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Transnational audiences and the reception of television news: a study of Mexicans in Los Angeles.

Gabriel A. Moreno-Esparza

School of Media, Arts and Design

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TRANSNATIONAL AUDIENCES
AND THE RECEPTION OF
TELEVISION NEWS:
A STUDY OF MEXICANS IN LOS ANGELES

GABRIEL A. MORENO-ESPARZA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the University of Westminster
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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To Tupe, *a quien debo lo que soy*

To Adela, *mi compañera de viaje*

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Abstract

This doctoral contribution borrows from the discursive practices of transnationalism and diaspora in order to articulate the concept of “transnational audiences” in the United States. The project identifies transnational audiences as formed by individuals and families whose lives straddle two national territories. It draws on the traditions of cultural studies and reception analysis as a strategy to explore the relation between media use and novel experiences of migration in a context of contemporary globalization. This conceptual background is the result of empirical research conducted in Los Angeles which investigated the television news reception of 67 informants of Mexican origin during three months in 2006. Relying on a range of qualitative research methods based in the domestic settings of the participants, the project found high levels of interests across a variety of news occurring in Los Angeles, the US, Mexico and further afield. During interviews, television news-viewing sessions and in daily written accounts, respondents constantly conveyed the idea of being directly impacted by a wide variety of events and developments in the news, regardless of geographic proximity. Heightened sensitivity to realities unfolding in nearby and distant places, it will be argued, would be a result of transnational communities’ connections with different social, cultural, economic and political contexts. These links emerged in a variety of ways throughout the research activities. Notably, the interactions in which members of families engaged when discussing the news, revealed the re-articulation – and possible subversion – of patriarchal structures regulating relationships between males and females. At the same time, the research provides hints of a possible intertwining between the mediated and unmediated experiences of contributors to the study, who constantly informed their understanding of the news on the basis of interpersonal and mediated communication, knowledge of places and locations, and circumstances attached to opportunities and constraints related to aspects such as migration and citizen status. While in need of further systematization, this thesis’ findings are relevant for they highlight the need to operationalize the transnational audience in ways which differentiate it from those media publics who are based in their countries of origin. At the same time, this intervention highlights the need to question or move forward from established forms of thinking about the media use of non-native peoples in the developed world. The project as a whole opens a window to explore an alternative academic vocabulary to the notions of “ethnic” and “minority” audiences, privileged in US scholarly endeavour.

Introduction

This doctoral thesis draws on data from fieldwork that followed the television news consumption of Mexican-origin people in Los Angeles. The findings articulate an account of “transnational audiences” as formed by peoples whose lives extend across borders, and whose media consumption point us towards systematic methods to explore a variety of mediated and unmediated experiences which one could define as “everyday life globalization”. The project has drawn on a body of literacy contributed by cultural studies, reception analysis, and other areas of sociological and anthropological endeavour which are useful to understand the role of media in the lives of *transnational communities* and *diasporas*. There are conceptual and practical considerations that make these concepts different. In essence, transnational communities result from the convergence of multiple factors: global capitalism, a revolution in transport and communication technologies, political changes involving decolonization and the universalization of human rights (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998: 4). In the face of these developments immigrants create cross border networks that enable forms of social, cultural, economic and political organization in more than two national territories. While transnational communities can be seen as one core aspect of globalization, diaspora, on the other hand, defines primarily a particular group of immigrants from a variety of perspectives: their social formation, their collective memories, and their practices of cultural reproduction (Vertovec, 1997). Originally, diaspora applied to groups that predated the existence of nation-states, such as Jews, Greeks, Armenians (Tölölyan, 1996: 1). The term is now used to describe forms of displacement found in a range of populations from overseas, defined in the past as exiles, minorities, guest workers, refugees, etc (ibid.). At the centre of diaspora is its capacity to invoke modern experiences of international migration. This is not so much in terms of a teleological relationship with the homeland, but of the actual experiences implied in being ‘the exemplary communities of the transnational moment’ (Tölölyan, 1991: 4). James Clifford put this nicely when suggesting that talk of diaspora puts in perspective the project of ‘constructing homes away from home’ (1994: 302). One key motivation is exploring discursive practices in a country where ‘neither popular nor academic thought (...) has come to terms with the difference between being a land of immigrants and being one node in a post-national network of diasporas’ (Appadurai, 1993: 803). One of the consequences of adopting this vocabulary results in a move away from outdated “assimilationist” paradigms that have dominated in the study of non-native

media audiences in the United States. “Viewing” the transnational audience, in other words, requires getting rid of the lenses of marginality that academics have normally “worn” to investigate groups who move from an underdeveloped or developing country to a more developed one. A short anecdote from “the fieldwork” is in order before pointing out the specific claims that this intervention advances. The short story will be followed by a layout of the project’s central arguments, its theoretical framework and a brief description of the sections in which the whole manuscript is divided.

Grown up people in Mexico frequently say that the US is ‘a clay-footed giant’ nearing its collapse. ‘Nonsense’, the teenager in me used to think, such image did not correspond to a country that had Hollywood, that launched rockets into the space, and made Mustangs and Trans Ams. As I set out to writing this introduction the metaphor seems genuine, for “the giant” is overwhelmed in the midst of the ‘gathering clouds and raging storms’ that Barack Obama described when he was sworn in as the first black president of the United States. That day, the winds of change and hope that had been the soul of his campaign had given way to what he described as ‘indicators of crisis’: a nation at war, a ‘badly weakened’ economy, home repossessions, job layoffs, costly healthcare, failing schools, a financial system in tatters, and so it went on. Being in London, viewing Obama’s inauguration on television as many millions did around the world, I thought of the men and women who contributed as informants to my research about Mexican-origin people in Los Angeles and their consumption of television news. Somehow, I supposed they felt they were being addressed by the new leader, for many of them had first-hand experience of the problems he was mentioning.

The supposition that my informants were actually witnessing the president’s inaugural address on television has a variety of implications which are at the core of my research project. First of all, were they really watching? On the 20th of February 2009, I spent several hours trying to contact from London some of my fieldwork contributors. After talking on the phone to five of them, I could find that all but one had indeed seen the inaugural address on TV. This of course tells me nothing of statistical relevance, but it let me know some of them have bestowed their hopes in the new president, just as the many Americans who voted him into the White House. ‘Did I watch? Of course I did. I follow every statement he [Obama] makes on the TV’, one of my informants told me. Now, this is problematic. After thanking the crowd that was present at the National Mall in Washington, and arguably the 100 plus million that followed the event on television and the Internet, Obama began his inaugural speech with the words “My fellow citizens”. The US leader was aware that the whole world

was listening, but because of his opening statement one knows who he was talking to, in the first place. Using this line of reasoning, I asked my respondent whether she had obtained her citizenship. She said she was still in waiting to receive a letter which would let her know when she is expected to make the oath of loyalty to the star-spangled banner. After this I asked: 'Why did you then care to follow Obama's statements? Did you notice that in his inaugural speech he said my fellow citizens? That didn't include you'. She replied this:

'I will be [a citizen] one day, it's only a question of time. Meanwhile I pay attention to what he says, maybe I can help to fix this country, after all its well-being is important for us, and for our people in Mexico' (Female, 61, nursing).

As stated above, this thesis is based on findings from a fieldwork that explored the consumption of television news by Mexican born people and their children in the United States. The result provides a perspective of transnational audiences, whereby people whose lives straddle more than one national territory complicate outdated paradigms for the study of non-native media publics in the developed world. Visualizing the transnational audience is a step which time has come in a 'geography of knowledge' (Appadurai, 2001: 6) where the terms "ethnic" and "minority" are preferred to define those sectors of the media public who, to put it simply, are not white. There is a principle of exclusion here that leaves "ethnics" and "minorities" outside the umbrella of "the audience", an object of discourse that is analogous of "the nation" and "the population" (Ang, 1996: 2). Traditional academic approaches to non-native audiences in the US reduce their media experiences to outcomes of "non assimilation" or degrees of "acculturation". What this project suggests is that "transnational audiences" are more complex: they are social, economic and political actors in home and host societies, and their uses of communication media require us to take stock of the local and global experiences and activities they lead in their everyday lives.

More than an attempt to "glamorise" Mexican immigrants to the United States, this project aims to put in perspective the interplay of agency and structure (Giddens, 1984) that became visible as informants began to reflect about different aspects of their lives in relationship to television news. Not that all informants were "news junkies" who followed every statement of the US president, as my interlocutor on the other side of the telephone line, let alone experts in current affairs. In fact, early in the research it had appeared to me as if all those who had told me they were daily viewers of television shows had only said so with the purpose to strike a pose. This impression came from the fact that ceaseless streams

of domestic work made it appear as if television news-viewing was at best a lateral, accidental activity. In other words, the mantra in studies of television-viewing, captured by the claim that ‘if the camera pulls us in, the family pull us out’ (Cubitt quoted in Morley, 1986: 19), became all too evident in the living rooms of those who kindly opened their homes to this research effort.

The argument: news matters

In the midst of the chaos that domestic life entails, however, people stop at some point to get a glimpse of a storyline that strikes a personal chord. We are told that when people view the news, they do so because they are automatically aware that news matter. People engage with news in practical, emotional and psychological ways (Hill, 2007: 97). As a form of culture news ‘incorporates assumptions about what matters, what makes sense, what time and place we live in, what range of considerations we should take seriously’ (Schudson, 1995: 14). For all the (rather accurate) talk that news are increasingly focused on scandal and spectacle, my three-month empirical incursion in Los Angeles uncovered what may be seen as an authentic interest in television news. In a few words then, the contribution of this doctoral thesis is its call to reconsider key aspects of the study of non-majority audiences, which is done by proposing an answer to the following question:

What does the importance that Mexican-origin people in the US attribute to television news tell us about transnational audiences?

In the researcher’s view, the interrogation is double-edged: one side belongs in the field of media studies and the other is mostly of sociological, but also anthropological relevance. In the first case the question asks us to focus on probing the importance that television news has for a certain kind of public. The assumption was that the news that mattered to respondents would reflect on aspects of their lives which are paramount in practical, emotional and psychological terms. Such an expectation turned correct in the analysis of empirical evidence, which revealed that a), research subjects manifested interest in a multiplicity of news reports which they saw affecting them in very personal ways. This could be considered as normal, except for the fact that b), both nearby and distant events were seen as having a form of direct impact in peoples’ lives. This particular aspect should be considered as an element of distinction between national and transnational audiences. It is

understood that such claim is risky, especially for a case study which lacks empirical evidence to make a proper comparison between one type of television news audience and the other. However, there is solid evidence – like the one Jensen used to design his model of ‘the world in the head (1998: 165-6) – that in assessing the relevance of news events, national audiences tend to systematically consider the proximity of a ongoing development as a critical element of judgment. In this context, news stories which are somewhere geographically nearby would normally be perceived as important, and vice versa.

Transnational audiences: connecting the local with the global

The hypothesis that transnational audiences establish personal connections with nearby and distant developments represented in the news leads to a second key claim put forward in this thesis. This has to do with the notion that people with a background in migration have vivid “local” and “global” experiences. In this regard, the analysis of their television news-viewing puts in perspective their involvement in more than one national space. The idea is that the news awareness of transnational audiences – for example Mexicans in the US – might include an accident in South East Los Angeles, a protest at the Town Hall, a political debate in the national Congress, a number of victims at the border, a flood in the hometown, a political standoff in Mexico, and the war in Iraq. One would normally think people who follow with interest all of these developments are well-informed, but the point that is being stressed here is that ‘transnational viewing’ makes us reconsider the scope of the ‘knowledge-experience’ (Robins & Aksoy, 2005: 24) of individuals and families who inhabit transnational spaces. The argument is that,

‘Through the process of migration, these groups find themselves in a new space for experience. They are removed from the habitual space – the habitual national space – of their country of origin. Their relocation puts them into a more international frame of reference’ (Robins & Aksoy, 2005: 24).

Robins and Aksoy have made the case for the broadened ‘knowledge-experience’ of transnational audiences in connection to Turkish people in London. A similar view frame can be adopted for the case of Mexicans in Los Angeles. This requires, however, the deployment of a vocabulary which is alien to the US scholarly context, and which requires us to consider a number of theoretical and practical developments which are outlined in detail in the first

chapter. This can be summarised here by briefly considering key developments in travel and telecommunication technologies which have dramatically transformed certain migration processes. The economic articulation that the United States and Mexico have undergone in recent decades, which reached a milestone in 1992 with the signature of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has been accompanied by an intricate articulation of electronic and transport networks between the two countries (Mosco & Schiller, 2001). Despite large disparities in the cost of services from telephony, to fast Internet and airplane tickets between the two countries, NAFTA has accelerated the formation of transnational circuits of family and kin that extend across borders. In this regard, paraphrasing Roger Rouse, Mexicans can run 'spatially extended relationships as actively and effectively as the ties that link them to their neighbors' (Rouse, 1996[1991]: 13).

The question of transnationalism has evolved into a fruitful area of research (see for instance Basch et al., 1994; Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt, 1999; Portes, 1996; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). While some have labelled it an 'intellectual fashion' (Waldinger, 2003: 2) transnationalism was manifest in a multiplicity of ways during my empirical incursion in Los Angeles. In the homes of informants it made itself present in the form of long-distance telephone calls, of family pictures, of friends and relatives whose back and forth movements across customs checkpoints brought the atmospheres of Mexican realities into the domesticity of life in Mexican-American households. This transnationalism also made itself felt all over the cultural space of Los Angeles (cf. Gutiérrez, 1998). It included facades of houses which combine an American flag with the blazon of a Mexican football team; the streets that feature the murals of Latino social fighters with the representations of prehispanic deities; business outlets that sold "Pollo Loco" – a well-known Mexican food chain – next to a Starbucks or a Kmart. One has a truly transnational social space when adding the established infrastructure that allows Mexicans in Los Angeles to buy food in Mexican currency, to send remittances to their relatives south of the border, or to open bank accounts from a First Bank with an identity card issued by Mexican consular offices.

The premise that Mexican-origin audiences in Los Angeles can vividly experience the local and global through television news needs therefore to be understood in the context of a transnational space. This invites entering another level of abstraction that binds together the semantic field of transnationalism with that of audience research, particularly of the kind that has been first developed within the tradition of British Cultural Studies and that later evolved into reception analysis (Jensen & Rosengren, 1995). This shift goes first of all by assuming the notion of "activity" as an intrinsic aspect involved in media consumption. The idea of

‘audience activity’, of “readers” who decide what to “read” and what to make out of media “texts”, was born with the work of scholars from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. Stuart Hall’s classical essay *Encoding/Decoding* (1980), for instance, called for understanding media communication processes by analyzing the social practices which took place around the production and reception of media content. This converged with a torrent of academic research which investigated how different audiences interpreted television programmes, books and magazines on the basis of their class, gender, nationality and race positions (for instance, Ang, 1985; Hobson, 1982; Liebes & Katz, 1990; Morley, 1980; Radway, 1984). The intention here is not to start a celebration – *à la* Fiske – about the freedoms of the audience to oppose, and even subvert the “preferred readings” of media texts. Rather, the aim is to recognise that such perspective, paraphrasing David Morley, keeps us from falling back,

‘Into the politics of “false consciousness,” where the realm of the popular media is simply conceived as a world of “bread and circuses” got up by the powerful to dupe the vulnerable masses—though of course, it is presumed to only affect those Others (children, women, the poor, the working class, the uneducated) outside the realms of adult maturity and transcendent consciousness happily inhabited by the critic Himself’ (Morley, 2006: 103).

The domestic as context of reception: rearticulating the private-public binary

The notion of ‘active audiences’ is thus important because it allows discerning the ‘false consciousness’ of the scholarly perspectives that have been used in the US to analyze “ethnic” and/or “minority” audiences. These rely on ‘simple-minded models of media power’ (cf. Morley, *ibid*), which imply the suggestion that ethnic media are central vehicles in the assimilation, acculturation, or cultural maintenance of non-majority publics (e.g. Constantakis, 1993; Johnson, 2000). This blinds itself to people’s abilities to reinterpret and adapt media contents beyond the intentions of their transmitters (cf. Morley, 2006: 103). This semiotic activity and selectivity should however be seen as an entry point to broader aspects about the role of media in the lives of transnational communities and diasporas. These were revealed in the Los Angeles fieldwork as a result of probing into the interpretations of media texts, and by connecting these to the contexts of their reception. Authors like David Morley and Roger Silverstone have made it clear that producing an adequate “ecology of media

consumption” (cf. 1991: 150-1) demands systematic analysis of media reception in relation to the various sets of domestic activities and exchanges that take place in the audiovisual space (see also Silverstone, 1994). While such demand has not been completely satisfied in this project, the principle that media reception must be analyzed in its primary, naturalistic space (Lindlof, 1987), has been fully taken on board. This follows from James Lull’s conviction that ‘television is integrated into family routines’ that ‘reflect on broader cultural themes of the society’ (Lull, 1988: 240). This leads to the suggestion that media reception analysis opens a window to visualize aspects of the overarching structures that shape the rules of play to which audiences, as social actors, need to subscribe. One core set of rules that has been fruitfully considered in audience research has been that in relationship to the social uses of domestic television-viewing (Lull, 1980; 1988; 1990). Lull identifies a four-prone typology of television uses which include diversion, personal relationships, personal identity and surveillance related uses. These are in turn divided in two types of social uses, structural and relational (Lull, 1990: 35-46). While this thesis has not subscribed systematically to the categories developed by Lull it has used the views of fieldwork contributors about a variety of television news, as a platform to start developing a theoretical construct which is of academic value for the research on transnational audiences.

The researcher had money, time and even knowledge constraints that limited his ability to produce an exhaustive account of the various routines and exchanges around the television news consumption of his research subjects. Early methodological choices – described in chapter four –, however, made it possible to interrogate considerable amounts of data generated in the fieldwork. This involved taking an approach that linked the personal interpretations of respondents with their family dynamics and life histories. The idea further finds support in Sonia Livingstone’s notion that audience reception focuses on ‘interpretative processes’ located in the contexts of media reception (cf. Livingstone, 1998: 174). The strategy from this researcher’s point of view relies on two theoretical constructs: the social uses of the media perspective as noted above, and the well established notion that television and other media recreate a ‘home-centred way of living’ (Williams 1973[2003]: 19), whereby the private and the public get bound together. The private-public binary was long considered a phenomenon occurring at a national level. More recently, however, it has extended to cover members of diasporas and transnational communities. The latter’s uses of media communication and information-processing technologies allow them to act upon various geographic layers that span their home and host societies. This implication is adequate for a context of high-speed globalization (Held et al., 1999) and is present in previous studies of

transnational audiences (e.g. Naficy, 1993; Kolar-Panov, 1996; Sreberny, 2000; Cunningham & Nguyen, 2000; Aksoy & Robins, 2000; Robins & Aksoy, 2005; 2006). More of this work is needed however, simply because the role of television in sustaining ‘the reality of the “national family” and of various transnational communities’ needs to be further explored (Morley, 1992: 283; 2000: 3).

Like any other media audience, but different

Reference in general has so far been made to this project’s subjects and object of study, its core theoretical construct and concepts. Summing up, the project has studied the television news consumption of several households of Mexican-origin in Los Angeles. Our core findings highlight the need to develop a systematic conceptualization of “transnational audiences” which relies in well proven approaches provided by cultural studies and reception analysis. The qualitative methodologies of these theoretical traditions enable us to capture a range of media experiences of transnational communities and diasporas with the same productive results it has yielded throughout the years. At the same time, this research strategy reveals a paradox: transnational audiences are just like national audiences, but different. The point is they need to be researched as one would do with any other sector of the media public. This involves putting aside the prism of superiority that scholars – largely based in Western academic institutions – have traditionally adopted to study peoples who migrate. Once one stops seeing transnational audiences as essentially marginal, their true distinctiveness emerges in a number of characteristics observable in their reception of television news. The latter is characterised by what appears a high interest in current affairs and a tendency to see television news as transparent reflections of reality; an inclination to suppose that news events can have an impact in one’s life and surroundings, regardless of their geographic proximity or distance; a proclivity to construct narratives of the self in a variety of temporal and spatial locations which very clearly connect with novel ways to understand processes of migration. What one could define as transnational traits in media reception emerge as a consequence of the expanded “knowledge-experience” of diasporas. However, because anyone could say such claim is an intellectual leap of faith, it is necessary to produce valid elements of analysis that hold the argument together. This will be done especially in the first two chapters of the thesis and will then be reinforced in the other sections which are briefly described below.

The first chapter of this thesis provides a literature review which, broad as it is, helps to justify the concept of transnational audiences. The chapter begins by discussing in detail theories of transnationalism and diaspora which will demonstrate their analytical purchase in the context of the United States. Aiming to strengthen the relevance of the concepts, an overview of current trends in international migration will be advanced. This will include a critique of the “fallacy of social equilibrium” present in debates about immigrant adaptation to host societies, constantly used to mobilise the logic of national exclusion of immigrants, while obscuring the fact that international migration is a creation of capitalism itself. The second part of the chapter refers to how the emergence of transnational communities and diaspora have resulted in the formation of new “ethnoscapes” in the first world. One of the consequences is that people recreate collective and individual identities in contexts where the national structures of the receiving societies, and those of their sending countries, combine with the transformative agency of diasporas themselves, leading to the production of a post-national space. The latter, it will be argued, is important not because it renders the national irrelevant – and it clearly does not – but because these post-national contexts provide ideal sites to explore developments pertaining to the production of individual “global identities” as well as the so called deterritorialization of culture. In other words, analyzing the idea of ethnoscapes in a post-national context opens a door to appreciate the extent to which a variety of electronic mediations makes members of transnational communities ideal research subjects to understand personal experiences of contemporary globalization.

In the third section transnational media is considered as a key aspect of the globalization of cultural markets. Some developments in international communications like the emergence of powerful broadcasters from the “global South” are acknowledged as central to the wide access to media from the homeland that certain groups of immigrants enjoy. The suggestion is made here, however, that the “diasporic public spheres” that transnational media are thought to breed, can only be understood by also taking into account the role of both main and non-mainstream television and other media contents produced in host societies. This is so because they provide access to symbolic and material resources which are of the same or more importance to the daily lives of transnational audiences, giving them access to information on public and private products and services. A brief overview is also provided about structural developments in the production of Spanish-language television in the US. In this context, the incursion of global companies like Universal NBC and ProSieben has gradually weakened the dominance that Mexican broadcasters once had in the market of Spanish-language television in the US. This suggests that the increasing relevance that

national broadcasters in countries like the US have for the programming needs of the Spanish speaking segment of its population, requires an understanding of transnational media that focuses on the appropriation of meaning on the part of transnational audiences, and not just on its production or distribution. This is to say that for all of the dominance US broadcasters Univision and Telemundo have as providers of television news in Spanish, a focus on the experience of reception of these shows on television is what will ultimately produce a proper conceptualization of transnational audiences. This leads us to the fourth and final part of our theoretical review, which will look in detail at the body of literature in the areas of cultural studies and reception analysis, in order to adapt it to our particular research case. The section will start by suggesting the need to acknowledge that audiences are active. This, as a way to invalidate the implicit “hypodermic” characteristics of media content embedded in traditional approaches to “ethnic” and “minority” media. The next move will be to acknowledge the contribution of research approaches to audiences where the domestic, as a site for reception analysis, reveals the importance of television news in relation to people’s daily lives, and to their articulation between private and public spaces.

The profile of a diaspora in reverse

The second chapter of this thesis provides a demographic profile of Mexican-origin people in the United States. It begins with a brief historical note about the late sixteenth century settlement of Spaniards and Indians in what today is US territory, and which was considered by Mexicans as Aztlán, or “the land of the Aztec people”. This part provides historical elements that help to characterize Mexicans as a “diaspora in reverse” (Price, 2000: 106). The focus moves early on to a discussion about how the bulk of Mexicans in the US became a significant part of the population with the large scale migrations starting in the second half of the twentieth century. At this stage a “close up” to Los Angeles is made. This is done in order to provide an idea of the context of this project’s fieldwork, and of the demographic characteristics of Mexicans there. Equally important is the effort to sketch an impression of “Mexican Los Angeles” as a space fit for transnational communities and diasporas. The chapter is accompanied by a few pages which reflect on how the rise of America’s economic might led to the creation of a system of international labour migration. Here, a combination of policy and economic integration with Mexico – which reached a turning point with the signature of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992 – were central to the development of permanent Mexican settlements in the US Southwest. This aspect of the

thesis also considers the contradictions between a drive for economic integration with increasingly harsh restrictions to the movement of people across the border. This has sometimes resulted in legislation that equates undocumented immigrants to terrorists. As new fences are raised and security tightened, stories of death at the border take over the headlines of television and newspapers, with many of the hardships being endured by the undocumented, but also by legal residents and citizens of Mexican-origin who frequently have ties of kin and friendship with the victims. Thus the border becomes a powerful symbol, a clear reminder that nation-states can shape the lives of immigrants. However, the chapter will go on to contend that in the era of globalization, new possibilities for immigrants are opened that link their sending and receiving countries, forming transnational and diaspora spaces. Halfway of the second chapter the argument will be put forward highlighting the need to move outside the “methodological nationalism” that has informed classic debates about migration. This is done via an in-depth outline of theoretical discourses about transnationalism and diaspora which are relevant for the case of Mexicans in the US, and which by the end of the chapter will have made our vocabulary more adaptable for an audience research.

The third chapter will develop an account of Spanish-language television news. It begins by defining the genre as resources that diasporas deploy to negotiate access to public spaces and the construction of their identities. Despite the dominance of commercial discourses, as evidenced in an overview of the many available choices, these provide the platform for transnational communities to engage in conversations with their homelands, while enabling their participation within diasporic public spheres that span sending and receiving societies, and beyond. All of this works at an introductory level and goes deeper in a discussion about Univision and Telemundo, the two largest Spanish-language broadcasters in the US, and the ones that were preferred by most of our fieldwork participants. From here the argument moves to address a number of developments in the history of television news broadcasts in Spanish, and of considerations about the structure, formats and modes of address of mainstream newscasts. In the process, a distinction is made accounting for the fact that television news in Spanish is largely a by-product of American broadcasters, even though a significant share of television programming in Spanish is made in Mexico and other places in Latin America. This leaves us with an “ethnic” media which obeys the logic of the US mainstream market, but which is also devoted to the daily creation of an alternative diasporic reality. Here, news coverage about Hispanics in the US alternates with a variety of stories about Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico and other countries which are of interest for large segments

of the US Spanish speaking population. What works largely as a system of “ethnic” media in the context of Spanish-language television in the US, the chapter concludes, requires us to look at news as narratives transnational audiences make sense of in terms of their social networks and a variety of activities that form their everyday life.

Chapter four opens the door to the empirical facet of the project, by offering a description of our research subjects and of the methodologies adopted to explore their television news consumption. Instead of staying at a descriptive level, a rationale for the decision that led to the sampling of fieldwork participants is provided. Here, the pre assumption that Los Angeles is part of a transnational social space is used to defend the notion that our sampling was of a theoretical nature. This despite the fact that informants were recruited through the “convenient” and generally random technique of “snowballing” (see Gunter, 2002: 216). An important amount of effort and space is also devoted to an explanation of research methods. The reader may perceive at this point a certain tension resulting from the decision to conduct fieldwork in informants’ households despite this caused the “contamination” of such “naturalistic” setting. Such “contamination” came from tying the analysis of television news reception to the viewing of pre-recorded blocks of television news. It should not be missed here, however, the fact that the nature of the research project made it absolutely important for informants to verbally put the importance they attributed to news events. In this context, the centrality of the domestic, the case will be made, comes out of the idea that a familiar environment would increase peoples’ reflexivity and openness as to how they related television news to their personal life histories. In a way, this approach revealed that the reception of television news in domestic spaces is helpful to grasp the dynamics of television news reception, and to produce accounts of the “lived experiences” of transnational audiences. After a detailed description of each of the data-gathering strategies deployed in the fieldwork, an explanation of how the evidence was analyzed is provided. The value of this section is that it reveals an approach to “grounded theory” (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) where interpretations, discussions, and the biographies of fieldwork participants themselves provide the very rationale for our parameters of analysis.

Chapter five is closely linked to the previous one because it reveals with more clarity what the value of the gathered information is. This results from the idea of tying different methodological approaches together as an integral strategy of data analysis. This part includes description of a number of individual steps that construe a variety of claims. By assessing the dominant forms of family interaction that emerged in sessions of television news-viewing, for instance, a hypothesis is developed regarding the kinds of social uses that

transnational viewers give to television. A second form of analysis came from coding the meanings that informants took from television news through an approach of thematic indexing – that draws on Jensen’s concept of “super-themes” (Jensen, 1998) – which helps to organize evidence obtained from diaries and viewing sessions. Subsequently, this allows visualizing the variety of concerns, interests and motivations that fieldwork contributors develop in relation to television news. Elements of structural linguistics constituted a third tool of analysis, employed to make sense of the interviews in which fieldwork participants spoke about their personal histories in connection to television news. Altogether, these elements guide us towards more abstract claims in terms of how participants’ interpretation of television news reveals their involvement in a transnational space, while offering examples of their interplay between the local and the global as they go about their daily lives.

By the end of the fifth chapter a number of claims will have been made which reflect on the relationship between television news and the variety of local and global experiences of informants. One finds here that television news inform peoples’ perceptions about a variety of factors, ranging from their access to public services and to parts of the US political process; to assessments of how economic circumstances and international conflicts affect the availability of jobs and the capacity to send remittances to Mexico. Many more snapshots of contributors’ lives pop up in relation to developments in the news, from reflections about their displacements across the streets and highways in Los Angeles, to their keeping up with the death of immigrants at the border, and the use of news to monitor the well-being of relatives and economic interests in Mexico. In this context, it is found that the prospect of political transnationalism is weak, as reinforced by the scepticism provoked by the presidential election in Mexico. Far from eroding our transnational frame of reference, news items frequently moved participants to reflect about the homeland in ways that direct the discussion to narratives of transnationalism and diaspora.

Altogether, the original contribution to knowledge put forward in this doctoral effort translates into a call to explore transnational audiences not in the binary terms of their orientations to host and origin societies, but against the backdrop of the many daily concerns that result from leading lives in a transnational frame of reference. This should lead to better understand the development of global identities. This requires us to keep an eye on the way in which television news inform people’s involvement with their countries of origin and destiny, but also to produce a more detailed picture of the transnational audience that is of use for the fields of cultural studies and reception analysis. The idea is that the reception of television news helps visualizing transnational audiences as developing ‘various links between two or

more settings and manifold ties of movers and stayers between them' (Faist, 1999: 14). In a period of history when global flows shape the pattern of many local social realities, such approach will hopefully be received as a contribution to the project of understanding everyday life in a context of contemporary globalization.

Chapter 1: Literature review

1.1 Transnationalism, diaspora and borders: flows of the global and the local

1. The realm of the transnational

The chapter opens with a discussion of transnationalism, diaspora and borders as three concepts which are useful to understand aspects of migrant experiences in a context of globalization. In explaining transnationalism, Michael Kearney distinguishes it from globalization by noting that it serves to foreground dynamics between two or more specific nation-states (Kearney, 1995: 548). He indicates that in the transnational, the concept of “nation” is more important than the prefix “trans”, which would be normally used to convey, for instance, that the operations of a transnational company extend *beyond* a national market. Such is the logic at work of a ‘transnational capitalist class’ (Sklair, 1998: 3-4) composed by entrepreneurs, top-level government officials and wealthy individuals who move freely across borders on a day-to-day basis. Rather, the emphasis on the transnational should be on the “nation”, which ‘refers to the territorial, social, and cultural aspects of the nations concerned’ (Kearney, 1995: 548).

Thus understood, transnationalism provides a solid framework to make sense of complex phenomena around contemporary migratory patterns. These have been noted by scores of scholars who have been sketching a novel paradigm of migration as a process whereby moving peoples trace circuits that connect them with culturally similar individuals and groups across various geographic regions, normally spanning international borders. This is a step away from clichés of uprooting (Handlin, 1973; Ahmed, 2003), magic transitions (Gennep, 1960), exiles (Naficy, 1993) and estrangement (Ahmed, 1999), that mark the literature about migrant experiences. For too long has international migration been addressed as a leap from one societal order to another, in the process dismembering individuals from their organic communities (cf. Rouse, 1996 [1991]: 249). On the contrary, transnationalism reveals mass population movements occur in circumstances that are distinct from those in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Castles & Miller, 2003; Held et al., 1999: Ch. 6). The growth of institutional, social and cultural structures that underlie it, and of the transport and communication technologies that enable it (Wakeman, 1988), has turned migration from being an experience of uprooting to one of spatially extended relationships between sending

and receiving societies (cf: Basch et al., 1994: 7). A somewhat canonical definition of transnationalism characterizes it,

As the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political – that span borders we call “transmigrants” (Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton Blanc: 1994: 7).

Important academic publications have in recent years contributed to an expansion of the transnational perspective with journals such as *Diaspora*, *Public Culture* and more recently, *Global Networks*, documenting the magnitude of the trend. There is evidence that migrant transnationalism has been a worldwide spread practice that occurred prior to the emergence of the nation-state (Vertovec, 1999; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006: 131), but its intensity and consequences have deepened in recent decades. The region of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been a vibrant laboratory for research on the subject. Early in the last decade anthropologist Roger Rouse documented the way in which Mexicans from the state of Michoacán who reside in Redwood California ‘find that their most important kin and friends are as likely to be living hundreds or thousands of miles away as immediately around them’ (1996[1991]: 253). In his reflections about what could be summed up as the “Mexicanization” of Southwest United States, historian David Gutiérrez concluded that ‘Mexicans can now live in the United States as if it were simply a more prosperous extension of Mexico’ (1998: 322). In a way, immigrant transnationalism is seen as opening venues of opportunity for communities that have long been characterized by their economic and political marginality. Embodying what has been branded as a movement of globalization-from-below (Falk 1993; Portes 1997; Smith & Guarnizo 1998; Brecher et al., 2000; Castles, 2000; Appadurai, 2001), immigrants organize primarily along the margins of labour structures, economic and social activities that open opportunities for economic development arising in response to the constantly shifting conditions in the deployment of capital. These accounts add to many others where immigrants are seen forming, for instance, hometown communities in cities like Los Angeles and New York (Smith, 1998), creating religious and entrepreneurial networks (Levitt, 2001; Portes, Haller & Guarnizo, 2001), and

trading circuits that link markets in the border regions of Mexico and the US (Álvarez & Collier, 1994). These endeavours create a sense of belonging to a space that transcends national boundaries (Long & Villarreal, 1998) in both origin and destiny areas of migration (Cohen et al., 2003).

In some cases transnationalism has been dismissed as an ‘intellectual fashion’ (e.g. Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2003: 2), a view reinforced by findings suggesting that most immigrants tend to have limited connections with their homelands (Guarnizo et al., 2003; Waldinger, 2007). But even where displaced communities do not lead significant transnational activities concepts such as transnational social spaces or fields (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Goldring, 1998; Faist, 1999; Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004), put the spotlight on activities and social networks that span receiving and sending communities, and on the institutional structures and agents that converge to mediate between ‘those who move and those who stay behind’ (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004: 1003). In other words, “transnational social fields” include ‘relatively immobile persons and collectives’ (Faist, 1999: 4) embedded within transnational spheres of action. This perspective does not ignore that immigrants in general, and Mexicans in the US in particular, have for years been the object of economic exploitation and racial exclusion (Acuña, 1972; Gutiérrez, 1995). There are in consequence risks in making ‘transnational relationships of power appear as a neutral necessity’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999: 42). However, authentic survival and adaptive strategies have emerged where margins – policed, neglected or dismissed by national and international power elites – are being truly tapped on “from below” (Portes, 1997; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), sometimes resulting in outcomes of improved economic upward mobility (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006: 133) and broadening the scope of life chances for people who migrate.

An aspect which has drawn close attention is that of transnational forms of citizenship. The emergence of Mexican political leaders from migrant communities in states like California (Smith & Bakker, 2005) have been followed by government attempts to create mechanisms of transnational political participation (Goldring, 2002). Some warn about the dangers of considering transnationalism as a migrant liberating force while losing sight of the fact that it frequently preserves structures of power in political and economic elites (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). In this regard, the designs of governments from migrant-sending countries to co-opt citizens abroad into funding and supporting development projects and policies (Smith, 2003), is a manifestation that transnationalism opens room for the reproduction of inequalities at the level of the nation-state (Weiss, 2005). Some authors have suggested that transnationalism is essentially a project of national states to

reassert claims of sovereignty over displaced national populations (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2003), while “piggy-backing” on the wealth they generate, for instance, in the form of remittances. Facing the risk that immigrants leave the homeland permanently, thus abandoning their spheres of influence, the latter have had to give them “voice” via the option of double nationality, and the choice to elect top government officials (Roberts et al., 1999). As the case of the Mexican government shows, this process is slow and full of bickering (Valenzuela-Arce, 1999). Its failure to deploy the electoral infrastructure required so that nearly 4 million Mexicans could cast their vote for a president on the 2nd of July 2006, demonstrates its lack of interest in seriously empowering citizens abroad, and reveals some petty form of chip bargaining aimed at preserving a pattern of transnational – instead of permanent – migration. After all, as Roberts and his collaborators write, when this form of migration is in place ‘ties to the local community ensure that migrants continue contributing to their state of origin without need for the state to improve its performance’ (Roberts et al., 1999: 250).

Criticism of opportunistic governments’ strategies to retain the loyalties of peoples abroad is aimed at stressing the “trans-statal” (Kearney, 1995: 548), as a reaction of nation-states to the loss of influence they have allegedly undergone in the face of economic globalization (Ohmae, 1995). This does not allow, however, to conclude that transnationalism is the exclusive preserve of official power structures, for it is well documented that governments have established transnational policies only in response to actions initiated by migrant communities (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006: 136). In any case, the transnational reveals the re-dimensioning of “imagined communities”, whose communalities become enacted in “translocal” (Appadurai, 1996; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Drainville, 1998; Mandaville, 2002) spaces. In the play out of the new struggles for economic and political influence in which collectivities engage, post-national identities are constituted which result in the production of *translocality* (Appadurai, 1996: 192; Mandaville, 2002).

2. Crossing the borders of diaspora

One venue to explore transnationalism is offered by the narratives of peoples in diaspora, which according to Kachig Tölölyan are the ‘exemplary communities of the transnational moment’ (1991: 4). Diaspora, a combination of the Greek verb *speiro* [to sow] and the preposition *dia* [over], is presently deployed in reference to peoples displaced from national to “post-colonial” (Bhabha, 1994: 173), and “post-national” (Appadurai, 1996; 2003)

contexts. In following movements of expansion and colonization, Robin Cohen provides a categorization of diasporas which is useful to visualize some common patterns of migration in which they are involved, including (1997: 26) 'Victim diasporas' (e.g. Africans and Armenians), 'Labour and imperial diasporas' (e.g. Indians and British), 'Trade diasporas' (e.g. Chinese and Lebanese) and 'Cultural diasporas' (e.g. Caribbean peoples worldwide). Vertovec notes that as a social form, diasporas tend to be characterised by complex triangular relationships involving the homeland, the host land and the members of the group in diaspora (1997: 277). Reserving the term for traumatic expulsions and fetish home returns, as some authors seem to suggest (e.g. Chaliand & Rageau, 1991; Marientras, 1989; Safran, 1991), should be avoided, for the concept has theoretical purchase on a range of social practices in which transnational communities engage (Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994; Tölölyan, 1996; Tsagarousianou, 2004; Verhulst, 1999). It should therefore be afforded to recently formed communities of sojourners, foreign workers, political refugees, etc, displaced by forces linked to the restructuring of global capitalism.

