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Etxeak of memory: the Basque diaspora in the Oroitzapenak oral history project

Jill N. (Jill Nagy) Anderson
Western Washington University

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Etxeak of Memory:
The Basque Diaspora in the
***Oroitzapenak* Oral History Project**

By

Jill Nagy Anderson

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair, Dr. Randall Jimerson

Dr. Amanda Eurich

Dr. Peter Diehl

MASTER'S THESIS

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Jill Nagy Anderson
May 8, 2013

***Etxeak* of Memory:
The Basque Diaspora in the
Oroitzapenak Oral History Project**

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Jill Nagy Anderson
May 2013

Abstract

Throughout the verdant hills of the Pyrenees, the foundation of Basque culture is built on the foundations of the *etxeak* - the immense houses that form the centerpiece of Basque farms and symbolize the incredible cultural inheritance of the Basque people. This inheritance is most evident in their shared language, *Euskara*, and in their shared pride - both of which followed the Basques throughout their long history in the New World. A joint project between the University of Nevada in Reno and the Basque Museum and Cultural Center in Boise, Idaho, with funding by the Basque government, is documenting the most recent stories of this long American history. Collecting oral history interviews conducted from the 1970s through the 2000s, the *Oroitzapenak* ("Memories") Project now has excerpts from over 200 interviews online, along with transcripts, biographical information, and photographs. These interviews are part of the modern-day *etxea* of memory, helping to keep alive a difficult language and the stories of the Basques who immigrated to the United States to pursue greater economic opportunity for themselves and their families. With focused investments in social network outreach, collection, and online descriptive interfaces, these interviews can reach an even greater user constituency and remain a solid foundation for generations of Basque Americans to come.

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The process of producing this thesis was a marathon, not a sprint: it came out of many perspectives of study on Basque history, as well as being heavily informed by my practical work as an archivist-to-be. Many hearty thanks to my committee chair and my advisor throughout my graduate experience, Dr. Randall Jimerson, without whose counsel, patience, and direction this thesis would not have been possible. The heartfelt guidance of Dr. Amanda Eurich as a professor and as a member of my committee was critical to my study of Basques in their homeland, and Dr. Peter Diehl was gracious and forthright with well-needed critique. Lastly, this research was inspired and assisted by Dr. Maria D. Goldstein, a woman of courage, kindness, and intelligence who also embodies Basqueness in the American West.

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*“[T]hey will cut off my hands,
and with my arms I will defend
the house of my father;
They will leave me armless,
without shoulders,
without chest,
and with my soul I shall defend
the house of my father.
I shall die,
my soul will be lost,
my descendants will be lost;
but the house of my father
will endure
on its feet.”¹*

Gabriel Aresti,
renowned 20th century Basque author

*“If you look down at the Basque Country from the sky above, you’ll see great circles
carved in rock below. Across the four corners of the Basque Country, families have lived
in such circles, where fathers have sons, and sons turn into their fathers.
We can leave the circle, but that cycle is hard to break.”²*

from the film *Zuretzako* (“For You”)

*“My message is simple.
Archivists are active agents in constructing social and historical memory. In so doing, they have an
obligation to remember or consider the needs and expectations of the future as much as to conserve or
remember the past.”³*

Terry Cook

¹ Gabriel Aresti, “Nire aitaren etxea,” in *Harri eta Herri* (1964), qtd. in Mark Kurlansky, *The Basque History of the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999): 9.

² *Zuretzako* (“For You”), directed by Javi Zubizarreta (2011; Boise, ID: By the Old Bridge Productions, 2011), DVD.

³ Terry Cook, “Remembering the Future: Appraisal of Records and the Role of Archives in Constructing Social Memory,” in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin, Jr. and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2006): 170.

Introduction

Surrounded by the flourishing, verdant foothills of the Pyrenees, the traditional Basque house was the *etxea* (et-CHAY-uh)⁴, often a sizable timber-framed structure, often with a foundation of stone. In the country, it composed part of the *baserri*, or farm. Redolent with the aroma of roasting sea bream and *sagardo* (cider), the *etxea* was expansive, both as a physical structure and as a familial space in which the long history of those who belonged to the house was literally carved over the door. Traditional *etxeak* were built facing the east in honor of the rising sun. Two or three generations often lived in the *etxea* at any one time, and families more often than not took the name of the house as their own - resulting in “Eche-” as a common component of Basque surnames.

These *etxeak* became far less common - physically and figuratively - in the late 20th century and into the 21st. As Basques emigrated to the west and expressions of Basque culture in Spain were nearly extinguished by the régime of Francisco Franco, some traditions were lost and a difficult language began to be forgotten. Large *baserriak*, or farms, became impractical or unnecessary in the modern age. But the Basque sense of inheritance and connection to one’s heritage remained an undeniable motivating force as oral histories rose in prominence as valuable historical evidence and technology made capturing and sharing these memories became cheaper and

⁴ Basque is a difficult language to learn and not for the faint of heart - a source of pride with its speakers, as Jeronima Echeverria has found; additionally, it is pronounced differently from region to region, from France to Spain, and whether it is “Old World” Basque or Standardized Basque. For the purposes of this thesis, Basque letters are pronounced very similarly to Spanish letters, with notable exceptions. In this thesis, the most important of these to be aware of is the *tx* sound, which constitutes an inseparable sound and is pronounced t-ch. Thus, *etxea* is et-CHAY-uh. *R* and *rr* are rolled, the latter more than the former. Double-*l* is similar to the Spanish *ll* in “tortilla.” Pronunciations herein are provided to the best of a non-*Euskara* speaker’s ability.

easier. Out of this determination rose an oral history partnership between the University of Nevada at Reno (UNR) and the Basque Museum and Cultural Center (BMCC) in Boise, Idaho, funded by a grant from the Basque Government. It is called *Oroitzapenak*, the Basque word for “memories,” and over 200 interviews have been digitized and put online as a digital and cultural *etxea* for Basque Americans seeking to deepen or rekindle their ties to the Basque country. The websites containing the oral histories for each section of the project are accessible and informative, but there are opportunities for growth, as will be addressed in the last section of this thesis. With more consistent policies and practices, the *Oroitzapenak* project will continue to be unrivaled as a point of access for Basques in the diaspora to reconnect with their heritage.

“Moving neither forward nor back”

Robert Laxalt, a renowned second-generation Basque American writer, professor, and founder of the University of Nevada Press, accompanied his father, Dominique Laxalt, on his first visit home to the Basque country in the early 1950s and later writing a critically-acclaimed book about the journey, illuminating his father’s struggles as a shepherd and living between two worlds - a common theme in Basque memory. In *Sweet Promised Land*, the Basque country is one where 47 years of absence can be erased in an instant, where relatives, known or as-yet-unknown alike can be greeted with ebullient handshakes or exuberant embraces, where the mountains shimmer with viridescence and scarlet and the poplars are “tipped with gold.”⁵

⁵ Robert Laxalt, *Sweet Promised Land* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1957; reprinted 2007): 121.

Laxalt also spent part of the 1960s in *Euskal Herria*, on the French side of the border, visiting his father's ancestral homeland. His cousins, "poor as poor can be,"⁶ nevertheless invited Laxalt and his wife to a large dinner at the family's *etxea*. The mountain home, removed from the more well-travelled tourist areas, still maintained the traditional division: one side for the farm's animals, which provided warmth for the living space on the other side. It was a stone building encircled by a stone wall and entangled in ferns, roofed with yet more stone and with oak chips. An immense open fireplace provided the means of cooking the considerable meal, course after course of everything the family could provide. The *etxea* and its hospitality were a source of pride for Laxalt's elderly aunt and his cousins as they showed off to their American relatives. "It was a repast that surpassed anything I had been served in fine restaurants," Laxalt recalled.⁷

Rodney Gallop spent many years living in the Basque country and, as one of the earliest modern academics to take on the description of Basque life and culture, is considered an authority for any foundational understanding of Basqueness. His 1930 text, *A Book of the Basques*, is evidence of the deep effect years in the Basque country had on Gallop, a British diplomat and folklorist who spent his childhood in the Basque region and returned there many times throughout his adulthood before his early death at 47.⁸ In 1970, when the University of Nevada began publishing its *Basque Series* of publications, it was Gallop's *Book* with which they inaugurated the unique series, and it

⁶ Robert Laxalt, *The Land of My Fathers: A Son's Return to the Basque Country* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2000): 136.

⁷ Laxalt, 139.

⁸ "Obituary," *Folklore* 59.4 (1948): 190.

is a poetic text, one redolent with Basque character and a fervent memory of *Euskal Herria*: Basque villages tucked into the Pyrenees, folk dances and games of pelota providing the soundtrack, the ever-present beret and the syllables of *Euskara* populating the streets of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia. Gallop's descriptions of the folkloric aspects of Basque life correspond to those of other, later scholars, as do his observations of Basque introspection, a manner of regarding outsiders sometimes with diffidence but often with warm hospitality. Yet Gallop's text, much in the style of history prior to the postmodern era, sees the Basques as a premodern anachronism of a linear history, a primitive phase that persists despite the best efforts of modernism, issues which will be addressed in a later section of this thesis.

Perhaps the most distinctive thread running through Basque culture is the tenacious engagement with their inheritance, in every form in which it exists. The literature on Basque life, history, and culture is stocked with the extreme pride, which often comes off to the outsider as insularity, that Basques have historically exhibited toward their Basqueness. The *etxea* is the most powerful representation of this inheritance. For centuries, the eldest son or daughter literally inherited the physical estate and all that it included: the *etxea*, its household goods, the lands, the wealth. But inheritance in this sense did not mean the same thing that it has in other times and places. Rather than becoming the new owner of all of this wealth to do with it as he or she wished, the inheritor had the responsibility of being the *guardian* of that which had come down to him, in trust for the generations to follow. The *etxea* came to stand for everything inherited through the family, including a sense of belonging within both the family and the Basque community at large. Mark Kurlansky, in his seminal

overview of Basque history and culture, *The Basque History of the World*, describes this belonging as “a central concept in Basque identity,”⁹ writing that “[e]ven today, some Basques recall their origins by introducing themselves to a compatriot from the same region not by their family name, but by the name of their house, a building which may have vanished centuries ago.”¹⁰ The family - represented by the physical and figurative *etxea* - informs and shapes the identity of the individual as one locus in a web of ancestors, descendants, and the greater Basque community.

