and west of Date Street. The elementary school is on the east of Date Street. You can glimpse the semi-suburban neighborhoods of the city Elephant Butte further east. To the north, the high granite peaks of the San Mateo Mountains mark the divide between Sierra and Socorro counties. All along the western horizon lies the long, jagged inky line of the Black Range.

At the top of the hill is the Los Arcos Steak and Lobster House, whose 1970s lava-rock interior is crowded and still surprisingly elegant. The food is superior and bar always lively. A little further down the road are the hardware stores, centers of small town life. Older box buildings, hotels, small businesses, restaurants, and an occasional chain store define this stretch. A few of the 1950's, '60's, and '70's car-court motels have

been recently remodeled. There is a Circle K that is always busy. From the parking lot, you can look due west and see the golf course. Raymond's, next door, is a quintessential dive bar. It has a small backlit sign and wooden façade and shares a wall with the Circle K. I watched one night as several of the town's gay men, and there are a good many, joined a handful of the local rural cowboys and a few random ladies and line-danced in the very small space by the pool table. It could have been a choreographed music video. It is the only bar left in town.

There is a great new seafood restaurant and a beautiful Catholic Church at the bottom of the hill. The town's former single stop light at Third Street is now one of two since the Walmart was built at the top of the hill. There are several WPA buildings in this small area. On the northeast corner is the 1939 Sierra County Court House. It is built in the territorial revival style. There is a lovely rock-wall remnant and archway that remain from Salcido Stadium on Third Street built in 1938. It was torn down for tennis courts in 1986. The residential houses in the neighborhoods to the west employ a great deal of similar rockwork. The graceful 1938 former Elementary School building was likely designed by Willard C. Kruger, who served as the New Mexico state architect from 1936-1937. The former school sits next to the Civic Center auditorium where dances, meetings, community events, and Miss Fiesta pageants are still held. The Civic Center's gleaming wood floors, heavy wooden bleachers, and deeply recessed stage create a beautiful space. The public library and City Council Chambers are south of the Civic Center. The former Hot Springs Public School, just down from the stop light at Third, is a Mission Revival building designed by Henry Trost in 1935. It currently houses government offices and the public school administration offices. Both schools have been retrofitted in the repurposed

institutional splendor of dropped ceilings and florescent lights. The beauty and sense of place that are evident in individual buildings are hardly noticeable unless you are walking. There is very little pedestrian traffic.

The road separates into a two-lane one-way road at the downtown entrance, turning sharply west and becomes Main Street. The mirror one-way comes east along Broadway. The commercial downtown lies between these two roads, separated by several streets, easily visible to one another. Main Street curves up and around a bend. There are stretches of buildings from the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's. It is a traditional building-business block type, with buildings on the sidewalk's edge and large display windows. There are a few odd elements. A two-story building with dusty windows is filled with antiques and random junk with a half-finished paint job from years ago. Old residential apartments in livable disrepair slope off the steep hill where the town's landscape defining water tank sits, called Water Tank Hill. Geronimo Museum is a long brown building with brown brick arches on an addition built by a local architect as the museum grew. You can see these arches in other downtown buildings from the 1960s and 1970s. There is a repeated and place defining use of arches in many buildings from this era that is place defining. The post office is a lovely and unadorned square across the street. There is a striking WPA mural, "Indian Bear Dance," by Boris Deutsch (1940) inside. There is a large and colorful fiberglass-types sculpture next to the private museum, with lots of motifs. This is where the gazebo covering Government Springs used to stand; it was changed to Geronimo Springs by boosters, sometime in the 1940s.

There are several empty lots on the north side with colorful graffiti on the bare cement walls where buildings used to stand that abut Water Tank Hill. A wood-shingled

remnant of a western-type shade structure obscures many buildings on the other side. Further around the bend, this western façade has been removed, and the shade awning ends. A small row of five very appealing small 1920's and 1930's buildings represent a small revived commercial strip. The movie theater sits on opposite on the south side one side. The Vera Hotel, once place defining, now sits, hardly noticeable with its second roof removed, at the top of the rise. A long adobe back wall, with Sierra Grande spelled in blue tile and glass, curves in and out along down the hill. Ted Turner owns the small but beautifully restored two-storied bathhouse. The city hall and police department are visible to the south. The road swings back east, around to Broadway, or continues southwest up the hill and out to the interstate.

On the other downtown one-way thoroughfare is the downtown grocery store, Bullocks, always busy, although not as much as it used to be with Walmart in town. There is the Charles Hotel, a double-storied main building, with a long row of rooms built for longer stays with kitchenettes and large interiors. In the main building is a hot tub to fill with mineral water on the roof and two separate rooms with deep bathtubs for men and women that can be freshly filled. There is also a massage room. Broadway looks exactly like a small-town main street. Businesses, a few with a second story, several other car court hotels/bathhouses, a church with identifiable and highly visible steeple, and a classic and busy drive in. There are antique and junk stores, galleries, a yoga studio, boutiques, and a few restaurants. Several buildings are vacant or turn over regularly. There is a parking lot at the bank on Broadway. It is a very large one, where street dances are often held during the annual fiestas. The buildings of the 1970s that characterize these

areas on either side of the downtown and a few in the downtown, however, are starting to achieve the patina of good looks that age can bring.

The streets that run perpendicular to the main roads are lined with buildings. Some have been restored. There are a few good restaurants and a few businesses. There are several offices and commercial buildings. There are two sets of alleys that run parallel to the main roads. In the middle of town is the Lee Bell Center, a beautifully proportioned WPA built in the Spanish Pueblo Revival style in 1935. Directly west is the City Hall, a long building marked by brown brick arches, are in the center of town. The downtown residential district is between Austin and the river.

Austin, a wide and straight street, parallels Broadway to the north. There are several restored bathhouses, larger buildings, apartments, and business. Businesses come and go regularly. There are a few places in disrepair that hold potential. Broadway and Austin merge and end at Ralph Edwards Park. There is a smaller park with a good-sized pond and a small cluster of rock formations with short winding sidewalks. The large park runs along the river, with a small skate park at the west end, a gazebo in the center, with basketballs courts, a sad volleyball lot, and a playground. Riverside Drive continues east along the river. It eventually emerges far down on the east end of Third Street a few miles away. Third Street becomes Highway 51, which runs to the lake and east to Engle, and beyond this to the Spaceport.

The neighborhoods from the river north and to the west of Date Street are on oddly shaped streets, unlike the mostly platted developments in other parts of town. They are a mix of old houses and trailers. Beyond Third Street, the numbered streets are laid out in a neat box grid. Most of these homes are from the 1940s and 1950s to the present.

The trailers are a later vintage, but quite a few are acquiring a vintage look. The four residential neighborhood groupings in town are east and west of north Date Street from the top of the town to the downtown, the residential neighborhood south of downtown, and the neighborhoods on the top of the bluff to the west of downtown that extend to the Williamsburg boundary and interstate.