Critical for alternative views of diasporas is the recognition that the homeland and the ethnic group of reference is but a point of departure for future life configurations. This is because peoples in diaspora are flexible in the management of their cultural identities (Ong, 1999), which are as much about the past as they are about the future (cf. Hall, 1990: 5). In this sense, Clifford suggests that diaspora discourses close in circumstances involving the construction of 'homes away from home' (1994: 302). In a similar vein, Avtar Brah contends that 'the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same as desire for a 'homeland' (1996: 179). Brah's notion of 'diaspora space', as 'the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes' (p. 181), is in this regard an instrument to locate diasporic developments even in cases of transnational groups who chose not to represent themselves as a diaspora, including Mexicans in the US (cf. González, 1999: 558). What this suggests is that a diasporic consciousness consists on identification and communication strategies directed towards different social and political entities, in which sometimes non-diasporic discourses can result in more attractive material and symbolic rewards, such as job opportunities and political recognition (ibid, p. 550, 8).

One central attribute of diasporas is that they are shaped by their host societies at the same time that they are a pervasive transformative force in their countries of settlement (Schnapper, 1999: 236). In this regard, the Mexican diaspora is known to be under the

permanent influence of political developments in the US and in Mexico (González, 1999), but also exerts strong cultural, political and economic influence in the homeland (Shain, 1999). This gives diaspora traction in ‘assimilationist national ideologies such as those of the United States’ (Clifford, 1994: 307), where the narratives of immigration are ‘designed to integrate immigrants, not peoples in diasporas’ (ibid). As Dominique Schnapper put it, ‘the term “American population” means little if not envisaged through the participation of various diasporas which give the country its history (1999: 236). This formulation leaves the door wide open to integrate the concept of diaspora in the analysis of transnational communities. In any case, the inclination of Mexicans in the US to identify themselves as members of a multiplicity of imagined communities – Latinos, Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Hispanics, Chicanos – constitutes them as a diasporic formation (Rinderle, 2005). It is out of their multiple orientations that diasporic populations should be seen as imagined communities enabled by forms of mobility and connectivity (Tsagarousianou, 2004) which are common in the present context of globalization. It is in their networking abilities and practices of identification and communication with “distant and proximate others” that they can constantly overcome geographic and cultural borders (Fazal & Tsagarousianou, 2002). The concept of borders in this context is relevant.

Border theory has been a vibrant development derived from the complex patterns of human crossing at the US-Mexican border. This 2,000 miles boundary is in words of Gloria Anzaldúa, one of border theory’s pioneer authors, ‘*una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds’ (1987 [1999]: 25). According to Anzaldúa, the complex realities formed by the human settlements, commercial exchanges and other practices formed around the acts of transgression of a geopolitical border have given way to a ‘third country—a border culture’ (ibid.). This other culture sandwiched between the two “official” cultures of Mexico and the US resonates with talk of “hybrid identities” and the “places of thirdness” (Bhabha, 1994: 207) that are common in post-colonial studies. As Angie Chabram-Dernereseian put it, border theory draws

‘Attention to what is called a third space of ethnic identification, but it also sees this border culture as a place where new possibilities can be investigated through alternative imaginaries, political coalitions, social networks, and cultural productions’ (Chabram-Dernereseian, 2006: 97).

At the same time, border theory makes visible the various social boundaries that settler communities have to cross as part of their everyday contacts with members of the core white American population (Rosaldo, 1993 [1989]: 208). The negotiation and contestation of differences that play out in situations involving sexual orientation, gender, class, race, politics and so on, generate complex cultural dynamics which are central to investigate diasporic experiences. But while border theory tends to celebrate border crossings as politically progressive, it also puts in perspective the fences that are raised by individuals and groups who are either part of a marginalised ethnic minority or who once were border transgressors themselves (Vila, 2003). The more specific case of such “border enforcers” is given by Mexican-American activists who in the 1960s and 1970s pointed fingers to new arrivals of Mexican immigrants, who they claimed, contributed to the maintenance of low salaries and took the jobs of US born peoples of Mexican descent (Gutiérrez, 1995). At the same time the Chicano movement of the 1970s, initiated by Americans of Mexican ancestry who largely based their ideological platform on prehispanic Mexican symbols, systematically pointed fingers at segments of the population who called themselves Mexican-Americans, and who allegedly, in hyphenating their identities manifested contempt for their ethnic roots (ibid). In any case, the language of borders opens room to explore the diasporic patterns of migrant communities in a cultural space that has normally been shaped by the American politics of racial identities (Appadurai, 1993: 801), and the top-down expectations for migrants to strip off their cultural identities (Rosaldo, 1989 [1993]: 210). In an age of high-speed satellite transmission and readily available means of transport, border theory is increasingly useful to explain the multiple conditions of diasporas, which paradigm was long deprived from specific geopolitical boundaries but which in present times ‘increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country’ (Clifford, 1994: 304).

3. Migration: the human face of the global

Theoretical developments discussed above provide a platform to understand migration experiences in an age of planetary interconnectedness. The complex subjectivities inherent to migrating are constantly shaped by economic and political conditions which surround those who migrate in their countries of origin and destiny. Normally, these circumstances are unfriendly for the sheer majority of migrants, and while it is not the aim of this project to reflect on these hardships, it has an interest in establishing a theoretical framework that puts international migration in perspective. One of the aims is questioning the theoretical

assumptions that command on related mainstream debates, especially those which tacitly imply that immigrants are aliens in the national territories of migrant receiving nations (cf. Wimmer & Schiller, 2002). The point of departure is that international migration is a form of globalization that has been moulded by the realignment of global capitalism itself (Castles & Miller, 2003; Castells, 2000). It is clear, for instance, that the transnational social spaces inhabited by transnational communities, rely heavily on travel and communication structures put in place throughout decades of institutional relationships between governments, political and economic actors of the sending and receiving countries (Portes & Böröcz, 1989; Basch et al., 1994: Ch.1). Despite the fact that immigrants in all these years have fuelled the needs of low cost labour in the developed world, while providing the money that sustains their families and the development of their homeland's economies (Durand et al., 1996), most of the academic work about international migration has mobilized the logic of national exclusion of immigrants, overlooking the fact that their mass presence has been propitiated by the realignment of interests of political and economic elites in sending and receiving countries (Stone, 1985). The point is that large movements of population across international borders is one of globalization's most salient dimensions. For Held and his colleagues globalization evokes 'movements of peoples across regions and between continents, be they labour migrations, diasporas or processes of conquest and colonization' (1999: 284). Globalization has been also understood as the history of 'formerly separated peoples (coming) into contact with one another' (Gilpin, 2003: 350). This links to the view that the history of globalization could have begun 100,000 years ago with *homo sapiens* transcontinental departure from Africa (Wolf, 2004), thereby evolving in waves of civilizational encounters that have frequently led to the creation of empires and nation-states. In the last two hundred years the most salient form of migration has been labour-related (Wolf, 1982: 362; Castles & Miller, 2003), even though war related displacements of refugees and asylum seekers remain an important aspect of present migration streams (Held et al., 1999: 303; GCIM, 2005; Özden & Schiff, 2006). Discussion of some figures related to current international migration trends is here in order.

According to the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM) – set up by the United Nations in 2003 – the number of human beings living outside their countries of birth doubled to 200 million in only 25 years since 1980 (GCIM, 2005: 1). Moving across borders is a widespread planetary phenomenon, with most countries involved as sources or places of transit and destiny of migration. The distribution of immigrants by region in the world as of 2000, according to the UN (ibid., p. 83), was as follows: 56.1 million in Europe,

including the part of the former Soviet Union; 49.9 million in Asia; 40.8 million in North America; 16.3 million in Africa; 59 million in Latin America and 5.8 million in Australia. The single country with most immigrants on the planet is the United States (35 million), followed by the Russian Federation (13.3 million), Germany (7.3 million), Ukraine (6.9 million), India (6.3 million) and Australia (5.9 million). In such countries as Andorra, Macao, Guam, the Vatican, Monaco, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates migrants represent more than 60 percent of the total population. What these figures suggest is that while rich nations continue to be the main recipients of migrants, several Arab, African and Latin American nations have become part of complex “south to south” migration circuits, thus reasserting international migration as a key aspect of globalization.

Presently, 60 percent of migrants are in developed countries, with such estimate expected to rise to 86 percent by 2010, as reported by the GCIM. This trend had been previously captured by a United Nations estimate pointing that the presence of foreign people in wealthy nations had gone up to 110 million in 2000, from 48 million in 1980. The number of migrants in developing countries, according to the same source, had moved up in the same period to 65 million from 52 million (GCIM, 2005: 12). A recent World Bank (Özden & Schiff, 2006) report indicates that the main origin of migrants for the European Union is in the Maghreb, countries from the Middle East and the new nations that emerged from the former Soviet Republic, while Mexicans and nationals from countries in Central American and the Caribbean feed the migrant inflows to the United States. Recently, a prevalent form to track the presence of migrants consists on looking at the remittances they send to their homelands, with these reaching \$216 billion in 2004, of which 70% have been sent from developed to developing countries (Özden & Schiff, 2006: 1). The top recipients of remittances in 2004 were Mexico (\$16 billion), followed by India (\$9.9 billion) and the Philippines (\$8.5 billion) (GCMI, 2005: 26).

The fallacy of social equilibrium

The picture presented by global migratory patterns is problematic for it can lead to ideas of migration as a problem originating in economic imbalances between low and high-income regions of the world. This approach has been traced to Ravenstein’s foundational *The Laws of Migration* (1885; 1889), which identified resettlement as the response of peoples’ natural inclination to ‘better themselves in material respects’ (1889: 286), and as a consequence of ‘over-population (...) bad or oppressive laws, heavy taxation, an unattractive climate,

uncongenial social surroundings, and even compulsion' (ibid.). According to views like these international migration occurs as a mechanism that compensates population and wage imbalances between low-income/high-labour and high-income/low-labour regions of the world, generated by "push and pull" factors rationally assessed by individuals who migrate (Borjas 1989; 1990; Chiswick, 2000; Lee, 1966; Lalonde & Topel, 1997). At the initiation of a migration movement is implied an uprooting from a homeland and a transplantation to a host society where new arrivals are expected to assimilate to a local culture for the sake of national uniformity (Park, 1950; Warner & Srole, 1945; Handlin, 1959; Gordon, 1964; Gans, 1973, 1997). The focus on social equilibrium is said to ignore dynamics beyond "push and pull" factors that lead to over-simplification. Since migration has been a fact of human history such approaches fail to reflect on what is distinctive about present population movements. These shortcomings are grounded in a concern on social equilibrium (Schmitter Heisler, 1999: 119) inherent to classical and 'neo-classical' economic theories of migration. 'It is not that theory of neoclassical economics is wrong', Massey and her colleagues write (2002: 143), 'but that by itself it is seriously incomplete'. A more refined level of analysis suggests, for instance, that migration is a self-feeding process that expands through the development of networks of kin and friendship (Massey, 1987; Massey & García España, 1987; Boyd, 1989; Massey et al., 1998). In this way, people enter migration cycles of departure and return (Bustamante & Martínez, 1979) as part of a social process that transcends economic need (Massey, 1987).

Proponents of an 'historical-structural approach' to migration (e.g. Castells, 1975; Portes, 1978; 1979; Portes & Walton, 1981; Portes & Bach, 1985; Portes et al., 1989; Sassen, 1988; Sassen-Koob, 1981), provide an alternative to mainstream perspectives on international migration which are not as simplistic as those based on the paradigm of social equilibrium. For these alternative views international migration is a response to the historical penetration of capital and institutional influence from industrialised to underdeveloped countries. Such view, grounded in Wallerstein's theory of world systems (1974), may be summed up in the idea that 'labor migration is generated by the need for the reproduction of capitalist relations at the center' (Sassen-Koob, 1981: 65). This friction creates wage imbalances that stimulate flows of men and women displaced by the effect of mechanization in rural areas and programmes of capital investment in cities, which make them all redundant and therefore willing to migrate (Portes, 1978a, 1979; Sassen-Koob, 1978, 1981; Zolberg, 1979). In this way international migration allows to reproduce capitalist relations in the centre and the periphery, as it makes up for labour scarcity by providing an underclass category of guest

workers and illegal immigrants who take on the lesser jobs of receiving countries, at a lower cost (Bach, 1978; Portes, 1978b; Piore, 1979). Thus industry captains make handsome profits similar to those previously extracted from African slaves during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Portes & Böröcz, 1989: 608). In sending countries, this reproduction of capitalist relations has been characterised as a mechanism of 'dependent development' (Caporaso, 1978; Cardoso, 1972, 1973), in which national elites serve their economic and political interest by accommodating those of international capital. Economic stimulation of international illegal migration flows works as well as a form of social control in receiving societies, which allows to displace blame from elites concerning economic difficulties onto 'alien scapegoats', who function as a safety valve for class conflict (Jenkins, 1978: 525).

While the historical approach to international migration has been a preserve of academic endeavour, the stance that sees migration as a disequilibrium resonates strongly in mainstream spheres. It has fuelled the arguments of economic elites, conservative mainstream media and workers unions in migrant receiving economies, according to which flows of foreign workers are particularly composed by poverty stricken masses evacuated by countries facing corruption, mismanagement and failed social policies (cf. Portes, 1978a; Alba, 1978; Sassen, 1998). This long held view is embodied by analysts names such as Samuel Huntington (e.g. Huntington, 2004), and talking heads of cable news-networks (*The Economist*, 2006). For these, Mexican immigrants in particular are a source of threat to Anglo-Saxon cultural values, posing an economic burden on local and federal governments and eroding the salaries of American workers. The noise surrounding national debates about immigration is more of a smoke screen, however, distracting attention from the fact that at least labour migration results from policies of economic development created in the centres of capitalist power (Spengler, 1958; Sassen, 1996[1990]).

It is important to bear in mind that mass population movements have irreversible consequences, as they lead to shifts in the ethnic composition of receiving societies (Castles, 2003: 33; Castles & Davidson, 2000). Only in the US, the percentage of the foreign born population has moved from 4.7 % in 1981 to 9.3 % in 1996 (ibid.), and up to 12.3 % in 2003 (Dumont & Lemaître, 2005: 21). In the United Kingdom those born abroad made 2.8 % in 1983, 3.4 % in 1995 and 8.3 % in 2003 (ibid). In France the trend has ticked up from 6.3 % in 1990 to 10 % in 2003. Foreign-born peoples represent an average 7.8 % of OECD countries' populations (2003), with big gaps between countries like Mexico (0.5 %) and Japan (1.0 %), and nations like Canada (19.3 %), Australia (23 %) and Luxembourg (32.6 %) (Dumont & Lemaître, 2005: 21).

1.2 Interconnected ethnoscaples of the post-national moment

1. Global cultural identities

While only a small portion of the planet's population has migrated – 200 million out of over six billion as suggested by the figures discussed above – the migratory waves that have occurred in recent decades have deeply transformed the ethnic landscapes of national spaces across the planet, especially in the “First World” (Castles & Miller, 2003: Ch. 10). The consequence is that many of these countries are nowadays multiethnic, while religious, linguistic, gastronomic, and other cultural commonalities are not necessarily attached to national territories. The concern here is however not with the extent to which national states have become ethnically heterogeneous (Smith, 1995: 102), but with the ways in which peoples who have migrated recreate their individual and collective identities in their places of destiny. This process is seldom straightforward and it involves struggles that become to an extent more transparent when seen through the crystal of transnational analysis. In this way, migration, diaspora, dislocation, relocation and so on,

‘Makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of ‘nation’, ‘peoples’, or authentic ‘folk’ tradition, those embedded myths of culture’s particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition’ (Bhabha, 1994: 172).

The first section of this chapter has established that mass population movements are a widespread aspect of globalization, and that considering the advent of transnationalism and diasporas, migratory processes are a move away from narrow dominant academic visions on the subject. The objective of this second part will now seek to generate a theoretical framework useful to visualize the experiences of transnational communities at the level of the individual. The argument is that persons in diaspora are central to investigate the emergence of global cultural identities (Tomlinson, 1999) developed in response to mechanisms of individual reflexivity (Giddens, 1990; 1991) that are common in contexts of “high” or “late” modernity (ibid.).

What will be suggested is that in present times communities displaced from their societies of origin can no longer be seen as if they were dismembered parts of some organic community rooted in a national territory. Just as novel articulations of diasporic experience

suggest, transnational peoples can be seen as “nation unbound”; they may relate culturally to people of their own national origins, but for questions of material and personal development they may develop alternative identities based on associations with culturally distinct groups and individuals (Castells, 2004; Ong, 1999). Giddens’ theory of Structuration (1984) is useful to pursue this idea. The person who takes the decision to leave her/his place of birth can be seen as an “actor” or “agent” with ‘the capacity to understand what they do while they do it’ (p. xxiii). Recognizing the “agency” of immigrants does not ignore the lack of economic and political resources they frequently endure, as has clearly been the historical case of Mexicans in the US. A step should be taken, however, to move from perspectives of migrant settlement, for instance, which recurrently characterize migrants as starving hordes piling at “the gates”, destined to experience “downward assimilation” (see for instance Waldinger, 2001). Rather, Structuration puts in perspective the interaction of individuals with their surroundings. Adapted to migrants, it shows them as developing states of mind and the practical attitudes required to face the hardships – and the opportunities however limited they are – which are in store for those who relocate to a different nation (cf. Giddens, 1984: xxii-xxiv). Thinking of immigrants as actors is a conceptual move that suits the ongoing tendency in all spheres of human activity to think under a logic that is post-national, rather than national. This approach puts to our consideration the need to study social realities in a frame of the “local” and “global”, where specific phenomena in localized societies is to be understood in relation to developments and actions occurring in distant places. This “spatialization” of social theory (Featherstone & Lash, 1995) presents us with a “trans-societal” view whereby peoples’ consciousness and identities are transformed and adapted to circumstances they see as intrinsically connected to distant forces and events (Beck, 2002; 2000; Ignatieff, 1998). The idea is that identities have become “post-national” for people think of themselves as members of “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1991) no longer regulated by exclusivist narratives of belonging to a national territory. Arjun Appadurai puts this in context when writing that,

‘The landscapes of group identity—the ethnoscares—around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous’ (Appadurai, 1996: 48).

The idea is further elaborated by Aihwa Ong, who notes that in present times persons and institutions groom forms of “flexible citizenship” whereby ‘the cultural logics of

capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement... induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions' (1999: 6). Once more, the post-national argument does not deny the continuing importance of nation-states in the life of diasporic formations. Indeed, the former are central in the narrative content of the trans-localities reproduced in transnational spaces. These trans-localities, as previously discussed, have the cultural content of associations that were once maintained in the homeland but through their reproduction in different national territories give way to subjectivities that are 'often at odds with the projects of the nation-state' (cf. Appadurai, 2003: 338-9). From this the notion follows that cultural identities are not inevitably bound to national cultures.

As Gilroy notes, identity 'provides a way of understanding the interplay between our subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile subjectivity is formed' (1997: 301). Identity is therefore an important concept for it informs peoples' understandings of each other and themselves, thereby laying the foundations for social bodies that create parameters of inclusion and exclusion along the lines of nationhood, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, etc (ibid.). Because identity provides the grounds for 'collective action' (Hall, 1991b: 45) the dynamics that influence its development constantly involve great tensions and conflict in dominant sectors of societies. Central to this debate is the distinction between identities in pre-industrial and industrialized societies. In the former they are understood to be 'fixed, solid, and stable' (Kellner, 1992: 141) characteristics which define individuals and groups; in the latter, they are acknowledged as interchangeable, malleable strategies of identification and self-definition practiced by social actors. Kellner asserts that while identities have become de-linked from the norms of tradition and labels to which individuals subscribe consciously, these are 'still relatively circumscribed, fixed, and limited, though the boundaries of possible identities, of new identities, are continually expanding' (ibid.). He asserts that 'one is a mother, a son, a Texan, a Scot, a professor, a socialist, a Catholic, a lesbian – or rather a combination of the social roles and possibilities' (ibid.). Hall, however, observes that collective identities have been fragmented in a process coinciding with the erosion and instability of nation-states (cf. Hall, 1991b: 44). He writes that while the 'great collective social identities' based on notions of class and nationhood still matter,

'They are not already-produced stabilities and totalities in the world. They do not operate like totalities. If they have a relationship to our identities, cultural and individuals, they do not any longer have that suturing, structuring, or stabilizing force,

so that we can know what we are simply by adding up the sum of our positions in relation to them. They do not give us the code of identity as I think they did in the past' (Hall, 1991b: 45-6).

It is necessary to make the point that identities are not pre-given sets of cultural categories available for everyone to choose. These categories are shaped by historical contexts, psychic processes and figures of speech which are never of the making or under control of individuals (cf. Hall, 1991b: 43-4). Instead, these dynamics are part of permanent struggles where the narratives for the construction of identities are defined, even if they constantly emerge in the form of 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992[1983]) devised in the interplay of political struggles involving elite groups and institutions interested in pushing certain national projects for which specific cultural traits would be desirable. From this the notion that cultural identities are constructed (Morley & Robins, 1995: 44) and that religious, education, communication, and scientific institutions play a central role in the contests for the definition of national cultures and their ensuing outcomes. In this post-national context peoples – especially those in diaspora – define themselves in reference to the past, their nationality and ethnicity, but at the same time in relation to a future (cf. Hall, 1990: 225) idea of themselves in their new diasporic context.

The “late” modern self

It is convenient, however, to consider that the transformation of identities in present times does not necessarily need to be characterised, at least not in all cases, by 'the great aporia' and feelings of loss that Stuart Hall (1990: 224) attributes to the ongoing transformations of cultural identities experienced by peoples in diaspora. This view essentializes the displaced communities that he himself has tried to de-essentialize and denies transnational communities recognition of their capacity to act intelligently in relation to their surroundings. An articulation of identity that is more adequate is that provided by Anthony Giddens (1991), who contends that individuals' sense of being goes in hand with their interpenetration of the surrounding environment. He contends that,

'The self is not a passive entity, determined by external influences; in forging their self-identities, no matter how local their specific contexts of action, individuals contribute to

and directly promote social influences that are global in their consequences and implications' (Giddens, 1991: 2)

This account of identity opens windows to an understanding of how globalization may be experienced by individuals in a manner in which ethnicity and national origins cease to be the master narratives that inform the experience of migration. More important is the fact that no one in present times can disengage from an existence that draws solely on links with local peoples, ideas or objects (p. 30). Everyone is irremediably influenced by distant actors and events, in a 'dialectic of the local and the global' which bind '*self* and *society*' to a global matrix (p. 32). This results from the wide spread generalization of modernity, or the establishment of industrial and capitalist relationships that gave way to social forms including the nation-state and the international division of labour (p. 15, 21). This can be redirected to David Harvey's (1989) view that the generalization of modernity, or "post-modernity", consists on the breakup of a rigid economic and political order which in the early 1970s 'inaugurated a period of rapid change, flux, and uncertainty' (1989: 124). Then, industrial activity, labour and markets became increasingly flexible, while patterns of transport and consumption grew in mobility (p. 147), increasing capital owners influence on national political economies. In this way, economic and social activities became reliant on dynamics of "time-space compression", in which, 'the time horizons of both private and public decision-making have shrunk, while satellite communication and declining transport costs have made it increasingly possible to spread those decisions immediately over an ever wider and variegated space' (ibid.). This line of argument couples with that developed by Lash and Urry (1994), who claim that a permanent state of time and space compression contributes to the acceleration of wealth (money, finance, manufactures, raw materials), and of individuals, whether as workers, immigrants and tourists. 'This accelerated mobility causes objects to become disposable and to decline in significance, while social relationships (and individuals) are emptied of meaning' (Lash & Urry, 1994:31). It is this "emptying out" and "flattening" (cf. Lash & Urry: 1994: 31) which makes the experience of modernity distinct, and in need to be dissected with some level of specificity in the context of transnational communities.

On a first impression basis it seems that the 'post-traditional order' (Giddens, 1991: 20) modernity entails makes it a tyrant of sorts, a 'juggernaut (who) crushes those who resist it' (Giddens, 1990: 139). This comes from the 'separation of time and space' it brings about, thereby disembedding social life from ethno-specific historical territories (1991: 16-8). Thus viewed, 'high modernity' and its globalizing means one has to endure the dissolution of

nuclear families, and of extended ones in spaces like the church, the workplace, the neighbourhood, etc. For Ulrich Beck at play here is an uprooting mechanism of individualization in which the price of winning ‘absolute control of one’s own money, time, living space, and body’ (1992: 92-3), entails giving up one’s class position, and the recognition of membership to groups that once gave meaning to individual existence. Views of this type are vulnerable to excessive abstraction, but they can be adapted to recent processes of domestic [from rural to urban] or international migration, which sometimes deplete entire small populations in migrant-sending countries (Baños Ramírez, 2001: 230; Castillo et al., 2004: 356; López Castro & Pardo Galván, 1988: 120), giving way to the “loss of community” that is part of late modernity.

It should be kept in mind, however, that while modernity “dis-places” or lifts peoples out of place, it also inserts these individuals and groups in ‘globalised communities of shared experience’ (Giddens, 1990: 141) where they can both continue to participate in familiar associations and practices while engaging with new ones. This is why, as Anthony Giddens contends, “late” or “high” modernity manifests itself as a ‘dialectic of the local and global’ (1991: 22, 32), characterized by the separation of social activity from particular locales. This “separation of time from space” does not mean these elements become mutually exclusive, but rather amplified dimensions which are constantly subject to input from distant interlocutors. In other words, ‘the “when” of these actions is directly connected to the “where”, but not, as in pre-modern epochs, via the mediation of place’ (Giddens, 1991: 17). The interplay of the local and the global is central to see globalization ‘as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’ (Giddens, 1990: 64). This notion is present in multiple accounts that articulate globalization in terms of planetary interconnectedness, whether in the form of ‘distant proximities’ (Rosenau, 2003), ‘accelerating interdependence’ (Ohmae, 1990), ‘the integration of the world-economy’ or the establishment of ‘supraterritorial relations’ between people (Scholte, 2005).

The local and global connection can easily be seen then as a possibility opened to those who have moved from one country to another, for they frequently have family, economic and other kinds of links in more than one country. Their daily contacts with distant “proximate others” enabled by affordable travel and satellite communications, make people more mobile, capable of frequent travel to the homeland and to enact a social life through the constant exchange of voice messages, text and photos, e-mails, and even videoconferences. For transnational communities, this separation of time from space transforms the nature of the

migration experience, which for most of the twentieth century was understood as implying an outright transplantation from one societal order to a different one.

2. The deterritorialization of culture

To this point concepts have been deployed to argue that our global times have changed the nature of migrant experiences, as well as the parameters for the construction of group and individual identities. This allows for the view that transnational communities and diasporas have developed an awareness that the local is penetrated by the global, but something needs to be said about how this process calls for a shift in anthropological discourses that equate diasporas with bearers of their national cultures, whilst missing practices of meaning production which are useful to understand present experiences of migration. This requires engaging with the concept of culture. For Immanuel Wallerstein, 'culture (or a culture) is what some persons feel or do, unlike others who do not feel or do the same things' (1991: 91). According to John Tomlinson, culture 'can be understood as the order of life in which human beings construct meaning through practices of symbolic representation' (1999: 18). In a world where peoples from different ethnic groups are constantly rubbing shoulders with individuals who were once members of somewhat homogeneous national populations, the notion of culture is the foundation of political and popular discourses through which distinctive characteristics are endowed to ethnic minorities. These communities, according to Gerd Baumann, are 'defined by their cultures' (Baumann, 1996: 9), and such definitions provide the basis of inclusion and exclusion to a national body. Countries with multicultural policies like Britain encourage immigrants to practice the religious and social traits from their places of birth (Vertovec, 2001: 3). In contrast, in United States, for instance, cultural diversity is desirable as long as it stays in the aisles of "world foodstuffs". This means that immigrants' desire to be "truly American" is verifiable only through their cultural invisibility (Rosaldo, 1993). In a context where the Third World has imploded in the First, 'members of racial minority groups receive a peculiar message: either join the mainstream or stay in your ghettos, barrios, and reservations, but don't try to be both mobile and cultural' (p. 212). Clearly, this understanding of culture has been the filter through which sociologists devised the notion that immigrants [were supposed to] enter a *progressive* and *irreversible* process of assimilation (Park, 1950: 281). In this respect the "cultural traits" of Mexicans and peoples of other sub-national groups, for instance, have been systematically overemphasised, giving way

to ideas that document a 'culture of poverty' (Lewis, 1963) impeding their full adoption of American values (Bogardus, 1923: 264; Huntington, 2004: 38).

The problem with the 'official anthropological doctrine' (Rosaldo, 1993: 196) that informs the meaning of culture is the tendency to endow characteristics to a group or an individual on the basis of their places of birth or their nationality. While in this sense, the culture of a people may be unique and therefore too complex to be grasped without careful observation (Boas, 1911), its dimensions are to be assessed on the basis of the ordinary, everyday practices through which peoples produce meanings (Geertz, 1973; Williams, 1981; Tomlinson, 1999). This is why it is important to bear in mind that the so called culture of a people is the by-product of political constructions involving the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992) and of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991). What this suggests is that culture is a site of contest, but most importantly, that it is open to transformation. Keeping this in consideration is essential in a context of "high modernity" where not only location, but also the trajectories that people follow, are central loci for the production of meaning. As James Clifford put it, 'anthropological "culture" is not what it used to be' (1992: 101) for in the interplay of the local and the global 'one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted, native ones' (ibid.). In this sense, transnational communities and diasporas can be seen as the "travelling cultures" *par excellence*, to be assessed in relation to the variegated interconnections established between "movers" and "stayers" and the other symbolic and material flows that are common in conditions of time-space compression. The kind of approach entertained here reveals that the life views of "travelling cultures" are not organically tied to an ethnicity or to a national "cultural container", and allows to understand the experiences of migrant communities outside the narrow *either/or* perspectives of assimilation and cultural pluralism (Schmitter Heisler, 1999) that have traditionally filtered their study.

In present times, the production of meaning by diasporas and transnational communities is the result of cultural deterritorialization. The latter consists on peoples being able to stay connected via electronic means of communication to a multiplicity of locations, so that their landscapes of activity become distributed across time and space. The capacity to network at a distance is as much present in people's ability to send a bank transfer or to make a phone call to their relatives at any given moment; or to send their children to visit their grandparents in the homeland so they are socialized within contexts that privilege family values; in this way, they offer them protection against, for instance, the negative influences of gang culture in the US. In this respect, Nancy Foner speaks about a 'creative' dimension of

culture (Foner, 1997) whereby norms of the homeland are combined with new patterns of being which re-dimension the contents of family life. This kind of example puts deterritorialization in context as the decoupling of social space from national territory, opening the way for ‘supraterritorial relations between people’ (Scholte 2005). Néstor García-Canclini explains deterritorialization as ‘the loss of the “natural” relation of culture to geographical and social territories and, at the same time, certain relative, partial territorial relocalizations of old and new symbolic productions’ (1995: 229). This “re-territorialization” pre-figured by Canclini is however not without transformation. At the same time that, for instance, transnational communities draw on their ‘pre-migration cultural conceptions (...) these (...) practices do not continue unchanged, of course. They are restructured, redefined, and renegotiated in the new settings’ (Foner, 2005: 158). Drawing on a multiplicity of research cases focused on different groups experiences of migration, Foner suggests the communities they form engage in the re-invention of traditions whereby people ‘may interpret and act upon the present in light of their models of the past’ (ibid., p. 159). In other words, the deterritorialization of diasporas makes visible the latter’s embedding on a grid of local and global exchanges. According to Appadurai, ‘the loosening of the holds between people, wealth, and territories fundamentally alters the basis of cultural reproduction’ (1996: 49).

Electronic mediations

The idea of human activity as “nation unbound” confers new meanings to the conception of place, distance and borders. In this way the organization of spaces where social and economic interactions take place has been reshaped (Scholte 2000: 42-3; Held et al. 1999: 16) and opens the possibility to investigate migrant communities as formed by actors whose economic, social and cultural engagements are informed by a consciousness of the local and the global. This links to Anthony Giddens’ account of the late-modern as a stage in which dis-embedding mechanisms feed individuals with uninterrupted knowledge about the causes and effects of their decisions and actions (1991). In the process, the self becomes a reflexive endeavour which constantly adjusts to feedback received from a multiplicity of sources via expert systems that mediate contact with the world outside, whether with close and distant relatives, friends, neighbours, classmates, religious, political leaders, a general practitioner, and even institutional entities dedicated to the production of knowledge, including think tanks, universities, private laboratories, governments, etc. The local/global interconnections

that are established in high modernity force individuals to negotiate a plurality of 'lifestyle choices' (ibid., p. 5) which influence their views on themselves and the world on a day-to-day basis.

Personal experiences of modernity are heavily mediated by electronic media. Giddens writes that 'with the development of mass communication... the interpenetration of self-development and social systems, up to and including global systems, becomes ever more pronounced' (1991: 4). Here, the question of "lifestyle choices" adopts a special significance to be interpreted not as people's capacity to consume, but as the 'routine contemplation of counterfactuals' (Giddens, 1991: 29) in which the possible outcomes of ordinary decisions are constantly assessed. In this regard, the perceived 'intrusion of distant events into everyday consciousness' (ibid., p. 27) explains people's constant awareness of the world as a place fraught with danger and risks (see also Giddens, 1990: 10; Beck, 1992; 1999). Hence the notion that most human beings living in modern societies feel that whatever goes on in the world can potentially impact their lives in personal ways. Tomlinson has referred to the awareness of the local/global connections in terms of 'deterritorialized cultural experiences' or as the 'phenomenology' of a 'global consciousness' (1999: 30), one which is more likely to be experienced by peoples in the Third World than those in the First, given their increased vulnerability to time-space distancing dynamics (p. 137). Hence the notion that transnational communities and diasporas, having been "lifted up" from their national contexts, are central to research individual experiences of globalization (ibid.).

The divorce between personal experience and locality is rooted in the irruption of distant realities brought about by electronic media, in which television is a particularly powerful force (Williams, 2003[1974]; Meyrowitz, 1985: 308; Thompson, 1995). The normalization of the exotic, whether in the form of peoples from one's antipodes, ethnic foodstuffs, up-to-the-minute coverage of international conflict and natural disasters, real-time transmission of media events such as Live Aid or the World Cup, add all up to this phenomenon. The consequences of the complex patterns of connectivity that globalization entails, however, do not just materialize through symbolic atmospheres or phantasmagoria; because globalization alters people's contexts of meaning production many actions at the level of the individual or the group become consequential for the rest of the planet. This is made clear by the dissemination of environmental politics whereby Non Government Organisations (NGOs), public and private research centres are constantly reminding the public of the necessity to reduce their carbon footprint by cutting on air-travel and shopping responsibly, thus contributing to slow down the melting of the polar caps or to reduce child

exploitation in sweatshops in India or Vietnam (Lash & Urry, 1994: 145; Garner, 2000). It is true that as many authors document, the global experiences of peoples across the world will be determined by their socio-economic and geographical location (Hannerz, 1996: 83-9). Where “highly skilled workers” and top executives will tend to praise globalization as the age of human reason, “cultural mongrels” and immigrants will feel lost in the swirl of ethnic potpourris and the sense of uprooting in which they are protagonists (ibid.). Even worse, as Doreen Massey asserts (1991), the optimism fuelled visions of the world becoming smaller via time-space compression overlooks the fact that ‘air travel might enable businessmen to buzz across the ocean, but the concurrent decline in shipping has only increased the isolation of many island communities’ (p. 25; see also Chowdhury, 2002).

But as other theorists suggest, novel experiences opened by globalization are not the preserve of *bon vivant* cosmopolitans (cf. Hannerz, 1996: 102). Notably, the ‘informationalization of social movements’ (Castells, 2004) gives way to ‘powerful expressions of collective identity that challenge globalization and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people’s control over their lives and environment’ (p. 2). The possibility opened to normally disempowered peoples to network across national boundaries has created venues of political action, in which immigrant workers, for instance, can organize by pooling together their otherwise scarce economic resources. Thus they become viable interlocutors of politicians and other decision-makers in their homelands (Portes, 1997; 2001; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), capable to construct collective definitions of self-identity which act as counterweight to those imposed from elite discourses (Kearney, 1991; Nagengast & Kearney, 1990). Taking all of the above into account it is safe to assume that millions of immigrants, as every other individual and group in a modern society, experience globalization in one way or another, principally in the form of deterritorialization (Tomlinson, 1999: 137).

1.3 Transnational media in perspective

1. Visualizing the glocal in transnational television

In the last section the notion of cultural deterritorialization has been deployed in connection with the emergence of a post-national order which is emblematic of globalization and its dynamics of time and space compression. The post-national moment suggests that while nations remain relevant they are shaped by the interplay of local realities with actors and

forces acting at a distance. A central aspect of globalization has been the rise of cultural markets that have changed 'the process of imagining communities' (Shohat & Stam, 1996: 145). This takes place frequently across national boundaries and breeds 'diasporic public spheres' (Appadurai, 1996: 22), formed by 'contemporary media [which] enable migrants to sustain up-to-the-minute links with events in their homelands' (Morley, 2000: 125). The capacity of broadcasters to beam their programmes across national boundaries has created what authors label 'geolinguistic regions' (Sinclair, 2000; 2005; Sinclair, 1996a, 1996b) or 'cultural linguistic markets' (McAnany & Wilkinson, 1996), whereby the creation of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991) becomes somehow independent of circumstances of physical co-presence. One core vehicle in the creation of geolinguistic regions is supported by television as well as by the widespread availability of other communication and travel technologies that function as vectors of people, symbols and objects through which cultural references from beyond the boundaries of migrant receiving societies materialize. Together, these "media of diaspora" (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001; Karim, 2003; 1998) contribute to change the nature of migratory experiences:

'The images, scripts, models, and narratives that come through mass mediation (in its realistic and fictional modes) make the difference between migration today and in the past. Those who wish to move, those who have moved, those who wish to return, and those who choose to stay rarely formulate their plans outside the sphere of radio and television, cassettes, and videos, newsprint and telephone. For migrants, both the politics of adaptation to new environments and the stimulus to move or return are deeply affected by a mass-mediated imaginary that frequently transcends transnational space' (Appadurai, 1996: 6).

