

COMMERCIALIZING DEATH AND DESEGREGATING GENDER: Twentieth Century Funerary Practices in Central Tejas and the Border

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Based on several years of ethnographic research, including auto-ethnography, participant-observation, and interviews, we argue that social, political, and economic processes, especially the commercialization of funerary practices, have created changes in Mexican American families and gendered identities. During the early twentieth century, funerary practices occurred within a patriarchal family and were often divided by gender. As commercialization increased mid-century, some practices moved outside the family, with many tasks moving to a patriarchal and segregated mortuary industry. At the same time, women created new economic opportunities in the flower and grave decorating industry, and men increased their involvement in family-based cemetery visits. Although second-wave feminist theory suggests that increasing women's involvement in public businesses and men's involvement in private families would result in greater gender egalitarianism, our research suggests that this is not always the case. Instead, as third-space Chicana feminists have argued, social structures and practices such as race and class counter assumed equalizing effects and reproduce gender inequality. Key Words: Gender, Funerary Practices, Mexican Americans, Cultural Studies, Feminism, Culture Change, Cemeteries.

One of my (Salazar's) most vivid memories from childhood is the vibrant and bright color of grave decorations that lined the streets at local flower shops (see Figure One). As children, we remember a handful of cemeteries that we visited throughout central Texas and the border as being beautiful and serene places; they were also one of the places where we learned that our families, both dead and alive, could be called upon for support and protection through conversation and prayer. Years later, both of us remain fascinated with cemeteries, and thus we turn our ethnographic gaze to Mexican and Mexican



Figure 1
Women shopping at local flower shop near San Fernando Cemetery II,
San Antonio, Texas. Photo by Jeremy White.

American¹ funerary practices in the southern, central, and border regions of Texas and Mexico (See Figure Two). Based on ethnographic research including auto-ethnography, participant-observation, informal and structured interviews, and visual/photographic documentation, we argue that the commercialization of funerary practices in the mid-twentieth century, along with other social, political, and economic processes, created changes in Mexican American gender relations. Dividing the paper both thematically and chronologically, we show that early twentieth century practices occurred within more patriarchal and gender-segregated households. With increasing commercialization after the mid-century, mortuary practices continued to be segregated by gender, but men and their customary work moved to patriarchal businesses,² eventually changing both Mexican American funerary practices and gender relations.



Figure 2
Central Texas and Texas-Mexico border region indicating research sites: Laredo, Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, San Antonio, Austin, Houston, and San Marcos. Map by Jeremy White.

Women, who had previously been in charge of cemetery decorating within their families, created new flower and grave decorating businesses, thus increasing their economic power. Men continued many of their previous roles within the funerary industry, but they no longer did these tasks within the family. The large-scale displacement of men's funerary tasks from the domestic unit to the mortuary industry resulted in men becoming more involved in family visits to cemeteries, thus increasing their involvement with their families. Second-wave feminists such as Marta Cotera and Michelle Z. Rosaldo (see Garcia 1989; Lewin 2006) argued that gender desegregation, or women's participation in men's activities and vice-versa, would result in greater gender equality. If these feminists were accurate, then the changes we document would bode well for increased gender egalitarianism. Unfortunately, as many gender activists have noted, the second-wave feminist movement often resulted in women

moving into typical men's activities such as jobs, education, and sports, but men were less likely to become involved with more conventional feminine activities such as family and kin work. Moreover, our research, drawing on third-space feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1990), bell hooks (1981), and Chela Sandoval (1991), shows that gender integration in-and-of-itself does not necessarily result in greater equality. Instead, we must simultaneously address gender within the larger context of race, class, and other social structures and practices. Our research illustrates how latter twentieth century practices have changed gender relations, sometimes empowering women, sometimes displacing men, and sometimes changing what are considered typical gender activities.

Our analysis draws on a long and sometimes contentious history of gender theory within both anthropology and Chicana/Latina studies (Davalos 1998). Drawing on a cultural constructionist approach that stretches at least from Margaret Mead to the growing number of contemporary Chicana/Latina scholars, we conceptualize gender as a form of social stratification and a dynamic cultural category that emphasizes the differences between males and females.³ Because we consider gender inherently relational, our analysis focuses on the behaviors and activities of both women and men. Funerary and grave decorating practices in central Texas and on the border have been gendered throughout the twentieth century, but political and economic, technological, and institutional factors have led to recent transformations, as we will discuss.

Since many mortuary practices occur within the family, we specifically look at gendered family relationships. Both feminist anthropologists and Chicana/Latina scholars have analyzed the hierarchical institution of the family, questioning its universality (e.g. Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako 1997; García 1989; Lewin 2006) and documenting its historical transformation (e.g. Cantú and Nájera-Ramírez 2002; Castañeda 1998;

González-López 2005; Ruiz 1998; Zavella 1987). Norma Williams' ethnographic research on Mexican American families specifically describes and analyzes gender and generational change, including funerary practices (1990). Although Mexican and Mexican American families were once stereotyped and normalized as exclusively macho and male-centered, contemporary scholars have documented more complex relations and noted the importance of female power and activities (Castellanos 2009; González-López 2005; Guttman 2003; Juárez and Kerl 2003; Montoya, Frazier, and Hurtig 2002). Similar to historians D'Emilio and Freedman (1988), authors such as Collier (1997), Hirsch (2003), Hirsch and Wardlow (2006) and Zavella (1987), emphasize the role of capitalism and economic change in family and marital relationships, especially the increased emphasis on love and affection as the basis of families. Our research finds that the increasing commercialization of society in the twentieth century, including the funerary industry, has produced significant changes in the gendered practice of mortuary rituals.

Chicana and Latina folklore and culture scholars, dating back to at least the beginning of the twentieth century, have described and analyzed many social and cultural practices in south and central Tejas, including both sides of the Texas-Mexico border. A combination of literature, anthropology, and folklore by early scholars such as Jovita González (1932), María Elena Zamora (2000), and others, produced a rich body of work to understand life in the early to mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, Chicana/o literary critics, folklorists and anthropologists, like Norma Cantú, María Herrera-Sobek, José Limón, Olga Nájera-Ramírez, and Américo Paredes, similarly provided varied analyses of expressive culture, including music, dance, festivals, and religious and oral traditions, using innovative theories and methods that simultaneously address issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality.⁴ Our

research draws on this scholarly tradition while focusing attention on a relatively new topic: mortuary practices.