There are new murals on the Lee Bell Center. They are beautiful murals, evocative of the WPA murals of the 1930s, where fine art and paintings meet on the canvas of public buildings. The artwork in the town has become place defining. The most prevalent are murals and sculptures. Structural artwork, like fences, is place defining. The fences are small works of vernacular art in tin and wood and repurposed materials and some are wildly flamboyant. The alleys that run throughout the downtown and the residential section are mostly maintained thoroughfares. In preparation for a guided-tour for an architectural group that was coming to town based on the power of a presentation I gave at a conference, I revisited places I thought I knew perfectly. I walked the same general route for two months, dozens of times, to see where shadows fell, where the light was best, to see where things looked unexpectedly beautiful, and to showcase iconic buildings and elements of the historic district. Although I had been in town for two years before the tour, I found myself noticing new things with every traversal of the same small set of blocks. I was also sharply aware of the ugly places in new ways.

The Rio Grande runs along the entire west side of town. It is either a swift-flowing river brimming with irrigation water or a sluggish muddy ribbon, depending on the time of year. It comes from the spillways out of Elephant Butte Dam, through the steep canyons just east of the town, curves along the downtown, and eventually turns

south, just before Interstate 25 at Williamsburg. Along with mistletoe-infested cottonwood and tamarisk, a small community of houses sits on the south banks of the river. It is a 20-minute drive east to the nearest bridge and back. On the south end of the downtown, the street curves steeply up, affording a sweeping view of the whole downtown, before cresting at the entrance to the former Carrie Tingley Hospital for Crippled Children, now the site of the New Mexico State Veteran's Center. It is one of a handful of WPA buildings in the town. It is a large and beautiful two story territorial building with a columned front and long industrial wings,. Just beyond the short rock wall that runs the whole perimeter of the Veteran's Center is the small Veteran's Museum. There are parking lots and small war memorials, including a replica of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall. At the edge of this parking lot is the Healing Waters trailhead, a new semi-urban trail that ties the town's historic downtown to this site, as well as the river below.

The road leading out of downtown and headed west, Broadway, curves up the small hill to the State Veteran's Center. Once this hill is crested, the downtown falls away and the road runs straight to the Williamsburg exit to the west. There are two lanes each way and are long stretches of sidewalk along the road. There are a few businesses and a few restaurants and many available spaces. There are garages and larger service buildings, both occupied and vacant. Residential houses are farther back on either side. There is a much more rural feel to this part of town. There are wide roads and a few dirt roads and very few sidewalks back in the residential neighborhoods. There is a mix of trailers and old adobes and frame houses on larger lots. Kids ride around on bikes, and men gather around trucks with open hoods. People watch you in a friendly way.

Occasionally, there will be an obvious meth house, marked by refuse and the frantic half-finished maniacal projects of the addicted that look, almost, like art. To the north, a half mile or so to a mile back from the road are low eroded mesas; to the south is the river, out of sight. There are some lovely little houses down by the river.

A few small government offices line the roads. The town of Williamsburg melds in, unnoticeable as different except for the Williamsburg signs and a few government structures. There is a park and playing fields and then the gas stations and a single motel and the interstate. The mountains, sprawling in the background, velvety golden brown in the crevasses and canyons at the base, rising to a rocky cluster spanning the top, both immense and diminutive in the surrounding expanse, are always visible. It is four miles north from the Williamsburg exit to the Truth or Consequence's exit. Both exits provide amenities. Neither gives an indication of the charming and odd and sometimes desolate little town tucked down below by the river.

There are two lakes, Elephant Butte Lake and Caballo Lake, and well-maintained state recreation areas at both. The town of Elephant Butte is almost a suburb of T or C, although the town is fiercely protective of its separate identity. Caballo has receded in recent years enough to occasionally resemble a river. Elephant Butte Lake is also constantly shrinking and receding, although in wet years it will occasionally regaining a former shoreline. On certain holiday weekends the lake has tens of thousands of visitors. The lake has its own particular joyous and dangerous reputation.

The town is the seat of Sierra County. The county includes the nearby villages of Monticello and Placitas, the communities of Animas Canyon and Palomas Canyon, and the old mining communities of Hillsboro, Cuchillo, Winston, Chloride, and Kingston.

Many of these old mining towns are characterized today as ghost towns. All are peopled communities. Some are thriving, and others struggle. Agricultural landscapes to the south and the small communities Arrey is to the south. Mountains that thrust up on both sides of the Rio Grande valley and ring huge swath of mostly arid land in the center. These include the San Mateo and Black Range, the San Andreas Mountains as well as the nearby Cibola and Gila national forests. Back roads are everywhere. These were state and federal roads on national forest and Bureau of Land Management lands, county roads to small communities or a few residences; they were old roads and dirt-landed thoroughfares through private lands to reach public lands.

Dirt roads are everywhere, leading out in all directions. They will take you to mountains that are cool and sweet smelling, with pine and juniper trees and wildflowers. They will take you to vistas where the views stretch to distant curved horizons at the edge of the earth. They will take you to watering holes and little towns, out to the the scrub and mesquite hills, back to the steep-walled canyons and along sandy river washes. They lead to locally-known places where congregations of trucks and cars gather for drinking, smoking, and sport. The wind blows often hot and dusty, covering everything in a fine layer of grit. Sometimes you can smell wildfires, see the sky ablaze as the sun sets like a red ball of fire in the smoke-filled sky. In the late summer the rain clouds tower overhead, turning sandy washes into roaring rivers.

Appendix 3: Research Blog Examples

Monday, July 23, 2012

Where Everybody Knows Your Name



Photo taken by author at Fiestas, 2012.

The last post ended with the idea that Truth or Consequences is a "familiar place," to me, a hometown of sorts. A hometown is a whole lot of who people are. There is a story in the New Testament, in Mark, about Jesus going to his hometown. I read as the liturgist a few weeks ago. It was interesting. Mark 6:1-6. "Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. 'Where did this man get these things?' they asked. 'What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?' And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, 'Only in his hometown, among his relatives, and in his own house is a prophet without honour.' He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith."

I think this brings the tension between the nostalgic warm fuzzy idea of a hometown, especially a small town, up against the idea that our most familiar places can be hard places. Testing places. Even for the son of God. "But, you know," says Jim Carrey, "you can't be a star at home." Jesus would have understood. Elvis said that "more than anything else, I want the folks back at home to think right of me."

There are reasons people leave their homes and hometowns. There are reasons they come back. There are reasons they stay. It is the home part of the hometown that carries the weight. Some two thousand years ago Pliny the Elder, a Roman naval commander, philosopher and

naturalist, is said to have coined the phrase "home is where the heart is." T. S. Eliot wrote that "home is where one starts from." Laura Ingalls Wilder, of *Little House on the Prairie* fame, said that home "is the nicest word there is." George Augustus Moore said that a "man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it." And Robert Frost wrote that "home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

It is hard finding a good quote about home being a hard place, except another by Wilder that said there "is no comfort anywhere for anyone who dreads to go home." I was hoping David Sedaris would have something really funny to say about home being the place where they rip the heart right out of you, and if you are lucky they graft it back, and then you move back so you don't have to explain the scars. Striving to be fair and balanced, in the face of overwhelming sentiments that favor home as the keeper of all that is good, is not easy. But there is something to this idea that when we talk about where we are from, we are also talking about who we are, and we tend to focus on the better parts of our places and selves.

It is an undeniable fate that homes, and by extension hometowns, leave indelible marks on people. How can communities make sure they are writing good stories? The narratives we write about places, and how we go about making places are the central considerations of my dissertation. A huge part of my research is looking at the people 'writing' place narratives and making places and talking to them. We all do this to some extent, but some people do a lot more. I was lucky in my first real interview to talk to one of these people.