It is in this same tradition that Basques are the guardians of the collective memory they inherit. Basques who speak the language of their forebears call themselves *euskaldunak* (yoos-KAHL-doo-nahk) - “those who have the Basque language.” *Euskara* (the Basque language, pronounced YOOS-ka-dah) is a linguistic isolate, one with unknown roots and which yet survives in the Basque homeland and through the *euskaldunak* who have scattered throughout the Basque diaspora. Many immigrants to the American West taught *Euskara* to their children, but many more second-generation Basque Americans have forgotten it, and this is a concern to modern-day speakers. Speaking *Euskara* is one of the most crucial cornerstones of Basque culture and its endurance, despite a history of foreign incursions into the homeland and a turbulent relationship with outsiders that has existed for centuries.

Euskara is still alive and well for some Basque Americans, thanks in part to the *Oroitzapenak* project. Collected by a variety of researchers starting around the 1970s, these oral histories contain the testimony of Basque immigrants to western states such

⁹ Mark Kurlansky, *The Basque History of the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999): 6.

¹⁰ Kurlansky, 7.

as Nevada and Idaho. As well, they include interviews with the children of Basque immigrants, who recall their childhoods surrounded by other Basques in a windswept, brush-covered landscape, centered around cultural customs that connected them to a far-off homeland - one that, for decades, existed under the shadow of civil war and the brutal Franco dictatorship. Pride in their Basqueness tied them together and linked them with their cultural inheritance. As such, the project is named for the Basque word for “memories.”

Now, perhaps more than ever, Basque Americans carry the cultural inheritance of their ancestors and are temporary guardians over it for their progeny, just as they were guardians of the physical inheritance through *etxeak* for centuries. The *etxea* was the locus of Basque life, physically, economically, politically, and culturally - a steadfast foundation situated in the Basque memory as they, time and again, left these *etxeak* for frontiers like the sheep pastures of the American West, in search of opportunity for themselves and their families. The importance of collective memory for Basque Americans is even more important in the 21st century as their emigrant parents and grandparents pass on. What is being built is a new figurative *etxea*, a metaphorical site of memory, attuned to the needs of the digital era and which dovetails with existing Basque cultural structures like social clubs, to continue providing future generations access to their cultural birthright.

Oral histories in the archives

In a 2003 literature review, archivist Ellen D. Swain examined the importance of oral histories in the archives and outlined the ways in which archivists could more

actively engage with oral histories and their creators. According to Swain, archivists took a long time accepting oral history as a format that concerned their profession and belonged in the archives. Interest in oral histories increased with the move toward “bottom up” history and activity on the part of the Society of American Archivists - through workshops and collaboration with the American Historical Association - to encourage archivist participation in actively collecting oral histories. Even then, archivists often treated oral histories as extensions of sound collections, rather than as documentary evidence in their own right.¹¹

Mark Greene similarly found a disturbing trend of archivists attempting to revive the constraints of the definition of “record” or “archive” to one that only encompassed transactional, evidentiary value in documents and makes historical or cultural information secondary. “[The archival and recordkeeping] paradigms,” Greene argues, “are not mutually exclusive . . . The conflict has occurred because the recordkeeping paradigm presumes to *become* the archival paradigm.”¹² Greene singles out Luciana Duranti and Richard Cox for promoting the narrow recordkeeping paradigm (and to be sure, neither is unaccustomed to dealing with criticism in this respect). In particular, Greene cites a listserv post of Duranti’s in which she includes oral histories as matter that would not meet “legal requirements of evidence” (Greene’s

¹¹ Ellen D. Swain, “Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-first Century,” *American Archivist*, 66.1 (2003): 141-142.

¹² Mark A. Greene, “The Power of Meaning: The Archival Mission in the Postmodern Age,” *American Archivist*, 65.1 (2002): 43-44. The development of modern archival practice is, in part, a result of constant tension between different types of value in archival records - specifically, whether the purpose of archives and archivists is to preserve the natural product of business and governmental processes (today’s records management), the documents that provide details of and context for historical study (archives and special collections), or some preponderance of both. Current practice is much more fluid, finding a variety of meaning in all types of records, themselves contained in archives, records centers, special collections, museums, or combination facilities.

terminology) and thus are not legitimate research sources for historians.¹³ But Greene argues in favor of the expansive definition of records and archives (and ostensibly in favor of cultural materials like oral histories), arguing that, by asserting that the cultural roles of archival materials are purely secondary to transactional ones, “we do indeed forfeit at least half of the archival heartland.”¹⁴ And finally, Greene asserts that the idea that transactional records give a more “true” picture of society remains “a fond delusion.”¹⁵

Correspondingly, Swain also argues for the importance of oral histories in filling in the gaps in historical understanding, that the interviews can act as new access points for those who otherwise do not use archives. Additionally, she writes concerning the need of archivists to work outside of their own field with other professionals to bring oral histories up to date in the digital era. She likens oral histories to scrapbooks and epistolary practices at the turn of the 19th century, writing that “[o]ral history will have an important documentary role in the twenty-first century as more and more information, crucial to historical understanding, is disseminated over electronic media.”¹⁶ Swain emphasized the importance of collaboration between librarians, sound archivists, and oral historians - and “would-be” oral historians amongst students and the public.¹⁷ It is in this spirit that the

¹³ Greene, 46.

¹⁴ Greene, 47.

¹⁵ Greene, 53.

¹⁶ Swain, 148-149.

¹⁷ Swain, 154-156.

Oroitzapenak project has called on their constituents to contribute their own oral histories and to volunteer in making them accessible.

The partnership that has resulted in the *Oroitzapenak* oral history project is actively engaged in bringing the testimony of 20th-century Basque diasporic experience into the 21st century. Between the UNR and BMCC websites, over 200 interviews are already online as of this writing, with summaries, access terms, and in many cases, photographs. The University of Idaho actively encourages alumni, many of whom are Basque or have Basque ancestry, to contribute their own stories, and UNR seeks more contributions, offering to cover the cost of converting and transcribing existing interviews or to conduct the interview directly. Others interested in helping with the project also have the opportunity of summarizing and transcribing interviews not yet processed.

A long history in the New World

From the era of transatlantic exploration to the modern period of transcontinental railroads and sheepherding, common themes unite Basque experiences in the New World. Basques so far from home have often felt a deep sense of longing for *Euskal Herria*, a longing that finds its roots in the argument made by William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao in *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, that “Basques in the New World acted, at least on occasion, as a self-aware ethnic group. This awareness was translated into collective actions, mutual assistance, a common stance toward outsiders, and a perception on the part of outsiders that the Basques were set apart from other Iberian and Creole (New World-born persons of European

descent) groups.”¹⁸ Two factors have contributed to the unique character of Basque diasporic experience. First, a long cultural memory, inherited over generations and intimately tied to a particular sense of place, connects even second- and third-generation immigrants to their ancestral homeland, as well as to fellow *Euskadi*, in the New World. In the early Spanish colonial period, Basques retained their linguistic identity and formed crucial transactional ties with other Basques, exploring much of present-day Mexico and the southwestern United States. The current Mexican states of Durango and Chihuahua were once part of a Basque-dominated province of New Spain known as *Nueva Vizcaya*, named after the Basque homeland of Francisco Ibarra, who explored the region for the Spanish crown. Juan de Oñate, the first governor of present-day New Mexico and the first to introduce sheep to present-day America, was a member of New Spain’s Basque aristocracy, born in Zacatecas, but closely tied to his fellow Basques.¹⁹ And charitable mutual assistance institutions (the *Real Congregación de San Fermín de los Navarros*, founded in the 1680s, and the *Congregación de Naturales y Originários de las Provincias de Alava, Guipúzcoa y Vizcaya*, founded in 1713) opened their membership to all Basques throughout the empire, whether born in *Euskal Herria* or in the New World.²⁰

Incontrovertible success, as well as a distinct outsider status, defines the second characteristic of Basque life outside the Basque country. With roots in the “universal nobility” of Basques, supported by the *Fueros* that defined Basques’ position in Spanish

¹⁸ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 73-74.

¹⁹ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 78.

²⁰ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 103-104.

society, Basques of the colonial period had access to connections and demands on Spanish officials that meant that Basque funding, industry, and manpower became one of the most crucial forces in Spanish colonialism.²¹ Basques established the only trade monopoly endorsed by the Spanish crown, and between 1520 and 1610, Basque shipping controlled 50%-80% of Spanish colonial trade.²² Aside from shipping, vast networks and confederations in Spain and the New World entrenched Basque control. Douglass and Bilbao describe

two generations of colonial expansion into northern Mexico and the southern United States in which Basque leadership, Basque capital, and Basque manpower carried the brunt of the effort. This expansion left in its wake a social structure whose economy included numerous Basque *hacendados* [plantation and estate owners] and mine owners, and whose officialdom was heavy with Basque administrators, soldiers, and clerics. That much of this effort was consciously and collectively Basque is reflected in the many Basque place names found throughout northern Mexico . . . ²³

Yet as it often is with highly successful groups that define themselves by ethnic and linguistic ties and preference those connections in political and business transactions, Basques in the New World were often seen as insular or subversive and subject to attacks by outsiders.

Douglass and Bilbao found this history of exclusion and anti-Basque antagonism in the Americas as uniquely similar to that of Jewish immigrants from Europe; in fact, one attack characterized Basques as “disguised Jews.”²⁴ Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, accusations of tax evasion and corruption fueled ethnic

²¹ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 63-70, 76, 79, 88-89, III-III5.

²² Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 70.

²³ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 79.

²⁴ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 83.

wars in New Spain between Basques and other groups. Each attack prompted Basque collective action - either in raising troops, forming exclusive institutions and societies, or in soliciting help from well-connected fellow Basques - that often fueled the accusations. Douglass and Bilbao also consider another factor when addressing anti-Basque sentiment: that of a “black legend” surrounding Basque existence in Europe. “From a Basque perspective,” they write, “their incorporation into the Spanish and French nations was something less than voluntary and not entirely desirable.”

Political dependency upon the Spanish and French crowns, even if not complete, must have occasioned ambivalence in a people who regarded itself as superior to its neighbors. To this day, there is racial antagonism and elitism reflected in the terms that Basques use in referring to the surrounding populations. . . . [And] Basque social organization reflected a strong measure of democratic idealism, whereas a feudal heritage characterized Spanish and French societies.²⁵

It is not much of a leap to see, Douglass and Bilbao argue, that accusations of subversion, undermining the national agenda, and opportunism sprang from misconceptions and envy of a group that was highly successful, unfurled the fruits of that success primarily among their own, and had, in many ways, avoided the problematic history of their non-Basque neighbors.