Similarly, scholars of funerary practices and cemeteries have approached the topic in several ways, looking especially at changes in imagery and style (Cannon 2005; Deetz and Dethlefsen 1982); religious, class and racial/ethnic status, segregation, and identity (Foster and Eckert 2003; Hernandez 2008; Meyer 1993; Santino 1994); or historical change (Scaramelli and Tarble 2000; Sloane 1991; Will de Chaparro 2007). By far, most analyses of Mexican American funerary practices have focused almost exclusively on either the imagery and grave decorations (Gosnell and Gott 1989; Graham 1990; Jordan 1982; Tunnell and Madrid 1991), or *Días de Muertos* traditions.⁵ Thus, many writers have noted the religious, colorful, and sometimes-festive atmosphere of Latina/o cemeteries—what Tomás Ybarra Frausto terms “*rasquachismo*,” or the transformation and repurposing of free or inexpensive materials into beautiful and valued art and objects that is often used to characterize Mexican American art and social movements (see Figure One). *Rasquachismo* is “a uniquely working-class aesthetic of Mexican origin—resourceful, excessive, ironic, and in its transformation of utilitarian articles into sacred or aesthetic objects, highly metaphoric” (Gaspar de Alba 1998, 13). However, few have explicitly analyzed both the racialized and gendered nature of funerary practices, grave markers, or grave decorating.

A few scholars have specifically analyzed women or gender in mortuary practices. For example, Hobbs (2001) examines erotic imagery in graveyards, and Cannon (2005) analyzes the role of women in changing mortuary “fashions.” However, most funerary scholars have overlooked gender as a category of analysis. Even when gender is quite evident, like in Garcíagodoy’s (1998) or Turner and Jasper’s (1994) treatises on the days of the dead, it is still

neglected. Based on the pictures and interviews in both books, many more women than men are active practitioners on this holiday, yet these works overlook the role of women or gender in the holiday. To their credit, Turner and Jasper briefly address the gendered activities of the flower-selling business, noting “women undertake the skilled chores and the sales activity, whereas men provide the muscles and machines to lift, move and transport supplies and sales products” (1994, 144). In the tradition of interdisciplinary Chicana feminist scholars such as Anzaldúa (1990), Castañeda (1998), Davalos (1998), Ruíz (1998), Sandoval (1991), and others, our research considers it essential to integrate race, class, and gender in our analyses.

Methods and Positionality

Having grown up visiting cemeteries, we realized that everyday mortuary rituals could help us understand our own culture and how it had changed over the years. Although I, Juárez, a fifty-three-year-old anthropologist, had always taught about Día de los Muertos and funerary practices in my Mexican American culture courses, I began incorporating more about this topic in 2003, when I became involved with two local Mexican cemeteries that had been vandalized. After the vandalism, I was invited to serve as Academic Liaison for the San Pedro Cemetery Board, one of the vandalized cemeteries that has been owned and managed by a mutual aid society since 1909. I began encouraging my students to pursue local research related to cemeteries and mortuary practices and began working with Salazar as an undergraduate in 2005. As we investigated the topic, we recognized that constructions of gender and family were central to the subject, yet scholars had neglected the gendered nature of these practices. We began exploring the matter using both auto-ethnography and more conventional ethnographic research in central Texas and along both sides of the Mexican border.

I, Salazar, a twenty-seven-year-old Mexican American, recently completed my master's thesis on Mexican American grave decorating practices. I spent much of my life observing the cultural interactions of people in San Antonio, specifically within San Fernando Cemetery II, where my maternal grandfather is buried. My father grew up in one of the neighborhoods surrounding the cemetery, and my grandmother lives there to this day. I once lived in this predominantly Mexican American neighborhood, and since then I continue to visit my grandmother and interact with her friends and neighbors. Though I only lived there for a year-and-a-half of my life, I constantly return to this house and neighborhood. With the exception of a few, my family (grandparents on both sides, tías, tíos, and cousins) lives in San Antonio and I am there for every major holiday, wedding, funeral, and celebration. We stay with my paternal grandmother when visiting, which has allowed me to become more familiar with the people, places, and culture of the west and south sides of San Antonio. As such, I consider myself part of the neighborhood and continue to make observations of mortuary practices.

I have also conducted research in Matamoros, Mexico, where several relatives, including my maternal great-grandparents and an uncle, are buried. In addition to course and thesis-related research, focused primarily on the transformation of grave decorating, I also served as one of the 2008 Fellows with the Texas Historical Commission (THC). As a fellow, I researched and studied many south and central Texas cemeteries, and collected information on Mexican American cemeteries in the Austin/San Antonio area for incorporation into THC's website.

I, Juárez, grew up visiting cemeteries in Laredo, Texas, and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, with both my natal and marital families. As a child, my family traveled frequently from Austin to Laredo, my parents' hometown, and visits

to the cemetery were quite common. These visits often involved extended family, mostly tías and primas/os, and the cemeteries were key sites for hearing family stories and learning about family history. Shortly after I met my husband, in 1980, I began accompanying him and his family to visit Nuevo Laredo's old cemetery, especially during Día de los Muertos. As my husband and I matured and lost members of our own family, especially my grandparents and mother-in-law, who are all buried in Laredo, we began visiting their graves more often, and eventually became decorators ourselves.

In addition to auto-ethnography, we use more traditional ethnographic methods such as participant-observation, informal and structured interviews, visual/photographic documentation, and secondary research. We have conducted participant-observation in several Hispanic cemeteries in central Texas, especially San Pedro and City Cemetery in San Marcos, Texas. Many of the hours spent at San Pedro involved helping community and student volunteers to clean, photograph, and document information about grave markers, and to develop and evaluate cemetery documentation instruments specific to Mexican American cemeteries and decorating practices.⁶ Participant-observation at San Marcos City Cemetery involved student implementation of the grave marker and decoration instrument for over 1,000 of the approximately 5,000 graves that were decorated in March 2006.

Most interviews were conducted with Mexicans and Mexican Americans throughout south and central Texas and in a few in small communities just west of Houston, as well as in Matamoros, Mexico. Ages ranged from twenty to eighty and were about equally divided between women and men. Most of the interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, and were conducted with individuals, but some involved couples, small groups, or families. Some

interviews were carried out at cemeteries, including the period around Día de los Muertos in 2008, and some came from students in central Texas colleges, or were conducted by students in Juárez' classes.⁷ Beyond individuals from our own families and everyday lives, we used our personal involvement with cemeteries and grave decorating to identify other participants. Most of our participants come from middle-class families throughout south and central Texas and on both sides of the border.

Family and Gender Segregation in the Early Mid-Twentieth Century

For cities on both sides of the Texas-Mexico border, and large cities in Texas with substantial Mexican American populations, like San Antonio, mortuary rituals are cultural practices that remain vibrant and retain a deep emotional intensity. These practices constitute a form of ancestor worship that reproduces social relations and allows the living to interact with the dead; they also symbolize and create a respect and reverence for the departed that contributes to familism, a characteristic in which the collective unit of the family is placed at the center of social and cultural productions.