My first formal interview was with a local leader and mentor to many. We spend four hours talking at Bar-B-Que on Broadway. People light up when they see him. He is the sort of person you want in your hometown, a decent guy who cares in both a general way and very specifically. He keeps a great many commitments to the town even though he spends a good deal of his year away from home. We talk through through the breakfast rush and the lunch rush. When we leave Kathy tells us to come back when we "can't stay for so long," with a friendly smile. It was a good place to be on a Thursday in July. Every table is a portrait of why so many people want to be from small towns or live in one. Smiling, saying hello, laughing and sharing stories over great food. On the other hand every table could just as easy have been a perfect reason why some kid is dying to get away. There are a dozen people who remember you at 3 and 4 and 10 and 15, and remember most of the rotten things you did. And they love you anyway. You can feel teens shudder at the thought. There is no getting lost in this crowd.

A lot of people know him. A lot of people love him. You can tell this pretty easily. He loves them back. This is pretty easy to see too. He moved to T or C the summer before the 4th grade. He went down to Las Cruces after he graduated from high school to get his teaching credentials at NMSU, focusing on History with minor in English. He then got a Masters Degree in History at NMSU and spent some time teaching in El Paso, Juarez and Guadalajara. After a few years he came home for a spell to publish a consumer newsletter. This is when an intrepid and brilliant Sherry Fletcher called to ask if he would teach at the alternative high school. Ten years later, as the school closed its doors due to decreasing enrollment, He had picked up a PhD and was the school principle. He was also raising two sons.

There were a lot of really sharp things that He said about places, hometowns, and people. I asked if I could share of few of these in this post. The idea that came though in almost every answer to my questions about place and place making was connection. What it means to have

connections to a place and the people there. How important these connections are to him and to creating good places no matter where he is. What it means to have these connections to home when we are far from home. He feels very connected to Truth or Consequences. People may know your business, he says, but that can keep you from falling through the cracks. Even when he is halfway around the world, he still knows what is going on in town. T or C is his home, he says, no matter where he is or what else he is doing. A good home connects us, generally to family, but also to other kinds of things, like security. A good hometown connects us to one another, but also to other kinds of things, like opportunities to link to the wider world.

Big cities generally have a cultural advantage in this way. But small towns have an advantage too. We can create a sense of history through familiar landmarks, knowing people, working together. He remarks that there is not a lot of formality in the town. People are pretty open and friendly, even people you don't know, or don't know yet. Korean's, he tells me, don't wave. Although he does have a couple of guards he sees daily into the happy habit of waving these days, a story about being open and friendly that nicely illustrates his personality. He is currently the MHS Academic Affairs Director at the SMIC Private School in Shanghai, China. The rest of the day I notice how often people wave.

He talks about how the T or C community has worked at creating a strong sense of history and a lively cultural scene through establishing a historic district, holding yearly festivals, bringing in exhibits and speakers and other activities. He brings up the Smithsonian Museum's traveling exhibit *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* that came to the Geronimo Springs Museum in April. He is animated as he talks about making things happen with volunteers. He still sits on the Board for the 4th Street Computer Lab and attends meetings from China via Skype. A sense of history and place connections run strongly through T or C, he says. He brings up his ten year high school reunion, where people like me, who lived in the area when they were young, came back because they still felt these connections to this place.

There are problems, and he talks about these with the same passion and knowledge. There is crushing poverty and a lack of opportunity. There are not enough chances for kids to see the value of education. There are fears of changing and developing, of turning into a place where families of young kids and older folks on fixed incomes are not priorities. The backbone of the town is volunteers, and while this model can makes deep connections and can turn out a fine fiesta, it cannot be the only way community needs are met. There are a basic services that need to be in place for a place to prosper. It's hard to get ahead, and hard to stay afloat. This is true in places all over, but especially true in rural New Mexico. People may know your business, and may try to keep you from falling through the cracks, but sometimes the need create chasms. Support networks can be fragile, especially if they are entirely dependent on volunteers.

We create high expectations for kids, he says, but we have to have examples of success to show them as well. To this end, one of the best things communities can do to create success is to have vision and to have leaders who have a sense of vision. Celebrating and recognizing history is key to creating a sense of place he remarks, but learning to see the possibilities in the world means having other models and experiences too. He talks about his travels and seeing the world, which he has done extensively. I agree a that love for your own place can more easily take root when you have been to others. This love of home grows in other ways too, but there is something about distance and the heart growing fonder that is true.

You have to have diversity He says, in people, in experience, and in economic opportunities. This is the richness of experience that renders your own places vivid. You bring back this richness when you have gone away. But what we take with us, he says, is home grown. He wraps up our interview with a story of how his home grown experience and connections impacted the life of a Chinese friend and graduate student in Korea. Through his mentoring, this friend wrote a thesis and finished his degree. We are always influenced by our place and the people in our hometown, and what we learn there. This extends far out into the world he says. It translates from here to other places, and to the communities we make and choose. These connections are what hold us together no matter where we are. The world seems very small when he tells this story. Not stifling small, but small in the sense that you cannot get too lost, because all roads lead home.

Monday, July 16, 2012

What Am I Doing? Part II



An ethnography seeks to describe all or part of the culture or life of a person, or a community, by identifying and describing the practices or beliefs of that person or community. Anti-Defamation League

Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.

Zora Neale Hurston, in *Dust Tracks on a Road*, 1942

Zora Neale Hurston (1/7/1891-1/28/1960) was an anthropologist, ethnographer, author and American folklorist. She published dozens upon dozens of essay, short stories and plays. She was a beautifully evocative, sharp, funny and lyrical writer. In the late 1920s she drove her car through the rural south as an anthropology student at Barnard, collecting African-American folklore. *Mules and Men* is the collection of the material and research about people and places she gathered in Florida. Her introduction talks about why she starts by going back to her old hometown to begin this work. I quote it generously below.

I am still figuring out who to answer the question everyone asks me about my work on Truth or Consequences. What are you doing here? Or there, depending on who is asking. I am still figuring this out honestly, despite the 20 page IRB application that I wrote up so the University would allow me to come to T or C to talk to people (see Part 1 of this post for more on my IRB).

I want to talk to people mostly. This is basically what I am doing. I want to ask people what they think about the town, and what kinds of things they like about it, and what kinds of things they like to do. I want to know what people think that *other* people think about the town. I want to know about memories and activities and festivals. I want to know why people visit and why people stay. Really thinking about it on my drive home last week, after my second week of "fieldwork" and my first formal interview, I figured out that I want to know these things because I love the town. Truth or Consequences is not my hometown in some ways, but in other ways it is. I grew up in Albuquerque, but I also grew up in T or C. It is part of my "familiar ground." The idea of familiar ground is something Hurston writes about as she sets off to do her fieldwork and research:

Dr. Boas asked me where I wanted to work and I said, "Florida," and gave, as my big reason, that "Florida is a place that draws people, white people from all the world, and Negroes from every Southern state surely and some from the North and West." So I knew that it was possible for me to get cross section of the Negro South in the one state. And then I realized that I was new myself, so it looked sensible for me, choose familiar ground.

First place I aimed to stop to collect material was Eatonville, Florida.

