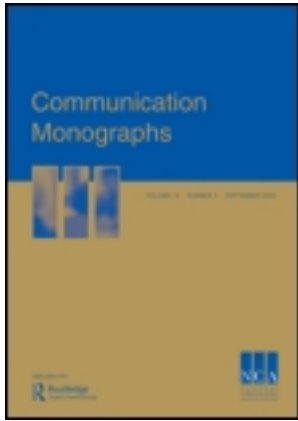


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# Communicating a “New” Environmental Vernacular: A Sense of Relations-in-Place

Tema Milstein, Claudia Anguiano, Jennifer Sandoval,  
Yea-Wen Chen & Elizabeth Dickinson

*This study focuses on communication as a lens and tool for reinvigorating and empowering marginalized cultural environmental relations. We use a community-based cultural approach to identify a core Hispanic premise of a sense of relations-in-place. This premise constitutes nature as a socially integrated space that provides the grounding for human relations, and differs from dominant Western discourses that constitute nature as an entity separate from humans. The study’s interpretation of a more integrated orientation to environment has the potential to inform wider alternative ecocultural discourses and applications that are more inclusive, and perhaps more sustainable.*

*Keywords: Environmental Communication; Ecocultural Premise; Resolana; Relations-in-Place; Sense of Self-in-Place; Nature–Culture Binary; Environmental Meanings; Hispanic; Latino/a; Chicano/a; New Mexico; US Southwest*

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From Mesa Prieta hasta al Bosque de Doña Luisa we are one with this convergent landscape.

Our sangre flows as the Rio Grande del Norte  
once did—when it was still known as Wild River

—from *Capulín Wine y Alegria* by James M. Aranda<sup>1</sup>

In this study, we present a core ecocultural premise of a sense of *relations-in-place*, in which nature or environment is not understood in dominant Western binary terms as an entity onto itself, separate and removed from humans (Cronon, 1996a; Williams, 1980), but rather as an immersive space that provides the grounding, experiences, and material for social relations. In our examination of US Southwest Hispanic<sup>2</sup> ecocultural meanings, we argue such culturally specific communication research could point to wider alternative framings of environmental perceptions and practices that are more inclusive and potentially more sustainable. We join an ongoing discussion by scholars and practitioners who have long problematized environmentalist discourses as identity driven, largely speaking for and to cultural paradigms of affluent white audiences (Bullard, 2001; Morello-Grosch, Pastor, & Sadd, 2002; Pulido, 2000). We also assist in environmental organizations' current efforts to address this concern by identifying and voicing marginalized cultural paradigms.

The implications of having one's voice unheard are numerous. In the state of New Mexico, for instance, industry-backed politicians often typify Hispanics as disinterested or antagonistic when it comes to environmental issues; the same politicians legitimate their anti-environment voting records as meeting the needs of Hispanic constituents. Compounding such issues of representation, area environmental organizations often find they speak largely for non-Hispanic populations in limited affluent urban centers. In response, some organizations recently have shifted focus to Hispanic outreach. This study is the result of several organizations' collaboration with communication researchers to find ways to connect with, listen to, and represent Hispanic communities. The intended goals of this study, therefore, go beyond the authors' core academic questioning to join a body of studies (e.g., Loh & Sugerman-Brozan, 2002; Morello-Grosch et al., 2002) that collaboratively inform policy and ongoing efforts within marginalized communities to reclaim their environmental voice.

As communication researchers, focused on ways Hispanic environmental meaning systems might be discursively constituted and represented, our interest was piqued by US Southwest director of The Wilderness Society's Neri Holguin's characterization of area Hispanic connections to the land as clearly linked to language, and as comprising core themes of family, stories, and sense of self:

The land is like a part of the family—an elder—and it holds our stories and memories. And perhaps uniquely among Hispanics, that sense of place nurtures a sense of self and is closely tied to it. That means that the language we use is necessarily different. (Knuffke, 2007, p. 55)

Other community leaders pointed to communication as a core issue. Arturo Sandoval, a consultant for TWS's outreach to traditional Hispanic communities, argued the communities' different environmental "language" required a "new

vernacular,” a discourse that embraced a Hispanic “deep love of place” (Knuffke, 2007, p. 55). Likewise, TWS outreach staff Michelle Otero (personal communication, August 15, 2008) stressed the importance of “writing our way into a reconnection with the land” as a core tool for reinvigorating Hispanic environmental relations.

In seeking to ascertain the ecocultural language and meanings of a variety of New Mexico Hispanics, we used a creative community-based approach to research design that develops Otero’s notion of writing one’s community back into the land and Sandoval’s notion of the requirement of a new environmental vernacular. In what follows, we situate the study in both cultural and environmental communication literature, describe our data collection and analysis methods, and present our interpretations of a community’s premise rooted in ecocultural knowledge of place that offers ways of communicating, perceiving, and practicing nature inseparable from social relations.

### Culture, Discourse, and Sense of Self-in-Place

In cultural explorations of humanature relations, Carbaugh (1996) argues for the special importance of specific community-based case studies that trace the patterned use and interpretation, or means and meanings, of environmental communication. Such case studies focus on “the discovery of the most powerful discourses whose crisscrossing continua create the complexity of communication” (p. 53). These prevailing community discourses point to cultural premises rooted in history and place (Carbaugh, 2007a). In this case study, we were particularly interested in what we term *ecocultural premises*, those premises we understand as difficult to uproot and likely nearly impossible to transplant as they are integral to a community’s place-based relationship that brought them into being.

We use compound terms, including *ecoculture* and *humanature*, as a way to reflexively engage ecology and culture, nature and human, in integral conversation in research as they are in life. These symbolic textual moves are heuristic turns away from western notions of “the environment” and turns toward lexical intertwining in league with Haraway’s (2008) use of “naturecultures” to encompass interrelated historical and contemporary entities. These moves are also an attempt to bypass frameworks in scholarship that can reproduce the very nature–human (and ecology–culture) binaries that studies attempt to critique. In our symbolic intermingling, we equally hope to indicate communication’s mediating force within and between these overlapping systems (Carbaugh, 2007b; Milstein, 2008; Rogers, 1998).

