

VIDAS AL OTRO LADO: ACTS OF REPRESENTATION THROUGH
TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL EVENTS

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***Vidas al otro lado: Acts of Representation through Transnational
Cultural Events***

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ABSTRACT

This project examines the connections between popular Mexican celebrations, such as *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* and *Día de los muertos*, and transnational communities established in the United States in order to better understand the functions and ways in which cultural events and non-governmental organizations contribute to the (re)articulation of identity, representation, and community building in communities of residency. The aim is to study in depth the connections between Mexican transnational communities, many of them indigenous, and these popular cultural celebrations and events that take place in Mexico and in the United States. There are two regions in which transnational migrants from the Mixtec region in southern Mexico reside in significant numbers: the New York Metropolitan area, especially in New York City, and Southern California. In my analysis, I apply an eclectic methodology, stemming from Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, and Border Studies while also engaging with the work of Mexican academics in the field of Transnationalism and Anthropology.

My project contends that these events reveal transnational and transregional elements that contribute to fulfill the needs of immigrants in the United States, many of who live in this country undocumented. The dissertation demonstrates how Mexican transnational communities participate in a complex system of networks that go beyond the binary perspective traditionally considered in migration studies of communities of origin and communities of arrival, while responding to a greater need to study transnational cultural events from a bi-national perspective.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation responds to a need to investigate the connections between popular Mexican celebrations, such as *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* and *Día de los muertos*, and transnational communities established in the United States in order to explore the functions and ways in which cultural events and non-governmental organizations contribute to the (re)articulation of identity, representation, and community building in communities of residency. In my approach I draw from various fields of study such as Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, and Border Studies, in order to investigate the connections between Mexican transnational communities and these popular cultural celebrations and events that take place in Mexico and in the United States. I analyze the representations of cultural events connected to immigrant communities in Mexico, which have become popular representations of Mexican identity, especially in places where high numbers of immigrants live. Even though my general focus is on Mexicans in the United States, due to the high percentages of representations of Mixtec communities in the areas chosen, I will be incorporating their networks and cultural practices as prime examples. I argue that these events demonstrate transnational and transregional elements that contribute to meeting the needs of immigrants in the United States, many of who live in this country undocumented. There are two regions in which transnational migrants from the Mixtec region in southern Mexico reside in significant numbers. One of these areas is the New York Metropolitan area¹, especially in New York City, and the other is in southern California. Existing research about these

¹ This is also referred to as the tri-state region which includes the states of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

transnational communities offers enough information, especially from anthropological and historical perspectives, to contribute to existing research from other fields of studies such as Cultural Studies, Performance Studies, and Border Studies, which serve as a point of departure in this dissertation. In addition, I engage with the work of Mexican academics in the field of Transnationalism and Anthropology who offer different perspectives from which to approach research in these disciplines.

Transnational immigrants are active members in their communities of origin as well as in the communities in which they reside. They are functioning members of our society, participate in religious services, have their children attend neighborhood schools and are constantly interacting with many other people in our society. Cultural practices of Mexican immigrants may be events that are already acknowledged and celebrated to various degrees in the United States. Other traditions have begun due to the large numbers of people from certain regions in Mexico that reside in the United States. These celebrations have taken place in important city locations, such as St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, demonstrating that Mexican transnational immigrants have made this country their home.

This dissertation matters because the celebration of some Mexican traditional events is becoming more visible in many areas of the United States in part because it is one of the fastest growing demographic as Pew Research Center findings indicate. The purpose of this study is to find connections between Mexican transnational communities and popular Mexican celebrations in the United States. I also seek connections between the needs of many immigrants, resulting from their shared undocumented status in the

United States, and the social-political activism these celebrations demonstrate. At the heart of my research is the question, “how are cultural events in the place of residence affected by the transnational status of immigrants?” which I explore through the framework of cultural representations. A secondary exploration is “how do these cultural practices represent Mexican transnational immigrants?” and “what is the representation of Mexico within these transnational cultural practices?” I expect to find a strong link between Mexican cultural events in the United States with the immigration reform movement that reflect important elements of Mexican transnational migration patterns. While I was unable to find direct participation of transnational immigrants in these events since it would have taken different methodological approaches (i.e. ethnographical study), there are links between the involvement of the organizations that cater to Mixtec immigrants’ needs and traditions to the events chosen for this dissertation. However, by analyzing events related to *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* and *Día de los muertos*, the organizations that put them together, and other factors that are an important part of these cultural traditions, I highlight transnational elements to show how these events have been reframed due to the active participation of transnational immigrants in the United States.

New York City and southern California have always been regions that attract large number of immigrants. Both are destinations where a significant number of Mexicans have established residency. As a result of the high percentages of Mexican immigrants, it is not surprising to see that many events traditionally celebrated in Mexico are becoming cultural traditions in the United States. These celebrations include, but are

not limited to, *Día de la independencia*, *Día de los muertos*, *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, *Posadas*, *Cinco de mayo*, and many others.

In New York City, nonprofit organizations such as *Asociación Tepeyac*, established in 1997, have played an important role in organizing celebrations that are closely connected with the Mexican community, including immigrants from the Mixtec region in Mexico who live in the New York City area. In addition to planning cultural events, *Asociación Tepeyac* has also worked to incorporate an activist agenda into these events due to the immigration status of many Mexicans in New York City. The celebration of *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, like many other cultural and religious events organized by *Asociación Tepeyac*, is a contribution to the immigration movement by calling for amnesty for the over eleven million undocumented immigrants in the United States. By organizing an event where *la virgen* crosses the national border that many are forced to cross in dangerous ways as a result of the United States' broken immigration system, they are "...knocking on the doors of the authorities, asking them to grant them the rights and dignity they deserve" (Gálvez, *Guadalupe in New York* 149). I am interested in studying how these cultural events change from being a transnational celebration into a call for justice in the United States.

In southern California and other parts of the Southwestern United States, *Día de los muertos* has gained popularity not only among the Mexican communities residing in these areas but also among United States mainstream culture and immigration activists. For communities in southern Mexico this event is deeply rooted in their religious traditions, and while it has changed since the Spanish Conquest, the indigenous elements

of the celebration were still highly present. Yet during the 20th century, while most of Mexico celebrated this day, they did so following the Catholic tradition. Interestingly, those who celebrated with *ofrendas*, an altar dedicated to deceased family members and an important indigenous tradition, were many times ridiculed by others in the community. A teacher interviewed by Elizabeth Carmichael and Chloë Sayer for their book *The Skeleton at the Feast* (118). In part, this is perhaps a result of Mexican's struggle with modernity during the 20th century when associations related to indigenous culture were considered antiquated. As a result, holidays associated with indigenous culture were rejected, as noted above about *Día de los muertos*. The reception of this holiday changed to the point of becoming a prominent representation of Mexican culture in Mexico and the United States.

By the 1980s, *Día de los muertos* was publicized by the government in order to attract tourism to certain regions of the country. Now, *Día de los muertos* is celebrated with *ofrendas*, *pan de muertos*, and processions throughout Mexico, including the border regions, as well as in the United States. In my own experience growing up in Ambos Nogales (Nogales, Arizona, United States and Nogales, Sonora, México), I remember that while the Catholic community celebrated *Día de los muertos*, the *ofrendas*, *pan de muertos*, and other indigenous traditions were rarely seen. With the increase in migration to these border regions from the South of Mexico, cultural events and traditions unusual to the North of Mexico began to appear. Now, *Día de los muertos* is not only an event that is celebrated throughout both countries, but it is also adopted and adapted to activist movements of social justice and human rights in southern California and the

Southwestern United States. In Tucson, for example, a nonprofit organization called *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* has organized a pilgrimage in honor of the migrants who have died each year crossing the border for fourteen consecutive years. This pilgrimage takes place on *Día de los muertos* and incorporates some elements from indigenous celebrations in Mexico.

For the transnational communities studied in this dissertation, their communities of residence are in specific regions of the United States. Due to technological advances, staying connected to communities of origin is easier and therefore it is likely that more and more immigrants will become transnational subjects rather than just immigrants. This means that they are part of United States society, our schools, our government, and part of our own daily lives. Their background, language, traditions and cultures matter because they are a significant part of our growing society in the United States.

Structure of Dissertation

The first chapter of this dissertation creates an interdisciplinary dialogue that guides the dissertation. In essence, my goal is to formulate an eclectic framework that will allow me to read and interpret the cultural events that I have mentioned above. To that end, I attempt to reframe the notion of transnationalism as conceived by a recent generation of cultural anthropologists as I put it in dialogue with Stuart Hall's ideas of representation, some aspects of material culture, and notions of Performance Theory to illuminate how these events capture, include, and represent the agency and the communal exercise of the migrant population.

By problematizing established notions of transnationalism (i.e. of Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (1992), Ulf Hannerz (1996), and Michael Kearney (1986, 1998, 2004), among others), my project intends to explore a deeper dimension of the cultural events and syncretic ceremonies that Mexican migrants undertake in the United States. What this dissertation does is to engage not only with the idea of network so important in transnationalism, but also to pay a close look at how the nodes in the networks operate. These nodes take the shape of organizations and other collective entities that use events, rituals and celebrations to display and engage entire communities of transnational subjects. Hence, readings of the performative aspects of these networks become central to my analysis.

In chapter two I focus on the impact of the celebration of *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* among Mexican communities in New York City. In particular, I pay attention to a non-profit organization, *Asociación Tepeyac*, and one of its cultural events, *la Antorcha Guadalupeña*, and the ways in which the association undertakes a prominent role in *la virgen's* celebration. I am interested in looking at how *la Antorcha Guadalupeña* capitalizes on the transnational subject's relations and interactions across borders and regions. In addition, I study the effects of the performative aspects and how through these the organization is able to expand the agency and outreach of the Mexican immigrant community in the New York Metropolitan area, in the communities of origin, as well as those where *la antorcha* stops throughout its almost 3,000 mile trajectory from the *Basílica* in Mexico City. While I draw extensively on the work of Alyshia Galvez (2010), I attempt to create a dialectic tension with her work by going beyond her

anthropological lense in order to better highlight the cultural and representational impacts of these performances and events.

In chapter three I explore how the celebration of *Día de los muertos* in California has been influenced by the increased flows of Mexican immigrants from indigenous communities from southern Mexico such as the Mixtecs. In particular I pay special attention to a non-profit organization, the *Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales* (FIOB), which has been instrumental in organizing transnational communities and has cooperated in the coordination of the celebration of *Día de los muertos* in Oceanside, California. I am interested in the tensions that exist in the replication of the traditional practices associated with this celebration in the communities of origin and the ways in which they have been forced to negotiate some of its practices while interacting with other establishments in Oceanside. Thus, what I see in this process of negotiation is a reframing of transnational practices that must take into account the notion of place and how, or what, is the ultimate objective of the celebration. Moreover, I also look at how this celebration of *Día de los muertos* dialogues and interacts with other celebrations organized by Mexican and American organizations in the region. Given the long and yet changing nature of the celebration, my aim is to highlight how these different practices and exercises of community represent and comprise agency for the transnational subject communities.

Overall, this dissertation studies the representations and performances of two traditionally Mexican cultural events that can be considered transnational events as a result of the strong ties that people in both countries have developed and the process of

migration and adaptations the events have experienced to meet the needs of the people in each area. The high need of immigration reform and amnesty is what these events advocate while simultaneously continuing to celebrate traditions that perform Mexican and transnational identity on both sides of the border.

I am mindful that this project is a preliminary exercise in interdisciplinary studies that I hope to continue in the future. The current project exhibits many limitations and its potential for additional findings started with considerable ambition. As a result of circumstances related to life decisions and time constraints, it has resulted in what I present in this dissertation. Future research for this topic would include an ethnographic approach of these events. I hope that as I continue my career in K-12th education, the classroom will become my place of enunciation so that I can be able to link classroom experience to some of these events and practices.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND—PERFORMING TRANSNATIONALISM

A growing number of immigrants that have left their community of origin still maintain strong ties with it despite the distance that separates these locations (Glick Schiller et al. *ix*). In these transnational communities the migrants' cultural traditions and practices, language, and even their social responsibilities are often upheld. According to Hannerz, we live in a time when these transnational connections are so permeable that they have an undeniable effect on human life and culture (17). Although there is much that has been done in terms of studying and mapping the processes these migrants follow, i.e. their migration history and life in the places of residence, there is a need to better understand how their cultural traditions are produced or reproduced away from their communities of origin, and on the role of the process of transnationalism in the various stages of these events. In this dissertation I analyze representations of cultural events of transnational communities originating from the states of Oaxaca and Puebla in Mexico who live in southern California as well as in New York City. I incorporate the analysis of the events in these locations in comparison to the events organized in the communities of origin in order to present a more complete picture of the adjustments and changes of the events that have taken place. This dissertation engages in a dialogue with a number of theoretical approaches such as transnationalism, semiotics, thing theory, representation and performance theories.

The life of transnational immigrants is reflected often in cultural events that they participate in in their place of residence. These celebrations are also a demonstration of cultural maintenance, as opposed to assimilation, as well as the adjustments culture goes

through as a result of migrant experiences in their place of residence. Multicultural elements and their “trans” nature that challenges the dominant culture appear in representations of popular Mexican cultural events in the United States.

Research questions that frame my study include the following:

- How are cultural events in the place of residence affected by the transnational state of migrants?
- Do the members of these communities represent themselves in these events? If so, how?
- How do cultural events, traditions, and objects “perform” the communities’ transnationality?
- How are these cultural events represented in printed and digital forms? How are they represented by the organizing associations? How are they represented by religious organizations in the United States and in Mexico? How are these representations similar and how do they differ?
- How are cultural events adapted to show support of immigrants, many of whom are undocumented, by centering on the need for immigration reform?

These events have been significantly transformed to promote immigration reform in the United States. Members of transnational communities have not been active participants in the creation of these events or the ways they are represented through these modified traditions, but they actively promote the events to their communities of origin in order to encourage awareness and their activist purpose of human rights and social justice that would benefit them and their families. While a religious connection is made with the

holidays these events commemorate, there is also a strong activist purpose, especially in the case of the *Antorcha Guadalupana*.

Prior to the 1960s many definitions of communities did not consider the factor of mobility. Martin Albrow, in “Travelling Beyond Local Cultures: Socioscapes in a Global City” (1997), references Elias and Scotson who considered “social mobility as normal” and redefined former concepts of “communities” (42). When one thinks of a community, the association with a delineated space is generally made. In 1991, Arjun Appadurai presented the following question: “What is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized, deterritorialized world?” (196).² In the chapter “The Production of Locality,” Appadurai compares localities with neighborhoods, where he sees localities as “... relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial,” which better describes neighborhoods (204). This means that while neighborhoods may have a bounded space, localities do not. The construction of locality or community is an ongoing struggle with constant negotiations among different social actors (“Global Ethnoscapes” 213).³

Technology has given people the opportunity to be involved in issues of locality despite the distance that may separate them. According to Hannerz, as a result of technological advances and the mass media, “*lo distante puede convertirse de pronto en próximo*” (17). In his book *Transnationalism* (2009), Steven Vertovec mentions Held et al’s⁴ research and findings regarding the advances made in transportation, technology,

² Also in Peleikis, *Lebanese in Motion* (2003).

³ Also in Peleikis 15-16; Cooke, *Localities* (1989).

⁴ Held, D., A. McGrew, D. Goldblatt and J. Perraton. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999. Print.

and telecommunications and the impact they have had on the “extent, intensity, velocity, and impact of globalization.” These “[e]nhanced transnational connections between social groups represent a key manifestation of globalization” and further facilitates the process (2). Technological advances shrink distance and allow transnationals to be constant contributors in the construction of their localities in their places of origin (Peleikis 16). New technologies do not “create new social patterns but they certainly reinforce pre-existing ones” (Vertovec 5). Despite the distance that separates transnational migrants from meaning their home country, language and culture, the national continues to be important for them (Hannerz 20). This results in their participation in the creation of locality in their place of origin while simultaneously recreating communities in their place of residence that are highly associated with each other.

In addition to technology, another aspect of globalization is reflected in “the changing nature of the global labor force [and] the development of interconnected supply chains and markets” (Vertovec 2). The global restructuring of capital in the 1980s resulted in a high number of industrial jobs moving into developing countries. Lower wages and minimal security and benefits made outsourcing these jobs profitable for manufacturers. While many may believe that First World countries provided means of employment to developing countries, June Nash and María Patricia Fernández (1983) explain that the consequences were an economic disruption (vii – xv). Glick Schiller et al. note, not only did it create “a displaced, underemployed, labor force, not easily absorbed by the growing . . . economy” but there was an increase in migration that resulted in

insecure “cultural, social or economic bases within their new settings. This vulnerability increased the likelihood that migrants would construct a transnational existence” (“Transnationalism” 9). The displacements that the authors identify are examples of the intrusions and disruptions referred to by Nash and Fernandez. These economic shifts resulted in increased migrations; the increase in migration, before these established networks, led to a lack of security that these migrants encountered in their new settings such as abuse and mistreatment in the workplace and vulnerability to thieves, examples noted by Gálvez in *Guadalupe in New York* (2010). This in turn contributed to the formation of transnational communities and their extensive networks. Members of these groups “imagine” themselves as part of a community that provides a sense of security among immigrants from the same place of origin to facilitate the process of migration and the social, cultural, and financial adjustment to the place of residence.

Migration patterns that existed prior to the economic shifts were also disrupted and experienced significant changes. According to Alejandro Canales and Christian Zolniski in their article “*Comunidades transnacionales y migración en la era de la globalización*” (2000), until the mid-1960s migration patterns of individuals were generally circular, leaving their place of origin for various rural zones in the United States, always having as a final destination their return home to their communities in Mexico. This pattern has changed dramatically over the years resulting not only in transnational communities that span across countries, but also permanent immigrants, those who considering the circumstances (laws, danger, etc.) have decided to remain in their place of residence. Members from the Mixtec communities that live in California

have largely adopted this pattern as a result of the tough immigration initiatives passed in the 1990s such as Operation Gatekeeper and Operation Hold the Line.⁵ In New York, circular migration surely occurred, but its practice may have been less common since they were coming from the Mixtec region in Puebla where many were escaping political violence and extreme economic hardship (Smith, *Mexican New York* 22). This can be considered another demonstration of the various disruptions and intrusions that Nash and Fernandez mention in relation to the global restructuring that took place in the 1980s.

Economic, cultural and social processes that have accompanied globalization have resulted in a social movement coined “transnationalism.” “Transnationalism is a manifestation of globalization,” accompanied by multiple processes and outcomes which are often “messy” (Vertovec 2). Anthropologists have noted that a growing number of immigrants reside beyond their nation’s borders but still maintain their ties to their communities of origin despite the distance (Glick Schiller et al., “Towards a Definition of Transnationalism” ix). Vertovec states that “[t]ransnationalism’ refers to the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” (I). A large percentage of these immigrants have been constantly involved in negotiating and defining their locality in the place of origin in addition to their locality in the place of residence. These transnational communities serve as a means to maintain their cultural traditions, language, as well as their responsibilities in their community of origin.

⁵ Operation Hold the Line and Operation Gatekeeper were responses by the Border Patrol to the “tremendous increase of illegal immigration to America” in the 1980s and 1990s (“Border Patrol History”). There was an increase of agents and the use of modern technology in order to stop people crossing the border undocumented. Operation Hold the Line was established in the El Paso-Juárez border in 1993 while Operation Gatekeeper was established in 1994 in the San Diego-Tijuana border.

Hannerz and Appadurai have noted that as people are displaced, as people migrate, their cultural meanings and performances change even within the community of origin (Hannerz 24). This demonstrates not only that communities are no longer contained in a delineated place, but culture is also not contained within this space. Culture is constantly being modified by actors within the area in which the community finds itself physically and it is also modified by actors that are not physically present, but are still active members through the many technological advances that shrink great distances. Transnational immigrants are also recreating and reproducing cultural patterns and traditions from their place of residence (Canales and Zolniski). This results in migrants being part of more than one community simultaneously.

According to Vertovec “the awareness of multi-locality stimulates the desire to connect oneself with others, both ‘here’ and ‘there’ who share the same ‘routes’ and ‘roots’” (6).⁶ Vertovec uses Stuart Hall’s idea in the chapter “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” (1990), where he writes about the “rediscovered” identity for Afro-Caribbeans. Hall claims that representations of the African diaspora offer an “imaginary coherence” as a way to bring together shared experiences of fragmentation that they suffered in through the forced diasporas (224). Even though these diasporas resulted in different identities developed in different locations (Africa, Caribbean, the United States, and the United Kingdom), there are images and other forms of representations that bring these together in a collective identity linked to their shared “roots” and “routes”. Vertovec finds that these identities can “be held together or recreated through the mind, through cultural

⁶ Also see Gilroy, *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack and The Black Atlantic* (1993).

artefacts and through a shared imagination” (6). As a result of the shared routes that Mixtec transnational immigrants experience in their journey North and their shared culture and language, a strong community is formed in the place of residence on the basis of these shared experiences and backgrounds.

The state of transnationality in which migrants find themselves can create a crisis of identity when one considers the multiple aspects in their life experiences at the levels of culture, language, customs, and daily life. Glick Schiller et al. state that “while some migrants identify more with one society than the other, the majority seems to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation” (“Transnationalism” 11). This results in processes of “syncretism, creolization, bricolage, cultural translation and hybridity” which can be perceived in various forms of popular culture such as clothing, music, and film among others (Vertovec 6). Members of these communities create “new ethnicities”⁷ from various cultural backgrounds where the cross socialization that has taken place is reflected in the various forms of culture and identities (Vertovec 7). This multiplicity in identity and the processes that can be found in various forms of culture are especially applicable because members of these transnational communities are not only Mexicans residing in the United States, but they are Indigenous Mexicans. Many identify more with the regions in Mexico from which they originate

⁷ Vertovec borrows the term “new ethnicities” from Stuart Hall’s chapter “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities” in the book *Culture, Globalization and the World-System* (1991). In this chapter, Hall explores different notions of identity. The old notions are those that are homogeneous and collective. Marx, Freud, and Saussure’s work makes us question identity. We realize that it is not as stable as we thought it was. The new notion of identity is one that is always in the process of construction and is influenced and shaped from different directions. In Vertovec’s work, they are multi-cultural.

than the nation. This results in the expressions of a variety of identities in cultural performances in places of residence in the United States.