In assessing the emergence of these novel formulations one needs to consider the evolution of academic debates on the subject of international communications, for they have provided a site for debate about the meaning of globalization itself. Paradigms in this context have emphasised the adoption of Western media as a step that could put developing nations in the pathway of economic and political progress (e.g. Schramm, 1964). The notion gave way to a world-systems based approach which saw that, paraphrasing Galtung, a media 'dependency of the Periphery on the Center' (1971: 90) subjected the former to a pattern of cultural imperialism (see also Nordenstreng & Varis, 1973; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985). The reliance of countries in the Third World in news, films and television from

Western media powers gave credence to this perspective (see respectively Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Guback & Varis, 1982; Varis, 1986). From here the notion that through its ‘mastery (...) of global communication and culture’ (Schiller, 1998: 17) the United States has been able to preserve its economic dominance, a symbolic imperialism of sorts exercised via ‘global electronic networks’ (Thussu, 1998). The cultural imperialism argument has however been attenuated since centres of media production in Latin America (Fox, 1997; Antola & Rogers, 1984; Sinclair, 1990) began to make themselves present in the radar of international media flows. The visibility of programming – especially soap operas – produced by Mexico’s Televisa and Brazil’s TV Globo all over the world gave way to talk of ‘reverse cultural imperialism’ (Rogers & Antola, 1985: 34), and has gained such broadcasters the label of ‘media transnationals of the Third World’ (Sinclair, 1996b). The pattern is also present in India, Japan and China, countries which have developed as hubs of media production acting as instruments of cultural influence in their respective regions (Dissanayake, 1988). The panorama of international communication has therefore in recent years become one of global media flows and contra-flows. These include south-to-north or south-to-south trajectories, in contrast to the unidirectional north-to-south of the past (Thussu, 2007). One dimension of contra-flows is the rise of “media transnationalism”, or non Western broadcasters who have emerged as key players from the so called “global South”, which nonetheless follow patterns of expansion and commercialization set by American media corporations (Thussu, 2005; Sinclair et al., 1996). There is however the opposite case of media operations such as Al Jazeera and Telesur, from Qatar and Venezuela, respectively, which privilege counter-hegemonic discourses and controversial approaches to the coverage of international events, in the way gaining political influence for those who source their operations (Sakr, 2005; Kozloff, 2007: 242).

Contra-flows such as reggae music, soap operas and Latin American literature have been seen as ‘culture coming fully developed, as it were, from periphery to center’ (Hannerz, 1992: 222), but authors acknowledge that these cultural counter-discourses are asymmetric (Hannerz, 1992: 222; Sánchez-Ruíz, 2001) both in volume and significance. Instead of contra-flows being a case of ‘peripheries talking back’ (cf. Hannerz, 1992: 222), the argument of cultural imperialism has been reformulated to suggest that contra-flows are ‘evidence of the reformation of a global economic power elite, now more broadly based, ethnically, but otherwise intensifying processes of corporate concentration without regard for national division and geography, as corporate giants battle it out on a global field of commercial war’ (Boyd-Barret, 1998: 158). Hence the multiplicity of academic accounts

which have tracked the growing influence of transnational corporations (TNCs). These have become global media monopolies (Bagdikian, 2004; Herman & McChesney, 1997) that shape the business models of national media firms across the world, making them over-dependent on advertising, and leading to the “dumbing down” of journalistic practices (Barnett, 1998; McChesney, 1999) and to the erosion of public service broadcasting (Curran, 2000).

With firms like Time Warner, Disney, News Corporation, Viacom and so on dominating the modern firmament of the ‘culture industry’ (Adorno & Bernstein, 1990), there is the notion that local cultures are destroyed through the imposition of US-inspired, market-driven infotainment (Thussu, 2007b), the food of McDonald’s (Ritzer, 2002), and the logos of Microsoft, Coca-Cola and Nike (Klein, 2001). These assumptions have permeated popular conceptions about globalization. In contrast, there is the idea that cultural symbols are not uncritically “absorbed” by media publics across the world, who rather adapt these media products to their everyday life contexts (Fiske, 1987; Gauntlett & Hill, 1999; Lull, 2007: 69).

Questions regarding the independence of audiences to negotiate or oppose the preferred readings of media texts (Hall, 2001[1980]) are highly relevant for this project, and they lead to the point that with global media, as with any other material or symbolic goods, meanings and uses are seldom preserved intact. The subject of cultural homogenization fails to consider, Appadurai claims, ‘that at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or other way’ (1990: 295). The production of culture is caught in a circular mechanism of ‘universalistic supply and local, particularistic demand’ (Robertson, 1991: 74), which can also be described as a process of “glocalisation” (Robertson, 1995). The neologism “glocalisation” blends the concepts global and local; it derives from the Japanese *dochakuka* principle of matching farming procedures to the specific conditions of local environments (p. 28). In social theory, the idea of the glocal refers to the act of borrowing from, for instance, mass produced goods or internationally disseminated symbols, and their use for the manifestation of local expression and identities. Roland Robertson explains that,

‘The global is not in and of itself counterposed to the local. Rather, what is often referred to as the local is essentially included within the global. In this respect globalization, defined in its most general sense as the compression of the world as a whole, involves the linking of localities. But it also involves the ‘invention’ of locality, in the same general sense as the idea of the invention of tradition... as well as its imagination’ (Robertson, 1995: 35).

Glocalisation brings several questions to the table, one is recognising that whatever is seen as the “global” does not have to be American or Western, this is that globalization can have different meanings. Put another way, Indianization, Vietnamization or Russianization, may be more worrisome, respectively, for Sri Lankans, Cambodians and Armenians, than Americanization (Appadurai, 1990: 295). In the context of television one aspect of this multifaceted dimension is the existence of contra-flows, which have profoundly altered the national media markets of both the developed and developing world. Crucial is the case of Portugal, which has grown used to watching programming from Brazil, its former colony; or of the US Hispanic viewers, whose “television diets” are heavily composed by *telenovelas* and sports produced in Mexico (Sinclair, 1999; 1996). In this sense, transmission and production technologies, and liberalization of economic policies, have given a solid multinational market presence to communication conglomerates throughout the world (Thussu, 2006[2000]), even though the characteristics of the media markets where they operate continue to be predominantly national (Morley, 2000: 125; 2006: 105). Glocalisation, in this sense, is evidence of the commanding influence of terrestrial channels as producers of the most popular programming, and drivers of the highest ratings (e.g. Dowmunt, 1993). Indeed, even though media markets have grown in complexity due to the transformation of ethnic landscapes which have triggered demand for transnational programming (Chalaby, 2005a), non-local media actors constantly have to struggle against the more refined knowledge that national and local broadcasters have regarding the kind of programming sought by locally based audiences. As noted by Wang and Servaes, ‘markets may be sought, created and maneuvered by capital holders, however, it is consumer demand that holds the key to ultimate success’ (2000: 12). Hence the importance to “glocalise” in order to suit the needs of transnational audiences (Chalaby, 2005b; Straubhaar & Duarte, 2005; Wang, 2000). Some have addressed these developments as the rise of cybercapitalism, manifested in the convergence of telecommunication, media and information industries at the level of vast regional markets such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Mosco & Schiller, 2001) or of the European Union (Esser, 2002). These views offer great detail in the way in which the government policies and economic actors of nation-states are fully embracing the global economy.

2. Transnational audiences

In a way transnational television presents immigrant communities with alternative ways to think of themselves as members of ‘imagined communities’ that transcend national territories (Appadurai, 1996: 3; Shohat & Stam, 1996; Morley, 2000; Morley & Robins, 1995). In this context, transnational audiences can be considered as those formed by peoples with some form of involvement in their sending and receiving societies, and who primarily, but not exclusively, consume media in their native language. In this regard, Jean Chalaby (2005) notes that satellite communications have broken the intrinsic relationship of television broadcasts to a national territory, giving way to the rise of ‘hundreds of cross-border TV channels’ (2005: 1) and transforming the ‘media cultures’ of countries across the globe. In the face of these technological developments different sorts of transnational connections are established to create post-national forms of conversation between broadcasters and their imagined audiences. Clearly, experiences of television transnationalism are evidenced in the discreet inroads opened by international broadcasters in Europe, who despite political, economic and cultural resistances managed to set a foothold in Europe by adapting mainstream programming formats to local tastes (Chalaby, 2005: 3). An interesting case is that putting in perspective the television systems of mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, where contrasting and sometimes clashing policies and processes interact to regionalize the audiences of Greater China, an heterogeneous yet deeply profitable market (Chan, 2005). The picture is further sharpened by the array of institutional and commercial television choices from Turkey available to Turkish audiences in Europe (Aksoy & Robins, 2000), who are thus able to transcend feelings of cultural estrangement and to obtain psychic resources needed to thrive in new socio-political environments (Robins & Aksoy, 2005; 2006). Next to stabilizing the experience of migration, transnational media may also provoke unease in the polities of immigrant receiving societies where the penetration of satellite television may be perceived as an obstacle to the cultural integration of foreign nationals (Hargreaves & Mahdjoub, 1997).

The impact of media transnationalism is undeniable, but somehow its pervasiveness reinforces the traditional paradigms that inform the relationship of migration and the media, failing to develop an account of transnational audiences and their consumption of various types of media—whether ethnic, transnational and diasporic (Naficy, 1993; 2003), or in its “general market” form (Subervi & Eusebio, 2005). The idea is that media publics who have a background in migration are embedded in complex networks of media programming. This

raises the need to conceptualize the category “transnational audiences” from an audience research perspective, which should in turn render concepts such as “ethnic” or “minority” audiences inadequate—including the reductionist notion that media have functions in the assimilation or maintenance of cultural identities (e.g. Subervi-Velez, 1986; Subervi & Ríos, 2005). Before this argument is clarified it is convenient to address three main arguments that explain the link media/migration as a form of paving the way towards a visualization of the “transnational audience”. An overview will be outlined first addressing the link between migration and the media. It will be followed by a summary of the roles that media is thought to have in the adaptation of immigrants to their new places of settlement.

The first argument suggests that television programmes, films and other forms of audiovisual content encourage people to migrate, particularly from developing and underdeveloped countries to the metropolises of advanced economies (e.g. Mai, 2001; Sabry, 2005). A second formulation identifies dynamics whereby media programmes act as symbolic bridges that migrants use to find information about their homelands and to connect with their cultures of origin (Aksoy & Robins, 2000; Siew-Peng, 2001; Tsagarousianou, 2001; Uribe, 2003). A third prevailing view focuses on migrants’ representations, which allegedly determine how they are included or excluded in receiving societies (Hargreaves, 2001; Lichter & Amundson, 1998; Ramírez, 1998; Wilson II & Gutiérrez, 1995).

From a different perspective, the theoretical arsenal of transnationalism and diaspora has for some years been permeating media studies, particularly in debates about transnational media and its use by transnational or diasporic communities. After Marie Gillespie’s accounts of South Asian diasporic audiences in London (1995; 2002), several other interventions (Ang, 2001; Aksoy & Robins, 2000; 2003; Robins & Aksoy, 2005; 2006; Qureshi & Moores, 1999; Tsagarousianou, 2001) have articulated diasporic media consumption beyond the “bounded belonging” (Gilroy, 1997: 3) to an ethnic group or to a nationality presupposed by the racial approaches privileged in American academia, choosing instead to make visible the part media play in the experiences of mobility, connectivity, and cross-cultural negotiations in which transnational communities engage. Some emblematic research cases include Hamid Naficy’s study of Iranian television producers in Los Angeles (1993; 2003), and Kolar-Panov’s account of the (former) Yugoslavian diaspora’s consumption of gutting videos about the Balkans war (1997); Annabelle Sreberny’s investigation on media use by Iranians in London (2000b), the study of the Vietnamese diaspora’s consumption of video entertainment produced in North America and Europe (Cunningham & Nguyen, 2001), and the reception of Turkish television by Turks in London (Aksoy & Robins, 2000; Robins & Aksoy, 2005;

2006) add to this developing body of literature. In US academia, much of the scholarly endeavour has largely concentrated on ethnic minorities' access to and representation in the media (Wilson II & Gutiérrez, 1995; Rodríguez, 1998), the media's role in dynamics of assimilation or cultural pluralism (Subervi-Vélez, 1986; Constantakis, 1993; Subervi & Ríos, 2005), and the way in which commercial discourses are central to the construction of pan-ethnic, racialized identities (Dávila, 2001; Mayer, 2003b).

Research of ethnographic characteristics documenting the Mexican diaspora's use of Spanish-language media in the US is in short supply, even though some scholars have begun to use the language of diaspora to address the explosion of media alternatives in Spanish-language media (Sinclair, 2004b; De Santis, 2003). Studies of Mexican-American audiences have focused on the media's role in dynamics of assimilation or cultural pluralism (see especially Subervi-Vélez, 1986; Constantakis, 1993; and Subervi-Vélez & Ríos, 2005). Hispanics' "perceptions" of television adverts (Del Toro & Greenberg, 1989), and their television motivations and viewing preferences have also been explored (Albarran & Umphrey, 1993). More recently the hypothesis that Mexican-American teenagers use soap operas to maintain their ethnic identities (Mayer, 2003a) has been examined, while it has been found that Mexican immigrants use soap operas to re-enact their sense of belonging to a Mexican imagined community (Uribe, 2003). These last two examples have used focus groups to capture the meanings viewers take from their favourite programmes. They are a step forward towards research methods that don't rely exclusively on statistically obtained inferences to backup positivist claims, such as the idea that Latinos use the media for purposes of cultural maintenance (Ríos, 1999). Scholarly work about Mexican audiences in the US that deploy the vocabulary of transnationalism and diaspora is, however, conspicuous by its absence.

The importance about media transnationalism is that it opens new venues to explore the role of communication and mass media in the life of diasporas, for instance, in the development of transnational forms of citizenship (Brubaker, 1992; Mosco, 1997; Smith, 2005). This potential is embodied in expressions such as 'diasporic and transnational public spheres' (Morley, 2000: 125), 'micro public spheres' (Dayan, 1998: 109) or 'public sphericles' (Gitlin, 1998; Cunningham, 2001), which one way or another suggest different roles of the media in connecting transnational communities with homeland polities, preserving their cultural identities, inserting them in the polity of the receiving society, or simply fragmenting them in second tier clusters of "particularistic" media. It should be kept in mind that the "public sphericles" open to transnational and diasporic audiences are not

necessarily politically progressive, for they are frequently operated within commercial structures which make them relevant not because of their textual forms, but because of the uses to which they are put by those who consume them (Cunningham, 2001: 136). In a sense, these premises reveal the various cross-border interconnections and flows of media programming and advertising, remittances, political and identity claims that occur in transnational spaces. The distinction should be made, however, that while cultural deterritorialization occurs out of dislocated peoples' need to remain in contact with their homelands (Appadurai, 1996: 38), the audiences that are formed in this process also need information that give them access to community and neighbourhood resources, and to elements of cultural value and entertainment that socialize them in their areas of settlement (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2001; Deuze, 2006). The assumption should then be that while transnational communities may be consumers of media programmes made in their homeland, they are also viewers, listeners and readers of media produced in their contexts of reception. Indeed, it has been found that the views of the world that migrant communities get from locally or nationally produced media lead to the development of local community bonds (Lin & Song, 2006), and enable to make identity adjustments necessary for transnational contexts (Sampedro, 1998).

These perspectives are helpful to move on from the dominant view that the media use of migrant communities' has an "either/or" orientation, which is at best dual. One side of this debate indicates, for instance, that minority audiences who view television in their native languages are trying to maintain their cultural identity, or to assimilate, if they view television in the language of the receiving society. This implication is frequently made in accounts of the "dual nature" of "ethnic" media (e.g. Constantakis, 1993; Viswanath & Arora, 2000), as well as in reports that transnational audiences use "particularistic" media (Dayan, 1998; Karim, 1998) to reduce the cultural separation provoked by their diasporic condition. Many of these accounts are problematic because they mobilise a form of methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002) that indistinctly attach transnational audiences to media beamed from a homeland, disregarding the various experiences and lateral orientations that they develop in their places of settlement, and that move them to interact with various types of media platforms and programming which are not necessarily related to their birthplaces (Robins & Aksoy, 2005; 2006; Tsagarousianou, 2001).

An alternative paradigm is that 'diasporas make use of communication media in ... dialectical processes' that transcend 'the dichotomy of "home" and "host"' (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001: 4). This premise remains under researched, particularly in the case of

Mexicans in the US. Statistically obtained evidence signals, for instance, that while ethnic minorities in the US are inclined to follow broadcast media in their native languages (NCM, 2005), they frequently, and for several reasons, engage with programming in English, which makes bilingual media consumption a rather generalized activity amongst migrant communities (De la Garza et al., 1998; DeSipio, 2003). Recent research in Britain suggests that while transnational audiences want to have news about their homeland, they are avid consumers of locally produced television news (e.g. Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002: 50-1). Similar accounts have been produced about Turks in Germany, and South Asians and Greek Cypriots in London (see respectively Robins & Aksoy, 2005; 2006; Tsagarousianou, 2001).

“Public sphericles”: the convergence of transnational and national media

The literature reviewed so far suggests that transnational audiences are embedded in media markets that give them access to programming produced in local, national, transnational and global contexts. Despite the various layers that compose the “television geography” (cf. Moores, 2000: 99) of transnational audiences, there is strong indication that the national media systems of the countries where they settle are a predominant source of programming. This case is particularly strong in the context of Spanish speaking audiences in the US, which are the world’s wealthiest and heavily drawn towards the dynamic media production hubs of Miami, Los Angeles, and San Antonio (Dávila, 2001; Mayer, 2003b; Sinclair, 2003). The predominance of media production in the areas of settlement of diasporic communities in the US and other migrant receiving societies has been verified in the cases of Iranians in Los Angeles (Naficy, 1993), and of the Vietnamese (Cunningham & Nguyen, 2001) in North American and European cities. All of this emphasises the fact that ‘most media audiences are located within one country’ (McQuail, 1996: 62), and thus are subject to television-viewing realities shaped by nationally based television networks (cf. Straubhaar, 2007: 7). This view draws on evidence that documents the commanding influence of local terrestrial channels as producers of the most followed TV shows (e.g. Dowmunt, 1993); at the same time, the tendency is that most countries which were once thought to be dependent on Western, particularly American programming, have increasingly become self-sufficient in producing television for nationally based audiences (Straubhaar, 2007); inversely, the market for Spanish-language television in the US, once dependent on programming produced in Mexico and other Latin American countries, generates nowadays most of its television shows (ibid.). In this context, even Spanish based broadcaster Univision, fifth largest in the US, has been

reducing in recent years its requirements for prime time programming produced by Televisa in Mexico and Venezuela's Venevisión (Univision, 2007: 19). The requirements of transnational audiences for certain types of media products will impinge heavily on what media programmes are made available. It is claimed, for instance, that the demand of transnational audiences for local news will trigger attempts from both local and transnational broadcasters to cater for those needs (Straubhaar, 2007: 172; Sinclair, 2003: 222). Notably, the case has been made in the sense that despite airing in Spanish, broadcasters who target Hispanics have professional practices and institutional codes that make them American, rather than foreign companies (Sinclair, 2003: 214). It can be said then that the media geographies of transnational audiences have various centres of gravity, somewhat scattered along the layers of the global and the local (Sreberny, 2000a). What this suggests is that researching this kind of media publics requires a perspective that considers the possibility of interactions with programmes and print materials which insert them as members of a national audience. Even if a programme from a producer abroad is targeted to an ethno-specific audience, 'one can hardly imagine how such micro public spheres would manage to remain sealed to the public sphere at large' (Dayan, 1998: 109). In other words, the fact that transnational audiences are located in a particular country makes them by default members of a national audience (Ang, 1996: 2), with access to a broad atmosphere of symbolic resources – a public sphere – where public opinion is formed (Habermas, 1989), and where different societal functions, of correlation, surveillance and transmission (Wright, 1959), are enacted.

It should be recognised that several questions remain unanswered as one tries to make sense of that which differentiates transnational from national audiences. Clearly, peoples in diaspora tend to see themselves as culturally distinct from core populations (Rinderle, 2005; Rinderle & Montoya, 2008), and this is manifest in the kind of media choices they make. The impression is therefore that transnational audiences are somewhat caught in a vacuum that separates them from the rest of the media publics in a national territory. This separation is however only apparent and as several authors suggest, there exist points of connection between the transnational and national public spheres created by the media. Visualizing such "synapses" of media systems helps to stress the fact that the national, unitary public sphere (cf. Gitlin, 1998: 170) has in recent decades broken into a scatter of mercury-like globules (p. 173), which stresses the fragmentation of social life.

Instead of national audiences integrated by 'simultaneously lived experiences' (Anderson, 1991: 37), the present is marked by clusters of media consumers divided in socio-economic categories, lifestyles, sexual, ideological, religious orientations, ethnicity, etc. Todd

Gitlin comments that the power media companies have to tailor information and programmes for meticulously defined subgroups of consumers, foregrounds ‘the existence of a two-tier society’ (1998: 172). He takes this point further, suggesting that ‘under the sign of multiculturalism, today’s media’ target groups through ‘ethnic marketing campaigns’ which perpetuate them in subaltern positions of the American society. Interestingly, Gitlin redirects the way in which media ‘capitalize on identity boundaries’ (ibid.) to processes of “segmented assimilation”, thereby reflecting on the different outcomes of present immigration trends. The well-being of immigrants, in this context, ‘depends on the economic and social resources that they, their families, and their communities can muster’ (Portes, 2007: 88). Hence the concept of “public sphericles”, a symbolism that puts in perspective both the wearing out of national social fabrics, but more importantly for this dissertation, the transformation of ethnic landscapes within the boundaries of national states. The social fragmentation proposed in Gitlin’s articulation of public sphericles is a relevant concept for audience research, as it presents the challenge to produce accounts of the varieties of experiences that different sectors of the public obtain from the media. At the same time, implicit in the approach is the idea that the audience is ‘an object of discourse whose status is analogous to that of “population”, “nation” or “the masses”’ (Ang, 1991: 2). Gitlin’s formulation, in this sense, suggests that the dilution of a “public sphere” into “public sphericles” is a process attached to a national territory. This leads to visualizing significant developments in terms of media concentration, conglomeration, and commodification that hinder the public value of media discourses, and that threaten to deteriorate the quality of ‘communal life’ (Murdock, 2000: 46-7), leaving societies with ‘no shared mediated experiences to trade in everyday conversations’.

As formulated by Gitlin, however, and as Stuart Cunningham rightly notes (2001: 133-4), the cited developments are depicted as phenomena anchored to national territories, overlooking those media targeted to members of ethnic minorities and transnational communities from outside the national territory where they are located. Aiming to strengthen the analytical value of “public sphericles”, Cunningham states that these should be thought ‘as constituted beyond the singular nation-state, as global narrowcasting of polity and culture’ (p. 133). After making this move, the concept becomes dynamic, as it opens windows to the possibility of taking ‘full account of contemporary vectors of communication in a globalizing, commercializing and pluralizing world’ (p. 134). If one assumes “public sphericles” to be transnational, new conversations emerge whereby immigrant communities sustain dialogues with physically distant yet culturally proximate others across geographic

boundaries. In this way, instead of Gitlin's fragmented globules "public sphericles" become spaces that,

'Provide a central site for public communication in globally dispersed communities, stage communal difference and discord productively, and work to articulate insider ethno-specific identities – which are by definition "multi-national", even global – to the wider "host" environments' (Cunningham, 2001: 134).

The idea is then that "public sphericles" provide a conceptual model to see both the transnational conversations of ethno-specific audiences as well as creating entry points to the "host environments", as hinted by Daniel Dayan (1998: 109) and Stuart Cunningham (2001). In the most obvious of cases the synapses of the wider public spheres with the transnational sphericles appear, for instance, when a cluster of a minority audience enters the sphere of the mainstream audience by tuning in general market television programming (Subervi & Eusebio, 2005). In this context audiences have to endure the fact – regardless of ethnicity, gender, class, etc – that programming supposed to provide arenas for rational debate and the making of informed political choices grows in scarcity. Rather, the available choices become a 'platform for advertising' (Habermas, 1989: 181).

Before considering some of the central vehicles through which diasporas form public opinion, including types of media, transmission platforms, programming genres and journalistic styles, some effort should be made to keep in mind the role that print media had in the construction of 'imagined political' communities (Anderson, 1991: 6), by reproducing atmospheres of simultaneously lived experiences (p. 37). The influence that the 'reproducibility and dissemination' (ibid.) of print ideas had in breeding forms of national consciousness in early capitalist societies have their equivalent in modern publishing, film, radio and television broadcasting. These are seen as vehicles of national unity, of common cultural values and as structuring collective routines (Monsiváis 1976; Cardiff & Scannell 1987; Scannell 1996); as engines of political movements (Hobsbawm 1990; Sunkel 1985), vectors of symbolic power that determine the scope of national cultural policy and communicational practices (Garnham, 1990), and as embodiment of both reasoned public discourses that shape politics and societies (Dahlgren 1995; Habermas, 1989). These "nation-forming" capabilities of communication media were especially important, for instance, for the young Latin American nations of the early twentieth century, as they helped to hammer the nationalist and populist political ideologies that catalyzed the tensions between

impoverished masses and the forming states, thus contributing to the social stability that was required for their consolidation as nations and for their access to modernity. As Jesús Martín-Barbero notes film and radio in most Latin American countries ‘gave the people of the different regions and provinces their first taste of nation’ (1993: 164). In Mexico between 1930 and 1950 film dramatized the habits and codes that were common to inhabitants of the Mexican territory, thus giving a face to their national identity; in the same period, in Chile, the popular press was providing the arguments that shaped a consciousness of national politics (*ibid.*).

During most of the twentieth century commercial and state broadcasting’s main concern was with the transmission of cultural values and attitudes that gravitated around ideals of democracy and citizenship in the nation-state. The ongoing process of globalization already addressed in this chapter means however that the economic interests of broadcasters, for instance, lead them to set their sights in targeting transnational, rather than national audiences (Morley & Robins, 1995). It is in the face of these progressions that channels from CNN, BBC, Fox, MTV, and Cartoon Network have become the norm in the product packages of cable providers across the world, at the same time that their programming has been adapted – glocalised – (Straubhaar, 2007) to fit the characteristics of specific broadcast markets, thus giving way to news services and shows produced, dubbed or subtitled in several foreign languages. At the same time and as previously elaborated, broadcasters in regions outside the First World have tapped on the potential of satellite and other telecommunication technologies to compete in the newly formed transnational markets of media consumers that have been formed as consequence of international migration (Appadurai, 1996; Karim, 1998; Morley, 2000).

3. Structural developments

This section will address some structural developments in reference to the operation of general and transnational or diasporic media, with emphasis on Spanish-language television in the US. It will also layout a platform that, focusing on the genre of television news, locates the appropriation of media contents as a stage that must be differentiated from its production and distribution (Du Gay, 1997; Thompson, 1990; 1995). This will lead to a discussion of television news as a form of common knowledge (Schudson, 1995) that shapes everyday life experiences of transnational audiences, thus paving the road for the section on media reception that will close this theoretical chapter.

In the last section the point was made that transnational media create geolinguistic regions that foster the reproduction of transnational or diasporic public spheres. The latter transform experiences of migration by bridging cultural gaps, but at the same time create connections with national public spheres in host societies. The current circumstances that involve multidirectional media flows from both “the West” and the “global South” have rendered questions of cultural imperialism inadequate, but the idea that broadcasters have all become capitalist players regardless of the country where they are based, explains why media markets have become global in scope, even though sometimes their limited reach makes them only regional or transnational (Straubhaar, 2007: 106). It is safe to assume that ongoing transformations in the realm of mass communication are closely tied to the logic of global capitalism (cf. Paredes, 2001: 120), including the kind of media transnationalism which has so deeply affected experiences of migration.

Indeed, critical political economists find that in recent years media companies have become central in shaping the form and substance of modern cultural experiences (e.g. Garnham, 1990; Golding & Murdock, 2000; Martin-Barbero, 1993; Thompson, 1990; 1995). As these firms have increased the output and availability of different media products in the market, they have also grown in size; in the process, they have commoditised cultural production at the expense of public service broadcasting, for instance, which has increasingly found itself under pressure, and tempted to resort to funding strategies similar to those of its commercial competitors (Curran, 2000). Mergers beginning in the mid-1980s led to fusions such as that between Viacom and CBS, whereby the US television network added cable channels MTV and Nickelodeon, amongst others, to its existing 15 TV and 160 radios stations (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001). The merger frenzy reached its climax in 2001 when the provider of internet content and services America Online (AOL) acquired Time Warner for \$166 billion (ibid.). The pattern has now been spread to the internet, where firms like Google are aggressively extending to cover operations in the businesses of search engines, entertainment, advertising and social networks (The Economist, 2007). In sum, structural trends in the media industry have been marked by its growth via mergers and buyouts, the integration (horizontal and vertical) of multiple media forms and their systems of production and distribution; its planetary expansion or globalization, and its concentration in a few corporate holdings (Croteau & Hoynes, 2001: 73-4). The consequences in this process are visible in the US media market, where a media cartel integrated by 50 companies in the early 1980s is now under the control of only 5 corporate giants (Bagdikian, 2004).

Remarkably, the structural changes of the media industry have transformed the nature of media companies that cater for transnational audiences. An example of this is the purchase of US Spanish-language broadcaster Univision in June 2006 by a group lead by Haim Saban, an American-Israeli media mogul who controls German broadcaster ProSieben, for \$13.7 billion (The Economist, 2006). This has been the most visible deal involving a Spanish-language media firm since General Electric's affiliate NBC Universal, the world's ninth largest media conglomerate by revenue (Straubhaar, 2007: 99), bought US second largest Spanish-language broadcaster Telemundo for \$2.7 billion. The latter had been acquired for \$700 million in 1997 by a group of investors including Sony Entertainment Pictures (Grossman & Hiestand, 2001). Corporate ownership of these Spanish-language broadcasters, which in addition to television operate radio stations, internet websites, and print publications, has represented the end of direct Mexican presence in the most important media operations in Spanish in the US (cf. Mayer, 2003b: 8; Rodríguez, 1999: 64). Mexican broadcaster Televisa said in March 2007 it had received \$1,094 billion for its 11% stake in Univision, which it failed to acquire after being outbid by ProSieben's Saban (Barrera, 2006). Certainly, firms including Televisa and Televisión Azteca are important sources – especially – of television programming in the US market, where they nevertheless face legal and commercial obstacles that curtail their growth (Schiller & Mosco, 2001: 13; Azteca, 2006: 19). There is no denying of the central role that Televisa has as the main supplier of Univision's programming (cf. Sinclair, 1999: 55; Univision, 2007), but its revenues in this context are marginal (10%) in comparison to those it generates from its primary activity as Mexico's leading broadcaster (Televisa, 2008). After all, when it comes to the business of cultural commodities, it is in their distribution, not in their production, where 'the key locus of power and profit' (Garnham, 1990: 162-3) resides. In fact, a contract that binds Televisa to provide top entertainment to Univision until 2017 has in recent years been the object of bitter legal disputes, and has forced the Mexican firm to find alternatives for access to the market of Hispanic media consumers (Zeidler, 2007).

Certainly, the case of Spanish-language television in the US market is one that is substantially apart from examples such as Hamid Naficy's Iranian media producers, which from Los Angeles run a decentralised model of "global narrowcasting" (2003: 53) that through small television productions keep alive a sense of belonging to an "imagined community". This form of "exilic" programming is in line with scores of other television shows aired in Los Angeles, in that they reach a limited number of peoples whose first language is other than that spoken by the core population. In reference to the lack of a

homogeneous mass transnational audience in Australia similar to that of Spanish speakers in the US, Stuart Cunningham (2001) notes that diasporic media 'are not necessarily aesthetically transgressive or politically progressive texts', but somewhat leaning towards hyper commercialism, given 'the need to fund expensive forms of media for a narrowcast audience' (p. 136). What is important about transnational and diasporic media is that the uses they are given reflect the cultural commonalities of an ethnic group as one point of departure. Here, symbols such as "the homeland" and their political struggles may act as a common reference which meanings and interpretations are to be negotiated or sometimes imposed in the diasporic space. More frequently, the uses of media texts will be oriented towards the reproduction of a diasporic imagination which has the host society as its main playing field. In other words, paraphrasing Cunningham, transnational media tend to be a site where contests for political representation, identity formation and forms of cultural expression of the peoples in diaspora can be visualized (2001: 136). Cunningham finds that most diasporic media operate in parallel to the mainstream media systems of immigrant receiving countries (2001: 137), leading to media output which formats are characterised by a limited input of economic and technical resources (p. 135-6). This is normally not the case of Spanish-language media in the US, where geographic contiguity with Mexico in the first place (Sinclair, 1996: 46-7), natural population growth and migration (Gutiérrez, 1998), converged to create a vast cultural linguistic market (McAnany & Wilkinson, 1996: 15), leading to programming characterised by the same production values and sophisticated marketing techniques employed in US English-based mainstream media (Dávila, 2001; Mayer, 2003b; Paredes, 2001; Rodríguez, 1999).

Media aesthetics aside, which in the end can be said to simply reflect the size of an audience and therefore of the economic resources and societal actors it attracts, there are at least two dimensions of transnational media that serve to establish a link with television news. This genre is key to reflect on all those aspects of existence that are of concern for transnational communities. The two dimensions are related to the media-centred (cf. Cunningham, 2001: 138-9) nature of the public life of transnational and diasporic communities, and to the hybridity of the information generated by their activities in the host society. This translates, on one hand, into media programmes that, given limited access to public spaces and a scarcity of significant political leadership, become key stages for the re-enactment of social life of ethno-specific groups. On the other hand, these media representations trivialize cultural differences and political dissent, giving way to programming which invoke debates about media tabloidization, and about the blurring line

between information and entertainment which is thought to erode the character of the public sphere at large.

4. Experiencing television news: foregrounding the audience

Tabloidization is however – for the moment – only a topic of transition to invoke the notion that media, independently of developments analyzed by political economy, can and should be studied from the perspective of the audiences. It is true that media publics are constructed and packaged for their delivery to advertisers (Franklin, 1994; Gandy, 2000), but as John Sinclair notes, ‘they can only do so on the basis of the irreducibly cultural relationships that are established between certain types of program and the audiences for whom they are meaningful’ (1996: 55). Robert Allen reinforces this point when suggesting that viewers throughout the world obtain pleasant aesthetic experiences from soap operas. This is independently of the strategic economic importance these genres have for broadcasters and advertisers (Allen, 1996: 111). Doubtless, soap operas are a popular type of programming that carry ideological valences, generally reflecting on norms and values that are consistent with national cultures (ibid., p. 115-6). However, even though Latin American *telenovelas*, for instance, are designed to be attractive for audiences in different countries (p. 121), it has been found that audiences are also drawn to manifest closer cultural proximities with sectors of a population of a different region of the world than they are with peoples of their own country (Straubhaar, 2007: Ch. 8). But where soap operas have a global quality to them in that they can appeal publics of different cultural backgrounds, genres like television news tend to be of an inversely proportional nature, for it is geographic proximity which makes audiences aware of their closeness to and distance from other peoples (Jensen, 1998).

In other words, it can be said that television news provide individuals a sense of the local (the neighbourhood, the city, the state, the national) and an understanding of how the latter interacts with the broader developments (regional, transnational, continental, transoceanic) which are regularly identified as the global. One can argue that news as a whole are central for the habits of media consumption of publics across the world, but that they are especially important for transnational communities. At least in the US, recent reports suggest that while circulation of English-language newspapers and other print media is falling, their counterparts in Spanish are recording higher circulation and revenue numbers (Lieberman, 2006). Highlighting the importance that Spanish-speaking audiences give to journalistic contents in television, *The Christian Science Monitor* noted that a bilingual debate among

democratic presidential candidates in September 2007, broadcast by Spanish-language network Univision, had attracted the largest number of viewers of a televised political debate in the history of the United States (Arnoldy, 2007). The newspaper added that for an entire week in that month Univision had surpassed leading English-language broadcasters in attracting the largest number of 25 to 54 year old viewers. Television news for Spanish speaking audiences in the US has also given new life to the question regarding the link between moments of media consumption and political action (Jensen, 1998: 15), by mobilizing hundreds of thousands of protesters, the majority of them Mexican, to march in the streets of several US cities against legislation that sought the criminalization of undocumented immigrants (Flaccus, 2006). This all goes in hand with the notion that Spanish-language media are part of an increasingly multi-ethnic US cultural space, familiar to Mexican and other Latin American descent people (Gutiérrez, 1998).

One needs to ask what is it that television news have to offer to publics with a migratory background. There is no doubt that, as put by recent accounts based on communication infrastructure theory (CIT), the media followed by immigrant communities inform their perceptions about globalization as phenomena that impacts their immediate surroundings (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2000; Lin & Song, 2006; Wilkin & González, 2005). ‘Geo-ethnic stories’, as one of such perspectives has it, provide information that is vital and ‘culturally relevant... to immigrants in the host society’ (Lin & Song, 2006: 364). These accounts contribute a productive move from dichotomic “ethnic media” approaches discussed earlier in this chapter. This is because they help to reveal the local/global aspects that may be of concern for transnational audiences and to recognize the latter’s link with television news in an anthropological rather than an ethno-centric context. This said, one can visualize transnational audiences’ nexus with the media as if one were dealing with any other public, and where the motivation is finding what is it that people do to the media, rather than the other way round (cf. Halloran, 1970). This step shall leave the door open to define television news in terms of the roles it has as a factual genre which transnational audiences use to survey and understand the world they live in (Corner, 1995; Shoemaker & Cohen, 2006; Schudson, 1995; Hill, 2007), an idea that will be developed in detail in chapter three.

1.4 Reception analysis: seeking the transnational audience

1. A qualitative focus

This section's main argument is that mass media act as pools of symbolic resources audiences draw on to produce meanings in everyday life contexts. Such claim is based on two notions, one is that audiences relationship with media is equivalent to that of "readers" and "texts" (Moore, 1993: 5-6), and that they decode media content out of social activity, which yields new texts and meanings – social practices – that hold the key to understand people's place in society (Hall, 2001[1980]). The contribution of this perspective is that it adapts a long-established tradition of audience research to answer the following questions: what is it that transnational audiences do with television news? What do their assessments of television news teach us about experiences of migration? What does television news-viewing tell us about life in a transnational space and about everyday life experiences of globalization? A body of literature pertaining to strands of cultural studies and reception analysis will be drawn upon in order to answer these interrogations. Having said this, it is central to recognise that such body of knowledge has been intensively used in the research of "national audiences", but that there are large gaps to be filled in exploring the relationship of transnational audiences with various kinds of media platforms, programmes and technologies which are thought as constituting "diasporic" and "transnational" public spheres (Morley, 2000: 125). With this in mind, cultural studies and reception analysis offer perspectives which are useful to transcend positivist paradigms and methodologies that scholars have relied on to study audiences of an immigrant background. These approaches have resulted in formulas according to which media act as vehicles for the assimilation or cultural maintenance (e.g. Subervi-Vélez, 1986; Ríos & Gaines Jr., 1999) of "immigrant" or "ethnic" minorities. Such terms are seldom used nowadays. The idea that the use of "ethnic media" is an indication of foreign nationals' adaptation to a host society persists, however, in the argument that the former control traits of their cultural identities (i.e. dancing *salsa* or watching television in Spanish), so they will only emerge when in the presence of the group of reference, but keeping them out of sight when in a context dominated by elements of the core cultural group (e.g. Subervi & Ríos, 2005). Ultimately, a perspective nourished by cultural studies and reception analysis is needed to get rid of the "media effects" thesis tacit

in accounts that reduce migrant audiences to “ethnics” and “minorities” who would only be capable to interact with media programmes through the filter of their nationalities and ethnicity (cf. Negus & Román Velázquez, 2000).