During the early mid-twentieth century, Mexican American mortuary practices were still largely a family affair, situated within a patriarchal household and structure.⁸ Together, families prepared bodies, planned funerals, and buried the dead, usually in conjunction with a church and cemetery. Death customs mirrored the gender ideologies and practices of the day: men were more involved in labor that was physically heavier and centered on agricultural fields and house yards; women were more involved in the housework and family care-giving domains. Both men and women shared some death customs and grave-decorating tasks; other responsibilities were deeply gendered.⁹ As Williams suggests, "The spatial segregation of men and women during the wake underlined the separate domains of men and women" (1990, 36). Our evidence

indicates that women were more involved in body preparation, cooking, and emotional work, whereas men were more involved in making grave markers, and doing the heavy work of cemetery and gravesite maintenance. The main commonality for women and men involved cemetery visits, although women clearly took the lead in visiting and grave decorating.

Women's Emotional Work

Beginning with the premise that both women and men have similar emotions, we nonetheless suggest that both cultural and situational factors affect how emotions are felt and expressed. In both Mexican and U.S. societies, women are believed to be inherently more emotional and sensitive; in fact, it is often considered inappropriate for men to express sentimentality. This is less true in Mexican societies, where male crying is more acceptable on some occasions, especially life-cycle rituals such as weddings and funerals. Similarly, situational factors such as degree of closeness and interaction can affect the depth of sentiments. This section explores the gendered expression of emotions.

We use the term emotional work to refer to activities that emphasize and express human feelings and sentiments, especially as related to social relationships. Crying and grieving are the most important emotional work related to death, and “bereavement customs worldwide commonly assign women to prolonged and ritualized grieving, both during the funeral services and long after they are over” (Scheper-Hughes 1992, 428). Like other scholars (Andrews 2004, 105; Habenstein and Lamers 1995), we found that women were usually more active in sobbing, wailing, and other activities that express or provide emotional support.

My (Juárez's) parents, both in their early 70s, recalled the intensity of emotional expressions when they were young; they noted that mourners, both women and men, are less emotionally expressive today.¹⁰ Beto, my

seventy-four-year-old father, was an altar boy in the 1940s who served during many funeral masses in Laredo, Texas:

Me acuerdo, cuando era monaguillo yo, me tocaba asistir a los cementerios, a los entierros, y a mí me impresionaba mucho que la gente lloraba así a gritos. No como hoy en día. En general, la gente no enseña esa emoción ¿verdad? Pero en ese tiempo, no. La gente gritaba y lloraba: ¡Ya se fue! ¡Ya se fue! Especialmente, en aquel tiempo, uno veía cuando bajaban el ataúd. Lo bajaban y luego era más llorar allí ¿verdad?¹¹

Compared to present-day expressions of mourning, he noticed that both women and men in the 1940s expressed grief more publicly and openly by sobbing and wailing; both he and my mother, Toni, agreed that women were even more expressive than men. As Toni recalled,

The women were the ones that did most of the crying, even though at first notice of the death—of the person passing on—the men would also cry out loud, and kind of do their bit of crying. And then, when it was time to take the body away, or the actual burial, we would get to the cemetery and they would start the prayers and all. And then when Father would give it that final blessing and they would start lowering the casket, everybody started crying again. It was like, “Bring him back! Bring him back!”

Ironically, Beto thought there was less crying by the time my maternal grandmother died in 1961, when I was about five years old. However, my siblings and I remember so much crying and wailing after her death, especially from my aunts, we feared the mourners would create a flood and drown the family.

Several participants suggested that situational factors contributed to a greater sense of grief. Tomás, a retired veteran and one of the older, active members of the San Pedro cemetery board, talked about family deaths being harder in the past because people visited and spent more time together, whereas now, even if you are visiting, “you are watching television” or doing something else. According to Toni,

It was a harder thing for people to pass away because...there was not as much mobility as there is today, so as a consequence, your parents as a rule lived with you, until they passed away. You cared for them until they passed away. You tended to them with great love and respect, it was a given thing. No questions asked as to who was going to take care of them, or what are we going to do. You know, you did that. And so people got a lot more endeared. It's only natural, if you're taking care of that person and you live with them on a day-to-day basis. You know of their pains or of their illnesses firsthand, like we used to know. Certainly, you are going to feel that person a lot more.

Participants further suggested that the combination of situational factors and gendered emotions influenced funerary behaviors. My (Salazar's) eighty-four-year-old maternal grandmother, María Rosa, who was born and raised and started her own family in Matamoros, Mexico, suggested that women were so emotional at funerals that they did not go to the actual burial. “Por lo general, nosotras [las mujeres de la familia] no íbamos al entierro de papá y mamá, nada más los más acercados o hombres, porque era muy difícil verlos ser sepultados.”¹² A similar pattern is seen in other cultures. For example, in rural Greece women lead funeral laments, but

Wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters of the deceased, those who are most moved by [the deceased's] death, do not usually lead the singing of laments, because they are too overcome by grief...The singing is led by women who are less directly touched by the death, more distant relatives of the deceased, or women who are not related to him. (Danforth 2004, 157)

Similar to Greeks, Mexican American women were expected not to witness the burials of their close relatives because they are constructed as inherently more emotional than men. As Danforth suggests, situational factors such as degree of closeness and familism affect the intensity of emotions.

In addition, women were expected to mourn for longer periods, and their emotional distress could even lead to health problems. Women typically wore *luto* (black clothes) for at least a year after the death of a close family member, but men's *luto* normally consisted of a black armband, and it was only worn for a short period. María Jovita, Salazar's fifty-nine-year-old mother, recalled how María Rosa, her own mother, practiced the custom of *luto*:

Back then you dressed in black from top to bottom. For a whole year or more....Actually, guelita (grandmother) wasn't able to complete the year [for her mother's funeral, Mamá Chaly, in 1963], so she wore what they call *medio luto*, which meant that you could wear white with it. *Luto* is completely black; *medio luto* is black and white. She had to wear that because it started to affect her health. Because it is a reminder, I mean, you look at yourself in the mirror and you see yourself dressed in black, and you keep reliving that moment. She was starting to become very depressed. She would wear white blouses and black skirts, and she had to do that because the doctor

told her: “Well, one of two things is going to happen. Either you work with your mind and you say ‘I can do this, I can overcome this,’ or I have to give you some sort of narcotic or sleeping pill or something for your state of mind, and then you’ll end up in the loony house!” He said, “You have those two choices, what do you want to do?” And she said “I’m gonna get better.” But *guelita* is a very strong woman, very strong.

These observations suggest that women carried more of the emotional work than men. Feminists and other scholars are increasingly recognizing the importance of emotions in society. M. Bianett Castellanos recently argued that migration theory overlooked the importance of “sentient resources” as opposed to economic resources in migration. Like us, she found that both women and men express “care and love”; however, “women show their devotion and concern through both companionship and caregiving, whereas men demonstrate these feelings through brief acts of caregiving” (163). Micaela di Leonardo similarly recognized a gendered form of labor that she calls “kin work”: “Kin work...is like housework and child care: men in the aggregate do not do it. It differs from these forms of labor in that it is harder for men to substitute hired labor to accomplish these tasks in the absence of kinswomen” (343). Likewise, the mourning and emotional support provided by both women and men is difficult to commercialize; instead, commercialization has clearly attempted to suppress and control emotional expression. In fact, American funeral homes may have promoted assimilationist policies. According to Toni, by the 1950s,

People kind of started looking at showing grief, or any kind of emotion for that matter, as wrong. I think that is strictly a white thing. Just something that Hispanics adopted because we live in

America and we're supposed to be American...and adopt all that culture part of it.