Michael Kearney, who has studied transnational communities from the Mixtec region in Mexico into the southwestern border areas and California, contributes to the literature on transnationalism from a different perspective. In his chapter “Transnationalism in California and Mexico at the End of an Empire” (1998) he first explains the role of the nation-state and nationalism as elements that establish and reproduce differences (118-21). At the level of the nation-state these differences are primarily between the countries that colonized and their (former) colonies. This nation-state defines the social, cultural, economic, and spatial boundaries of who belongs and who does not belong to any particular nation-state or colonizing power. Nationalism, as Kearney mentions, has a similar role except that it happens at a global scale (118-21). As noted earlier, Kearney claims that the nation-states’ current condition is what is known as transnationalism. It “implies a blurring and reordering of the binary cultural, social and epistemological distinctions of the modern period.” His definition not only refers to the networks and forms of cultural expression that surpasses established boundaries, but also “the meaning of transnational as post-national, in the sense that history and anthropology have entered a post-national age” (Kearney 121). While I agree with Kearney that there has been a “reordering” of culture and society, I disagree that we are living in a “post-national age.” As I stated in the introduction, transnationalism does challenge the nation-state because culture, language, and people are no longer contained within the spatial limits belonging to each nation, but this does not mean that we have moved on to a post-

national age. Not only is it active in the regulation of the border, from the side of the United States but also, in the case of *Día de los muertos*, the nation's participation and funding of events through cultural organizations like CONACULTA, and other events sponsored throughout the United States by the Mexican Consulates, challenge Kearney's argument.

Kearney mentions a historic moment known as "End of Empire"⁸ which corresponds to the beginning stages of transnationalism. He states that in the late stages of capitalism, there is a reordering of social factors such as political-economic and sociocultural. When the colonial system was dismantled halfway through the last century, these distinctions between the western nation-states and their colonies formalized and became much more apparent (123). "The current transnational age is, however, characterised by a gross incapacity of peripheral economies to absorb the labour that is created in the periphery, with the result that it inexorably 'flows' to the cores of the global capitalist economy" ("Transnationalism in California" 124).⁹ This results in former colonial subjects joining the former colonizing power as guest workers. Kearney uses the example of Great Britain to compare the process the United States is currently experiencing. He states that in the southwestern border area this process is apparent and that these zones "manifest a transnationalisation of identity in the culture, economics, and politics of late capitalism . . . however, it is not territory *per se* that is being contested, but instead personal identities, movements of persons, and cultural and political hegemony of

⁸ Kearney took this term from a BBC documentary series about the British Empire and its former colonies.

⁹ Also in Kearney, "From the invisible hand to visible feet" (1986).

peoples” (124). In the southwestern border area, as noted by Kearney, the distinction between citizens of the United States and Mexico is blurred. This is visible spatially in border towns and cities throughout the Southwest in which there are areas that “look” like Mexico. This is also notable in the cultural aspects of people, families, and communities in celebrations of traditionally Mexican events such as *Día de la independencia*, *Día de los muertos*, *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, and other familial celebrations such as *quinceañeras*.

As noted by Kearney, the United States seeks to assign, take, withhold and reject identities by trying to maintain control of the border and at the border through tougher immigration laws, and other government initiatives that have been established to control the flow of immigrants into the United States (124). Despite these efforts, Kearney points out that “every day thousands of ‘undocumented’ persons successfully defy the state’s power to control their movement into and through this space and in doing so contest not only space but also control of their identity” (124). Despite United States government efforts to restrict the flow of migration and identities, migrants constantly challenge the state’s power to command these aspects. By crossing the border without going through the official ports of entry, not having a passport that assigns their visa and migratory status or purpose of travel, and by choosing to practice their own culture once established in the United States, immigrants resist the state’s power and authority. In addition, by becoming part of transnational networks, members of transnational communities are also able to play an active role in their community of origin. By doing so not only are they

defying the receiving state's ambition to control their flow and identity, but they are challenging nation-state boundaries.

Transnationalism is a global phenomenon relevant to many different communities from different nations and cultures. A community that has established a wide network by participating in this process of transnationalism and defying nation-state limitations is the Mixtec community from southern Mexico. Due to the maintenance and recreation of cultural experiences in the transnational's place of residence, it is important to include background on the theory of representation in order to add to the analysis by making connections about how these communities are represented through these cultural events.

A contribution that my dissertation also makes to academia is that it engages academics from both sides of the United States-Mexico border on the topic of transnationalism. Federico Besserer, in his book *Topografías transnacionales: Hacia una geografía de la vida transnacional* (2004), proposes to go beyond the traditional "unilocal" methods in the study of transnational communities, and consider the multiple centers, or as I refer to it as nodes, from which members of San Juan de Mixtepec interact in their experiences of life. Besserer states that "*personas viajan entre múltiples puntos del gran archipiélago comunitario y no solamente entre un origen y un destino*" (112). Most of the studies about transnationalism focus on the sending and receiving communities without considering other localities and the role each has within the transnational networks established. In his work, Besserer conducted a cartographic study of the various localities in which members of the community of San Juan de Mixtepec, in Oaxaca, Mexico, have experienced different aspects of life, which he calls dimensions.

These include, but are not limited to, education, rituals, cultural practices, labor and economy (69, 112). He finds that, generally, each dimension is practiced in a specific locality within the transnational network. For example, while children may be born anywhere within the network, they are generally only baptized in the region of San Juan de Mixtepec in Oaxaca. Likewise, weddings, funerals, and other rituals are generally celebrated in Oaxaca. A cultural practice is one of the dimensions that may take place in any of the locations, or as he renames them “*topografía*,” locations in which life experiences take place as organized by the investigator.¹⁰ Besserer’s concludes that transnational communities are *multicéntricas* and *multidimensional*.¹¹ While in my research I am not able to explore the many nodes in which cultural practices take place in the United States, my dissertation contributes to Besserer’s findings by exploring the ways in which the dimension of culture is practiced, represented, and (re)articulated in locations of residence in the United States.

In his article “*Antropología de la frontera, la migración y los procesos transnacionales*” (2003), Everardo Garduño complements Besserer’s conclusion about the (re)articulation of the dimensions of culture and identities. He states that “*las culturas y las identidades son creativamente reinventadas como complejas y multidimensionales formas de autorreferencia.*” While Garduño makes this statement in reference to the geographical and political borders, it is an idea that certainly apply and connects to transnational immigrants and their cultural practices in the places in which they reside.

¹⁰ Besserer also coins the term “*topología*” which gives the transnational subject a voice and opportunity to be an active participant in the research process. *Topografía* means “la interpretación propia que hacen los actores del espacio en el que sucede la acción” (21).

¹¹ For other conclusions related to gender and *direccionalidad* see *Topografías transnacionales: Hacia una geografía de la vida transnacional* (2004).

Among other ideas, Garduño presents two perspectives: *literal* and *aliteral*. The *literal* perspective of the border is what most academics have engaged within their research which includes the social and economic issues that take place in the region. The *aliteral* standpoint of the border has gained more importance and deals with the field of cultural studies by focusing on social action and cultural production. This approach has resulted in studying the border as a space for transnational negotiation. I wish to contribute to Garduño's *aliteral* notion of the border through my research and this dissertation.

The analysis of representations of transnational communities calls for the exploration of Hall's work in this field. Hall is considered one of the most influential academics in the formation of Cultural Studies (Barker 5).¹² As a sociologist and cultural theorist who worked on cultural representations, Hall connects to the work of Ferdinand Saussure, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault. In his book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997) Hall states that "representation connects meaning and language to culture" (15). We use the meanings facilitated by language in order to study cultural phenomena that surrounds us in everyday life. Culture, as Chris Barker defines it in *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (2008), deals with "shared social meanings" that are created through the system of signs known as language (7). As humans, we use language to create and communicate cultural meanings (*ibid* 75). Language as a system of signs creates meanings within cultures and among cultures. Through the analysis of two cultural events, *Día de los muertos* and *Día de la Virgen de*

¹² See also Procter, *Stuart Hall* (2004).

Guadalupe, celebrated by transnational communities in California and in New York City, I note the differences between the events, meanings, and purpose in the communities of origin in comparison to the events, meanings, and purpose in the communities of residence and focus on the adjustments that have catered to the need of the growing Mexican population in the United States.

Objects are a part of our day-to-day life and they serve as important elements of cultural events. They are one of the three key elements in the theory of representation and therefore a fundamental component of analysis in this dissertation. Cultural events and traditions, in any culture, incorporate objects that, while they have their own set of meanings, also contribute to the event's meaning. For example, *Día de los muertos* is often associated with sugar skulls, the *calaca*, and other objects on altars and *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* with candles, frames, clothing, and other memorabilia with her image. Bill Brown's reflections on material culture are also helpful in guiding my project. He distinguishes between an object and a thing.¹³ Moreover, Daniel Miller's work where he rethinks the notion of artefact is also helpful.¹⁴ I expand on their views in chapters two and three of this dissertation where I address the differences in the physicality of objects, such as shape and color, incorporated in cultural events in the communities of origin and the communities of residency.

The work of Richard Schechner, an influential scholar of Performance Studies, is central to my dissertation. Schechner claims that although archives, meaning objects,

¹³ For more see *Things* (2004).

¹⁴ For more see "Artefacts and the Meaning of Things" (1994).

pictures, books, etc., are objects of study in performance theory, actions tend to be the focus in this field. Actions are important in four ways. First, as stated above, behavior is the most common object of study. Second, the relationships between studying performance and doing performance should be considered. This means that most performance studies scholars are also active participants in various forms of performances. Third, the anthropological practice of “participant observation” has been adopted in this field. In anthropology, participant observation is a way to learn about cultures. This practice creates the dichotomy of the “home culture” (generally Western) and the “other” culture. What is special and unique about the field of performance is that one’s own culture can become that “other” to be studied and explored. This allows for revisions and criticism to take place both from within the culture while simultaneously studying it from a distance (*Performance Studies 2*). This is an aspect of performance that allows me to locate myself as a participant of these events and an observer. Even though my family’s migration history may not fully associate with the patterns described as transnationalism, I do share and participate in the events I chose for my study. Furthermore, I am able to study different versions of my own cultural practices as an “other”.

The last and final way that actions are taken seriously in that “performance studies is actively involved in social practices and advocacies. Many who practice performance studies do not aspire to ideological neutrality. ... There is no such thing as neutral or unbiased” (*ibid 2*). It is important to know where one stands in relation to others and inform ourselves to either maintain that position or change it (*ibid 2*). In the

case of the *Antorcha Guadalupeana* in New York City, the event was organized, in part, to urge the United States and Mexican societies, but especially members of the United States government, to take action in regards to immigration reform. *Día de los muertos* celebrations have also been appropriated in the border region to bring light to issues that occur in this area and affect locals and immigrants from all over the world since this region has claimed the life of many who risk their lives to cross it in order to survive.

In the case of the celebrations for *Día de los muertos*, the *Coalición de Derechos Humanos*, an activist organization of people who support immigrants' human rights and fight the militarization of the border (based in Tucson, Arizona) has adopted this event to pay their respects to the thousands of immigrants that died when crossing the Arizona-Sonora Border (“November 2 13th Annual Día de Los Muertos Pilgrimage”). Each of the names of those who passed that year is painted on to white crosses carried by participants of an eight-mile procession to the San Xavier Mission.¹⁵ These events are not only practices emerging in the transnational community's place of origin and then practiced in the locations in which they choose to reside, but the purpose of the tradition is expanded in order to facilitate activist stances from the various parts of the country in order to advocate for the needs of a community that has lived underground in the United States for too long as undocumented immigrants or that died in their attempt to reach that status that would have facilitated survival.

Following Schechner, “[p]erformance studies builds on the emergence of a postcolonial world where cultures are colliding, interfering with, and fertilizing each

¹⁵ San Xavier del Bac Mission is now a landmark in south Tucson, on the Tohono O'odham reservation, which was established by the Catholic Church in the 18th Century.

other” (*The Future of Ritual* 21). The “tensions” that these cultural interactions create at all levels of human life (personal, between cultures, societies, etc.) have been expressed through various forms of performances throughout the world and by scholars in the field of performance. “If performance studies were an art, it would be an avant-garde” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 3). This area of studies pushes the limits and challenges the norm in academia. This makes it a favorable option for those of us who study cultural phenomena that contest social and cultural norms. I point out that in the events included in this study, while it cannot clearly be considered a clash of cultures, it can be considered a coming together of cultural subjects for a common purpose, in the case of the activist nature of these events.

Performance Studies is an academic area that allows marginalized populations to present, study, and create alternatives. It is very important to mention that Schechner defines this field of study as “sympathetic to the avant-garde, the marginal, the offbeat, the minoritarian, the subversive, the twisted, the queer, people of color, and the formerly colonized” (*Performance Studies* 3). When thinking of the processes that resulted in large number of migrants worldwide, transnational immigrants are a combination of marginal, formerly (or even currently) colonized, many belonging to minorities within their own countries (often indigenous in Latin American countries). I suggest that in studying the new migration patterns and processes established by transnational communities, they can also be participants of a social and/or migratory avant-garde. These connections make performance theory a useful perspective from which to analyze cultural events.

In studying the world *as* performance, there are an indefinite number of actions and objects that can be considered the center of analysis. Within the field of performance studies, when using this concept as a tool for analysis, a distinction must be made between what *is* performance and what can be studied *as* performance. As Schechner mentions, *is* performance incorporates a set of conventions that vary depending on its historical and cultural context (*ibid* 30-31). These sets of conventions are very important in order to differentiate between what *is* and what can be studied *as* performance. Examples of the conventions that identify what *is* a performance include a separation between actors and audience, a set of rules to follow in performances found in concerts or plays.¹⁶

The concept of *twice-behaved behavior* or *restored behavior* is important in the definition of performance because “[p]erformance means never for the first time. It means: for the second to the *n*th time” (Schechner and Turner 36). In what *is* performance, the most common example of *restored behavior* for plays, musicals, concerts, etc., are the rehearsals that take place in preparation for the formal or the official performances. Audiences also take part in the restoration of behaviors by acting or maintaining the “etiquette” expected from audiences in such performances. Even though the focus of this study is read *as* performance, there are a myriad of events that can be classified as *is* performance—for example, the mass that takes place at Saint

¹⁶ According to Schechner there are various definitions of “performance.” One of the most common and applicable is to perform to a set standard (for example, in business or). Another includes “to show off, to go to extremes... for those who are watching,” generally a definition applicable to everyday life. Schechner notes that “explaining showing doing” is reflective of the purpose of understanding not only the “world of performance” but also the “world *as* performance” (*Performance Studies* 22, my emphasis).

Patrick's Cathedral in New York City (Gálvez, *Guadalupe in New York* 5) as well as a number of cultural events organized in Mexico such as the *Día de los muertos* celebration in Janitzio in the state of Michoacán (García Canclini, *Transforming Modernity* 96), and many other performances organized by the *centros culturales* throughout the country.

I agree with Schechner when he states that anything can be studied *as* performance (*Performance Studies* 32). This includes actions that take place in our daily lives as well as social and cultural phenomena. The concept of *restored behavior* is also important in understanding what can be studied *as* performance. In terms of social practices, it refers to ideas and ways of being within different societies that have been behaved for centuries. For example, established gender norms have been acted repeatedly over time through individual daily lives.¹⁷ What can be read *as* performance, especially in situations that many transnational migrants experience due to the undocumented immigration status many still hold, is an aspect of performance that contributes not only to the analysis of the performance of cultural events, but also to the analysis of performance of members of transnational communities. I point out that they perform a transnational and even transregional identity through elements of their performances in these events. The costume with elements representing both countries demonstrate elements of transnationalism while the nicknames used to describe their communities in the United States, for example Puebla York and Oaxacalifornia, reveal a transregional identity.

¹⁷ Marvin Carlson and Diana Taylor have studied some of these aspects. For more see Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (2004), and Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003).

In theatrical performance, as noted by Carlson, actors are aware that the operation of their activity holds agency (37-38).¹⁸ Similarly, in social performances, the individual that executes a specific role in society and is aware of such enactment also holds agency despite the role they may be performing. Carlson notes that the cultural performer is accountable to its audience,¹⁹ where the individual participates in the social performance of a selected idea for an intended audience and holds the responsibility of the performance as well as agency (Carlson 38). In the case of transnational migrants, especially those who assist and participate in setting up events such as *la Antorcha Guadalupeña* and *Día de los muertos* celebrations, with or without an activist intention, those who are aware of the event and the purpose of the event hold agency despite their positions as outcasts and/or criminals within United States society. In addition to their awareness of the social performance, in particular those who perform an event with an activist intention, maintain agency by knowingly resisting social and cultural norms.

The daily existence as members of transnational communities, and in many cases as undocumented migrants, are aspects found both in the cultural events and in the daily lives of the members of transnational communities and can be examined *as* a performance. An investigation that utilizes this aspect of the field as a method for research (*as* performance) cannot do so without also going into the meaning and the role of performativity. Schechner indicates that the terms performative and performativity are very broad. Performative can be both a noun and an adjective. For example, as a noun it is “a word or sentence that does something,” such as saying “I do” in a wedding. As an

¹⁸ Agency refers to having the power to take action despite social limitations.

¹⁹ Idea also in Hymes, “Breakthrough into Performance” (1975) and Goffman, *Frame Analysis* (1974).

adjective it indicates “‘performance-like qualities,’ such as performative writing” (*Performance Studies* 123). In this field, the term “performative” can be applied to many different issues such as “the construction of social reality including gender and race, the restored behavior quality of performances, and the complex relationship of performance practice to performance theory” (*ibid* 123).

Performance art related to the social often times utilizes theories of performativity. As Schechner points out, art plays a role in the construction of identities. He states that “the personal is the political . . . Only by recognizing that identity is constructed, not given, contested, not settled, historically and politically evolving, not fixed in ‘nature,’ can the practice of performance art, be regarded as political” (*ibid* 137). I suggest that by celebrating *Día de los muertos* and *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, in the locations in which they are celebrated, members of these communities, and others who join them in their cause and traditions, become participants of identity construction. This is one in which the members of this society (in the United States) have highlighted foreign identity as not belonging in this country through the media and laws passed in the federal government, especially immigrants from the South. Participants of these events contest this identity and reconstruct it to point out their place in United States society.

Every performance, meaning every action, is made up of what Schechner calls “ritualized gestures and sounds.” Whether a performance *is* a performance or is read *as* a performance, all actions have been done or said before. Each of these restored behaviors “is generated by interactions between ritual and play” (*Performance Studies* 52). Schechner defines rituals as “collective memories encoded into actions.” In its interaction

with play, these two have the ability to provide the experience of a “second reality,” one that is secluded from “ordinary life” (*ibid* 52). Through the ritual of cultural events, the members of these transnational communities can experience a “second reality” that is directly connected to their place of origin.

There are two main types of rituals: sacred and secular. Sacred rituals are associated with, express or enact religious beliefs. This type of ritual makes the assumption that a religious belief incorporates communication with supernatural forces or with the natural world (*ibid* 53). On the other hand, secular rituals are associated with “state ceremonies, everyday life, sports, and any other activity” that does not incorporate religious elements. While there are distinctions between the two types of rituals, most celebrations and human rituals are a mix of these two (i.e. birthdays, weddings, holidays, etc.) (*ibid* 53). *Día de los muertos* and *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* celebrations and the events discussed in this study would also be examples of sacred as well as secular rituals.

Performance studies pays close attention to eleven themes of rituals. For my purpose, I will focus on the most relevant for this investigation. “Ritual as action, as performance,” portrays known patterns of behavior and communicates religious ideas (*ibid* 57). This is common in religious events due to the countless rituals that take place in church events. Another mentioned by Schechner is “communitas and anti-structure.” It notes that rituals are experiences that provide the opportunity or experience to free people from the stress of daily life. Turner called this “‘liberation’ from the constraints of ordinary life ‘anti-structure’ and the experience of ritual camaraderie ‘communitas’” (*ibid*

70). In the case of participants in the events chosen for this dissertation, especially immigrants without documentation, these celebrations provide an opportunity to liberate themselves from the daily worry and stress. In addition, it provides a chance to realize that they are not alone, that not only are there many other people who walk in the same path and there are countless others who support them by participating in such events and backing up amnesty and immigration reform.

Another theme is “changing rituals or inventing new ones” (*ibid* 81). “Rituals provide stability” and help people in carrying out change in their life. Technology has affected rituals—presenting “new” social realities to others. They are also invented by society or individuals (*ibid* 81-83). The influence that technology has had is also incorporated in my research through the exploration of how the social realities that organizations involved with activism related to immigration reform and the events that help promote this reform are presented to others through social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and news or religious websites. The rituals that I explore in this dissertation have been widely promoted through these means. In addition, organizers and immigrants in the United States have transformed these events in order to encourage our government to incorporate the millions of immigrants who are forced to live in fear and in deplorable conditions as a result of their immigration status in this country.

Rituals have been used for popular entertainment. In the case of *Día de la Virgen*, we have seen that in Mexico famous singers and artists participate in a televised celebration where they sing and interact with the host and other artists. In New York City, while it is not televised (yet), recognized actors and singers are slowly starting to

participate in the event. In the case of *Día de los muertos*, there have been a myriad of activities and celebrations that include parades, workshops, movies, where this celebration is a central aspect of the attraction. “Rituals [are often] reframed as aesthetic performances . . . tourist shows draw on locals as well as foreigners for audiences. The distinction is no longer mostly ‘East/West’ or ‘North/South’ but increasingly ‘center/margin,’ ‘metropolis/outlying areas,’ and ‘tourist/local’”(*ibid* 84). Many cultural events organized and performed by many migrants in the United States are and began as rituals. Rituals that have changed in many ways, whether because of the new setting in which migrants find themselves or the other effects processes such as globalization have had on cultural practices and events from these communities.

According to Schechner, performances have seven functions: (1) to entertain, (2) to make something that is beautiful, (3) to mark or change identity, (4) to make or foster community, (5) to heal, (6) to teach, persuade, or convince, and (7) to deal with the sacred and/or the demonic (*ibid* 38). I suggest that the performances I chose as objects of study for this dissertation meet with most, if not all, of the functions identified by Schechner.

In this dissertation I will present a common trajectory that many immigrants belonging to specific transnational communities have followed, analyzing and comparing two cultural events, *Día de los muertos* and *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, that many members of these communities have participated in by applying theories of transnationalism, semiotics, representation, thing theory, and performance theory. The

analysis demonstrates how these events reflect a transnational nature that goes against the dominant due to their “trans” nature as well as the activist adaptations of each event.

Chapter two will focus on a transnational community from Puebla that has established itself in New York City. As participants in Mexican cultural events, their participation in the celebration of *el Día de Virgen de Guadalupe*, along with the involvement of many other Mexicans in the tri-state area, resulted in the organization of a binational event, known as *La Antorcha Guadalupana*. Its organization and participation was facilitated due to the importance of this day to all Mexicans and as a result of the strong networks and relationships that exist as a result of the formation of transnational communities.