Fortunately, there is a large body of literature which provide adequate gear to move on from media-centred models based on the so called “hypodermic model” of media effects. Views of audiences as atomized masses (e.g. Blumer, 1939) have died out; the media public is no longer seen as vulnerable to propagandist schemes deployed by political and economic elites (e.g. Adorno & Horkheimer, 1992[1944]). Cases in which the public have reacted with fear and panic to media content (Cantril, 1940; Kellow & Steeves, 1998) remain exceptional; they are at most proof of the well established view that cultural, social and historical contexts explain public responses to media content (Merton, 1949). Should any influence arise from these programmes, personal backgrounds, levels of credibility in societal actors (Lazarsfeld, 1944), and the generalized assumptions kept by the society at large (Klapper, 1960), would be more reliable elements explaining people’s responses to the media. The idea of media effects in vulnerable sectors of society such as children and the poor (Sparks & Sparks, 2002; Cantor; 2002; Jackson Harris & Scott, 2002) has somewhat been discredited by the positivist methodological approaches of such studies (Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001), and awareness of the conservative political agendas that motivate them (Gauntlett, 2005[1998]). While this project finds the “hypodermic model” of the media is inadequate to clarify its nexus with transnational audiences it is however necessary to address such paradigm, given its pervasiveness in the context of studies assuming that, for instance, the rise of media alternatives from immigrants’ homelands provide an antidote against cultural assimilation (cf. Negus & Román Velázquez, 2000: 330).

News in the inquiry of audiences

The “hypodermic model” of the media is inadequate because it assumes contents disseminated by television, radio or the press can create distorted “pictures” of the world in our heads (e.g. Lippmann, 1922). More worrisome than just erratic ideas, so the argument goes, mass-disseminated messages could provoke “stimuli” leading to all sorts of irrational behaviour. This view explains, for instance, why thousands of otherwise decent German individuals surrendered to Hitler’s ill-conceived Fascist project (Adorno & Bernstein, 1990: Ch.5 & 6). Broadcasts of television news and current affairs have attracted a big deal of attention precisely because of the concern it can shape the characteristics of the “public

knowledge” (Corner, 1991) societies consider important. Notably, broadcasts of news bulletins have been accompanied by dramatic reactions that reinforced the “effects” argument. Infamously, Orson Welles provoked panic amongst thousands of radio listeners in New Jersey who thought Martians were invading the Earth after a live dramatization of H.G. Wells' novel, *War of the Worlds*, in 1938. Allegedly, a newscast – which used an ethnic reporting framework – about the death of the Rwandan president incited civilian Hutus to kill thousands of their Tutsi neighbours in 1994 (Kellow & Steeves, 1998). These have proven exceptional media events though. In this context, John Corner writes that ‘calculated public persuasion’ should indeed be a concern of media studies trying to find out how media is deployed in the exercise of power (Corner, 2000: 381). He criticises the narrowness of the ‘persuasion paradigm’, however, present in the assumption that propaganda and symbolic manipulation can be used to override the rationality of the public, thereby inducing mischievous responses. One should rather speak about media “influence”, Corner argues, upon ‘institutionalized processes’ and ‘upon individual consciousness’ (p. 379). In this sense, ‘mediation carries implications for the formation of understanding, judgement and the conduct of life’ (p. 380). The concept of “influence” is therefore important as it foregrounds a need for context whereby ‘the range of media-social and media-individual relationships routinely occurring in modern societies’ serves to assess ‘the complexities of cultural interpretation and evaluation that come into play when media products, their images, speech and writing, are attended to by diverse audiences’ (ibid).

The nuances introduced by the concept of “influence” as a replacement for “effects” aids indeed to grasp the contributions of early work associated with the latter term. Books like *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944) and *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) used statistical data and models of sociological analysis to determine that public opinion was not a direct imprint of media political coverage, but a consequence of a “two-step” flow of influence involving information obtained from various media sources and personal contact with immediate and extended social networks. This notion of “limited effects” (Klapper, 1960) provided the foundations for more recent academic thrusts focusing on the mediation and the complex mechanisms through which people obtain knowledge, thereafter processed for the exercise of social engagement and democratic duties, such as casting a ballot or joining civic organizations (for instance Gamson, 1992; Graber, 2004). A flurry of studies has emerged in parallel trying to capture in more detail the range and intensity of audience responses to, for instance, political campaigns and commercial advertising (McLeod et al., 2002; Stewart et al., 2002; Windahl et al., 1992). Studies of this

type have aimed at establishing how much people know or remember about a certain candidate or product. Despite remembrance and recall of news content has been found to be low and irregular (Robinson & Levy, 1986), some researchers insist that the work of selection and presentation performed by professional journalists is determinant in guiding the attention of the public at large, thus influencing perceptions about political conflict and electoral debates (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002: 1).

The turn from a “limited effects” to what could be described as a “definitive [if nuanced] influence” has been particularly strong in the news media, thanks to the so called “agenda-setting” function of the news (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Dearing & Rogers, 1996; Weaver, 1981). This model is famously anchored in the view that even though the ‘press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think... it is stunningly successful in telling its reader what to think about’ (Cohen, 1963: 13). Agenda-setting has given way to other elements of analysis that explore the power of the news media, via its role in “priming” and “framing” the issues it itself ventilates into the public arena (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Scheufele, 1999). On the other hand, what people know can determine the interpretation of political messages (Neuman et al., 1992), but such popular knowledge would be the result of a long-term process in which a view of the world has been cultivated through constant long-term exposure to television (Gerbner et al., 2002). A version that developed to counter the claims of media effects emerged at an early stage in the form of the “uses and gratifications” model, which shifted its focus of inquiry towards the subject of *what people do to the media*. In this context, theorists and scholars found that people utilized television news and newspapers to satisfy needs and attain access to public entitlements (Katz et al., 1973; Katz et al., 1974; Rosengren et al., 1985). There is also the notion that television news are a source of pleasure, knowledge and empowerment for ‘armchair imperialists’ (Stam, 1983), which explains the thirst for television news amongst audiences across the world. Views like these were anchored in the earlier assumption that the appeal of radio programmes was tied to the motivations and orientations held by individuals (Merton, 1949), thus triggering personal quests for information, entertainment, social and “parasocial” interaction, diversion from daily concerns, and fulfilment of a variety of psychological needs (see Rubin, 2002: 529-530). Overall, “uses and gratifications” moves audience research from a framework of a passive to an active viewer. The fact that people seek news in the media because of their informational value and the glimpse of reality they provide ‘suggests utility, intention, selectivity, and involvement’ (Rubin, 2002: 535).

The contribution of “uses and gratifications” is that it moved research questions to asking *what people do to the media* from the simplistic *what media do to people* paradigm. The problem of this approach is that it only regards the link between media and audiences from a psychological point of view, falling short from producing a picture of sociological characteristics. David Morley’s assessment of viewers interpretation of television news on the basis of their class positions (1980) was a firm step towards understanding media reception beyond the behavioural framework of “uses and gratifications”. Such seminal work triggered new research which further clarified the struggles for meaning-making between news producers and their audiences (Lewis, 1985), while subsequent investigation made visible the “frameworks of understanding” (Corner et al., 1990) media publics draw on when positioning themselves in relation to developments in the news. While these efforts helped to clarify the interpretative processes and skills of “news decoders”, they also raised the need to see aspects of meaning-taking in relation to media platforms and types of programming. In this regard, Shaun Moores speaks about a development in audience research that moved from an “encoding/decoding” model of media consumption to a ‘theory of genre’ (1993: 30) which follows the ‘interdiscursive relations’ (ibid.) between audiences and programmes to explain the significance that the latter have for the former. The notion of genre is here important because it moves research questions from ‘the power of the text to a new politics of cultural distinction’ (ibid., p. 31), which necessarily ends by putting the attention of researches on the physical contexts of media consumption. Before addressing this question, however, something else needs to be told about news as a programming genre which is all too likely to interest audiences across the planet.

News matters: from resource to lived experiences

It’s been noted already in this chapter that television news are important, they inform peoples understanding of their immediate and distant surroundings and in most countries are a staple of peoples’ “media diets” (Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002; Jensen, 1998). In reference to the salience of news in media studies one can note a trend to see them as a kind of resource. This view was early promoted by the so called New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debate (Sinclair, 1990), which at one point focused on the fact that foreign news were largely produced by Western countries, which made coverage of events irrelevant for most audiences in the developing parts of the planet (Sreberny-Mohammadi & Grant, 1985). The vision of news as resources remained present in attempts to trace the pattern of their

trajectories from one region of the world to another, with international news agencies controlling the flow (Boyd-Barrett, 1980). Some studies focused on how governments in the Third World grew suspicious of the information imbalance, which they saw as a tool of economic exploitation (Stevenson & Cole, 1984). It was later noted that non-Western governments and companies began developing regional news services (Stevenson, 1988) which created an informational “contra-flow” (Boyd-Barrett & Thussu, 1992). Clearly, the assumption behind so much interest in the news comes from their supposed value as element for access to the public sphere (Habermas, 1989; McNair, 2007), to the circles of public knowledge (Corner, 1991; Schudson, 1995), and to other informational resources (Bentivegna, 2002; Webster, 2006) that allow involvement in the polity of a national culture and direct participation in its democratic institutions (Jensen, 1988; Graber, 2004), even if in mediated, indirect ways (Bennet & Entman, 2001). While not very prominent, the notion of news as a resource is also present in a range of perspectives considering audiences of an immigrant background. These make reference to news as entry doors to housing, schooling and health services (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2000; 2001; Ling & Song, 2006; Wilkin & González, 2004), vehicles of socialization (Deuze, 2006), and for processes of adjustment in transnational spaces (Sampedro, 1998).

There are of course nuances and counter-views to be considered for they reflect on progressive conceptions of news as wishful thinking. They are seen instead as pre-packaged commodities designed for maximum political impact (Franklin, 2004) and propaganda aimed at the manufacture of consent (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The so-called sociology of news production provides more tempered lectures that reveal the constructed character of news (Philo, 1999; Schudson, 2000). These approaches deal with the interplay of media ownership, institutional environments, political contexts, news cultures, relationship with news sources, etc, as phenomenon shaping the nature of journalistic output (Manning, 2001; Schudson, 2000). Other viewpoints do however insist in noting the results of the journalistic trade as leading to the “dumbing down” of the press (Barnett, 1998; Dávila, 2001; Paredes, 2001), a kind of journalism that trivializes reality (Hartley, 1996), and makes it entertaining for the sake of a neo-liberal project (Thussu, 2007b).

Putting reception in the context of everyday life

The traditions of “media effects” and “uses and gratifications” have so far been discussed in relation to journalistic media output, particularly television. Prior to our recent overview of

news it had been stated that a turn to establish relations between specific media genres and audiences opened room to research the latter not on the basis of the importance of *the text*, as in the effects and “gratificationist” paradigms, but in regard to contexts of reception. Klaus Bruhn Jensen raises, for example, an important question when suggesting that traditional studies of audiences have yet to clarify how they can employ news as tools for political engagement. This consideration refers to more than just the instrumentality of news in enabling political action, which anyway is seldom active in representative democratic systems (cf. Jensen, 1998: 9). Rather, the emphasis should be on seeing news as essential in concept and peripheral in practice, and on considering audiences as agents who appropriate news resources over time, with one eventual outcome being their use for politically progressive purposes. (ibid., p. 10). Further illuminating this Orozco contends that,

‘The viewing process may be conceptualized as a dialectic in which viewers construct their particular strategies of reception within specific socio-cultural conditions and contexts, and with reference to the concrete information televised. The dialectical characteristic of television-viewing makes it all the more significant to explore comparatively the multiple interactions involved, with the aim of arriving at a better understanding of the role which televised news plays in the life of different segments of the audience’ (Orozco, 1998:126).

In sum, the consumption of television news should be investigated from a reception analysis point of view. This, Jensen states, provides an interdisciplinary framework ‘of audience-cum-content analysis which emphasizes qualitative inquiry into the processes of interpreting and applying media contents in everyday social contexts’ (1998: 10). Jensen’s awareness that news are in practice marginal for personal political agendas is important to decouple the subject of television news consumption from democratic ideals. After all, even though many can not do without their daily intake of news reports, most of the times ordinary people are simply too tired to see the news as instrumental for their political engagement (Morley, 1999a). Once this is assumed one can start considering news as a marker of “everydayness”. Previous work on news and daily life suggest that these programmes are not only textually but existentially meaningful. The existentialism invoked here is one which is useful for sociological analysis, considering the subjective in relationship to the physical world and to what is entailed by living in it. Gauntlett and Hill (1999) suggest that the significance of news content should be understood in reference to both its textual

comprehension and to how its consumption is embedded on patterns of day-to-day activity. ‘Thus, news bulletins or current affairs programmes are often watched whilst people are simultaneously engaged in other households activities’ (p. 53). Further to providing evidence that television news lubricate understanding of *that which goes on*, news consumption is closely related to the socialization of individuals at the level of small groups (i.e. the family) and the society at large (ibid., Ch. 3). This is to say that even if television news were to be but background noise for domestic chores, the fact that they are tuned in at all needs to be further explored, especially in the case where such an approach has not been attempted.

2. When the private and the public becomes the local and the global

So far we have discussed a multiplicity of perspectives on audience research involving news. It has been argued that news are important textual resources to be assessed on the basis on the context of viewers’ daily life. When it comes to transnational audiences this approach is in short supply and such is one of the key theoretical motivations to try it with the case of Mexicans in the US, which provide an ideal “interpretive community” (Lindlof, 1988) for such purpose. This chapter will close after looking at the corpus of research which helps to foreground the relevance of analyzing media consumption against the “naturalistic” settings where they take place (Lindlof, 1987). In this context television viewers, radio listeners or readers of the press are active and selective producers of meaning (Alasuutari, 1999; Fiske, 1989; 1994; Jenkins, 1992), whose repetitive acts of consumption lead to the production of popular cultures (Williams, 2003[1979]; De Certeau, 1984; Radway, 1984). The idea here is to study the reception of television news by grounding the meaning people take from these texts in relation to their biographies. Some have warned against the “pointless populism” present in theories of the active audience (Seaman, 1992), and to not losing from sight that hyperactive media consumers can indulge in tergiversation, and aberrant interpretations of media texts (Eco, 1979; 1990). However, the contribution of reception analysis goes beyond interpretation. As Jensen and Rosengren argue, ‘the centre of mass-communication research is located outside the media, which are embedded, along with audiences, in broad social and cultural practices’ (1990: 213). These approaches provide a template of methodological tools that help to picture concrete individuals, active in psychological and sociological ways, and immersed in historical specific contexts (cf. Livingstone, 1998: 174; Lull, 1988: 240).

To explain the relationships of audiences with the contents of media – or their “texts” – some authors have assessed their interpretive capabilities in relation to the nature of the text

[genre] (Radway, 1984), class positions (Morley, 1980), and cultural and ethnic backgrounds (Liebes & Katz, 1990). These approaches link the interpretation of media texts to sociological categories, but do not quite illuminate the social structures that impinge upon the viewing, listening or reading of media texts (cf. Silverstone, 1994: 151). This makes it necessary to draw on forms of audience research that help to locate 'frameworks of interpretation [in connection] to structures of power and inequality' (Moore, 1993: 5). In the context of television and with the purpose to explore what television-viewing says about the social, one has to give attention to ordinary existence. Television is deeply integrated into daily routines, it provides a structure to the conduct of everyday life and a means for the integration of the private with the public (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999; Silverstone, 1994; Williams, 2003[1974]). Roger Silverstone writes that,

'Television is a domestic medium. It is watched at home. Ignored at home. Discussed at home. Watched in private and with members of family or friends. But it is part of our domestic culture in other ways too, providing in its programming and its schedules models and structures of domestic life, or at least of certain versions of domestic life. It is also a means for our integration into a consumer culture through which our domesticity is both constructed and displayed' (1994: 24).

Silverstone had previously reinforced this point when noting that audiences 'are not simply or only watchers of television or listeners to radio: they are members of families, households, communities and nations' (1991: 136). The idea is that the study of television consumption needs to be based in domestic environments, for these clarify the multiple dimensions where 'people live out their everyday lives' (Grossberg 1988: 25) and allow to engage in the practice of "audiencing", or in 'constituting the audience both as social and as active' (Silverstone 1991: 136). As point of observation, the domestic should lead to a mineful of data showing how television is part of a technological plethora of machines linking the domestic to the broader economy (Williams, 2003 [1974]: 20-1; Morley & Silverstone, 1991). In this context television-viewing would never be an isolated activity (Morley, 1988), but something that is enmeshed in daily routine, individual and family dynamics, and their interplay between indoor and outdoor spaces (Morley & Silverstone, 1991). Various meaningful aspects of research in the household have illuminated television-viewing as something that normally occurs in parallel with everyday life, from household chores (Bryce, 1987; Gauntlett & Hill, 1999) to family disputes (Gunter & Svennevig, 1987;

Lindlof & Traudt, 1983), and other “rituals” which can be read as extensions of the culture, the household and the persons (Lull, 1988) who make part of a research setting. At the same time, the various uses to which television is put, from information provider to source of entertainment, and even as a substitute for parenting (Jensen-Leichter et al., 1985), puts television-viewing at the heart of sociological endeavour. Focus on the domestic micro-settings of audiences should then lead to a sharper understanding of how audiences use and interpret television. A wealth of evidence has indeed emerged in this context, demonstrating for instance that household members use television as a vehicle for family interaction or avoidance (Lull, 1980; 1988; 1990), or as solace for coping with the burdens of household work (Hobson, 1982). Such work has given way to the view that programming is gendered [i.e. females watch soap operas and males watch news] (Brunsdon, 1981; Hobson, 1980); that males regularly have a commanding voice in controlling the television set or in deciding what programmes are viewed (Lull, 1982; Morley, 1986). Thus the research of audiences in domestic spaces contributes insight upon the hierarchical structure that orders family life. In short, according to Morley and Silverstone, ‘the household or family, as the basic unit of domestic consumption offers the most appropriate context for the naturalistic investigation of the consumption and production of televisual (and other) meanings’ (1991: 150).

Some strengths of reception analysis of television have been discussed until here. The main point is that it provides a strategy to sociologically ground the consumption of televisual programmes. More attention needs to be given to the private/public link television-viewing can allegedly reveal, specifically in a transnational context. Morley and Silverstone have expressed that ‘television has to be seen as embedded within a technical and consumer culture that is both domestic and national (and international), a culture that is at once both private and public’ (1992: 32). The argument is that audiences are not just participants in a broadcast circuit but citizens and consumers who interact with a variety of technologies, including television, a range of electronic appliances, telecommunication networks and converging media processing technologies that allow them to interface simultaneously between private and public spaces. This notion is captured by Williams concept of “mobile privatization” (2003[1974]: 134-6), which first in the form of print and then with the audiovisual, thrust ordinary men within the orbit of the *polis*. In this context, television use is as much about family life and domestic activities as it is about larger social networks and forms of material and symbolic exchange (cf. Silverstone, 1991: 140-4); it is even about the ‘sequestration of experience’ (Thompson, 1995: 208) – addressed in the discussion about “electronic mediation” in this chapter – that allows viewers to participate in culturally

significant public events (Dayan & Katz, 1992) from the privacy of their homes. It should be emphasised, once more, that television and the rest of technologies that reproduce what Silverstone calls the ‘moral economy of the household’ (1991: 146) promote the domestic ‘incorporation of the outside world’ (ibid). This is so even though the TV set might as well enable the absorption of the self, as Bausinger notes when telling the case of a family whose bread winner, exhausted from the day at work, uses the TV set to block himself from both the in and outside world, basically, ‘to hear and see nothing’ (1984: 344). But instead of leading to the “implosion of the social” that some intellectuals (e.g. Baudrillard, 1994) see as consequence of the mediatization (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999) of modern societies, experiences of globalization thrust new questions regarding the private/public relationships which are implicit in the consumption of television.

“Audiencing” in the transnational dimension of “the private” and “the public”

Our discussion in this section has focused on the idea that television-viewing is an activity engaged by social actors whose reception of programmes manifest their interplay between the public and the private. Some thought should be given to what is meant here by public and private. These concepts need to be also made relevant for the context of transnational audiences. As argued elsewhere in this literature review the latter need to be seen as participants in a transnational space whose presence in a receiving society renders them as members of a country’s population and consequentially, of *the* national audience. It has been said that television is primarily an aspect of the domestic whereby the personal and the familiar hinges upon the social and the public. Television sets have become a pervasive aspect of public spaces (McCarthy, 2001), but in the household they continue to mirror the interaction of ordinary – indoors – activities with the screened representations of – public – social space. Some light is shed on this when McCarthy writes that the ‘public/private division... allows us to specify, with a great deal of precision, how the visual and bodily constitution of the subject as a citizen, or a consumer, or a trespasser occurs in quantum ways within the spaces of everyday life’ (2001: 121).

Definitions of “private” and “public” have long been problematic (Arendt, 1998[1958]), but in the context of this project they can be kept to a somewhat basic level in which the former refers to an individual or small group space where “bodily” needs are met, and that remains closed and in contrast to that other ‘space of appearance’ (Arendt, quoted by Canovan, 1994: 180) where social life is enacted. This is how reception analysis of television

news by transnational audiences in their domestic contexts reveals a reconfiguration of the “private/public” binary. In consequence, the “Westphalian” nature of national territories (cf. Fraser, 2007) becomes permeated by transnational connections (Hannerz, 1996). This expanded understanding of the link between the private and the public reveals the convergence of national and transnational media systems and the ensuing “public sphericles” (Cunningham, 2001) this process forms. This is how the idea of a transnational public sphere, which remains under researched (Fraser, 2007), can begin to be sketched out. From the naturalistic settings of transnational households emerge dynamics which are both penetrated by the reality of life in host societies as well as by the presence of people, objects and symbols from the homeland. In these contexts, visitors, pictures of relatives, telephone calls, trips and television programmes, connect the domestic to a transnational reality. The focus in this context should be on how the private/public articulations of transnational audiences shed light on the character of the transnational spaces they inhabit. This requires engaging in some form of “audiencing” (Silverstone, 1991: 136), which requires addressing television viewers as social and active regardless of gender, class, age, ethnicity, migratory status, and so on. This perspective has in the last three decades been consciously applied to the research of national audiences, and should now be used to find the connections between the “private” and “public” in a post-national context. Morley argues that (2000: 3) ‘the articulation of the domestic household into the “symbolic family” of the nation (or wider group) can best be understood by focusing on the role of media and communication technologies’, which enable the formation of ‘diasporic public spheres’ (p. 125).

The challenges to “audiencing” in the *transnational living room* are connected to the fact that media publics of an immigrant background have been commonly dealt with as exceptions to the norm of the “national audience” (e.g. Constantakis, 1993; Wood & King, 2000; Kolar-Panov, 1997), even though their presence in host societies renders them captive of national media systems where their experiences of media consumption occur (Ang, 1996: 2). Even if marginalized, any audiences need to be understood as societal actors in specific historical contexts, and their study requires engaging with them instead of first looking at the media they consume as if it were the latter which defined the former, and not the other way round. These approaches have normally exaggerated the distinctiveness of “minority” publics in respect to a majority; highlighting an alleged preference for programming compatible with their cultural orientations, or probing for responses to mainstream portrayals of themselves as members of a minority. Seldom are any of these interventions deployed to reflect on these audiences as actors who engage economically, culturally, socially and politically at the levels

of the private and the public. These more positive articulation of the research of audiences should be applied to post-national contexts, where members of immigrant communities and diasporas can be seen as economic, political, cultural and social agents, and where concepts such as public and private need to be seen in the context of shifting human conceptions of time and space that lead to new patterns of interaction between the local and the global. If in the past reception analysis has helped to illuminate the link between the private and the public in national spaces it can surely do the same for transnational ones. This said, transnational ‘audiencing’ (Silverstone, 1991: 136) would require, for instance, finding out what Mexican-Americans’ consumption of television news says about their daily experience and articulation in the society of the United States and Mexico. In consequence, daily life will appear as entering in contact with different persons, institutions, commercial outlets, etc, scattered across different layers of a transnational space. This approach is more useful than assuming, for instance, that “minority media” have a dual role in the adaptation and cultural maintenance of immigrants (e.g. Subervi-Vélez, 1986; Constantakis, 1993), an implication which locates transnational audiences within the limited discourses of cultural assimilation. Eroding this “minority media” paradigm, recent academic work (e.g. Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001; Cunningham, 2001) makes a compelling case for a shift in the patterns that media studies provide for the analysis of diasporic audiences and the media. These contributions call for a change in understanding ‘the media as an imposed force to a recognition of audience activity and selectiveness’ (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001: 3). This shift of paradigm is long due in the research of audiences of Mexican and other sub-national origins in the US, who throughout the last two decades have been analysed under the lens of what Mayer labelled as the ‘binary’ models of mainstream American media studies: “Black” and “White”, “Native” and “Foreign”, “Citizen” and “Non-citizen” (2003b: 113). Once these categories are jettisoned “audiencing” becomes possible by drawing on the strengths of ethnographic research methods long deployed in the living room of families and household members, to assess what their media consumption says about their dwelling in a transnational space. Here the focus must be on the small scale practices that take place around the consumption of media in the domestic spaces of diasporas. This should yield insight into their social realities, those involving their life in their receiving countries, their engagements with the homeland, and their awareness of broader phenomenon occurring at a planetary scale.

Chapter 2: Mapping Mexicans in the US

2.1 Mythic transnationals in Mexican-American space

1. Origins of a “diaspora in reverse”

The Spaniards, the Indians and their *mestizo* (mixed) descendants settled in different parts of what today is Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas between 1598 and 1821 (Arreola, 2000: 111). For the Indians, this meant the return to *Aztlán*, or ‘the land of the Aztec people’ (Anzaldúa, 1999[1987]; Weber, 1992: 356-7), which they had left in 1168 in search for a new homeland, later to be found in *Tenochtitlán*. The latter was the bedrock of the Aztec Empire, which the conquistadors destroyed to found New Spain, today Mexico, in 1521. The offspring of the Spanish-speaking peoples who settled in Southwest US are commonly referred to as Mexican-Americans,¹ a diaspora in reverse (cf. Price, 2000: 106) ripped off 500,000 square miles² (May, 2001) of a mythic homeland lost in the Mexican-American war of 1846-1848.

Ethnically, Mexicans came from the mixing of Spaniards and indigenous peoples from Mexico and Southwest *colonial* United States. Their presence in the region has been nourished in waves, the first occurring with Spanish settlers led by Juan de Oñate in 1598 (Arreola, 2000: 112), and subsequently in the Catholic missions of the eighteenth century; thereafter as miners in the gold rush started in 1849, and then towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century as rail builders and later as agricultural labourers (McWilliams, 1949: 43). For Mexican-American civil rights leader George Sánchez “Mexicanos” was the term reserved for these peoples despite striking differences resulting from ethnic mixing, different historical contexts and places of settlement which gave way to *californios* (Mexicans from California), *arizonenses* (from Arizona), *nuevomexicanos* (from New Mexico), *tejanos* (from Texas), etc. Emphasizing those differences he noted that while Mexicans in general speak Spanish some have English as their mother tongue, with many others using a mixture of English and Spanish as their vernacular, thereby eluding ‘classification as a group’ that ‘no term or phrase adequately describes’. (Quoted in

¹ In this thesis I use the labels Mexican-American and Mexican interchangeably to refer to people of Mexican origin. Distinctions may be made between immigrant and native Mexicans when is necessary to the argument. For a comprehensive discussion on the subject see Reich (1989).

² This is more than 5 times the total area (94,525 square miles) of the United Kingdom, or 3.6 times the size of Germany’s 137,846 square miles.

McWilliams, 1949: 43). In present times people of Mexican roots make nearly 65% of the 45 million (Gonzalez, F., 2008) strong Latin American origin population in the United States (cf. Table 2.1).³ Despite their presence dates back to the late sixteenth century, their numbers have grown exponentially only since the 1960s (see Chart 2.1 on page 71), against the backdrop of post-colonial population movements to highly-developed countries triggered by global economic restructuring (Castles, 2003: Ch. 4).

Table 2.1 Hispanic population in the United States

United States		
	Estimate	Percentage*
Total:	298,757,310	
Not Hispanic or Latino	254,737,430	
Hispanic or Latino:	44,019,880	
Mexican	28,165,623	64%
Puerto Rican	3,998,264	9.10%
Cuban	1,535,236	3.50%
Dominican (Dominican Republic)	1,183,365	2.70%
Central American	3,351,269	7.60%
South American	2,395,914	5.45%
Other Hispanic or Latino	3,390,209	7.70%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey
 *Percentages rounded

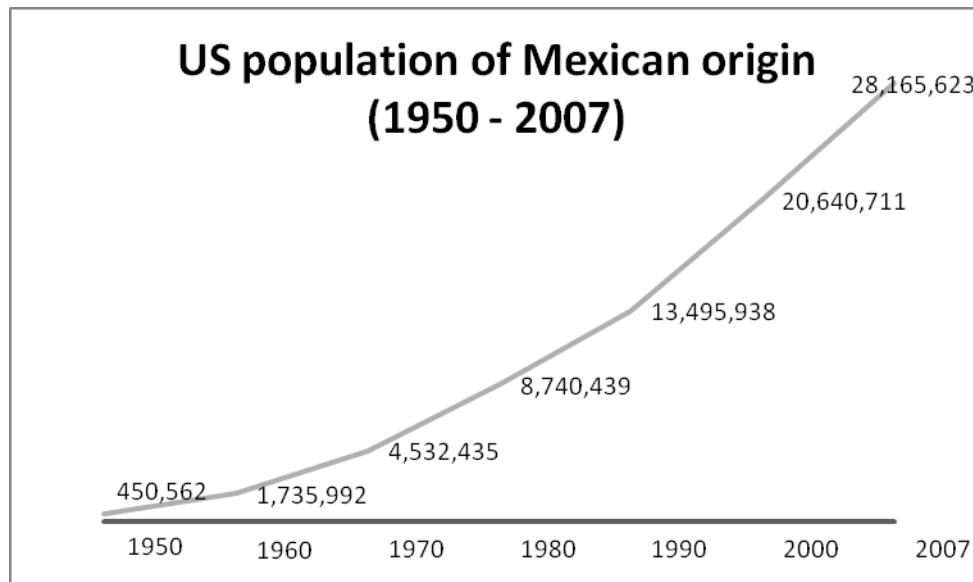
Mexicans are recently relocating across the US territory (Durand & Massey, 2003; Durand et al., 2005),⁴ but a vast majority has settled permanently in cities like Los Angeles, San Antonio and Chicago, among others. Mexicans, and other national groups of Latin American ancestry, are present in every one of the country's 50 states, but 70% live in California, Texas, Florida, New York and New Jersey (Durand et al., 2006: 87). Such distribution is partly evident in Mexicans principal states and cities of settlement (Tables 2.2/2.3), Los Angeles being a social laboratory to gain understanding of the Mexican diaspora

³ Arguably, people of Mexican origin will continue to account for over half of the total Hispanic population in the US in the next few decades, which is projected to reach 103 million by 2050. See Rumbaut (2006: 16)

⁴ In 1970, for instance, 52.7 percent of Mexican immigrants lived in California, but in 2000 that percentage has declined to 47.8 percent. In Texas and Illinois, two more of the so called "gateway" states for Mexican migration, the percentage went from 26.5 to 19 and 6.2 to 5.8 percent, respectively, in the same period. At the same time, "non-gateway" states have become new destinies of Mexican sojourners, and in 2000 they hosted 21.1 percent of Mexican migrants, from 9.4 percent in 1970. A similar behaviour applies for traditional metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, which in 1990 hosted 32.9 percent of the Mexican migrants who had arrived in the previous five years. In 2000, that figure had declined to 17 percent. See Durand *et al.* (2005: 10-5).

(cf. Acuña, 1996: *x*), and of the individuals, families and household who participated in this research project.

Chart 2.1 The rise of Mexican migration north or the border



Source: See Lorey (2000) for data between 1950 and 1980. Data for 1990, 2000 and 2007 were retrieved using the US Census Bureau's American FactFinder.

Tables 2.2/2.3 Main Mexican cities and states *

Los Angeles	1,258,335
Houston	642,844
San Antonio	623,146
Phoenix	540,547
Dallas	447,491

California	10,727,293
Texas	6,951,856
Arizona	1,584,285
Illinois	1,465,449
Nevada	475,557

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

* Number of Mexican origin inhabitants

2. Closing in Mexican Los Angeles

The largest concentration of Mexican origin people in the US is in Los Angeles,⁵ which metropolitan area is roughly inhabited by 3.6 million Mexican-Americans, out of a total 9.8 million population. The metropolis has indeed the third largest urban concentration of Mexican ancestry people, after the central Mexican metropolitan areas of Mexico City and Guadalajara (INEGI, 2004). The presence of Mexicans in Los Angeles goes back to its settlement in 1781. Named *Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles de Porciúncula*, (The Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels of the Porciúncula River), the city is now home to an *ethnic quilt* (Allen & Turner, 1997) formed by peoples from all over the world, including a heavy Asian component. Despite this cultural diversity the place maintains a Mexican touch and feel present in the architectonic style of its white-washed adobe buildings and the names of its demarcations, such as Ventura, Santa Monica and San Bernardino.

The largest concentration of Mexican-Americans is in East Los Angeles, just east from the city's downtown. This Mexican core stretches down southwards across a concrete flatland that is 3.5 miles wide by 4.5 miles long (Curtis, 2004: 128). It consists of an industrial belt followed by the exuberantly Mexican neighbourhood of Boyle Heights, merging thereafter to the south into the cities of Vernon, Maywood, Huntington Park, Bell, Bell Gardens South Gate and Lynwood. These cities had nearly 337,000 inhabitants in 2000, with concentrations of Hispanic, mostly Mexican ancestry peoples rising above 90 percent. Mexican peoples along with other South Americans of recent arrival have in recent years expanded to Azusa city, also growing west and southwards, putting a foothold in the previously "black" South Central Los Angeles, and into the cities of Watts, Compton, Inglewood, Paramount, Bellflower and Lakewood.⁶

⁵ Los Angeles has one-third of the Mexican origin population in California. It is formed by 88 cities that extend along incorporated and unincorporated stretches of a vast metropolitan area linked by high speed roads and freeways which connect the counties of Orange, San Bernardino, Kern, Ventura and Riverside. This vast region is also referred to as Greater Los Angeles and covers an area of 33,210 square miles of coastal, mountainous and arid terrains that millions traverse everyday by car as an emblematic part of American life. While most of my fieldwork participants lived in Los Angeles County a very small number of them (four households) lived in the neighbouring San Bernardino and Riverside counties. The population of California in 2005 stood at 35.28 million, 10.35 million of which were of Mexican descent. Sources: US Census Bureau and Los Angeles County websites.

⁶ This information has been obtained by compiling city population data from FedStats, <http://www.festats.gov>.

A space fit for diaspora

One categorical dimension of the Mexican diasporic experience in Los Angeles is linked to the cultural familiarity of its urban spaces, particularly in the East and South Central parts of Los Angeles County but increasingly so all across the Greater Los Angeles area. Mexican-American historian David Gutiérrez speaks of ‘an overarching ethnic infrastructure’ (1998: 311) developed as part of the adaptation process ‘to life in the north’ by consecutive waves of Mexican migration. Now that Mexicans make over a third of the total population in Greater Los Angeles – and indeed in California – this ethnic infrastructure has expanded all across the region with architecture, Spanish-language signs, colours and sounds which recreate a distinctive Mexican cultural, diasporic space. Neighbourhoods, inhabited by a Mexican majority and a smaller but increasingly visible Central American component, have houses normally painted in shades of yellow, orange, blue or pink. It is usual for residents here to hang their countries national or football team flags by their windows or from poles fitted in roofs. Men relaxing by their homes porches, polishing or repairing their vehicles are frequently seen outside their front yards, as well as women rearing their children or selling belongings in yard sales or *yardas*. Interspersed with these scenes of daily urban life are images of Mexican revolutionary heroes, political Mexican-American leaders and prehispanic deities imprint in colourful murals, which are a landmark of multi-cultural Los Angeles (see box 2.1).

Box 2.1 Urban landscapes and myths from the south

In Los Angeles colourful murals depict stories in which pre-Columbian deities oversee the daily struggles of their dark skinned children. Mexican muralists David Alfaro Siqueiros, Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, were commissioned in the 1930s to paint the first murals in public American buildings (Arreola, 1984). The practice was later adopted by Mexican-American artists who first took muralism to exterior settings in the civil rights movement they pursued along African-Americans during the 1960s and 1970s (Gutiérrez, 1995: ch 8). These paintings are now part of everyday life in the urban landscapes of multi-ethnic Los Angeles, and create a distinctively holographic identity (cf. Vélez-Ibañez, 1996: 246) for Mexican-American and their *barrios* (neighbourhoods). These expressions frequently depict scenes about the concerns of local communities, from schooling and gang violence to police abuse and deportation of undocumented immigrants. Such stories are told through the colourful imagery of Pre-Columbian gods, Chicano social leaders, Mexican places, revolutionary heroes, artists, religious characters and icons which are ordinarily summoned by an energetic artistic Chicano movement (Price, 2000: 109) which thrives in discourses of inter-ethnic unity. Next to being a vehicle for political discourse, reaffirmation of ethnic identity and appropriation of urban space (Arreola, 1984, 2000; Vélez-Ibañez, 1996), murals are a powerful source of meaning for a Mexican origin 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991), constantly resurrecting 'symbols and origin myths from the south' (Vélez-Ibañez, 1996: 244).