Ecocultural premises likely are not immediately evident, in part, because a range of discourses circulate in individuals’ everyday communication. Marafiotte and Plec (2006) point to the heteroglossic quality of environmental communication, identifying ways varied ideologies, such as anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, circulate within individuals’ single utterances. Similarly, Cantrill and Chimovitz (1993) point to at least two widespread western environmental value orientations, both the “dominant social paradigm,” which touts limitless resources, economic growth, private property, and technological salvation, as well as the “new environmental paradigm,” which touts

ecosystem integrity, biocentric order, and restrictions on growth and resource use. Similar to Marafiotte and Plec's findings, Cantrill and Chimovitz find the majority of individuals show allegiances to both these contradictory paradigms. Taking these studies into account, we are not concerned with locating an all-encompassing environmental discourse in US Southwest Hispanic communities, but rather a prevalent underlying framework that indicates a particular ecocultural lens.

Working interpretively, focused on participant meanings, we started by viewing our data without any central driving theory. However, during our coding and analysis, it became clear the *sense of self-in-place* construct was helpful as a sensitizing concept. The construct combines the idea of a sense of place with Cantrill's (1992a, 1992b, 1998) notion of the environmental sense of self. Studies that emphasize the importance of people's physical context, local settings, and social and cultural worlds illustrate that people understand and process claims about human relations with the natural world from the standpoint of a sense of self-in-place (Cantrill & Senecah, 2001). This sense of self-in-place is reflected and produced in communication and plays a pivotal role in environmental practices and advocacy.

In the present case study, we work to more clearly culturally contextualize the notion of a sense of self-in-place, focusing on environmental discourses rooted in culture and grounded in history, identity, and community (Carbaugh, 2007a). In doing so, the present study is able to expand upon a sense of self-in-place by deemphasizing the more individualistic construct of *self*, and opening the door to introducing and emphasizing study participants' more collectivist notion of a sense of *relations-in-place*.

Our work fits into a body of such studies focused on cultural meanings about dwelling, place, environment, and nature, all of which are concerned with communication as it relates to environmental relations. For instance, Basso (1992, 1996) has pointed to ways western Apache tribe members connect contemporary experiences to ancestors and place by referring to story-steeped natural location names to describe current happenings, and Carbaugh (1999) has explored Blackfeet tribe members' forms of "listening" to nature that open one to relations between natural and human forms. Both studies illustrate long-lived emplaced and relational indigenous ecocultural premises.

In contrast, in looking at dominant North American discourses, scholars have found less emplaced premises. In examinations of American and Canadian tourism discourses revolving around endangered whales, Milstein (2008, 2011) found whales are perceived as something to be identified, protected, sublimely experienced, and as a doorway or deadend to more sustainable humanature relations; however, tourist discourses largely position nature as something out there, separate from human culture and social relations. In examining meaning-making about water in New England, Morgan (2002, 2003) argues aspects of nature are made relevant according to local systems of communication based upon differing, deeply felt cultural premises, such as nature is something to be tamed or is a system of which people are a part. Policymakers, Morgan argues, must seek to understand "complex communication issues underlying all facets of environmental practice" (2003, p. 153) if they are to effectively implement environmental policy.

### Hispanic Orientations to Nature

Just as no one culture is homogeneous or static, no cultural view of nature will be uniform. In looking at Hispanic ecocultural meaning systems, we note “Hispanics are as varied in their feelings toward the land as members of other groups: some care deeply, others not so much” (Knuffke, 2007, p. 55). For many Hispanics from the US Southwest, however, there is “one essential difference: time in place—a very long time” (p. 55). Generally, those who identify as Southwest Hispanic partially descend from waves of Spanish who began colonizing the area several hundred years ago; these same people often are mestizo,<sup>3</sup> or of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry, indicating a significantly longer connection to dwelling space. Arellano (2007) points to the continuing existence of a Southwest mestizo sense of place termed *querencia*, comprising both a love of and responsibility toward place, and exemplified in ongoing hybrid ecocultural practices that reflect historical and contemporary cultural migrations (such as agricultural or food traditions influenced by Roman, Arab, Spanish, Sephardic Jewish, Mesoamerican, Mexican, and Pueblo heritages).

New Mexico has the highest Hispanic population of any state (45.6% compared to the US average of 15.8%). The second largest population is non-Hispanic White (40.9%), and third is Native American (9.7%) (US Census Bureau, 2010). New Mexicans often speak of a triculture state, comprising Hispanics, Native Americans, and everyone else. Area ethnic identity is linked to environment within historical contexts of Spanish and US cultural conquest, which implicate contemporary Southwest Hispanics as both colonizers and colonized, and yield complex mixed race identities and views about land ownership. Discussions of Hispano identity continue to include a denial by some Hispanics of any mixing with Native Americans and a focus on Spanish ancestry as a way of crafting identity—claims to whiteness that some scholars attribute to a strategy for increased racial hierarchy status (Oboler, 1995; Rinderle, 2005).

Wilmsen (2007) examines the complexity of environmental discourse in New Mexico where Hispanics have occupied an ambiguous position on the “axis of victimization” due to simultaneous role enactment of oppressor and oppressed. He argues that racial triangulation among Native Americans, Anglos, and Hispanics marginalizes Hispanic oppositional discourses. Relatedly, Peña’s (2003) review of Latino/a environmental scholarship demonstrates how racist constructs of Southwest environmental history have been used to argue against the restoration of stolen Spanish and Mexican land grants. At the same time, scholars have put forward competing arguments on the appropriateness of attributing postconquest land loss as a primary decider of local orientations and have argued that regional debate over use and management of natural resources exploits a “mythologized imagery” of relations between Hispanics and Native Americans and their interaction with the natural environment (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Rodriguez, 1987).

Grounded patterns of exploitation certainly circulate in the cultural narrative of Spanish Crown colonization of indigenous land, followed by American Southwest attrition of Spanish land exercised by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

(Cervantes, 2003). The end of the US–Mexican War led to forcible incorporation of almost half of Mexico’s national territory creating a complicated aftermath of land occupation that continues to affect New Mexico Hispanics, many of whom describe US conquest and Hispanic displacement as a catalyst for ongoing patterns of oppression and land ownership contestation resulting in harmful ecological transformations (Peña, 2003). The *US v. Sandoval* decision, which rejected Hispanic community forms of property, is but one example of how environmental law and policy are entwined with culturally constructed racial hierarchies and relations to land (Peña, 2005, p. 132).

In extant literature, Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s (1961) influential regional study on cultural values remains widely cited and critiqued in intercultural communication scholarship but has received little to no attention in environmental communication research.<sup>4</sup> The generative study focused on the same general location and an earlier generation of the present study’s community. A scholar team conducted in-depth interviews with Spanish-Americans (Hispanic New Mexicans), as well as communities characterized as Navajo, Texan, Mormon, and Zuni, investigating cultural orientations to nature, as well as to time, social relations, and behavior. The study’s possible orientations to nature included humans as dominant over nature (humans in a position of superiority and capable of controlling natural and supernatural forces), humans in harmony with nature (humans living in balance with nature, replenishing what is used, and appreciating their connectedness as part of the natural world), and nature as dominating humans (humans at the mercy of natural forces; this orientation is marked by a certain fatalism).