CHAPTER 2: NEW YORK AND MEXICAN TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL PRACTICES AND TRADITIONS

In this chapter, I invoke the importance of *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* for Mexicans migrants and how the *Antorcha Guadalupeña*, organized by the non-governmental organization *Asociación Tepeyac*, emerged from Mexicans' devotion to the *Virgen de Guadalupe* and the common social and economic needs of the Mexican community in the New York Metropolitan area. Questions that will guide this chapter include the following:

- How do transnationalist practices affect, and how are they reflected in, the *Antorcha Guadalupeña*?
- What are cultural elements and traditions in these events that identify them with transnational communities? How do they work?
- How do the *Antorcha Guadalupeña* and other celebrations of *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* in New York City reflect migratory dynamics?
- What is the political role of the *Antorcha Guadalupeña* in the United States in relation to immigration reform?
- How are the *Asociación Tepeyac* and *la Antorcha Guadalupeña* represented in various print and digital productions including social media and how do these contribute to the notion of transnational culture?

The links between *la Antorcha Guadalupeña* and the theories of representation, performance, and thing theory, contribute to the conversations on transnationalism from an *aliteral* perspective and focuses less on the *literal* notion. Due to the political and social elements present in *la Antorcha Guadalupeña*, these perspectives as described by

Garduño do not function independently of each other. The analysis of *Asociación Tepeyac* and its celebration of *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* from a Cultural Studies perspective demonstrates the ways in which this festivity has developed from places where transnational immigrants originated to those where they now reside.

New York has been a popular destination for migrants from all backgrounds, a trend that has resulted in interaction among various migrant communities as well as with people who are United States citizens. This characteristic has resulted in an “hourglass economy” where there are a vast number of jobs for the professionals and highly educated population and a vast number of jobs for the unskilled and “unstable labor markets.” The city’s poor population, including established and incoming migrants, generally fill the latter jobs (Smith et al. 2). Since the 1950s, not only has the job market changed drastically, but so has its population. “In 1997, non-Hispanic whites constituted 36 percent of the city’s population, while non-Hispanic blacks were 29 percent, non-Hispanic Asians were 8 percent, and Hispanics were 26 percent” (*ibid* 3). When evaluating the diversity, Smith et al. mention Reynolds Farley’s conference presentation in 1998 where he estimated that 48 percent of the region’s population is of “foreign stock” (3). It can be assumed that the trend of incoming migrants from all countries and walks of life has continued and this would imply that this estimate has grown. Historically, New York City, home to Ellis Island, was the most important port of entry for immigrants during earlier immigration waves into the United States. Since then, the dynamics of the city, meaning its political institutions and populations, “have evolved in ways that require greater collaboration among ethnic groups.” New York City, as

Cordero-Guzmán and Navarro claim, has a large number of community-based organizations whose focus and purpose is to support the immigrant population (21); an example is the *Asociación Tepeyac* which, as will be noted, has not only developed support for the Mexican population in New York City, but also a means of cultural practice while simultaneously organizing its followers in the struggle for citizenship rights. Through her extensive work on this organization and celebration of *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, Galvez provides an extensive anthropological study in her book *Guadalupe in New York: Devotion and the Struggle for Citizenship Rights among Mexican Immigrants* (2010). While my dissertation relies heavily on her work, I approach this association and event from a Cultural Studies perspective, presenting the performative, representational, and transnational aspects in more detail and how these contribute to the immigrants' identity as transnationals.

As a result of the growing numbers of immigrants in New York City, who constituted over one third of the population in 1998 (Foner 1), the importance and the role some of these community-based organizations play in immigrants' daily lives has grown as well as the way the city has been affected by the growing population and the cultural institutions established to serve these populations. Foner notes the differences in the patterns of migration to New York City in the last four decades of the 20th century that made the city home to over two and a half million immigrants. In the early 20th century, immigrants were overwhelmingly from European countries, whereas in the early part of the 21st century they are primarily from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (1). According to the article "City Sees Wave of Newcomers" (2013) the top five

countries that account for the highest numbers of foreign-born population in New York City in 2011 are the Dominican Republic, China, Mexico, Jamaica, and Guyana from the highest numbers to the lowest in that order (Hollander A21). Even though New York City is a popular destination for immigrants from the Caribbean, immigrants from other Spanish-speaking countries have made New York City their destination. From the almost 30% of Hispanics in the late 1990s noted by Smith et. al in *Migration, Transnationalization, and Race in Changing New York* (2001), the biggest Hispanic groups in 1990 and 2000 according to the Census are Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Mexicans (*Demographic/Household Characteristics and Asian and Hispanic Subgroups* 26). Members of these communities have established a pattern of migration that results in networks and increased migration from specific communities from the country of origin.

Immigrants seem to look for security and residence in areas inhabited by other immigrants. Don Pedro, one of the first Mexican immigrants from Ticuani, paved the road to the beginnings of a transnational community of Ticuanenses in New York City (Foner 4). Since they could not obtain a contract for labor in the United States, a *Bracero* contract, they got a ride to New York City in the 1940s with a New Yorker who was vacationing in Mexico City. These were the beginnings of migration from Ticuani, Puebla to New York City (Foner 4; Smith, *Mexican New York* 21). At the turn of the century, Mixtecs made up approximately two-thirds of Mexicans in New York City (Smith, "Mexicans: Problems and Prospects in New York" 276). It is also important to note that in the 1990s, Smith found that 41 percent of Ticuanenses lived in New York

City, 48 percent lived in Ticuani, and the remaining 11 percent were scattered throughout the United States and Mexico (“Mexicans in New York City” 67). While Smith’s findings are not strongly related to Besserer’s idea of *topografias*, they do reveal the strength of the transnational network established by Ticuanenses since the mid-twentieth century.

MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS AND TRANSNATIONALS IN NEW YORK CITY

Traditionally, Mexicans have been known to immigrate to regions of the United States much closer to their own country. In the recent past, Hispanic population maps demonstrated that Mexican immigrants concentrated in regions such as the Southwest and in California. Until recent decades, few Mexican immigrants chose the East Coast as a destination. Driving through the streets of Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Washington, D.C.; New York City; Philadelphia; and Bridgeport, Connecticut one may be surprised to find that the Mexican population is large enough in these regions, and many others, to support numerous markets, *bodegas*, restaurants, and *panaderias* that promote, sell, and make available Mexican products, foods, and culture, especially in New York Metropolitan area.

Among the few studies that address Mexican migration to the Northeastern region of the United States. Smith (2006) focuses on Mixtec communities from Puebla that have established in New York City and still maintain ties to “home.” He describes the evolution of the transnational Ticuanense community by “focusing on the formation of political community by first-generation men; on how gender structures transnational life;

and on second-generation assimilation and participation in transnational life” (4). The community that he worked with during 15 years of ethnographic research lives in New York City but originated from Ticuani, Puebla. He also traveled to the community of origin various times to complement and expand his studies. Smith found that like many other transnational communities, people from Ticuani and living in New York City also actively participate in Ticuani’s economic and political system. A good example of this took place in 1993. Ticuani needed new water pipelines because the old ones were corroded. This project required approximately \$150,000, of which two-thirds was raised by the community living in New York City. Not only did the Ticuani community in New York City raise this money, but it also participated in consulting authorities and contractors in the planning of this project (Smith, *Mexican New York* 2-3).

Smith found that the Mixtec community migrated in four different phases. The first took place between the mid-1940s and the mid-1960s, when the sending communities of migrants were primarily from parts of Oaxaca, Puebla, and Guerrero. Due to these early patterns established from the Mixtec region to New York City, surveys that Smith conducted in 1992 and then in 2001 and 2002 indicate that approximately 66% of Mexican immigrants in New York came from the Mixtec region in Mexico, and almost half of these are from Puebla (*ibid* 20).

The second phase took place between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s. During this time, many people from Puebla were finding an escape from political violence that permeated the Mexican state. The third phase took place between the 1980s and the mid-1990s. As a result of the economic struggles that Mexico experienced, many decided

to migrate. Puebla was among the states in the Mixtec region that were hardest hit. This “coincided with U.S. employers’ identification of Mexicans as plentiful and diligent workers” (*ibid* 22), which encouraged this third phase of Mixtec migration to New York City. The Reagan administration’s Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) established in 1986 not only allowed migrants to be able to go back home, but they were also able to bring back family members with them (*ibid* 22). The fourth and final phase of migration from the Mixtec region took place in the late 1990s. By this time, due to the many migrants from this region that had already established abroad and whose communities had reached a sense of maturity and security (New York City being one of the most popular of these destinations), those who wanted to leave were more likely to join these communities. Also, due to the tighter border security, immigrants were not only more likely to cross illegally, but also to avoid the circular migration pattern that had been practiced in earlier phases. At this point in time, the East Coast had become an important and growing destination for Mexican immigrants (*ibid* 22-23). The significance of the communities and the number of Mexican immigrants settling in New York City was such that in the 1990s a number of nicknames were established. These included “Puebla York,” “Manhatitlán,” “New Yorktitlán” (*ibid* 19), and “Neza York” (Smith, *Mexicans: Problems and Prospects in New York* 281; Foner 5).²⁰ These nicknames are not only proof of the growing population but also proof of the strong ties that Mexicans continue to have with their own country (Smith, *Mexican New York* 19).

²⁰ Also in Vecino, *Gangs and Crews: Field Notes for NSF Project* (1999).

By choosing nicknames that incorporate New York and components of Mexico, these communities are representing themselves as members of both societies, mirroring their connections and participation in both locations and performing their place in both societies. They are also displaying elements of transnationalism as identified in chapter one by Garduño. Not only does it demonstrate the creative, complex, and multidimensional ways in which transnational immigrants rearticulate culture and identity, but it also contributes to his notion of what is considered *aliteral*. Therefore, transnationalism could be interpreted as a response to assimilation. This is important because it is an expression of the multiple components that make up this community's identity and culture in its (re)articulation. It is also a demonstration of the strong ties to the communities of origin and networks that exist and make the community from Ticuani, a transnational community.

In paying close attention to the elements that make up these nicknames, I point out that the communities that Smith worked with identify themselves much more as members of the indigenous communities they are a part of than the country of Mexico as a whole. Puebla is a state in Mexico and one from which many immigrants in New York City are originally from. It is also one of the states that make up part of the Mixtec region. The ending "...titlán" makes reference to Tenochtitlán, Mexico City's name before the Spanish Conquest, the center of the Aztec Empire. It is also a suffix that means "place" or "location" in nahuatl and illustrates a strong linguistic connection. Many of the *poblano* immigrants are nahuatl speakers.²¹ This example and link shows that immigrants

²¹ According to Mixtec.org Ñuu Savi, there are between thirty and fifty variations of the Mixtec language.

are not only transnational but transregional. By integrating linguistic aspects from a specific region of Mexico into these nicknames it is a particular region that is being exalted rather than the nation. Thus, transnational identity is also articulated as transregional.

MEXICAN CULTURAL EVENTS IN NEW YORK CITY

A cultural tradition is a crucial element of any community, at a regional or national level. With the fast growing population of Mexican immigrants in the United States and New York City, the communities established find ways to continue their practices in their home away from home. Some are celebrated through smaller neighborhood and family events, such as *quinceañeras*; others are celebrated on a much larger scale as a result of the people's practices and devotions and thanks to the intensely tight networks established throughout both countries, such as *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* and the *Antorcha Guadalupana*.

Cultural events such as these not only play an important role in the daily lives of immigrants in their place of residence, but have also been used as a strategy—conscious or unconscious—to maintain strong ties to their roots instead of fully assimilating. There are various ways that Mexican immigrants have upheld their cultural practices and traditions. Any tourist visiting New York City or any person living in the city can see that the Mexican communities established in the city have come together around major Mexican cultural traditions such as *16 de septiembre*, *5 de mayo*, *Día de los muertos*, *Pastorelas y posadas* related to Christmas celebrations, *La batalla de Puebla*, and *La*

Antorcha Guadalupana, which culminates with the holiday of *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, the day the *antorcha* arrives to St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. In addition, there have also been various events and workshops where dances or languages are the epicenter, and others that celebrate particularly the state of Puebla, where most immigrants living in New York City come from, as stated in a subscription email by *Mano a Mano: Mexican Culture Without Borders*, a New York organization that focuses on honoring Mexican culture. I point out that through the organization of events directly linked to the state of Puebla, the notion of transregion that exists between transnational immigrants living in New York City intensifies.

El Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe is celebrated widely throughout México and now the United States.²² *La Virgen de Guadalupe* has been a prominent religious figure in Mexico and in the United States due to Mexican immigration. In an interview with the coordinator of the torch run in Mexico City, Galvez found that while not all Mexicans are religious, more specifically Catholic, they would all consider themselves *guadalupanos* (*Guadalupe in New York* 146). *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is one of Mexico's principal symbols (*ibid* 75)²³ and receives between 12 and 20 million visitors at the *Basilica de Guadalupe* in Mexico City each year (*ibid* 75). *La Virgen de Guadalupe* can count on all

²² The legend of the *Virgen* states that in 1531 she appeared to *Juan Diego*, an indigenous convert to Catholicism, on the *Cerro de Tepeyac* now located in Mexico City. *La Virgen* asked *Juan Diego* to deliver to the bishop a message of her appearance and her desire for an altar in her honor. *Juan Diego* was rejected numerous times. Finally, he asked the *Virgen* to give him a sign for the bishop as evidence. *La Virgen* gave him Castilian roses and imprinted her image in *Juan Diego's tilma*, his cloak, which now sits in the *Basilica de Guadalupe* in Mexico City. According to Alyshia Galvez's findings in her own research, the author of the book *Guadalupe in New York* (2010), it is said that this is when Mexico, the country, was born (72).

²³ Also in Castillo, *Goddess of the Americas* (1996); Johnson, *The Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexican Culture* (1980); LaFaye, *Quetzalcóatl y Guadalupe* (1993); Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe* (1995); Wolf, *The Virgin of Guadalupe* (1958).

Mexicans' devotion and adoration, including Mexican-Americans and Chicanos²⁴ in the United States. While this is an event that is widely celebrated by people of Mexican background in the United States, one of the main differences are the transnational connections Mexicans in New York use in order to make a grand event a reality. In addition, the hope for amnesty and immigration reform is one that while Mexican Americans and Chicanos may support, it does not generally affect them like it does recent immigrants and many transnational immigrants. Mexican Americans and Chicanos are generally citizens or documented immigrants in the United States. While this does not mean that they do not experience any struggles in their daily lives, the struggles are not related or resolved by the passing of a fair immigration reform in the United States. Despite this lack of association in the struggles of undocumented migrants, there are many people who participate in these events to demonstrate their support.

ASOCIACIÓN TEPEYAC IN NEW YORK CITY

The *Asociación Tepeyac* in New York was officially established on the day of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, December 12th in 1997 (“Asociación Tepeyac de New York: Historia”) thanks to the New York Archdioceses that funded the office space and salaries for two people to lead the association (Sletza Ortega, “Tepeyac en Nueva York” 15). The initiative and idea that lead to the formation of *Asociación Tepeyac* did not come from

²⁴ A Mexican is a person who was born and raised most of their life in Mexico. When they establish in the United States they may choose to identify themselves as Mexican-American which places emphasis on the duality of their language and culture. Chicano is generally a term that has political implications as going against the norm (coming from the Chicano Movement). From another perspective, Chicano is also a person who was crossed by the border when it was reestablished in 1848 or 1854. Many people, like myself, may choose between these three different terms that identify us depending on the context.

Mexicans residing in New York City as one would think. Instead, it was founded by a group of Catholic priests and community leaders trying to respond to the needs of the rapidly incoming population of Mexicans constantly increasing in their parishes (Gálvez, “She Made Us Human” 150). While this can be considered a lack of agency on the part of Mexican immigrants, the conditions many of them live in as a result of their undocumented status prevents them from openly looking for ways to help themselves. Instead, they found ways in which to exercise their agency in safe havens such as churches around town by establishing *comités guadalupanos*, religious groups devoted to *la Virgen de Guadalupe*.

The priests knew that the Mexican population was likely to continue growing, as would their needs, as a result of the almost half a million Mexicans in the Tri-State area. According to the Census in 2000, 186,700 Mexicans resided in New York City. Despite these official numbers, Smith and other researchers in New York City predict nearly half a million Mexicans were really residing in the city. In addition, their high birthrates would also contribute since “...the total number of births to Mexican mothers is third among all groups,” and the continuing migration due to the state of the Mexican economy and government in states like Puebla, Guerrero, and Oaxaca (*ibid* 151, 156). Research shows that Mexicans that migrate from the Mixtec region generally have limited education (*ibid* 156). When the lack of education is combined with their undocumented status it yields a population that is at high risk of being exploited and abused by the society in which it is settling. I do suggest that while research findings indicate a “lack of education,” what is not contemplated is that education can present itself in various ways.

In the case of many indigenous communities in Mexico and the United States, there tends to be an oral tradition, which is a form of education. Here, Walter Mignolo's (2002) geopolitics of knowledge come into play. Investigators are only taking into consideration Western forms of producing knowledge. Researchers and religious leaders associated with *Asociación Tepeyac* found that employers, landlords, neighbors, and sometimes even other Mexicans exploit these incoming migrants due to their exceedingly vulnerable state (Galvez, 'She Made Us Human' 152; Sletza Ortega, "Tepeyac en Nueva York" 16). This raised concern for priests who served the growing and vulnerable Mexican population in the city. The growing population and the findings about the exploitation these immigrants experienced confirmed the need for an organization that can serve as a resource for immigrants and a place where they feel safe to come for support and to share common traditions, practices, and beliefs.

Priests started noting that members of their parishes began requesting celebrations on December 12th in honor of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. In the late 1990s, several of these priests became part of the Committee for Hispanic Affairs in the New York City Archdiocese where they requested assistance and clergy from Mexico to help in their efforts to meet the needs of the growing Mexican population in their neighborhoods and parishes (Gálvez, "She Made Us Human" 151; "*Asociación Tepeyac de New York: Historia*"). The response was sending Joel Magallán in order to help build support for Mexicans in New York. Magallán was a Jesuit brother with experience in Mexican communities in Chicago and who had worked in the Mixtec region in Mexico. He conducted a survey of Mexican Catholics in New York City and in response founded the

Asociación Tepeyac in 1997, the first meeting taking place on September 6th and opening the center's doors in Manhattan on 14th Street on December 12th of that same year (“*Asociación Tepeyac de New York: Historia*”). The association linked existing *comités guadalupanos* already established as a means of dealing with issues of the community, such as the various hardships experienced by recent and often undocumented immigrants (Gálvez, *Guadalupe in New York* 13, 44, 46) and promoted establishing additional *comités* in other areas where they might be needed considering the concentration of Mexicans in neighborhoods throughout New York City (Gálvez, “She Made Us Human” 151; “*Asociación Tepeyac de New York: Historia*”). It is clear that the *virgen* not only played an important role in the formation of this organization, but the organization wanted to use a strong figure to represent it in order to attract followers and supporters, primarily Mexican, but open to anyone who identified, believed, or related to *la Virgen de Guadalupe*.

The more Magallán learned about the ways to address the issues of the Mexican community in New York City, the more the organization supported and promoted amnesty for all undocumented immigrants through the organized events celebrated in the community and the services provided. Services included, but were not limited to, English classes, legal advice, and help in navigating the city and the system (assistance filling out forms, for example). Nationwide this means amnesty for over 11 million people, 56 percent of whom are Mexican (Passel *i*). Galvez asked Magallán why the focus of the association was mainly amnesty, to which he responded that most problems experienced

by Mexicans are either “indirectly or directly related to their lack of papers” (“She Made Us Human” 152). Galvez adds that the

[l]andlords, knowing that some tenants are undocumented, charge higher than market rates for substandard—or illegal—housing and then neglect to make repairs; employers refuse to pay minimum wage or overtime; petty thieves target immigrant families and the buildings where they live knowing that they are unable to open bank accounts and thus might hoard cash and are reluctant to report crimes to the police; women spend their entire pregnancies without prenatal care, arriving at the emergency room of hospitals to deliver, believing it is the only way they can access emergency Medicaid; the list [of issues experienced by undocumented migrants in New York City] goes on and on. (*ibid* 152)

The rationale behind this argument says that if immigrants in New York, and in many parts of the United States, would regularize their immigration status, many of these problems would not exist. People would feel safe going to the authorities in cases of abuse by employers or thieves, or have access to other services and avoid any complications. By taking steps to eliminate their vulnerable state, employers may not even try to take advantage of them, or thieves not target them, examples that demonstrate that amnesty and fair immigration reform is a perfect solution to many of the issues experienced by Mexican immigrants in New York and other parts of the country.

Adriana Sletza Ortega, contributor to Joel Merino’s graphic history of the association and of Guadalupe in New York and coordinator of “*Sin Fronteras*,” a

supplement in a Mexican newspaper that focuses on migrant matters, notes that other Hispanic groups in the city have had to struggle for their civil and political rights and states that: “[l]os mexicanos son los nuevos inmigrantes en la metrópoli y por lo tanto los que deben luchar porque se les reconozcan su[s] derechos civiles y políticos” (“Tepeyac en Nueva York” 17). The issues of exploitation and abuse that undocumented immigrants experience suggest a need for people or organizations that advocate for these immigrants by promoting their basic human rights. *Asociación Tepeyac* has tried to fulfill this demand through its different programs and events.

Through its website, the *Asociación Tepeyac de New York* members of the association represent it as a place where Mexicans and other Latinos can find hope despite the situation they may find themselves in as undocumented immigrants through the use of colors, images, and phrases that identify with *la virgen* and with the phrase commonly linked to her: “*protectora de los mexicanos.*” On their website, the association states that “Tepeyac is devoted to inform, organize, and educate Mexican and Latino immigrants and their families about rights, resources, develop community leaders and organizations” (“*Asociación Tepeyac de New York: About Us*”). The programs that the association offers the community align with the mission statement. They offer English and computer classes; GED programs; advice on topics related to immigration, labor rights, and tenant-landlord issues, small businesses and purchasing of a home here in the United States or in Mexico and tutoring services for children. The organization also offers programs and cultural events that provide the opportunity for immigrants to play an important role in promoting education, especially among young immigrants, as well as

promoting and supporting a political stand on immigration issues, such as the immigration reform and the DREAM Act (“*Asociación Tepeyac de New York: Historia*”). In addition, *Asociación Tepeyac* also participated in forming and promoting the National Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty, where over 300 organizations worked towards the legalization of undocumented immigrants. The efforts of the *Asociación Tepeyac* reflect the belief of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* as the protector of the Mexican and, in this case, undocumented Mexican immigrants.