Clearly, Basques have had a long history in the Americas, one that stretched back to the earliest days of European colonialism (which some, Mark Kurlansky included, argue that Basque history in the New World goes back even further) and which renewed itself in the 19th and 20th centuries. Familiar themes echoed from the earlier period into the modern one, serving to further bond the experiences of modern Basques with those of their forebears: a deep sense of pride in Basqueness and

²⁵ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 113.

profound ties to other Basques as well as the homeland; a work ethic and business sense that propelled many Basques to success; and bitter prejudices on the part of non-Basques, partly as a reaction to Basque exclusivity and success.

In the 19th century, Basques continued to rely on their deep ties to *Euskal Herria* and to other Basques as they immigrated to the United States. During the gold rush of the 1840s and 1850s, Basques also took their chances in the gold mines, but most discarded that difficult, rough-and-tumble occupation for herding livestock, building successful sheep and cattle empires that hired other Basques and even assisted *Euskadi* in building their own herds.²⁶ Later on, Basques that landed in New York were never far from those who spoke their language and could assist them in crossing the continent to the vast pasturage and boardinghouses of the West.²⁷ Here, too, they were never far from the intricate Basque network that promulgated Basque success in the New World.

Basque experience: from *Euskal Herria* to the American West

Basque immigration to the United States had been steady after the gold strikes of the 1840s, but slowed down during World War I and particularly after legislation limited immigration via quotas in the 1920s. A crisis in competent shepherders in the 1940s and 1950s led to opening of immigration for Basques to fill the positions, and many did. Basques who had immigrated in the earlier waves found xenophobia and anti-Basque sentiment, including newspaper articles such as the one that compared

²⁶ Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak*, 212.

²⁷ Echeverria, 45-47, 50-51, 54, 206-210.

them to the Chinese, with the emphasis that Basques were especially “filthy, treacherous, and meddlesome.”²⁸ Many of these early immigrants made what money they could as itinerant shepherders and returned to their homeland. But 20th-century immigrants found thriving Basque cultures in Nevada and Idaho, and many stayed, married, and had children, though they tended toward other industries, like hospitality, baking, and construction. By the time oral history researchers found them, many had settled, lived good lives, and had time to reflect on childhood in *Euskal Herria* (“Basque Country,” pronounced eh-oos-kahl eh-REE-ah) and life in the west.

Basque Studies is a relatively new field, and traditionally, few researchers looked seriously at Basque culture. Even well into the modern period, Basques were largely exoticized and mythologized, due partly to popular opinion about a society with seemingly no traceable origins and partly to Basque resistance to the prying eyes of outsiders. Praising Rodney Gallop’s *A Book of the Basques* as “the best English-language study to date” and “invaluable for anyone with an interest in these unique people,” *Basque Series* editor William A. Douglass (himself a renowned scholar in Basque studies) nevertheless acknowledged the controversy and provocative nature of many of Gallop’s conclusions as to Basque character and thought.

Actually, much of Gallop’s text echoes later examinations by Douglass, Basque-American writer Robert Laxalt, and journalist and author Mark Kurlansky in its analysis of Basque character as proud, private (if not insular), and persevering. Where Gallop’s study is markedly different from more recent work is the somewhat patriarchal tone of

²⁸ William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao. *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1975 and 2005): 270.

the outsider, one that is typical for histories from this period and earlier, despite Gallop's long experience with the region and its inhabitants. Gallop often refers to the Basques as "primitive" and as the logical evolutionary step from earlier, more prehistoric man. Gallop very coarsely and openly pits French Basques and Spanish Basques against each other, making blanket judgments about Basques on each side of the border, in accordance with a political boundary drawn by non-Basques through a land that has historically been united independent of the conquerors of it. Gallop then judges each on either side by imperialist, modern standards of success, ambition, and valuable work and work product.

The difference between the two halves of the race is not relative but absolute. The French Basques seem to lack all ambition so long as they remain in France. They are content to live simply and humbly, and do not care to do more than the minimum of work necessary to provide them with the bare necessities of life. Imbued with no social aspirations they seldom try to "better themselves," to become doctors, lawyers and business men or to rise to administrative posts of importance. They remain and are content to remain a handful of peasants, and the Northerner will find, in his contacts with them, the unreliability and dilatoriness characteristic of Southern races.²⁹

Gallop treats Spanish Basques with a corresponding amount of praise:

In the Spanish provinces a different spirit is abroad, a spirit of competence and progress. The upkeep of the roads, the harnessing of water-power for industrial purposes and the higher standard of cultivation bear eloquent testimony to a greater degree of initiative and ambition. In San Sebastian, Bilbao, Tolosa and other towns of importance the greater part of the business and administrative activity is in Basque hands. One finds . . . a Basque professional class and commercial aristocracy.³⁰

Gallop attributes these alleged differences to each area's constituency as French or Spanish (the larger country determining the character of the smaller Basque area), but

²⁹ Rodney Gallop, *A Book of the Basques* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1970): 27.

³⁰ Gallop, 27.

these conclusions differ greatly from other observers' descriptions of *Euskal Herria*. By and large, Basques are more similar with each other across the border than they are with either French or Spanish non-Basques and that the Basque character in both cases, not just in the Spanish side, has been historically recorded as being adventurous, innovative, and industrious. No less than William Douglass himself and author Mark Kurlansky have both discovered Basques to have been the catalysts of Spanish imperial expansion and authority, and Kurlansky emphasizes Basque dominance at the forefront of shipbuilding, maritime navigation, and food preservation - technologies that allowed them to become some of the most adept fishermen the world has seen. In any event, Gallop, despite having lived among Basques for so much of his life, seems nevertheless unable to see them without the lens of the modern, patronizing Englishman, and the result is a text that is hard for twenty-first-century readers to digest.

The greatest issue with Gallop's text, however, is a rather shallow definition of "Basqueness," which seems particularly pretentious in light of the postmodern views of identity which are most widely accepted today. Despite Gallop's extensive study of and time spent in *Euskal Herria*, he is not Basque and appears to have experienced Basque culture as one "experiences" an insect under magnification. His approach is distanced and patriarchal and his analysis of Basque life the result of the cold gaze of the British academic - not at all the passionate immersion of Robert Laxalt discovering his father's heritage. Gallop appears to feel that Basque identity rests largely on the retention of *Euskara*, the Basque language. Indeed, it is each province's degree of assimilation into "modern" capitalist culture that had defined Gallop's evaluation of their success, and the most "successful" Spanish provinces had, by Gallop's own admission, ceased speaking

Basque or retaining many traditions. Álava, he observes, “looks intensely Basque,” based on certain expectations held by many tourists to *Euskal Herria*: “little villages clustered round grim brown churches; black bérets amid the maize fields, oxen ploughing or dragging rude carts with solid wheels, scattered farms crouching under the weight of their broad sloping roofs, seen as flecks of white against green hillside or blue mountain slope.”³¹ Gallop sees the indicators of peasantry, which correspond neatly to his expectations, though, as he readily admits, “I am hardly competent to write of Álava, for my impressions have been formed exclusively from a railway carriage.”³² Indeed.

Ironically, Gallop’s main argument revolves around the exoticizing of Basque culture that had constituted the bulk of knowledge about Basques. He illustrates through copious citations the ways in which Basque culture had been poked and prodded and studied by outside observers, much like an animal relegated to a cage, while at the same time seemingly lauded for being “unchanged” throughout centuries, the last “pure” examples of primitive man, or as a mysterious race, proudly isolated and evidence of something unknown. The question of Basque origins yet remains partially unanswered today, even after studies utilizing DNA sequencing, the measuring of Rh factor in Basque blood, and linguistic analysis looking for similarities among existing languages or those long vanished. But Gallop falls into the same trap, looking for folkloric clues of Basque origins and yet succeeding only in insulting Basqueness repeatedly throughout the pages of his text. Basques are “primitive,”³³ examples not of modern man but of the

³¹ Gallop, 43.

³² Gallop, 43.

³³ Gallop, 24, 44, 55, 57.

logical outgrowth of the area's savage early inhabitants, except where they have fully embraced modern capitalist systems and aspired to occupations emblematic of modern-day success. Gallop is not ignorant of what many later authors have discovered, that Basques were among the first explorers in the New World, that they developed elaborate languages with indigenous people there for the purposes of trade, that they set up outposts, that they preserved cod for the long voyages and were excellent whalers and shipwrights.

But even as he admits these, he does not modify his opinion that they are primitive people anachronistically existing in a modern world. Interestingly, the very criteria Gallop uses to judge success and transition from primitive relic to modern success story - assimilation, taking up dominant cultural and economic systems - are the very things he laments with a rare display of passion: "It was hard to believe that the spirit of *Eskual* [sic] *Herria* had fled for ever from these lovely valleys. And I asked myself how soon the ancient language and traditions would die out in the other provinces and the Basques and all that they stand for be no more than a vanished memory."³⁴ The twentieth-century emigration to the New World that Gallop had praised pages earlier as conjuring up more industrious Basques also seems, in Gallop's opinion, to make them less Basque. In fact, as the balance of this thesis will show, Basque emigration to the New World was more fully an extension of their historical tendencies toward braving new frontiers, and Basques retained or even enhanced their sense of community and a shared identity in the American West.

³⁴ Gallop, 43.

At the heart of the issues with Gallop's text is his outsider status. He seems unable to look at Basque life and culture without the patriarchal filter of a non-Basque, despite his long experience with life in the region. In fact, many observers of *Euskal Herria* have been outsiders - including the author of this thesis - and so it is necessary for the definition of Basqueness to come from Basques themselves and their descendants in the diaspora. In the postmodern world, Basques need oral histories, strong cultural ties, and robust houses of memory more than ever, so that they may define Basqueness for themselves.

The importance of collective memory

As one of the most alluring, poetic foci of archival practice, collective memory is a popular topic in archival literature. Elisabeth Kaplan examined the role that collective memory plays in identity politics in an iconic article in *American Archivist*.³⁵ In particular, she studied the way American Jewry represented and constructed an identity through the institution of an historical society at the turn of the 19th century, amidst an onslaught of anti-Semitism and internal battles over the meaning of Jewishness in America. Debates at the first meeting to constitute the new historical society centered around the activity of the organization - was it enough to collect the documentation and let it speak for itself, through the future work of historians? Or ought the society to become actively engaged in historical writing and publication itself, to more energetically show the significance of Jews to American life?

³⁵ Elisabeth Kaplan, "We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity," *American Archivist* 63.1 (2000).