And now, I'm going to tell you why I decided to go to my native village first. I didn't go back there so that the home could make admiration over me because I had been up North to college and come back with a diploma and a Chevrolet. I knew they were not going to pay either one of these I items too much mind. I was just Lucy Hurston's daughter, Zora and even if I had, to use one of our down home expressions, had a Kaiser baby, and that's something that hasn't been done in this Country yet, I'd still be just Zora to the neighbors. If I had exalted myself to impress the town, somebody would have sent me word in a matchbox that I had been up North there and had rubbed the hair off of my head against some college wall, and then come back there with a lot of form and fashion and outside show to the world. But they'd stand flatfooted and tell me that they didn't have me, neither my sham-polish, to study 'bout. And that would have been that.

I hurried back to Eatonville because I knew that the town was full of material and that I could get it without hurt, harm or danger. As early as I could remember it was the habit of the men folks particularly to gather on the store porch of evenings and swap stories. Even the women folks would stop and break a breath with them at times. As a child when I was sent down to Joe Clarke's store, I'd drag out my leaving as long as possible in order to hear more.

Folklore is not as easy to collect as it sounds. The best source is where there are the least outside influences and these people, being usually underprivileged, are the shyest. They are most reluctant at times to reveal that which the soul lives by. And the Negro, in spite of his open faced laughter, his seeming acquiescence, is particularly evasive. You see we are a polite people and we do not say to our questioner, "Get out of here!" We smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because, knowing so little about us, he doesn't know what he is missing. The Indian resists curiosity by a stony

silence. The Negro offers a feather bed resistance, that is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out. It gets smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries.

The theory behind our tactics: "The white man is always trying to know into somebody else's business. All right, I'll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho' can't read my mind. I'll put this play toy in his hand, and he will seize it and go away. Then I'll say my say and sing my song."

I knew that I was going to have some hindrance among strangers. But here in Eatonville I knew everybody was going to help me. So below Palatka I began to feel eager to be there and I kicked the little Chevrolet right along...

I know I will have some hindrances too, many of my own making. There will probably be a good number of people who won't feel much need to talk to me. Trying to know someone else's business is a treacherous thing. I have year to convince people of my good intentions. Good intentions can be treacherous too, so I will watch this. But I know I am in the right place, a familiar pace. Already there are a lot of people who are helping me. I am eager to be here in Truth or Consequences. I will, if I do this thing well, convince people that my business here is good business, and what I am doing, poking and prying with a purpose, is worth doing.

Friday, August 10, 2012

The Death and Life of Ordinary American Towns: Part I



farmers Market at Ralph Edwards Park.
<http://www.torcnm.org/images.html>

Jan Jacobs begins the *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) succinctly. "This book is an attack on current city planning and rebuilding." She says she "shall mainly be writing about common, ordinary things: for instance, what kinds of city streets are safe and what kinds are not;

why some city parks are marvelous and others are vice traps and death traps..." The attack Jacobs leveled was against 20th century urban planning practices starting from the 1940s, but especially evident after WWII. A major target was the rise of "single-use" zoning over "multi-use" zoning. For those not in the planning field, single-use zoning this means that we carve up places and give them one solitary and single purpose, usually through legally-binding zoning laws. Jacobs believed that places where living, working, playing, enjoying cultural activities, and that included light industry or manufacturing and all kinds of other activities (hence 'multi-use') were vibrant places. The pattern of single-use zoning remains strong however, most notably in America suburbs. This is part of an urban planning legacy that sought rational, well-ordered, separate, distinct places for our modern compartmentalized lives. Jacobs pretty much condemned these practices as soul crushing, community destroying and deadening. This type of planning favored automobiles and new ideas on economic development, such as shopping malls. Hand in hand with single-use zoning was the practice of urban renewal. The legacy of urban renewal, or 'urban removal' as it is commonly known, was an overwhelmingly bleak one in America. Traditional and vibrant neighborhoods, landmarks and buildings were razed to 'make way' for the clean, well-ordered and rational modern city, most of which were utter failures. These were not just urban policies however. These ideas were everywhere.

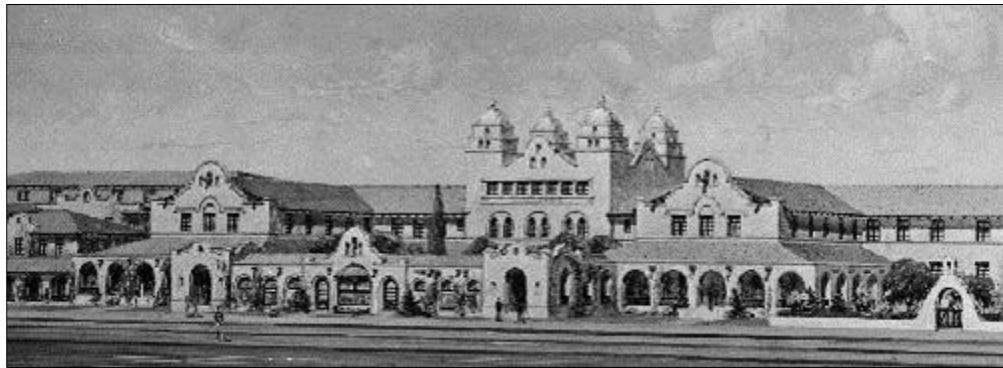
New Mexico has two examples of how these city planning policies impacted our own city and town landscapes. There is Las Cruces to the south. In the 70s, a handful of gorgeously important historic buildings were razed. They were torn down to make way for a downtown strip mall which was to be the central component in a "downtown revitalization" plan. It was the death of downtown Las Cruces, which has been a vivid and beautiful place. The buildings included the St. Genevieve Parish, the Loretto Academy and the Rio Grande Hotel. Then there is Albuquerque to the north, and the similar destruction of the grand Alvarado Hotel. According to an editorial that ran a few days after its destruction, the hotel, which was in decline, was meant to be a central component of downtown preservation and revitalization, but the city lacked the funds and will to save it. And so it became a parking lot. Across America built history was lost to memory.



The Loretto Academy building in Las Cruces.
<http://archives.nmsu.edu/exhibits/loretto/index.html>



Photo from the story Tearing out the Heart of Las Cruces by Denis Chavez
<http://www.pasodelsur.com/news/chavez.html>



Alvarado Hotel. Razed for parking, now the site of a vaguely creepy 'replica' that serves as a transportation center.
 Photo from Duke City Fix.

<http://www.dukecityfix.com/profiles/blogs/the-alvarado-has-come-back-for>



Historic postcard photo of the Alvarado in the 1940s? Ebay auction site (sold).

So what does this have to do with the town of Truth or Consequences? A few very important things. The most important to this project, this place study on Truth or Consequences, is reflection. Jacobs sought to understand the "death and life of great American cities," through grounded case studies on place and a great deal of place reflection. In my own small way I too want to understand the death and life of "ordinary American towns" to some degree. I am spending a stretch of time in a place I am both immensely fond of and believe to be a fantastically illustrative case study on revitalization, preservation, economic growth and stagnation, opportunity, cohesion and conflict. In short, a lot of the things that small towns are struggling with across America. Jacobs book is a classic in urban planning.