People converge usually in *suamis* (swap meets), and shopping centres that merge the Mexican with the American, so that popular retail stores and restaurants such as “El Tapatío” and “El Pollo loco” are frequently found next to a K-Mart and a Starbucks. One would say a Mexican person in Los Angeles has little or no chance to miss Mexico, as all kinds of Mexican goods and services from family restaurants, locksmiths, barber and butcher shops, bars, electronics, and car repair outlets are to be found all over the city. One landmark place of Mexican Los Angeles is found at the *El Pueblo Historic Monument*, a major tourist attraction at Olvera Street, at the heart of Los Angeles downtown only a few minutes walk from Chinatown. This Mexican style village preserves the original architecture as conceived by its first settlers. On Sundays it is crowded by mostly Mexican peoples who attend mass at La Placita Church, after which they can eat all varieties of Mexican cuisine. It would be fair to say that *el pueblo* at Olvera Street may be a bit *too* Mexican, since its carefully preserved 27 buildings and intact colours make it more of a *hollywoodesque* setting. This is however an important assembly point for many individuals and families of recent arrival. There, friendships are made while guidance about job opportunities, health, educational and legal services is sought from the many *Hispano* organizations offering advice to undocumented

persons. Many more Mexicans and Mexican-Americans will tend to converge in local Catholic and evangelical churches, community parks and commercial outlets. In these places commonly congregate individuals from same Mexican cities, or villages where they exchange news about hometown developments which are seldom or never heard of in the Spanish-language news programmes. It is in this kind of settings where individuals discuss their personal histories, travel plans to their birth places, events which are important in their hometown communities, from marriages to deaths and the birth of new babies.

3. A growing diaspora of labour

Babies are indeed an important aspect of the Mexican diaspora, which has had two major sources of growth in recent decades: high-fertility rates and migration. This section will deal with demographic aspects that connect with the former and will leave a discussion of the latter for a section ahead. Mexican women are the most fertile among all other females in America, with an estimated 83 births per 1,000 women in the 12 month periods in 2004 and 2003, only behind Guatemalan women's 92 births, but far ahead from "white alone, not Hispanic" women's 50 births per 1,000 women (Suro et al., 2007: 11). Indeed, while migration has in the past been the main source of Mexican population growth in the US, this trend is set to shift in the next few years, when growth will come from second generation's children (the third generation). An eloquent indicator of this is the swing in the contribution of immigrants from Latin America to the Hispanic population in the US, which is projected to decline from 40% in 2000 to 34% in 2020. At the same time, the share of the population contributed by the second generation – the children of immigrants from Latin America – is set to grow to 36% in 2020, from 28% in 2000 (Fry et al., 2005). It may be forecast safely that high fertility will continue to characterize the Mexican-American population, considering that it is the youngest of all Hispanic subgroups, with a median age of 25 years versus a national median of 36 years.⁷ Mexicans in general have their higher concentration in the lower age ranges, with those under 5 years making almost 12% of the total. The young profile of Mexicans is all the more notable if one is to focus on the average age of immigrants'

⁷ This also sustained in the forecast that Hispanics are to account for nearly one-third of the entire American population by 2050 (GCMI, 2005: 5)

children (the second generation), ⁸ estimated at ten years at the beginning of this century (López & Stanton-Salazar, 2001: 59). The implications are relevant considering that Mexican-Americans are projected to outnumber, for instance, every other ethnic group by 2050 in California – the world’s fifth largest economy – a state where the majority of schoolchildren are already of Mexican descent (ibid., p. 58). One may as well correlate fertility with the types and size of families in Mexican-American households. In 2005 an average 3.7 individuals lived in 7 million Mexican households, far above the 2.5 occupiers of the average American household (ACS, 2005-2007). Despite projections of numerical dominance, Mexican-Americans are said to be ill-prepared for a future in which they are more likely to be a marginal majority (López & Stanton-Salazar, 2001: 62). Some disadvantages are seen to be related with Mexicans lack of fluency in English. In 2005 nearly 80% of the 5 years and over Mexican-American population spoke a language “other than English” at home, and over 40% said they spoke English “less than very well”. Only 21% were “English-only” households (ACS, 2005-2007). Trends of this kind are thought to have a negative transmission effect on second generation children’s future educational performance, and the type of jobs they are likely to obtain (Portes & Basch, 1985: 259-63).

4. Demographics

An account of the Mexican diaspora would be incomplete without a reflection on the structures that have nourished it in recent decades. As suggested by Portes and Böröcz (1989: 608), the colonial relationship that resulted from the US military invasion of Mexico was followed by the development of institutions and infrastructure linking the two countries together. The ensuing “postcolonial” (Bhabha, 1994) landscape triggered an international system of migration from Mexico to the US, leading to the establishment of a vast Mexican community outside its recognized national territory. When the US annexed Mexico this human formation was first an ethnic minority, but years of sustained migrant inflows have given way to a labour diaspora (cf. Cohen, 1997: 57-8; Van Hear, 1998: 126-132). Even before these migrations began, since Mexicans became *de facto* Americans in 1848 they have been subject to forms of political and economic exclusion reserved for non-whites (Acuña, 1972; 1996; Vélez-Ibáñez, 1996). Subsequently, they have been caught in a mechanism of

⁸ The Mexican-American second generation currently accounts for one-third of the Mexican origin population in the country (See Fry et al., 2005: 4).

racial and economic stratification which explains their historical permanence in menial jobs, to the expense of their chances for advancement in the American society (Acuña, 1972; 1996; Bashi & McDaniel, 1997; Cornelius, 1998). Resulting from a past of colonial domination ethnic Mexicans were then 'subordinated at the lowest levels of the working class' (Almaguer, 1994: 153), a hard-working one though (Grebler, 1970; Oster, 1989: 221).

For instance, Mexican-Americans aged 16 years and over in Los Angeles had a rate of participation in the labour force (economically active) of 66%, the highest in the region. As is the case at the national level, Los Angeles based Mexicans predominate in service, construction, extraction, maintenance and repair occupations as well as in production, transportation and the moving of materials. Their presence wanes, however, in jobs linked to managerial and professional tasks, as well as in sales and office occupations. The industries in which the group is highly visible include construction, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, transportation, warehousing and utilities. They are also heavily employed as blue collar workers in arts, entertainment, and recreation-driven businesses as well as those providing accommodation and food services. It is normal then to find that many Mexican-Americans make a living preparing and serving food, cleaning and giving maintenance to buildings and grounds, and toiling in construction trades and in factory production processes. Their participation is naturally minor in firms dedicated to processing information, finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing services, as well as the provision of education, health care and social assistance, and as public administrators (Tables 2.2 & 2.3).

Beyond the reach of official records Mexican-Americans make the front-line of underemployment, particularly those of recent arrival, who are twice as likely as any other immigrant to be partially 'employed by low wages' (Zhou, 2002: 84), and to have very little chance to ever get out of such dead-end jobs (Ellis, 2001: 121). These peoples form armies of janitors, gardeners, masons, house and building cleaners, children and elderly minders, garment labourers, tenders in dry-cleaning, liquor, gas-stations and other outlets of the sort, and street corner workers (Cornelius, 1998: 116). People like these are normally absent in the statistics and combine two or more similar activities to make ends meet. They maybe said to live in a parallel world in the affluent public and private buildings of Los Angeles. They do the landscaping and remodelling of houses in trendy Santa Monica and Malibu; clean the shopping centres, universities, compounds of high-tech and development companies; package processed foods and load lorries for their distribution; they take care of the sick elderly and the young children of wealthy families, normally for less than 7 dollars an hour (ibid., p. 117).

Table 2.2 The occupation of Mexicans in the US

	Total Population	Mexican
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	140,148,744	11,797,359
OCCUPATION		
Management, professional, and related occupations	34.10%	14.20%
Service occupations	16.60%	23.90%
Sales and office occupations	25.80%	19.90%
Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.70%	3.50%
Construction, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations	9.80%	18.60%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12.90%	20.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey

Table 2.3 Mexicans in US industries

	Total Population	Mexican
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	140,148,744	11,797,359
INDUSTRY		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1.80%	4.30%
Construction	7.80%	15.70%
Manufacturing	11.50%	13.70%
Wholesale trade	3.40%	3.70%
Retail trade	11.50%	10.30%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5.10%	4.10%
Information	2.50%	1.40%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	7.20%	4.20%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	10.10%	9.30%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	21.00%	12.40%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	8.70%	12.60%
Other services (except public administration)	4.80%	5.40%
Public administration	4.70%	2.80%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey

The adverse working structures in which Mexicans in the US have evolved are also manifest in demographic indicators which paint bleak prospects for them. While, as some studies contend (Servin, 1970; Chávez, 1991; Magaña, 2005), second generation Mexicans normally do better than their parents, this trend is seen as reversing, with the most recent waves of Mexicans set to stay trapped at best as a permanent working-class (Ortiz, 1996), but

may be even worse, as a new underclass of international workers (Clark, 2001; Cornelius, 1998; Stone, 1985) which make a living as pawns for subcontractors. This trend is likely to be inherited to their future US born children. We are talking about ‘a generation at risk’ (López & Stanton-Salazar, 2001) set to fall ‘below the ranks of the lower working-class in which their parents have established themselves’ (Zhou, 2001: 273). In this context signs of low academic and socioeconomic attainment remain constant in the latest demographic indicators. When it comes to the educational achievement of Mexicans their profile as a disadvantaged group is reinforced. In fact, 42% of Mexicans have not completed elementary (primary) school, which leaves them as the ethnic group with the lowest level of schooling. Nearly 50% of the Mexican origin population that is 25 years and over lacks a high school diploma. This is in high contrast to the 16% of the rest of the American population (ACS, 2005-2007) that do not have an equivalent academic degree. Mexicans also happen to trail Hispanics as a whole in academic accomplishment. Until 2005, for instance, those over 25 years old who had a graduate or professional degree in the US accounted for less than 3% of the group’s population (Table 2.4). Among other peoples of Latin American origin, however, the attainment of a professional degree increases to 10%, and above 20% in the case of groups with roots in countries from South and East Asia and the Middle East. The earnings of Mexicans in the US also lie at the national bottom in both individual and household terms (Table 2.5). In 2005 Mexican-Americans reported an average household income of nearly \$38,800 dollars, nearly 20 percent below the national average. The income of Mexican individuals averaged \$12,830 nearly 50% less than the average American worker. In an analysis of people living in conditions of poverty Mexicans are top of the line, with over 20% of the group’s 5.6 million reported families in 2005 in conditions of poverty, a striking contrast with the 10% of the country’s total number of families (nearly 75 million).

Table 2.4 The schooling of Mexicans in the US

Educational attainment		
	Total pop.	Mexican
Population 25 years and over	195,646,383	14,509,168
Less than high school diploma	16.00%	46.50%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	30.00%	27.50%
Some college or associate's degree	27.00%	17.60%
Bachelor's degree	17.10%	6.00%
Graduate or professional degree	9.90%	2.40%
High school graduate or higher	84.00%	53.50%

Table 2.5 The earnings of Mexicans in the US

Income in 2007		
	Total pop.	Mexican
Households	111,609,629	7,062,223
Median household income	50,007	38,823
Families	74,625,059	5,721,851
Median family income	60,374	39,297
Married-couple family	74.50%	67.20%
Median income	71,187	45,430
Male householder, no spouse present, family	6.80%	12.00%
Median income	43,111	36,624
Female householder, no husband present, family	18.70%	20.80%
Median income	29,829	23,147

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey

2.2 A history of migration

1. Borderline policies

After a look at the demographic characteristics of Mexicans in the US, which apply fully to this group in Los Angeles, it is convenient to take stock of crucial events which mark the emergence of the Mexican diaspora. It is due to the millions of men, women and children of Mexican origin which give places like Los Angeles 'its early *pueblo* (village) features' (Sabagh & Bozorgmehr, 1996: 79). As suggested in the first part of this chapter, however, the Mexican-American population has not always been in the region in its present massive numbers. By 1930 the population in California had reached 2.2 million people, but only over 191,000 were of Mexican origin (Lorey, 2000: 40), and not even the most penetrating academic work about Mexican-Americans foresaw the potential expanse of Mexicans in the region (cf. Grebler et al., 1970: 76-7). In Los Angeles, with a population of roughly 3,500 in 1850 (ibid.), Mexicans remained as a largely invisible minority which had been overrun by hundreds of thousands of Midwesterners who had flocked to the city's 'fabulous job machine' (Waldinger & Bozorgmehr, 1996: 7).

Two key periods have been the historical background for the mass arrival of Mexicans to the United States and their subsequent evolution as a predominant component of the American ethnic landscape in the Southwest. One has to do with the rise of the US as an economic superpower, and the second with its transition from an industrial to an informational economy. In the first, a system of international labour migration was put in place in a context of capitalist relationships between centres and peripheries. Portes and Walton explain this as the 'penetration of economic and political institutions of peripheral areas by (the) core' (1981: 30). This dynamic, grounded in Wallerstein's theory of world systems (1976), has been documented by scores of authors. According to Mexican-American historian David Gutiérrez, 'Mexican acquiescence and the imperatives of regional economic development worked in concert with US labour and immigration policies to stimulate and sustain transnational migration patterns' (1996: *xiii*).

This process has been studiously dissected by Douglas Massey and his colleagues (2002), according to whom migration from Mexico to the US may be summed up in a series of developments. The earlier stage was characterized by US expansion to the Southwest through military conquest, ensued by domestic migration from the Midwest to the captured

territories, motivated by a drive to exploit and industrialize the captured territories, and resulting in forms of marginalization and displacement of the indigenous population. Thereafter the process evolved in the form of US political support for a friendly Mexican regime, accompanied with capital investment in extractive industries, mostly in mining, and development of railway linkages at the border and going down to central Mexico.⁹ Simultaneously, forms of direct and indirect recruitment of Mexican workers¹⁰ were aggressively nurtured first by employers and then by the US government, with the cooperation of its Mexican counterpart, in such bi-national accord like the *Bracero* Program, which lasted between 1942 and 1964. Under temporary visas and in the context of Roosevelt's "good neighbour" policy, some 1.5 million *braceros* (Corwin, 1978: 54; Meier & Ribera, 1981: 170), literally "farmhands", entered the country and helped to build its railroads and to harvest its crops until December 1964. While international migration between the two countries has existed since the end of the Mexican-American war, it may be said that the process acquired a life of its own until the beginning of the *Bracero* agreement, but more so towards its end. Before then, the south-to-north stream of workers had always maintained a balance. This resulted from economic cycles oscillating between high and lows in the demand for Mexican labourers in the US, and its coupling with phases of political and economic instability south of the border. With the formalization of labour migration that started in the early 1940s, however, hiring of documented workers was paralleled by a very steady inflow of clandestine migration.

The end of the *Bracero* programme came at the time of a full-fledged shift in the migration policies of the United States. This change was inspired first by the philosophy of social justice and equality infused by the Civil Rights movement, and then in attempts to curb illegal migration. The result came as a spell of unintended consequences for the migratory pattern between Mexico and its neighbour (Massey et al., 2002). This momentous shift came behind passage of the *Hart-Celler Act* in 1965 and then with the *Immigration Reform and Control Act* (IRCA) of 1986. The former removed a system that for decades withheld visas for peoples from eastern Europe and Asia, while tying allocation of visas to individuals with family binds to American citizens, or with working skills in short supply. This mechanism generated massive inflows to the US, especially from Asia and Latin America, and at the

⁹ This pattern has been termed "associated-dependent development". For a review of the Mexican-American case in particular and of Latin America in general see respectively Cardoso, L. (1980) and Cardoso, F. (1972).

¹⁰ This practice is known to be aimed at maximizing the extraction of surplus value from the cost of labour. See for instance Amin, S. (1976) and Emmanuel, A. (1972)

expense of Mexican workers, who nevertheless continued to migrate through backdoor channels.

The most radical measures came with passage of IRCA, which legalized 2.3 million Mexican undocumented workers. The new regulation also put in place a guest worker programme to supply demand in the agricultural industries of California and Texas, while penalizing – in principle but not in practice – employers who hired unauthorized labour. IRCA's success in stemming undocumented migration was short lived, but it also modified the nature and behaviour of the migratory pattern (Massey et al., 2002). For instance, those who were legalized after IRCA ceased returning to Mexico when they achieved an earnings target, and focused their attention to bring in their families. On the other hand, IRCA created expectations of new amnesties for undocumented workers, who continued to cross the border, but shifting from sojourners to permanent clandestine workers who avoid returning to Mexico given the risks of increased policing at the frontier (Cornelius, 2001). Massey and her team (2002: 2-3) contend that America's migration policies towards Mexicans have been characterized by their ambivalence and hypocrisy. On one side these have nurtured legal and illegal migration from Mexico to meet employers' demands of cheap labour, while simultaneously using its government agencies to deport them (cf. Gutiérrez, 1995: *xxii*) as to placate multiple sectors of the American society which during decades have demanded tighter migration controls. 'This sort of schizophrenia toward Mexico is nothing new', Massey and her team write. 'If anything, it is typical. Throughout the twentieth century the United States regularly encouraged or welcomed the entry of Mexican workers while publicly pretending not to do so (2002: 84).

2. NAFTA: economic articulation and human fragmentation

In recent years, the level of contradiction has become more obvious, with such mechanisms of economic articulation like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed in 1992 by Mexico, the US and Canada, being characterized by its contradictions, on one side lubricating economic liberalization and on the other restricting the free movement of people across the border. The commercial pact has not produced the economic development in Mexico (See Box 2.2) that US policy makers expected would contribute to slow down south-to-north migration (Massey et al., 2002: 49). On the contrary, increased human inflows resulting from changes in migratory policies and by new bridges to international migration put by NAFTA (Sassen, 1996; 1998), have been met with increased border security.

Box 2.2 NAFTA, a bag of mixed results

In 1991 Canada, Mexico and the US kick started the negotiations that would lead to NAFTA, an arrangement by which the destinies of two highly developed countries were sandwiched against that of an underdeveloped one. The pact entered into force on January 1, 1994, establishing the first full-fledged free trade region of the world, with nearly 420 million people and a combined economic output exceeding \$11 trillion (Preusse, 2004: 73). NAFTA called for the elimination of nearly all tariffs with a few exceptions in the oil and energy industries, some “rules of origin” locks requiring all textiles and automobiles to be made in North-America (Du Boff, 2001: 39). It also included full dismantlement of obstacles for cross-border investment in real estate and finance markets and committed all partners to protect and enforce the intellectual property rights of the other parties’ interests, including literary works, film and video, software, sound recordings, encrypted programmes carrying satellite signals, trademarks, pharmaceutical patents, etcetera (Also see NAFTA, n/d). Thirteen years after NAFTA went into effect it is claimed that the trade pact has boosted the economic size of each of the countries by nearly 50 percent (Gereffi, 2007). For Mexico, the most dramatically affected of all three members (Lustig, 1998: 138; UNCTAD, 2007: 65), NAFTA is a bag of mixed results, generally positive in a few macroeconomic indicators but negative if one is to account for its impact in the livelihood of ordinary people. On one side, the country has had an increase of manufactured exports and foreign direct investment (FDI), but China’s accession to the WTO in 2001 (UNCTAD, 2007: 74) reversed that trend. Reflecting this, the boost that the Mexican economy receives from NAFTA has come down to reflect an average annual expansion of its GDP of 2.3% between 2001 and 2006, down from 3.6% annually between 1994 and 2000. Adding to this, the wages of Mexicans in the manufacturing sector have declined during the NAFTA years to 17.3% in 2006 from 17.5% as percentage of US nominal wages in 1994. Regrettably, Mexico’s increased dependence on its exports to the US, which have grown six basis points to 86% between 1995 and 2006 (ibid., p. 70), make it excessively vulnerable to any downturn in the American economy. This is so even though Mexico has over 30 free-trade agreements, one with the European Union. As put by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, ‘Mexico’s strong export growth and FDI inflows under NAFTA have not translated into similarly strong economic and social progress. Indeed, the outcome of NAFTA has been disappointing with regard to key macroeconomic variables and social indicators’ (UNCTAD, 2007: 75-6).

Only two years after NAFTA became effective, the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* of 1996 authorized massive spending which turned the border into a zone of ‘low-intensity conflict’ (Saldívar, 1997: 148). Also in 1996 other legislation cut benefits for legal immigrants, setting off a wave of naturalizations (Massey et al., 2002: 91, 95-6). More recently, the *USA Patriot Act* in 2001 restrained access to the legal system for

legal residents (Massey & Bartley, 2005), while the *Border Protection Act* of 2005 and the *Secure Fence Act* of 2006 deals with undocumented immigrants as if they were terrorists (Durand et al., 2006). Referring to the US historical push for economic integration with Mexico ‘while insisting on separation’ by restricting the free movement of labour, Massey and her colleagues contend that,

‘These contradictory policies did not succeed in slowing down either documented or undocumented migration from Mexico; if anything, they encouraged more of both. They did, however, create a black labour market for Mexican labour, lower(ed) the wages of legal US residents, increased US income inequality, and worsen conditions in US labour markets. At the same time they pushed migrants decisively away from seasonal, circular migration toward permanent settlement and transformed Mexican immigration from a regional phenomenon affecting a handful of US states into a broad social movement touching every region of the country’ (Massey et al., 2002: 3).

The line that crosses Mexican-Americans

As the contest to replace George W. Bush in the White House got to a full gear “democrat” politicians wrestled over the presidential bid with populist rhetoric, including promises to renegotiate NAFTA on claims it moves jobs to Mexico (Economist, 2008). A different “evil” signalled by politicians concerned immigrants in general and Mexicans coming from south of the border in particular. Until March 2006 Mexicans accounted for nearly 60% of the 12 or so million unauthorized individuals living in the US (Passel, 2006; Kohut & Suro, 2006). The total number of unauthorized border crossings between 2000 and 2005 is estimated at 850,000 per year. According to recent estimates 500,000 Mexicans have arrived every year to the US in the ten years prior to 2005, and some 85% of these crossed the border without documents (Passel, 2006). In recent months, their inflow has slightly decelerated but they continue to arrive every year by the thousands, and are systematically blamed of taking jobs, housing, education and health services away from citizens (Gutiérrez, 1996; 1998).

The anti-immigrant outrage is commonly appeased through a series of actions which tie together terrorism and undocumented migration, including legislation such as the *Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*, the *Fence Secure Act* and the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*.¹¹ The legislation guarantees

¹¹ See respectively Representatives (2005) and House (2006).

maintenance of an expensive programme of border control in place since the mid 1990s, which involves several agencies at the local and federal levels, and use of reconnaissance and assault helicopters, remote control operated airplanes with TV cameras, infrared, movement, heat, acoustic and night-vision sensors and cameras used to detect Mexicans on their way to the US (Saldivar, 1997: xi). More recently, 6,000 National Guard troops have been emplaced,¹² and a Congress bill which in 2006 authorized the construction of up to 700 miles of double-fencing along the border is to be completed by end of 2008 (ICE, 2006). This war against undocumented workers has been brought to all immigrant-receiving cities, through raids at firms known to employ them. These began to attract attention since in October 2003 some 250 undocumented workers were arrested in Wal-Mart stores across the country. On 12 December 2006 a number of raids in different states led to the apprehension, and in most cases deportation, of 1,300 individuals (Younge, 2007). In 2007 the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) made over 4,000 arrests as part of its “worksite enforcement operations” (ICE, 2006).

An open wound

The media attention given to the anti-immigrant outrage usually ends up eclipsing the death of the 400 Mexicans who officially die every year trying to cross the border (Pan, 2006). This number reveals the tip of an iceberg as it is thought that only 30% of the corpses of people who die in the arid deserts across the Mexican-American frontier are found (Hartley, 2008). Death alone is not the only risk facing human beings as they attempt crossing the border, where they are also exposed to the abuse and violence of entities including the “Minutemen”, a group of border vigilantes that euphemistically call themselves “citizen volunteers” (Gaynor, 2007). Elsewhere, cable networks such as CNN and Fox News pitch their anti-immigrant tirades as forums for debate and analysis (Cienfuegos, 2007; Economist, 2006b).

In tying together measures to curb illegal immigration with efforts to counter the terrorist threat American policies have criminalized immigrants (Cole, 2005), with the consequences touching upon the lives of millions in the US, native and foreign born. As of

¹² At the end of fiscal year 2006 US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said that it removed 186,600 “illegal aliens” from American soil, a 10 percent increase over fiscal year 2005. Some 21,400 of these detentions were assisted by National Guard troops. Coinciding with president George W. Bush’s *Comprehensive Immigration Reform* announced on 1 June 2006 and his request to the Congress of \$1.94 billion in emergency funding for border security operations, ICE also reported that it had terminated with years of an operational procedure known as “catch and release”, an old practice through which border patrol officers liberated undocumented persons apprehended while trying to cross the border. In this way, ICE brought detentions of apprehended people to 99 percent in 2006, over the 34 percent registered in 2005. See ICE (2006).

2005, for instance, there were 16 million people of Mexican origin who were born in the US and 11 million born in Mexico. It is known that 3.1 million US born children were born in a family in which at least one of the parents is an undocumented person (Passel, 2006). As one author notes, nearly 70% of Mexican-Americans ‘have an immigrant background, compared to only 16 percent of the largely *assimilated*’¹³ non-Mexican US population’ (González, A., 2002: 7). The point being made here is that with the heat of the political debate, policy and policing measures targeting immigrants with the same intensity as if they were terrorists, the subject of unauthorized migration features heavily in both the real and imagined lives of Mexicans in particular and Hispanics in general. In such hostile circumstances the experience of migration translates into a variety of life circumstances which shape everyday experience. In this way, driving a vehicle without a permit, working and owning property with forged identities are part of a dangerous routine, all adding up to the emotional distress that results from the fear of being deported – and therefore separated from one’s loved ones. As academics note, with tough anti-immigration policies incoming flows of illegal persons are made more difficult but so are the outgoing ones. Such was the case after the September 11 2001 attacks, with scores of Mexicans ‘deterred from returning to Mexico by the increased cost and risk of re-entry to the US (a result of the concentrated border enforcement strategy)’ (Cornelius, 2001: 666). In the same way that individuals were discouraged from attempting illegal crossings from Mexico after the 9/11 attacks, apprehensions of undocumented persons at the borders fell over 8% in the fiscal year 2006, which would reflect on the impact of increased personnel, funds and technology put in place in recent months by the Bush administration and the US Congress (Homeland, 2006).

However real this short term results are, academics have more elaborate explanations for what the US Customs and Border Protection simplistically finds as its ‘outstanding 2006 results’. Lower numbers of people apprehended while trying to get across the border could mean a number of things, for instance that people already settled in the US avoided travel to their home countries lest the way back would be a lot riskier (Cornelius, 2001: 666). Another explanation is that even if there are less people trying to cross, those who are on the try are guided by experienced *coyotes* (smugglers), thereby reducing the chances of being caught (ibid.). The fact that prices for smuggling “services” have climbed from \$620 to \$2,000 between 1994 and 2002 (McKenzie, 2006: 132), would mirror more difficult operating conditions that derive from tougher border surveillance as well as a higher demand for

¹³ Author’s emphasis

coyotes. This latter assumption is informed by the functioning of a transnational system of kinship and friends for whom paying a professional smuggler is rather an investment with guaranteed returns (ibid.).

The wound is a lot more than a metaphor. As the raids on undocumented workers continue Mexican-origin US born citizens are being torn apart in the thousands from their born in Mexico parents (e.g. Ellis, 2007), which helps to raise the point that Mexican-Americans are a reality in the United States not likely to end, even if migration from the southern country suddenly came to a halt (Marbella, 2007). It is not fortuitous, for instance, that Hispanics accounted for half of US population growth since 2000, according to a study released in October 2008 by the Pew Hispanic Center in the US. This will not change, since over 80 percent of the population growth in the United States between 2005 and 2050 is going to be fed by immigrants, Mexicans included, and their US born children (Passel & Cohn, 2008). As the evidence here suggests, the anti-immigration climate and the risks involved in undocumented migration are likely to influence the lives of Mexican origin families and households inhabited by both documented and undocumented individuals who live in the US.

A laboratory for globalization

The line that divides the US from Mexico is then more than a geopolitical division. Under NAFTA, this region of the world is ‘a site for experiments in globalization’ (Mosco & Schiller 2001: 2), where complex urban systems develop (Herzog, 1990) along rivers of goods, services, business people, legal workers and tourists. Behind the latter come the traffic of human beings, drugs, weapons and illegal merchandises that get through Mexico from other parts of the world, including cocaine from Colombia and Chinese goods that have exceeded legal quotas at American entry points (Andreas, 2001). In this context and with the war in Iraq and a broader conflict in the Middle East that has allegedly fuelled anti-American feelings across the world (Paz, 2003), the Mexico-US border is a focal point for the so called war on terror, as *The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005* and other legislation lead us to believe. Needless to say then that the border is a powerful source of meanings, concrete and abstract, which shape the experience and imagination of millions north and south of the border and in ways that go beyond the issue of immigration. While the border remains a powerful symbol of the struggles and distress endured by people who migrate, its meanings, concrete and abstract, should be the point of

departure to rearticulate the subject of migration with the emergence of transnational social spaces that link together countries of immigration and emigration (Castles, 2000: 125). These spaces, to be dealt with in the following section, are giving way to new configurations of social life which extend beyond national territories and are useful to update understandings of the migratory phenomenon. Before getting to this part, however, a detailed literature review of theories of international migration will be provided, which is important to see the logic behind the idea of transnationalism.

3. De-nationalising migration theory

This section argues for a change of perspective in theories of international migration that lead to forms of reasoning that de-construct immigrants as non-belonging elements of the nation-state. This requires thinking outside concepts rooted in forms of methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Schiller, 2002) and a visualization of international migration as an engine of the globalization process, and therefore, a by-product of capitalism (Castles, 2000: 207). Population movements like those of Mexicans to the US have transformed ethnic and cultural landscapes and are challenging myths of national homogeneity at the heart of which lie the ‘entrenched political and economic interests’ (Castles, 2000) of groups from the American society that have historically depended on the protections granted by the laws and institutions of the nation-state. The requirements of developed economies for low cost labour and of capital owners to move their wealth freely across the world, have triggered post-colonial population movements, also creating bridges for international migration (Sassen, 1988; 1998). Increased pressures on housing, health, education from immigrants coupled with ever worsening economic downturns have made them the target of contempt by citizens who endure the nation-state’s retreat from public welfare policies. The current political climate picks on Mexicans and NAFTA – a draft for the international rules that are today legally binding for most countries in the world (Du Boff, 2001) – as the sources of many evils for American citizens. In this context, those “blessed” with the ointment of citizenship demand the exclusion of Mexicans on the grounds of national belonging. As Castles writes, immigrants are constructed as a ‘a racialized underclass’ that threatens the cohesion and identity that holds together a national community (Castles, 2000: 191).

One favourite way to racialize Mexican-Americans has been long reproduced through notions of international migration that respond to foundational perspectives such as Ravenstein's *The Laws of Migration* (1885; 1889), which identified this phenomena as the response of peoples' natural inclination to 'better themselves in material respects' (Ravenstein, 1889: 286). Approaches similar to Ravenstein's have been pursued by a flurry of geographers and demographers to whom the latter's laws 'stand the test of time and remain the starting point for work in migration theory' (Lee, 1966: 47). These perspectives define migration as a linear process in which individuals move in response to "push and pull" factors between places of origin and destiny. These theories, now recycled into a neo-classical economic perspective, characterize migration as the result of rational decisions where evaluations of the potential profit from migrating is made against individual assessments of migration outcomes (e.g. Borjas 1989; 1990; Chiswick, 2000).

Countering theories that "otherize"

Such understandings of migration are blind to the fact that, as in the case of Mexicans, for instance, a combination of American policies and capitalist interests have first established and then reinforced an international system of migration which has later picked on a life of its own, developing intricate social systems deployed across transnational networks of kin and kith. As Massey and her team explain, migration is ruled by a social process that neoclassic economics fails to recognize (2002: 143). Its economic determinism fails to explain why certain poor communities are not a source of out-migration, why migrants normally come from more economically resilient families, or why communities with similar levels of poverty and inhabitants do not send the same amount of migrants, even if they are equally distant from the country of destiny (Piore, 1979; Massey et al., 1998).

One can counter simplistic explanations for international migration in the US with world systems theories (e.g. Portes, 1978a, 1978b, 1979; Piore, 1979; Sassen-Koob, 1981; Portes & Bach, 1985), according to which post-colonial international migration is rooted in the forms of indentured labour that emerged in response to European transcontinental colonies, thereby establishing asymmetrical systems of international labour demand and supply between centres and peripheries (Portes, 1978a, 1979; Zolberg, 1979). In these cases, market forces that trigger migratory flows are a consequence of capital and institutional penetration from industrialized to underdeveloped economies (Portes, 1978a; Sassen-Koob, 1981; Sassen 1988, 1996). These flows have been normally started by governments and employers from industrialized countries which conducted migrant recruitment programmes

through out the twentieth century to guarantee the supply of manpower during periods of economic expansion and those of the Great Wars. Two examples are the *Bracero Treaty* agreed by the executive branches of the US and Mexican governments (Galarza, 1964; Grebler et al., 1971; Samora, 1971; Cardoso, 1980), and Germany's recruitment deals with North African, Near East and Mediterranean European countries as part of its *Gastarbeiter* system (Thomas, 1954; Rist, 1979). This form of analysis has evolved into more sophisticated approaches such as 'migration systems theory', which studies the variate macro, meso- and micro structures (Castles & Miller, 2003: 26-7) that explain the phenomena of human international movements from a multiple number of angles. As Castles and Miller explain,

'Migration systems theory suggests that migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries based on colonization, political influence, trade, investment or cultural ties. Thus migration from Mexico to the USA originated in the southwestward expansion of the USA (...) The migrations from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to Britain are linked to the British colonial presence on the Indian subcontinent. Similarly, Caribbean migrants have tended to move to their respective former colonial power: for example, from Jamaica to Britain, Martinique to France and Surinam to the Netherlands. The Algerian migration to France (and not to Germany) is explained by the French colonial presence in Algeria, while the Turkish presence in Germany is the result of direct labour recruitment by Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s' (2003: 26).

Critical forms of migration theories should then be deployed to resist notions of migration that depict it in simplistic terms that reinforce political and cultural biases of economic and institutional elites, mainstream media and workers unions in migrant receiving economies. According to these, foreign workers are composed by poverty stricken masses evacuated by countries facing corruption, mismanagement and failed social policies. This long held view (cf. Portes, 1978b; Alba, 1978) has always applied for Mexicans who migrate to the United States, and is constantly invoked by conservative ideologues (e.g. Bogardus, 1923; Huntington, 2004; Skerry, 1993) to whom Mexican immigrants are but a source of threat to Anglo-Saxon cultural values, posing an economic burden on local and federal governments and eroding the salaries of American workers.

De-assimilating assimilation

A theoretical move is needed in order to get around the simplistic notion that international migration is a movement of peoples who seek to escape poverty by migrating to the developed world. Another important step should also be taken to avoid the commonly made assumption that the relocation that people experience after migrating involves a full-fledged change of social realities, in which the probable outcomes are to either assimilate, adopting the ways of the host society, or to remain “ethnic” in the context of a receiving country where forms of ethnic pluralism and multiculturalism are promoted by its polity (Schmitter Heisler, 1999). In the face of these perspectives the incorporation of immigrants is normally assumed to imply an outright uprooting and transplantation of human beings from their sending to the receiving societies. From this point of view migration was long thought to be about ‘broken homes, interruptions of a familiar life, separation from known surroundings, the becoming a foreigner and ceasing to belong’ (Handlin, 1973[1951]: 4). For decades migration has implied a permanent break with one’s natural place of belonging, family and home, the neighbourhood or the nation, and a gradual substitution – sometimes only taking place in second and third generations – of these with the cultural and socioeconomic practices inherent to the receiving culture. Perspectives such as Handlin’s helped to move scholarly focus on migration from its causes and patterns to the experience of settlement in receiving societies. This shift gave birth to the fertile universe of assimilation theory, which has informed most academic thinking about immigrant settlement in the twentieth century (Portes & Böröcz 1989; Schmitter Heisler, 1999). Useful as such advance is to investigate the adjustment of immigrants and their offspring to receiving societies (Alba & Nee; 1997), it appears to escape contemporary migration processes which are otherwise complemented by the literature about transnationalism, and which problematizes the formula of migration as leaving ‘one world to adjust to a new’ one (Handlin, *ibid*). In the following section, a brief analysis of the concept of transnationalism will be developed with a focus on the case of Mexican-Americans in the US.

2.3 Mexican transnational, diaspora and border spaces

1. Putting Mexico in a transnational perspective

Mexico and the US are at the core of a transnational social space which hosts the livelihoods of millions of Mexican-origin people who conduct lives that constantly spill over these countries' national boundaries. The theoretical value of transnationalism derives both from its contribution to challenge long established assumptions about the adaptation process of immigrants to host societies in terms of assimilation, and from the adequacy of its analytical framework to visualize how migration winds up processes of globalization (Castles, 2000; Appadurai, 2001). Academic debates about transnationalism acknowledge that readily available means of transport, information-processing technologies and mass media enable international immigrants to engage in long-distance economic, political, social and cultural activities that straddle their places of origin and destiny. Representing what has been termed as a movement of "globalization from below" (Falk, 1993; Portes, 1997; Smith & Guarnizo, Appadurai, 2001), workers are seen to organize primarily along the margins of labour structures and practices that arise in response to constantly shifting conditions in the deployment of global capital (Rouse, 1996: 254; Portes, 1997: 3-4).

Everyday life transnationalism

Transnationalism is an ever growing area of studies which can't be addressed in detail here, but a number of points will be addressed which are relevant to visualize the transnational space inhabited by Mexican-origin people in Los Angeles and in other cities especially in Southwest US. Transnationalism in this context is relevant in at least three senses which will be briefly developed in this section. One pertains the everyday life of Mexican-Americans; the other addresses the permanent flow of people, ideas and capital across the border, and the third recognizes the relative influence of the Mexican government which to a lesser extent contributes to what has been labelled as the production of 'translocality' (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Drainville, 1998; Smith, 2003). The first point to advance is that while not every Mexican-American conducts significant transnational lives (cf. Portes et al., 1999; Waldinger, 2007) they do inhabit a context of social, cultural and economic transactions that

constantly cross national boundaries, thus creating 'transnational social spaces' (Faist, 1999: 14). According to Faist,

'International migration is not a discrete event constituted by a permanent move from one nation-state to another. Rather, it is a multi-dimensional economic, political, cultural and demographic process that encapsulates various links between two or more settings and manifold ties of movers and stayers between them' (Faist, 1999:14).

It is important to stress that, as Faist and others imply, transnational social spaces include immigrants as well as people who have never migrated, including their own children. Such was an occurrence in many of the families which participated in my audience research. In any case, members of these groups were constantly entering in contact with aspects of human activity which required some level of engagement with symbols and materials that have been part of a transnational circuit with nodes in Mexico and the United States. As Levitt explains,

'The transnational social fields that migration engenders encompass all aspects of social life, though they may arise at first in response to the economic relations between migrants and non-migrants, social, religious, and political connections also emerge which constitute and are constituted by these arenas' (2001: 197).