This is similar to the debate that concerns archivists in dealing with oral histories. Even given that archivists now agree on the importance of oral histories in archival collections (which is a generous assumption), the battle becomes one between archivists as collectors who attempt, in a postmodern world, as little mediation of the documentary record as possible and archivists as active participants, shuffling off the dust and cobwebs and throwing open the doors, engaging with their constituents in ways that make records most relevant to them. It seems well-established at this point that the archivist is not a neutral collector and one would be hard-pressed to find an author willing to justify the Jenkinsonian position³⁶ today, though Kaplan argues that archivists “do not seem to recognize that ours is a subjective endeavor, and we rarely present it as such.”³⁷ The most dangerous pitfall that Kaplan distinguishes in this respect is the reification and artificial fixity of ethnic identity of groups which archivists attempt to document. It is the definition of ethnic groups that destroys diversity, she argues, and even archivists with good intentions run the risk of emphasizing difference.³⁸ Yet Kaplan fails to provide an alternative solution and indeed, it may be a case of archivists doing the best they can with the documentation tools at their disposal. Engaging enthusiastically by any means necessary, then, requires archivists to be mindful about their work and depends on the function of collective memory in the archives and how that collective memory is manifested.

³⁶ See the writings of one of the fathers of modern archival practice, Sir Hilary Jenkinson - specifically, *A Manual of Archive Administration*. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922). Jenkinson argued that the archivist was a neutral custodian of objective, organic records and that the creator of the records, not the archivist, was responsible for deciding issues of retention or disposition. Today, this process of determination, called archival appraisal, is not only accepted practice, but a foundation of modern archival work.

³⁷ Kaplan, 147.

³⁸ Kaplan, 150-151.

Jeannette Bastian has emphasized the role of collective memory in archival practice in much of her writing. She describes it as “a social phenomenon that refers specifically to a group’s recollection of the past in the present” and one that is demonstrated in acts and sites of commemoration.³⁹ While collective memory was once completely separate from - and often considered inferior to - written history, postmodernism, the traumas of the 20th century, and memory studies have not only legitimized collective memory but interwoven it with history to create “an alternate path to the past, one that may complement and enhance traditional archival records.”⁴⁰ In researching the collective memory of the 1892 labor strike in Homestead, Pennsylvania, Bastian found that the event became a “touchstone” for commemoration and, more importantly, for contemporary union organization movements⁴¹ - an illustration of a particular community’s incorporation of the past into their present needs. The emergence of “bottom-up” history and the imperative to add voices to the silent spaces in the archival record all but require the introduction of new forms of illuminating past events and contextualizing the present. Incorporating - and arguably, creating - oral history collections is a prime example of the way in which archivists can and should contribute to sites of memory.

Additionally, Bastian has emphasized the importance of communities to have access to a documentary record that shores up collective memory. She acknowledges the assessment by the former president of the International Council on Archives, Jean

³⁹ Jeannette A[llis] Bastian, “Flowers for Homestead: A Case Study in Archives and Collective Memory,” *American Archivist*, 72.1 (2009): 116.

⁴⁰ Bastian, “Flowers,” 119.

⁴¹ Bastian, “Flowers,” 124.

Pierre Wallot, that archives, in all their forms, are “houses of memory” and argues: “As the evolving nature of custody suggests, providing access may be just one more step towards defining the custodial obligation, one that reflects the needs of communities of users to construct their collective memories.”⁴² Though in this instance, Bastian was concerned with post-colonial custody issues that physically fragmented a community’s records, the effects of silence in the archival record or fragmented documentation on collective memory are equally applicable in the case of preservation and access for the *Oroitzapenak* oral histories, collected from members of a community that, for many years, was silenced by American xenophobia and to this day, is relatively unknown to the American public at large.

Basque collective memory

Jeronima Echeverria’s text, *Home Away from Home*, is the first comprehensive study of the development of *ostatua Amerikanuak*, Basque boardinghouses in the American West. These hotels and boardinghouses, located throughout Idaho, California, and Nevada and with others in Washington, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming, and Oregon, became not only way stations for newly-immigrated Basques traveling through the West but were structures of culture and sites of memory - a refuge for those far from home and a locus of common experience. Like many immigrant groups, familial ties or those based on a shared homeland meant survival, a need that was particularly acute for Basques, whose ability to immigrate was constantly under threat

⁴² Jeannette Allis Bastian, “A Question of Custody: The Colonial Archives of the United States Virgin Islands,” *American Archivist* 64.1 (2001): 97.

and whose new neighbors saw them as strange and insular. Echeverria describes how the first stop for many newly-immigrated Basques was Valentin Aguirre's Casa Vizcaína in New York City.⁴³ The Aguirres would pick up the new arrival, give him a place to stay, and arrange for the rest of his trip west - and he would stay at many other *ostatuak* along the way. "Among Basques who came to this country before the advent of air travel," Echeverria writes, "it would be difficult to find any who had not stopped at Aguirre's."⁴⁴

Basque boardinghouses in America held together Basque families and communities for decades. Among their many functions, Echeverria found, boardinghouses acted as birthing centers, student boarding homes, *pelota* (handball) courts, and venues for hosting celebrations such as births, marriages, and deaths.⁴⁵ The *ostatuak* were packed on Sundays with families sharing the local gossip or playing card games. During Prohibition, the boardinghouses found ways to provide alcoholic beverages to Basque communities.⁴⁶ The *ostatuak* acted as bridges - and their owners as second families - for new Basque immigrants.⁴⁷ The importance of Basque boardinghouses is at the center of the Basque Museum's mission, with a former boarding house and Boise's oldest surviving brick building, the Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga

⁴³ Jeronima Echeverria, *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 1999): 45.

⁴⁴ Echeverria, 45.

⁴⁵ Echeverria, 51-53.

⁴⁶ Echeverria, 52.

⁴⁷ Echeverria, 54-57; 218-232.

House, as the centerpiece of its facilities and as both a literal and cultural bridge between Basque immigrants of the past and their descendants in the present.

Gloria Pilar Totoricagüena has examined the role that Basque language maintenance has in retaining the cultural inheritance of *Euskal Herria*. She interviewed a Basque woman who changed her name from the Spanish Rosarito to the Basque name Nekane, saying “Being Basque is primordial. There are thousands of years of Basqueness in me. I am not Nekane who also happens to be Basque. I am Basque and that shapes how I manifest myself as Nekane.”⁴⁸ Potentially, as people with symbiotic diasporic identities, Totoricagüena writes, Basques incorporate the culture they inherited with the culture of the host country, and one study she analyzed found that 73% of respondents self-identified as hyphenated Basques (Basque-host country or host country-Basque).⁴⁹ But identity is much more fluid than thickly-drawn boundaries imposed by outsiders would suggest. Totoricagüena found that, though immigration has largely slowed, those new immigrants are marrying into the diaspora, passing along *Euskara*, and attending social events. “They also continue the transnational aspect of the Basque community by adding new networks. The question, of course, is whether they constitute sufficient critical mass to effect a cultural staying power over the long term.”⁵⁰

In a 2008 study of 80 attendees at Basque cultural centers, David Lasagabaster found that, though 79% were children or grandchildren of Basques who immigrated

⁴⁸ Gloria Pilar Totoricagüena, *Identity, Culture, and Politics in the Basque Diaspora* (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2003): 141.

⁴⁹ Totoricagüena, 147.

⁵⁰ Totoricagüena, 16.

(and six had immigrated themselves), only 54% had any knowledge of *Euskara* and only 24% considered their Basque language skills to be “good” or “very good.”⁵¹ Clearly, the study sample is somewhat self-selecting through Basques who long for a connection to their homeland enough to attend social events at cultural centers, and so it can be assumed that *Euskara* competence among the nearly 60,000 Basques in America is probably much lower than that. Basque language maintenance is likely becoming a tenuous link to *Euskal Herria* for Basque Americans.

The good news, however, is that these results do not indicate a lessening of Basque Americans’ interest in their cultural inheritance. Lasagabaster found that nearly 64% of respondents have “favourable” attitudes toward the language of their ancestral homeland, a percentage that Lasagabaster finds to be very unusual in situations where the ancestral language and the host-country language are in tension with each other.⁵² The Basque Museum in Boise maintains “the only Basque language preschool outside of the Basque country,” the *Boiseko Ikastola*, where all classes are taught in *Euskara*.⁵³ Basque cultural centers, where Basques and Basque Americans take part in cooking classes, dancing, and other cultural activities, exist all over the country, many (Seattle, New York, Washington, D.C., and New Mexico among them) utilizing the concept of the *etxea* as a cultural hearth around which Basques can congregate. These cultural *etxeak* foster collective memory that is the inheritance of Basques, whether in the homeland or in the diaspora. New metaphorical *etxeak*, in the form of

⁵¹ David Lasagabaster, “Basque Diaspora in the USA and Language Maintenance,” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 29.1 (2008): 72-75.

⁵² Lasagabaster, 78.

⁵³ For more information on the Boiseko Ikastola, go to <http://www.boisekoikastola.org/>.

greater archival attention to Basques in America, would be beneficial to these cultural institutions and provide a greater touchstone with which Basque Americans can shape their identity.

The *etxea* as a metaphorical framework to encourage Basque archives

Architectural historian Eleni Bastéa studies the intersections between memory, identity, and place. In the 2004 volume she edited, *Memory and Architecture*, Bastéa argues for the importance of “houses of memory,” referring to the architecture in our memory that shapes our sense of self. We hearken back to these imagined spaces and use them to contextualize our memories. She writes, “On one level, no one of us can go home again. . . . [W]e have to acknowledge that, seen in a global perspective, the loss of home may now have become the norm. Many of us grew up in someone else’s house of memory. We are all carrying our memories around, looking for a new home for them to rest.”⁵⁴ Globalization and increased mobility mean that immigration and diaspora have even greater impacts on collective memory than ever before - the communication technologies of the 21st century notwithstanding.