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) found Hispanics most strongly aligned to the submissive relationship. Their preference set them apart from all other groups (Texans and Mormons preferred the dominant over nature position, and Zunis and Navajos, though widely variable, preferred harmony). Though the researchers acknowledged a diversity of perspectives within each group, they found Hispanics were distinctive in their high level of intracultural congruence, leading researchers to label Hispanics “the most unique of the five cultures” (p. 353). More recent work (e.g., Atencio, 1988; McSweeney, 1995; Raish, 2000) appears to support a continued Hispanic New Mexican orientation to nature that is submissive or fatalistic, as well as a cultural attachment to tradition, family, and community, in which environmental practices, such as grazing, are performed not so much for the sake of profit as for continuity with the past (Hess, 1990).

In recent years, studies examining Hispanic environmental relations have largely focused on a conceptual split between mainstream environmentalists and Hispanics. For instance, Macias (2008) critiques environmentalist tactics that overlooked structural factors in ways northern New Mexico Hispanics view environmental issues. In examining a conflict over forest protection, pivoting on environmentalist protection of endangered species versus Hispanic cultural activism to protect forest-based livelihoods, Macias argues that some mainstream environmental tactics created an “assault on the economic stability and cultural social fabric of the communities and pueblos of New Mexico” (p. 62). In a study on similar issues in

New Mexico, Kosek (2006) argues that through a history of forest management and labor exploitation, state officials, governmental agencies, and white environmentalists exhibited a value of federal environmental stewardship and control, and denigrated Hispanic and Native American notions of common natural resources that sustained local communities. Like Macias, Kosek illustrates how Hispanics are often left out of environmental conversations and decision-making in New Mexico.

Lynch (1993) argues that what differentiates wider US Latino environmental perspectives from the Anglo-American mainstream is “an unwillingness to sever people from the landscape, the technological from the political, or the environment from cultural identity” (p. 118). She points to the divergence of a Latino *integrated* view from a dominant White view that dichotomizes humans and nature. In the US Southwest, histories of losing communal forms of property under American rule often further the coupling of environmental and ethnic community identity, linking cultural struggle with environmental injustices (Figueroa, 2001).

### Methodological Structure, Inspiration, and Goals

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) served as our methodological orientation for designing and implementing data collection. CBPR challenges the social scientific positivist paradigm and addresses the gap between theory and practice (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). CBPR’s starting point is a research topic of importance to the community with the aim of combining knowledge and action for social change. As CBPR is intended to be a social process that is participatory, practical, collaborative, emancipatory, critical, and reflexive (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), our orientation enabled us to cocreate and complement our research design with the environmental and community groups that initiated this study.

At the outset, representatives from Conservation Voters of New Mexico (CVNM) contacted the study’s lead researcher, the first author, to discuss ways of using communication research for outreach to Hispanic communities and for framing Hispanic constituent messages to hold state legislators accountable. CVNM, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that advocates for sustainable conservation policies, intended to use study findings to help reach goals of educating, lobbying, and monitoring legislators. The project burgeoned to include a group of collaborators who titled the project Connecting Community Voices, and included the first author-led research team in University of New Mexico’s Department of Communication and Journalism; CVNM; The Wilderness Society (TWS), a mainstream environmental organization also, in part, dedicated to underrepresented community outreach; local cultural advocacy group Arts of Aztlán; and UNM Architecture and Planning School’s Resource Center for Raza Planning.

As researchers, we came to this project from a variety of backgrounds. Some of us identify in different ways as Latina or Hispanic. During data collection, we all lived in New Mexico. However, none of us is Hispanic New Mexican and so we largely saw ourselves as cultural outsiders to the communities under study. The lead collaborators in all our partner organizations, on the other hand, were all Hispanic

New Mexicans and forefronted their identities as key to the inspiration, organization, and advocacy goals of the project.

Some collaborators' project motivations and goals were inspired by scholar Tomas Atencio's (1988) notion of *resolana*, a communication practice rooted in Hispanic New Mexican history and tradition. The term is derived from *resol*, the sun's warm glare on buildings or plazas, within which villagers, or *resolaneros*, in New Mexico gather to talk during fall, winter, and spring (Atencio, 1988; Montiel, 2004). *La resolana* is focused on embracing community stories and lived experience as important forms of knowledge. During the civil and Chicano rights movements, Atencio built upon his personal experience of *resolana* to describe and generate a culturally empowered form of education, manifested as a philosophical and community space where those gathered could have meaningful dialogue and shed light on shared knowledge. This notion of *resolana* recognized mixed Hispanic-indigenous identity, in part, by incorporating a Papago Indian view of communication: "The sun shining on everything and everybody is seeing everything as it is at the same time" (Atencio, 1988, p. 2).

Atencio argues that *resolana* can be both a method and diagnostic tool for evaluating aspects of experience, meaning, and culture. As such, the research team and environmental and community groups used a series of creative writing and storytelling workshops based on *resolana* to both provide an opportunity for community building through communication and reinvigorating knowledge, and to generate data from which to interpret ecocultural meaning systems. Then-TWS staff Otero facilitated free workshops publicized to participants via direct contact or fliers titled "Tell Your Story: Honor New Mexico." The series of workshops met for two hours a week over several weeks and engaged participants longitudinally in written and oral storytelling about place, land, and water.

Our goal was to attract people not typically heard in the political realm, those generally spoken for instead of listened to, so we did not target community leaders or spokespeople. Workshop participants, who included teachers, ranchers, civic workers, and retirees, voluntarily gathered in two distinct communities: Deming, a majority Hispanic rural small town near the Mexico border, and Sawmill, a largely working-class Hispanic urban neighborhood in Albuquerque that organized to curb a polluting sawmill located in its midst.<sup>5</sup> For data, the research team took field notes during workshops, collected all workshop-created writings, and audiotaped and transcribed participant oral storytelling. We analyzed a total of seven workshop transcripts and thirteen sets of workshop fieldnotes collected from both Sawmill and Deming during the months of October and November 2008.

Whereas a CBPR orientation guided our process of collaborating with environmental and community groups in study design and data collection, we looked to Carbaugh's (2007a) Cultural Discourse Analysis (CuDA) approach to inform our data analysis and interpretation. CuDA fit with both our collaborative approach and analytical focus on ecocultural premises. CuDA emphasizes community meaning systems and focuses on making explicit formerly taken-for-granted ecocultural knowledge and values, helping researchers identify largely unstated common sense

cultural premises to place them “into a domain of ‘discursive scrutability’” (p. 178) for analyst and participant reflections.