The image that represented the organization for its 15th anniversary was the number 15, hugged by a banner that reads “years serving the community,” with an eight-petal flower inside the round portion of the 5. On each side of the number 15, there are seven flowers, also with eight petals making it a total of 15 flowers, to represent each the organization has been in existence. Below, the name of the association appears and the background for the complete image is a blue sky with white clouds.²⁵ This logo represents the association as heavenly, which brings to mind the notions of hope and faith. In addition, it deepens the connections with *la Virgen de Guadalupe*.

The elements that make up part of the image of *la virgen* in the *tilma* that hangs in the *Basílica de Guadalupe*, in Mexico City, are symbols that represent or connect to indigenous beliefs or others related to faith and that may also be connected to religion. This is relevant in my research because it contributes to understanding the links *Asociación Tepeyac* has to *la virgen* and how its organizers represent this association. Furthermore, it adds to the aspect of transregional, not through the limitation of space but

²⁵ For access to the image go to: <http://www.tepeyac.org/about/>

because of the transnational community's association to the Aztec culture and system of signs. For example, the color of her skin is an important factor since she was the first indigenous virgin. There are other symbols that can be found on her dress. One that is relevant in the logo the *Asociación Tepeyac* for its 15th anniversary is the eight-petal flower. According to the series of articles "*Conoce a María*" the eight flowers with 8 petals that appear in the virgin's attire represents the conjunction of the Sun and Venus (Monroy, "*Códice Guadalupano II parte*"). These astrological meetings only happened every 104 years. It is a rare event and it coincided with the apparition of *la virgen* to Juan Diego on December 12th, 1531. The article states that on this date "*el hombre y el universo se encontraron para comenzar una época nueva, bajo el nuevo sol*" (Monroy, "*Códice Guadalupano II parte*"). By connecting the meaning of this flower and considering that it has been in the logo for this organization since its early years, we can interpret that an unusual meeting of events will take place for immigrants in New York City and they too will be able to "begin a new era, under a new sun." *Asociación Tepeyac* is likely to be involved in this conjunction due to its involvement in the life of immigrants and the organization's support of the various initiatives for immigration reform in the United States.

The name *Tepeyac* has intentional connections to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* on various levels. First, it is the name of the hill in Mexico City where *la Virgen de Guadalupe* appeared to Juan Diego in 1531. Also it has to be considered, as Gálvez's research shows, that this association is composed of *comités guadalupanos*, generally identified as Mexicans brought together to celebrate December 12th, the Day of *la Virgen*

de Guadalupe (*Guadalupe in New York* 31-71). Another reason cited in the same book from an interview conducted with Estela Morales, a member of the *Tepeyac* staff at the time, who stated that in Mexican history, “[t]he apparition of the Virgin appeared at a very crucial moment, when there was a lot of oppression for the indigenous people. Her apparition changed the indigenous people’s status to the category of human being” (72). In Gálvez’s chapter in the book *Performing Religion in the Americas* (2007), she opens a section with the following quote: “Immigrants today are like the indigenous people during the conquest” (“She Made Us Human” 149). This is an unfair statement to make because immigrants are not experiencing the same treacherous accounts that took place against a civilization during the Spanish Conquest. Many immigrants do experience various forms of exploitation but immigrants do have access to organizations that have been established in order to assist them as best as possible.

The apparition to Juan Diego, an indigenous convert to the Catholic Church, took place during a time when there was debate over the classification of indigenous people which depended on whether they had a soul and which was related to their faith and belief in the Catholic Church’s God and practices. When *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, known to the Spaniards from her shrine and place in Extremadura, Spain, appeared to an indigenous convert, it sent the message that they too were sons and daughters of God and as such they could not be abused or exploited through *encomiendas* (Gálvez, “She Made Us Human” 144-145). Many Mexican immigrants find themselves in a situation of abuse and exploitation. While their “belonging” is not determined religiously, according to Gálvez they are in a situation similar enough from which *la Virgen de Guadalupe* saved

the indigenous during the conquest, and within the community there is hope that her presence and participation in amnesty requests may result in a change of status for undocumented immigrants. This status would not only publicly acknowledges their basic human rights, but also allow immigrants to be part of United States society, where they had to establish due to the economic or political needs in their communities of origin.

La Virgen de Guadalupe is considered a religious figure, which has been used for political purposes as well.²⁶ According to José Castillo y Piña, author of the book *Tonantzin*, there are hardly any historical accounts in which *la Virgen de Guadalupe* has not “*intervenido como el principal factor de nuestra protectora y modelo en la solución de nuestros graves problemas nacionales*”(225). For these reasons adopting a name that not only has connections to their home country, connections to the legend of one of the most important figures for Mexicans, and the various political movements *la virgen* has been associated with, nationally and abroad, *Tepeyac* will play an important role in defending Mexicans in any way possible and celebrating Mexicanness is appropriate.²⁷

²⁶ Gálvez mentions that in 1810, when Miguel Hidalgo called for independence from Spain, he carried an image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* with him and shouted “*Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe y Muerte a los Gachupines*” (“She Made Us Human” 147). In addition, during the *Revolución*, Emiliano Zapata also carried her image and named her *La Generalísima*. In the last century, her image was also adopted and used by César Chávez when he led the United Farmworkers’ Movement, and as a result it became an important image for “Chicano and Mexican-American struggles for justice and cultural citizenship in general” (*ibid* 149; Flores and Benmayor).

²⁷ One of the first logos that *Asociación Tepeyac* used to represent itself presented images that could be connected to political agendas. The logo had the image of *la virgen* in the center that appears to be coming out of a Mexican flag. Behind *la virgen* was the New York skyline, including the Statue of Liberty, and under *la virgen* and the flag is the image of ten arms with their hands in the form of a fist. Five of these hands are on the left and five are on the right. In the middle, there is an open book with a plant that looks like it is growing out of it. This first logo had a clear visual connection to *la virgen* and a link to Mexican culture and people, as well as an indication of the importance of education for the people’s future. According to Juan Carlos Aguirre, the fists gave the impression of resistance and rebellion (phone interview June 7, 2014) and while members of the organization support measures and laws that will favor undocumented immigrants in the United States, their intention is not to position themselves as rebels. Instead, in the “About Us” page of the association’s website, it states that it intends to promote human

By choosing to represent themselves through clear associations to *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, *Asociación Tepeyac* ensures reaching a wide range of audiences. This in turn may result in increased participation from others in the community in promoting and supporting amnesty. Amnesty would be the miracle that *la virgen* would grant Mexicans in the United States since, as stated by Magallán, it would resolve most of the issues and hardships Mexicans in New York City face.

DÍA DE LA VIRGEN DE GUADALUPE

I mentioned in the introduction that I had the opportunity to participate in the *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* celebration in New York City. In my experience living in the region and taking part in this celebration I noted her strong presence in the New York Metropolitan region. The importance of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* is notable not only in daily practices of devotion but also in the annual celebration on December 12th.

Considering the vast number of followers of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and that her “cult,” as Sonia Iglesias Cabrera, describes her followers in the book *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* (2001), transcends borders, physical, social and ethnic, and as a result it would not be surprising that she is celebrated all over the world. “*Ser mexicano y ser guadalupano son dos conceptos que pueden confundirse hasta llegar a ser sinónimos*”

(3). Wherever Mexicans have established themselves, so has a celebration to her, *La Patrona de México*.

rights, organize and educate immigrants and provide opportunities for leadership. For all of these initiatives *la virgen* is a perfect connection and representation in advocating for immigrants and started doing so by bringing together the *comités guadalupanos*.

Cities and towns throughout Mexico generally celebrate *la virgen* with attendance to a mass and either parades or local events in her honor. However, in Mexico City celebrations to *La Virgen* are extensive considering the thousands of visitors the *Basilica* receives on the 12th of December. This celebration is important in my dissertation because it not only provides the opportunity to explore the ways in which this celebration *is* a performance, but also how performances and rituals compare between the events in Mexico City and New York City. Pilgrims from all over the country travel to the *Basilica de Guadalupe* in Mexico City as a demonstration of their devotion or often as an offer of gratitude for the favors that *la virgen* has granted. Pilgrimages are a common occurrence on December 12th in Mexico City. They can have as few as 10 to 20 people, or as many as 500 (*ibid* 16). They are accompanied by the image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, flowers, braids made up of human hair, and other offerings that they bring to their *Patrona* (*ibid* 17). In addition to the elements of celebration that accompany the pilgrims, there are a number of other cultural and traditional practices at the *Basilica* such as dancers from various regions of México, music, art, and many others, most of which are also present in celebrations around the world, including those in New York City. These details are important to note because the *Antorcha Guadalupeana* incorporates many of these components—not only because it is what they would do in their communities of origin, but it can also be interpreted as a way in which assimilation is challenged despite the modifications celebrations and traditions may experience.

In the beginning stages of my research I came across information about *la Antorcha Guadalupeana*. At this point I had already read Smith's work and knew that a

transnational community established in New York City. As a result I planned a trip to New York City to witness the event. On December 10th of 2009 I walked into the offices of *Asociación Tepeyac* where numerous people related to the association or coming to visit just for the upcoming event were conversing and helping with the final preparations. I became part of the conversations and made new friends while I also joined in assisting with the folding of the *misales*, the programs for the mass for *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. Maria Zuñiga Barba invited me to join them for the *mañanitas* at St. Patrick's Cathedral the next evening and then again the following morning at Central Park to receive the torch and march it to the cathedral. I did not know what to expect, since at the time I had only read about this event after hours of internet searches about Mexican cultural events in New York City, where I knew academic studies had been done related to transnational Mexican immigrants. I knew what celebrations looked like in Mexico City, especially the televised versions, where many artists sing to *la virgen* and people talk about the miracles she granted for them.

When we arrived at the cathedral, there were already many people sitting while they waited. The church made few changes for the event; the main one was placing an image of the *la virgen* at the right side of where the priest performed parts of the rituals. The ceremony was beautiful. There was the mass, and towards the end there was a musical concert that concluded the night's events. The ritual and performance that took place at St. Patrick's Cathedral are what Schechner identified as what *is* performance. The set of conventions that identify this as a performance include the separation of the people who are there to take part in the event as an audience or as passive participants,

considering the call and response involved in parts of a mass. The priest and his assistants were located up at the altar, where they not only performed the rituals that take place in a mass, but where they remained and changed their role to that of audience when the musical performances took place.

People throughout both countries may not recognize the artists that participated in the concert, but they were certainly following a similar pattern in the style of music and songs chosen as they take place at the *Basilica* in Mexico City. The separation between the musicians and the audience remained after the priest concluded the mass. The artists would be at the altar, but they would always place themselves right next to *la virgen* and sing directly to her in most cases. For me, two performances stood out due to the resemblance to the televised version of the celebration from Mexico City in the type of music and style of the songs. There was a woman who sang *Ave María* who throughout would sing directly to *la virgen*. In the case of the mariachis, they entered the church when it was their turn to sing to *la virgen* and, like all the other performers, placed themselves next to the image representing *la virgen*.

While the whole event of *La Antorcha Guadalupana* can be considered a ritual to be analyzed using Schechner's themes of rituals, the mass and the concert are rituals that do not deviate much from the original performance in Mexico's capital. The theme of "communitas and anti-structure" is one that is relevant in the case of immigrants in New York City, especially undocumented immigrants. Turner would characterize this as a "liberation" from daily life. Considering the hardships that undocumented immigrants experience (issues with landlords and employers, targets for thieves, etc.), this ritual

provides a space where the undocumented immigrant can forget about those issues to be with his or her protecting mother. Considering the purpose of the organization that puts together the event and the message that *la antorcha* carries throughout both countries, it also provides the opportunity for camaraderie. Undocumented immigrants know that they are not alone. They have the opportunity to see others who are either going through the same experiences, lived them in the past or, have the support of others who encourage measures that will change the lives of those who live in the United States without documentation.

LA ANTORCHA GUADALUPANA

Alyshia Gálvez and Joel Merino are among the limited professionals in academia or in journalism that have focused on *La Antorcha Guadalupeña*. Alejandro E. Montiel Bonilla, Secretary of Culture in the Mexican state of Puebla, in his introduction to Merino's book *La Antorcha Guadalupeña*, mentions that Merino's graphic testimony "[e]s uno de los pocos acercamientos a este fenómeno social que no ha sido revisado a profundidad por sociólogos y antropólogos, pero que tampoco ha sido tomado en cuenta por el periodismo mexicano e internacional" (3). In my research I found that most of the newspapers that covered the event and had records online were small and local newspapers from both sides of the United States-Mexico border.

The *Carrera Antorcha Guadalupeña* is a binational and transnational event organized by the *Asociación Tepeyac* in New York City and with the support of the many *comités guadalupanos* that have been established throughout the five boroughs of New

York City. The *comités guadalupanos* are made up of Mexicans that established themselves in various neighborhoods throughout the city, initially brought together by their devotion to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and who stuck together due to their shared experiences as undocumented immigrants in New York City.

As mentioned before, the *comités* were brought together to create the *Asociación Tepeyac*. Through the association's efforts and organization, many supporting activities and classes have been offered for years. In addition to these services, it has also provided various Mexican, Mixtec, and Pueblan cultural celebrations that have been a very important contribution to the Mexican community in New York City (Gálvez, *Guadalupe in New York*; "*Asociación Tepeyac de New York: Historia*"). Many of these immigrants have found ways to take part in the performance of each cultural event, be it as a participant in a dance or informing family members and friends in their place of origin about the *antorcha's* route. Otherwise, could a binational event such as *La Antorcha Guadalupeana* have been able to take place if it weren't for the contributions that the Mexican people of New York made to this event? While it might still have been possible to make it happen, the involvement of the numbers of people on both sides of the border would only have been possible thanks to the networks that immigrants have already established.

At first, the Guadalupe torch run took place locally with the participation of the *comités guadalupanos*. On December 12th, there would be a celebration that started first in the church of Our Lady of Guadalupe on New York's 14th street, right down the street from the association's offices. From there, members of the *comités guadalupanos* and

representatives from churches throughout the city lit a torch and ran it to their local churches (Gálvez, *Guadalupe in New York* 143). In 2000, Saint Patrick's Cathedral was the place from which the torches started their runs back to their community churches. In her research, Gálvez found that torch runs are also a common way that devotees of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* have celebrated this day throughout much of the Mixtec region. These runs were often organized through church youth groups and could be considered a rite of passage; not only was it a bonding experience for the participants of each run, but it also contributed to the participant's "individual identity as guadalupanos" (*ibid* 142). Many of the participants that Gálvez interviewed or briefly questioned in her research mentioned that they had already participated in their town's torch run, so participation, organization, and support from the Mexican community in New York City to make the *Antorcha Guadalupeana* a reality comes as no surprise, especially when coupled with the devotion Mexicans feel towards *la virgen* (*ibid* 142). Considering Galvez's findings noted above regarding *la antorcha*, I suggest that the biggest differences between events that participants celebrated in their place of origin and in New York City is that the event in their place of residence also carries a political significance related to the status of many immigrants in New York City.

La Antorcha Guadalupeana is based on a tradition that exists not only in the transnational immigrant's place of origin but which also like themselves defies the nation-state boundaries by encompassing both sides of the border. In most cases the *carrera* stopped in cities or towns which many of the immigrants left and the communities where immigrants reside. "Torch runs are also used by social movements to

create a sense of community” (*ibid* 142). It is a practice and a tradition that contributes to an event and a social movement that spans a set of cultural, spatial, and political boundaries. In New York however, this was the first year that *Asociación Tepeyac* was able to organize an official celebration for *la Virgen de Guadalupe* in New York City’s Saint Patrick’s Cathedral (*ibid* 144) signifying participation in the city’s society at large. Allowing for this event to take place at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, according to Zuñiga in an informal conversation, meant that New York City was starting to take them in as part of the community at large rather than foreigners who do not belong. I point out that the practice of a torch run is once again a practice that is connected to the community of origin of many participants of *la Antorcha Guadalupeña* another element that supports the idea beyond the transnational to transregional. What started as a local celebration became a transnational and transregional event that has connected Mexican *guadalupanos*, documented and undocumented, from both sides of the border for over a decade.

Gálvez notes the importance of publicity and the role of the media in events for the association in New York City. She also expresses her surprise upon finding out that there was no publicity on the *Antorcha Guadalupeña* when it launched from the *Basilica* in Mexico City on October 29th, 2002. When she asked why that was the case, she was told that if it is not publicized, thousands of people attend *Basilica* events. But if it had been publicized, a million people would have been present (*ibid* 146). This leads to the explanation of why specifically a torch run devoted to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* is perhaps the best way to get a message out. One of the coordinators in Mexico City stated that

“[i]n Mexico we are 95% Catholic, but 100% Guadalupan” (*ibid* 146); therefore, as Gálvez states, “it seemed self-evident that if one had a message to get out, in this case about inhumane immigration laws, Our Lady of Guadalupe was the most appropriate messenger to carry it” (*ibid* 146). While there are exceptions to the coordinator’s claim, I do agree that most Mexicans do honor and respect *la virgen* and consider it an important element of our culture as Mexicans and a helpful messenger to disseminate this message. Besides, following indigenous traditions of running to carry messages through “messengers,” in combination with processions as a common form of devotion and celebration in the Catholic church (examples include Holy Week celebrations, among others), running a torch made sense. In Gálvez’s and Zuñiga Barba’s work, it is mentioned that the runners who run the torch call themselves “Messengers for the Dignity of a People Divided by the Border” (Zuñiga Barba). *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, accompanied by her messengers, carry her message of amnesty and immigrant rights all over Mexico and the United States thanks to the organizers, participants, and the networks of migrants that contributed to the *Carrera de la Antorcha Guadalupana*.

The organization of the *Antorcha Guadalupana* relied on social networking from members and organizers from the association. Heraclio, an organizer and captain for the Mexican portion of the torch run, told Gálvez that he knew people at the *Basílica* who also had connections in the states of Puebla and Hidalgo (Gálvez, *Guadalupe in New York* 146). In addition, Magallán also reached out to his Jesuit brothers who mobilized to contribute in making the event happen. Heraclio was able to travel around Mexico during the summer of 2002 in order to map out a route and reach out to community leaders,

nonprofit organizations, and priests. Once the route was outlined, people in New York who were going to take part in the event reached out to friends and family members to encourage participation in running the torch throughout the Mexican portion of the 4,500 kilometers (*ibid* 146). Zuñiga Barba, who was the “*capitana de la antorcha*” in 2007, stated that this “is a relay run that brings together popular tradition, the faith of our peoples, and a political and social slogan” which was imprinted on the participants’ shirts and the runner’s identity as “*mensajero de un pueblo dividido por la frontera*” (*ibid* 150). These connections to past Aztec practices not only reinforce the what Garduño considers *cultura reterritorializada*, meaning relocated traditions, but it would also do so by rearticulating itself with new meaning and purpose related to the hope for immigration reform.

While the *antorcha* has been referred to as a transnational event, none mentioned the elements of transnationalism that apply to this celebration. First of all, like mentioned above, the reliance on the transnational networks that already exist, those from immigrants as well as those from other nonprofit or religious organizations, identify this event as a transnational event. In order for an event like this to take place every year, the communication must be active. Also, as noted in chapter one, Vertovec states that “transnationalism is a manifestation of globalization” (2). Like transnationalism, this event is also a result of globalization. The economic shifts that resulted in increased migration led to security issues that immigrants experience regularly which result in the need for communities and networks for support. Through participation in *la antorcha*, many have found another reason to stay in touch with their families and friends in their

communities of origin. Not only do they inform each other of dates and plan of events related to the torch passing through towns in Mexico, but this becomes a form of participation in celebrations that take place in their places of origin. Another way in which this event links to the theories of transnationalism is by demonstrating that these events are not molding themselves to become part of the melting pot. The essence of the celebrations that take place in the places of origins of these immigrants still remains. They run a torch as a ritual to commemorate *la virgen* and the miracles she granted her people. While there are changes that are made, such as adding a message in support of immigration reform, this does not demonstrate assimilation into United States culture; instead, it co-exists with the culture and celebrations in the United States. As a matter of fact, in recent years the *Asociación Tepeyac* has taken steps forward to inform parents of how they can request the day off from school for their children so that this absence does not count against them if they have a test, missed work, etc. (“Asociación Tepeyac Website: News”). This initiative that the organization is encouraging among its members is a demonstration of that co-existence of cultures in the places where immigrants have chosen to live.

The day of the launch of the *Carrera de la Antorcha Guadalupana* from the *Basilica* in Mexico City, a number of artists, some staff members of the *Asociación Tepeyac*, and representatives from major news organizations in Mexico who covered the launch were present. Every year members of the *Basilica*'s staff donate an image of *San Juan Diego* and *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. In his opening speech, Magallán stated that “Mexican immigrants in the United States are knocking on the doors of the authorities,

asking them to grant them the rights and dignity they deserve” (Gálvez, *Guadalupe in New York* 149). The meaning and request from *San Juan Diego, la Virgen de Guadalupe*, and her messengers is for immigrants to be treated like humans, a right every human being deserves regardless of their status. These are requests that the pro-immigration movement in the United States have voiced and echoed since the beginning of the marches that have taken place throughout the country since 2006 and prior to that date. While there have been many promises made by candidates at the various levels of government in order to pass reform, time and time again it has taken a back burner position to other issues of the nation or to a lack of agreement in the bills proposed as the immigration reform. Through *la Antorcha Guadalupeana*, participants offer a sense of hope and of not being alone because, after all, *la virgen* supports this cause and her people.

Zuñiga Barba indicates that the torch passes “through those communities in Mexico that are most affected by migration and, after crossing the Rio Grande, we pass through communities along the East Coast of the United States where there are fellow immigrants who have crossed the border and now live and work to improve the lives of families that remained in Mexico” (“Messengers for the Dignity”). While the purpose of the *antorcha* is primarily to pass on a message to those who can change the situation on both sides of the border, it also serves as a way to send messages to loved ones.

Zuñiga Barba shares an experience she had while she accompanied the *antorcha* in 2007. She mentions Manuel, a young man who was living in Durham, North Carolina and had not been able to see his mother for about seven years. When he and his mother,

who is in Atlixnac, one of the towns the torch visited, spoke on the phone, his mother told him to find Zuñiga Barba who would share pictures she had taken. She showed him the pictures. At first he could not recognize his mother, but when Zuñiga Barba told him to look with his heart, he found her in seven of the pictures taken in Atlixnac. Manuel received a couple of messages, one of love and another one verifying that his mother was okay. The torch, as Zuñiga Barba mentions, also serves as a connection “of love, of hope, of struggle, and a quest for justice” between the communities on both sides of the border (*ibid*). Despite these messages, one of the things that this event cannot do is to educate people, in detail, about the political purpose associated with *la antorcha*. Unfortunately, due to the short time the torch spends in each town or city, educating locals about immigration reform and the change that they are requesting is not a plausible goal due to the time that is already spent running from town to town until its arrival in New York City. In most cases, however, educating about why reform is needed is almost unnecessary since many of the people that attend this event are aware due to their own experiences or those of loved ones.