Sabir Khan’s contribution to *Memory and Architecture* is an essay in which he argues that émigré autobiographies incorporate spatial, architectural concepts in order to describe the journey from “there” to “here.” Khan writes, “In their accumulation of everyday detail, as well as in their rhetorical strategies, autobiographical accounts represent a twofold transformation of lived life: first, the figuration into memory of

⁵⁴ Eleni Bastéa, ed. *Memory and Architecture* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2004): 8.

experiences and sensations, and then the transmutation of that memory into a coherent narrative.”⁵⁵ To Khan, the term “memory work” concerns not just memories, but the ways in which memories are used - the constant reformatting and refiguring, how we use memories to locate ourselves against the backdrop of the places we’ve traveled. These places are “haunts” and the people in our lives “ghosts,” Khan says, “the result of these obsessive forays along the locus of one’s memory and to a series of sites from the past and in the present.”⁵⁶ Khan analyzes the way physical spaces in two modern South Asian texts facilitate memory work for their authors. These spaces are the result of built environments each woman actually inhabited at one point, but the point is well-made for a cultural monument like the *etxea* as well. A Basque American, who has never visited *Euskal Herria*, may nonetheless benefit from the use of the metaphorical *etxea* as a site of memory work - and indeed, the concept of the *etxea* is merely one particular to Basque culture and language, but remains applicable and useful for any community invested in building and retaining collective memory. Though many of us may have grown up in “someone else’s house of memory,” the concept of a commemorative site around which to recall and reformat memory is not alien to non-Basques. Basque Americans happen to be a unique, largely under-served constituency with whom archivists might seek to work, and the success of the *Oroitzapenak* project and the support it has received surely indicates that Basques who

⁵⁵ Sabir Khan, “Memory Work: The Reciprocal Framing of Self and Place in Émigré Autobiographies,” in Eleni Bastéa, ed. *Memory and Architecture*. (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2004): 118.

⁵⁶ Khan, 120.

immigrated to and roamed the American West passed on a desire for the retention of cultural memory if not the memory itself.

The *Oroitzapenak* Project

The Basque Museum and Cultural Center in Boise, Idaho, has a total of 183 interviews online, the bulk of them collected between 2001 and 2004 and most by five different interviewers. Each group of interviews was done usually as a complement to a book project or exhibit, and six interviews were done as interpretation research for the 2005 restoration of the Jacobs-Uberuaga House, the Museum's main cultural hub. Each interview has hitherto been recorded on a large tape recorder with a stand-alone microphone.⁵⁷ The Basque Museum has digitized about a quarter of its oral history collection, completed as funding was available. The BMCC interviews are stored on the original cassette tapes, off-site at the Idaho State Historical Society Archives vault, with two copies - one for researcher use - housed at the Museum in a storage unit with environmental controls.⁵⁸

At the University of Nevada in Reno, the interviews are in both cassette tape and reel-to-reel format, with copies burned to CDs and digitized by the University's IT department. Like the BMCC's interviews, only excerpts from interviews are accessible via the website, but unlike the BMCC, UNR chose this option due to server size constraints, which would be an obvious consideration if this program were to continue into the future. The transcripts provided on the UNR site are inconsistent,

⁵⁷ Patty A. Miller (BMCC Executive Director), email message to author, 30 January 2013.

⁵⁸ Michael Vogt (BMCC Curator of Collections and Exhibitions), e-mail message to author, 14 August 2012.

both in format and amount of information provided, due in large part to new department personnel that opted to direct funding toward other projects instead of the oral history collection and so transcription wasn't completed. There are, unfortunately, no plans to expand, promote, or enhance accessibility of the project in the future.⁵⁹

The *Oroitzapenak* stories

A few stories from the interviews will illuminate the larger themes that emerge, which are discussed below in greater detail. In 1957, Patxi Marcuerquiaga immigrated to the U.S. from a *baserri* named Kurtzia near Lekeitio. Living in the family *etxea*, he left his wife and baby daughter in the Basque country and travelled to America to join his father, who had worked in Oregon on Patxi's uncle's sheepherding operation, off and on for decades. He had traveled with four other Basques and relied on fellow *euskaldunak* to get from New York to Enterprise, Oregon. Patxi's father had told the 29-year-old Patxi not to expect easy money. "My dad told me lots of times," Patxi recalled. "You're not going to find it easy in the United States . . . Dogs don't wear shoes here, either."⁶⁰ He had intended to return home after a short time, but opted to stay and, after years of naturalization paperwork, became a citizen, moved to Nevada, and brought his wife and daughter over on Christmas Eve, 1965. In the small community of Lovelock, Nevada, Patxi was the only Basque, but he and his wife,

⁵⁹ Kathleen J. Camino (Program Assistant at the University of Nevada at Reno), email message to author, 22 January 2013.

⁶⁰ Patxi Marcuerquiaga, interview by Mikel Chertudi, 24 August 2001, The Basque Museum and Cultural Center, Boise, Idaho. http://www.basquemuseum.com/oralhistory/Marcuerquiaga_Patxi/Marcuerquiaga_Patxi.htm

Cirila, spoke Basque at home and taught it to their children. They attended Basque cultural events in Reno and other cities, returning to the Basque country for visits on four separate occasions. The most astounding news for their relatives in *Euskal Herria* was that they had maintained their Basqueness - particularly in the form of speaking *Euskara* - so far from their homeland.

Cirila Marcuerquiaga gave her own interview to the Basque Museum, with her unique perspective on raising her daughter alone for seven years while her husband made a home for them in America. In a smooth, light voice, she describes working on her parents' *baserri* and taking her young daughter to town to visit her newly-married sister. When Patxi decided to stay in the United States, Cirila thought she would give it a try for 7-10 years and then potentially return home. Thirty-five years later, she was still in Lovelock, fluent in English, and had raised a family there. Most importantly, she describes a situation common to many Basque Americans - the dual identity. "When I go there," she said, "I go home. When I come here, I come home. That's how I feel. . . . I know the language enough to defend myself. I have my kids, my grandkids, my house, my cars. I have all the values there, so that is my home. My roots are here, and more than half of my life is here too."⁶¹

Mary Abbot was born Mary Micheo to Basque hoteliers in Gardnerville, Nevada. When oral historians interviewed her, she reminisced about a childhood spent growing up in a boardinghouse in rural shepherding country.⁶² She grew up

⁶¹ Cirila "C.C." Armaolea Marcuerquiaga, interview by Mikel Chertudi, 24 August 2001, The Basque Museum and Cultural Center, Boise, Idaho. http://basquemuseum.com/oralhistory/Marcuerquiaga_Cirila/Marcuerquiaga_Cirila.htm

⁶² Mary (Micheo) Abbot, interview by Mateo Osa, 20 August 1987, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada. http://basque.unr.edu/oralhistory/abott_mary/Mary_Abbot.htm

surrounded by other Basque hotels filled with her parents' countrymen - shepherders coming to take a bath, other Basque American children with whom she played kick-the-can and marbles, American kids in school, and boarders with whom she played *pidro*, a card game. Her first language was Basque; she learned English when she went to school. She helped clean and serve meals to boarders. She remembers meals with fresh bread and cheese delivered from Reno. There was a piano bar and on New Year's Eve, they would throw a big party and play the accordion. Once a year, they had a big oyster dinner. But Mary and her siblings grew older, went to college, and none took over the hotel. Mary laments that, while she went off to live another life, things she thought would always be there had vanished by the time she returned.

John Ascuaga is also the child of Basque immigrants from the heart of the Pyrenees. He was born in Notus, Idaho, in 1925, growing up alongside two older siblings and a twin sister. After attending the University of Idaho and Washington State University, he opened the Nugget Café in Sparks, Nevada, developing it into the Nugget Hotel & Casino, with 1,658 rooms, 8 restaurants, and 84,000 square feet of casino games. His wife, Rose, who he met in Sparks, is also Basque. As of 1992, the Ascuagas had made one visit to their homeland, visiting family and reconnecting with his cultural heritage. John recalled the intensity he felt on the trip, a feeling akin to nostalgia, but for memories he himself had not created.

Well, we didn't stay there long enough, but it was very emotional to go to the Basque Country, to go to your dad's house and to your mom's house, . . . And I enjoyed the entire country, to see your cousins for the first time in your life. I have no relatives in America except for my immediate family, and I do have some distant second cousins, but other than that, I never knew my grandma or grandpa because we didn't have one. No cousins, just our immediate family. So going to the Basque Country was awful important for me, go to my dad's place,

to my mom's place, see my mom's sister, [she] looked just like my mother. It was really an experience.⁶³

He lamented knowing only passable Spanish and not Basque; it was an element of his Basque heritage he had not inherited from his parents and one which interrupted his linkage with his extended family.

Themes revealed by the *Oroitzapenak* oral histories

Of the over 200 oral history interviews online at UNR and BMCC websites, the bulk of them exhibit similar themes and life histories. Many of the questions one might ask about the memories contained in the interviews are answered by extraordinarily high affirmatives due to biases and cannot be generalized to Basque Americans at large. Using just these interviews, the argument that Basques are intrinsically proud of their heritage and deeply involved in their community is overwhelmingly supported. Basque Americans, it would seem from this data, almost always teach their children Basque culture and to speak *Euskara*, take trips to visit family in *Euskal Herria*, hold representative and leadership positions in local Basque organizations, and actively cultivate the survival of Basque culture. Most of them came as shepherders, or because one's father, brother, or husband was a shepherder, and many did military service during the mid-century.

But the interviews are inherently biased, not only because the value of oral histories did not emerge until a very specific, postmodern period (and thus culled interviews from a very specific generation thus far), but also because of the low

⁶³ John Ascuaga, interview by Joseba Etxarri, 1992, University of Nevada, conducted in Sparks, NV. http://basque.unr.edu/oralhistory/ascuaga_john/JohnAscuaga.html

visibility of the *Oroitzapenak* project and the selectivity of the subjects. Those who were asked to sit down for interviews or who volunteered are inordinately those who are already closely tied to their roots, local cultural events, the Basque language, and the sense of inheritance from their parents and grandparents. So the data from this group of interviews can reveal very important memories and experiences of a specific group of people - those who are known in their communities, live in specific geographical areas heavily influenced by Basque immigration, and are inclined to extend their acts of cultural preservation and connection by answering questions from oral historians. But they do not say much about the tens of thousands of Basque Americans who do not identify as Basques so publicly or whose Basque heritage is hidden in family lore and the lost stories of generations who have passed on. This Basque American perspective will be addressed shortly.

In analyzing the *Oroitzapenak* interviews, I engaged in two separate analyses - one driven by basic factual characteristics (language of the interview, fluency in Basque, year immigrated, employment in shepherding, incidents of return to the Basque country) and one going deeper into thematic memories and experiences (remembrance of the Spanish civil war, longing for *Euskal Herria*, searching for opportunity, community involvement, the significance of the family homesteads known as *basseriak*, and the importance of boardinghouses, known as *ostatuak*, for immigrants once they arrived). The volume and repetition of much of the thematic qualities quickly made sampling the most efficient and productive method, so I used a random start of 5 and sampled full data for every 10th interview, listed alphabetically, starting with the UNR interviews. I also checked the accuracy of the sampling by

measuring it against a full inventory of basic factual elements from every interview and found the sampling to be accurately representative of the whole.