After closely reading the transcripts and fieldnotes, the research team met as a group more than a dozen times to compare and contrast all collected data and conduct a thematic textual analysis. Using CuDA as our framework, we deliberated initial open thematic codes based on constructs related to participant meanings about dwelling, place, environment, and nature. Initial code analysis of all data was cooperative, with the lead author then continuing deeper level interpretation to extract closer codes further focused on CuDA’s notions of community meaning systems, cultural knowledge and values, and tacit common sense cultural premises. A core ecocultural premise of a *sense of relations-in-place* emerged during the collaborative open stage of analysis. During later close coding, the first author continued to be struck by the centrality of the premise in participant discourse, and created clusters of codes that most clearly had the premise as their organizing principle. We present some of the most salient codes here to illustrate the importance, range, and depth of the premise.

### A Sense of Relations-in-Place

In order to hear participants’ own language and meanings, the workshop facilitator avoided terms like nature, wilderness, or environment. Instead, Otero facilitated workshops largely by focusing participants on place. As researchers, we observed that participant discussion rarely described nature as a separate thing out there, but instead represented nature as a highly social space in which one experiences largely human-to-human relationships. The strong relational emphasis when talking about nature was nearly always centered on both immediate and extended family, community members, and at times, especially for urban participants, on neighbors, or *vecinos* (e.g., Sawmill workshop: Otero: “When would you visit with your neighbors?” Participant D: “I would never visit my *vecinos*; we were always together here.”).

In what follows, we describe the meaning systems inherent in the sense of relations-in-place ecocultural premise. In doing so, we illustrate a self-identification rooted both in the land and in relations with others, an emphasis on food that is both of the land and integral to social relations in the land, the importance of storytelling that situates nature as a place for stories and stories as a way to manage children’s secure senses of relations-in-place; and sublime responses to nature that highlight both contemporary and historical relations-in-place. In addition, we describe a participant-identified problem, a sense of loss interwoven with the dismantling of both nature and culture that fundamentally threatens the ecocultural premise of relations-in-place.

### Self-Identification: Place and Identity

Relations-in-place provided a starting point for participants introducing themselves to one another. Wrapped up in these identifications often were New Mexican place names, descriptions of one’s name in relation to others and the land, and the use of

Spanish, all of which were relationally and historically meaningful. In addition, participants foregrounded their identities with family ties, social roles, ancestry, personal history, faith, and race.

Participant M introduced himself by speaking of his “ancestors” being from the Mimbres (he provided no further information, assuming all in attendance would know this place) and that some of his family married into another large family in the area giving him “muchos primos” (many cousins). After naming origin place and ancestry, as well as noting the light complexion of one of his predecessors, M told others at the workshop:

Somebody did some research on the acequias in Silver City for the state engineer; my grandfather’s acequia is listed as one of the older ones there. They’re up in arms again there.

In his self-introduction, M places his ancestry in a nearby area that has shared meaning for participants. He notes a lighter complected ancestor—some participants did this to point to “Spanish” heritage, others to a mixing of non-Hispanic white heritage, highlighting a racialized sense of relations-in-place. In addition, M situates his family as being of the acequia system for some time, meaning they have used and helped maintain the shared water, and the community that forms around acequias, for generations. Acequia systems, a traditional form of community-shared ditch-based irrigation, are very much alive in parts of New Mexico and struggling to survive in the face of privatized development interests.<sup>6</sup>

In describing their names, participants often emphasized nature, family relations, and faith. For instance, one participant introduced her first name of Petra as meaning rock and also as the feminine form of Peter, the saint. Another introduced his last name of Flores as meaning flowers; another, Otero, as meaning both hill and altar. Another introduced her last name, Parra, as meaning grapevine, which she pointed out also meant her family had hidden Jewish roots.<sup>7</sup> Many also explained that they were named after relatives. Thus, participants situated their names simultaneously in the natural, social, and cultural.

Likewise, place naming was important in orienting one’s self and culture to place. One participant explained that it was important to speak of “not New Mexico but Nuevo Mexico.”

C: Our own art, cuisine, music, colors—New Mexican sunrises, sunsets—the most beautiful thing in the world. All different, every time you see one. Spiritual. I don’t own Nuevo Mexico—I am a part of it. She shares herself with me. I walk on her—she’s been before me and will be here long after I’m gone. I thank the Lord for blessing me with the sense of vision to recognize that.

Many participants spoke of being of the first generation to move from ranch or farm to town or city. While this is a common American experience for an older generation, most participants’ sense of relations-in-place was in stark contrast to other American experiences of scattered families spread over different regions of the United States. Despite many participants moving from more rural areas of New Mexico as younger people, many emphasized currently living close to extended

families. For example, D in Sawmill noted that most of his five children and 15 grandkids lived within blocks of his home.

A sense of relations-in-place was also intertwined, in some cases, with one's access to and treatment of nature. One participant discussed the beauty of the Deming area and the value of land access (M: "We're so blessed with public land"). He noted changes happening today, however, with ways people treat the land, linking these to a changing sense of relations-in-place.

M: In the olden days, people were more respectful of the land. If you knew somebody you'd go talk to them and you could get permission to go anywhere. Things have changed. These days, people are so environmentally unconscious; people litter. That to me makes me so sad, so mad.

Throughout the workshops, participants used communicative devices in discussing self-identification, values, and land access that activated discursive radiants of both place and social identity. In doing so, they illustrated ways in which ecocultural discourse is a substantive activity in their worlds, and indicated key discursive features that pointed to knowledge of place and self that emerges through social relations in place.

### **Food: Harvesting, Hunting, Making, and Enjoying Food of the Place**

In participants' narratives we found an overwhelming emphasis on food in connection to place and community. Participants persistently introduced the topics of growing food, hunting and slaughtering for food, preparing food, and eating and enjoying food, always in tandem with relations in particular places. We interpreted food as being core to explaining, experiencing, and maintaining both a material and emotional sense of relations-in-place. One participant, for example, related a memory of the annual communal spring-cleaning of an acequia system, in which food formed the most cherished part of his memory.

D: Oh yeah, me and my dad had a hundred feet of ditch that we had to clean. The whole neighborhood, all the neighborhood, would get together and do that. That was done in March before the water came. And everybody got involved. Then at noon the women used to take out something to eat. And that is what I used to like. Beans, red chile, green chile. Good cooks, and you know it is all cooked with firewood. There was no gas in here.