There are some great books on rural planning, but the focus on urban centers remains strong. The movement of urban dwellers to small towns, who join both the rooted, the recent transplants and those returning home, has refocused some attention on small towns. "Main Street," after all, was the foil against the lying, cheating, stealing and other evil excesses of "Wall Street." The "character" of a lot of small towns draws people. This is not the moral character generally, although it is often the characters. A great deal of the appeals, however, is the character of the built environment: the buildings, streets, landscapes and physical structures of a town. A lot of small towns escaped the 'rational' madness of planners and elected officials. They still have a core of historic buildings, traditionally built neighborhoods and business blocks.

Some small towns were spared the destruction of urban renewal/removal by the virtue of their size. This worked in two ways. The first was the growth of cities. This was largely the result of wage labor overtaking agriculture labor and subsistence agricultural livelihoods, essentially stealing an entire generation from rural America who went in search of work and opportunity in urban centers. This was especially prevalent after WWII. The second thing that saved a lot of small towns from losing their 'hearts,' their landmarks, historic buildings and downtown business blocks, was the economic decline that accompanied the loss of the work force and traditional rural industries. The decline in small agriculture, base economic industries, such as mining and ranching, mom and pop stores shutting their doors, and the increase in urbanization, suburbanization, mechanization, big box retail and similar economic models impacted every landscape across America. But in small towns, and some lucky urban cities, there was no money to tear down vacant but lovely 19th and early 20th century buildings and put up those disco-hot models from the 1970s or make way for parking lots.



Photo from chuckmancollectionvolume12.blogspot.com.

Do note that buildings, like fashion, go out of style, but, if well-made, can come back as hip vintage. A good city or town fabric should be multi-era as well as multi-use. What looks dated now might be the cool boutique or bistro location in 20 years. The well-made part always applies but is not always evident. Place making is about what we do, like farmer's markets and walking trails, but it is also about what we don't do, like not tearing down a good building or not coming together to make things and places happen.

There are a lot of things going on right now in rural America. Some of those vacant building are getting new life. People are rediscovering historic downtowns and the vibrancy of multi-use places. People are starting to realize that suburbs and other landscapes built for automobiles at the expense of being built for people, who do happen to own and love cars, are not sustainable or pleasant models. Handmade and local crafts and foods are experiencing a renaissance. Don't get me wrong here. This is not a blog about shiny-bright cumbaya moments where small town folk are showing that can-do rural spirit of sufficiency, calling out each other by name out on Main Street and trading baskets of peaches for legal advice. But it is a blog about some of those good things, so it may reflect a little of that singing around the campfire feeling. There is a lot of hard-work going on in Truth or Consequences. This means a lot of good-tasting, fun-loving, cultural shaping, community and collaborative place making happening. What may look like a bunch of seemingly random posts in my chapter 4 dissertation blog may in fact *be* a bunch of random posts. This is how it seems to me at the moment. I am sure there is some agreement among my handful of readers. The hope is at the end, and maybe even towards the middle, that patterns will emerge, a few worthy observations will be made, skills in interviewing and reflection will get better, and this will ultimately result in tidy and not-so-random record of a year in this town.

Much of my critique of both the town and of larger place narratives, what we say about places, and place making practices, what we do in places, will happen in my dissertation. Critical assessment and critical theory, in the old-fashioned academic sense of looking carefully at ideas of power, influence, historical repression, violence, race, class and other ways that the power of place is realized and enacted, will not be entirely absent from these writing here. But at present I just don't know enough. And I don't think this is the right place for too much academic speak. But even as a glass half-full and plenty-enough-to-share kind of person, the questions about the state of the well and aquifer need to be followed up and investigated. But until then, bottoms up.

Returning to the original focus of planning, a few buildings have come crashing down in Truth or Consequences in the last few weeks. The first was the downtown Buckhorn Salon, long-abandoned but still charming enough to warrant a lot of small town abandoned building 'character' shots on-line. According to the Sentinel, there was concern that the building could collapse on its own during Fiestas. As another story by Frances Luna in the Sentinel tells a more complete story:

If the City of Truth or Consequences had a skyline comprised of its downtown buildings, it has forever been changed. The once hopping Buckhorn Bar on Main Street was demolished into a pile of rubble, hauled off and now sits as two vacant lots. Once the thriving downtown pub for locals, miners, ranchers and visitors alike, the Buckhorn Bar had set motionless for nearly 30 years, being used only by vagrants, graffiti artists and the owners as a storage. Earlier this year the City of Truth or Consequences pushed on with the condemnation proceedings, after notices

had been sent to either bring the building into a safe condition or have it demolished, failed. Once on the historical register, the Buckhorn's owners, Jim and Bettie Brannon fought the city's demolition movement to no avail. The Brannon's cited attempting to get grants to return the building to a useable state. However, it appeared as though the years of abandonment had ruined the historical bar beyond a saving grace. The destruction order was given for the week of July 2. But the traditional trait of the owners carried on, and at the eleventh hour the Brannon's asked the city to give them one more week in order that they could retrieve the contents from the building, including the bar, which were said to be sold. Their request was granted..



hoto from gpkmedia.com



Photo from the Luna Sential story (see above)



Photo by author 8/7/2012

The other building that came down was the 'disco-hot' addition to the lovely historic downtown building by the City Hall. I remember going to dances there in the 8th grade, and felt a little nostalgic about seeing it come down. All of that lovely lava-rock and the feeling of a school portable ultimately had to go though. There will be a charrette, I hear, on August 24th and 25th to start the conversation about what to do with this prime center-town location. A "charrette," is a french word for 'little cart,' and comes from the design practice of professors sending a little cart around for student drawings, and the mad rush to complete them before deadlines that had students flinging themselves onto said carts. What is the appeal to design professionals, architects, planners and the like, to use this obscure word to bring the public together? Because the Historic Preservation and Regionalism graduate and professional certificate program is housed in the UNM School of Architecture and Planning, I am generally the only non-design professional in the room. Like the RC & D Councils of the last post, there is inevitably a shared and secret language in any discipline. Perhaps the word is used because in the process of telling people what it is, you can also stress how important creative and collaborative planning to creating great places. Half full?



Photo by author 8/8/2012

A charrette, according to The Town Paper (<http://www.tndtownpaper.com>) is "an intensive planning session where citizens, designers and others collaborate on a vision for development. It provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers. More importantly, it allows everyone who participates to be a mutual author of the plan." According to Wikipedia, a "charrettes take place in many disciplines, including land use planning, or urban planning. In planning, the charrette has become a technique for consulting with all stakeholders. This type of charrette (sometimes called an enquiry by design) typically involves intense and possibly multi-day meetings, involving municipal officials, developers, and residents. A successful charrette promotes joint ownership of solutions and attempts to defuse typical confrontational attitudes between residents and developers." So basically, it is a public meeting where ideas and solutions to "what to do" with places are put forth. A good friend recently told me that the quickest way to ruin a public space is to give it to the public.

Collaboration is more than just the public though, is meant to bring all parties to the table--public, private, professional, blue-collar, business, creative, young, old, rich, struggling, optimist, nay-sayer--the whole lot. Sort of like Fiesta crowds. But most people who I have talked to repeat the idea that the the same handful of folks show up all over the place. But this is the heart of the heart of Truth or Consequences, and the consequences of this decision are far-reaching. It would be nice to see the glass overflowing in this instance.