The results of the factual analysis can be found in Appendix III. The vast majority of interviewees conducted their interviews in English, a fact that - particularly in Boise - had little to do with whether the interviewee had immigrated or was native-born, but was predictable based on the era in which the interview was conducted. Interviews given in Boise in the 1970s (when oral histories, the importance of memory, and an emphasis on folk culture and language were in their heyday) were conducted almost without exception in Basque. Those conducted later, throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, were almost entirely in English, regardless of the interviewer's fluency in Basque. In Reno, where the interviews primarily cover other western states like Nevada, Wyoming, California, and Montana, a slightly greater percentage were in Spanish or Basque. The era in which first-generation interviewees came of age was also grimly illustrative: those who interviewed in Spanish overwhelmingly grew up in the 1930s and 1940s before immigrating at mid-century (when legislation allowed for exemptions for shepherders) - a fact reflected in their remembrances of the Spanish civil war and the fascist crackdowns on Basque language and culture. Many interviewees related memories of punishment at school for speaking Euskara as well as the hardships endured during a Francoist childhood; during her interview, Lucia Lezamiz related the death of her father during the devastating bombing of Gernika in 1937.

The majority of first-generation interviewees had immigrated after the Immigration Act of 1924, which reduced each country's quota of immigrants allowed

to enter the United States. This act disproportionately affected Basques who, due to lack of an autonomous, recognized homeland, were counted under either French or Spanish quotas. In fact, the bulk of first-generation interviewees came during the 1950s or later, after postwar legislation allowed exemptions for shepherders to supply a worker shortage; though independent sheep operations were not prevalent in *Euskal Herria* and few Basques had experience herding sheep, many took the opportunity in order to immigrate. The high representation of this generation in the interviews is also, of course, due to timing; oral histories were not valued as historical evidence (or as technologically convenient) until after the generation of 19th century Basque immigrants had long passed.

Most of the interviewees had returned to (in the case of first-generation) or visited (in the case of second-generation) the Basque country at some point, journeys which were equally as fulfilling and full of longing for either generation.⁶⁴ Many first-generation interviewees had intended to return home after a short stay, working in the American west to help their family's financial situation back home; some did return and ended up coming back to the United States to settle, and others never were able to make the return journey. This tug-of-war is heartbreakingly represented in Javi Zubizarreta's 2011 film, *Zuretzako* ("For You"), the story of Zubizarreta's grandfather, Joaquin, who was twice driven by financial straits in Spain to toil for years as a shepherd in Idaho, far from his wife and virtually unknown to his children.

⁶⁴ This thesis uses the terms "first-generation" and "second-generation" as they are generally used by American academics: "first-generation" Basque Americans are those who immigrated and naturalized and "second-generation" are their children born in the United States.

Yet not all Basques are represented by the stories told by those still deeply connected to their roots. Basque Americans living outside of Basque enclaves like Idaho, Nevada, and California often go about their lives self-identifying as Basque when asked by friends, but may be comfortable with self-identification alone and often do not feel the need to be more involved than that. David Goldstein is a Seattle attorney who studied abroad in Spain as an undergraduate and always identified as much with his Spanish and Basque maternal lineage as with his father's Jewish heritage. He describes his Basque identity as important, but not one that requires further participation in Basque activities like learning *Euskara*, playing the card game *mus*, playing handball, or eating Basque dishes. His Basque identity, true to a young man who came of age at the end of the 20th century, is fluid, having "different meanings whether speaking with an American or a Spaniard," he says.

Most of the American response is "What is that?" They don't know exactly what [being Basque] is, or they have a very vague notion that it's this region in northern Spain. When I say it to a Spaniard, particularly outside of the Basque country, I think they have sometimes, they have a notion of Basques being elitist and separatist, so if you identify as that, then they potentially lump you into that category - that this guy might be one of these separatist types, which most of Spain is very against, the idea of secession.⁶⁵

When a second language was spoken at home in Albuquerque, it was Spanish, not *Euskara*; *tortilla de patata* and *paella* (with a perfectly toasted *socarrat*, where the rice meets the pan) were regularly enjoyed at the dinner table. Goldstein is glad to know that the history and memories of Basques are being preserved, but for him, being second-generation and a quarter Basque does not rely on speaking *Euskara* or knowing Basque history. He roots fervently for Athletic Bilbao, the professional soccer team,

⁶⁵ David Goldstein, interview with author, 23 February 2013.

but his Basqueness rests with his familial identity, not a collective one. “I’m not a person who looks to the past very much,” he says. “Whatever the Basques have done or accomplished really has almost nothing to do with me and who I am. I’m only a quarter. And I was never around any other Basque people other than my mom and my brother . . .” In certain social situations, to keep things simple, he says, he describes himself as half-Spanish. “If these are traditions that people find helpful and comforting, and people are trying to keep them alive, I think that’s good regardless of what people or culture you’re talking about. And as much of the historical record on Basque experience that can be preserved should be. I’m not going to read it,” he says, laughing good-naturedly, “but it should be preserved if other people want to access it.”⁶⁶

The *Oroitzapenak* interviews give the listener a good sense of the types of experiences and memories that make up the lives of prominent, culturally-immersed Basque Americans. They cannot, however, give one a true sense of Basque American life as a whole. A larger survey, designed to elicit responses from more reluctant, more private, or lesser-known Basque Americans, would illuminate an even more complex image of Basque diasporic life. BMCC interviewee Helen Elguezabal Berria, the daughter and granddaughter of immigrants, driven by a deep sense of connection and responsibility to her cultural inheritance, began a census of Basque Americans in 1994, enumerating over 2,000 immigrants and descendants, and her work clarifies the difficulty in studying Basque identity in America. Cristine N. Paschid also found the obsession with narrowly-defined identities problematic at the Japanese American

⁶⁶ David Goldstein, interview, *ibid.*

National Museum in Los Angeles, since such obsessions detract from the ability of the museum to collaborate, innovate, and serve the community at large. “This history [of Japanese Americans], just like the community of its origin,” Paschild writes, “is not inherently separate from, independent of, or marginal to the broader history of the United States. Nor is it any more or less subjective than the history documented by any other collection in any other archives.”⁶⁷ It is not evident that the *Oroitzapenak* project has in any way narrowly defined what it means to be Basque. Rather, it is likely this unavoidable truth that stifles the program’s growth: that the program was conceived and built *after* many of the interviews had been conducted, and as a result, has grown in fits and starts, instead of by a well-developed plan defined by clear, guiding collecting and outreach policies.

As long Basque names become shortened or disappear through intermarriage, as knowledge of one’s Basque roots becomes forgotten, as identity becomes even more fluid and subjective, any kind of count of America’s Basque population becomes difficult. During her interview, she acknowledges this difficulty that is as much an issue of qualification as it is of quantification. “We really don’t know who the Basques are,” she says, echoing the frustrations of demographers and historians of years past. “People intermarry and their names change and you can almost walk down the street and they say, I’m an eighth Basque or half-Basque or so on. And that’s what the numbers are. They’re not full Basques, but they’re Basques.”⁶⁸ Most of these Basques

⁶⁷ Cristine N. Paschild, “Community Archives and the Limitations of Identity: Considering Discursive Impact on Material Needs,” *American Archivist*, 75.2 (2012): 141.

⁶⁸ Helen Elguezabal Berría, interview by Mikel Chertudi, tape recording, 13 March 2002, Basque Museum and Cultural Center, Boise, ID.

do not appear in interviews or newspaper articles about the concentration of Basque culture in Boise, but their personal acknowledgement of their Basque heritage is still significant to their identity. David Goldstein may not be the type of subject to sit down to an oral history interview, but the quarter of him that is Basque may be inclined to participate in a brief survey. The beauty of the postmodern world is that Basques, no matter their history, can interact with or remain apart from these *etxeak* of memory - to whatever degree they deem critical for themselves.

Challenges remain

The *Oroitzapenak* project is a diamond in the rough. Rather than having been planned prior to interviewing, organized around a documentation strategy, and executed by a dedicated institution, it was a response to a need - a need for a home for the Basque memory contained in previously-recorded interviews. It is amazing that there is a site where the memories of Basque life in the west can be accessed by various constituencies - researchers, students, and casual users - but access is limited for a number of reasons. Only excerpts are included as audio files and researchers otherwise have to rely on varying levels of summary and transcription for the rest of the information. Audio quality is inconsistent. Some audio recordings are in Basque, a common challenge for archivists of immigrant and ethnic archives,⁶⁹ and this is a barrier to Basque Americans who do not speak the language of their parents or grandparents. And outreach for the project appears to be minimal at best, even with

⁶⁹ Dominique Daniel, "Documenting the Immigrant and Ethnic Experience in American Archives," *American Archivist*, 73.1 (2010): 87.

staff that is dedicated to Basque issues but may not be full-time employees (specifically in the case of the museum) or may not even be archivists. Additionally, it does not appear that there is more than cursory collaboration between the two institutions, whose practices in accessioning and handling the interviews are very different. Inspiring, however, is that, at least as of 2001, interviews were still being conducted and the interviewers have been and continue to be knowledgeable and engaged.

In the future, the Basque Museum plans to strengthen its mission as a cultural *etxea* to the Basque-American community. The Museum has recently upgraded its website for easier navigation and a slicker, more up-to-date interface, and is actively engaged in a process to make more of the interviews available online as well as through audio stations at the Museum itself. Staff are in the process of applying for a 2013 grant that would allow them to digitize the remaining 75% of the interviews, and as of this year, have revised their strategic plan to increase collection of interviews, both within Idaho and outside the state, within the next five years, moving to digital recorders and formats, storage on CDs, and utilizing audio/video recordings to share a more profound experience with the user. “This is one of the most important collections that the Basque Museum and Cultural Center maintains,” says Patty Miller, Executive Director, “and I believe that its importance will only increase in the coming years,” citing not only researchers but descendants of Basque immigrants as primary users of these collections, which provide otherwise unknown details of the interviewees’ lives. Miller says that many Boiseans have used the histories to provide details for obituaries, which makes the collection all the more necessary, as those Basques who immigrated pass away, taking with them their memories. “It’s important that we

capture as many stories as possible from immigrants and first generation individuals,” Miller says. “Then we can continue to tell the story of those still active in their communities who are trying to keep various aspects of Basque culture alive.”⁷⁰

Oroitzapenak - particularly in its iteration at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center - is a vital program on the verge of becoming even more relevant in the twenty-first century. One way to do this is to analyze the collection for its coverage, in terms of age or experience. As Dominique Daniel found, seeking to “fill in the gaps” or speak for the “common man” raises its own philosophical issues, not the least of which is defining the gaps or what “common” means.⁷¹ More concretely, Daniel advocates a active, creation-based approach to ethnic archiving (based on the documentation strategy concept), and this approach is particularly applicable to the archiving of oral histories. Both UNR and the BMCC are active creators of the records in their care, the oral histories. Using the documentation strategy approach, both institutions would benefit from a detailed audit of their respective collections, analyzing the gaps between what is digitized and accessible online and what is not, looking for aspects of the Basque experience that are not already represented in their holdings. This will likely require reaching out to regions outside of the intermountain west, possibly with the help of local organizations, and it will require a more dynamic outreach program - both to potential interviewees and to new constituencies who can conduct interviews. The idea of the neutral archivist is over. An approach to *Oroitzapenak* project revitalization should incorporate a re-appraisal of the collection and a strategy laid out

⁷⁰ Miller, email to author, 30 January 2013.