Food, and at times accompanying music, was central to both past and present senses of relations-in-place. One Sawmill participant recalled how she became involved in neighborhood efforts to curb the polluting sawmill. She volunteered to take part during the first meeting she attended.

L: So within like 15 minutes I was the vice president and I was like, what is going on here? "And by the way, we are going to have enchiladas—you need to go home and get all this food." and I was like, whoa! . . . One thing we understood is that every time we had an event, there was some kind of celebration; we had music; we had food. We understand the way our people think: food and music. There was a lot of posole that we made.

Participants who emphasized memories based upon community and food nearly always mourned the loss of such experiences.

R: I was born in San Miguel, a little community of farmers. We used to eat good. In the fall, we would slaughter a pig and everyone would eat. What they would do is in summer they would fatten the pigs and then in the fall they would slaughter them. It was real good stuff. First, they kill it and lay it down on a big board. And then they put boiling water. And then they start scraping the hair off and then, when everything is done and they cut it up and everything, they make chicharrones in a great big pot with fire just boiling away and that was good stuff. Everybody was there. Not very many musicians over there. Those were the good old days. Nowadays if you don't have a dollar you don't eat. You can't go to McDonald's without a dollar.

Of particular note throughout participants' utterances is the New Mexicaness of food mentioned. Tortillas, red and green chile (chile rojo y verde), beans (frijoles), posole (chile hominy stew), chicharrones (fried pig skin), enchiladas—these culturally and environmentally specific foods are quite literally rooted or grounded in ecocultural relations-in-place. In stories of the past, these foods were dependent on people eating food grown where they lived and living on what they grew (e.g., D: "Everything in those times was done by people; never did we use machines or use anything to do anything. Stuff that people don't even know about now."). While participants discussed both contemporary experiences and memories of food in connection to place and community, the sense of mourning over loss of particular community practices and their replacement by capitalist practices (e.g., R: "Nowadays if you don't have a dollar you don't eat.") also begins to point to the central participant-identified problem we detail later below, the intertwined loss of connection to both land and culture.

### Storytelling: In Place and Childhood

Storytelling was another main theme of the ecocultural premise of relations-in-place. This emphasis on storytelling is not surprising as the resolana-styled workshops were framed as opportunities to tell one's story. However, the stories themselves often contained further descriptions of storytelling in a particular natural place or began with announcements that one was about to offer a story about a place. Further, in stories, participants identified places by describing social relations and storytelling that happened within those places.

M: I loved the outdoors, going to the mountains of the Mimbres. The purpose for going was usually hunting, hiking, and driving on old trails. There were many piñons (pine nut trees), juniper trees, and always plenty of different wildlife. We would meet with many of my father's old friends or relatives and I enjoyed listening to them talk about the old days. There were plenty of humorous stories, which I have tried to remember to pass on to my children.

C: I have a little tale about the tree there—underneath the tree there was an old bench. An old man, Pancho Villa, used to live there. The old man would sit there

and fall asleep on the bench. I was mischievous—one day I spray-painted his shoe when he was asleep. He was slow but said he knew who it was. One day he made believe he was asleep and he caught me—he said, “Now go grab that spray paint and paint the other one.” He walked all over with silver shoes.

Children, and being a child, were often the topic of stories in or about nature. Themes involved keeping children safe, socially appropriate behavior, and one’s own childhood memories. Many children in New Mexico grow up with the story of La Llorona, a haunting tragic female figure usually depicted as having been forced to drown her children and who wanders the edges of waterways crying. There are many versions, some ancient and some contemporary, but most children hear this story as a warning to never play by water’s edge—or La Llorona will get them, too. The story does the trick in spatially ordering children in nature, generally keeping them safely away from arroyos (mountain run-offs), acequias, and rivers.

V: All the kids would stay in the yard. All the adults would sit around talking and laughing. La Llorona lived in the north part of town. (*Group laughs at the suggestion that La Llorona was there in Deming.*)

Participants also equated children’s safety in nature with secure senses of relations-in-place. In these cases, the focus was on relatives who looked after children in situations in which children felt threatened by nature in some way.

G: We used to visit my Grandfather in Laredo, Texas. I remember going to the other side, Nuevo Laredo, with my Dad’s cousin, Martinita. I remember holding onto her hand rather tightly as we crossed the bridge. The bridge was pretty high. The river seemed to have a lot of water, moving very fast. I remember holding onto her hand very tightly. I felt safe with her behind me.

Participants mourned today’s children’s loss of being in the outdoors. This loss was explicitly tied to a sense of relations-in-place, and the loss of the storytelling and intergenerational experience that such relations-in-place encompass.

L: I miss seeing people, children, outside, early and late evenings during the summer. If you drive around town on a summer night nowadays, one doesn’t see children playing tag, riding their bikes, playing el encantado, telling stories, hanging around with their elders. It’s a sign of the times: TV, video games. The extended family has moved out of town to bigger more exciting places and to find jobs not available here. My grandmother, tíos [uncles], tías [aunts], cousins all lived in Deming.

The traditional New Mexican Hispanic communication practice of *resolana* is perhaps most notable in this focus on storytelling. Stories centrally functioned as the communicative network, fastening and nurturing a community in place and providing a process for sharing means and meanings of the ecocultural premise of a sense of relations-in-place. As *resolana* focuses on embracing community stories and lived experience as important forms of knowledge (Atencio, 1988), participant stories helped identify emplaced knowledge by describing social relations and activities in place, and by spatially ordering and protecting children by establishing a clear and secure sense of relations-in-place. Here, again, participants express their

understanding that loss of culture and nature are entwined, with video games and TV taking the place of outdoor play and stories with extended family.

### Desert Unsolitaire: Sublime Response and Human Relations

We found it intriguing that very few participants described sublime responses, even while engaging in several workshops about one's sense of place and nature. Oravec (1981) identifies the sublime response, typified in John Muir's writings, as a profound moment in nature involving an attunement with "the natural eloquence of the environment" (p. 252). In vast natural places, like New Mexico's mountains or desert, Oravec describes sublime response as evoking senses of apprehension, comparative personal insignificance akin to awe, and spiritual exhalation.

We argue the sublime response presents layers of culturally specific meaning. In one regard, Oravec's (1981) sublime response depends on a solitude and a culture–nature binary often central to the telling of such experiences in mainstream Western environmental depictions, an isolated and often adventurous departing from the human realm frequently brought to life by the lone white male in the "wilderness," such as in Edward Abbey's US Southwest environmental classic *Desert Solitaire* (1971). In another regard, the sublime can allow for the realization that one's own significance as a human is dwarfed within nature. In this regard, Oravec (1996) noted that the sublime can be a positive quality that instills "hope and energy in environmental causes" (p. 68).