Fiesta 2012
<http://www.torcnm.org/images.html>



City panoramic looking south.
<http://www.torcnm.org/images.html>

Monday, December 31, 2012

The Power of Place: A Year in Review



The iconic Baptist Church steeple pierces straight through the full moon, which rests briefly on its pinnacle before floating free into the winter night sky. Arrested by this ephemeral spectacle of sublime beauty, I grab my camera and shot out the window. This is probably a pretty funny spectacle itself, inching along in car with a camera balanced on a half-open window, a portrait of the modern place voyeur and bad driver wrapped up in one. This kind of place narrative seeks to capture fleeting phenomena. Whether unexpected or iconic, a good image captures a sense of feeling, a great image captures a sense of place. The curve of moon rests on a church spire, and then floats free. Places are treated like steeples. Fixed and permanent. Rooted in the geography of a town and its history. But places are more like the moon. Waxing and waning. Pulling at us like the tides, without us knowing. Never really fixed, never wholly rooted, just on a wobbly orbit, albeit regular and largely known. This is where a great many theories on place are moving to, the idea that place is a process and not merely a fixed geographical location. This does not mean that places are not real in the physical sense, or geographically knowable. It does mean that place is no longer a mere backdrop where history is staged, but something to be studied as powerful in its own right. But they still make lovely backdrops.

A picture used to be worth a thousand words. Most are only worth a few words now, as many as there are. We are overrun by images. Romanticized, deftly poignant, pop-culture clever, photographic images are isolated from their surroundings in place and time. A rusted car sits amid the lovely ruins of tumbled gates and fences, an old pickup in faded blue sets off the dusty green of a faded playground, boys sitting by a pond seem timeless in black and white. The quintessential truth of photographs is that they lie. Photographer Miguel Gandert, who sits on my dissertation committee to my great delight, told me this when I sought photographic advice. "Just remember, the picture is not the thing itself." But a good picture fools us into believing it is the truth of a thing.



Miguel Gandert. *Nuevo México Profundo: Rituals of an Indo-Hispano Homeland* (2000)

The thing itself is a complex animal with teeth and claws, blood and bone. The thing itself is a tortured girl tied in the back of a truck by Ralph Edwards park. The thing itself is land abandoned as economic opportunity flees to countries where little is often worse than nothing. The thing itself is the world moved on from one war to the next, minus the boys who lived here and never came home. The thing itself is the the methamphetamine-carved flanks of boys young enough to have good teeth still, in a new kind of war. The thing itself is the full moon on a homeless man shambling down Austin on a cold night in December on the Friday after Christmas. The thing itself is not the brilliant moonstruck placescape I am trying to capture from a warm moving car that passes him quietly in the night. The thing itself and the place that holds it have a curious relationship.

"Corner of 5th and Central"

by Levi Romero

in *A Poetry of Remembrance: New and Rejected Works* (p. 105)

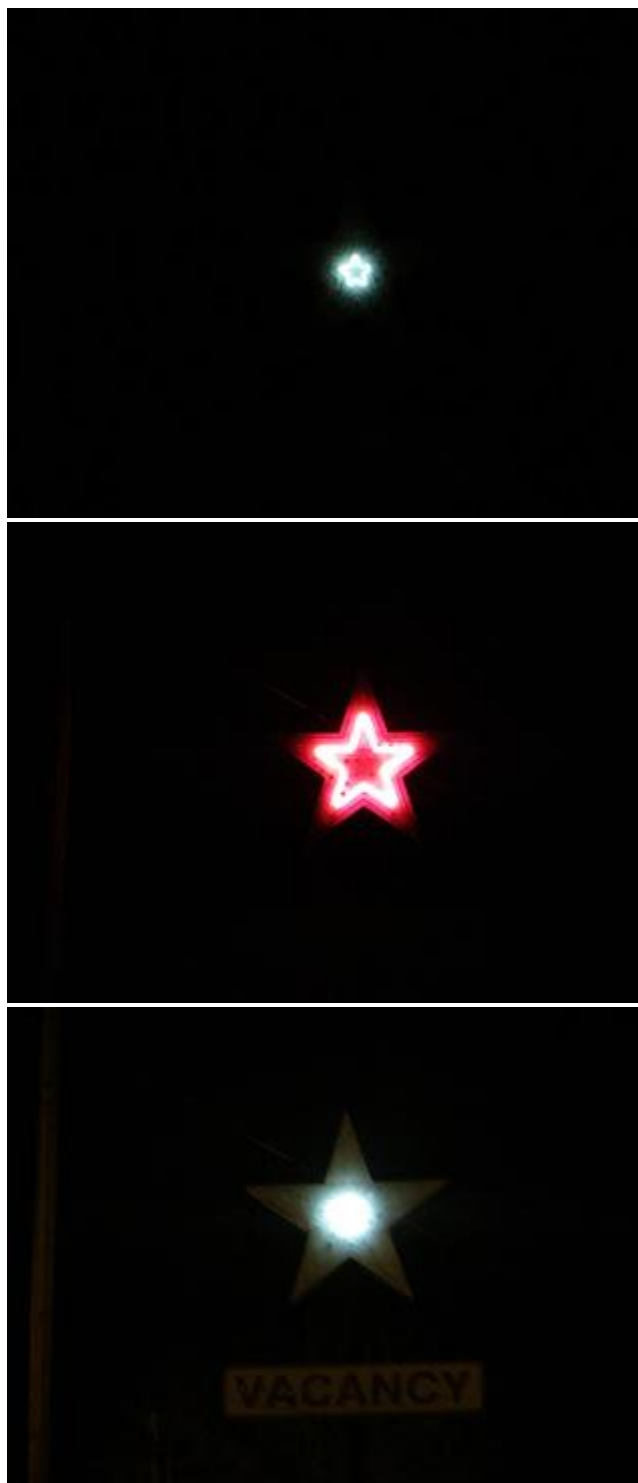
My name is Keven
rhymes with heaven
I'm the most photographed
homeless man in town

contrary to what the
bible thumpin' Jesus servants told me

I am not lost

I am on the corner of 5th and Central
albuquerque, new mexico
united states of america
northern hemishpere

the planet is divided up into four quadrants...



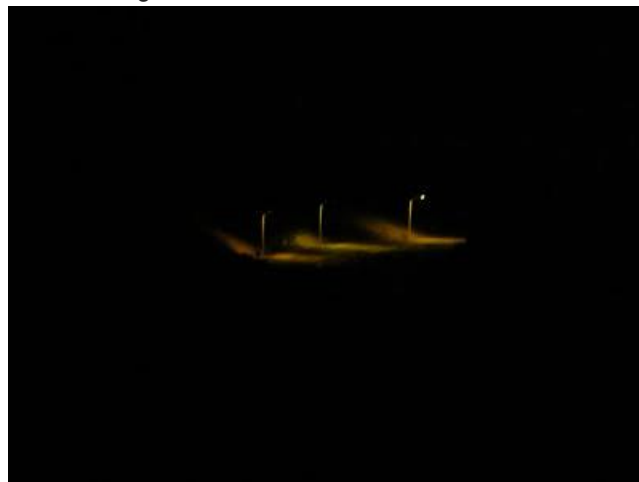
The star at the north corner of the Palomas Hot Springs Bathhouse photographs nicely. I love that star. The pink neon shutters down into smaller and smaller blue stars. The swift cascade goes black for a moment and repeats. The continuous cycle of bright pink and blue and black. I am buoyant at regaining my momentum, lost during my month-long illness. My day was great. I talked to a couple I had been wanting to meet after an accidental conversation at the Passion Pie Cafe. I had dinner with Sherry and Baxter. I had some incredible new ideas about the town, what Sherry calls her 'Ah Ha' moments, when certain things become clear and patterns emerge. Part