⁷¹ Daniel, 87-89.

as to where existing gaps may be filled - perhaps geographically, perhaps chronologically, perhaps generationally. New generations of Basques and their descendants - particularly young Basque Americans - should be incorporated. Being under the age of 70 does not preclude one from having perspective on his or her heritage.

A lot of work could be done by graduate and undergraduate students, either for college credit or funded through grants. Among the work that can be done by students would be replacing the audio clips with full audio recordings, chapterized using free or low-cost audio editing software. Students could also standardize the transcription, if each institution instituted transcription policies and authority files to control the vocabulary used to describe the interviews.. Lastly, more access points would benefit researchers and descendants of interviewees, allowing users to search by topic, region, or even whether the interviewee was first-generation or a second-generation Basque American. [See Appendix IV for an example of what this might look like.]

Finally, greater outreach and promotion for the project needs to be strategized. In the anthology on web outreach edited by Kate Theimer, Joy Palmer and Jane Stevenson argue that Web 2.0 outreach is “intrinsically participatory and focused on sharing, collaboration, and mutual meaning-making,” dubbing these practices “Archives 2.0.”⁷² They rightly argue for the need for archives to “demonstrate the value” of archives, particularly as funding declines - a threat that seems eternally relevant in 2013. Examples for *Oroitzapenak* in terms of demonstrating its value could include a

⁷² Joy Palmer and Jane Stevenson, “Something Worth Sitting Still For? Some Implications of Web 2.0 for Outreach,” in *A Different Kind of Web: New Connections Between Archives and Our Users*, ed. Kate Theimer (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2011): 1.

wiki about each of the people, places, and activities documented in the oral histories. Flickr accounts for the BMCC and UNR could highlight Basque history and oral history interviewees through photographs, and graduate students could easily take up this kind of work. Once new interviews are recorded on video, these videos should be uploaded to YouTube, Vimeo, or any of a number of free video-sharing websites, where they can be easily shared across any social network. The British Film Institute National Archive is one of thousands of archival institutions that has utilized video sharing to promote their holdings; other institutions, such as the Virginia Holocaust Museum, use video sharing sites to make their oral histories more shareable through social media like Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit. A designated staff member to act as a Twitter coordinator could tweet, in 140 characters or less, something important about that particular day with a link to the interviewee's page. Twitter has been successfully used by archives for diary projects, where the date of the tweet corresponds with the entry's date in the diary, giving a brief, tantalizing preview and a link to the full entry. The Smithsonian's National Postal History Museum created a Twitter account for a taxidermied dog that traveled the country around the turn of the century and became the unofficial mascot of the Postal Service; Owey the Railway Mail Dog has 1600 followers and follows Lee Rex, a fossilized *Tyrannosaurus rex* at the Tate Geological Museum in Casper, Wyoming. Neither are rarities, either; there are many dinosaurs and even more dogs, all with their own Twitter handles. The BMCC does already have a Facebook page, indicating an awareness of social media and a desire to engage through it.

As it is, *Oroitzapenak* seems to exist on its own lonely little corner of the Internet - largely unknown and unsought. In 2012, for example, the BMCC's Oral Histories section had 720 unique visitors, for a total of 2,568 page views. This is certainly impressive for a museum of its size, but it is clear that a small yet passionate constituency is driving repeat usage, and this constituency could be greatly expanded, which in turn could be used as a strong argument for funding in grant proposals. The twenty-first-century user group is only going to be more sprawled across geographic areas, and as more Americans than ever are driven to research their genealogy, more of them will be finding the Basque stories they never knew they had. Potential user groups are currently left to hopefully stumble onto the project. The common thread throughout archival literature concerning digital outreach is that it is no longer enough to dust things off and wait for users to walk in. Archives have to meet people where they are.⁷³ In this respect, partnerships with larger family history institutions could greatly benefit the Basque Museum and UNR's Basque Studies Department. The Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana, could be one such institution; the Nevada State Museum system is another.

Of course, all of these changes require funding, which is a resource that no archives has in abundance. But grants are being funded even as the country climbs out of recession, and crowdsourcing and innovative partnerships offer greater options than ever before for preserving Basque cultural memory for the next 100 years and beyond.

The 1940 Census Community Project as a partnership between the National Archives

⁷³ See Andrea Medina-Smith, "Going Where the Users Are: The Jewish Women's Archive and Its Use of Twitter"; Helena Zinkham and Michelle Springer, "Taking Photographs to the People: The Flickr Commons Project and the Library of Congress"; and Tim Sherratt, "Bringing Life to Records: Mapping Our Anzacs at the National Archives of Australia"; all in Kate Theimer, ed., *A Different Kind of Web*, *ibid.*

and both commercial and nonprofit family history websites is one example; the World Memory Project as a partnership between Ancestry.com and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is another. And with the constituency already built by the collections at BMCC and in Boise at large, the *Oroitzapenak* project could utilize Kickstarter, a crowd-funding website, to solicit donations for planned projects. Cultural institutions have already used Kickstarter to raise funds for additions and collections maintenance; it allows for passionate followers to spread the word about exciting new cultural projects - like one dedicated to video interviews with Basque Americans - to turn many small donations from the public into a new outreach campaign. Finally, LODLAM (Linked Open Data in Libraries, Archives, and Museums) projects like HistoryPin offer new ways for the *Oroitzapenak* project to explore the places that drive the narratives of the interviews, by creating layers of time over interactive maps to show how, for example, the Basque Block in Boise has changed since the first Basques arrived from the gold fields of the 19th century, ready to try their hand at a more prosperous occupation.

None of these projects should be entertained lightly. Like anything else in archival advocacy, the archivist need not “go big or go home,” but does need to commit to a plan of Web 2.0 outreach with an open mind and dedication to the mission of advocacy. As younger archivists arrive on the scene ready with social media tools, grumbling and eye-rolling can sometimes be the reaction of more established archivists, who understandably believe that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or Kickstarter may be just the latest in a string of flash-bang fads. Some social media platforms fail miserably, remaining the butt of smug hipster jokes, but others have

changed the way people communicate, often for the better. Facebook and Twitter, specifically, have changed even the way the world is viewed for many younger generations. The sites themselves may come and go, but the internet as a medium for outreach and advocacy is likely to dominate communication, interaction, and cultural memory for decades or centuries to come. In fact, there is likely something already around the corner that will augment and change the systems we have today. The reaction in the face of that potential change is not to throw up one's hands and to cling stolidly to existing models. The proactive approach works new technologies into existing processes now, on a scale and at a pace that best suits the institution, before the changes have far exceeded the incremental steps that such change requires. There are risks in implementing Web 2.0 outreach: front-end investment of staff time and financial resources, authority and control over content, and obsolescence that can render existing programs irrelevant or inaccessible, among others. Advisory committees and firmly-grounded policies can help avoid many of the pitfalls, and an open mind will mitigate some of the stress of the others. The *etxeak* of the twenty-first century are a worthy cause, and Basque history has a ready, passionate constituency of Basque descendants, researchers, and genealogists ready to help construct these houses of memory.

Conclusion

When Patxi Marcuerquiaga left his home in Leikeitio, he left his family's *etxea* along with his wife and baby daughter. He took with him the memories and sense of self that he had built around that *etxea*, along with cultural inheritance with which he

situated himself at home in the Basque Country and in the wide, windswept pastures of Nevada. When Cirila joined him, they built another, metaphorical *etxea* together, under which they raised their children - speaking Basque, attending social events, playing *mus* (a card game) and *pelota* (handball), and passing along that inheritance. They built a house of memory. And they added on to it every time they returned home, appending new cultural rooms that accurately reflected their dual identities as Basques and as Americans.

This collective memory, this cultural inheritance, is alive and well in Basque social groups across the country, but remains at risk as each generation of Basque Americans stops learning *Euskara*, stops giving their children Basque names, stops identifying as hyphenated Americans and assimilates with the culture that surrounds them. This, of course, is the risk for every ethnic group that immigrates to the United States, and it is bittersweet. Assimilation brings acceptance from the host culture and a sense of belonging to the immediate community, but can increase the tension between the pull of one's heritage and their everyday life. Cultural homogenization remains a grave concern for those looking to bolster diversity and hold on to some of their own identity. But new technologies also mean that collective memory can be more prolific and more accessible than ever. Far beyond the lonely website - the technological equivalent of opening the doors and waiting for someone to walk in - the applications and outreach capabilities of social media, crowdsourcing, crowd-funding, and LODLAM offer unprecedented opportunities to reach new constituencies motivated to donate time, money, and influence to keep archives relevant for centuries to come.

Cooperation and working across professions will be crucial. The ways in which one locates his or her sense of self within multiple identities is a highly personal decision and one that must be respected, particularly by archivists and those seeking to influence the historical record. To this end, archivists, as professionals concerned with a more complete documentary record, ought to work with Basques and Basque Americans, particularly librarians, Basque scholars, and technologists, to preserve and include this cultural *etxea* for future generations. The *Oroitzapenak* project has been working to do this for decades and has used a grant from the Basque Government to digitize and transcribe oral histories and put them online to encourage access and use - the fundamental goals of the archival profession.