We argue those few participants who did describe what could be interpreted as sublime responses focused on Oravec's (1981, 1996) points of spiritual exhalation and realizations of personal insignificance akin to awe, yet eschewed notions of solitude, a separate nature out there, senses of apprehension, or the insignificance of the human realm. In contrast, sublime responses centered on the significance and centrality of human social relations within and with nature.

C: I love the wide open spaces. When you start narrowing yourself and blending with this environment . . . I can almost feel the spirit of some of the ones who were on this land before. They didn't abuse it. This land awakens your senses. You can smell the sage.

M: I walk the land alone or with my children or grandchildren and we open our eyes to see the beauty of nature or the geology, the remnants of those who came before us. I love for them to see the rainbows and the sunsets, and when they point such things out to me I know that they too will cherish the land and I have opened their eyes to this beautiful place we live in.

Participants highlighted those people who joined them on forays, either those living or those who lived with the land long before them. The sublime, therefore, was inseparable from relations with both place and people of that place. Implicit in the relational descriptions were respectful and cherishing place orientations. In many ways, the sublime response as described here, immersed in an ecocultural premise of a sense of relations-in-place, provides an alternative to the notion of

overcoming the nature–culture division often central to Western pursuits of the sublime experience. This very different, already integrated, sense of profound unitary relations of culture and nature provides a backdrop to the next section on participant-identified problems, problems steeped in interconnected losses of both nature and culture.

### **Participant-Identified Problems: Split from both Land and Culture**

Participants brought up a sense of loss that revolved around the dismantling of both environment and culture. They described their mourning through the lens of nostalgia: a simpler and safer past, walking neighborhoods, children playing outside, close communities and *vecinos*, respecting the land and one's elders, and even premotorized times. Participants grieved the loss of things such as the strength and beauty of a less compromised Rio Grande; the natural and social life supported by now removed *acequia* systems; the gardens, orchards, and communities paved over by freeways; the clear starry sky veiled by ever-increasing town lights; the animals one worked or played with, or hunted; and the large old trees knocked over to make way for buildings. Interwoven with loss of these aspects of place was often the loss, or threat of loss, of social relations, as well as a certain fatalism in the face of “progress” akin to the human–nature orientation Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) interpreted half a century ago.

Participants in Sawmill focused particularly on changes in the urban *socionatural* environment brought on by the building of the interstate highway through the city's center.

D: The Freeway changed everything. Traffic. Every time cars would go by, you'd smell fuel and hear noise. They finally built noise walls. I guess it was the early 1960s, my little daughter took off over there to see traffic. We were going crazy, we didn't know what to do. It was a good thing to see the dog up there. We found her because of the dog; the dog always followed her. My daughter now lives across the street. She was in diapers, 1 or 2 years old, a baby watching the tractors. *Mi hijita, pobrecita* [My little girl, poor little one].

Participants in particular spoke of the freeway's role in decimating the city center's *acequia* system, and the loss of the social relations that accompanied the communal sharing of water.

L: The freeway was what really changed the face of this city because it cut right through neighborhoods, this one included. It took down house after house, destroyed the *acequia* system—a lot of them had to go underneath the freeway. And the continuity was disturbed through the community and it has never really been the same since.

D: Like I tell everybody, in 1952 I went in the service. When I came out there were no *acequias* no more; there were all kinds of warehouses where there used to be all kinds of trees, fields, apple orchards, everything. And it's sad. I cannot believe what I saw here and then I was so unhappy. But what can you do? You start looking at progress and that is what it brings. That *acequia* used to run to *Barelas*. Then they

had one that used to go east to Martineztown. You know, almost all communities were attached by acequias.

Acequias, a material manifestation of a sense of relations-in-place, were not only credited with linking communities and providing continuity, but also with fundamentally supporting life in place (e.g., S: “The acequia was our livelihood. We’d water our gardens and get veggies”). In the acequias’ removal, people gained more privately owned land (e.g., five feet of privately owned yard in the place of a community-maintained waterway) and more distance between community members.

Other participants mourned the loss of, or loss of access to, particular places. This loss was always linked to one’s sense of relations-in-place.

C: This place was wide open. You could go out there and not see anything for miles. Now you go out there and there’s old cars, lights all around. I know it’s progress and whatever, but it was just the freedom to go out and party all night long and wake up when the sun’s coming out. If a cop stopped you, they knew the difference between crime and mischief. Now you’ve got the sheriffs, the FBI, and everything.

G: Another thing I miss are the open areas for picnics—because people didn’t take care of their land so they had to start closing it up. It’s just a shame.

In mourning these losses, participants discussed an amorphous “they,” “kids,” or “people” (with the exception of law enforcement officers) as taking away or squandering such places. Older participants especially pointed to newcomers as not having respect for people or the land.

D: It’s people; you start bringing in people. When I was growing up here I can walk in a straight line. There were two houses from here to school. Felix Perez’s dad used to own alfalfa fields. . . . I used to play with a slingshot; shoot at rabbits and pheasants. Dona Felicitas would cook up the pheasant. That was my whole life . . . everything nice. Then the town started growing. There was horrendous change: buildings, paved roads, cars. People were coming from all over. It was starting to be a town, a big town. The feeling that I get, you know, when a place starts growing up, is that the worst people in the world come to it. And it all depends on the people, *costumbre de la gente* [custom of the people], you know? What customs they have and all that. And when any *ciudad* [city] starts growing, people change.  
S: It diminishes.

D: And it’s not the people change here. It’s the people that come in bring change and that is what it’s all about.

S: In the old days, everybody used to visit everybody.

D: In the olden days . . . if I was building a house and I was right next to him living next to him. I would get out there “and let’s help.” Nowadays you know what it is all about—it’s about the mighty bucks.

Such social changes, wrapped up in *vecinos* changing to strangers, in the regulation and privatization of publicly accessible lands, in the replacement of sustainable relations-in-place by “progress” or capitalist practices, also point to an understanding of power that rests with newcomers, not those who hold the traditions. These

ecocultural perceptions are embedded in layers of historical mistrust, power, hypocrisy, and socioeconomic politics.

### Discussion

The present study introduces a core ecocultural premise of a sense of relations-in-place, a way of understanding and experiencing human relations with nature that is alternative to mainstream Western environmental/environmentalist paradigms. The premise pivots on self-identification rooted both in the land and in relations with others, on food of the land as integral to emplaced social relations, on nature as a place for stories and stories as a way to manage secure social relations within nature, on sublime responses that emphasize social relations, and on a sense of interwoven loss in the dismantling of both nature and culture.