We now turn to another example of caregiving, one seen after loved ones have passed and attention turns to the funerary rituals and the body itself.

Women's Caregiving: Preparation of Food and the Body

Even though funeral homes serving Mexican Americans in central and south Texas existed at least by the early 1900s, most did not start using them until mid-century (Williams 1990; Davis 2000). Instead, the family was in charge of most of the planning, including the preparation of the body. Since the corpse was not embalmed, it was vital to quickly prepare the body, notify the neighbors, and prepare for the all night wake. María Jovita recalled how friends and neighbors were notified of her own maternal grandmother's death. "When driving towards [Mamá Chaly's] house, we could see the white curtains that were hung in the doorway blowing in the wind. Above them, on the door, was a black bow, indicating a death in the family." White fabric was also hung in the windows, and the front door was left open all night, visually inviting family, friends, and neighbors to join the all-night vigil and wake. These notification practices—including the variously named and styled door badges, crepes, wreaths, bows, or scarfs—parallel American funerary customs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Habenstein and Lamers 1995, 259-262).

Led by those of the immediate family, women were largely responsible for the bathing, grooming, and dressing of the deceased. Most scholars and participants agreed, "traditionally [in the early twentieth century]...the women prepared the body for viewing in the home" (Williams 1990, 35).¹³ As a child, historian Antonia I. Castañeda witnessed women preparing a body

for the wake. Writing for an eclectic, activist news-journal in San Antonio, Castañeda describes women directing men to scrub tables, and how the women lovingly interacted with the body:

And so I watched and listened as the five bathed Doña Chelo's body and mapped her life, and their own, by the physical traces of her scars, the dirt under her fingernails, the swollen breasts of childbirth, the calloused skin of poorly shod feet, the allure of swaying hips at a dance. I heard tears and laughter, rage at life and death, beauty in everyday truths, unknown depths of love and friendship in voices sometimes loud, sometimes barely audible. (2005, 6)

One participant, María Rosa, suggested that one's sex determined which body you were allowed to prepare. "Para las mujeres, las vestían las mujeres, y para los hombres, los hombres."¹⁴ This variation may depend on kin relations; if men do not have close female relatives such as a mother, wife, or possibly even a sister, non-related women may be reluctant to handle their bodies. Nonetheless, María Rosa's description of her mother's 1963 wake in Matamoros, Mexico, paralleled that of most participants.

Cuando la gente se moría, en sus casas los arreglaban. Ahí mismo los vestían, no las embalsamaban. Y se velaban en la casa por veinticuatro horas, día y noche. Estaba la gente allí velando y rezando para el eterno descanso del alma. Y se les ponía cuatro velas en las cuatro esquinas del cajón.¹⁵

After the body was bathed and dressed, the furniture was cleared from the living room or main living area of the home, and the deceased was placed on top of a table, sometimes laying on a sheet and sometimes displayed in a

coffin. Participants usually spoke of four candles surrounding the table, but sometimes they were placed at the corners, and other times they were in the form of a cross, as described by Williams (1990, 35).¹⁶ Once the body was prepared and laid out, women continued to play key roles in both spiritual and physical nourishment; they were *rezadoras* or prayer leaders, and they fed the mourners.

Not only were women in charge of preparing food for the vigil and post-burial gathering, they also fed the mourners during the customary nine-day period of evening prayers, or *novenario*. Williams explained that “women of the family took care of the children and served the food that friends and relatives had prepared for the mourners....The men were usually outside the house visiting with one another” (35). Máximo, my (Salazar’s) sixty-six-year-old paternal relative, emphasized that it was often female neighbors who prepared food for the family, recalling that, “They would provide chocolate or coffee throughout the night.” According to other participants, men also cooked, but they usually cooked outdoors, either making *barbacoa* or *carne asada* (grilled meat). While women usually cooked inside and men usually cooked outside the home, we emphasize that both women and men were cooking within the domestic space. According to Tomás, both women and men often sat outside because it was too crowded for all the mourners to fit inside the house. This pattern thus challenges second-wave feminist models that dichotomized female-private and male-public domains.

Although attended by both females and males, women usually did the “kin work” of providing food, making arrangements, and leading the prayers for another death custom, the *novenario*.¹⁷ The *novenario* usually lasted nine consecutive days after the burial, but at least one person from Mexico reported that it lasted one day per week for nine consecutive weeks. During these nine

days, family and close friends come together, usually in the early evening at the deceased's home, but sometimes at a church, to pray the rosary and share a meal. Attended by both women and men, the *novenario* usually took place in the home, and women clearly took the lead in this practice.

Men's Manual Labor: Cemetery and Grave Maintenance

Many of the earlier tasks men performed in death customs and rituals involved physical, manual labor. My (Salazar's) maternal great-grandfather, Papá Tavito (born September 8, 1890; died April 25, 1966), was well-known throughout our family during the 1950s and 1960s as a teacher of carpentry at the local middle school in Matamoros, Mexico, and as a part-time headstone maker for family and friends. Like many other men in the early mid-twentieth century, he performed tasks that centered on maintenance of graves and required more "hands-on" work.

According to my father, Antonio Ignacio Jr., his father would pack tools to clean and maintain the graves during family visits to the cemetery in Hebronville, Texas. "He would take a rake and a hoe, gloves to pick weeds with, and a shovel. The cemeteries then didn't have maintenance, so cleaning was the responsibility of the family." Most other participants agreed that the heavier maintenance and clean-up tasks associated with cemeteries were men's responsibility, and all of the caretakers at San Pedro Cemetery in San Marcos have been men. Even when participants reported that women and children helped with the gravesite and grave marker cleaning, they distinguished the "heavier work" as being men's responsibility. For example, Tomás spoke of one year when "the family wanted to plant a Christmas tree at my brother's grave, but since it was a tree, we had to dig the hole really deep. So the men did the heavy digging. The women helped, but the men did the heavy work." Clearly, the more physical manual labor in the cemetery was the responsibility of men within the family.