of this was the decision to re-work my history into something that does not replicate a too-simple linear timeline. Part of this was the people I talked to on this beautiful Friday in December I realized that a similar place narrative was present in almost every one of my new-to-town, in varying degrees, resident interviews. It is a narrative that speaks to a deeply-rooted place belonging that comes from something other than the a history of being in a place. I am buoyant, and there was the moon shining like a beacon in the night sky. Then the homeless guy went and ruined my landscape, and I was once again pulled under by the weight of the thing itself. The thing in question is, broadly, the colonial violence necessary to settle any land that is peopled and claimed, no matter how often it is called untamed wilderness or wild frontier. That violence is everywhere, but carefully edited from our histories until it resembles a photograph of a civil war battlefield on a marker by the side of the road. But these histories echo in modern acts of violence and resonate in contemporary struggles with poverty, abuse and addition. But they also echo in the history of triumphant, or stories of struggle without triumph but struggles nonetheless. How can these place narrative get written? Scholar Delores Hayden, in *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, (1995) explores how several contemporary public history projects have sought to embody a more honest history of place, and in doing so have been vital sites for community engagement and transformation.

“It is in providing outward display for things and pathways as they exist within the horizons of landscape that places enable memories to become inwardly inscribed and possessed: made one with the memorial self. The visibility without becomes part of the invisibility within.”

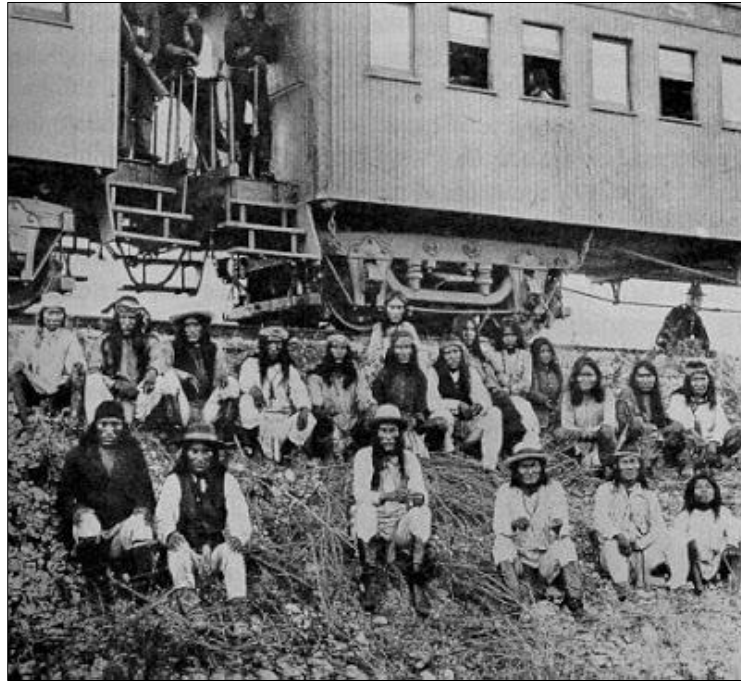
— Edward Casey. *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (1987. p. 213)

The truth of a thing, or a place in this case, can only ever be partially known. Back stories are endless. History is obscured, buried, re-fashioned and re-told. Sometimes, as is the case with the Apache warrior Lozen, which will be my New Year's narrative, the contemporary story is nothing but careless fiction. But that is a fairly common characteristic of many of our stories, especially our place stories. The story I will write about Truth or Consequences has begun to emerge, and I hope to inscribe in this written landscape a complexity and fullness that is its due. I am thankful for the countless people who have opened their homes, hearts and histories to me these past months. I stop one last time on my way north, to take a photo of the three lights that sit on-top of the rise where the interstate traverses Alamosa Canyon. As a child I always marked the the top of this canyon the arrival point to Monticello, and, by extension T or C. There is something reassuring about these lights, and I am glad they will mark my return here in a few days when the year is new again.



Monday, January 21, 2013

Writing History: Part 1



Apache prisoners of war en route to Florida camps.
Nueces River, Tex. September 10, 1886.

There is little on Lozen in the historical record. This much at least is considered historical fact. The photograph above is said to be her only recorded image. If this is an accurate assertion, she is seated at the top, the sixth woman from the right. The historical record, and the archives of observation which found this record, are not any guarantee of accuracy. This is not revelatory. In the who, what, when, where and why of journalism, for instance, the margin of error is wide. The margin of omission, however, is immense.

Other kinds of record keeping and archives, like death and taxes, or their records at least, fare somewhat better. Not always. Gaping holes where where people and their stories have fallen are in every place, archive or unmarked grave. The pit of what we don't know is bottomless. What we do know, or claim to know, is the tenuous truth we hold out as history. Beyond the truth of omission and just plain poor observation is a bigger issue however. This concerns the question of the how and who of history writing as a method and history as a product. Also at issue is the idea that the written record is the superior instrument; both a fact and its own record of progress. Each is at stake in the writing of history, particularly the kind of public history I am interested in writing about when I write about places.

Lozen, an Apache women whose warrior legend is the stuff legends are made of, illuminates with her contested history the ways that places, like people, can be carried away and vanish. With these losses our storied landscapes lose their shape and power. There are always new place narratives being spun, however, to explain why this land is our land. America has used Native American histories, individual and communal, to assert a national identity while simultaneously

erasing the violence that accompanied these encounters. The habit of populating the national imagination while depopulating the land was also two-fold. Land long-settled by different cultural groups was called vacant or open, or, when settlement was harder to ignore, the lament of the vanishing native was sent forth to create a future vacancy. The twin tale of either vacancy or imminent demise did nothing to diminish the importance of 'playing indian,' in creating an American Identity. Philip J. Deloria *Playing Indian* (1998), originally a dissertation at Yale, looks at how America uses the idea of 'Indian' to create their own national identity, think Boston Tea Party and noble savage, or Buffalo Bill and dime novels. Lozen's story, as it appears in two recent published writings, illustrates how place narratives that seek to establish the power of place in the contemporary moment can diminish places when they are spun from air and conjecture, even in good faith. But they follow a pattern of negligence long established.

Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (1999) written by by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, is an excellent text about history as a tool of power and domination. That is history with a capital H, generally a national history. The western model of knowledge accumulation is a violent record of abuses, and the knowledge accumulated not nearly the objective body of 'this is what happened' fact that it is billed to be. There are many books that challenge the ways that we learn about the world. Our sense deceive us, our bigotries blind us, our paradigms control the way we process the most simple phenomenon, and whole sets of truths that govern the 'way things are,' are overturned with a startling regularity. How to counter the 'truth' that is woven into the lessons we learn when we are learning our lessons at school and in the world? To paraphrase a great bumper sticker, It is hard not to believe everything we think.