Roudometof (2005) elaborates on this point when he writes that even opposing groups maybe located within the same transnational social field. This thought is important because transnationalism is sometimes a site of conflict, as shown by a recent controversy created by a food retail chain which decided to accept Mexican currency as payment for its snacks. Having boosted its sales by 35 percent after the company started its *Pizza for pesos* promotion in 63 stores across US cities with large Mexican populations, the firm generated enormous attention from mainstream media all over the world, and it also received emails, phone calls and even death threats from individuals who thought the move would promote undocumented migration. Andrew Gamm, an executive officer of the firm, said that rather than aiming to create 'a national debate on illegal immigration' the company's move had been motivated by the objective to 'create a unique experience' for its Spanish-speaking customers (Gamm, 2007). This "unique" experience, one may assume, is provided by the transnational connection which is embedded in the transaction that occurs inside a commercial outlet in the

US which takes the currency of Mexico. In a way, paying in pesos should to some extent become an act of deterritorialized presence in the homeland. As Kearney asserts, 'transnational migrants move into and indeed create transnational spaces that may have the potential to liberate nationals within them who are able to escape in part the totalizing hegemony that a strong state may have within its national borders' (1995: 553).

Transnational social spaces are embedded in activities such as sending remittances and having phone conversations with relatives and friends in the homeland; these may as well involve frequent back-and-forth travel across national borders that immigrants incur to visit their families, to go on a holiday, to conduct business or to take care of property which they have bought with the proceedings of their work. Thinking through the concept of transnational social fields, or as *everyday transnationalism*, is productive to consider the kind of experiences, practical and subjective, which are common to life in cities like Los Angeles. Ordinary existence here shares a significant number of aspects that are familiar and similar to what goes on south of the border. The use of Spanish as a language, the foodstuffs and recipes, contact with peoples who move back-and-forth across the border, the long distance phone calls, the so familiar soap operas, and the constant feed of news from the homeland, all work together to recreate this transnational social spaces.

2. The strand of Mexican transnationalism

It has been suggested in the section above that not every person has significant transnational involvements, but rather entry and exit points to persons, objects and ideas which participate directly in transnational activities. The idea of everyday transnationalism pressed here should be understood as enabled by streams of human activity at a large scale which allow the reproduction of transnational social relations. For instance, 150,000 Mexican pedestrians daily walk across a customs checkpoint in the US to work (Cino, 2003). It can be safely said that the back-and-forth movement of these peoples generate all kinds of transactions which create transnational social fields. It could also be argued that transnationalism has been institutionalized with treaties like NAFTA, which boosted previously existing flows of people, vehicles, and merchandises turning the border in one of the world's busiest. This line of argument could be used to elaborate on the notion that globalization intensifies social exchanges across the distance (Giddens, 1990), while normalizing the presence of *exotic*

peoples, languages, traditions and objects in places all over the world. (Robins, 1997). In this sense, transnationalism, as Kearney contends, 'overlaps globalization' (1995: 546), but concentrates in processes that pertain solely to the national inscriptions where they are anchored.

The idea of this is to visualize the flows triggered by transnational activity in relation with the experiences of those individuals and groups who conduct transnational lives, thereby reproducing transnational social spaces. Long and Villarreal (1998) make this point clearer when they claim that the networks of production and consumption of commodities that span places in Mexico and in the United States do not just create markets of mass consumption, but social practices and subjectivities which allow geographically distant individuals to identify themselves as members of a transnational space. A similar viewpoint should be taken to understand the way in which Mexican truckers who haul goods along border towns and cities in both sides of the border do not only pursue business relationships and profits, but also assert their identities, in a way creating Mexican locality in the United States (Álvarez & Collier, 1994).

The notion has been well developed since Rouse found in his pioneering work about Mexican transnationals, that immigrants have developed intricate flows of people, money, goods and information extending from small villages in Mexico to highly industrialized hubs in the US (1996[1991]). Attracted by the American economy dependence on cheap man power for farming, manufacture and services, these peoples earn a life in the US and realize their existences in Mexico, which according to Rouse makes up for an 'alternative cartography of social space' (p. 252). With dollars earned from their jobs as waiters, gardeners or cleaners these workers finance their living expenses on the other side of the border. At the same time they sustain the livelihoods of their relatives in their hometown. In Rouse's view, the Mexican-American 'transnational migrant circuits' that extend from Aguililla, in the central state of Michoacán, to Redwood City, California, seem to be replicated in other cases, including Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, or Matamoros and Brownsville (p. 255). Commonly, given the lack of job opportunities at home, inhabitants of poor Mexican communities are said to actively pursue establishment of economic relationships with their fellow expatriates in the US, thereby creating informal trade networks (Kearney, 1986; Gledhill, 1995). Next to fuelling consumption and development, Mexicans' proceedings from their work in America, for instance, have further promoted transnational activity, as families use earnings from abroad to produce local goods which are then exported to the more affluent Mexicans north of the border (Durand et al., 1996). As Gutiérrez put it,

‘The influx of immigrants in recent years has expanded the ethnic infrastructure of jobs, communication, entertainment, and local cultural practices in the United States to the extent that, in many ways, Mexicans can now live in the United States as if it were simply a more prosperous extension of Mexico’ (Gutiérrez, 1998: 322).

At a collective level, transnationalism is said to take place when members of migrant communities organize hometown meetings where they make investment plans to renovate roads, public squares and churches in their places of birth (Smith, 1998). It is frequent as well that relatives and friends from sending and receiving societies gather together to celebrate beauty pageants, national holidays and sports competitions, while local officials and candidates to public office in the homeland are increasingly reaching out for expatriates for their economic and political support (Guarnizo et al., 2003; Goldring, 1998). A highly visible case of political transnationalism is represented by Andrés Bermúdez, who migrated to the US at the age of 23 to become a successful tomato grower, and who has in recent years won important electoral races in Mexico (Smith & Bakker, 2005).

Shaping transnational spaces

While immigrant transnationalism is often seen as a project of ordinary people moving ‘astride political borders’ (Portes, 1997: 3), there is also plenty of evidence indicating that institutional interests are frequently at the forefront of this phenomenon. Thus government officials, entrepreneurs, activists, representatives from universities, political parties, churches, etc., are some of the dominant entities of migrant sending states which seek to capture migrants’ allegiances and to shape the meaning of transnational identities (Basch et al., 1994; Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1998; Goldring, 2002; González, 1999). Under this prism, supranational bodies such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) the United Nations (Held et al., 1999) and the so called transnational capitalist class (Sklair, 1998), have a hand in regulating the flows of people, trade and finance that shape the content of transnational spaces, in opposition to state driven national contexts centred on the notion of the welfare state (Drainville, 1998). Not that sending states lose their relevance, as it is clear that their institutions and representatives lead efforts to construct ‘deterritorialized’ nation-states (Basch et al., 1994; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). The latter’s political drives for both national dominance and international reassertion are taken outside geographic boundaries (ibid.) in what has been referred to as the reproduction of “trans-locality” (Drainville, 1998), or *trans-*

statism (cf. Kearney, 1995: 548). Trans-locality doesn't necessarily occur within the institutional structures of national states, but throughout the reproduction at a transnational level of cultural and social traits rooted in national contexts. This occurs when, for instance, a Mexican immigrant with political contacts in the homeland is able to enter the circuit of Mexican transnational politics in California (Smith, 2003: 492). Simply put, trans-locality is represented by

'Collectivities – local households, kin networks, elite fractions, and other emergent local formations – which actively pursue transnational migration to create and reproduce another kind of transnational social space, the “trans-locality”, to sustain material and cultural resources' (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998: 7).

The concept of trans-locality is important because it aids in revealing the actors who participate in moulding transnational social spaces. The Mexican government is central in this process. In order to keep its citizens from permanently leaving the national realm – lest they cease to send the remittances that generate economic and social stability at home (Lessinger, 1992; Mahler, 1996; Taylor, 1999) – national governments like the Mexican have readapted their policies for transnational contexts, thus redefining notions of citizenship and membership to the national polity. This is why voting rights and access to dual-citizenship and nationality (Sherman, 1999; Levitt & De la Dehesa, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) have been granted to Mexicans in the US. For instance, the Mexican government uses its network of consular offices in the United States to promote health and education programmes among its diaspora, as well as links between Mexican and American based communities (Gonzalez, 1999) with direct participation of Mexican state governments (Goldring, 2002), and party elites (Smith, 2003). One of the ways in which Mexico takes over definitions of transnational social space is by appointing leaders from among expatriate communities to run “home-town” associations. At a state level, authorities of immigrant-sending states usually try to co-opt immigrants to contribute money for state-run projects in exchange for political influence, favours and recognition for their relatives in Mexico (Goldring, 1998, 2002; Smith, 1998, Smith, 2003; Smith & Bakker, 2005).

The case has been taken to an extreme by the Salvadoran government, which in attempts to establish links with Salvadorans abroad, has paid for legal representation of citizens it persecuted at home, so that they are able to obtain political refugee status (Mahler, 1998) in the US. These new forms of relationship between institutional and social actors re-

inscribe new meanings to national membership, as participation in transnational projects strengthens migrants' social and economic standing in their communities of origin and destiny (Goldring, 1998), thus being incorporated as extraterritorial citizens (Smith, 2003). The point here is to stress the importance that the Mexican government has in defining to a certain degree the content and shape of transnational social spaces inhabited by its citizens abroad. One important way in which Mexico has done this has been by issuing a card or *matrícula consular* (Cano, 2004) which Mexicans citizens can use in US territory to open bank accounts, and to establish their identity in all kinds of transactions, for instance buying a property or a vehicle (Nevaer, 2007). In recent years the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has criticized Mexico's government for being 'particularly aggressive in marketing the use of its consular ID card' (FBI, 2003), a precedent which other foreign governments have taken into account to provide IDs to its nationals in the US, allegedly creating the problem that millions of foreign nationals are now capable to identify themselves with forged documents. Despite being controversial the *matrícula consular* has 'empowered' Mexicans in the US (Cano, 2004: 3) as well as in all of the Mexican territory, given that a Mexican living in New York or Los Angeles can use it to officially identify himself in Mexico (Nevaer, 2007).

The backlash of extra-nationalism

Of course, the issue is not simply one of empowerment. Mexican trans-statism should not be blindly seen as an innocent move of extra-national citizen representation. At the same time that the Mexican government rushes to provide consular IDs to Mexicans in the US, for instance, it has dragged its feet to put in operation a programme that would give them IFE cards, a hard to forge identification which the Mexican government requires to all citizens for them to vote in state and federal elections. Lack of this card explains indeed that only a tiny minority of Mexicans in the US, less than 1% of 4.2 million eligible to vote, registered to participate in Mexico's 2006 presidential election. Rejecting blame for not approving resources which would have made it easier for Mexicans to obtain their cards, lawmakers said the reason for the low participation of Mexicans in the US had been one of 'political culture' (Teherán, 2005). Blaming Mexicans in the US as politically apathetic, or even worse as traitors, has been an attitude which was long promoted by Mexican elites. The fact that they are now, at least in the public discourse, considered as "heroes" (Durand, 2005), only signals the fact that the Mexican government sees in Mexican-Americans an opportunity to

advance its own national interests *vis à vis* the American government, and the need to justify its failure to create enough jobs and life prospects for the millions of people who see the need to emigrate from their country in the first place (cf. Drainville, 1998).

The possibility that Mexican-Americans may be used as bargaining chips by the Mexican government in its dealings with the American government makes room to suggest that transnationalism is not necessarily a politically progressive development. This is so because the opportunities it opens usually imply the reproduction of an order that leads to forms of transnational social inequality (Álvarez, 1994; Glick-Schiller & Fouron, 1999; Mahler, 1998; Weiss, 2005). Gutiérrez makes this point clear when he notes that cross border dynamics have brought about a vast transnational second-tier economy that contributes over 10% of the US annual gross national product, and which is based mostly on the sheer exploitation of undocumented workers, including women and children (1998: 314-5).

3. Diasporic space: life beyond the border

This last section aims to justifying the discursive use of the concept of “diaspora” applied to Mexicans in the US. At the same time a move is proposed to think through a concept of diaspora which rejects traditional takes on the term, specifically in regard to what has become the fetish notion that all diasporas long for an eventual return to the homeland (Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994). This kind of perspective allows one to take stock of mass population movements in a context of globalization (Tölölyan, 1996; Sharpe, 1995). If transnationalism, as Faist explains (1999: 14), broadens the playing field for action of immigrants, the concept of diaspora enables understanding of the psychic and emotional processes that accompany the development of an identity in transnational social fields. This is the kind of perspective that allows visualizing, for instance, how peoples who have migrated can use media and other symbolic resources as part of their experiences of displacement, as instruments to imagine themselves in a world that is in a constant process of dislocation (Appadurai, 1996; 2001).

Diaspora was originally applied in reference to the expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem and their scattering through out the world. “Magnetized” by the experience of the Jewish exile, the concept of diaspora has attached to it ideas of uprooting, persecution, homeless wandering, problematic relationships with a host society and the longing for a distant return to the homeland (Cohen, 1997). These associations were reinforced by the traumatic

conditions which triggered the displacement of Africans by Dutch slave traders and of Armenians, massacred and forced to leave their places of birth by the Ottoman Empire (ibid.). In recent times a few reasonable calls have been made for restraint in too flexible a use of the concept (e.g. Vertovec, 1997: 277). Its application in current times, from this doctoral project's perspective, should be reserved for peoples who have been removed in mass numbers from their places of birth, especially by economic and political forces unleashed by the restructuring of global capitalism. This applies to peoples who have migrated in search of better life prospects or escaping some form of discrimination or persecution; but highly skilled workers, students and entrepreneurs fit better in categories such as Sklair's (1998) 'transnational capitalist class'.

In his *Global diasporas* Robin Cohen provides an illuminating angle of what one can do with the concept of diaspora. As he wrote, 'in the age of cyberspace, a (d)iaspora can, to some degree, be held together re-created through the mind, through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination' (1997: 26). He presses for "a more relaxed use of the term" in order to transcend the understandings of diaspora promoted by the 'Jewish tradition' (p. 21). Against his pledge to think "out of the box" Cohen subscribes to normative rules that leave certain populations uncovered by the concept. 'I imagine most would agree that in order to qualify they [scattered populations] should be dispersed to more than one [country] (p. 22)', he contends, while picking on William Safran's listing (1991) of new diasporas, saying that his inclusion of 'the Mexicans' [in the US] 'and (to a lesser extent) [of the] Cubans [is] somewhat doubtful' (ibid.). It would be pointless trying to fit Mexicans into Cohen's diasporic checklist, or for that matter, in that of any of the authors concerned with normative definitions (e.g. Chaliand & Rageau, 1995; Marientras, 1988; Safran, 1991). Such listings are useful to establish connections with the exoduses of history (van Hear, 1998) and indeed, processes of diasporic formation, but they often end in clichés about traumatic dispersions and homeward obsessions which do little to clarify actual diasporic experiences. As Clifford (1994) suggests, one should be wary of ideal diasporic models, which may lead to missing the 'diasporic features or moments' (p. 306) that emerge along the project of building (p. 302) 'homes away from home'. Rather than checking a list of diasporic characteristics, the author contends, a diasporic consciousness should be looked for in the,

'Decentered, lateral connections [which] may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return. And a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering,

adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin' (p. 306)

Where borders meet diaspora

Two moves are necessary to articulate the discourses of diaspora with the experience of Mexicans in the US. One involves articulating the language of diaspora with that of border theory (Clifford, 1994). The second requires visualizing the diasporic not in terms of the characteristics of a human formation, but of the array of cultural, political and social configuration that constitute what Avtar Brah characterizes as 'diaspora space' (1996: 181). Clifford suggests that the language of diaspora should be interspersed with that of border theory since, in a context of globalization, understanding how 'the terms border and diaspora bleed into one another ... [is central] to account for transnational identity formations' (1994: 304). Brah hits the same nerve when stating that diaspora and border are 'immanent' (1996: 181), central to lock in ongoing large labour-driven transnational population movements which commonly converge with high-speed flows of capital, objects and ideas.

It should be said that the line that divides Mexico and the US is both a geographic demarcation and a metaphor that is deployed as a source full of meanings. As one author put it, even though borders exist to mark divisions, they also exist to erase them (Pat Brady, 2006: 151). The Mexican diaspora has in this context been characterized in both senses. Susan Rinderle (2005), for instance, has cautioned against pan-ethnicist signifiers such as Hispanic and Latino, which imply an unreal uniformity that lies at the core of assimilationist political agendas (p. 305). For her, addressing the Mexican diaspora obliges recognition of the different national origins of Latin American origin people, as these are central to diasporic identities and practices of self-identification. These are in themselves 'the most powerful forms of resistance to dominant hegemonic and colonial discourses' (p. 313). Rinderle's concern is with the labels that erase difference between ethnic groups in the US and brings attention to the diversity of the Mexican diaspora, one which has 'a complex structural relationship among homeland, hostland, and diaspora' (p. 296).

Sinclair (2004) strikes a similar chord when he suggests that the diasporic experience of Mexicans in the US is a two-edged process. On one side they are willing to adopt the labels "Hispanic" or "Latino" as a strategy for access to public spaces, and on the other, to think of themselves as "Mexicans" in their daily lives. Here, the ambivalence of borders is useful to visualize both the diversity of histories and contexts of arrival which make

distinctive Mexicans from Cubans and Dominicans, for instance, as well as the commonalities of language and culture. As Sinclair writes,

‘The presence of such large numbers of people with a common language from diverse origins in the same country has no parallel in the English-speaking world (...) To the extent that a diaspora can be redefined to include a series of mass deterritorializations from various countries (occurring both at different historical stages and continuing into the present), rather than just a (single or continuous) dispersal of people from the same country, then the landless Mexicans, the Cubans exiles, the Salvadorian and Guatemalan refugees, and the endless waves of Latin American ‘economic immigrants’, whether documented or not, who are all now residents in the US, can be considered collectively to form a diaspora’ (Sinclair, 2004b: 9).

It is even possible to think of a Mexican diaspora in the US that forms its identity on the basis of that which makes it distinctive from Mexicans in Mexico. Mexican-Americans have never fostered a diasporic identity and are indeed known to be keen to become part of the American society in ways which resonate with processes of assimilation (González, 1999: 557). In this way, rather than expecting them to display unconditional forms of allegiance and loyalty to the homeland, it would be reasonable to consider the influence of the Mexican diaspora in Mexico, whether promoting economic growth by sending remittances or by exporting consumer lifestyles to their places of birth, as some of the ways in which ‘the Mexican nation extends beyond the political borders of Mexico’ (ibid., p. 558). The possibility of “melting in the pot” is however precluded by the collective experience of Mexican-Americans, which predisposes them to remain as members of a modern, if incipient, diaspora. As González writes,

‘The discrimination against immigrants and their descendants, their geographic concentration in the Southwest of the United States, the proximity to Mexico, and the consolidation of family networks on which migration rests (a consolidation that practically guarantees a continuous resupply of Mexican immigrants) have maintained in the communities a culture and identity different from those of the majority in the United States’ (1999: 553).

Ideas that connect with the discursive configurations of borders may lead to different forms to visualize the Mexican diaspora, even if this is in ways astray from foundational uprooting, scattering and teleologies of home return. This ‘anti-essentialist’ (Sreberny 2000: 181) argument of diaspora reveals not uprooted immigrants passively yearning for a homeland, but as transnational agents, capable to develop psychological, socio-political and economic collective and/or individual agendas. Stressing this point Clifford contends that ‘diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement’ (1994: 308). This view of diasporas puts in trouble dominant discourses that marginalize or assimilate migrants, depending on their socioeconomic status. Instead of labelling them with tags that obey solely to the logic of race, class and nationality, diasporic talk endows peoples with ‘discursive incentives’ (Tölölyan, 1996: 3) recognizing their competence to participate in hegemonic processes of homelands and receiving societies. Rather than accepting the argument that in criminalizing undocumented workers nation-states are exercising their sovereign rights, for instance, the notion of diaspora spurs looking at the trajectories of individuals from poor to rich countries in a post-colonial context, which explains such displacements as a consequence of historical asymmetries of power between nation-states. In using diaspora as a term which visualizes specific movements of populations as part of a historical continuum, one a) moves away from exclusivist uses of the concept, b) rejects ‘discourses of fixed origins’ (Brah 1996: 180) and c) avoids the temptation to deal with those deterritorialized in ‘intrinsically progressive’ (Morley 2001: 427) ways. This leaves us with a notion of diaspora that is more useful to analyze current forms of human dispersion and the processes accompanying their development as ‘exemplary communities of the transnational moment’ (Tölölyan, 1996: 4).

Acknowledging some shortcomings

It is true that the concept of diaspora, by emphasising a post-colonial reality, poses the risk of exaggerating the reach of its members strengths. By being too closely associated with the values of modernity (Schnapper, 1999) the discursive practices engendered by the concept pose the risk of missing differences, for instance, between voluntary and involuntary population movements, as well as of the mechanisms of political, social, economic, cultural exclusion, and criminalization that affect immigrants. (Sharpe, 1995: 184). The language of border theory, as suggested earlier in this section, provides a way to restore the inadequacy

that use of the concept may entail in the US, which narratives are ‘designed to integrate immigrants, not peoples in diasporas’ (Clifford, 1994: 307). The border more regularly invokes images of peoples crossing the desert and swimming across the Rio Grande in search of a better life, of death and smuggling, but other of its dimensions can productively reflect on diasporic experience without losing track of the struggles and inequalities that constantly affect immigrants. It is useful then to convey an understanding of diaspora which focuses on the struggles of migration and on the transnational networks that sustain the livelihood of diasporic peoples (Smith, 2003: 467-68).

In that context, borders mark the life of the Mexican diaspora and highlight both the histories that take place in a geographic site as well as the tensions among Mexican-Americans. These work against conceptualizations of diaspora as homogeneous displaced communities driven by their homeward oriented lives. Rather, this borders help to reveal the way in which the Mexican diaspora characterizes itself by divergent, sometimes clashing interests which preclude the possibility of any significant forms of diasporic cohesiveness. In conditions of social exclusion and economic distress, sharing an ethnic background can translate into clashing identity politics (see especially Gutiérrez, 1995). Tensions within the Mexican diaspora began to gain salience since social fighters of Mexican ancestry like César Chávez and Ernesto Galarza championed the rights of Mexican-American workers in the 1960s and 1970s. Mexicans in the US, they said (e.g. Galarza, 1964), saw their wages and general prospects for advancement in the American society hindered by undocumented migration. Now a days, these tensions are embodied in everyday histories in which Mexicans who have long been settled in the US are commonly found expressing sentiments of opposition to new arrivals which create downward salary pressures as well as scarcity of jobs, housing and health services. Elaborating this idea, Vila (2003) quotes a woman who spoke to a reporter of *El Paso Times* in the following terms:

‘Mexicans come to the United States and take everything away from us, things that we worked so hard to get... I was born in Mexico, but I worked my way here.... I was born in Mexico and I know the way most of the people over there think. These people don’t know anything about responsibility’ (2003: 110-111).

People like these who oppose the arrival of new migrants from Mexico are labelled ‘borders enforcers’. Vila’s account reveal similar behaviours and attitudes which are

sometimes an aspect of diasporic communities. The Chicano ¹⁴ movement that emerged in the 1970s, which derides self-identified Mexican-Americans for disrespecting their cultural heritage, has commonly borrowed on Mexican symbolism to create its metaphors of resistance and struggle as part of a nationalism centered in the United States (Velasco, 2006). This presses the point that amongst people of Mexican origin borders, symbolic and real, are constantly crossed, but also bridged, in the development of a diasporic consciousness. Border enforcers emerged in this project's research fieldwork, as was the case of a Mexico City born female who migrated to the US in order to look after her recently born grandson. As she put it, 'Mexican immigrants (in the US) demand benefits and services. They think they deserve only because of the fact that they are here. They demand everything but in return only give birth to children to secure their leave to remain' (Female, 60 years old, diary entry). However, when discussing the US construction of a miles long fence along the border she said that such measure 'was not the solution. The solution is in Mexico, the government has the responsibility to create jobs so our people will not attempt leaving the country'(ibid.). This view can be redirected to Stuart Hall, who points that diasporas are defined 'not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" which lives with and through, not despite, difference' (1990: 235).

Heterogeneity

The lack of an overt diasporic agenda among Mexican-Americans, as opposed for instance to black peoples in Britain who define themselves 'crucially as part of a diaspora' (Gilroy, 2002: 202), does not preclude the development of states of mind, practices and exchanges that steer away from the 'progressive' and 'irreversible' process of assimilation (Park, 1950: 281; Park & Burgess, 1969) thought to be the unavoidable destiny of people who migrate. Pressures to assimilate are nowadays disguised in the American boutique of multiculturalism (Alibhai-Brown, 2000), which celebrates stylish expressions of ethnicity while reinforcing melting pot schemes. The Mexican diaspora has, however, spilled over the box of window-shopping diversity (ibid., p. 42), transforming the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the US southwest and constantly making its presence felt south of the border.

¹⁴ As Gutiérrez explains Chicano implies 'pride in the Mexican cultural heritage of the Southwest' (1995: 183) and symbolizes a common front 'against a history of racial oppression and discrimination at the hands of Anglo-Americans'. Use of the term may be subject to controversy. An activist sector of the Mexican-origin people who call themselves Chicanos, for instance, snub 'Mexican-American' as 'a person who lacks respect for his/her cultural and ethnic heritage. Unsure of her/himself, she/he seeks assimilation as a way out of her/his "degraded" social status' (See MEChA, n/d).

This is not to say that the “American experience” of Mexicans can be separated from the migration structure that has developed between Mexico in the United States during the last 160 years. After all, most Mexicans there ‘trace their origins to people who migrated to the United States after 1848’ (Massey et al., 2002: 25) and many are deeply touched by the very narratives of migration which hinder an articulation of themselves as a diaspora. Nearly 70% of the 16 million Mexican-origin people born in the US are the children of immigrants (González, 2002: 7). It is therefore common to find Mexican-Americans of second or subsequent generations living under the same roof with their Mexican born parents, grandparents, friends, etc, many of who may be without government authorization in the country (García, 1996[1985]). In this circumstances difficulties to obtain jobs and services, economic exploitation and racial exclusion (Acuña, 1972; Gutiérrez, 1995) may be a constant in the lives of the Mexican diaspora. As García writes,

‘People of Mexican descent, in what became the American Southwest, have had to relate in one degree or another to the border. It is both symbol and reality in the Mexican-American experience and has confronted each generation with questions: What does it mean to be a Mexican in the United States? How should Mexican-Americans relate to the continual influx of Mexican immigrants? How much of Mexican culture and identity should one retain? How should Mexican-Americans relate to Mexico?’ (García, 1996[1985]: 90).

Questions like these, which emphasise the heterogeneity of the Mexican diaspora, call for answers that focus on the “decentered, lateral connections” that emerge out of diasporic internal struggles and which are relative to the historical specificity of Mexicans in the US. These peoples are frequently bound by blood yet separated by the distances imposed by the politics of identity (González, 1999: 550). Pablo Vila has noted that most border theory ‘essentializes the cultures that must be crossed’ (2003: 307), in a way celebrating the violation of borders but overlooking the fact that ‘border crossers’ are always resisted by ‘border reinforcers’. The point here is that borders are essential aspects of such diasporic experiences, they call to jettison notions of diaspora which proclaim homogeneity, common homeland oriented agendas and fetish home returns. Dynamics like those noted by Vila are frequently used to assess the likeliness that individuals will assimilate or acculturate to an American mainstream culture. A diasporic perspective puts the spotlight on these forces but at the same time opens room to look at the subjectivities which are produced in parallel.

These reject the conditions imposed by the centres of power of Mexico and the United States (Saldívar, 1997: 14), and become part of emergent cultural practices and sources of identity that are central to the diasporic condition. Multiple forms of identification which become available for the diasporic experience are exemplified by Guillermo Gómez Peña, who claims that,

‘When they ask me my nationality or ethnic identity, I cannot respond with one word, since my “identity” has multiple repertoires: I am Mexican but also Chicano and Latin American. On the border they call me “chilango” or “mexiquillo”; in the capital “pocho” or “norteno”, and in Europe “sudaca.” Anglo-Saxons call me “Hispanic” or “Latino” and Germans have more than once confused me with being Turkish or Italian’ (Quoted in García Canclini, 1995: 238-9).

García Peña is a Mexican artist and writer who leads La Pocha, a San Francisco based project that focuses on border cultures and trans-disciplinary artistic activities which claims itself to be ‘by nature anti-essentialist and anti-nationalist. We are this and that and everything in between’ (Pocha, n/d). While García Canclini uses the artist’s case to make a point about the existence of hybrid cultures which become so in the transition from the traditional to the modern, Sreberny states the concept of hybridity ‘seems to simply highlight some putative pristine original states’ (2000: 181). On the other hand questions of hybridity, which should be only part of diasporic discourses, lose sight from the contentions that are inherent to borders, real and imagined, that emerge as part of dislocation processes. As sites of migrancy these border places, Brah suggests, subvert the subject position of the ‘native’ (1996: 181) but equally important, turn those who are on the move in a permanent presence, which also problematizes the condition of the ‘immigrant’.

Quoting Alberto Melucci, Sreberny proposes that diasporic identities have replaced the logic of ‘either/or’ territorial inscriptions to an ‘and/and’ axis of existence (2000: 181). This is not to say that borders are innocuous lines, since as Anzaldúa wrote (1999: 33), they are sites for “shock cultures” and “third countries” where human beings become dehumanized. Here borders separate legal from illegal, Mexican from Mexican-American, recent arrival from long-term settlement, and so on. In this sense, the act of crossing the border not only makes individuals exposed to the hostile looks of those who have already paid their dues through the rites of passage (Gennep, 1960); also they pay a psychic toll as they learn that their practices of self-identification become obsolete and useless, even a

burden that is more likely to hinder any prospects of development. In this sense, Saldívar analyzes how the “chilango”¹⁵ is subject to pressures that force him or her to seek new forms of self-identification. He writes that,

‘Thus the “ex-Chilango” is transformed into Hispanic or Mexican-American and into an image opposite from what she had in Mexico. She is no longer seen as being smart, arrogant, sharp, a clever rascal; on the contrary, many perceive her as being a person without ambition. As soon as our imaginary Chilango crosses the border, she enters the ethnic classification system of the United States... The problem is that our emblematic Chilango, in one way or another, has to respond to this new set of social perceptions, creating a self that relates in some way to this new mirror’ (Saldívar, 1997: 110-1).

What is then useful about border talk is that it enables ways to think differently about peoples in diaspora, not just as individuals “transmogrified” (cf. Pat Brady, 2006: 151) by the act of crossing the border but as agents who *build homes away from home*.

4. The physical and the symbolic

Merging the vocabulary of diaspora with that of border theory provides thus a way to visualize experiences of displacement and dislocation without overlooking the conditions – the location – that render diasporas vulnerable (Brah, 1996: 181). Once this conceptual move is taken one is free to analyze those spaces that contribute to the production of diasporic reality. These generally take place in physical as well as in mental, symbolic spheres which one could label diasporic spaces (Brah, 1996), where different life configurations take place. Avtar Brah defines ‘diaspora space’ as the intersection of,

Diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes. It is where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed; where the permitted and the prohibited perpetually interrogate (...) Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’, are contested’ (1996: 208-9).

¹⁵ This word typically identifies Mexico City dwellers..

The diaspora space of Mexicans in the US is, as already discussed in this chapter, enacted in a range of social, economic, political and cultural activities in which millions of Mexican-Americans participate everyday. These are undoubtedly diasporic spaces that feed into the reproduction of an imagined community that inhabits a vast transnational social space wired via the technologies of connectivity (Tsagarousianou, 2004), and which create cultural, social, economic and political bridges between Mexican and US national territories. In physical terms, this Mexican diaspora space is amplified by a whirlpool of human activity, nourished over the decades by the growth of Mexican border cities such as Mexicali and Tijuana (Zenteno, 1995). These have become major urban hubs which are part of the transnational space that binds together Mexico and the US. In his work about the transformation of social space of the US Southwest by Mexican-Americans, Gutiérrez (1998: 321) picks on the “twin cities” (transnationalist) argument, saying that these metropolises and villages ‘intimately link populations originally from Mexico on both sides of the international frontier’. He writes that,

‘The transnational linkages and communication networks, which continue to shape current migration patterns by deepening historical ties that bind communities in Mexico with those in the United States, have been greatly reinforced (...) by the intensification of remittance flows from ethnic Mexicans in the United States to family, friends and business associates in Mexico’ (ibid.).

But another dimension of the Mexican diaspora space has developed in parallel to its diasporic infrastructure. This space gives way to an imagined community that overflows national boundaries and gives it its transnational reach. This imagination has found a powerful vector in the spectacular system of Spanish-language communication media in the US which nowadays runs in parallel to an English-based media system, and which enables the Mexican diaspora to enact its multiple forms of expression, further expanding the scope of its diasporic experience, and reproducing what is called ‘diasporic public spheres’ (Appadurai, 1996: 22; Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001: 26; Morley, 2000: 125). While the concept is the subject of endless academic debates it is used in this project in reference to Spanish-language media and more concretely to Spanish-language television news, which will be developed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Spanish television news

3.1 Newsclapes

1. TV news as diasporic resources

This chapter puts forward an understanding of Spanish-language television news that is relevant for this project's core arguments. One straightforward definition of news is provided by John Corner, in terms of 'regularly updated information about, and depictions of, significant recent events within a particular geographical area or sphere of activity' (1995: 55). From audiences point of view, news is seen primarily as a factual genre which, political agendas aside, satisfy individual and collective needs for surveillance of the environment (Jensen, 1998: 9). Shoemaker and Cohen strike a similar chord when explaining that,

Although news is a manufactured product and is subject to a wide-ranging set of influences, the basic form from which news comes is people's innate interest in two types of information: (1) people, ideas, or events that are deviant (either positive or negative); and (2) peoples, ideas, or events that have significance to the society (2006: 3).

It is therefore important to see news as a narrative of 'everdayness' (Highmore, 2002: 1), for 'news is part of the background through which and with which people think' (Schudson, 1995: 16). Some consideration should be given as well to what news actually is from the view angle of this project's informants. The TV news through which they got their glimpses of the world outside were those produced by Univision and Telemundo, the two largest Spanish-language broadcasters in the US. They claim, respectively, covering 99% and 93% of the 11.2 million Hispanic households in the US (Univision, 2007: 8; Telemundo, 2008). In this context, it is worth mentioning that while TV entertainment produced in Mexico commands large Spanish-speaking audiences television newscasts from Mexico are largely negligible in the US. This does not mean that viewers do not care about news from the homeland, but that TV news programmes from Mexican broadcasters do not carry the kind and doses of information that could be of use in people's places of settlement. There is then the lack of trust in Mexican newscasts, especially among Mexican immigrants, who view Televisa particularly (Sinclair, 1999: 103) as part of the same establishment that failed in the

first place to create the life prospects for immigrants to make a life in their country of birth. For such public, Televisa is a synonym of censorship, part of an establishment that benefited from the corruption and power abuses of Mexico's PRI, the party that ruled the country for 71 years until 2000. With a few exceptions, Mexican viewers have turned their backs to news from Televisa, and their attention to those from Univision and Telemundo. Having been at some point employed by Televisa, many journalists and presenters of the US Spanish-language newscasts are now characterized by their critical style and anti-government bias, attitudes which function as declaration of independence from the powers that be (cf. Rodríguez, 1999: 86).

As a Spanish-based "American product" the television news produced by Univision and Telemundo tend to look and sound the way mainstream news in English do (Rodríguez, 1999: Ch. 4-5). High news production values and notions of objectivity aside, however, these programmes distinguish themselves for being a site of advocacy for Mexican and Latin American-origin peoples in the US. Generally, the mechanisms by which these news are constructed project an understanding of the audience as poor, non-white, generally uneducated and therefore in need of media that redress their audiences' main problems (1999: 47). The way in which these viewers are visualized by news producers is manifest in the headlines of the television newscasts. In these prevail subjects such as migration and the residential status of individuals and their families; access to housing, health and education services; crime; intra-ethnic relations, jobs, community services and questions of governance and tributary law which may not be fully transparent to people born abroad, or not fluent in English. In other words, television news in Spanish put out a picture of that which directly involves the livelihood of Mexicans and other "Latino" communities as the "imagined" audiences of news producers. In this context, Rodríguez notes that Spanish-language news-making reflects on its imagined audiences within a dual frame of reference, one that addresses Hispanics in the US and another that provides them with abundant coverage of news in Latin America, which would be considered as a vast cultural container of a sub-continental "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991) that viewers arguably identify with. While this may provide some interesting elements of analysis, more salient dimensions are revealed outside this dichotomy. In this context, the fieldwork completed in Los Angeles pointed towards a variety of news developments that attracted the attention of informants, making it clear that awareness of close and distant events relies on the active construction of meaning primed by television news stories, more than on interests predetermined by language, ethnicity, nationality, migration status, etc. Television news in Spanish may then be

considered as a window that Mexican-Americans and other Latin American origin people in the US use to access the public sphere (Habermas, 1989), from where they can obtain information for their advancement in society. The understanding here of television news is one in which news function as a social resource, possibly of a democratic potential, but also for engagement with different aspects of public life (Graber, 2004; Jensen, 1988; 1998).

From the point of view of audiences with an immigrant background the resources provided by news have been articulated in terms of promoting 'Geo-ethnic storytelling', this is 'the practice that aims to produce culturally relevant and locally vital information to immigrants in the host society' (Lin & Song, 2006: 363). In this context, television news could be understood as an important layer of what Ball-Rokeach and her team define as 'communication infrastructure', consisting 'of the everyday conversations and stories that people, old and new media, and grassroots organizations create and disseminate, and the resources that afford a conducive or constrained communication environment for the conduct of daily life' (Ball-Rokeach et al., 2000: 7). Sticking to the notion of news as a resource and in reference to diasporic populations, scholars contend that by shaping the meaning and uses of the media diasporas are able to maintain and negotiate their access to spaces, or to resist and adapt to the inscription of identities which emerge as part of migration processes (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001; Cunningham, 2001). Television news could be understood then as supporting Mexican-Americans adaptive tactics – one may say strategies of survival – which enable the construction of a diasporic imagination.

A parenthesis should be opened to concede that television news in Spanish, as the rest of television news in the US and other parts of the developing and the developed world, clearly suffer oversimplification and are shaped to suit the commercial interests of media companies (Bennett & Entman, 2001; Paredes, 2001; Rodríguez, 1999; McChesney, 2004). Having said this, while it is frequently difficult to establish a line between news and infotainment (Thussu, 2007), news-only television programmes adapt better to the notion of news as resources, and are the ones considered relevant for this chapter.