After my (Juárez's) *suegra* or mother-in-law passed away in March 2000, for two to three years my family often visited the Laredo cemetery with my *suegro* or father-in-law and *cuñados* or brother-in-laws. Even though the cemetery provides perpetual care along with strict restrictions about altering the grounds, at almost every visit the men in the family did some kind of landscaping or maintenance. When the cemetery administration told them that they could not plant trees or bushes at the gravesite, the family negotiated to buy and plant three oak trees for the cemetery, planting one at the head of my *suegra*'s grave. In addition, they brought along various tools to tamp down the dirt around the headstone in order to ensure that it remained upright, constantly watering and weeding the grass surrounding her grave. During many of our visits, we encountered an elderly man at a neighboring grave who ignored cemetery regulations and had planted St. Augustine grass on his wife's entire plot; he kept her plot verdant and beautiful by constantly weeding and watering the well-defined area.

Gender Differences in Visits and Decorating

Throughout the twentieth century, visiting cemeteries has been an important ritualized activity for Mexican and Mexican American families. In both Spanish/Mexican and Mesoamerican cultures, the concept of familism and ancestor worship is key for grave decorating and other death rituals. Ancestor veneration establishes a continual relationship with deceased relatives and friends, exemplified by celebrations, rituals, and the use of offerings, including grave goods. In order to ease the dead's transition from the world of the living to the realm of the dead, people provided offerings and prayers. Mesoamericans provided worldly goods such as food and drink for their journey; Spanish Catholics prayed rosaries and other prayers to speed the deceased from purgatory to heaven. As several scholars have suggested, Mexican and Mexican American folk Catholic practices often involve communication with deceased

relatives and saints, especially through prayer (Turner 1999; Broyles-González 2002). In fact, my mother Toni often reminds me to pray to various deceased relatives, usually my grandmother, a great aunt, or my *suegra*, depending on the nature of the problem. She reminds me that they will hear my prayers and have a special power to help me.

In the early twentieth century, both women and men shared cemetery outings, commonly visiting after church on Sundays, on birthdays, various anniversaries, and other holidays. Typically, visitors communicated with and prayed to and for the deceased. Sometimes they used formal standardized prayers. Other times they used informal prayers or simply conversed with their loved ones. Families preferred to keep the gravesite decorated; in the past, this usually meant taking fresh flowers, or, less often, items such as rosaries, candles, and statues of saints.¹⁸ Even though both women and men visited, usually as a family, our research clearly shows that women were the persons in charge of this practice, especially when it came to decorating.

Most participants recalled going to the cemetery regularly, often with both parents and on occasion with extended family. I (Juárez) remember the occasional visits to the Laredo cemetery with my family, usually with both parents. Although mandatory in the sense that most visits to my parents' hometown of Laredo would include a visit to the cemetery and in the sense that children had no choice but to tag along, I do not remember these visits as being tedious. To me, the cemetery was always a beautiful, serene, special place where I heard family stories, learned that our family would protect us, especially when they had passed, and felt familial love and appreciation. Today, I continue to visit the graves of both my natal and marital families on both sides of the border. Occasionally, I visit with my parents and/or father-in-law, but most often with my partner and daughter.

Several participants emphasized that women in their family are and have been integral to the practice of grave decorating. Rosie, a young mother who was born and raised in San Marcos, frequently visits the cemetery and is an active participant in grave decorating. She calls her mom the “driving force” within the family as far as grave decorating is concerned. In addition to being the ones who picked, or later bought, the flowers, whether in their own or their neighbors’ gardens, or more recently from flower shops, there is some evidence that women also directed and managed the activities related to cemeteries and gravesites. In at least one case, reported by Gabriel, a sixty-something man from New Mexico, a family matriarch “dictated” who did what jobs at the cemetery, and even selected someone to represent the extended family for funerals that required extensive travel or expense. He also mentioned that men in the family made the basic homemade grave markers, but women added decorative details and accents to the headstones.

As is demonstrated by these examples, men participated in visiting, but it has most often been women, especially mothers, who took the lead in taking the family to cemeteries. On important holidays like Día de los Muertos, men might visit briefly, while women and children stayed most of the day. Some participants attributed this, at least in part, to men’s job or work-related commitments.

Because of family dynamics, women also experienced some constraints on their practices. For example, María Jovita remembers having to stay home as the family grew:

I remember my mom going. And, you have to remember that I was number four, out of ten kids. So [we couldn’t go], we pretty much stayed back and helped take care of the little ones and she would go. Sometimes she would take maybe one of the younger ones or the older ones.

Like María Jovita, Rosie, who was a child in the 1970s, recalls that it became harder for her mom to take the children as the family grew, but also because her father participated less: “It did seem to be harder because there were more children and it wasn’t so much a family effort. It was usually my mom carting us around, taking us everywhere, and my dad would just kind of stay home.” While the constraints due to increased numbers of children are clear, further research is needed to determine how male participation has changed over the twentieth century, as well as how it varies within the life cycle of a family.

As we have shown, research illustrates that during the early mid-twentieth century, women and men commonly performed certain tasks, most of which followed suit with formerly established gender roles within a segregated, patriarchal family model. Women were more likely to do the emotional work, preparation of the body, and preparation of food. Men tended to perform tasks that were outdoor activities or geared toward manual labor such as grave digging, headstone production, and heavy cemetery and gravesite maintenance. Notably, both women and men performed these tasks within the space of the home and/or family. While both women and men shared cemetery visits, women visited more frequently and for longer periods, were more active in organizing and managing the visits, and took most of the responsibility for decorating the graves. The following section will show how the increasing commercialization of society has influenced the gendering of mortuary practices.

Gender and the Commercialization of Funerals and Cemeteries

Our research indicates that in the middle of the late-twentieth century, as the political economy globalized and the death business developed, many gendered tasks began to change. Men’s duties, as described earlier, had often involved more manual labor. However, as mortuary practices were

commercialized and institutionalized in cemeteries and funeral homes, masculine tasks were taken over by businesses and removed from the family. It was no longer necessary for male family members to dig graves, lower and bury coffins, weed cemeteries and gravesites, or make and clean headstones for loved ones. Men still did this type of work, but they did it within the space of patriarchal commercial enterprises, not within the family.

Similarly, women's responsibilities changed as funeral parlors removed the vigil from the home, took over the embalming and preparation of the body, and as women relied on more widely available take-out foods. Participants suggested that women continue to do more emotional work than men, but funerary institutions have established policies that conceal some of the most emotional moments of funerals. Ironically, mortuaries now forbid all mourners to watch the coffin being lowered into the ground, an act that was previously believed to be too painful for close female relatives of the deceased. As mentioned earlier, Toni even suggests that the concealment of emotions may be an assimilationist policy or strategy.

Drawing on their previous leadership in the area of grave decorating, women have come to dominate the flower shop businesses surrounding many cemeteries. Ironically, many of these businesses are physically located within houses, and make use of family and children's labor. Interestingly, women continue to be central to cemetery visits and grave decorating, but men are increasing their roles in this area. The transformation of family and gender customs, the institutionalization and restrictions imposed by the funerary business, and the changes in socioeconomic practices, such as the increase in wage labor and loss of the family wage, have all influenced the transformation of mortuary practices.¹⁹

**The Institutionalization of Male Roles:
Displacement and Paternal Protection**

Mortuary businesses, such as funeral homes, cemeteries, and gravestone marker companies, have displaced many of men's funerary practices, but these jobs continue to use mostly male labor. Máximo grew up in Hebronville, Texas, when men were responsible for digging graves and burying bodies, a task that would take almost an entire day. He remembers:

It used to be by hand, I've seen five or six men digging a grave, nowadays you send a tractor out there. I mean, in one hour, it's done! Where it used to take a whole day sometimes, or a day-and-a-half to dig a grave with five or six men, I mean, it's completely different.

