

Introduction

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The papers in this first volume of the Southwest Hispanic Research Institute's Occasional Working Paper Series titled, *Transnational Cultural Production and Expression*, address transnational social, cultural and political phenomena. Transnational approaches to the study of cultural production allow for inquiries that stretch, cross or overlay across multiple geospatial and temporal borders.¹ Cultural materials such as those addressed in this volume represent an important avenue for constructing modern and postmodern social beings and subjects. Peoples, goods and phenomena crossing nation-state borders generate new social sites for interaction with new modes of cultural production.

The selected papers unearth new and diverse intercultural knowledge routes by attending to the multiple and overlapping levels of cultural production embedded in the trans-American and global spheres, as well as their circulation across borders or territories. Each author offers a unique and innovative interpretation of how cultural production constitutes the political, economic and social dynamics that impact on the lives of Mexican and Latin American descent populations in the Americas.

The papers contribute to scholarship on Mexican and Latino American populations and their transnational expressions. Scholars have interrogated notions of the transnational as being more than the spaces connecting two or multiple places. Some have examined cultural materials as reflecting imaginaries that seek to work against dehumanizing forces of nation-states and their bounded borders.² While some researchers have focused their attention on the ways globalization impact the social and political behaviors of Mexicans and Latinas/os, others analyze how human rights organizers and activists use creative mediums to shape notions of globalization and transnationalism.

Each of the contributors of this volume analyzes the impact of transborder or transnational cultural materials on creative producers and their audiences. The papers reveal that popular symbolic and creative expressive materials are both consistent and changing, responding to multiple and at times conflicting narratives and perspectives. Mexican and Latin American immigration flows infuse cultural expressions in increasingly complex ways because humans cross borders not only to have bread but also to claim personhood and dignity. Embracing the possibilities contained in the critique and analysis of a "transnational imaginary", the contributors carefully dissect notions of cultural belonging, citizenship, identity, class, nationalism and collectivity.³

The authors in this volume demonstrate how cultural expressions constitute notions of identity and community sometimes in problematic ways. Creative producers draw on forms of cultural romanticization, sentimentality, or idealization to challenge negative cultural associations or stereotypes. While seeking to challenge derogatory cultural associations, creative producers also risk depicting individuals and communities as exceptional. As shown in the papers in this volume, cultural works become conduits of stories, emotions, and images, representations that enable the formation of a greater collectivity through transnational imaginings and subjectivities.

The range of possibilities means that individuals, communities, and nation-state officials may act in concert to produce sentimental idealizations or they may all work in contradistinction to form divergences in fidelity to the nation state. Thus, cultural phenomena are complex and fluid but also inextricably tied to political, institutional, and economic dynamics.

In his paper titled, “Transformative Borders in Cinema: Evolving Concepts of Migrant Crossings” Rafael Martínez explores two films that take on the subject of migration and border crossers. He finds that although the Mexican and U.S. governments impose and enforce international borders and repressive and regulatory containment systems, the lives and stories of peoples are not neatly confined. Globalization, the U.S. involvement in Latin America, and the drug trade have increased the numbers of immigrants coming from multiple locations in Latin America. Thus, migrants and immigrants are increasingly diverse, which challenges the notion of who immigrants are and what constitutes borders. Furthermore, the paper demonstrates that the dialogue between film and literature with reference to dynamic representations of borders and diverse migrant identities is pivotal in the formation of a movement for global justice.

As we learn, nation-states and their officials construct notions of peoplehood and citizenship through forms of cultural production. In “El Peladito and the Pachuco: Mexican Cinema and the Transnational Threat to Mexican National Identity,” Alex Jara examines *mexicanidad* as a state constructed notion involving an imagined unified and homogenized national and cultural consciousness. The government plays a role in sanctioning images of what it means to be Mexican. Jara argues that Mexican institutions and the public embraced the *Peladito* among other film characters because his film persona evoked a state oriented narrative of modernity and development, as well as resonated with a population that had mixed attitudes about formal government and authority. On the other hand, the *Pachuco* character deconstructed and challenged the state’s preferred representation of its citizenry by embracing the hybrid bordercrossing image of the *Pachuco*. For some el *Pachuco* reveals subversive ethnic and racial codes. In this paper, Alex Jara exposes the historical presence of a transnational Mexican subject that constantly stresses the cultural constraints embedded in the state's notion of the Mexican subject-citizen.

Trisha Martinez examines the border crossing phenomena of Mexico folklorico production among Mexican American populations in the U.S. In the paper, “Mexican Baile Folklórico: Dancing with Empire and Expressing the Nation,” Martinez inquires on how local expressions of folklore harken back or connect with Mexican folklorico performance, yet any notion of cultural cohesion breaks down in local situations and experiences. Folklorico is fluid, changing and responsive to local communities and social economic contexts. While folklorico can be used to prop up socially constructed notions of multicultural unity, creative producers also utilize dance expression to empower Mexican American populations living in highly racialized U.S. societies. Martinez's paper emphasizes the potential of cultural production to circulate across borders, change ideological beliefs, define places, and stimulate community engagement.

The flow of contestation politics across diverse nation states has informed the lives of Mexican and Mexican American communities in the U.S. In the paper titled “The Partido Liberal Mexicano and Political Images as Emancipatory Discourse,” Moises Santos examines the efforts of Mexican radical immigrants to combine mixed-media forms in the anarchist newspaper

Regeneración, which had a readership of up to 30,000 in the early twentieth century. He reveals how the Partido Liberal Mexicano, a transborder anarchist organization, sought to address literate and non-literate populations through the use of text and imagery that simultaneously criticized the Mexican and U.S. nation states in a turbulent period of U.S. history. Santos' paper presents a nuanced examination of the PLM's visual rhetoric, in combination with elements such as ideology, integration, agitation and pedagogy.

Ultimately, these papers encourage conversations on transnationalism, diaspora, identity, migration, citizenship, and cultural production as part of a larger project of collective research and scholarship. We hope that this volume of papers informs audiences of the rich and complex avenues of research offered by graduate students at the University of New Mexico.

¹ Akira Iriye, *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, New York, Palgrave, 2009. Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks 2011.

² Alicia Schmidt Camacho, *Migrant Imaginaries: Latino Cultural Politics in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Carlos Velez-Ibañez, *Border Visions: Mexican Cultures of the Southwest United States* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996); and Jose David Saldívar, *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

³ Saldívar, Ramon. *The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.