2. Tuning-in Spanish-language TV news

After establishing what is meant by television news in the context of this research, reference can be made to the available television news programmes in Spanish. The menu for pay TV viewers in particular is rich, featuring nearly 15 channels that include news operations

originating in the US and Mexico. What this highlights is the vigorous ‘geolinguistic region’ (Sinclair et al., 1996; Sinclair, 2004a; 2005) that has developed in recent years, allowing Spanish-speaking peoples in the United States to imagine themselves as members of a broader imagined community spanning areas of the planet where Spanish is spoken; after all, as Sinclair sums up, communication media have space-binding capabilities which create ‘virtual restructured spaces, in which new centres have emerged’ (2005: 209). Theorists contend that a rich assortment of media choices in the language of specific immigrant communities is central to recreate a diasporic imagination (Appadurai, 1996; Karim, 1998; Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001), one that results from the constant mediated dialogues between people who migrate and those who remain in their countries of origin. In this way, diasporic or transnational audiences ‘start new conversations between those who move and those who stay’ (Appadurai, 1996: 22), thereby creating ‘diasporic public spheres’.

Karim (1998; 2003) suggests that the creation of diasporic public spheres results from the direct dialogues between media producers and their audiences. One can use such premise to assess the diasporic function that existing television news in Spanish have in the lives of Mexican-Americans. For instance, by tuning in broadcast and cable channels Azteca América or Galavisión, which respectively include the news coverage of Mexican broadcasters Televisión Azteca and Televisa, viewers are able to keep up respectively with the news programmes that Mexicans in Mexico watch on the same day. In this way they can remain informed about developments in their country of birth, keeping track of the political and economic situation, the weather and even the scores of their football teams. One could say that keeping track of developments in Mexico through television news is related to viewers attempts to maintain a cultural, diasporic identity (Gillespie, 1995; Naficy, 1993), or a narrative of themselves as members of an imagined community (Anderson, 1991).

Another dimension of diasporic television is exemplified by Canal Once TV and México 22. Funded by the Mexican government, the former includes news segments with a focus on Mexican traditional and contemporary cultural production, while the latter reflects on a broader political, economic and socio-cultural agenda similar to that from a government news agency. While neither of these channels makes overt claims in terms of seeking to establish contact with audiences of Mexican origin in the US, the fact that their contents are made available by cable in that country is in conformity with the officially sanctioned notion that ‘the Mexican nation extends beyond the political borders of Mexico’ (Gutiérrez, 1999: 558). In this way, by using this media content to reach out for Mexican-Americans, the

Mexican government would be directly trying to shape the collective identity of Mexicans abroad (ibid.).

A different case of diasporic television is that run by CB Televisión Michoacán, a private media company that originally focused on producing content for audiences in the central state of Michoacán. Because that state in Mexico is one of the core sources of immigrants to the U.S, these immigrants have become a natural extension of its audience outside the Mexican territory. After 13 years and given its commercial success, the company preserves its name but it has expanded its coverage to touch on issues that concern a wider audience that spans from Guatemala, Mexico's southern neighbour, to several cities in the US, where it reaches 6 million Spanish speaking viewers (Michoacán, n/d). In this case, the assertiveness of CB Televisión Michoacán has been a result of its original intention to appeal to an audience that shares language and place of birth. Having seen the opportunity to grow, however, this outlet aims to cast a larger net that summons its viewers on the idea of similar ethnic background, and experiences of immigration which might be of interest for audiences in Guatemala, in Mexico and US cities with large Spanish-speaking populations.

A different case in question is that of Canal Sur. As opposed to the channels mentioned above, Canal Sur is the only one that was originally launched from outside US territory with the intention of 'becoming a meeting point for Latin American origin immigrants with their roots' (Sur, n/d). Rather than addressing Spanish-speaking audiences in general, the channel generally divides its programming in blocks of news by country, the focus being on preserving the *authentic* national flavour of each of the newscasts. The menu of TV news in Spanish also includes 24 hour news rolling channels such as TVE Internacional and CNN en Español,¹⁶ the former offering a mix of news, analysis and documentaries from Spain's national – commercially funded – broadcaster, and the latter running a parallel operation to Time Warner's CNN. Both are interesting cases of media operations that tapped on the capabilities of satellite broadcasting to overcome geographic and cultural barriers in order to extend their outreach into the Latin American market. Their presence in the US obeys a similar logic but obvious different trajectories. CNN en Español and TVE began targeting audiences in their national territories and then extended to other Latin American markets. Sinclair (1999: 106) notes this was the same pathway followed by most US television channels in Spanish including cases like HBO Olé, ESPN en Español, MTV en Español and Fox Latin America. TVE Internacional, on the other hand, was

¹⁶ CNN en Español and TVE Internacional have, respectively, a 4 and 2.5 million subscriber base in the US.

considered a news imperialist of sorts in Latin America (Tunstall, 1992: 84), before it were sending its signals by cable to Hispanic householders in the United States.

3. Questions of access and ratings: the reason to focus on Univision

Some of the most visible alternatives of television news in Spanish have been discussed so far. This section will now focus on the most popular of them: Univision and Telemundo, respectively the first and second largest Spanish-language television networks in the US. These broadcasters are central for a discussion addressing media reception, since the large audiences commanded by their programming lead to more or less straightforward assessments of what Mexican-Americans are watching on television. The question of television viewership is central because even though ratings are a fabrication that the media industry uses to exercise some form of control on its audiences (Ang, 1996), they can be thought of as providing a more or less reliable snapshot of who the audience actually is. In determining what are the television news that Mexican-Americans keep up with, Univision, especially, and less so Telemundo, provide indeed a reliable idea of the kind of journalistic plots and news content followed by Mexicans in the US.

Focusing on Univision and Telemundo is essential in a context in which trying to address every single media choice would spread too thin an analysis of the television news landscape in Spanish. Some more justification here is in order though. As is normal, Spanish-language television news choices vary on the basis of programming and delivery technologies that households have access to. Los Angeles provides the largest Spanish-language television market in the US, with nearly 1.75 million households. It is an adequate setting to address the question of what this study's participants view. The aim is assessing the extent to which television news in Spanish reproduce experiences of an imagined community (Anderson, 1991). While a research project focusing on the media of diaspora should ideally deal with programming alternatives from an audience's homeland, these are not necessarily suitable for an analysis of media consumption of the Mexican diaspora. This is so because, to begin with, a majority of Mexican-American households, over 60%, do not have cable television.¹⁷ What this means is that while households with cable in Los Angeles have nearly 15 different

¹⁷ Despite the fact that nearly 80% of Hispanics in the US have cable television in Los Angeles, where Mexican-Americans make 60% of the city's population, the number of households with such media delivery medium goes down to around 40%. This is in contrast to the city of New York, for instance, which with less Hispanic households (1.2 million), has a cable TV penetration of over 900,000 households (CAB, 2006).

channels to tune in Spanish-language television news at any given time of the weekday, the number of choices trickles down to 3 for terrestrial television-only households (See Appendix A). These reduced alternatives include Univision, Telemundo, and 62 KRCA, a relatively small broadcaster that operates in Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas and San Diego, targeting Mexican-origin viewers with low cost reality shows produced in California, and a low budget news programme. In any case the idea is that the television news that Mexican-American audiences follow are not those from broadcasters which are normally referred to as transnational or diasporic (see for instance Dayan, 1999; Karim, 2003; Naficy 1993; 2003). Instead, one would say that the news agendas these audiences are keeping up with are those provided by “ethnic” media (Constantakis, 1993; Mayer, 2003; Naficy, 1993; 2003; Rodríguez, 1999). While this label works in opposition to the notion of the transnational and the diasporic, it can be argued that such antagonism is artificial as will be shown ahead in this chapter.

Before making the case of why “ethnic” media are an intrinsic aspect of diaspora and transnational social spaces, something else should be said to justify an exclusive examination of mainstream Spanish-language television news, namely those of Univision and Telemundo. As already mentioned, these are respectively the first and second main Spanish-language television networks in the US, claiming a respective outreach of 99% and 93% of the 11.2 million Hispanic households in the US (Univision, 2006: 8; Telemundo, 2008). It can be said these claims were manifest in this project’s fieldwork, where the sheer majority of participants said they followed the news programmes of Univision and less so those of Telemundo. A similar trend emerged from a survey conducted by the researcher in the premises of Mexico’s consular office in Los Angeles, where more than 80% of 106 interviewees said they followed primarily Univision’s news. This is consistent with past statistical evidence suggesting that Univision’s main newscast, *Noticiero Univision*, had an 85% command on Spanish speaking audiences (Rodríguez, 1999), with Telemundo’s newscast having the remaining 15%.

More recent statistical indicators support the trend. Using data from Nielsen’s National Hispanic Television Index (NHTI), Univision claims that between 95% and 100% of the most widely watched Spanish-language television programmes in prime-time schedules in the last five years to 2006 have been broadcast by itself (Univision, 2006: 12). Telemundo’s ratings rank far behind in second place, and TeleFutura Network, also a unit of Univision, runs close behind Telemundo in third place (2006: 11). Mexican Television Azteca-controlled US broadcaster, Azteca America, lags far behind in the 11th position, with

major US networks ABC, CBS, NBC and cable operators like Fox capturing a larger share of the Spanish speaking public (ibid.). While the numbers and findings cited above are not necessarily an accurate reflection of television news viewership in Spanish, they are a reliable indicator of the television channels that Mexican-Americans are tuning in, and backup the decision to centre the discussion on the newscasts of Univision and Telemundo.

4. Ethnic television news

Given the scope of academic work about the subject of transnational communication that deals with notions of diasporic media, it has been surprising for this writer to find that Mexican-Americans seem to have a relative low interest in the news content produced by broadcasters from the homeland. This is an inference that can be drawn directly from ratings figures, but it is also sustained by the survey conducted at Mexico's consular representation in Los Angeles, where only 8 out of 106 individuals said they followed news on television produced by Mexico's largest broadcaster, Televisa, and with only one individual claiming it followed a newscast of the second bigger Mexican broadcaster, Televisión Azteca. Certainly, this comes up in sharp contrast to the predilection that Mexican audiences in the US, and Latin American descent peoples in general, demonstrate for television entertainment, mostly soap operas, produced in Mexico. On the other hand, rating figures of Nielsen Research suggest that Televisa is a core actor in the Spanish-language televisual space of the United States. Reflecting on this, Nielsen's audience measurements of the programmes that attracted the ten largest ratings among Hispanic television viewers for the week of January 7 2008, for instance, were all broadcasts from Univision with a predominant input of content from Televisa. For instance, *Pasión*, a soap opera produced by Televisa, scored the first, second, third and fifth best ratings that week. *Amar sin límites*, another *telenovela* of Televisa's, obtained the fourth, seventh, ninth and tenth largest ratings. In sixth place was Univision's produced talk-show *Cristina*. The version in Spanish of the popular series *Desperate housewives* or *Amas de Casa Desesperadas* – a joint production between Univision and Disney-ABC International Television-Latin America, took the eight largest share of the viewership. These rating trends are constant throughout the weeks. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that Univision's dominant position in the US has throughout the years depended on its privileged access to Televisa's programming. In reference to a bitter legal dispute that Univision and Televisa have in American courts – over a nearly 20 year-old

agreement that binds Televisa to provide soap operas and top entertainment to Univision until 2017 – Univision stated recently that,

‘The programming we receive from Televisa has been very popular and it has helped us to achieve high ratings and grow our audience share. If Televisa were to stop providing us programming for any reason, it could be difficult to develop or acquire replacement programming of comparable quality whether on similar terms or at all, and our failure to do so could have a material adverse effect on the popularity of our network and TV stations, which in turn would have a material adverse effect on our results of operations’ (Univision, 2006: 19).

Entertainment is Mexican, information is American

The point in question then is that while Mexicans in the US are being entertained with television content from Mexico the news they are consuming are produced by an American Spanish-language broadcaster. This could lead to a series of different arguments regarding the course along which Univision stopped – in the late 1980s – being a Mexican broadcaster that Televisa saw as a simple add-on to its natural national audience (cf. Sinclair, 1999: 103), to become an American one. This process has been long and complex, and has been addressed in detail elsewhere (e.g. Mayer, 2003b; Rodríguez, 1999; Sinclair, 1999; 2004a). The point that is relevant for this discussion is that the new Univision was shaped under the corporate and production values of mainstream US media firms, as well as by political pressure to become more representative of the interests – and therefore commercially appealing – of US born Hispanics or *Latinos* (Dávila, 2001; Rodríguez, 1999; Mayer, 2003b).

One of Univision’s main challenges has consisted on becoming a provider of television content that is attractive not only for Mexicans and early generations of Mexican-Americans, which as discussed in a previous chapter, make the brunt of the Mexican-origin population in the US. Univision has taken measures with such aim, changing its production facilities from Los Angeles to Miami, where it could draw on the more diverse population of Latin American origin – formed largely by Cubans and Puerto Ricans – and producing low cost entertainment very much styled in the format of popular US shows. More recently, the firm has invested heavily in its TeleFutura network, which combines a small portion of Mexican-made shows with modern programming genres targeted at younger, better educated

Latino audiences. For instance, while in 2006 and 2005 Televisa provided content worth 42% and 39% of Univision main network's non-repeat broadcast hours, its TeleFutura network only used 19% and 23% (Univision, 2006: 13) of content made by Televisa in the same years. This does not mean, however, that Univision can in anyway abandon its traditional dependence on Mexican audience, which continue to be a large majority of the US Hispanic population and to arrive by the thousands as immigrants. Having realized that its core market remained with this group the firm reinforced the profile of its cable network, Galavisión, as an exclusive carrier of Mexican soccer, popular comedies, classic soap operas and news. 'Their refocus in 2002', a US media marketer claimed, 'to more Televisa-supplied programming means a stronger following of Mexicans looking for the staples of programming from home' (Marroquin, n/d).

However, and despite the huge success of Mexican made TV entertainment, news in Spanish can be thought of as being a relatively marginal commodity in terms of viewership and impact in the landscape of Spanish-language television news. This has come up as unexpected, particularly in the face of solid scholarly endeavour proving that audiences of an immigrant background in the First World are normally keen on content produced in their places of birth (Aksoy & Robins, 2000; Dayan, 1998; 1999; Hargreaves & Mahdjoub, 1997; Karim, 1998; 2003; Sakr, 2005), even when that involves negotiation of cultural identities between different sectors of specific populations in diaspora (Gillespie, 1995). Not enough attempts have been conducted, however, to address the relationship between these groups with television news produced in immigrant receiving societies, which is necessarily another dimension of diasporic experiences in transnational social spaces (Tsagarousianou, 2001; Robins & Aksoy, 2005; 2006). Thus, while there is some truth to the commonly held notion that members of immigrant communities want to have news about their homeland, it is also a safe bet to say that such sectors of an audience are avid consumers of locally produced television news (e.g. Hargreaves & Thomas, 2002: 50-1). Such is the case of Asian descent viewers in England which value both diasporic media such as STAR TV, NDTV and the 24-hours television news channels run by the BBC and CNN. These generally offer international coverage which may concern these viewers' homelands and are perceived as providers of in-depth coverage of international and local events (Thussu, 2005).

5. Meeting the needs of diasporic experience: news value and trust

Different contexts lead, however, to different realities, as is the case of the television news that Mexican-Americans find relevant. In this context questions of news-value and trust are interrelated. This link can be observed in the stance that US-Spanish-language broadcasters have towards the production of news and in shifting journalistic orientations pursued by Mexican-owned broadcasters such as Azteca América. Sinclair (1999) notes, for instance, that while Univision's needs for top entertainment can only be met by importing content from Mexico and other parts of Latin America 'the demand for US content is increasingly being met in terms of talk, variety, and news shows' (2003: 222) produced in Miami. In the case of Univision, this comes out of a recognition that immigrant communities are in need of information that they will find valuable as part of their settlement and adaptation to life in the US. 'Our mission is to connect Hispanics to their culture, their community, and the programming that entertains and informs them', the company told its shareholders in a recent statement. 'Our strategy is to be a link between Hispanics and the culture that is their cornerstone, connecting them to the resources and marketplaces that enrich their lives' (Univision, 2005: 6).

It is clear that the interests of Univision in "enriching the lives" of Hispanics should be understood with commercial jingles as musical background, rather than with the heroic notes of a classical march. To explain this a short historical parenthesis needs to be opened. In 1986 Televisa was forced by the US government to divest from the Spanish International Communication Corporation and Spanish International Network (SICC/SIN). The SICC/SIN system is the predecessor of Univision; it was founded in 1961 by Mexican entrepreneur Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, Televisa's progenitor (Sinclair, 1999: 97). Using the well-known manoeuvre of the *presta nombres*, literally a "name lender", Azcárraga used Rene Anselmo, a US born citizen who worked for him in Mexico City, as a way to skirt federal regulations that barred ¹⁸ foreign nationals from owning broadcasting stations in the US. The unlawful dealings of Azcárraga's came to light after a stake holder in the SICC/SIN system filed a lawsuit in a federal court (cf. Sinclair, 1999: 97-101; Rodríguez, 1999: 61-4). While the process took 10 years to settle against the interests of Televisa, pressure from Hispanic

¹⁸ While this prohibition remains in place a strange and unexplained exception is that presented by Australian-born media mogul Rupert Murdoch, whose registry of News Corporation as a publicly traded firm in the US grants him rich fiscal advantages, access to trained staff and technical capabilities from which he runs his global communication empire.

lobby groups played an important role in redefining aspects of Univision's programming. These activists claimed that Mexican ownership of Spanish-language media in the US was damaging – if not more – for their interests in the US as if it were owned by a mainstream US broadcast network (Rodríguez, 1999: 63). As Rodríguez observes,

‘The order to sell SIN was met with much excited anticipation by U.S. Latino political groups who felt that for the first time since its inception a quarter century earlier, there was a possibility that U.S. Spanish-language television could be controlled by U.S. Latino interests (...) U.S. minority ownership of media has been a rallying cry of civil rights activists since the 1970s. Media ownership is a powerful symbol of empowerment for US minority communities’ (Rodríguez, 1999: 62-3).

3.2 A short history of Hispanic television news

1. The manufacturing of pan-ethnicity

The historical context invoked above is important to understand the process by which Spanish-language television newscasts developed a Hispanic orientation, one that was based not on news fed from newsrooms and studios in Mexico City, and which did not carry the burden of being seen as unreliable. On June 1, 1981 the SIN network carried its first *Noticiero Nacional* or National Newscast, the first in history to be produced in the US for a Spanish speaking audience at the national level (Rodríguez, 1999: 79). The electronic inauguration was opened by then president of the US Ronald Reagan, who recognized – in English – ‘the growing influence of Hispanic citizens’ while reminding Supreme Court documents stating that ‘a free press stands as one of the great interpreters between the government and the people’ (Quoted in Rodríguez, *ibid.*).

SIN's replacement of Televisa's flagship newscast *24 Horas* (24 Hours) by *Noticiero Nacional* was a shrewd move from a commercial perspective. Economically, producing a news programme that targeted Latin American origin people in the US as a whole, rather than just Mexican-Americans, made sense and satisfied US Latinos' demands for representativity in the media. Interestingly, around the production of *Noticiero Nacional* gravitated the engineering of “Latino pan-ethnicity”, which became the A to Z of the Spanish-language media industry's commercial success in the country (Dávila, 2001; Mayer, 2003b; Rodríguez,

1999). Elaborating on the concept, Rodríguez explains that Latino pan-ethnicity elides ‘national identities with a Spanish-language-centered U.S. Hispanic one’ (1999: 49, 80). As a result, ‘Latino news emphasizes commonalities among Latinos, re-creating the ethnic group as a community of shared interests’ (ibid). She suggests that even though Latino pan-ethnicity is a contested notion in newsrooms, it is a force that defines the process of television news production. Rodríguez states that,

‘Latino panethnicity is implicit when Univision and Telemundo journalists produce stories about the Puerto Rican community in New York City for national broadcasts; the presumption is that Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles and Cuban Americans in Miami will also be interested in a story about their fellow Hispanics’ (ibid.).

As part of the engineering of Latino pan-ethnicity SIN hired professional journalists born in the US and trained in American newsrooms and universities. The demands of logistics and economics of news production, such as the requirement to broadcast television news for an audience located in different time zones, and the more varied air links to Latin America, made it a requirement for Univision to make its newscasts in Miami. When the decision was taken to move Univision’s national newsroom from Los Angeles to Miami in 1991, the then news director Guillermo Martínez entertained the idea of establishing national operations in Washington D.C., a neutral location which would convey the message of distance from “Mexican Los Angeles” and “Cuban Miami” (Rodríguez, 1999: 82).

Certainly, the transition from a Mexican-oriented SIN/SICC national television network to a pan-ethnic Univision was not without problems. Television newscasts in Spanish were at the heart of one of the bumpiest moments in that passage. After Televisa was forced to divest from SIN/SICC in 1986 it appointed one of its executives, Jacobo Zabłudovsky, to head its new Spanish-language international news channel ECO (Orbital Communication Company) in the United States. Televisa’s plan was that once ECO absorbed *Noticiero Nacional*’s staff, it would consolidate its competitive edge as one of the core vehicles of its internationalization strategy. ECO, ‘an early Spanish-language CNN’, was to be deployed in combination with Televisa’s cable network Galavisión in the US and to the rest of the Spanish speaking world via its privileged access to the PanAmSat consortium, the first US based private satellite system for international broadcasting (Sinclair, 1999: 107; 2005: 109).

Televisa's plans to bring in Zabludovsky to lead its US operations were however met by fierce opposition from *Noticiero Nacional*'s staff, who following the resignation of Cuban American Gustavo Godoy, the programme's first editorial director, moved to create Telemundo with the economic support of Reliance Capital. Telemundo began operations with three local stations in Los Angeles and with an association between Reliance's main stockholder Henry Silverman and the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) (Aredy, 1989). This lobby group has built its name around the purpose to increase the number and improve the roles of Latin American origin US citizens in the country's media industry. The relationship with the NHMC provided a perfect link to human resources that would get Telemundo going. Its first news programme *Telenoticias* was at the forefront of the new broadcaster's attempts to attract Spanish speaking audiences from different national origins all over the country. *Telenoticias* reflected the network's aim to build up a locally-produced stock of programming – which included *MTV Internacional*, an early-hour version in Spanish of MTV, and a soap opera named *Angelica Mi Vida*, centred around three families of Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican origin in the U.S (Constantakis, 1993: 41). Telemundo also sought to establish a model of content imports that was not over dependent on one single source, as was the case of the SICC/SIN system.

By 1990 the entire landscape of television in Spanish had been transformed as part of a multi-factorial process. First came in 1981 the replacement of *24 Horas*, a Mexican newscast, by *Noticiero Nacional* with which SICC/SIN would cater for a base of Spanish speaking viewers of different national origins while satisfying demands from the Hispanic lobby. Five years later, Televisa's unlawful ownership of SICC/SIN triggered the sale of most of its assets to Hallmark Cards and First Chicago Venture Capital for about \$300 million (Fox, 1997: 50-1). As Sinclair notes, behind the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) decision to enforce the law were economic reasons, as the rising numbers of Mexican-Americans and Latin American-origin people in general had made it clear that television for these audiences 'had become too much of a potentially profitable business to be left to *aliens*¹⁹ and Latinos: it was moving uptown from the ghetto, delivered by the FCC to the corporate mainstream of industrial and financial capital' (1999: 101). After the decision was upheld Televisa tried to reassemble its forces by bringing one of its own to lead its editorial staff, which in response left *en masse* to create Telemundo's news channel *Telenoticias*.

¹⁹ Sinclair uses the term "aliens" here in reference to a comment attributed to an FCC judge who had claimed that SICC/SIN's chairman Rene Anselmo was 'the representative of aliens'.

2. Producing news in Spanish

The developments occurring around the production of television news in Spanish in the 1980s and 1990s had put Univision and Telemundo in the national US spotlight. When SIN/SICC became Univision in 1988 its already Hispanic-oriented *Noticiero Nacional* was renamed by Hallmark as *Noticiero Univisión*. On the other hand and under brief control by CBS-Westinghouse, Telemundo's *Telenoticias* became *Noticiero Telemundo*.²⁰ What this highlights is the consolidation of Spanish-language newscasts as fully owned by US investors. It is also relevant in this context to note that news programmes such as *Noticiero Univisión* and *Noticiero Telemundo*, language aside, shared every element of the news formats established by major English-based broadcasting networks such as ABC, CBS and NBC. Reinforcing this point, a former president of Univision and then chairman of Telemundo said that for these firms to succeed 'a company must be an American television network that speaks Spanish, not a Latin American television network in the United States' (as quoted in Constantakis, 1993: 10). Rodríguez makes this point very eloquently, when writing that,

'The *Noticiero Univision* and CBS-*Telenoticias* are, without the soundtrack, indistinguishable from a general market news program: from the traditional attractiveness of the anchors, to the shots of Washington correspondents signing off in front of iconic buildings, to the "quick cut" pace of the editing, and the framing of head shots, the *Noticiero Univision* and CBS-*Telenoticias* look like U.S. news programs, which, after all, they are' (Rodríguez, 1999: 92).

In any case, Univision and Telemundo's operations had the challenge to address an audience on the basis of their commonalities – Spanish-language – while overlooking or playing down the distinctions amongst groups of different national origins (Rodríguez, 1999: 49-50). Since the early 1980s and aiming to prop up its commercial viability SIN/SICC, the predecessor to Univision, had adopted a discourse that emphasised the common Spanish heritage of its audiences. In the context of the new Univision a similar vision was articulated by Hallmark, which pursued a "Walter Cronkite Spanish" 'mode of address and house style of programming which minimized national cultural and linguistic differences' (Sinclair,

²⁰ Telemundo is now a property of media conglomerate NBC, which acquired the broadcaster in 2001 for \$2.7 billion from Sony and Liberty Media, which had themselves bought Telemundo in 1997 (Sutel, 2001).

1999: 104). Telemundo's news shows had on the other side been born out of the reluctance of professional journalists to being influenced by Televisa's political interests, which they felt compromised the objectivity and independence of its editorial judgement at the expense of Hispanic audiences. It was in this context that the production of news in Spanish needed to adapt traditional US mainstream news values and formats to, for example, a standardized form of Spanish-language. The latter avoided any traces of vernacular *Spanglish* – a combination of Spanish and English spoken regularly by US Latinos – or of Mexican-accented Spanish (Rodríguez, 1999: 89-90), which Univision's predecessor reproduced during its first 25 years of existence. Most importantly, the news agendas of these programmes needed to recreate Latin American origin peoples as legitimate actors in the US daily social, cultural, economic and political life.

The process of making commercially viable broadcasting operations was tied to the need of producing television newscasts which were of value in the context of realities that audiences face in the US. As Rodríguez (1999) valuable research reveals, media practitioners in Univision and Telemundo assumed the need for a pan-ethnic approach in the making of their newscasts. They also understood, however, that the identifications of Cuban-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Puerto Ricans to a particular country, their different class and education backgrounds, and their dissimilar contexts of settlement in the US were not to be erased simply on the basis of a shared language. On the contrary, when reporting on Latino issues or news developments deemed to be of relevance for the US Spanish-speaking audiences, these differences commonly appear as sources of tension amongst sub-national groups, and consequently newsworthy. This in turn plays out not in the direct reporting of those tensions but in a reinterpretation of the kind of news audiences are interested about.

This is how a bipolar orientation began to guide the works of the television newscasts, one pan-ethnic and one counter pan-ethnic. The former indicates that Latino audiences are more interested in questions pertaining the Hispanic community in the US and in news about Latin America; the latter signals that because differences between sub-national groups matter, there is need to report on subjects which are of particular importance for each of these. 'The counterpanethnic pole', Rodríguez explains (1999: 81), pulled journalist to produce stories about 'a more diversified imagined community of interest: Mexicans and border issues; Puerto Ricans and the island's referenda; Cubans and the Castro government'.

In the mainstream of marginalisation: an agenda of advocacy and service

It has been noted above that television news programmes in Spanish in the US tend to look and sound the way American mainstream news programmes do (Rodríguez, 1999: Ch. 4-5), while reflecting on Spanish-speaking public as a marginalised sector of the US population. Given the marginal position that Hispanic audiences – which critical mass numbers make them nonetheless attractive for mainstream advertisers – occupy in the eyes of the Latino elites who produce television news in Spanish, a discourse has developed that contests developments in the public sphere which are deemed as negative for Mexican-American audiences, and which get reflected in the coverage of television news. This conforms with the accepted notion that first the print press, later radio and now television news makers have segmented their audiences on the ‘strategic basis’ of marginality (Mayer, 2003: 3-4) felt for instance by Mexican-Americans in the US, and which has allowed media outlets to blaze a trail for the commercial viability of their media firms in US territory. Thus while English language newscasts, for instance, have been a platform US politicians use to advance populist anti-immigrant agendas (Gutiérrez, 1998: 317-8), Spanish-language newscasts frequently depict these as racist (Rodríguez, 1999: 46). The result is a news agenda that is ‘purposefully and strategically created for US residents of Latin American descent’ (p. 1), which ‘symbolically denationalizes Latinos as it renationalizes them as U.S. Hispanics’ (ibid.). Rodríguez contends that this brand of “Latino journalism”,

‘Does not melt or displace Latino cultures into the culture of the majority, dominant society, however. Rather, Latino newsmaking creates a detailed symbol system, a daily capsule of reality in which Latinos are seemingly everywhere: among the victims and witnesses of the Oklahoma City bombing, in Congress and city halls, in the professions as well as in the fields and factories’ (Rodríguez, 1999: 1).

3. Hybrid news

A “capsule of daily reality” where Spanish speaking peoples are protagonists is as a useful metaphor of what one can expect from Spanish-language newscasts. These will tend to reflect on a reality that is potentially important for Mexican-Americans, and which normally contains more stories about Mexico and Latin America than about any other part of the world, including the United States itself (Rodríguez, 1999: 92-95). There are no written rules for the daily output of these news shows, a clear sample of the hybridity that characterizes

them (Straubhaar, 2007). This said, a very *Latino* way of seeing lies behind catchy computer-generated graphics, punchy sound themes and state-of-the-art satellite links between studio sets and on-site locations. This Hispanic touch-and-feel, as opposed to the idealized neutrality (Hallin, 1994; Johnstone et al., 1972; Schudson, 2001) of English-language news shows, is laden with emotional footage, use of adjectives and claims in defence of the have-nots which, though exaggerated and sensationalist, convey a sense that what is being reported is truly important.

Rodríguez notes that in contrast to national newscasts in English those in Spanish are commonly characterized by a mode of address in the second person. Samples of this come up every day from the start of the shows, where names such as *Noticiero Univision* and *Noticiero Telemundo* will be prefixed with the pronoun *Su* (your), which links the discourse of ownership to that of belonging, in a way that ties the programmes to its audiences. A similar logic obeys the section *El Consulado a su lado*, literally “Consular office on your side”, a space that *Noticiero Univision* occasionally opens for the Mexican representation in Los Angeles so it can send information to the sector of the Mexican audience. This section includes reports about services and benefits made available to the Mexican population in the US. Whether in the singular or plural form newsreaders and reporters will generally address “you [the viewer or viewers]” to emphasise group cohesion and the fact that reporting angles and editorial decisions will be made in favour of the Spanish speaking audience. The point is clarified by a recent report on September 26, 2006, seemingly aimed at allaying tensions amongst black and brown inhabitants of a crime-ridden neighbourhood in Los Angeles after the killing of a three year old girl of Hispanic origin, allegedly shot by black youngsters. As *Noticias Univision*’s reporter Oswaldo Borraez put it:

‘Neighbours tell us they’re all hard working people, like you and like me. These are all families that try to live in peace, and who also cry (...) If you’re one of those people who gathers with their neighbours regardless of their skin colour they (the gangs) will become the minority, and you will have the support of the authority’ (Borraez, 2006).

Stories like these seem to be saying “this could happen to you”. It is the broadcaster’s self-appointed role of advocate of Hispanic audiences that endows it with the moral authority that makes the façade of quasi investigative journalism (Ettema & Glasser, 1988). Constant display of emotions, adjectives, and a direct form of address, however, do not necessarily erode the claims to objectivity invoked by Spanish-language newsmakers. While these

practices are obviously in tension with norms and journalistic values that impregnate the production of commercial mainstream television news in English (McChesney, 2004), they are explained by the mission that Spanish-language broadcasters have given themselves as advocates of Hispanic people. This puts them in a position to address audiences in a fashion they think their public understand, and compatible with the project to present a Latino perspective of life in the US.

As opposed to general market television newscasts, which as routine would tend to compete with each other to heighten the appeal of a particular story of national relevance, Spanish-language television shows need to reflect on happenings and events making sure Hispanics are the leading characters or the group affected by a certain development. The same newscast of *Noticias Univision* cited above was used for a viewing session of this project's fieldwork, and it serves as a good example of the point in question. The 6 o'clock show, which runs 30 minutes on weekdays prior to its parent newscast *Noticiero Univision*, featured as its main headline a story about a piece of metal from an airplane which had fallen into a Hispanic household near the Los Angeles airport. The piece of scrap had pierced the house's roof, landing in the living room; none of the household members had been present that day. After confirming that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had acknowledged the metal was indeed part of an airplane, a reporter interviewed the head of the family, who said he was considering filing a lawsuit against airline operators, and who had already contacted his insurer, which would pay for the damages.

This story went unreported by *Noticias Telemundo*, which that day opened its 6 o'clock newscast with a story about funding cuts for a hospital that provides health care for Hispanics and African-Americans in Los Angeles, a report which Univision included from a similar perspective but with less prominence than given to it by Telemundo. The fact that Univision put the scrap metal story as its main headline highlights the exclusivity of the news item, and underlines the fact that the newscaster operates under professional practices that inform newsmakers notions of how to stay ahead of its competitors. This exemplifies what makes a Spanish-language news programme both similar and different from its general market English-language peers.

Univision's second story in the same show was the one about the shooting of the three year old girl. Its sub-text seemed aimed at easing ethnic tensions, with the piece presenting interviews of black and Hispanic neighbours who called for unity and understanding. It included footage of policemen patrolling the area and of people laying flowers by a picture of the victim, but the positive note was overshadowed, the reporter claimed, by rising crime

rates which challenged people's willingness to improve relationships in the community. Another item focused on a press conference led by a Hispanic Army medic who faced prosecution in a military court, after he had declared himself as a conscious objector who refused being deployed for a second time in Iraq. The story was an opportunity for the medic to say he had already spent one year in Iraq, and that his decision for not going was out of political conviction rather than cowardice. Other stories that day included a report about the relaxation of security checks in US airports, raging fires in California's forests, a meeting of governor Arnold Schwarzenegger with Tibet's Dalai Lama and the beginning of a debate in the Senate about the proposal to lay a 700 miles long fence along the Mexico-US border.

4. A diasporic remit in commercial television?

Another dimension of *Noticias Univision* came to light in its newscast in the form of a service driven kind of remit. Next to the stories where Hispanics are the main actors is included information that is potentially valuable for Mexicans in particular and Hispanics in general. One example is a health feature, which tells audiences walking is not an exercise unless 'you do it with vigour'. The next report warns of an expected increase in water bills. At this point newsreader Raúl Peimbert addresses his imagined viewers directly recommending they make a conscious use of water. A third "service" item is about the availability of free tutorials open to elementary school students in Los Angeles. As a telephone number is put on screen Peimbert suggest viewers 'take advantage of this opportunity which may boost your children's future'. In the same tone the newsreader moves to provide information about a "citizenship fair" organized by Univision in Los Angeles Convention Center, where attendants may seek specialists advice about how to obtain a residence permit or how to apply for a citizenship. The special section "El Consulado a tu lado" is then announced by Teresa Quevedo, the female newsreader, with an intense drumming as background music. Named with a rhyming choice of words this is a space that Univision regularly opens to Mexico's Consular office. In this particular programme a minister appeared on camera from a studio in Los Angeles, where she invited the Mexican community to participate in the "Sixth Binational Health Week", which was to be held at the local consular section. There, free health services would be offered by government agencies which would give vaccinations to children, sight tests, dental cleaning, blood pressure, diabetes and cancer screenings, as well as acupuncture sessions. Specialist would also talk about nutrition, health insurance, and other information so 'Mexicans knew how to better stay healthy in this country'.

The host-land orientation of TV news in Spanish

At the same time that Spanish-language news manifest an agenda that prioritizes developments that affect the Mexican-American and Hispanic community in the US, special attention is devoted to news from Latin America. A study by Rodríguez (1999) found that over 45% of *Noticiero Univision's* news items were reports from the Latin American continent; a clear difference was found in the topics of ABC's *World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*, whose coverage of Latin America amounted to less than 2% of its stories. No effort has been made in this project to produce a systematic analysis of news output of television news in Spanish. A superficial observation leads to the impression, however, that while *Noticiero Univision* is heavily focused in Latin America its sister newscast *Noticias Univision* privileges news about Hispanics in the US. A similar trend can be spotted in the news programmes of Telemundo, which newscasts *Noticiero 52* and *Noticiero Telemundo* have respectively a bipolar concentration in both news from Latin America and reports about Hispanics in the US.

The inclination of Spanish television news to concentrate on news from Latin America goes down to two broad reasons. One of these is the fact that many journalists of either Univision and Telemundo were born in Latin America or have in the past worked for Mexican or Latin American broadcasters. They are therefore predisposed to consider developments in their countries as relevant and newsworthy. The other reason resides in the assumption made by Spanish television news producers that their audiences have an interest in such stories. What is relevant from this research point of view is related to what scholars in the US describe as the dual nature of "ethnic media". Constantakis (1993) uses this terminology to claim that Spanish-language media sustain viewers' process of adaptation to the US and their maintenance of cultural ties with their places of origin. This duality explains the fact that news agendas in Spanish-language television in the US are centred primarily in *Latino* subjects and in Latin American news developments. In this context what the news programmes of Univision and Telemundo would be doing is assuming the dual nature of immigrants, which Rodríguez says,

'Are between two countries, of two countries and not fully present in either. This is especially true of contemporary Latin American immigrants, many of whom, after settling in the United States, maintain close contacts with their native countries, in

many instances visiting frequently. Often this national duality is evidenced in the selection of the lead story for a given day's program' (Rodríguez, 1999: 101).

The notion of Spanish television news as "dual", despite its outdated connections to discourses of assimilation, is a productive link to the concept of diasporic media. The latter should not be understood in opposition to ethnic (Dayan, 1998; 1999; Karim, 1998; Naficy, 1993; 2003), or transnational (Chalaby, 2005) media, but adjusting to recent conceptualizations of what living in diaspora means. This conforms to the notion that immigrant communities can be conceptualized as diasporas to address the fact that they've been displaced by the forces of globalization and are therefore 'exemplary communities of the transnational moment' (Tölölyan, 1991: 4) whose life efforts are aimed at 'building homes away from home' (Clifford, 1994: 302). This perspective is compatible with the many dimensions that television news in Spanish reflect in regard to their audiences and contents, as already discussed, as well as in respect to the structures it relies on to produce versions of a reality that is relevant for transnational audiences.