Similarly, grave marker production has been moved from families to businesses. In the past, individuals like Papá Tavito and other part-time specialists used to make or carve headstones for their relatives. Reflecting this practice, gravemarkers from the early mid-twentieth century are made of many different materials and reflect many different styles (See Figure Three).²⁰ Today, most cemeteries restrict the type of headstones that are allowed, and they are often packaged along with burial plots. Nonetheless, the headstone making business is still very much alive and continues to employ mostly male labor. The few small, local businesses, such as the one owned by friends of the Salazar family, tend to be held by men who hire mostly male workers. Today, the only women you see working at the shops are secretaries, and we suspect this may be evidenced in most of the industry. The ownership and employment of the headstone-making business has remained in the domain of men since its rise in the mid-nineteenth century (Habenstein and Lamers 1995, 146-148).



Figure 3
Gravemarker styles from San Pedro Cemetery, including mosaic tile, statue and nicho.
Photos by Jeremy White.

The displacement of men's funerary labor within the Mexican American family is due in large part to newly instituted cemetery policies, including employed staff in charge of burials and maintenance. Some of the men that had relatives at privately owned rural cemeteries continue to participate in maintenance and grounds keeping. For instance, Oscar, a forty-eight-year-old San Marcos, Texas, resident, has relatives buried at San Pedro Cemetery. Oscar remembers families, and in particular, men, taking care of the grounds keeping. "It was mostly men. You would probably get some women out there doing light stuff. You know, pulling some weeds here and there, putting new flowers, cleaning up the grave, making it look pretty...prettier." In fact, he continued, "As far as I know, at San Pedro, the families still take care of it...if you have a city-owned cemetery, like here at the City Cemetery on Ranch Road 12, the city takes care of it." Even though Hays County has recently provided some maintenance in exchange for years of indigent burials at San Pedro, Mexican American men and their families continue to provide light grounds keeping.²¹ In contrast, San Fernando Cemetery II, located in the heart of a bustling city, and owned and operated as a business by the Archdiocese of San Antonio, takes away the ability of male family members to perform such grounds keeping tasks, due to their regulations and maintenance personnel.

Another practice taken away from the family involves lowering the coffin into the grave. Funeral homes and cemeteries now commonly censor this part of the funeral, perhaps because it is more congruent with Euro-Americans' more reserved expression of grief, or possibly because it is more profitable to speed up the commercialized service. Nonetheless, some men, drawing on their previous roles as paternalistic protectors, have constructed new tasks for themselves. For example, to ensure the proper execution of the final step of burial, Máximo asks special permission to be the family's witness:

If you speak to the funeral director, they let you stay right there. You can watch them bury the whole thing. I have stood on my close relative's gravesite, an uncle or an aunt, and I have asked to be there. I want to be there. Even for my mother-in-law and father-in-law I asked. I wanted to be there and I made sure they were covered before I left. It made me happy. It made the rest of the family happy, I mean, by being there.

Men like Máximo are still taking on the duty of the protective paternal figure, but in a much different light. Whether in urban or "rural" cemeteries, men still participate in tasks that have been circumvented and taken over by the death business, including supervising the burial and maintaining and cleaning up gravesites.

Desegregating Gender:

Increased Incorporation of Men into Visiting and Decorating

The roles of men are changing in other ways. When questioned about gender, Suzy, a flower shop owner near San Fernando Cemetery II, said that the sex of customers at her flower shop was "split down the middle." Observations by both authors in several cemeteries indicate that men are both increasing and changing their cemetery visiting and grave decorating practices. Although both authors have observed that most Mexican Americans visit in groups, and that groups are likely to include more females than males, I (Juárez) observed a greater number of single men (most middle-aged or older) on recent visits, especially on Mother's Day 2008. Many of the men were weeding with weed-eaters, or carrying other gardening tools (See Figure Four). At San Pedro, it is not unusual for men to stop by alone or in pairs. I (Juárez) have seen men swing by after fishing or on their way back from other errands in the area. In addition, the male board members frequently stop by to check on the cemetery.



Figure 4
Man with weed-eater at Laredo Cemetery, Mother's Day 2008. Photo by Ana M. Juárez, edited by Jeremy White.

Similarly, one Saturday before Mother's Day weekend in 2008, I (Salazar) counted the types of people visiting San Fernando Cemetery II, including their sex. Within a fifteen-minute period, I observed twelve women and eight men, or two-thirds female and one-third male. Four of the twelve women, or one-third of all women, were unaccompanied by men, but only one man was not accompanied by a woman. He appeared to be a twenty-something father with a five- to seven-year-old son. Because they were visiting a grave that had happy birthday decorations all over it, we speculate that they were visiting the grave of their departed partner/mother, or perhaps mother/grandmother. Accordingly, all but one man interviewed by the authors discussed decorating graves only when women were also involved. It is not clear to what extent the

increase in male-only visits is a function of change in gender and families, or of the exceptionally gendered holiday. Ironically, divorce may be inadvertently contributing to the increase in male-only visits. In one case, Roberto depended on his wife to do the “kin work” of decorating for his deceased mother, but when they divorced, he took over the job. Still, it seems more likely for women rather than men to go to the cemetery alone or in same-sex groups, and even as men become more involved in these activities, women continue to lead in the area of visiting and decorating.

In my (Salazar’s) experience, my father has happily taken on the role of chauffeur for grave decoration shopping stints by women in the family. He regularly provides the transportation for such occasions, especially for his mother, Gloria, while she picks out the decorations. He often arranges the decorations on the grave, with the help of a woman’s careful eye, ensuring they stay in place by strategically placing sticks and stones so that the decorations do not fly away or fall over. While the grave markers are usually durable granite slabs, which do not require maintenance, he still cleans them off, but in a much different way than his own father. Simply using his hands, he brushes off the dust and looks for small sticks to scrape dirt from the chiseled lettering on the headstones. Like his father before him, he weeds the gravesite, but due to the cemetery’s paid male gardeners, he is able to forego gloves and uses his bare hands to provide more meticulous attention to the gravesite. Even with the gardening staff, men often bring tools such as hoes and weed-eaters. When couples visit together, men are more likely to carry the grave decorations to the gravesites, especially as the decorations become larger, and they are more likely to do the “dirty work” and carry trash. For example, a man might be down on his hands and knees working with the grass and soil, while a woman might water.