There were some communities where, as Zuñiga Barba states that “we were shunned by communities that did not understand immigrants and saw us as a threat. But that did not stop us. We carried on with our heads high, just as we’d planned, dodging obstacles in order to arrive at our destination” (*ibid*). Other obstacles encountered are weather related. In the East Coast the runners have to run in cold temperatures and with snow while in the South the heat is a concern. Although these were some experiences lived throughout their journey, an intention of the torch run is to reach not only

lawmakers on both sides of the border, but also Anglo Americans who are afraid because they do not understand the immigrant community (*ibid*).

The last challenge mentioned in Zuñiga's reflections of her experience as *capitana* includes immigrants in their places of residence in the United States. While in Mexico anything short of big crowds is unlikely, in the United States smaller crowds are a common occurrence, especially in the southeastern states. This low number of participants welcoming *la antorcha* and the runners happens because most immigrants are afraid to come out and greet *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and her *antorcha*. This fear can be related to both their status as undocumented in a country that constantly criminalizes immigrants, especially those from Mexico, as well as the vulnerability they experience in their jobs that accompany their undocumented status as Gálvez's research and Teresa García's interview show (*Guadalupe in New York; "She Made Us Human"*). Despite these obstacles, *la antorcha* has experienced success as a result of the Guadalupan devotion and love felt by her followers, as well as its purpose of passing on a message of love, hope, faith, and justice.

La Antorcha Guadalupana dominated most of *Asociación Tepeyac*'s Facebook page from August through mid December of this last year (the organization joined Facebook in July of 2013). In August of 2013 it showed the post of the event that was created to promote the torch run and to raise as much money as possible for the people who were affected by hurricanes Manuel and Ingrid. In addition, postings also present the captains of the torch run, and then change to posting of pictures and updates of the journey of the people and the torch to New York City. While there are other events that

are also promoted on their Facebook page, *la carrera* seems to have significant presence. This Facebook presence takes place in the form of a “group” and not a person’s profile. While groups do not have “friends” people can “like” the site in order to follow the group. In an attempt to keep track of the role of Facebook in the network of people from both countries, I chose one of the most “shared” postings of *Asociación Tepeyac*. This posting took place on November 26, 2013 and it included the flyer for *La Carrera Antorcha Guadalupana*. There were 66 likes and twelve shares. From these shares, 10 were recorded. I found that three of the people had private profiles and did not share where they lived, three lived in Mexican cities (San Bartolomé Tlatelulco, Mexico; Tetelilla, Morelos, Mexico; Poza Rica de Hidalgo, Veracruz, Mexico), and three lived in the United States (one in Ohio, two in New York City- one of the two who lived in New York City shared the page twice and it logged it twice adding up to the ten recorded shares).

La Carrera Antorcha Guadalupana also has a Facebook group page. In its timeline, this group page had pictures posted of its trajectory in Mexico and in the United States. This group page has a recent posting (August 4, 2014) of this year’s flyer for *La Carrera Antorcha Guadalupana 2014*. This posting shows 188 likes, twenty comments, and 41 shares. From these the link only shows record of fourteen shares. From these fourteen shares, three people had a private profile and did not indicate which country they live in, six reside in Mexican cities or towns, two live in the United States, and three of these shares were done by organizations. Two of these organizations are located in the United States and one is located in Mexico. I point out that while the Facebook

information I analyzed does not demonstrate a pattern that would coincide with any one particular network of a transnational community, it does prove that participation on both sides of the border takes place and supports the idea of this event as a transnational event.

The pictures posted on the *Asociación Tepeyac*'s page represent Mexican culture, devotion, and support to *la virgen* and her cause in this journey. On November 26, 2013, *Asociación Tepeyac* shared a link to an article that announces the campaign to request December 12th as a holiday for Mexicans in order for immigrants, students and adults alike, to be present at the celebration every year. In the description of the link it emphasizes "*el poder laboral*" that Mexicans have in New York city and in its first few lines it makes reference to the movie *A Day Without a Mexican*. On one hand, this can be considered an alarming statement, especially when it is associated to the idea behind the movie as well as a day in May of 2006, where it was promoted all over the country that immigrants and their supporters not go to work on a specific day. I remember that on that day, the city of Tucson felt ghostly for part of the day since most people were at the protest. In the description phrases like "*somos una fuerza, enorme, de cientos de miles...*" makes reference to the power that this community, when united, can have. From the perspective of the immigrant, their reading can encourage a sense of security in knowing that they are not alone in their culture and their struggles despite the vulnerabilities they may experience. On the other hand, it is also represented as a civil rights issue to deserve a day off as a religious holiday. This phrase connects to the overarching mission of the association: promoting human rights for immigrants.

The history of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and the faith that Mexicans have in her make her the perfect messenger for justice throughout both countries. The *Asociación Tepeyac* has been a vehicle in the promotion of immigration reform and provided a number of services in order to facilitate the life of immigrants in New York City. It has also provided means for immigrants to educate themselves, both in terms of receiving a GED certificate as well as educating people who reach out to them about their rights and how reform would facilitate the life of immigrants throughout the country. These efforts and the events this organization facilitates and organizes are worth the attention of academics due to the contribution they are making in the community of New York and within the Mexican community living there, but also how it reinforces transnational migration patterns and utilizes these networks in order for an event like *la Antorcha Guadalupeña* to take place. Through the analysis of the event's transnational aspects, and social and theatrical performance, we will see that transnationalism is reflected, a transnational and transregional *mexicanidad* represented, and contributions to a social movement that spans throughout the United States.

REPRESENTATIONS IN THE *ANTORCHA GUADALUPANA*

La Virgen de Guadalupe has been the object of studies for many although, as Clarence Bernard Henry says in his concluding remarks in his article "Guadalupe, Yemanjá, and the Orixas of Candomblé" (2009) in the book *Religion as Art*, there is a need for even more interdisciplinary approaches to academic studies on *la virgen* and other Brazilian religious and hybrid figures (186). Francisco Crespo, the author of the

article “The Virgins of Guadalupe (Tonantzin) and La Caridad del Cobre (Ochún): Two Marian Devotions as Fluid Symbols of Collective and Individual Cultural Identities” (2009) in the same book, contributes to *la Virgen*’s studies and to this collection of essays by presenting historical representations of both figures. Using Crespo’s work on the role of *la virgen* throughout Mexico’s history, I will show how *la virgen* is represented as mother of Mexico, *protectora y defensora*, as well as *generalísima*. These lead to her depictions in *la Antorcha Guadalupana* as *protectora, defensora*, and mother of all immigrants in the United States. In the context of transnationalism, the (re)articulation and (re)appropriation of *la virgen*’s representation function as a sign of hope for undocumented immigrants throughout the United States.

The representation of *la virgen* as *generalísima* and protector of the Mexican people result from her presence in major Mexican battles and wars as Gálvez reminded us. The belief and devotion to *la Virgen de Guadalupe* continued to grow in Mexico such that when the revolution against Spain was set in motion by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the mestizo and indigenous forces that accompanied him carried banners with the image of *la Virgen* and cried, “[l]ong live the Virgin of Guadalupe and death to the *gachupines!*” (Alamán 173; Gálvez, “She Made Us Human” 147; Crespo 171) until they gained independence from Spain. During the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa who were also followers of *la Virgen*, carried flags with her image. Her participation during the Revolution and its leader’s devotion to her, *la Virgen* was named *la generalísima* (Gálvez, “She Made Us Human” 149). Her involvement in Mexican historical events helps establish the code that Hall claims constructs meanings and

contributes to representations. In this case, her involvement in these wars justify her representation as *generalísima*. In addition, the representation of *la virgen* as leader of the Mexican people, the disadvantaged Mexicans fighting for their land, and the banners with her images and the military images of both Zapata and Villa, add to *la virgen's* representation as protector and contribute to her representation as fighter for justice and Mexicans' rights.

La Virgen de Guadalupe was also a strong figure during the Chicano Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Gálvez, Cesar Chávez, one of the leaders of the United Farm Workers, was also a devout *guadalupano*. This resulted in the workers adopting the image of *la virgen* as one representing resistance and empowerment in their movement (Crespo 172). Because her image had been connected with Mexican national identity through her presence at key Mexican battles, and the Chicano Movement also had as a purpose to reconnect with Mexican roots, the image of *la virgen* was easily adaptable to the various purposes of the movements. As a result of the use of *la virgen's* image, the code established throughout history leads once again to her representation as protector and defender of her children's rights and justice through meanings constructed by actors in Mexicans' history.

This leads to *la Antorcha Guadalupana* organized by the *Asociación Tepeyac* and the various adaptations of the representations of *la virgen* for a movement that seeks to defend the rights of immigrants and one that asks for amnesty. This movement is one that is growing with the increasing numbers of Latinos in the United States and despite the fact that she is a symbol of Mexican national identity, *la virgen* has also earned followers

from other countries, as noted earlier in this chapter, as a result of her representation as protector and Mother.

These shared experiences and shared devotion led to the creation of an association that has assisted immigrants and provided a space to celebrate their culture for more than a decade. In addition, the organization and the immigrants who regularly participate in their workshops, activities, and events have found ways of protesting the state and status of immigrants in this country and in New York City by bringing history, culture, beliefs and devotion together. These culminate in the presence of the image and the representations of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* in many places where she is honored in many different ways. These transcend nation-state boundaries that have been so heavily enforced throughout the world.

TRANSNATIONAL ELEMENTS IN THE *ANTORCHA GUADALUPANA*

The transnational nature of an event like the *Antorcha Guadalupeana* also reflects the transnational nature of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* as well as the migrants that have played an important role in celebrating her in the United States. Aside from being a manifestation of globalization, Yerko Castro Neira states in the article “*Teoría transnacional: revisitando la comunidad de los antropólogos*,” it is also a response to the predominant theory of migration and assimilation in the place of residence during the 1980s (181; Smith, *Mexican New York* 1-17), an idea that Garduño also conveys. While people from the United States may still claim being part of a “melting pot,” a notion that is associated with the theory of assimilation, we see that immigrant communities that

arrive and establish in the United States no longer look to assimilate like they did in the past. Despite this common trend and as a result of their strong networks and participation in their communities of origin, immigrants are now more likely to continue participating in events and traditions from home. While there are cases where there are adaptations relevant to the reality of immigrants in their communities of residence, the predominant elements of *las tradiciones* from home are still present.

It is important to note that while immigration is a crucial factor in transnationalism, it does not automatically imply that all immigration is transnationalist in nature. A connection to the place of origin is generally maintained as explained by Vertovec: “[t]ransnationalism refers to the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” (1). We can see that *la antorcha* is an evolving practice that demonstrates elements mentioned above by Vertovec. *La antorcha* has a direct link to the home of *la virgen*, the *Basilica* in Mexico City, not only through the connections that the association established in order for this event to take place, but also because every year the *Basilica* sends a new image of both *la virgen* and Juan Diego to New York City which, until now, has been distributed to churches throughout the city (Galvez). It is likely that the churches these images are given to currently serve large numbers of Mexican immigrants, likely through *comités guadalupanos* as did many churches included in Galvez’s study. Another link of *la antorcha* to Vertovec’s comment is present in the cities, in Mexico and the United States, where the torch run passes *en route* to New York. As noted earlier, Zuñiga Barba notes that the torch also has the purpose to connect family members who are separated by the border. The story that

Zuñiga Barba shares about the man who had spoken to his mom and told him to find her so that she can show him the pictures is a perfect example of how people may connect as a result of this event. While not everyone may be asking to see pictures of their loved ones from home, many immigrants know that the torch passed through their hometowns, that their family members joined in on this celebration and this mission, and that they may have touched the same torch they hold in their hands. This connection is one that, despite the border and the laws that prevent them from being together in person, is meaningful at a personal level and provides a new way of studying cultural events such as *la Antorcha Guadalupeana*.

Due to this overwhelming presence of “former colonial subjects”, the increase in numbers result in a higher number of people gathering in celebration and participation of traditional events from home. Garduño mentions a presentation by Stefano Varese who found that, in the case of Mixtec migrants, their exploitation has led them to “*desarrollar la reconstrucción simbólica de su comunidad y a fortalecer su identidad en el exilio*” (qtd. in Garduño)²⁸. Garduño also notes that when this reunification and reconstruction of identity in the place of residence takes place, the new identity formed is no longer attached to a geographical space. This strengthening of identity while in exile and the reconstruction of both community and identity that takes place are both processes that have been facilitated and are present in the organization of the celebrations of *la virgen* outside of Mexico, especially *la Antorcha Guadalupeana*.

²⁸ Varese, Stefano. “Entre el tianguis y los designios neo-imperiales: Etnopolítica de la migración transnacional indígena.” Coloquio La Ruta Mixteca, Mexico D.F. 2 y 3 de agosto de 1994.

For Mexicans in New York City, *La Antorcha Guadalupeña* plays an important role in the reunification and reconstruction of identity that Garduño mentions in his article. As a result of the *comités guadalupanos* that sprung up throughout the city of New York, the Catholic Church leaders of the individual parishes noted the demand for an organization that would tend to the needs of these migrants. Despite the fact that the founders of the organization (*Asociación Tepeyac*) were not from the Mexican community of New York City and that the organizers of the event (*Antorcha Guadalupeña*) were transnational migrants living in New York City, the event that has taken place for over ten years provides the opportunity for transmigrants to reunite. This happens thanks to a dominant image that plays a role in each of their traditions and beliefs, in their place of origin and now in their place of residence.

The reconstruction of identity for many of these migrants in New York City is connected to the image of *la virgen*, a tradition and belief brought from home. This reconstruction also incorporates elements that are readjusted to the experience of migrants in New York City. In the case of *la Antorcha Guadalupeña*, these elements of reality for migrants in the United States are closely related to the abuses and exploitations that they suffer as a result of their status in this country. This is where a celebration in name of *la virgen* also incorporates requests for human rights and fair treatment by organizing this event around a demand for a much needed immigration reform in this country, as noted in this chapter. As a result of *la antorcha*, thousands of people come together every year throughout the country. They reunite symbolically, through the numerous events that lead up to and celebrate *la virgen's* day in both countries

throughout the almost 3,000 mile *recorrido*. The purposes of this event bring together elements that are important in the reconstruction of transnational and Mexican identity in the United States. One element is the strength of their *guadalupanismo* and their trust and belief in *la Virgen de Guadalupe*; another is not their assimilation, but the co-existence of both cultures in their daily lives and celebrations; and a third element is related to being migrants in the United States and the movement that they take part in through the event's and the people's demand for immigration reform in this country, as noted throughout this chapter.

La Antorcha Guadalupana, aside from being a religious event, is also one that reinforces Mexican identity of Mexican transnationals in the United States through the association of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* and coexistence of both cultures that make part of their daily lives and *la antorcha*. As a result of *la antorcha*'s effort to promote social justice for immigrants in the United States, it would also be considered a social performance. One that, due to its significance for migrants and the global imbalance of power that results in their struggles for rights, performance theory is a good tool for analysis of events such as *la Antorcha Guadalupana*.

ANTORCHA GUADALUPANA AND PERFORMANCE THEORY

Anything can be an object of study in the field of Performance Studies. Schechner states that this is a field that is concerned with the minoritarian while criticizing or going against settled orders that cause this marginalization (3). *Asociación Tepeyac* and *la*

Antorcha Guadalupana fit Schechner's description in regard to both social and religious performances. Rituals are an element of performance present in religious events.

Schechner defines rituals as "collective memories encoded into actions." Through these rituals people can experience another reality that is isolated from their "ordinary life" (*Performance Studies* 52). The daily lives of migrants in the United States are generally so different from what their daily lives used to be that experiencing an event such as *la Antorcha Guadalupana* and the celebration of *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*, provides an opportunity to live a reality that is intertwined with their place of origin.

Schechner also identifies two types of rituals that are generally present in most celebrations. These rituals are identified as sacred, related to religious beliefs, and secular rituals, which are associated with everyday life (53). *La Antorcha de Guadalupe* is a ritual that encompasses both types of rituals. *La virgen* is generally associated with religion, although there are people that follow her but are not considered religious (either in a formal sense or as Catholics). The celebration originated from the *comités* established in Catholic churches throughout the city and incorporates aspects of daily life relating to secular rituals. While *la virgen* plays an important role in the daily lives of Mexicans all over the world, there are other aspects of daily lives that the performance of *la Antorcha Guadalupana* incorporates. For many, the status and association that this celebration has with an aspect of daily life is that of living as an immigrant in a vulnerable state in the United States, while for others it is the devotion of *la virgen*. Through the sacred performance of celebrating a religious figure, daily life is also incorporated into this performance. As noted by Schechner and other researchers in the

field of Performance Studies, everything can be considered a performance. There are the traditional performances that are characterized as such, and there are actions that can be read as performances, both of which are present in the celebration of *la virgen*.

What *is* performance, is staged, planned, and incorporates a set of conventions that vary depending on its historical and cultural context. *La Antorcha Guadalupana* and the celebration of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* incorporate elements of what *is* performance. December 12th at midnight, in Mexico City and in New York City, people congregate to celebrate her day. New York City follows practices already established in Mexico for decades. Recognized artists perform every year for *la virgen* during the celebratory mass in the *Basilica*, in Mexico City and in St. Patrick's Cathedral, in New York City. Schechner notes that performance is not only a one-time event, but one that keeps occurring without a clearly defined number of replications (Schechner and Turner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology* 36). The repetition of these events, as well as the preparation and rehearsals it takes to put them together, play out this statement in establishing an element of what *is* performance. As noted earlier in this chapter, the setup in both the *Basilica* and St. Patrick's Cathedral follows conventions that both the participants and the spectators take part in. Some of the viewers sit in the chairs of the church and, considering the vast numbers of people that show up for these events, the witnesses spill out into the streets of New York City, as I saw the year I was lucky enough to witness the event. Noting from television broadcasts the number of people that are present in the celebration at the *Basilica*, it should come as no surprise how many

people were present in New York City because this part of the event appears to mirror the televised event that takes place every year in Mexico City.

Dancing children and adults also participate in the performance. While the setup and conventions are different when it is a pilgrimage or a parade, they do still rehearse their dances and perform them during various events organized by *Asociación Tepeyac* and others throughout the year that take place in the city. These dances are relevant to their practices, events and traditions at home.

Through their participation in these events and traditions, the dancing youth participate in what is studied *as* performance. Marvin Carlson includes Phillip Zarilli's point about how culture is in constant renegotiation of meanings and practices, both of which are considered to be culture (179). This renegotiation and reconstruction can also be applicable to the construction of social roles and identities which also take part in what Schechner calls restored behavior (*Performance Studies* 22-23; Carlson 4). Social practices have been behaved and rebehaved for centuries; they have also been negotiated through the encounters and experiences in new places, contexts, etc. The people and the youth that participate in these events are performing their Mexican identity in New York City. While this might not be considered a performance of their national identity if they were participating in the events in their place of origin, the change of context, society and the situation that many of the immigrants find themselves in here in the United States makes it relevant to read their participation in *la Antorcha Guadalupeña* as a performance of Mexican identity. This connects to one of the reasons the concept of transnationalism emerged. As noted by Garduño and Kearney, transnationalism is a

response to the overwhelming belief that immigrants assimilate into United States culture. This performance of Mexican identity and of a tradition that is important to all Mexicans once again contributes to Garduño's point in relation to transnationalism that migrants are not assimilating. Instead, they find ways to continue their own traditions in new contexts that are related to their daily lives in the place of residence.

Elements of their attire that not only support their performance of Mexican identity, but also present a renegotiation of it, include the image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* as well as the use of two bandanas that cover the dancer's face. A possible reason for covering their faces can be related to the anonymity that immigrants are forced to live in due to their undocumented status. We know that they are here, working hard and participating quietly in our society, but most do not make themselves visible due to the fear that they live in. The first bandana exhibits the Mexican flag while the other bandana exhibits the American flag. Because of *la virgen's* connection to Mexican national identity, participation in her event and the participants bearing her image in some form or another. The use of the American flag in their attire also attributes to the culture that they are acquiring. The placement of both bandanas on the dancers' faces can be analyzed as a performance of both cultures they embrace, but a performance of transnationalism when we consider the co-existence of both cultures mentioned in chapter one.

The renegotiation and reconstruction of identity is a topic that has been considered in literature about transnationalism and performance theory.²⁹ Involvement in events like those organized by *Asociación Tepeyac* are opportunities for Mexican transnational communities to participate in the reconstruction of collective identity that many transnational communities experience when establishing themselves abroad. On the one hand, the unity these communities find in exile can be found in the performance of their Mexican identity, clearly signaled by the Mexican flag bandana and participation in a celebration of the Mexican mother, *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. On the other hand, the reconstruction of their identity as transnational communities is also indicated by their use of an American flag bandana in events such as the celebration of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. Through their attire, performance and participation in these events, the people are not only performing their national identities, now in plural, but they are also performing transnationality.

Events like the *Antorcha Guadalupana* and others organized by *Asociación Tepeyac*, are performances of activism and a call for justice. They feel the need to reach out to *la Madre de los mexicanos y protectora de los desamparados* which identifies events like these as acts of the marginalized and those who support their cause. Through their traditional practices from their place of origin and their culture, immigrants that are both undocumented and transnational (as well as their supporters) adopt representations of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* that are favorable and helpful to the cause of undocumented

²⁹ Kearney “Transnationalism in California...”; Garduño “Antropología de la frontera...”; Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*; Schechner *Performance Studies*; Zarilli, “For Whom Is the King a King? Issues of Intercultural Production, Perception and Reception in a Kathikali *King Lear*.”

Mexicans in New York City and find ways of presenting through performances their transnational identities.

Mexican transnational immigrants and events are found throughout the United States. Mixtec immigrants have been part of a constant pattern of migration into the Californias both in the United States and in Mexico and have established strong networks that exemplify transnational communities. In addition, cultural objects and events that they brought to the region of California and the Southwest, such as *el Día de los muertos*, not only represent transnational practices of these communities, adapt for activist purposes related to immigration reform, but they are also representative of Mexico throughout the world.