Tuhiwai Smith develops an argument against history by drawing on theoretical critiques that characterize history as a specifically Western project, tied to the Colonialism, Imperialism and the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, so often articulated as the rise of reason and progress, saw the rise of the major political and economic structure shaping dominant understandings of the world and people in it. The resulting global system justified the death and destruction of all the people who were already settled on lands that Spain, France, England, other Europeans Nations and eventually, the United States. It still does a pretty nifty job of death and destruction, whose latest casualty seems to be the planet itself. But that is a whole different story, or maybe it is really the same story.

The end, fortunately, did not materialize for the first world's established populations prior to colonial encounters, although it may still be coming for the lot of us. The 'eventual' disappearance of all of these people in the face of 'progress,' was never realized, although we still love a rousing "Last of the Mohican's" moment in our narratives. Vanishing way of life and all that, generally characterized as inevitable in march of "progress." The horror has marked and destroyed robust cultural systems and killed so very many people, and continues to do so, is real. But so is the persistent underestimation about the resilience of a whole lot of cultures and settlements of people.

Tuhiwai Smith 's work connects the project of history with imperialist ideologies, like those of savagery or inferiority, and develops a list of ideas about history. Mainly, that histories need to be subject to systematic critique, both from inside indigenous communities and outside in places like Universities. Her list includes "the idea that history is one large chronology," which refers to the discipline of history, not the stories that people tell about their past (30). These stories, she argues, are "reclassified as oral traditions rather than histories" (33). This is a pretty well-know debate in Native American communities. "The talk' about the colonial past," she writes, "is

embedded in our political discourses, our humour, poetry, music, story tellings and other common sense ways of passing on both a narrative of history and an attitude about history” (19).

These ideas are well-known in academic fields that employ critical theory, where I have spent way too much time, as evidence by this very post. Or not enough. I struggle to not recreate these kinds of histories, where as a scholar I am allowed to imagine the power to tell and ascertain fact is mine, like some terrible Spider Man-like responsibility. This is what I do though, scholarship, and I would like to do it well, even if I am a grain of sand on the beach of written history. And by well I mean I would like to write things that are as close to accurate, fair and just to the parties involved as possible.

The study of place narratives brings fiction and history into constant tension. The line between the two is decidedly blurry. This is certainly true in the southwest, where so much of what people thought they knew what part myth, part bullshit, part conjecture, part survey and high adventure tale, part imperial project, part romance, part dime store novel, part longing, and so on to the hundredth part. How different history and fiction are, or are not, is what the above paragraphs are getting at in a more academic way. And yet there is a line crossed when history become fiction, and sometimes it is pretty clear. Sort of like the line that television crossed when reality became a genre.

Which brings this post back to Lozen. in an academically-winded and meandering route. I have not done enough research to talk about Lozen's history as much as is known, which is really not much, but there are some big recent issues with that history that have prompted this post. The first issue was with a paragraph brought to my attention by Sherry Fletcher. I do live in fear of her eagle-eye, a healthy fear to be sure. An unfounded assertion is like a fat field mouse doing a jig in a field at supertime when Sherry turns her gaze to a writing.

Here is the first example that features Lozen and promoted my first-of-the-year post. It is published in the most recent edition of the Sierra County "Official 2012-2013 Visitors Guide." After noting, on page 12, that the U.S government established forts and maintained troops in Sierra County to make it safe for the flooding hordes of miners, ranchers and farmers to to the newly claimed territories, which also "forced several bands on the region, including the Warm Spring Apaches into reservations, the "Truth or Consequences" narrative moves to Lozen. Here is the paragraph in total:



Art by Timothy Thixton,
a former student in Truth or Consequences.

"One of the most colorful characters was Lozen, an Apache woman said to have ridden as a warrior with her brother Victorio, and later, with Geronimo himself. According to accounts, she fell in love with a Confederate deserter who had been sheltered by the Apaches. When a wagon train came along headed to the California gold fields, he left, breaking Lozen's heart. She never married, devoting herself instead to using her unusual powers to sense danger and heal people."

The passage was lifted, verbatim with several others, from page 205 of *Spirits Of The Border IV: The History And Mystery Of New Mexico* written by Ken Hudnall, Sharon Hudnal. I am listening to his radio show (kenhudnall.com) as I write this. Pretty interesting. I have emailed Mr. Hudnall and requested clarification and a source for this assertion. Perhaps Mr. Hudnall wrote the piece, which is un-authored. I will follow up on this story. I hope it is bullshit, of course, because it sounds like a load of crap. From what I have read in the archives and in books thus far in the last few frantic weeks of research, Lozen would no more have been broken-hearted from a raggedy southern soldier than she would have been...I do not know how to finish that sentence. Maybe it was a tall, black and handsome soldier from the South. I should not write something like that--it may be quoted in some other account.

As a side note, just to drag this out a little longer, the publication is a "Co-op Participant in New Mexico True," the newest branding slogan for place narratives sanctioned by the New Mexico Department of Tourism. According to the Albuquerque Journal, the \$2 million dollar campaign, coming out of Texas (how grand, Texas), shows "Things that are just an activity somewhere else ... in New Mexico are true experiences because they are immersed in the landscape; the culture; the people. ... We wanted to bring to life the feeling you get from a New Mexico vacation," according to the Tourism Secretary (4.17.12).

A similar story about Lozen also appeared in the January 2012 Chapparal Guide. This one provides a lengthier history, and refers to several of the texts that explore the few collected the oral histories that were recorded by historian and educator Eve Ball, as well as a few other accounts of the Apache people. The problem with this story is that it quotes a fictional account of Lozen's life as though it were a biographical passage. In other words, the author quotes Tom Diamond's story *Apache Tears* (2008), which is according to the inside bibliographical page, "A work of fiction based on historical personas and occurrences with dramatization of characters " In other words, a work of fiction. On the back of the book, as a side note, is an "inevitable destruction of their way of life," moment.

Historical fiction is a genre that is eerily close to reality television. We want to believe that it is real, even though we know that it is not. The author of this article, who I have heard very nice things about, quotes Diamond as though quoting a historical account. Here is the difference, which is not blurry in this case. History is drawn from observation, or from a record of observation. Fictional accounts do not count. Stories do count. While all data is merely observation, the trick is to observe as accurately as possible. History may be fiction, but fiction cannot serve as history. Stories can count as both.

How we privilege the observer's accounts returns this musing to Tuhiwai Smith, and to the problems of history, research and writing that so many scholar struggle with as outsiders to communities, even if they are merely coming home from college. Once you are trained in

a method, especially the same methods that produced such brutally inept, violent and exclusionary histories, how do you write something that is solid and good? I draw wisdom from one of my favorite fictional books. This book made me curious about the Hattian experience in America. The quote was from a wise-women figure in the text, who said something along these lines (and don't quote me on this): knowledge is labor--you have to work at it.

This brings me to my last observation of the New Year. I always encourage my students, after I misquote the knowledge is labor bit in my opening lecture, to find wise people to emulate. And most wise people got that way by being avidly curious, being passionate, persevering through hardship, and working hard. Writing history is very hard work. Writing good history is harder. Even getting a post out is daunting. But the commitments forged, even with people who are long past knowing what is being written, are strangely compelling. Maybe that is why people keep writing histories, because they feel compelled to tell the stories, buried in the landscape, calling from the ground. In *Following the Equator*, Mark twain wrote that the "very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice," and yet he never put down his pen.

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