Commercializing Decorations: Women's "Home Work" and Empowerment

As men's customary responsibilities changed and took on new guises, women's practices also changed. Women took advantage of their expertise in grave decorating, drawing on the work they performed customarily and created a gendered niche industry within the death business. Prior to the early 1970s, men in San Antonio had been responsible for picking flowers from area farms and selling them on the streets bordering San Fernando II. During the early 1970s, however, women began entering the flower and decorating business. This transformation is an extension of women's customary work, in the sense that it is still about decorating. Furthermore, this work draws on previously gendered domains, as it is developed and still located in what were once homes fronting the large cemetery.

Turner and Jasper (1994) briefly noted women's importance in these businesses. Although they did not specifically focus on gender, they anticipated aspects of our current argument. For example, they described how the "matriarch of the Elizondo family" planted flowers to sell as grave decorations, eventually leading to a "multigenerational family floral business" (137), and that many of the vendors they interviewed "learned both the craft and the commercial aspects of the business from a female relative, such as their mother, their grandmother, or often, an aunt." Furthermore, they suggested that women, because of their presence within the home, were "more able to convert their time to...seasonal activities" and thus become "empowered by a form of financial independence that, in itself, can benefit the family as a whole" (Turner and Jasper 1994, 144).

During the 1960s, or the early years of commercialization within the death industry, Suzy affirmed that men within the family, mainly her uncles, went out to surrounding farms to hand-pick flowers for sale in the

family's flower shop. By the early 1970s, artificial flower arrangements became more popular.²² Most often, these decorations are silk flower arrangements of all shapes, sizes, and colors. Women also sell piñatas, balloons, and other types of decorations, in addition to the traditional corona-style wreaths, the ubiquitous floral arrangements in foil-wrapped cans, and arrangements that incorporate sacred and secular icons as well as kinship terms. These vibrant decorations are the epitome of *rasquachismo*. In Mexican American cemeteries, this aesthetic manifests with the use of bright colors, patterns, ornamentation and elaboration, and these decorations are paving the way for women's institutionalized roles within the death business. Drawing on this *rasquachismo*, some women commercialized their positions as decoration makers and became flower shop owners, even as men's family roles were displaced from the family unit into commercialized businesses.

Based on research in both Laredo and San Antonio, women, and often their children and families, own and manage the flower shops. According to Suzy, ownership of the family-based flower shops can be complicated, but "more women than men" have usually owned them. In Suzy's case, her mother originally owned the business, but her mother and grandparents together owned the home and lot. At some point, with the death of her mother and grandmother, the business solely belonged to her grandfather. Upon his death, it was transferred to her sister, and Suzy received it when her sister died.

As previously mentioned, the majority of flower shops bordering the cemetery in Laredo and San Fernando II in San Antonio are situated in buildings that used to be homes. The home-based business space facilitated women's juggling of both commercial enterprises and family care. Business-owners' children learn through observation, and continue to hone their skills through

the years. Suzy's three-year-old daughter accompanies her to work and helps any way she can, just like Suzy did with her own mother:

I was just like, right there, next to her. We started like sweeping, you know, just a few things here and there, cute little things that kids can do; bring out the cans, stuff like that. And then it just progresses. As you get older you can do more.

Although it is "mainly women" who make the decorations, Suzy noted that her husband helps out on occasion:

My husband, once in a while, he'll put his hands in there. He likes to do more with the spray paint on the cans [flower containers], on the crosses and stuff. It's just to kind of give it a different feel. He tries to put like shadow into the cross and stuff. Just to distinguish ours from everyone else's, 'cause everybody just puts like pink, or yellow and red. He gets the red and then he gets the black and he puts shadows on it. Or he'll get the blue and he gets white, and he'll put clouds on it. And it really looks like there's clouds on there! He just knows how to spray paint in a certain way, and he edges the cardboard to where it makes it look like billows of clouds on it.

Thus, running their businesses out of their residences allowed women to direct and manage family activities, without overtly threatening power dynamics between men and women (cf. Nash 1993). Over the years, we have observed multi-generational families working together at the flower shops. Our observations and directed conversations with owners in Laredo and San Antonio suggest Suzy's experience was common. These shops are clearly family businesses led by women with the support of their extended families.

Conclusion

What initially started with our childhood experiences of visiting cemeteries and decorating graves has now become one of the central interests in our lives. We were both thrilled to find we shared a common passion and excitement about funerals and cemeteries, and realized the scholarly potential of our shared research. My (Salazar's) auto-ethnographic observations of differences in grave decorating practices between my native Mexican mother, and my native Tejano father, gradually evolved into deep and open conversations with my parents and many others. Similarly, although I (Juárez) knew that gender is essential for most cultural practices, I was surprised to realize how profoundly the process of commercialization shaped gendered funerary practices.

Essentially, the mid-twentieth century commercialization of these practices, in conjunction with political, social, and economic processes, altered Mexican American funerary customs and gender relations. During the early part of the century, normative funerary practices were more gender-segregated, with women doing more of the housekeeping, caregiving, and kin and emotional work, including preparation of corpses and cooking and distribution of food during wakes. Men did more of the heavier, physical work, such as grave digging and grounds keeping at cemeteries. Although these practices mirror stereotypical notions of gender, we challenge second-wave feminists' dichotomization of private-female and public-male. Even during this early period, men performed female work such as cooking and crying, and women sat "outdoors" with men during wakes. They also jointly performed some tasks, such as cemetery visits and grave decorating, where women usually took the lead. In other words, both women and men worked in private homes and public cemeteries.

During the latter half of the century, the burgeoning industry displaced many funerary tasks. Instead of being situated within patriarchal and gender-segregated households, many of these practices continued, but within patriarchal businesses. Men continue to dig graves, make headstones, and maintain cemetery grounds, but not within the space of the family. Women's roles in wakes and the preparation of bodies were also commercialized, and women created a new economic niche as owners and managers of flower and grave decorating businesses. In addition, men became more active in family-based cemetery visits and grave decorating. Thus, commercialization has simultaneously reproduced some gender-segregated tasks, created some new gender-marked businesses, and desegregated some family-based activities.

Ironically, commercialization, which has had some negative effects, has produced some positive changes in family gender dynamics and inadvertently desegregated various funerary practices within some Mexican American families. Since the 1970s, feminists have lamented that women were making great strides in integrating previously male-dominated arenas such as education and professional occupations, but men's work within families and homes was not changing nearly as much. Our research challenges the second-wave feminist assumptions and shows that gender integration does not necessarily result in gender egalitarianism. Unfortunately, other gendered structures and processes such as wage structures and phallocentrism counter the equalizing effects of integration. As Chicana and other third-space feminists have argued, we must simultaneously consider the affects of race and class to understand gender inequality. Nonetheless, we encourage women, and especially men, to break down old barriers and continue to integrate previously gendered domains in ways that contribute to the balance of power in families, homes, and businesses.