CHAPTER 3: CALIFORNIA, TRANSNATIONALISM, AND TRADITIONS OF DEATH AND ACTIVISM

In this chapter I will focus on the importance of *el Día de los muertos* for Mexicans in the United States and how it includes and represents the communal exercise of the migrant population. The analysis of representation and the performances in the altars and celebrations I observed in Tijuana, Baja California and Oceanside, California, as well as in the Arizona-Sonora border region, will sustain the argument that *el Día de los muertos* is a transnational cultural event. The links that I make in this dissertation between *el Día de los muertos* and the theories of representation, performance, and thing theory also contribute to the dialogues on transnationalism. Questions that will guide this chapter include the following:

- What are cultural elements and traditions in these events that identify them as transnational events? How do they work?
- How does *el Día de los muertos* reflect the migratory dynamics in southern California and the Southwest of the United States?
- What is the political role of *el Día de los muertos* in relation to the immigration reform movement in the United States?
- How are *Día de los muertos* events represented in various print and digital productions, including social media, and how do these contribute to the notion of transnational culture?

MIXTEC MIGRATION TO THE NORTH

The labor market in agriculture, especially in northern Mexico and southern California, determined migration routes for many Mexicans, including those from the Mixtec region. The demand for an agricultural labor force and the Mexican government's cooperation with its neighboring country in providing the labor force resulted in the establishment of a significant number of immigrants and the continuous migration flow into northern Mexico and into California and, as has been more common in recent decades, northern regions of the United States.

According to Laura Velasco, author of *El regreso de la comunidad* (2002) and whose research focuses on Mixtec Migration and establishment on the border, the territorial fragmentation after the Mexican Revolution meant that indigenous territories in the Mixtec region could not be rebuilt (54). This left people without many options other than migration, since “[l]a relación entre identidad indígena y territorio [es tal que] ... un indígena sin su tierra no es ya propiamente tal, por lo que debe emigrar, alquilarse como peón en un rancho o hacienda” (*ibid* 54). The situation they found themselves in corresponded with the beginning of industrialization in Latin America, which resulted in patterns of migration from *el campo* into the cities (*ibid* 55). Another pattern of migration that took place, according to Carmen Martínez Novo in her book *Who Defines Indigenous?* (2006), was a result of the distribution of lands of the Colorado River Land Company that were barely populated during the nineteenth century. These lands were nationalized and distributed to people all over the country that promoted migration from the south into these lands (19). Prior to the Mexican Revolution, the land of Baja

California had been worked for agricultural export. Not only was a new migration pattern established, but it also began to incorporate Baja California to Mexico which, due to its location, was hardly populated and disconnected from the rest of the country. This inclusion was especially true when the completion of the Sonora-Baja California Railroad connected the peninsula to the rest of Mexico (*ibid* 19).

According to Martinez Novo, after World War II the demand of the United States bolstered agricultural exportation in Mexico. Mexico's cooperation in fulfilling labor demands resulted in the first official and registered migrants from the Oaxacan Mixtec region migrated north during the Bracero Program in the early 20th century (Velasco, *El regreso de la comunidad* 56). Their participation, according to Velasco, "*convirtió a algunos mixtecos en pioneros en el oficio de migrar, al recorrer grandes distancias*" (*ibid* 57). In her book *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (2007), Lynn Stephen also verifies the participation of men from Oaxaca in the Bracero Program from 1940 through 1964 and also includes the Zapotec region of the state of Oaxaca, focusing on Teotiteco (12). Stephen mentions that due to the participation of men from these regions in the Bracero Program, solid networks have been established to both Los Angeles and Chicago which have played a role in future migration patterns established by these communities (12).

After the World Wars were over, Mexico established the Sinaloa Project in the 1950s where fruits and vegetables were grown for exportation (Martinez Novo 20). The Sinaloa Project encouraged migration through the system of *enganche*, in which people went to specific communities and recruited workers. Many communities targeted by these

enganchadores were indigenous communities from the state of Oaxaca (Martinez Novo; Velasco, *Desde que tengo memoria*). As opposed to the lands of the Colorado River Company, which were distributed in the fields of Sinaloa, the indigenous workers worked in conditions of extreme exploitation. The San Quintín irrigation project, which began in the 1970s, also recruited workers to Baja California where the laborers worked under similar conditions (Martinez Novo 20). Since the San Quintin and Sinaloa projects attracted a significant number of Mixtecs and because of the community's need to work outside their own communities of origin due to the scarcity of work, many established along the Baja California and California border (Martinez Novo; Velasco, *Desde que tengo memoria*). In addition to the Bracero Program, a number of agricultural projects in Mexico contributed to the recruitment and the establishment of a migration tradition among people of the southern states, among them people from the Mixtec region, who began their travels north. The opportunities for people from the South of Mexico to live and work in the United States with the Bracero Program resulted in a significant number of them settling in border towns until the next opportunity to work came up (Velasco, *El regreso de la comunidad* 57). This was a practice that many migrants have participated in since then.

In the 1970s an agricultural crisis took place in southern California and the agricultural business in the state did not have the same high demand for workers as it had in the past. While a small percentage of migrants still established in California, a much higher number of them participated in the expansion of the migratory route to other states such as Washington, Oregon, and Alaska, and even to Canada (Velasco, *El regreso de la*

comunidad 58). The wave of immigration that took place in the 1980s, according to Velasco's findings, had as a destination the United States but also border cities where there was a demand for workers in the service and informal sectors. Men generally worked in construction and gardening while women were street vendors whose goods were oriented toward tourism (*ibid* 58). In her article "Mixteco Women on the Migration Route," published on the Smithsonian Institution Website titled "Migrations in History," Velasco states that women play an important role in the migration process their communities participate in by "preserving the home." She also mentions that Tijuana is one of these "migrant home base maintained by women at an intermediate destination." By this time, Mixtec migrants began to "*asentarse*" in the places of residence and as a result of IRCA in 1986 because it allowed for the legalization of thousands of immigrants, in addition to the changing demand for work (women were also migrating since the 1970s wave of migration), it facilitated their process of residence (Velasco, *El regreso de la comunidad* 59). The migration wave of the 1990s strengthened the establishment of the indigenous migrants from Oaxaca, both due to incoming migration and to the new generation who grew up in California (Velasco, *El regreso de la comunidad* 59; Besserer, *Topografías Transnacionales*; Besserer and Kearney, *San Juan Mixtepec*). Even though the term "transnational" had not been coined yet, new practices and links that appeared, both official and unofficial, got the attention of academics.

THE MIXTEC TRANSNATIONAL

In recent decades, some anthropologists began to notice different trends within immigrant communities (Glick Schiller et al., “Issues Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered” ix). Even though many migrants have established in a new country, these communities still maintain close ties to their communities of origin. These ties are not limited to communication with family and friends; they extend to their continued participation and upholding responsibilities in the community of origin. As noted in the previous section, Velasco’s research found that by the 1990s, the Mixtec communities from Oaxaca who lived in California along the border it shares with Mexico had begun processes and practices of a transnational nature between the communities of origin and the communities of residency (*El regreso de la comunidad* 58-59). There are many academic studies that note this kind of participation in transnational communities in spite of the distance separating them from their communities of origin. The Mixtec community in Mexico and the United States is one of the most studied.³⁰ Mixtec immigrants who live throughout the United States are considered examples of transnational communities.

As noted in chapter one, transnationalism is the process of building networks to connect the people from the places of origin and residency (Glick Schiller et al., “Transnationalism” 1). Anthropologists call immigrants that make these links *transmigrants*. They develop and maintain family relationships, along with social,

³⁰ Besserer, “Estudios Transnacionales y Ciudadanía Transnacional” (1999), *Topografías transnacionales* (2004); Velasco Ortiz, “Identidad cultural y territorio” (1998), *El regreso de la comunidad* (2002), *Desde que tengo memoria* (2005); Kearney, *Changing fields of Anthropology* (2004); Besserer and Kearney, *San Juan Miztepec* (2006); among others.

economic, organizational, religious, and political ties with their community of origin.

They are active in the decision-making process in their community of origin and share the same concerns (*ibid* 1-2). These immigrants are generally active participants in both societies, the one they come from and the one where they reside.

Significant research on transnational indigenous communities and their migration history include works by Laura Velasco Ortiz (1998, 2002, 2005, 2008), Carmen Martinez Novo (2006), Fernando Besserer (1999, 2004), Fernando Besserer and Michael Kearney (2006), Lynn Stephen (2007), and others. In her work, Velasco focuses on the Mixtec communities and the construction of transnational ethnic identity of groups that have established on both sides of the border, resulting from a recent history of migration encouraged by the labor market as well as the “*políticas estatales de control migratorio*” (*El regreso de la comunidad* 53). Martinez Novo on the other hand focuses on the shaping of indigenous identity that takes place “...in the context of migration and cultural exchange in a dynamic, export-oriented economic area” (4) that has been the border shared between Baja California in Mexico and California in the United States.

Velasco’s book *Desde que tengo memoria* (2005) takes many of the interviews that she collected for her book, *El regreso de la comunidad* (2002), in order to analyze ways in which their collective identities are constructed transnationally. When it comes to her research with the Mixtec communities in Tijuana, much of her work focuses on the constructions of identity; specifically, the role that activist leaders have played in the process. The interviewees’ narratives incorporate the sharing of cultural traditions and events that take place both in their place of residency as well as in their community of

origin and the importance of these traditions. What Velasco does not consider in her research is that while indigenous activists take the lead in community movements, other members of the community may not agree with the “collective” identity created by these activists. Martinez Novo on the other hand, focuses on governmental and non-governmental institutions, media, as well as scholars in the field of academia as her subjects of study and analyzes the ways in which these entities of power construct and define indigenous identity. While Martinez Novo’s work has a different focus from research with a traditional transnational focus, she works with much of the transnational communities that have become established in Baja California and along the U.S.-Mexico border much like Velasco.

Besserer is also an important investigator who has done a number of studies about transnational communities focusing on Mixtecs from Oaxaca, Mexico. In his book *Topografías transnacionales: Hacia una geografía de la vida transnacional* (2004) he conducts a topographic study, considering the places that are mentioned in life narratives and finding a relation between life experiences and geographic location in transnational communities. Due to his previous research, his focus in this book is on communities of origin from the state of Oaxaca and, although various states in the United States are mentioned in these narratives, the state with one of the highest numbers of Mixtec migrants is California. Besserer focuses on the multidirectional involvement of these transnational communities. This involvement goes beyond family ties to incorporate political, cultural, educational, and economic involvement that, in his research, he calls “dimensions.” This is relevant to my own research because these are the transnational

communities that have contributed to a wider distribution and popularity of traditions such as *el Día de los muertos*. The nodes, which make use of these celebrations, contribute to the engagement of transnational immigrants and members of the communities in which immigrants have established. The celebration of *Día de los muertos* relate to the cultural practice domain which, unlike rituals such as weddings and baptisms, are not constrained to a particular *topografía*, or a location in which a life event takes place. While my research focuses on the cultural domain, which takes place in three *topografías*, Oceanside, California, United States, Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico and Tucson, Arizona, United States, it is important to point out that there are other nodes that use these cultural domains in other *topografías* directly linked to transnational communities throughout the multiple communities that make part of these networks.³¹ Due to these strong networks, these have maintained ties to the ways in which they were celebrated in the places of origin of Mixtec transnational immigrants but have also been adapted and now incorporate aspects that identify them from both countries and which “coexist” in celebrations throughout the United States year after year.

After a detailed review of literature on transnationalism, in a chapter included in the book *Fronteras fragmentadas* (1999) Besserer claims that a “transnational citizenship” has developed through the practices of transnational communities. He demonstrates how “*el viaje*” has become part of San Juan Mixtepec’s traditions because of the widespread practice of migration within their community and, as a result, their definition of community has extended beyond the traditional territorialized view. Since *el*

³¹ I making refernce to Besserer’s idea of *comunidades multicéntricas* that he uses as a point of departure in his book *Topografías Transnacionales* (2004).

viaje is now part of their cultural practices, Besserer demonstrates how it is also incorporated in the construction of this community's identity. *El viaje* and the networks established and maintained for years are a performance of identity that people from the Mixtec region have repeated for decades. First, due to the continuity in the journey north, Schechner's concept of *twice-behaved behavior* or *restored behavior* is applicable to the communities' travels north. The journey immigrants make to arrive to the United States, as individuals but also as a migration process, is constantly being reenacted by different actors of Mixtec communities. As a result, societies that partake in similar practices establish norms of behaving which can be "stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed" as Schechner explains the separation of behavior and the people who perform the action (*Between* 36). This leads to the function of these performances as "vital acts of transfer" (Taylor 2) which transmit practices and identity through the practice of *el viaje*.

While *el viaje* as a cultural practice has been explicitly mentioned in Besserer's community, it is a concept that can be applied to most of the transnational communities included in this research project, in order to explain the processes of migration that these communities have participated in for generations. As noted earlier, Velasco mentions the territorial fragmentation and the inability to reconstruct the indigenous territories of that region, which for many resulted in no other option but to migrate (*El regreso de la comunidad* 54). This was a situation that many experienced and turned into what Besserer coined as a tradition of *el viaje* and the beginnings of the migration processes that we see

today. Furthermore, this process described by Besserer and which many Mixtecs practice also helps create and maintain cultural imaginaries.

The political and cultural presence of the migrants from Oaxaca in Tijuana and San Diego was evident especially due to the significant number of organizations that existed in the region during the 1990s. According to Velasco's findings, a total of 14 organization of Oaxacans had been established. These organizations were in different places in the state of California, including Madera and San Diego counties, as well as Baja California, where they established residency in different parts of the San Quintin Valley, Maneadero and Tijuana. These organizations established strong connections to different locations from where many indigenous migrated, especially in the Mixtec region (*El regreso de la comunidad 17*). Alex Rivera, in his short documentary "*La sexta sección*," also documents the existence of these organizations and their relationship to transnational networks.

One of the biggest and most well known organizations, and one that Velasco focuses on in her books, is the *Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales*, or the Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations (FIOB). According to the FIOB website, in the "About Us" page, the

FIOB is constituted as a group of organizations, communities and individuals (men and women) from various backgrounds, who have decided to join efforts, ideas and projects over the economic, political, social and cultural factors that our indigenous brothers/sisters migrants

and non-migrants face in Mexico and the United States, to fight for respect for their rights and identity as indigenous peoples.

Indigenous peoples have experienced second-class citizenship in Mexico, evident through the poor living and working conditions and the violations of rights that they have experienced throughout the years. These experiences have resulted in the need for and the establishment of an organization like the FIOB, with the mission “to fight for respect for their rights and identity as indigenous peoples” (*ibid*).

Members of *Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales* represent the organization and its members as defenders of rights and respect of indigenous people and immigrants throughout Mexico and California. FIOB’s background is primarily green and yellow, both colors of optimism. Their logo is in black and white, the earth in the background showing all countries belonging to North America—Canada, the United States, and Mexico—and in front are two shaking hands. One appears to be slightly darker than the other. The organization’s name goes around the image.³² The semiotics behind their colors and logo indicate that what the organization is looking for is agreements and the well being of the people of all three countries. In my personal experience as a member of Ambos Nogales, I also note a reference to the treaty that took place between all three countries, NAFTA, “National American Free Trade Agreement”, which opened the borders to smooth traffic of goods but they failed to add the movement of people. This has resulted in much of the immigration situation we see today between these three countries. The handshake appears to be an additional agreement where all

³² For image see <http://fiob.org/en/>.

parties, white and indigenous, are considered and satisfied. There is optimism in the logo just as much as is in the colors chosen to represent the organization.

Below the name of the organization are various links that guide the audience to videos or articles related to news of recent and upcoming events. The first image is what the observer assumes is a group of members who are modeling for the camera with their fists up in the air. While that link does not lead to the information one expects to find (yet), further down the page we find a link to the website “GoFundMe” which includes information on the money needed for the upcoming congress.³³ The pose of the people in the picture is one that holds the meaning of struggle and fight for rights. This photograph demonstrates part of the organization’s mission: “...as well as struggle for the defense of the human rights with justice...” (“FIOB: Mission and Vision”). There are a total of five pictures and links of information. Two more of the remaining four also have links to immigration issues in the United States.

One of these images show people gathered with signs in front of what appears to be offices for Sakuma Brothers Farms. Signs read “Yes we can” and “Honor labor.” The caption that accompanies this photograph reads “*Denuncia: Exigimos Sakuma Brothers Farms un sueldo justo*” (“FIOB: Home”). Finally, we also see an image of people protesting with posters stating “STOP the Deportations! *¡Ya Basta!* No Human Being is Illegal” and the caption is titled “*Niño mixteco expulsado a México*”. In the description of these last two images, their language and signs indicate that this organization is also one

³³ See <http://fiob.org/2014/06/convocatoria2014/> .

that defends immigrants from unfair situations such as low pay and supports immigration reform that favors immigrants in the United States.

The organization states that it is inclusive of all indigenous people but there are indications throughout their website that lead to assume that indigenous people from Oaxaca are the most prominent in this organization. The association's locations, California, Baja California, and Oaxaca ("FIOB: About Us"), the place where the congress they are organizing will take place in October, Oaxaca, México according to the GoFundMe page created "Congreso Binacional—Binational Congress", and the listing under projects of the celebration of *La Guelaguetza* and "*El Tequio*," both Oaxacan practices and traditions, all lead the reader to assume that the indigenous peoples, members of this organization, are primarily from communities in the state of Oaxaca in México.³⁴

In connection to FIOB and also due to the high numbers of migrants from Oaxaca and the Mixtec region, a Center of Studies *Oaxacalifornianos* has been established as one of their projects which appears to present studies, projects, and information about the life and the communities of indigenous people from Oaxaca that have established themselves in California. In the article entitled "*La cultura en las organizaciones de carácter binacional y comunitario*," Rufino Domínguez Santos, who at the time was the General

³⁴ *La Guelaguetza* is a dance festival held on the two Mondays after July 16, which celebrates a local religious figure, Virgin del Carmen, but before it was to honor Centeotl, the goddess of corn in the Zapotec culture (Sol, "Guelaguetza: Joyous and Colorful"). Like other celebrations *La Guelaguetza's* fusion of indigenous traditions with Catholic practices make this an example of syncretism. *Tequio* is "civil cargo system," as described by Stephen, where all residents are required to provide free labor for the community (57). This is a practice linked to communities in the Mixtec region, but more specifically to indigenous people from Oaxaca, Mexico as noted in an exhibition announcement called "Tequio Aquí, Tequio Allá" (*The William Grant Still Arts Center Website*).

Coordinator of FIOB, writes about the culture lived by the members of the communities and *pueblos indígenas* of the American continent. He mentions that as a result of the forced migration indigenous people experienced, they carry their identity through their language. He says that the word *Oaxacalifornia* did not only originate from the fact that so many people from Oaxaca have established in California, but also because many food products unique to their culture and region of origin are now also available in California (Domínguez Santos). The name that transnational immigrants have appropriated and which incorporates the names of both states that make part of their network and *topografías* indicates the significance these regions in their daily lives. The fusion in the name *Oaxacalifornia* is a demonstration of their identity not only as a transnational, but a transregional community. Furthermore, Domínguez Santos mentions the importance of various traditions and *costumbres*, practiced in both regions where indigenous immigrants have established, for example *Día de los muertos*.

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Día de los muertos is a tradition that is widely celebrated in México, but has also been part of the culture in Latin America in countries like Guatemala, Perú, El Salvador, Bolivia and in some rural areas of Argentina (Marchi 16-20). It is a celebration that has been commonly associated with indigenous practices and traditions, but it is also a celebration that has roots in Italy and a variety of European folk traditions as mentioned by Marchi in the book *Day of the Dead in the USA*. Similarly to *Día de la Virgen de*

Guadalupe, Día de los muertos is also syncretic in nature but indigenous traditions are more apparent in the latter celebration.

Día de los muertos has been considered syncretic due to the mix of indigenous and Roman Catholic beliefs and rituals in honoring the loved ones who have passed. It is a celebration that may even be considered transcultural considering the various cultural influences that make up this event today. This day has been the result of the blend of European folk traditions, medieval and Renaissance Catholic rituals and indigenous practices according to Kristen Norget in her book *Days of Death, Days of Life* (193). For the prehispanic communities of Mexico, *Día de los muertos* was generally celebrated around the time that the harvest began, without an exact date attached to it (*Día de los muertos: tradición muy viva 9-10*). On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church celebrations took place on the first days of November, around the same time as the harvest, which possibly facilitated an adjustment or *fijamiento* to the dates to correspond with the Roman Catholic Church's celebration.

The Roman Catholic Church has observed All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day on November 1st and 2nd, while for Mixtec indigenous traditions November 1st celebrates the *Día de los angelitos*, the innocent children who have passed, and on November 2nd, *Día de los muertos*, we celebrate the adults. Norget demonstrates in her research that in many places, including Oaxaca, the distinction between the two days is very important. "The factors of differentiation . . . always involved [are] issues of sin or, more precisely, 'conscious' sin" (120). As a result of this differentiation, the celebrations differ mainly in the use of colors, and some of the practices that are done for the adults (but not for the

angelitos) and take place right after the death of the loved one. For example, it is not necessary to do a *novenaria*, or nine days of praying the rosary for the saving of the soul of the deceased, for the *angelitos*. With adults, on the other hand, it is a practice that cannot be forgotten in order for the soul of that loved one to be able to move on, hopefully to Heaven.

According to Norget's experience in Oaxaca,

[d]eath is conceived as a passage from domesticated "inside" to an uncertain and uncontrolled "outside." This passage, however, requires help from the living if it is to be entirely successful. Not only must the physical corpse be disposed of properly, but the dead person's soul, which has been thrust into a new, ambiguous state of limbo, is subject to the influence of those who are still alive. The instrumental goal of the series of rites surrounding death is to ensure that the soul can leave peacefully and find eventual rest in heaven with the promise of salvation. (116)

This is a practice that is not "needed" for the *angelitos* since their innocence implies that even if they did commit sins, its consciousness is not the same as an adult since they were still learning the difference between right and wrong through their lived experience.

While the distinction between adults and *angelitos* is important in the celebrations, both days may be celebrated in families that have deceased persons of both statuses. *Día de los muertos*, on November 2nd, is the day that has been widely celebrated in Mixtec communities in Mexico and throughout the world.

According to the beliefs, the *angelitos* then visit us from October 31st and leave on November 1st, while the adults come on November 1st and leave on November 2nd; but the celebrations generally last throughout the month depending on the region where it is celebrated. In Oaxaca City and its surrounding areas, as documented in Norget's study, there are different *días de panteón*. The cemeteries are open at night for celebration on different days of the month in order for the family members and friends to be able to celebrate all of their dead around the city instead of having to choose. This is one of the reasons why the month of November is known as Month of the Souls in Oaxaca (197). Despite the extensive celebration of the dead in various regions of the country, November 2nd has been the main day of celebration and recognition.