Passionately following Jeanette Bastian's advice to focus on collective memory as a crucial tool for archival practice, however, may not be enough. Rabia Gibbs warns of the pitfalls of ignoring the historiographical representations of particular ethnic groups in an ill-planned attempt to open up archives of under-represented populations. Though writing specifically about African Americans, her advice to "examine the diversity *within* diverse groups"⁷⁴ applies equally well to Basque Americans. As demonstrated above, the interviews in the *Oroitzapenak* project document an extremely narrow window of Basque American experience, a problem examined by Cristine N. Paschild in relation to Japanese American collections. There is only so much control archivists have over what they collect, but never has it been easier for archivists to solicit materials from a greater range of their constituency - those that

⁷⁴ Rabia Gibbs, "The Heart of the Matter: The Developmental History of African American Archives," *American Archivist* 75.2 (2012): 204.

did not settle in the west, those who grew up partly Basque and partly Spanish or French, and those of younger generations.

The oral history archives, through the partnership of the Basque Museum in Boise and the University of Nevada at Reno, act as a cultural, metaphorical *etxea* through which Basque Americans can inherit their collective memory and pass it on to generations to come. But the project - and the interviews themselves - are split between the two institutions, and their accessibility online is incomplete. Inconsistent transcription and short clips that often cut off in the middle of a thought or sentence diminishes accessibility still further. Yet there is little doubt that, with such a long history in the New World - from leaders and participants in the earliest expeditions of the Age of Discovery to sheepherders saving an industry and contributing to the American family in the 20th century - Basques have many valuable stories, directly experienced as well as inherited, to tell.

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Further Reading

The bulk of available literature about Basque history has been published by the University of Nevada Press or, more specifically, their Basque Studies Department. Some of these texts were consulted for background though not cited, and others fall outside the scope of this thesis but may prove useful to readers interested in learning more about the Basque experience.

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Appendix I

The Oroitzapenak (UNR) website



The sister site at the Basque Museum and Cultural Center



Appendix II

Interviewees in the *Oroitzapenak* project



Patxi and Cirila Marcuerquiaga, Boise, August 2001
(The Basque Museum and Cultural Center)



John Ascuaga
(The Basque Studies Center, University of Nevada)

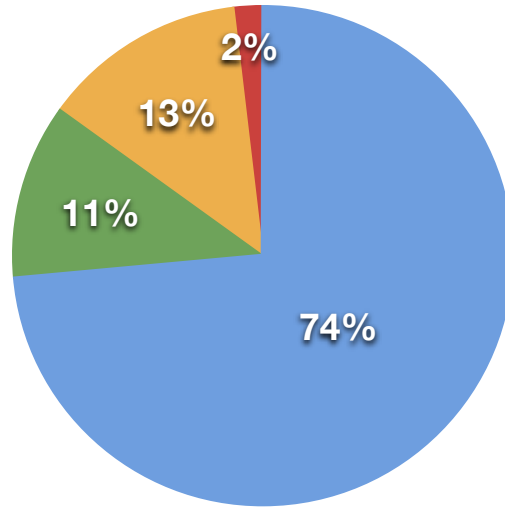


Mary (Micheo) Abbot
(The Basque Studies Center, University of Nevada)

Appendix III

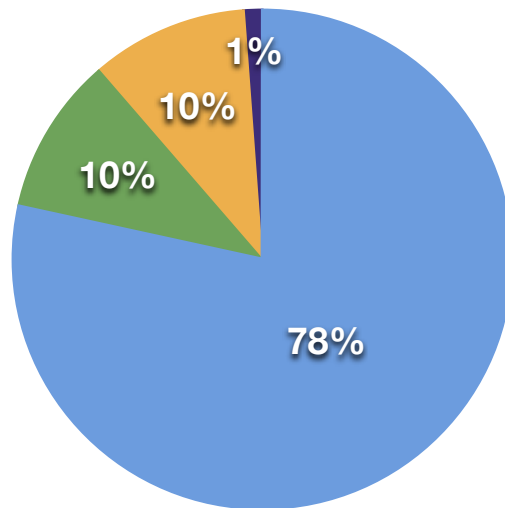
Interview Data - By Language

UNR (Reno, NV)



- English
- Basque
- Spanish
- Spanish and Basque

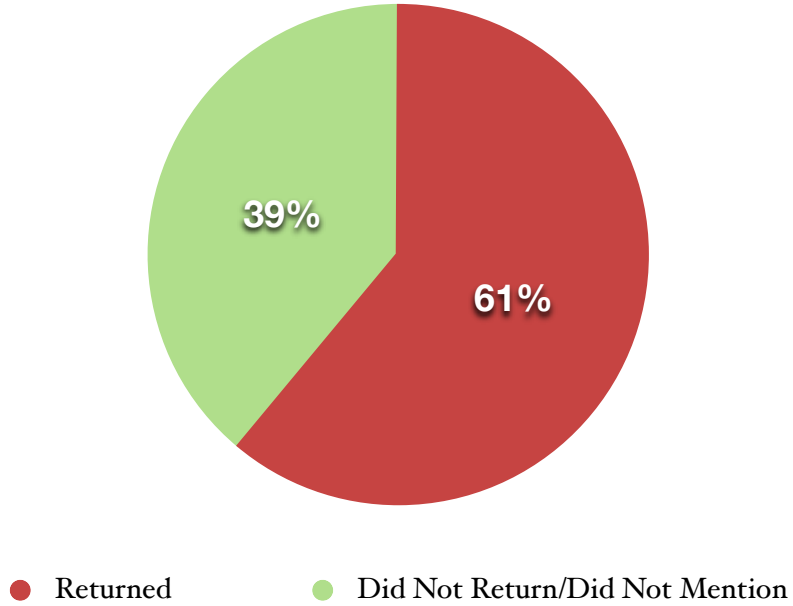
BMCC (Boise, ID)



- English
- Basque
- Spanish
- English and Spanish

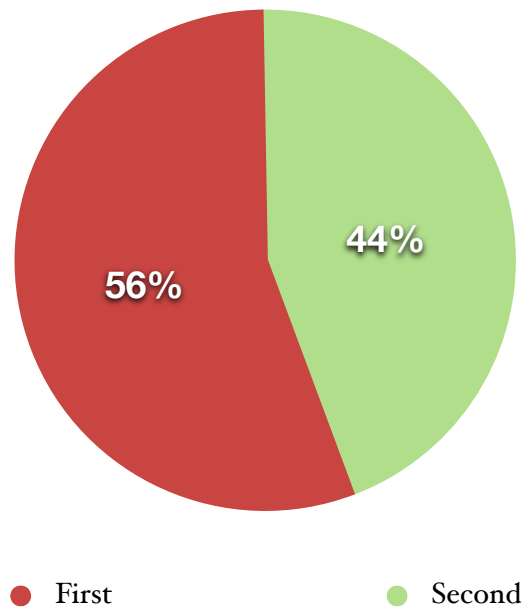
**Interview Data - Return Visits by First- and Second-Generation
Basque Americans to *Euskal Herria***

Among Sampled Interviewees



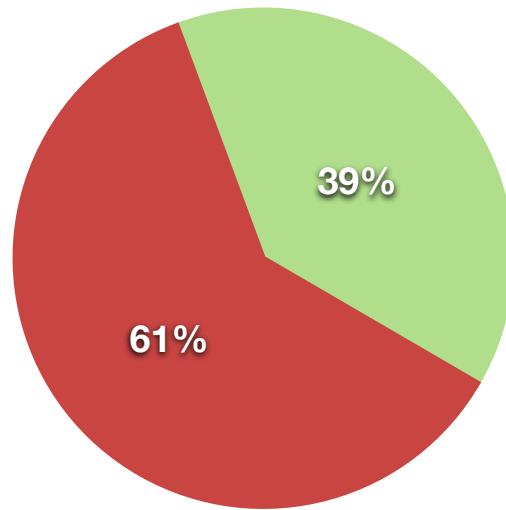
Interview Data - Proportions of First- and Second-Generation Interviewees

Among Sampled Interviewees



Interview Data - Basque Fluency

Among Sampled Interviewees

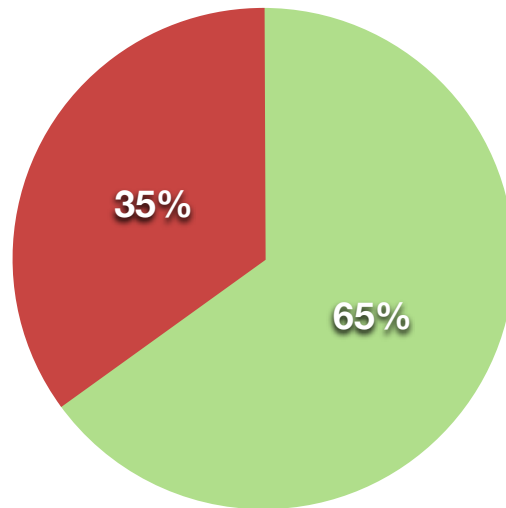


● Speaks Basque

● Does Not Speak Basque

Interview Data - Immigration Periods Represented

Among Sampled Interviewees



● Before 1924 Quota

● After 1924 Quota

Appendix IV

Sample BMCC Page

with new access points, full audio, and new interface

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website for the Basque Museum & Cultural Center. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.basquemuseum.com/collections/oral-histories>. The website header features a navigation menu with links for Home, Visit, Exhibits, Education, Collections, Shop, Get Involved, and Events. A prominent banner includes the museum's logo, a contact information box with the phone number 208.343.2671 and address 611 Grove Street, Boise, ID 83702, and a 'join us on facebook' button. The main content area is titled 'Oral Histories' and features a profile for Gregorio 'George' Alberdi. The profile includes two chapters of text and an audio player. The first chapter describes his birth in Iurreta, Bizkaia, in 1899. The second chapter describes his emigration in 1919 on the ship 'Chicago'. To the right of the profile is a 'Search by' sidebar with filters for State, Era, Generation, Language, Region of Euskal Herria, Sex (with 'Male' selected), and Keywords.

Oral Histories

Alberdi, Gregorio "George"

Chapter 1 Gregorio was born in Iurreta, Bizkaia on 24 December 1899 to Juan José Alberdi and Genara Bolinaga. His parents were farmers. Juan José passed away before Gregorio decided to emigrate to the United States to join his brother and uncle, but Genara was supportive of her son's decision. She gave her son the money he would need for his passage but told him to come home soon.

Chapter 2 In 1919, at the age of 20, Gregorio boarded the "Chicago" in Bordeaux, France, and crossed the Atlantic. The ship made a stop in Habana, Cuba before continuing on to New York, where Valentin Aguirre was waiting to take Basque immigrants to his boarding house. Aguirre helped Gregorio find the train that would eventually take him to Boise, Idaho.

Search by

- ▶ State
- ▶ Era
- ▶ Generation
- ▶ Language
- ▶ Region of Euskal Herria
- ▼ Sex
 - Male
 - Female
- ▶ Keywords