Notes

¹ Although Juárez grew up using the term *Chicana*, and continues to identify as both Chicana and Latina, with all the terms' political ramifications, Salazar grew up using *Mexican American*, like the majority of Tejanas/os in her generation. Since our research is based on both sides of the Mexican border, as well as more central areas of Texas, we honor the local population's usage. Thus, *Mexican* generally refers to persons or practices south of the border, and *Mexican American* refers to persons and practices of Mexican heritage and descent.

² The term *patriarchy* has been used in many different ways. Referring to social structures and institutions beyond the family that privilege males, Chicana scholars reject the stereotypical models of machismo and marianismo attributed to Latin American society (e.g. González-López 2005; Gutmann 2003; Juárez and Kerl 2003; Montoya, Frazier and Hurtig 2002). Chicana scholars in particular have distinguished between individual or interpersonal, family and household, and institutional or capitalist forms of patriarchy, referring to social structures and institutions beyond the family that privilege males.

³ For some examples of cultural constructionist, Chicana/Latina scholarship, see Anzaldúa 1990; de la Torre and Pesquera 1993; Romero et al. 1997; and Saldívar-Hull 2000.

⁴ See Herrera-Sobek (2006) for a scholarly historiography of Chicana/o folklore.

⁵ The extensive writing on this subject includes juvenile literature, films, and so forth. For example, see Carmichael and Sayer 1991; Ruiz 1992; Fernández Kelly 1974; Salinas-Norman 1994; Garcíagodoy 1998; Andrade 2000; Brandes 2006.

⁶ These documentation instruments are currently available from Juárez, who hopes to publish them in the future.

⁷ We would specifically like to thank the students in Mexican American Cultures and in Ethnographic Field Methods at Texas State University-San Marcos. All participants in course projects were informed that the research might be used for developing articles, exhibits, or web sites; they were ensured of confidentiality and were given the opportunity to remain anonymous. Only a few requested anonymity. Nonetheless, we are using pseudonyms for most participants. For further information, see Cemetery Research Projects, www.txstate.edu/anthropology.

⁸ Mexican and Mexican American funerary practices appear to have been commercialized and removed from the home later than other areas, especially in rural regions. Later commercialization may also have been due to familism and other cultural practices, ethnic segregation of funeral parlors and cemeteries, and limited financial resources. See Will de Chaparro (2007) for a recent history of funerary practices in New Mexico, and Habenstein and Lamers (1995) for a classic history of funerary practices in the United States.

⁹ Although we do not specifically address the issue of male clergy, Catholic priests and other Christian ministers of this period were usually male. However, *rezadoras*, or female prayer leaders, were essential for wakes and novenas, and we hope to address these issues in the future.

¹⁰ Beto, Juárez' father, suggested that both women and men are more reserved about crying at funerals now, and that you rarely see loud, active sobbing and wailing anymore. Nonetheless, women continue to cry and express more emotions at funerals than men.

¹¹ "I recall when I was an altar boy, that I had to serve during funerals, and I was very impressed that the people would cry aloud. Nowadays that doesn't happen. In general, the people don't show that emotion, right? But in that time, no. The people shouted and cried. She/he has gone! She/he has left! One would notice especially when the casket was lowered. Once it was lowered, there were even greater cries, right?"

¹² "Generally, we [the women of the family] did not go to the funerals of our parents, our fathers and mothers, only the immediate family or the men [would go], because it was very hard to see them being buried."

¹³ Prior to the nineteenth century, women were most likely to tend to the dead. Although midwives, nurses, and nurse-governesses originally specialized in "laying out the dead," by the nineteenth century, male "undertakers" started taking over this function (Habenstein and Lamers 1995, 146-48).

¹⁴ "Deceased women were dressed by other women, and men by men."

¹⁵ "When people died, the bodies were prepared in their homes. They were dressed right there, they weren't embalmed. The wake was held at home for twenty-four hours, day and night. The people would keep vigil and pray for the eternal rest of their soul. A candle was placed at each of the four corners of the coffin."

¹⁶ Based on Everton's (1991) pictures of funerary wakes in Yucatan, it is typical to have four candles surrounding the body, but the placement may not need to follow a particular form, or could even be haphazard (5). Interestingly, all death anniversary and día de los muertos altars have four candles on the corners and one in the middle; this pattern parallels the Mesoamerican metaphor of the cosmos, with the middle candle (or body) symbolizing the axis mundi that connects the different levels of the universe (e.g. see 5, 83, and 213).

¹⁷ Rezadoras or female prayer leaders appear to be very important for funerary as well as other religious or lifecycle occasions. We hope to further address this issue in the future.

¹⁸ Research shows that cemetery policies often restrict decorating practices, including the use of foodstuffs and images; plantings of real flowers, bushes, and trees; and the creation of permanent structures such as headstones and curbs. While most participants suggested that cemetery restrictions did not affect their use of artificial, as opposed to fresh, floral arrangements, periodic clean-up and pick-up of decorations at cemeteries may have some influence. Families generally circumvented restrictions by "planting" artificial flowers and routinely picking up large grave decorations prior to the cemetery clean-up days. Clean-up days were used to refresh artificial grave decorations.

¹⁹ Unfortunately, we do not know if Mexican Americans are visiting cemeteries less often today

than in the past. We speculate that visiting rates might be influenced by a variety of factors, including lower mortality rates for siblings and children, older age of parents at death, migration and mobility, smaller families, and other changes in the life cycle. Nonetheless, cemeteries remain quite crowded, often experiencing traffic jams on weekends and holidays, and they continue to be highly decorated.

²⁰ Materials include cement, mosaic tile, metal, wood, and many others. For further information on gravemarkers and grave decorations see Jordan 1982; Barber 1993; and the articles by Cynthia Vidaurri, Alberto Barrera, Chris Potter, and Rosa Nelia Trevino in Graham 1990, 1991.

²¹ Because the San Pedro Cemetery has historically handled so many of the county's indigent burials, the board was able to negotiate for Hays County to assist with some of the maintenance, such as mowing large areas inside and around the fence. In trying to acquire more land with few monetary resources, the board tried to share a neighboring plot of land with the county. Eventually the county bought the land itself, plotted it for indigent burials, and refused to grant any burial rights to San Pedro. The board continues to hope that they might acquire some rights in the future, but recognizes that it is highly unlikely.

²² The use of fresh and/or artificial flowers is more of a Catholic than a "Protestant" practice, but is also related to broader structural, institutional, and cultural practices (Goody and Poppi 1994). According to Habenstein and Lamers (1995), the use of flowers in Christian funerals was controversial during the late-nineteenth century because they were associated with pagans and wastefulness (273-76). Of course, the use of fresh flowers—cempasuchil or Mexican marigolds in particular—were essential for Mexica (Aztec) and Mesoamerican funerary observances (Carmichael and Sayer 1991; Andrade 2000).

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