The book *Día de los muertos, tradición muy viva* (2007) notes that there are two rituals that are commonly practiced in celebration of the dead. The first, which generally takes place in the home, is by putting up altars designed and created in memory of the loved one. While this must be ready by the *Día de los muertos*, often families build up to November 2nd in putting together and adding objects to the altar. The second are festivities organized in the tomb of the loved on this same day. The celebrations in the cemetery range from cleaning the tomb and decorating it with flowers, including Day of the Dead flowers for regions that have access to them: *cempasúchil*, to staying overnight with family members, sometimes with food, drinks, and in some cases, musicians to play the favorite songs of the deceased. These are all widely practiced customs that I have seen and recently practiced as well.

The altars are a very important component of the celebrations of *Día de los muertos* and one that relates to Brown's distinction between objects and things. In addition, many things that are placed in these altars have links to indigenous traditions practiced in immigrants place of origin and the rearticulated in the places where they have established. In the book called *Muerte, altares y ofrendas* (2008), Lourdes Aquino Rodríguez and Lourdes Beauregard García, one of the contributors, states that "*ofrendas . . . son dádivas o servicios por gratitud o amor. Se trata de objetos personales o de la vida diaria que son colocados como acompañantes de los individuos en el momento de su deposición*" (22). While these may sometimes be placed in their tomb, these are also objects that make an important part of the *ofrendas* or altars that are put together for the deceased's loved ones during the *Día de los muertos* celebration. According to Norget, these *ofrendas* vary depending on the family's time and finances (200), but the staple objects used include an arch is placed over the altar and decorated with flowers and fruits or other objects, flowers including the marigold or the *cempasúchil*, which is known as *la flor del muerto* (*ibid* 200). *Ofrendas* include food and drinks which vary from home to home but the most common, especially in Oaxaca and other locations, include *pan de muertos*, *mole*, *atole*, *tortillas*, *aguardiente*, tequila, chocolate, coffee, fruits, and in some places the sweets made for this celebration, especially *calaveras* (*ibid* 200). Pictures of the deceased's loved ones are generally at the center of the altar in addition to religious pictures, images, or figures (*ibid* 200). These may include religious images who the deceased had faith in, or those important in the town or to the family. Other objects that I have seen include candles, copal incense, and objects such as toys, cigarettes, or other

things that were somehow important to the deceased (adult or *angelito*). In my experience, an *altar* for close family members that have died is a common practice for many people, but *altares* with the detail and attention one devotes for the *Día de los muertos* only takes place once a year. This is significant because these are the types of *altares* that are assembled, by various nodes throughout the transnational networks, in order to express transnational immigrants culture and also to (re)articulate it in combination with cultural practices in the places where immigrants reside.

According to Mario Navarrete Hernández, a contributor to the book *Muerte, altares y ofrendas*,

[e]n Mesoamérica los altares, más que de vida o muerte, son altares de anual resurrección. La esperanza de la vida eterna para los difuntos no morirá mientras haya quien, cada 2 de noviembre, les obsequie con tamales... atoles, mole, arroz, dulces y el delicioso humo de copal. (36)

These *ofrendas* to the deceased are an indication of their loved ones still remembering and loving them. Stories dedicated to the deceased are often times shared with other loved ones. Part of the festivities in Oaxaca, and in some places in Veracruz, stories are told about the dead people's visit and their experiences. Some serve as a reminder that they are, for one night, back in our world; others warn family members about the importance of the *ofrendas*.

These offerings that families put together for their deceased loved ones are not only representative of their life, but they also perform a role at various levels of society. For the family, *ofrendas* are a performance of remembrance. The repetitive action that

takes place yearly links it to Schechner's restored behavior because it is an action that the families repeat "nth" number of times. Through the incorporation of the objects that identify and defined the person while they were alive, the family members perform the deceased person's life. These performances, as noted by Taylor, have the function of transmitting knowledge. In the case of individuals, it is information about them, but there are also *ofrendas* that perform social understanding. While celebrations focusing on a deceased person's life are the most significant to communities throughout both countries, Mexican organizations, directly linked with the government, also participate in the organization of celebrations throughout Mexico.

In November of 2009, I decided to drive to San Diego and Tijuana in search for *Día de los muertos* events that might be directly related to Oaxacan communities or inform the public about the immigrants who have died crossing the border. In my short trip, I was able to observe a performance organized by the *Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes* (CONACULTA), the official government entity in charge of funding and organizing cultural traditions and events, and I was also present at the Old Mission of San Luis Rey annual event in Oceanside, California. As an official governmental association, the exposition and the celebration in connection to *Día de los muertos* organized by CONACULTA is a contradiction to Kearney's description of transnationalism as one that indicates that we have moved on to a post-national era. The nation is involved in cultural events in Mexico and throughout the United States sometimes through the contribution and/or participation of embassies.

At the CONACULTA exposition there was one elaborate *ofrenda* dedicated to a well-known writer who had recently passed; there was also an exposition titled “*Muros entre hombres*” and a second one where there were images that criticized globalization. I did not have the opportunity to meet with anyone who participated in the organization of this event as I was able to in New York for *la Antorcha Guadalupana*, but while the *ofrenda* did not present a performance related to globalization, immigration, or transnationalism, the exposition did. The wall that stands between Mexico and the United States was represented in the photographs, as were images of crosses that represent the migrants who died crossing the border. There was also a photograph that showed the colorful tombs, one for each year, that hung on the border wall in Tijuana that informed people of the number of immigrant deaths for each year (in the actual photo, only 2001 thru 2003 were shown). This exhibit, in combination with the dates, the dance presentation to celebrate *Día de los muertos* that was taking place that day, and the exhibition of images that criticized various aspects of globalization can be interpreted as a social performance, as defined by Schechner. The combination of these presentations creates a social discourse that is not only related to the theory of representation but is also an aspect of performance theory.

These exhibits, the cultural event of *Día de los muertos*, and even Tijuana as a site that exposes many of the negative outcomes of globalization, demonstrate elements of what Schechner describes as performative. This means that the combination mentioned above displays “performance-like qualities.” It incorporates aspects of restored behavior and it is closely related to the postmodern in the sense that it challenges the dominant.

While it does not add to the construction of social realities such as gender or race, which are Schechner's examples of what constitutes the performative, this display does help contest the popular United States construction of immigrants as anything but human by incorporating various photographs that demonstrate two border cities and their own representation of activist art related to the death of hundreds of immigrants.

While the event in Oceanside was still a general exposition, it allowed for more interaction with some people who created the altars. The event was originally organized in 2001 in order to attract cultural tourism. The city invited the FIOB to build a number of altars; this marked the beginning of this event (Marchi 65). In November of 2009 this event took place in the Old Mission of San Luis Rey, where the altars were set up throughout the courtyard, which also served as a stage at the time for various Mexican dances. In her research, Marchi notes that, while FIOB and other organizations that may have social purposes were part of this event, none mounted an altar with political messages (65). Since many of the Mixtecs who have established and who participated in the organization of this event had celebrated *Día de los muertos* in their home communities, Marchi mentions that they felt comfortable recreating an altar as it would be at home (65). With this in mind, these altars had the intention to represent this cultural event as close as possible to how it would take place at home. Twice-behaved behavior, or restored behavior, is once again an element from performance theory that presents itself in this event, but so are customs. Schechner's definition of rituals as mentioned in chapter one applies to the celebration that takes place in Oceanside each year. These

ofrendas that are put together are memories that the Mixtec community in this city turn into actions.

The rituals, which make part of the altars at the Old Mission of San Luis Rey, are sacred but these do not incorporate all the ceremonious elements due to the timing and dates of the events. The day of the celebration doesn't always fall on November 1st or 2nd, and it is only a daytime event, but most altars honor loved ones who have died instead of creating generic *ofrendas*. Despite this, *Día de los muertos* at the Old Mission does not hold the same ritual themes as a tradition like this would hold in a household or in their communities in Mexico due to the lack of ritual themes such as ritual as liminal performance and ritual of time and space. Schechner's description of rituals as liminal performances includes major events, for example marriage. While *Día de los muertos* is not officially considered one of these major events in Catholicism, I suggest that it can still be considered liminal ritual. A defining element for this theme is the time when a person is "betwixt and between." The deceased person can be considered to feel this in-between element through their visit on November 2nd. Some family members may also experience a "presence," usually interpreted as the deceased person who comes to visit his loved ones. This cultural celebration is believed to be a day in which the lines between the world we live in and a one where our deceased have moved on to are blurred. In addition to the theme of liminal performance, *Día de los muertos* takes place on particular days and times and, in many cases, specific locations. The dates are nonnegotiable and many families make accommodations in order to demonstrate *el*

respeto that our loved ones deserve. While the location is important, it is so in terms of being where the altar is built for the deceased person.

The ritual theme of “*communitas* and anti-structure” can be considered present since it does not only bring a city together, despite the differences in culture and practices, but it also “liberates” people from the constraints of their daily lives. Considering Marchi’s research, the Mixtec community of Oceanside that participated in the organization of this event would not consider this a change; however, there are some elements that would qualify this event as meeting this theme of rituals. As mentioned above, the event does not always take place on the actual day and it is a public sphere in which it is presented. It has various purposes that are not necessarily associated with the personal intention of this day.

In recent years, as noted in their website and their Facebook page, there have been some additions which are not “original” to the traditions that take place in their home communities. This is important because it is a demonstration of the (re)articulations and cultural negotiations that are happening in the places where transnational immigrants reside. One of these recent additions were the car *ofrendas* that were added between 2009 and 2013. The pictures from the 2013 celebration show old cars with trunks or truck beds decorated to mimic a traditional altar. These were set up on what appear to be the side of the church where this Oceanside celebration takes place. This automatically reminded me of low-riders, which are part of Chicano culture in the United States (it was not clear if the cars in the pictures were low-riders, but they were definitely older). These changes are either adaptations that the community is making in their place of residency in the

United States, or they are alterations made in order to include other members of the community or to provide a cultural aspect that can attract more tourism.

Día de los muertos in the 1950s and 1960s was generally “mocked by ‘educated’ Mexicans for their ‘superstitions’” (Marchi 30). In an interview made by Carmichael and Sayer in 1989, a teacher from Puebla stated that “we were ridiculed for believing in *ofrendas*. . . . Those who honoured Day of the Dead, so it was said, were the victims of superstition and hallucination” (118).³⁵ This opinion towards indigenous practices is closely intertwined with issues of race and class. Not only were indigenous practices and beliefs controversial to the Mexican nation due to the notion of modern that existed, of which indigenous practices were not a part of, but people “with class” did not follow these ideas considered to be uncivilized.³⁶ In the 1970s, the Mexican Ministry of Tourism advertised this celebration in order to attract tourists and aid in economic development of the states that take part in these festivities, especially because in many cases, these were also some of the poorest states in the nation (Marchi 30). The state played a role in the reproduction of this celebration throughout Mexico and, in recent generations, in the United States and may affect ways in which transnational immigrants reproduce this cultural tradition.

Now in places like Tzintzuntzan, Michoacán as noted by Marchi and by Stanley Brandes in the book *Power and Persuasion* (1988), as well as in Oaxaca City, Oaxaca as noted by Norget, the amount of tourism that attends events like *Día de los muertos* and

³⁵ Also qtd. in Marchi *Day of the Dead in the USA* (2009).

³⁶ I am parting from links that exist that what is related to European practices are considered civilized as opposed to traditions linked to indigenous practices.

La Guelaguetza is such that, while it provides a boost in the local economy, the participation in these festivities has been limited for members of the community. The high price of attending (Norget 234) in addition to the “packaging” of this event for the tourist as Nestor García Canclini argues with respect to the *Día de los muertos* celebration in Janitzio, Michoacán (*Transforming Modernity* 97) become reasons why locals do not take part in these celebrations.³⁷ García Canclini in *Transforming Modernity: Popular Culture in Mexico* (1995), states that Janitzio “constitutes an extreme” of the capitalization of traditional events. In Janitzio’s *Día de los muertos* celebrations there are arcade games, bands from the cities, along with many other “typically” Mexican objects. These are one element of the celebration while the traditional dances and village decorations and practices are another (Canclini 97). Canclini states that “[t]he fiesta becomes first a fair and then a show—an intercity, national, and even international show, depending on the distance from which tourists come” (*Transforming Modernity* 97). Marchi states that many rural towns in Mexico have many more foreigners and cameras than it does local residents who take part in their cultural celebrations (31). As both authors note, *Día de los muertos* becomes a performance to sell, while simultaneously members of the community try to celebrate their own rituals and traditions that their ancestors have practiced for centuries. The events that are organized by the government can be considered performances of authenticity. While these celebrations are far from the traditions and practices that the locals take part in, the government is packaging up what is considered to be authentically

³⁷ also in Norget, *Days of Death* (2006).

Mexican in order to sell it to the tourist. This is important to my investigation because in places where transnational immigrants reside, in public celebrations, these expectations of authenticity are negotiated. In the case of the celebration in Oceanside, the element of the altars was one that, as Marchi describes throughout her work, is non-negotiable. However, the dances that are performed are not specifically representative of the Mixtec region of Mexico, where the immigrants are generally from.

According to Marchi, throughout Mexico, this celebration is an “exuberant commercial festival” due to the televised parades, concerts, dances, *ofrendas*, and many other events that have been added to the celebration of the dead (31). These embellishments are made in order to meet the “romantic expectations of tourists,” such as ofrenda competitions, as noted by Marchi (31) or the consumption of tequila and tamales as noted in Brandes’ research (105-109). These romantic expectations are also held in border towns throughout the U.S.-Mexico border as Marchi’s research indicates. In some cases, celebrating *Día de los muertos* was a way to counter the popular United States holiday of Halloween on the border and to reinforce Mexican nationalism. What Marchi does not account for in her explanation of how this celebration made it to border towns is the large number of migrants from the Mixtec region that join the U.S.-Mexico border culture and cities.

There are many celebrations in the border towns that are also government-sponsored celebrations such as events organized by schools, community centers, and other government agencies such as museums (Marchi 32). These, similarly to the celebrations that were organized and televised in Mixtec regions of Mexico and Mexico

City, have as a purpose either to attract or maintain tourism or to demonstrate and reinforce Mexican identity and nationalism. It has become an expectation of tourists visiting the south of Mexico just as well as the northern border towns to find elements belonging to “traditionally” Mexican culture and celebrations, such as the *Día de los muertos*. In Marchi’s research, one of her interviewees mentioned that when she was younger, *Día de los muertos* was not a popular celebration in the north of Mexico. It was not even an event that students learned about in school. This is something that my family and I also witnessed while we lived in the Mexican side of Ambos Nogales.³⁸ Marchi mentions an article from a local San Diego newspaper that mentions that now, as opposed to 20 years ago, *Día de los muertos* crafts are popular objects sold to American tourists. Some celebrations in northern Mexico have become a performance of Mexicanness. Tourists request things they associate with “Mexican” and due to the economic advantage this results in, those objects, dances, or other cultural factors related to what is Mexican are provided for the consumer. One way that this takes place is as a result of the Mexican government’s popularization of this tradition and the “romanticizing” of Mexican culture mentioned above.

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS IN THE BORDERLANDS

The various celebrations that take place throughout both countries can be considered part of a transnational practice when relating the concept of transnationalism.

As Besserer reminds us in *Topografías Transnacionales* Mixtec Transnational

³⁸ I refer to Nogales, Sonora, Mexico and Nogales, Arizona, United States as Ambos Nogales, a commonly used name by people who grew up in the region.

communities have established networks that are much more complicated than a place of origin and a place of residence as most anthropologists approach their research. With Besserer's idea of transnational, Nogales, Sonora would be one more *topografía* in the complex network of transnational migrants. If I was to analyze emerging cultural objects and traditions utilizing the concept of place of origin (Mixtec region in Mexico) and place where Sr. Castañeda has established (Nogales, Sonora, Mexico), then this is not a transnational incident. However, Velasco also mentions "home base" locations along the border as intermediate destinations that facilitate mobility in the existing routes or in the creation of new ones ("Mixteco Women on the Migration Route").

The United States has become one more country taking part in this important celebration of the dead. In her research, Marchi finds that celebrations that took place in the late 1800s into the 1970s were much more related to the Catholic celebrations rather than indigenous due to the detachment with southern Mexican indigenous cultures as a result of how history developed since the arrival of the Spaniards (34). In the border regions of the United States, while going to mass and spending the day at the cemetery were common activities, Kay Turner and Pat Jasper indicate in their article "Day of the Dead: The Tex-Mex Tradition" (1994) that food did not have the same importance as it does in celebrations in southern Mexico (145).³⁹ The commonalities that existed between *Día de los muertos*, All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day revolved around remembering loved ones who had passed, offering flowers, and visiting and cleaning their graves. *Pan de muertos*, copal incense, *ofrendas*, and most of the items that are now closely related to

³⁹ Also in Marchi, *Day of the Dead in the USA* (2009).

these dates and celebrations were not in any way part of the celebration in the United States until the 1960s and 1970s (Marchi 36). Researchers at the Southwest Folklore Center at the University of Arizona found that in *Ambos Nogales* elements from the celebrations of *Día de los muertos* from the South of Mexico were introduced by immigrants that established themselves in this border town and who came from the south in addition to some member of the city's intellectual community (Griffith 12-17).⁴⁰ Griffith, the author of *A Shared Space* (1995), states that “[l]ocal observances are focused much more on family continuity, with little attention being paid to death itself. Family members gather to clean, refurbish, and decorate their family graves, and perhaps spend some social time together with their dead” (19). Flower arrangements are generally ordered ahead of time. In Nogales the most common flower decoration is the *corona*, a decoration of flowers in circular formation, imitating the form of a crown. Flower decorations in the form of crosses have also been popular (*ibid* 19). The color of the flowers and the arrangement may be chosen according to the gender of the deceased person. *Cempasúchiles* are also commonly grown in Sonora and used in the decoration of tombs throughout the state (*ibid* 21).

Like other places, the people of Nogales, as Griffith found in his research, celebrated the dead during different days. In conversations and interviews with people from Nogales, Griffith found that on the 30th of October people in Nogales celebrate people who died in accidents; on the 31st of October unbaptized people are remembered; November 1st, like in southern Mexico's cultural practices, is the day for the *angelitos*;

⁴⁰ Also in Marchi, *Day of the Dead in the USA* (2009).

and finally on November 2nd adults who have passed are celebrated and remembered (18-19). As Nogales grew and more of its population came from southern Mexico, its celebration also expanded to incorporate elements of the celebrations from the south.

Griffith mentions a *panadero*, Sr. *Castañeda*, who came to live in Nogales, Sonora in the 1960s from the south of Mexico that made *pan de muerto* to sell and set up his own altar like he would have in his hometown. People were curious about the *pan de muerto* and slowly incorporated it into their customs. By 1984, as Griffith found in his interview, the bakery shelves were stocked with *pan de muerto*, ready for the demands of the people and he even sent out his son to sell more of it (25-26). The example of Sr. *Castañeda*, is surely just one of many migrants from the South that have become established in this border town and brought their own practices and celebrations that have been adapted in the celebrations of the border city of Nogales.

On the United States side of these twin border cities, the celebrations that take place were different. While the flowers were a commonality between the two, Griffith observed a small procession the evening of November 2nd to the cemetery in Nogales, Arizona. The people that Griffith saw were holding candles and were led by the priest and a few altar boys: a traditionally Catholic practice (28). Aside from this, few celebrations as elaborate as those from Oaxaca and other regions of southern Mexico took place on the Mexican side of the border until later years.

Restored behavior is an applicable concept to the performance and ritual of *Día de los muertos* in border towns before elaborate traditions, similar to those from the south, began. Like in other performance included in this dissertation, these customs

practiced in border towns reflect the theme of “*comunitas* and anti-structure.” It is an event that may temporarily liberate families from their daily lives and generally bring families together to celebrate their deceased. This ritual is of significance to a small group of people, as opposed to a tradition like *la Antorcha Guadalupana*. But these practices may have influenced a new tradition created which brings together a community of activists to acknowledge the immigrants who have died crossing the border.

It was not until the Chicano Movement that the United States saw a clear growth in the popularity of *Día de los muertos* celebration, especially in California. Marchi states that Chicano activists in California, as part of the Chicano Movement, started to organize processions and celebrations similar to those celebrated in the south and that have closer ties to indigenous celebrations of *Día de los muertos*. This was a strategy to “honor Mexican American heritage” (37) in the United States. In addition, “Chicanos adopted Day of the Dead as a way to challenge conventional ideas of what it meant to be an American” (Marchi 30). Tere Romo, a Chicana curator who has been an active participant in the organization of Day of the Dead exhibits in various parts of the United States for decades, states that these celebrations were “a momentous statement of cultural affirmation” (20) for people of Mexican descent who have been living as second-class citizens in this country. At the time, *Día de los muertos* celebrations and art creations related to it became *arte contestatario*, which is art meant to “challenge mainstream racist tropes about Latinos” (Gómez-Peña 86). Art created to challenge mainstream culture also had as a goal the “formation and unification of a Chicano cultural identity” (Romo 7). This led to a reintroduction of Mexican cultural expressions such as cultural celebrations

and art (*ibid* 7). As a result, many Mexican Americans and Chicanos were exploring Mexico's cultural roots and becoming learners of indigenous languages, dances, and other cultural practices related to Mexico's indigenous groups (Marchi 39). Besserer, who studies the multidirectional involvement of communities, would consider this a transnational connection due to the political and cultural re-connection that the Chicano and Mexican American communities in the United States are trying to accomplish. Not only can this qualify this community as transnational, but the events themselves and the purpose behind them would also qualify as transnational.

According to Romo, "The *Día de los Muertos* observance, including its indigenous philosophy, *ofrendas*, popular art, and foods, became a focal point in this reclamation process and helped establish direct ties back to Mexican ancestors, both familial and historical" (7). This is how *Día de los muertos* celebrations have become a fusion of practices that is also apparent in most Mexican celebrations in the United States. After all, we do generally see a mix of dances from all over Mexico, including Aztec dances, and art from all different regions of the country. These are elements that I have witnessed in the various Mexican celebrations I have observed such as *Día de los muertos* celebrations in California and *el Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* torch run arrival and celebrations in New York City. Schechner may say that this follows one of the themes of rituals where we present "new" social realities. I, however, would also include, that while this is a performance of Mexican identity, I fear that in some instances the purpose is not to rearticulate it or reinforce cultural traditions in the place of residence but to make it available for the consumer.