As Atencio's (1988, 2009) notion of *resolana* provided inspiration for the project, our collaborators designed the study's workshops to encourage people to communally express themselves and explore ways of talking about subjugated shared knowledge in a place with a tangled colonial history. Thus, the inspiration and framing of the workshops themselves were culturally informed and help contextualize our interpretive findings. Our participants illustrated the centrality of ecocultural discourse to their lives by exemplifying ways such discourse both fixed and cultivated communities in place. In their words, they emphasized an experience of social relations embedded in the natural world. Here, nature was not conceived of as separate from humans, as more sacred or pure, or as distant from the everyday, as in much dominant Western environmental discourse (Corbett, 2006; Cronon, 1996b; Sturgeon, 2009). Instead, the focus on nature was largely relational, material, and, even when sublimely spiritual or transcendent, grounded in the social.

Participants mourned a loss of connection to both culture and nature rooted in a faltering sense of relations-in-place and blamed this loss on the influx of newcomers and newer profit and "progress"-based customs. These contemporary interpretations echo Atencio's (1988) observations from hosting *resolanas* in New Mexico in the 1960s. Atencio quotes a 90-year-old Hispanic man speaking of a communal loss of the ability to "feel the soul of the earth" or recognize "the miracle—the *milagro*—of food, because we have not bent our bodies over a plant to care for it or to pluck its fruits" (p. 12). The man explained that these changes took place because "strangers—foreigners have come to our lands with their own styles and manners of being . . . We have believed what they said because we still have some faith in people" (p. 12). Our study points to little change in this perception, even after the passing of half a century.

In addition, participants' fatalism in the face of such ecocultural upheaval echoes Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) finding of an earlier New Mexico Hispanic generation's submissive orientation to nature. Instead of testing value orientations to nature as Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck did, or interpreting Hispanic environmental relations through an ecojustice framework as more recent studies have done, the collaborative and *resolana*-guided nature of this project directed us to have an inductive participatory approach to interpret a Hispanic ecocultural premise that

might reveal what TWS Hispanic-outreach consultant Arturo Sandoval termed a “new vernacular” (Knuffke, 2007, p. 55). Included in our academic pursuits were collaborative goals to provide voice to this vernacular to help shape policy and fuel ongoing efforts within communities to write themselves “into a reconnection with the land” (Otero, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

In explicitly melding the ecological with the cultural in our exploration, we align with many scholars’ efforts to undo culture–nature binaries reproduced not only in dominant Western discourses of nature but often in the very research that aims to deconstruct the binary itself (Carbaugh, 2007b; Milstein, 2008; Valladolid & Apffel-Marglin, 2001). This commitment allowed for an interpretation of an ecocultural premise rooted in a cultural knowledge of place inseparable from social relations, an integrated premise that points to alternative ways of perceiving and practicing humanature that may have wider sustainable applications and speak to and for a variety of underrepresented communities. Indeed, while cultural distinctions will exist, other communities, ranging from First Nations pueblos to rural small-towns, may relate to aspects of the Hispanic New Mexican environmental vernacular and thus the premise of a sense of relations-in-place may have wider value.<sup>8</sup>

From an analytical standpoint, Carbaugh (1996) argues that case studies such as this one enable comparative assessment of “available means for conceiving of, and evaluating, natural space, local meaning systems, and the attendant attitudes that these cultivate, and constrain” (pp. 54–55). Indeed, this case study provides an explicitly culturally grounded example to compare to Cantrill’s (1998) sense of self-in-place observation that the longer one lives in a region, the more important social forces such as interpersonal relationships become. However, in Cantrill’s studies of participants in a different regional US culture (largely Caucasian in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula), he noted that associated with the increase in importance of social relations came a concurrent decrease in importance of referencing environmental conditions in describing one’s surroundings. In contrast, the present study’s participants, with different and much longer histories of largely living with and off the land (as long as 400 years or more), emphasize interpersonal relationships as firmly grounded in environmental conditions.

In culturally contextualizing the largely environmental communication notion of a sense of self-in-place, we also speak to extant comparative cultural studies in which discourse is understood as a complex of practices and premises relating people to nature and place (Basso, 1992, 1996; Carbaugh, 1999; Milstein, 2008, 2011; Morgan, 2002, 2003). Drawing attention to the importance of culture in our study allowed us to newly apply and further develop this notion of discourse and, in doing so, highlight a culturally distinctive environmental paradigm that constitutes a unitary blending of close social relations and environmental relations. This blending is especially noteworthy for ecoculturally focused scholars, practitioners, and activists as it appears in some ways to override predominant Western human–nature/culture–nature binaries (Carbaugh, 1996; Cronon, 1996a; Plumwood, 1997; Rogers, 1998; Williams, 1980), as well as individualist constructs.

Cantrill and Senecah (2001) suggest that the sense of self-in-place construct's fabric is "richly textured and has a tensile strength largely dependent on separate strands of economic and social life accompanying any given location" (p. 192). In contrast, our study participants were urban and rural and of different socioeconomic strata; however, their shared New Mexico Hispanic backgrounds and experiences, albeit varied, informed a culturally aligned sense of relations-in-place. The premise, and its associated meanings, in some ways parallels what Cantrill and Senecah term a relatively small set of regionally representative socioenvironmental "nested symbolic themes," and point to a preliminary consideration of ways the premise may inform preferences for some environmental settings, practices, and activities over others, providing environmentalist organizations a toehold into collaborative discussions of ways to best advocate for cultural community values and needs.

Indeed, researchers have argued that environmental policymakers must heed cultural premises in order to be effective (Carbaugh, 2001; Morgan, 2002, 2003) and have shown how the sense of self-in-place relates to group responses to various forms of pro- and anticonservation efforts (Cantrill & Masluk, 1996). In this case, the premise of a sense of relations-in-place is especially relevant to organizations representing regional Hispanic, and perhaps other, communities. Centralizing a sense of relations-in-place in environmental communication campaigns would highlight interrelated respect and care for place and social relationships; help culturally explain and advocate for traditions such as common land and nature-based communal livelihoods (Kosek, 2006; Macias, 2008); serve to inform and influence policymakers to better represent constituents' culturally particular environmental values; and perhaps lead to restorative ecocultural measures, a growing aim of much environmental communication research (Milstein, 2009). Cox (2007), both an academic and three-time Sierra Club president, argues that environmental communication scholars "have a responsibility through our work . . . to enhance the ability of society to respond appropriately to environmental signals relevant to the well-being of both human civilization and natural biological systems" (p. 16).

From an advocacy standpoint, Atencio (1988) argues that the way to overcome social-change threats to culture is to achieve, restore, and sustain community-derived self knowledge. Resolanas in the form of community-focused collaborative projects, such as this study, are pathways for doing so. A number of comparative examples support the potential for this study's applicability, notably in investigating, and at times assisting, non-mainstream environmental perspectives brought to the forefront to enact change. Scholars have illustrated how underrepresented groups are becoming more unified and politically active by interrupting dominant environmental ideologies (Morello-Grosch, et al., 2002; Valladolid & Apffel-Marglin, 2001). For example, several Native American groups have used culturally specific discursive tactics to organize and fight back against community-targeted US governmental toxic waste dumping and other injustices (Brook, 1998; Endres, 2009) and low-income urban youth of color have forefronted marginalized voices to successfully bring attention to high asthma rates caused by transit pollution (Loh & Sugerman-Brozan, 2002).

Atencio (1988) claims, in using *resolana* as a sensitizing paradigm and also as community practice, that partnerships between universities and community groups can produce meaningful knowledge that is useful for participants and that lasts beyond the short scope of academic projects. We briefly draw attention to actions we hope will emerge from this study. Conservation Voters of New Mexico is reviewing the study's findings and will likely center the ecocultural premise of a sense of relations-in-place in its work, both to hold legislators accountable to, and have better outreach with and representation of, Hispanic communities. The Wilderness Society plans to use the sense of relations-in-place to inform ongoing innovative ways of hearing from communities about ecocultural values. Arts de Aztlan plans to bring to light and regenerate the premise of a sense of relations-in-place via community digital hubs; these hubs will display participant stories and research team thematic codes to spotlight meanings that became clearer via this study and to allow more community members to contribute, creating an emergent interactive ecocultural premise index and engaging and empowering community members to recognize and defend ecoculturally specific meaning systems. The Resource Center for Raza Planning plans to use the sense of relations-in-place premise to inform regional design and planning decisions by educating urban and environmental planners and architects to create and support more ecoculturally sensitive projects.

Other wider applications are possible. For instance, government agencies could draw upon this case study to create more culturally sensitive uses of natural areas, encouraging salient ways to experience relations-in-place that are restorative. As part of this study's collaborative goal was to connect community voices, we especially hope applications will support community-seeded and nurtured knowledge and activism, efforts that protect and restore connections to place and people and leave a sustainable legacy for future relations. Such application would assert the value of ecocultural perceptions and practices heretofore marginalized or overlooked in widespread dominant environmental discourses, and would help expand the range of representation and possibility in humanature relations.

### Notes

- [1] Aranda read his poem at the kick-off event for Connecting Community Voices, a nonprofit organization that emerged out of this study's collaboration. The event in Albuquerque's South Valley included local food, art, music, and spoken word addressing area ecocultural themes.
- [2] While there are various signifiers in the United States, including but not limited to Mexican/Mexicano, Mexican American, Spanish American, Chicano/a, and Latino/a, in this paper we use Hispanic based on study participant preference and overall usage. The term Hispano/Hispanic is widely used in New Mexico and other parts of Spanish colonized territories in the US (Acuña, 2008) and the signifier recognizes the unique historical contextualization of these populations. We are mindful of differences in ethnic self-identifying labels and that the very words to describe Hispanic cultures can carry numerous meanings and ideological implications. Latino/a, considered a more politically conscious label, has been adopted as the preferred panethnic label and refers more exclusively to persons of Latin American origin (Rinderle, 2005). Scholars like Oboler (1995) challenge the amalgamation of Spanish

- speakers under the umbrella term Hispanic and problematize political implications of the terminology and its origin as a state-imposed identity label.
- [3] In this paper, we avoid the practice of italicizing Spanish words in an effort to represent and reflect the integrated, unmarked use of Spanish terms and phrases by participants in their largely English-language communication. For reader comprehension, we include translation for Spanish words and phrases that may not be commonly known by non-Spanish speakers.
- [4] Researchers have since used these measures to identify value profiles in a number of other cultural groups in an attempt to understand cultural differences and similarities in human experience. Researchers like Hofstede (1980, 2001) and Rokeach (1979) have also labeled other universal value orientations. These theories require several fundamental beliefs including the belief in the existence of basic human values that are measurable, concrete, and universal. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) large values study has been the target of a great deal of criticism over the years, as well as reflective critique from the lead researchers themselves. Many individuals were involved and often had their own agendas, questions, and projects they were pursuing. Many lived in the communities they were studying and their presence had an obvious impact eventually leading the Zuni pueblo to stop allowing research in their community. Ultimately, at least 69 publications have resulted from the values project, not including 17 graduate student dissertations and theses (Powers, 2000, p. 25).
- [5] This study was limited by age range of volunteer participants, none of whom were under the age of 36. Future research should explore whether similar or different ecocultural premises inform young Hispanic New Mexicans. If the first author's current undergraduate students are any indication, some intergenerational continuity in the ecocultural premise of relations-in-place exists. Young urban Hispanic students speak warmly of outdoor family and community gatherings, such as mantanzas, annual events around pig roasts. Students who grew up on farms or ranches emphasize connections between food and community, of raising, slaughtering, growing, and eating food together on the land. These same students, mostly in their early 20s, already speak of mourning the loss of outdoor spaces in which they used to gather with neighbors or family.
- [6] Readers who saw or read John Nichols' (1974) *Milagro Beanfield War* will have initial familiarity with acequia water struggles. For more background on acequias as forms of ecocultural relations-in-place, see Lamadrid and Arellano (2008), Rivera (1998), and Rodriguez (2006).
- [7] Many early Spanish settlers were conversos, also called crypto-Jews or anusim. These were Jews trying to get as far away from the Inquisition as possible via the geographic movement of colonization to practice their faith, though still in secret by necessity. This history created a particular sense of relations-in-place in New Mexico, one of the farthest outposts of Spanish colonization and a place where many conversos settled. Relatedly, our participant who identified as Jewish pointed out her ancestors were among the original area Spanish settlers.
- [8] On the international scale, for instance, one possibly comparative culture could be found in Fitch's (1998) study of Columbia, in which she argues the fundamental unit of human existence is vínculo (bonds), forefronted in an ideology of connectedness embodied in the phrase "una persona es un conjunto de vínculos" (a person is a set of bonds to others), bonds among humans, between a family and its home, and between a human and her/his homeland.

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