There are other celebrations that are not quite as traditional as celebrations from southern Mexico and have a much more activist purpose. For almost 13 years now, *Coalición de Derechos Humanos*, an organization based in Tucson, Arizona and which promotes human and civil rights for all people, has organized a *Día de los muertos* pilgrimage in honor and memory of all immigrants that have died crossing the border, especially in honor of those who died and were found each year. In 2013, their “Press Release” stated that the pilgrimage will include walking eight miles from a church in South Tucson to the San Xavier Mission located on a reservation south of the city of South Tucson. The purpose of their pilgrimage is to “bring attention to the human rights crisis that is occurring in the Southwest” (“ November 2 13th Annual Día de los Muertos Pilgrimage”). A common practice for this ritual and many others that the *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* and many of their allied organizations (i.e. No More Deaths) do is to create white crosses, one for each immigrant found dead in Arizona from the tragic results of crossing desert. The Press Release states that since the 1990s, when border policies toughened to prevent undocumented people from crossing into the United States, “it is estimated that the remains of more than 6,000 men, women and children have been recovered on the U.S.-México border” (*ibid*). This excludes all bodies and remains that are left to be found, many of which may never be found. The press release states that “[t]hese deaths are a direct result of U.S. border policies, which have routed thousands of immigrants to their deaths in the rivers, deserts, and at the hands of border and law enforcement officials” (*ibid*). As a non-governmental human rights organization,

Coalición de Derechos Humanos is concerned and has been deeply involved in attempts to prevent continued deaths along the border.

On their website and in the introduction of the “Arizona Recovered Human Remains Project” they state the need to have accurate numbers of deaths in order to communicate the urgency and importance of their work and to prevent more deaths along the border as a result of the border policies put in place and that only get tougher and result in more deaths. Members of this organization work in cooperation with other organizations, such as consulates from Latin American countries, governmental and non-governmental, in order to “put names to our immigrant sisters and brothers . . . in an effort to honor every life that has been lost on our borders” (“Arizona Recovered Human Remains Project”). Remains that have been recovered and/or recorded by *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* add up to almost 2,600; most of the bodies are unidentified. These numbers not only demonstrate that the government’s efforts to seal the border is failing but that it is also violating the human rights of those who have, or tried to, cross this desert.

The ritual that *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* performs brings attention to the effects of the militarization of the border and attempts to make people and our representatives in the United States government aware of the situation. Through the repetition of this event, the visuals it presents, and the importance that other members of the community give it, participants hope to communicate a sense of urgency to the need for immigration reform in this country. In addition, it criticizes the militarization with the

hopes that some of the laws and measures taken that have led to many deaths will be renegotiated.

Día de los muertos celebrations in the United States are no longer just a celebration that represents Mexican identity, that encourages tourism or a result of its celebrants who are transnational migrants. It has become a means of social activism, a date and a space where human rights activists and immigration reform supporters and those who lost their lives as a result of our broken immigration system can protest and remind the world that it matters despite the fact that they are no longer here.

REPRESENTATIONS IN DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

In Mexico, death is very present at local and national levels of culture and daily lives. That “special” relationship that has been established with death has made death an iconic representation of the Mexican celebration of *Día de los muertos*, but also of Mexico and its identity. *Día de los muertos* turned from representing an indigenous tradition to representing a whole nation and forming an essential part of its identity. The extension of these events to people of other cultures and countries link to Besserer’s concept of *multicentric* communities but would be limited to their political and social realities in the United States more so than the established networks that define communities as transnational. Garduño, on the other hand, may still consider this a contribution to the *aliteral* notion of borders. While Garduño is referring to the physical border that limits the space of two nations, borders can also refer to the cultural limitations that exist, in any location, within societies. Members of other countries may

not relate themselves to the cultural aspects of the political United States-Mexico border, although most did have to find a way of crossing it. But culturally, they are contributing to the (re)articulation of cultural practices connected to transnational communities.

Through its celebration in Mexico and the United States, by Mexicans and others alike, people not only celebrate death and remember their loved ones, but they also celebrate indigenous and minority cultures through the incorporation of their practices. *Día de los muertos* has become a representation of and an opportunity to celebrate and incorporate minority cultures, especially in the United States. In her research, Marchi found that a significant number of *hondureños*, *bolivianos*, *chilenos*, *guatemaltecos*, and other Latinos throughout the United States have been a part of or hosted *Día de los muertos* events. Marchi states that “as new Latino immigrant groups participate in Day of the Dead activities, they manifest their regional traditions, transforming these celebrations into pan-Latino events” (10), events that recognize minorities in the United States. This, as Marchi notes, not only has resulted in the increasing participation and acceptance of non-Latinos, but also in this celebration becoming one of the most popular educational activities, especially in California and the Southwest (Marchi 90). Marchi’s examples show that not only is the event modified to co-exist with other cultures, but members of other societies have adopted it to meet their own needs and/or become part of a larger community and growing networks.

In the 1990s and at the turn of the century, news coverage and *Día de los muertos* event organizations had increased due to an increased support and interest in multiculturalism, as stated by journalists across the country. In Marchi’s opinion, positive

media coverage has strengthened the sense of an imagined community among Mexican Mexicans and other Latinos while it established an annual ritual for all the members of United States' society, including non-Hispanics. While I do agree with Marchi's statement, I also think that media coverage of many Latino events is limited to English-speaking channels as opposed to their Speaking-speaking counterparts. The internet, however, does a better job of covering it but its audience is limited to those who have access and which depend not only on class but also understanding of the English language. Marchi states that "the celebration is the subject of more than 28.6 million nonprofit, personal, and commercial Internet Web sites geared toward an English-speaking audience" (Marchi 85). She mentions that *Día de los muertos* coverage lasts from late September through mid-November and is found in newspaper articles, listings, and event announcements among other coverage. It has become so popular in the United States that Disney even tried to copyright the phrase "*Día de los muertos*" or "Day of the Dead" (Rodriguez, "Day of the Dead Trademark Request Draws Backlash for Disney"). As opposed to many Mexican celebrations of the Day of the Dead events, festivities in the United States are meant to be much more public than they are in Mexico. Cameras, video and photography are all welcomed as a way of sharing the event with the audience. But according to Marchi, in Mexico it is not nearly as common for this to be acceptable due to its intrusive nature (85). While I understand her statement, I would disagree. First, considering the growth and popularity of these festivities in Mexico with the intention to attract tourism, cameras are expected. Even in smaller towns, as noted by Brandes, families welcome tourists and even encourage them to return (106). This expectation of

returning to the spectacles created, depends on the region and the purpose of the event. As a result of the overwhelming coverage, Marchi states that it “portrays Latinos as having valuable contributions to offer mainstream society, both in terms of artistic and ritual practices, and in terms of alternative metaphysical views” (86). It provides an alternative or an addition to the already established celebrations.

The Chicano Movement adopted the *Día de los muertos* celebrations as a way to reconnect with their roots. Not only did participants of this movement start organizing processions and celebrations that reflected those that took place in Mexico, but they did so in such a way that it challenged the negative ways in which Latinos were represented (Gómez-Peña 86). Chicano activists, through their organized events and art, celebrated the contributions of indigenous civilizations through what is known as Neo-Indigenism (Marchi 39). Chicanos admired and incorporated rituals, symbols, and beliefs belonging to indigenous communities into their movement, art, and daily lives. Through these actions they chose to represent themselves as Mexicans, Indigenous Mexicans. This celebration played an important role in the reclamation process and in making connections to Mexican ancestors, notes Romo (7). While many people tend to choose some practices over others (indigenous or Catholic) to represent the history that they choose to focus on, the members that organized the first *Día de los muertos* celebration in California did so by incorporating aspects of both in order to “incorporate all the things that we knew made up the culture,” as stated by Tere Romo in an interview made by Marchi (42), and “to offer a historically marginalized population cultural resources with which to counter generations of disparagement from the larger society” (*ibid* 43-44).

Celebrations like these were intended to challenge the exclusion of Latinos and to educate members of society in order for them to understand and respect Mexican traditions (*ibid* 44-45). Elements of performance theory, such as the changing of rituals or the creation of new ones, in conjunction with elements of transnationalism, such as the coexistence of two or more cultures, helped negotiate these tensions by being inclusive so that anyone can identify with the event and perhaps with the movement. The community was trying to represent themselves in ways that had not been seen or accepted before in United States society. Being Latino, from any Latin American country, could be a good thing; and by creating this movement and the various representations it chose to emphasize, it contributed to the creation of new ways to appreciate Latino heritage and culture and led to the formation of a community that fought for the rights of its members and others who found points of connection.

The social and political activism that has recently emerged throughout the country as a result of the lack of immigration reform and heightened border security and militarization would certainly fit with the purpose of cultural events organized by members and participants of the Chicano Movement. Undocumented immigrants are a marginalized population, not only by society but by the state of fear in which many of them live as a result of their status. *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* and other organizations attempt to educate United States society understand the situation immigrants go through, why they come, and what many experience through the events organized. For example, once a year, *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* organizes the

Migrant Trail, where groups of people walk from Altar, Sonora, Mexico, into the United States and through the desert to Tucson.

Activists adopted and adapted typically Mexican celebrations or traditions, some of which also have connections with religious holidays. *Día de los muertos* is only one of these celebrations. On this day, people participate in a procession from St. John's Catholic Church in Tucson to the San Xavier Mission (Van Ham 118), as mentioned earlier. By carrying a cross for every immigrant that has died, they try to educate the people of the rise in immigrant deaths that take place every year in the desert of Arizona. Through these events, especially those that include and emphasize the number of people who have died, members of these organizations represent the reality of the state of Arizona and the reality that affects the lives of thousands of people. It marks the lives of those who cross the border, many who lose their lives in the process, and also their families who hope for the best but often end up *desamparados* as a result of the tragedy that their loved ones suffer.

In the media, the Arizona-Sonora Border is generally portrayed as a dangerous zone, a place that is so permeable that not only does it need the added security that the government has provided for this state, but it also accepts the help of any citizen that is willing to contribute in the protection of our borders such as the members of vigilante organizations. The media and these organizations contribute to the criminalization of the undocumented migrants that have no other option but to cross the border, without papers, while endangering their lives in the desert. This links back to Garduño's notions of *literal* and *aliteral* borders. The criminalization of the border and the various efforts to control

access to United States connects to Garduño's concept of *literal* border, which has been studied extensively in academia. But this particular event emphasizes issues related to the geographic and political borders (*literal*), through *aliteral* stand points, meaning through cultural production and social action. Activist organizations such as *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* and No More Deaths bring light to the other side of the issue that is being ignored: the lives that are lost.⁴¹ In addition, they also represent a reality of the border regions that many ignore due to the dominating images of criminality on the border that one is exposed to daily. This representation brings culture and activism together by presenting a compassionate aspect by projecting a human rights perspective.

The events planned by organizations like *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* fit in with one of the initiatives for performance theory because they are bringing light to a situation that a marginalized group of people in our society experience. They are also rituals in which religious and secular elements come together. Performance theory is a great device in studying *Día de los muertos* events that take place in Mexico and those that were and may continue to be organized by the Chicano community in the United States by either going against or reinforcing existing social norms.

PERFORMANCE AND DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

From a theatrical perspective in *Día de los muertos*, there are clear protocols that are followed in a performance. There is a specific place for the audience as opposed to

⁴¹ Between October 2012 and September 2013, 2,649 remains were found according to the number of deaths recorded by *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* refer to the "Missing Migrant Project": <http://derechoshumanosaz.net/projects/arizona-recovered-bodies-project/>

the location of the performers, there is a set of practices that are followed like applause at the end of a show. From another point of view of performance theory, there are also behaviors that are reenacted to either challenge or reestablish social norms. *Día de los muertos* events can play a role in both aspects of performance theory in addition to contributing to the literature with connections between performance and transnationalism.

Día de los muertos celebrations are rituals that incorporate sacred and secular elements. While for many this day is considered a religious holiday and celebration, for most people it is also a connection to aspects of everyday life. The religious celebration is one that takes place once a year for one or more days, depending where they are from and their own background and culture. For example, people from the Mixtec region, especially Oaxaca, may celebrate it not only for the first days of the month like many do, but also throughout the month, while others only celebrate one day: *Día de los muertos* on November 2nd. For many, death is not an isolated part of life only celebrated during these dates. In the homes and the daily lives of many, people honor, remember, and celebrate their deceased by having small altars up in their homes dedicated to their loved ones. *Día de los muertos* is just a time of the year that certain traditions take place, that go beyond the daily practices and that, in many cases, are closely connected to religious and/or indigenous practices.

Schechner mentions a set of rituals that provide the experience of camaraderie and anti-structure (*Performance Studies* 70). While the anti-structure mentioned is one that liberates people from the constraints of daily life, it is one that can also apply to the rituals organized by Chicanos when the first celebrations were taking place as well those

events that began to take place at the turn of the century in order to bring light and attention to the situation that was taking place at the border. The anti-structure that is applicable here is one that relates to the reality that we live in as members of United States society and the community building that takes place around movements such as the Chicano Movement and activist movements related to the immigration reform in this country.

Many *Día de los muertos* celebrations in much of southern Mexico, due to government intervention and promotion, have become “shows,” as García-Canclini called them, which perform to satisfy the evolving and romantic idea of Mexican celebrations and Mexican identity. As explained by García-Canclini, the Christian religion displaced pre-Columbian cultures. It

...confines many processions to the interior of its churches, and relinquishes the streets to outside merchants who set up stalls, loudspeakers, and amusement parks. Given its nature as a total aesthetic experience, the new invasion of color, light, and sound brought about by their commercial display replaces the religious *fiestas* . . . [t]he *fiesta* becomes first a fair and then a show. (97)

These celebrations, which used to be traditions and cultural practices of and for the locals, have become transformed into “*fiestas* for others.” Spectators come from all over the world for the entertainment, and as a result, professional organizers and even actors are the ones that perform in events like these in Janitzio, Michoacán and other places in Mexico (García-Canclini 97). Norget also describes a similar scenario that takes place in

the outskirts of Oaxaca City in Oaxaca. In these cases not only do these performances follow a set of rules such as separation between the audience and the actors, but also a set of “typical” performances that would identify them with Mexican customs and identity. A YouTube video titled “Janitzio: Pueblo Mágico (Día de los muertos) Uni-LCC,” demonstrates a celebration that is the exemplary expectation of a celebration by the indigenous people of Janitzio. The people who have decorated tombs sit next to their masterpieces while others, the tourists, walk around taking pictures. In other celebrations there are dances on a central stage and the public sits on bleachers surrounding it. This (re)articulation and reappropriation of culture now takes place in an unusual location in these networks of transnational communities. As mentioned earlier, the role of the Mexican government is important to consider in these modifications as a result of their efforts to attract tourism. However, these locations from which transnational immigrants originate are *topografías* in the complex nature of the networks established. These performative practices become a (re)articulation of culture that took place in the place of origin and may move on to celebrations in places of residence.

In her book Marchi also goes into detail about the role of the government in promoting and selling the popularity and festivities of this day to perform on television, parades, concerts, theatre and dance productions, *ofrenda* competitions, among many other activities involving businesses, schools, museums, and universities (31). In another video entitled “2 de Noviembre. Día de Muertos 2013,” created by the Mexican federal government, the *ofrendas*, *calaveras*, flowers, and the colors are what stand out and grab the audience’s attention. Considering the length of the video and that it ends with

“#Díade muertos2013,” a Twitter reference, I suggest that it was meant to be distributed electronically through social media in order to invite and attract tourism to the various locations where events may take place. Another possible purpose for this video may be to present a cultural element that identifies México. If this video portrays a performance of identity, or one that is more theatrical in nature, it is problematic that it excludes people. By doing so not only is this video failing to give credit to the people who have celebrated this custom for centuries, but it is also distributing a performance of a Mexican identity that exalts the color and culture that indigenous people contribute to the nation but fails to recognize them as part of it. A CONACULTA video on YouTube entitled “*Día de muertos*,” which informs the observer about this important annual tradition, does so in the same way as the video distributed by the Mexican government.

As a result of the nature of these events, and according to my experiences in a museum in Tijuana and another on the patio of a church in San Diego, the setup is one that goes along with what *is* performance. There is a set of conventions that each event follows. In the case of the places that organize concerts, theatre and dance productions, and some television shows and even parades, common convention includes a clear distinction between the performers and the audience. While not all places may have a stage, the distinction between where the performance takes place and where the audience is located is generally clear. In many cases, even the *ofrendas* are generally treated as if they were in a museum, whether the location where the performance and celebration is a museum or not. In Tijuana, as mentioned earlier, the performance took place in a museum. This included an exposition related to *Día de los muertos* as well as the dance

exposition that took place after. While most of these performance incorporate a set of norms to follow, the performances that take place do not only relate to what can be studied as what *is* performance, but also *as* performance.

In most of these celebrations, considering the expectations of the tourists that attend, Mexicans are performing what foreigners consider Mexican. We can see this, especially in celebrations that take place throughout border towns and in the United States in particular. Marchi mentions how government agencies and tourism officials have altered local traditions. I propose this presents another challenge to Kearney's notion of approaching transnationalism as a post-national era. According to Brandes, in Tzintzuntzan, locals asked the government for electricity in the cemetery to avoid torches, but due to the expectations of the tourists, their request was denied (*Power and Persuasion* 99-100). The dance performances, the *ofrenda* competitions, and displays are some of the best indicators of the performances of Mexican identity and what can be studied *as* performance. In my own experience in Oceanside, California I remember the beautiful *ofrendas* displayed throughout the courtyard. They were extravagantly decorated with flowers, food, pictures, and images. In addition, they also included banners that announced the celebration of this event in hometowns. Since many of the people from Mexico who live in Oceanside, California are of Mixtec descent, the focus of these celebrations do revolve around Mixtec cultural traditions without forgetting other aspects of what is considered Mexican in the region. The performance of Mexican identity as well as the coexistence of cultures and traditions that are identified as transnational elements can be found in Oceanside's celebration.

The performance of Mexican identity in *Día de los muertos* celebrations from the Chicano community is also incorporated. There are various aspects of Mexican identity that the organizers may have chosen to include as part of the celebrations depending on the aspects that they wanted to stand out. If the organizers wanted to reaffirm and celebrate the indigenous side of their heritage, like many did as part of the Neo-Indigenism movement, the performance of Mexicanness is one that favors the “original roots” of Mexico, usually in connection to the Aztecs more so than most other indigenous groups from Mexico. Many chose to emphasize both the indigenous and the religious aspect of *Día de los muertos*, and by doing so celebrate the *mestizo* element of Mexican identity by Chicanos in the United States.

Unlike other events organized for *Día de los muertos*, the celebrations that are organized by activist groups in the border region do so with another intention in mind. The event that has been organized by *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* in celebration of *Día de los muertos* every year does not necessarily incorporate elements that one would immediately identify as Mexican. While the procession can be an aspect that many *Día de los muertos* celebrations incorporate, the celebration described by Van Ham and announced and described by *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* in their emails and website present a social performance that speaks and protests for people who are no longer here to speak and protest for the injustices they have experienced as a result of their search for survival or a better life for themselves and their families. The crosses that the participants of this procession carry, as well as the event itself, are constant actors of social

performance. They perform the defense of rights that all humans deserve to have and a reality that this border experiences daily but many choose to ignore.

By analyzing what can be studied *as* performance in events that celebrate *Día de los muertos* in Mexico, the United States and the border region we can see that while there are points of intersection between these, there are also aspects where the performance of each differ but can complement each other in their purpose.

In the adoption and adaptation of traditional practices from the place of origin and the culture of immigrants that are undocumented, transnational, or have been in this country for decades, as well as their supporters, performances and representations of *Día de los muertos* celebrations have contributed to views and ideas of what is considered Mexican. They also add to the various social performances that have taken advantage of this widely celebrated occasion to bring light and attention to a reality that affects migrants from all over the world who cross the border. The social performance that these events accomplish is one that while it is born of local issues and experiences, it is applicable and relevant throughout both countries and the world alike.

EVENTOS TRANSNACIONALES: A CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have analyzed *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe* and *Día de los muertos* and explored the functions in which these celebrations and related non-governmental organizations with links on both sides of the United States-Mexico border contribute to the (re)articulation of identity, representation, and community building in the United States. I draw from Besserer's notion of multicentric and multidimensional aspects of transnational immigrants and the roles these play in the cultural production in various *topografías*. I approach my work from Garduño's *aliteral* notion of the United States-Mexico border, also applicable in studies of transnationalism, by focusing on cultural production and social action. By employing Hall's concept of representation and Schechner's work on the theory of performance, I found that transnational immigrants have (re)articulated their identity through representations and performances, incorporating transnational elements as well as bringing into focus a transregional notion of their identity. In addition, there exists a connection in the reconstruction of their identity and cultural production to social activism to supports and encourages action, on the part of government officials, in order to promote immigration reform in the United States.

In the first chapter I set up the theoretical framework that drove this dissertation by presenting various perspectives on transnationalism. I also introduce Hall's work on representation. Additionally, I examine an aspect of material culture as approached by Brown and Thing Theory as well as Schechner's research on Performance Theory. In the second chapter I explored the impact of the celebration of *Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe*

in New York City and the ways in which *Asociación Tepeyac* assumes a prominent role in this celebration. I found that through the organization's as well as other transnational immigrant networks, they are able to expand the agency and outreach to the Mexican immigrant community in the New York Metropolitan area. In the third chapter, I explored how *Día de los muertos* celebrations in southern California and its surrounding area have been influenced by transnational immigrants from indigenous communities such as the Mixtecs from Oaxaca in Mexico. I found that while there existed some tensions in the replication of the traditional practices associated with this celebration in communities of origin and communities of establishment, elements of transnationalism are present through the negotiation that takes place in the execution of some celebrations in this region. In addition, I also investigate the role of the Mexican state in celebrations of *Día de los muertos*, demonstrating how the state is very much involved, challenging Kearney's idea of transnational as a post-national era. Many members of transnational communities challenge the nation-state by crossing the border without going through the official ports of entry or not having a passport. Nonetheless, these individuals will often simultaneously become active members of their communities of origin in Mexico as well as within their new communities in the United States. In this chapter, I also explore Besserer's multcenters and how they are applicable to the various celebrations of *Día de los muertos* that have sprung throughout the United States, especially one organized by *Coalición de Derechos Humanos* in Tucson, Arizona, which does not have a significant participation of transnational communities. Nonetheless, this organization's activities are

centered around social activism and migrants' rights on the United States-Mexico border region.

I am aware of the limitations of my current project as well as the new avenues for exploration that have become apparent. In the future, I wish to incorporate an ethnographic methodology that would enable me to present a complete picture of the links between transnational communities and cultural events. Furthermore, I wish to explore the ways in which this knowledge can be incorporated in the K-12th classroom not only to better meet the needs of students whose families experience[d] similar life journeys, but also to contribute to my non-transnational and non-immigrant student's understanding of the transformations taking place within their communities.

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