The platforms of Spanish-language newscasts are determined by the objective to reproduce an imagined community which sources of material, emotional and symbolic meanings are located both in the Spanish speaking world in the US and in the countries that would allegedly be identified by viewers as their homeland (Rodríguez, 1999: 100). This explains why next to the prominence of local news, Univision and Telemundo newscast devote significant resources to include a flow of reports from Mexico and other countries of Latin America. As evidenced in most TV editions, stories from Latin America are normally presented by correspondents based in capitals like Mexico City, Lima, Caracas, Guatemala city or San Salvador. There tends to be a correlation between the size of a sub-national population in the US and the reporting of stories about their respective countries of origin. This is manifest in the number of stories per newscast, where Mexico regularly tops the number of headlines, and also in the formats of the programmes themselves. Telemundo's *Noticias 22* has, for example, a section of stories especially devoted to Mexico and Univision's *Noticias* has opened a special segment for Mexico's consular representation. When the scale of an event is prominent enough in countries such as Chile and Argentina, where the broadcasters do not have editorial staff, efforts will be made to deploy them, or footage and collaboration from other media staff will be sought. However, as Rodríguez notes (1999), staff is systematically deployed in capitals like Lima, Bogotá and Caracas, countries with relatively small diasporas in the US but where developments are generally

deemed newsworthy even by standards of mainstream news media. This in turn translates in an obligation of sorts that Spanish-language broadcasters have to provide first hand coverage of events in what can be seen as a natural extension of broadcasters' cultural linguistic markets (McAnany & Wilkinson, 1996), and explains why, for instance, they do not invest any resources in putting correspondents in the world's most important capital cities.

Special attention to news in Latin America does not mean that Spanish-language newscasts in the US are making any huge efforts to create connections between audiences and their homelands. Daily pressures to produce a television newscast leads to allocation of material and human resources that respond to commercial imperatives, rather than to any "diasporic ideal" in the production of television news. This translates into stories which one would not necessarily find as particularly relevant to viewers. This is so because coverage of each country is frequently reduced to one or two headlines, generally a digest of a certain development ranging from reports about electoral processes, urban skirmishes, natural disasters, features about child abuse, domestic violence and other items, generally problems which could eventually have a certain cultural resonance amongst audiences. Most regularly though, news stories are in relation to national politics, therefore not having any significant (Rodríguez, 1999: 102) 'bearing on an immigrant's life or that of his or her family in Mexico'. The fact then that television news in Spanish will tend not to include news about specific regions, towns and villages where immigrants come from is in turn a determinant reason of why the diasporic potential of these programmes should be assessed not in terms of how it connects viewers to a homeland but of what it does to enable their existences in the transnational social spaces they occupy. As a fieldwork participant put it,

'I never expect to find about my hometown in the news, it's too small (...) half of my friends from childhood are here (in Los Angeles) anyway, so I don't need the news to find what is happening there' (Female, 30, housewife).

The suggestion that transnational audiences do not necessarily expect to obtain information about their places of birth from television news emerged in several of the conversations maintained with fieldwork participants. In the "Consular Survey" that was conducted as part of this research project, this possibility emerged as a statistical statement, since 49 of 106 interviewed individuals claimed they wished more coverage from their hometowns were available, even if this meant having less information about developments in the local communities where they lived. By contrast, 68 respondents said they wanted more

local US-based stories. The idea that interpersonal networks of family and friends, as well as telephone conversations, were a more convenient way to gain awareness of developments in the homeland provides then a reason to look at television news as an instrument that diasporic and transnational audiences deploy to “look forward”, maybe always as symbolic resources to imagine the world, or to screen it in search of clues that bring predictability to daily life.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Research methods: notes from the transnational living room

1. What is in the methodology?

This thesis is the result of evidence obtained through a battery of qualitative research methods that focused on obtaining a first-hand registry of the television news reception of 67 participants in the fieldwork. With this in mind, the key data-gathering techniques on which this project is based were deployed in the homes of the informants, and included in-depth interviews, television news-viewing sessions followed by group or individual discussions, and diaries in which contributors kept reports of the stories they followed. While the diaries and the interviews were a part of the study's original design, the viewing sessions originated in response to early difficulties to capture the actual moment of TV news reception. With time and financial constraints, adaptations were made which resulted in 100,000 words of data representing the core of this project's findings. These adjustments will be discussed in this chapter, along with what should be a wholesome methodological reflection that will justify and validate my claims to knowledge contribution. First of all, one can simply define a methodology as 'the set of rules and principles that guides the investigation of a research topic' (Credo, 2001). It is also 'a way of thinking about and studying social reality' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 3), generally a process that involves 'a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analyzing data' (ibid.) relative to a particular phenomenon. The use of qualitative methodological techniques was central in revealing the link between television news reception and the transnational fields of action in which the informants of this project's investigation dwelled. Contrary to the focus on measurement and on probing relationships of cause and effect of quantitative research methods (cf. Gunter, 2002: 210-11) – predominant in audience research of immigrant audiences in the US in particular – the qualitative research process seeks to make sense of how human agents experiment social reality (Jensen, 2002: 236). This quest must be generally conducted against the 'naturalistic' settings of human agents. In qualitative academic endeavour "the domestic" has been thought as the naturalistic context *par excellence* in which the reception of media programmes, in particular of television news, ought to be explored (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999; Jensen, 1998; Lull, 1988; Morley, 1980; 1992; Morley & Silverstone; Silverstone, 1991; 1994). The importance of the domestic, from the point of view of this thesis, derived particularly from the fact that it

yielded data regarding informants interpretation of television news in relationship to their personal biographies. In this sense, the household provided a space in which individuals spoke freely to the researcher, while being highly reflexive about television news and how they saw these as affecting their lives. Notably, their views about journalistic reports revealed respondents locate themselves in a transnational space where a variety of local and global actors and processes interact to influence their very existences. This chapter aims to put in perspective the research strategy and methods that lead to our findings. As a first step a description of the process to access the research field will be given; this will be followed by an outline of the specific research techniques used to explore the television news-viewing of the participants, and then by an overview on the procedures for the analysis of empirical data.

2. Fieldwork in a nutshell

The research was carried out in Los Angeles between 28 June and 29 September 2006. It focused on obtaining evidence, especially of a qualitative nature, aimed at understanding the television news consumption of Mexican origin families and individuals in Los Angeles. Most of the participants were migrants to the US or were the children of Mexican immigrants. The fieldwork benefited from the participation of 67 informants in total, 53 of which were first generation individuals (born in Mexico), plus nine of the latter's young daughters and sons (second generation, born in the US), and four who had moved with their parents to the US from Mexico when they were younger than 5 years old (1.5 generation). Among the respondents there were 48 females and 19 males (see Appendix B).²¹ The research activities in the fieldwork were primarily of a qualitative nature, and included a wealth of data-gathering strategies. Adjustments emerged along the way as necessary, once the initial plan to rely mostly on participant observation emerged as unfit for purpose for reasons that will be explained later in this chapter. Additionally, a survey in the premises of Mexico's consular office in Los Angeles, where 2,000 individuals receive some form of service everyday (e.g. passports, identity cards, birth certificates, etc.), was successfully

²¹ An attempt to do statistical analysis of data from the table of fieldwork informants in the Appendix B has not been made, the reason being that the sample of fieldwork participants is not deemed representative of Mexicans in Los Angeles or in the US. For instance, while it could be interesting to know that the average age of fieldwork participants was 38 years, the fact that their ages oscillated between 15 and 75 years old makes the former figure irrelevant. To reinforce this point one can consider that the percentage of the Mexican origin population who is between 35 and 44 years old in the US is less than 15 percent – according to official figures – whereas in our sample, the percentage of informants in that age range was above 23 percent.

completed. This part of the research has not been incorporated to the methodology as it does not connect directly to the core of the empirical investigation, and has been used only as a complement in some parts of the thesis. In sum, the research methods yielded a) 25 audio-taped interviews and television news-viewing sessions; b) 25 television news diaries; c) a survey of media consumption answered by 106 respondents; d) eight videotaped structured interviews to survey respondents; e) a screening survey, and an initial phase based on note-taking and video-recordings. Data analysis was completed on over 100,000 words worth of material contained in nearly 40 hours of audio-taped interviews, 12 hours of video recorded sessions and 521 diary entries (Appendix C).

In all, members from 67 different households contributed with varied levels of involvement. For instance, while 55 TV news diaries were initially placed in an equal number of households only 26 were finally retrieved, one of which was discarded. In this context, not all households who returned the diary participated in a news-viewing session, and not all households who contributed an interview kept a diary. In total, 26 families or households opened their homes for an interview and a television news-viewing session, but only heads of families in 11 households were willing to participate in all the fieldwork activities.²² Such uneven rate of participation was compensated by some reassuring links and correspondence between data from the different activities, a result which is well grounded in the ethnography-friendly strengths of reception analysis (Jensen, 1998: 12; Morley & Silverstone, 1991: 157). The positive points of this projects' methodology lie particularly on the combination of various research instruments, which, as Morley and Silverstone explain 'guard against the risks of ecological invalidity' (ibid.) posed by approaches that depend on one-dimensional sources of empirically obtained information.

3. Grooming the field: screening and snowballing as an entry strategy

Some basic questions regarding the design of the study, and the sampling procedure followed to "recruit" viable research subjects should be considered before addressing the research methods in full. At the beginning of the project it was decided that informants had to be born Mexicans or born to Mexicans; at the same time they had to be household decision-makers or with enough authority to grant the researcher access to their homes; it was equally important

²² See Table 4.1 on page 156.

that they declared themselves to being frequent viewers of television news. These elements constituted the point of departure to explore the research hypotheses. A central question leading the way to the field had been primed by the notion that audiences of a diasporic type deploy communication media as resources that could help them as immigrants whose lives were characterized by overlapping processes of ‘cultural maintenance and negotiation, or resistance and adaptation’ (Cunningham & Sinclair, 2001: 4). Focusing on Mexicans made sense as they constitute the majority group amongst the US largest ethnic minority, as well as the largest source of immigrants to that country (see Chapter 2). At the same time, fieldwork in Los Angeles granted a presence in the largest “Mexican” city in the United States, where access to potential participants and their naturalistic contexts could be more viable. On the other hand, Los Angeles could be well defined as a Mexican ‘geolinguistic region’ (Sinclair, 1996; 2000), given the vast availability of Spanish-language media content. Despite the growing importance of Spanish-language media in the United States as a whole their availability is rather limited in areas of the country other than the major cities with Hispanic populations (Subervi & Ríos, 2005: 38). Los Angeles was then perfect to test the extent to which international broadcasters such as Televisa are able to create language-based imagined communities for migrants to enter at will into the cultural space of their homelands (De Santis, 2003; Sinclair, 2000, 2005). In this context, and against my initial expectations, most of those who participated in the fieldwork were inclined to keep up with news programmes produced by the US-owned Spanish broadcasters Univision and Telemundo, manifesting indeed very little interest for the more Mexico-oriented reports of Televisa and TV Azteca’s news shows. Certainly, this does not deny the importance that the transnationalization of media content has in terms of easing what Robins and Aksoy characterize as ‘the migrant’s experience of cultural separation’ (2005: 86), but it may work as an indicator of the heavy significance that dislocated communities and individuals give to news which are directly linked to their local concerns, thus driving attention to tensions and contradictions inherent to the diasporic experience. This underlines the close relationship between methodological decisions, such as the geography where audience reception is to be conducted, and their theoretical implications (Jensen, 2002: 239, 272).

For the moment, the question of how participants joined this project’s fieldwork activities needs more attention. “Grooming” the field with that purpose started by devising an entry strategy which would allow deployment of the research methods upon arrival in Los Angeles. Such need came in the face of significant time and money constrains, and the fact that the researcher had never been to Los Angeles. This alone, as well as the difficulties of

moving in the hectic Californian freeways increased the possibility of delays in the process of recruiting volunteers. Clearly, the biggest challenge was to establish a base of respondents who would open their homes and lives to a stranger. A snowballing based sample, which relies on one initial contact with an informant who in turn leads to other contacts (Gunter, 2002: 239), seemed the best approach to overcome such an obstacle. This seemed a sound decision given that the characteristics of the study required access to a social circle from which to start “rolling the ball”. This made someone else’s social resources indispensable to ensure research activities would be started immediately after getting to the field. The mission was partly enabled by Adela, my key contact in Los Angeles. Despite a very limited past relationship she was willing to connect the researcher to her network of relatives and friends. Her role in the fieldwork was instrumental as an entry strategy, this is the planning phase of the research which ‘builds a particular set of social relations between researchers and informants in a designated time and space’, thus constituting ‘a temporary structure for preparing and reflecting upon new knowledge’ (Gunter, 2002: 237). Prior to arrival in the field, the contact facilitated distribution of a pilot survey (Appendix C) through which theoretical constructs were anticipated, as well as logistic and procedural challenges which seemed likely to emerge in the course of gaining access to fieldwork contributors. With the purpose to gain knowledge of the microcosm to be found and nearly three months before landing in Los Angeles, Adela applied 100 questionnaires which, among other things, explored the frequency with which potential fieldwork informants followed television news, their preferred news programmes, viewing schedules, available television technologies, etc. As a first step, 20 pilot questionnaires were applied to test their efficacy. Once the experiment proved helpful other 80 questionnaires were administered in a period of eight weeks prior to my arrival in Los Angeles. I applied other 30 questionnaires in meetings with families whose responses would later be used as support during the interviews and news-viewing sessions.

The contribution of this survey was largely of a logistical nature. It effectively allowed forging a mental profile of probable fieldwork informants. Likely contributors were pictured as keeping up especially with Spanish-language television news. A notion of their access – or lack of it – to cable, satellite television and the Internet was also derived from the survey, which also gave clues about viewing schedules, favourite programming, etc. The surveyed addresses granted as well priceless insight on their residential locations especially in East Los Angeles, which yielded knowledge of the city’s urban geography when traced with search engines, maps and satellite imagery made available by Internet based information providers, Google and Yahoo. Despite the effort, errors rendered the survey too flawed to be

a relevant part of the study's findings, especially because it was too much of a "social" survey considering it had been conducted mainly among the pollster's friends and relatives, some of who were related individuals living in the same domicile. This is why use of the data gathered in the "screening" survey has been mostly ignored. Nevertheless the instrument provided names, and telephone numbers corresponding to nine of the total 26 households involved in the project. The activities engaged in the process to run the "screening" survey were however useful in that they lead the way to a respondents-recruiting strategy which kept the researcher from "parachuting" blindfolded into the field.

There was a need to find more people willing to volunteer with the research tasks, especially because the initial social snowball stopped growing soon. During the first three weeks in Los Angeles efforts to grow the base of respondents consisted on knocking doors near the investigator's first "home" in Los Angeles. This was a room rented to a single mother in Huntington Park, a densely inhabited Hispanic city in South East L.A. Neighbours in every house in two contiguous street blocks were approached. Only four new families got on board, one of which decided to withdraw a few days later after a housewife said her husband told her to quit. With no landline telephone or Internet, and with only a prohibitively expensive UK mobile, it was getting difficult to coordinate visits to contributor's homes. On the other side the let accommodation – with temperatures approaching 40 degrees Celsius, furnished with only one bed, a plastic chair and a drawer – was inadequate for research work. It was clear a more suitable space was needed to do the job. Thus search started for a room in South Central Los Angeles in the area surrounding the University of Southern California (USC), which had already provided me a library visitor's pass thanks to a professor who taught about ethnic media, whom I had previously contacted from London. Using a website of classified ads I found a spacious room with a large desk, wireless broadband and air conditioning in a large house owned by a Salvadoran entrepreneur who rented rooms in his property to USC students. A mobile telephone under a pay-as-you-go scheme was bought, and a one-month contract for a rental car was signed. Both telecoms and a vehicle were indispensable instruments for fieldwork in a vast metropolis that required constant driving to East and South Central L.A., as well as to the neighbouring Orange and San Bernardino counties, where other four contributing households were later added to the project.

The new headquarters made it easier to continue scouting for fieldwork contributors, a task which took up to six hours everyday beginning early in the morning. Afternoons were used to visit the households that had already joined the study. I started the job once more by

knocking on new neighbours' doors and by intercepting people at the University Village, a convenience mall across the USC campus. The stores there attracted students as well as large numbers of Mexican shoppers and workers who lived nearby. In four days the number of diary-keepers had doubled to 25. By the end of the first month, that number had risen to 40 after I approached Mexican origin personnel at USC, including two staff managers, an MA student and a PhD scholar, three clerks and nine custodians. Some 40 days after landing in L.A. all 55 diaries had been placed in an equal number of households. Opportunities to add a new line to the list of participants were always taken. Potential prospects were approached and referrals asked from those on board, but at the moment full-time concentration could be given to running the actual audience research activities.

Some effort should be made here to address the non-probabilistic sampling used as a strategy to have people get on the project. On a first impression basis one could tag these participants as part of a convenience sample because of the way in which they were recruited. By intercepting them at a mall or at their workplace it could seem there was no criteria to include them in the fieldwork other than the fact that they were 'available, convenient to access and prepared to participate' (Gunter, 2002: 216). Against this one would argue that the austere approach to recruiting peoples by knocking at their doors or by sheer verbal approach along their pathways does not necessarily make a sample convenient. This is so because there is a selection process. Simple as the mechanism was it created a filter to sift out the adequate from the inadequate. In this context, every time potential participants at the mall were intercepted, say an adult couple with kids, I would be facing them with a friendly attitude and asking something like: "Excuse me, how frequently do you watch television news?". An answer such as "I never see the news" would always be followed by good bye greetings. On the other side, getting an "everyday" or "very frequently" for an answer was a cue for the researcher to introduce himself, which was accompanied by putting a TV news diary in their hands. Later on they received an explanation about an academic research that was being conducted at a university in London, which sought to understand the TV news Mexican people followed, as well as their interest in news about Mexico's presidential election. Knocking at people's doors took a similar approach except for the fact that I had to introduce myself first, and while in several occasions they simply shut the door nearly 10 households joined the research in such a way.

Obviously, there were risks in assuming people would be suitable contributors even if they showed themselves open to cooperate upon interception. Actually, once they said they would cooperate the need for them to receive me in their homes was stressed. Equally so,

they were told, in the kindest possible way, they were expected to take care of the handbook and to return it in one piece one month later. Given the results, partial success may be claimed, since, as already suggested, less than half of the diaries were retrieved, while not every diary-keeper participated in the rest of the study activities. The point being made here is that while many of the contributors were randomly intercepted it was their claims to be frequent consumers of television news which constituted them, and the people they lived with, as viable research subjects. In this way the sampling was of a non-probabilistic, 'purposive' (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003: 88) nature, but more importantly perhaps theoretical in scope (Jensen, 2002: 239). This claim comes from the reason that I had made the choice to conduct the research in Los Angeles, which *a priori* visualized potential participants as subjects in transnational social fields who were likely to be in contact with Mexican migrants, to cook and eat traditional Mexican food, to travel south of the border, to use Spanish-language for their domestic interactions, etcetera, thus being part of a cultural space that is generally out of hand for immigrants who experience deeper levels of separation from their homeland. Simply put then, fieldwork contributors were the product of theoretical sampling, rather than purely a snowball rolled along a pathway of convenience.

Having placed the majority of the news diaries, most resources in time and energy were put to make sure that at least one fieldwork session would be conducted everyday at any of the contributing households. Some days two and even three visits were completed, and these compensated for those days in which a meeting could not be scheduled. Most of the meetings took place in the afternoon as people were generally reluctant to have meetings in the morning. On the other hand this was convenient since one key aim was to conduct sessions with the largest possible number of household members, most of who were only available until the afternoon or the evening. Getting to set a time table for meetings was in itself a task that consumed significant amounts of time on the phone, while creating tensions with some people who probably felt they were being pressed too hard to participate. At some point I was calling participants twice a week to ask how they were doing with the diaries, as well as to agree on the time and date for the fieldwork sessions. After reaching an agreement I would call them sometimes a day or even a few hours in advance to remind them of the visit. Such insistence appeared as necessary after I was stood up a couple of occasions in which participants had failed to be in their homes at the time agreed. Because of the difficulties to get actual access to the homes of the informants both the interview and television news-viewing dynamics were all carried out in one single visit.

4. Reproducing the moment of television news reception

Having described a basic road map to the design of this study and to the process of getting access to a relevant universe of informants this discussion will now focus on the research methods. The television news-viewing sessions will be discussed first as they were the ones which yielded the more immediate form of data providing an idea of what television news meant for my informants. This activity, put in practice by Morley's canonical *The Nationwide Audience* (1980) study, took around 40 minutes during which respondents were asked to sit and watch a pre-recorded news programme. After the viewing I would request each participant to pick on the story they considered to be the most relevant, and to argue their choices with each of the other members in the family. The purpose of this viewing session (Appendix C)²³ was to actually get a hold on the reflections that individuals made about the headlines – their sense making – but also to recreate a situation of verbal exchange which would reveal the content of household relationships in the understanding that television is an extension of domestic life (Lull, 1980; 1988) where convergent and divergent opinions and behaviours are likely to emerge.

This exercise triggered some of the most meaningful and productive tasks of my research in Los Angeles. This was so because they allowed reproducing the moment of television news reception in a way that would have taken several months to accomplish had such artifice (cf. Livingstone, 1998: 1) not been drawn upon. It was important to identify the actual moment when respondents “received” the news because, as Roger Silverstone suggested, it is necessary to understand the location of television audiences in respect of televisual space (1994: 132), if one is ‘to understand television’s role in everyday life’ (ibid.). The late scholar’s concern is with the academic contentious which constantly wrestles over the best ways to understand audiences, losing ‘sight of the audience itself, perversely preferring methodology to substance’ (ibid). Sonia Livingstone strikes the same chord when she notes that thick attention on the contexts of television-viewing is taking place in neglect of the intersection between audiences and audiovisual texts, which enables understanding of ‘the construction and reproduction of cultural meanings’ (1998: 171). Reception analysis, the

²³ See Appendix C for the base script in English of this fieldwork activity. The researcher never made a script in Spanish for this fieldwork activity and chose to translate instead from the script made for the study-design. Viewing-sessions were divided in three moments: viewing of a pre-recorded television news programme, a discussion where each family member argued about the stories they considered to be the most important in the block, and an in-depth semi-structured interview.

approach on which this case study is based, has to draw on a methodology of ‘audience-cum-content (...) which emphasizes qualitative inquiry into the processes of interpreting and applying media contents in everyday social contexts’ (Jensen, 1998: 10).

There is clearly a lot more to audience research than the instant where contents are received. Morley and Silverstone (1991) have made a forceful case to frame viewing as an activity within activities that develop as part of daily routines. The premise, the theorists point, is to be tested necessarily in “natural”, domestic settings where television use takes place, which is indispensable to observe degrees of attention and commitment of viewers with the content on the screens, the activities in which they engage as programmes run, their interactions, and inputs to the process from communication technologies. Approaching the fieldwork through these lenses made things instantly difficult for reasons that echo with empirical breakthroughs now established as conventions of sorts. For instance, television is frequently but a flickering presence to accompany the frantic pace of domestic chores (Hobson, 1980; Gauntlett & Hill, 1999); it is a resource that individuals draw on for family interactions (Lull, 1980), and to establish forms of mutual understanding (Corner, et al., 1990). In the fieldwork it was indeed recognition of complex household relationships and activities that unfurl along televisual space, which emerged as the main obstacle to gaining knowledge of what television news meant for my contributors. However, given the nature of a research project which aimed at understanding what television news contributes to the experience of migrant, diasporic communities, an eye must be kept on questions that went to the very moment of reception in order to analyze how my respondents made sense of television news. This links to the idea that audience reception focuses on ‘interpretative processes’ to be located ‘within the context of domestic, cultural, discursive and motivational processes which both precede and follow viewing’ (Livingstone, 1998: 174).

Refitting the methodology for purpose

Before I got to be able to observe my fieldwork contributors actual moment of television-news-viewing, how ever, the original plan to deploy the methodology had to be refit for purpose. This came clear soon after landing in Los Angeles. My primary contact in Los Angeles had talked a step sister into receiving me in her home in San Bernardino County, nearly a 90 minutes drive from Los Angeles County. My host had been born in Nicaragua to my contact’s Mexican father, and lived for years in Mexico since she was a teenager. Four days in the San Bernardino household were fruitful in the sense that fieldwork activities could

be started immediately and that two of my host's neighbours had accepted to keep TV news diaries, but yielded disappointing results in the sense that household members there were tuning in the news mostly at my request. Attention was loose when someone tuned in. The note-taking got filled with rather irrelevant remarks as the moment of news reception was frequently drowned by the indoors dynamics of household activities, shopping trips, and chit-chat about video rentals and car accidents in the neighbourhood. A strategy was in order as I was rapidly becoming a participant in the family circle, or just a visitor to treat with food and drink, which made up for a lack of scholarly purpose.

Acquiring a video-camera brought about some structure to the observation routines, as the awareness of being recorded motivated my hosts to discuss their news programmes preferences, their opinions about public affairs in California and Mexico. Still, the moments of news-viewing were limited and interspersed with domestic chores, and the video-camera's memory was filling up with what I saw as academically irrelevant footage. Strangely enough, my hosts somehow managed to keep an awareness of the news agenda, as they exchanged opinions about a political standoff developing in Mexico as result of a heavily contested presidential election on the 2nd of July 2006. Such talk was intertwined with everyday experiences and concerns: one sister had to be driven back to Mexico as her six month leave to remain in the US was about to expire; someone had witnessed a car accident in which a teenager had died; the eldest daughter's vehicle had broken down and required a ride to her workplace; a meeting with a lawyer had to be scheduled as to go ahead with someone's divorce process and so the list went on. After leaving my hosts in San Bernardino my contact and I drove her truck to East Los Angeles. She had contacted a friend of hers who received us in her home on my first Wednesday in Los Angeles.

Upon arrival and not surprisingly, the living room which connected to the area of reception provided a picture that threatened with becoming the norm: a large screen television set tuned in the news, in front of which lied a comfortable looking though empty family-sized couch. The housewife there was in the kitchen cooking dinner while her husband played with his one year old grand-daughter. At the order of their mother the two daughters, 18 and 16 respectively, came out from their room to greet me. One had a wireless IBM laptop on her hands while the other had a wireless telephone set. They soon went back to carry on with their communication activities in the room they shared. A four-hour stay that day delivered some similar results to the ones previously obtained. After 15 days visits had been paid to six families in several occasions which had apparently produced material of little scholarly value. The video-recording contained mostly footage of people's domestic routines

who would not sit to watch the news. With fieldwork visits frequently ending at a table where dinner was shared, however, the impression was reinforced in the sense that the actual moment of television news reception was missing. A pattern was taking form, though, as my hosts' table talk was interspersed with random comments about news events, also mixed with personal anecdotes and opinions. That night, the husband said something that was both worrying and intriguing:

'Normally I pay very little attention to the news, it's only scary stuff, things that affect us, so I see them on the side, like pretending I'm not really there so I won't be too worried. Then at night we [my wife and I] tune in but at a very low volume, sometimes a story gets our attention, but most frequently it (the news) ends up as lullaby' (Family visit, July 5, 2006).

My host's words caught my attention for two reasons. One was that I had found his "lullaby" metaphor colourful; the other, most importantly, was out of concern that given their hectic time schedules most peoples' actual news consumption would be taking place by bed time, thus complicating my way to assessing their actual engagements with their news "diets". I even considered the possibility to request access to their bed rooms, but then thought twice, considering perhaps that most of the people I had met couldn't "seriously" be considered as members of a news-viewing audience. That couldn't be correct either, since during visits there had been clear indications that respondents were indeed having an in-take of current affairs stories. The man's account attested to the fact that even if he thought the news were scary he was there, by the TV screen, paying very little attention as when he was giving child-talk to his grand-daughter (see Bausinger, 1984), simultaneously absorbing small doses of the news prattle. At one point he said:

'You should never take the news too seriously, see what happens? Take a look at Mexico, they're crying electoral fraud, what news is that for us? It's the same old story, isn't that why we left in the first place?' (Family visit, July 5, 2006).

These remarks were in relation to the first reports that a Mexican left-wing presidential candidate was planning street protests to contest the outcome of a national election that would give a cliff-hanger victory to his opponent from the conservative, incumbent party. Far from surprised with this rather "normal-among-Mexicans" political

cynicism, it was a good signal that after all my host did keep up with the TV news. Only thing is it was necessary to find when that happened. Frustrated about the impossibility to capture the actual moment of television news reception, but reluctant to base the fieldwork only on in-depth interviewing of contributors TV news consumption, it came clear conditions similar to the actual reception experience had to be reproduced. Aware that I could not ask my hosts to interrupt their daily activities to watch the news at their normal broadcasts schedules, a system of appointments was put in place. In these meetings household members would commit between 60 and 90 minutes to participate in a session in which they would watch pre-taped news programmes, then followed by a simple family dynamic of news discussion, and by an interview aimed to dig deeper into the part that television news had in participants' lives.

The exercise thus went on taking form in the following way: after the viewing, respondents would choose what they considered to be the most relevant news story of the programme; they would then provide an argument that was explanatory of their choices. When family members disagreed with their relatives' news choices they would have to defend their positions and try to reach consensus. All sessions were recorded in a digital video camera and have been stored in DVDs. In order to run the viewing sessions a 14 inches television set with an integrated VCR was bought and used to record the news programmes and for the viewing sessions. Many of the contributors did not own video recorders and if they did, they were either broken or gathering dust in a closet after having been replaced by DVD players. This methodological strategy allowed to finally capture viewers' contact with the news, bringing about new questions. As I planned schedules for the meetings I asked contributors what were the channels and programmes they kept up with, to make sure the recordings would match their news programme preferences, which tilted heavily on the side of channels Univision and Telemundo. The TV current affairs shows were taped one day prior to the meetings, in order to insure for the currency of the news headlines.

5. A focus on lived experiences

I had initially planned for part of the viewings to focus on the same programme but soon went for a different approach when participants were telling me off for using up their time to show them "old news". This was actually a serious reproach I received in the first four pre-

taped showings. From the second interview I had opted to bring both an outdated (at the time only a couple of days old), and the latest recording, but from the fifth visit I then reduced the sessions length to viewings of the more current recording. This was so because people were raising eyebrows over the unusual amounts of time they were spending sitting in front of a screen at times of the day in which they needed to complete other duties, or simply to relax.

The decision to show a different programme in every visit may raise objections given that it precluded the possibility of comparing the interpretations respondents made of the same text, thus being able to draw correlations in a way that would allow for generalizations about the television news consumption of contributors as members of an interpretative community. This was undesirable though, because the focus on the decoding practices of respondents was aimed not at finding a relationship between their national origins or ethnicity with the ‘cultural codes’ they used to make sense of the news. In other words, the priority was not aimed to find whether some master categories could explain informants’ views about current affairs as framed in the news. While the sessions of TV news-viewing were similar to Morley’s recordings of *Nationwide* (1980) shows, the interest here was in learning not about ‘cultural codes’ as pertaining to class or race positions, but on the intertwining of news contents with real-life situations; with how people use the news to explain the world outside from an angle that is significant for them. The purpose of the research aimed at understanding forms of reception that articulate media texts with lived experiences. In this context, respondents’ decoding of the news must ideally yield a ‘viewer’s story’ in terms of “super-themes” (Jensen, 1998) which ‘can be seen to mediate between viewers and story by translating a reality that appears complex and distant into simple, general and personally meaningful terms’ (p. 19). Doing this, on the other hand, did not depend on measuring contributors’ comprehension, or interpretation of journalistic accounts (e.g. Lewis, 1985). Such efforts would imply an attempt to evaluate peoples’ news intake as though it were a test to be approved only through the positivist reading of fixed, closed meanings of news discourses. On the other hand, bringing the most updated recordings to the viewing dynamics created a certain atmosphere of authenticity, as it generally made room for participants to reflect on the day-to-day developments of a given story. An example of what is meant here is provided by a building sub-contractor, who in criticizing the coverage of the presidential election in Mexico complained that Univision, the largest Spanish-based broadcaster, was too reliant on the news feeds from its Mexican parent company Televisa. He said:

‘I hope they come up with something new, they’ve been giving too much attention to the protests in the streets in the last days, but nothing about the things that matter, they’re not telling us what the electoral law says, who is right or who is wrong? for instance, and the problem is that they just put out Televisa’s footage but with the local newsreaders’ (Family visit, July 15, 2006).

Two issues are at stake in the last quote. One points to the value that viewers attribute to having the latest news and the other to a certain awareness regarding the technical aspects of news production, with a specific focus on the time lags between the occurrence of an event and its transmission. What this suggests is that frequently respondents seemed conscious that, except for live broadcasts, the news reports of television were never one hundred percent “fresh”, an aspect they were frequently keen to pick on. In the case above, the respondent blamed Univision’s failure to address matters of electoral law, but the reason at the heart of this was Univision’s reliance on another broadcaster’s footage, rather than poor overall quality of the news program, or a lack of professionalism. What is meant here is that just as viewers took pleasure on getting the latest news they as well enjoyed drawing on their understanding of the news production process in order to provide explanations of why a certain story was no longer news. Thus while the exercise of viewing pre-recorded news was a set up, it allowed participants to engage in such reflections, and even to experience household situations, like sitting with other family members to watch the same programme at the same time and location in the house. Thus, while some were aware the news they would be watching were “old news” they were also willing to make the best out of it. As one housewife said:

‘I’ve avoided the TV all day because you were coming and turned on the radio for music instead. That kept me less distracted, it gave me time to prepare lunch and dinner, I did some cleaning and even managed to finish the laundry, but now I’m ready for my news’ (Household visit, July 17, 2006).

At the same time that participants were ready to adapt the viewing session as part of their news daily intake, the point should be made that the research methods were aimed at gathering evidence of as many different examples of television news reception, and in as many different settings as I could possibly obtain. It was difference and variety, instead of similarity and reproducibility, which would provide a wide range of views on how the

experience of television news is lived by Mexican origin people in the US. In achieving this, the uniformity of the news recordings used for the part of the methodology in question was rather unimportant.

6. Talking the news: the tacitly present in what is out of sight

News-viewing sessions have been a successful research method because they enabled to capture the moment in which people engaged with texts as readers (Livingstone, 1998), but also because of the consequences such engagements triggered in the data-gathering sessions as a whole. It may seem a contradiction that so much importance is accorded to the actual moment of news reception while on the other hand claims of giving high value to the dynamics that take place around and beyond television-viewing are made. It is true that fieldwork visits were limited to a viewing session and an interview, at the expense of making a better effort at keeping a good record 'of the context of actions and their embedding in the fabric of everyday life' (Morley & Silverstone, 1991: 154). The researcher chose to cut some slack to demands of providing 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) as a tactical choice aimed at delimiting the portion of reality that was to be kept under observation (cf. Morley & Silverstone, 1991: 155). In this sense, given that access to people's homes had already been gained, it became necessary to close in onto the reception of television news and to exploit that angle to obtain other forms of evidence which would expand understanding of how television news could reflect on contributors' daily lives. This purpose was in a way achieved by having news-viewing sessions followed by an in-depth interview, which in a sense combined open and closed research strategies (ibid.) in order to get a hold on as many sources of meaning as were possible to obtain in regard to the equation television news/everyday life. In the face of serious time constraints, meetings had to be made as productive as possible, especially because in most cases I never ceased to be an outsider who asked not always discreet questions and who put a video camera on people's living-rooms (cf. Bourdieu, 2003[1973]). In other words, one had to be very specific in what to look for, rather than allowing for the chance of being blinded by *some playful encircling* (cf. Bausinger, 1984: 347) of sources of meaning which were not immediately related to the reception of television news. As Bausinger wrote, it is important 'to relate (...) theorization to empirical data, produced however by forms of empirical research in which qualitative

methods predominate—participant observations, introspections, depth interviews, case studies, etc.’ (ibid.).

As previously indicated then, stitching the news-viewing sessions to the interviews permitted to create a sense of continuity. This helped to “buy” more of the informants’ time to continue gathering empirical evidence which built on the momentum that had been achieved with the television-viewing sessions. This had created an atmosphere of importance that participants seemed to attribute to the setting (e.g. a video camera on a tripod placed out of sight, finding a spot for the TV/VCR combo, having an unusual family gathering headed by a researcher, etc). More importantly, these family dynamics became energized by the kinds of interactions in which family members engaged when making points about why the news items they had chosen were more important than others, or equally telling, when reaching agreement from the very beginning or after an argument. The conversations entered by family members during the news discussions and then in the interviews were in a sense revealing of dynamics that, though out of sight, were tacitly present.

Issues of hierarchy in the transnational living room

The notion one aims to put forward is that while the orientations of informants regarding public affairs and other news developments were of interest for this project, the surrounding under and overtones were more telling of the wider conducts and practices that are inherent to a household’s life. In these terms, a number of observations can be made, for instance, about the destabilization of hierarchies and relationships of power that transnational families have gone through. This is manifest in living rooms where fathers are far from having the last word when it comes to choosing, for instance, what channels and programmes are seen. Thus instead of males imposing the rules of family television-viewing (Morley, 1986), the contexts of transnational living rooms are characterized by daughters, for instance, who are normally better schooled and with incomes higher than those of their progenitors. With a more solid standing those traditional hierarchies are subverted, with household members who would have been in a subaltern position to that of a male head of family, challenging the attitudes and opinions of males (e.g. the father) on a daily basis. At the same time, as this example suggests, the idea that television programming is gendered, in that for instance wives watch soap operas while husbands keep up with the news (Gray, 1992; Hobson, 1982; Radway, 1984), is in need of reconsideration. A daughter whose preference of English-language TV news is connected to her professional interests and who only sees Spanish-language news

shows to spend time with her father, suggests that family life – both at the national and transnational level and as understood by media studies – is in need of reassessment. Testing such perspectives is in order not to simply spot *new* patterns of media consumption or to further the debate about ‘the inequities that come with being female’ (Wood, 2005: 1-2), but because it makes clear that analysis of television consumption does indeed reflect on social and cultural developments at large (cf. Lull, 1988: 240).

In a way, the methodology that was put in practice in Los Angeles was designed to generate a stream of responses that participants would associate with their own routines as viewers of television news. At the same time, by obtaining their considerations in a dynamic that involved their relatives they would necessarily bring in aspects of their normal family interactions, creating an atmosphere of meaning that pertains to the social life of the household. After analyzing fieldwork information certain patterns of communication have become more salient, for instance the destabilization of power relations between genders noted above. This is pointed out in order to underline the importance of the news-viewing sessions not just as a fieldwork practice that revealed how respondents make sense of television news, but because of the situations of communications they triggered. What is being conveyed here is that even though fieldwork activities were not specifically devised to keep a strict record of the routine behaviours surrounding television news (cf. Lull, 1987: 320), the deployed research methods were aimed at digging into the part that television news have in everyday life. Thus the news-viewing sessions and the ensuing discussions were aimed at enabling a situation of verbal exchange between individuals who lived in the household, which would eventually reveal aspects about the nature of the relationships that they were likely to have on a day-to-day basis. Rather than staying several days in each house to gain access to such empirical material I had decided to base observations at a specific location of the naturalistic context: the space of the television set. This observation strategy would enable a focused enquiry of the social uses of television and of the ways in which these reveal ‘the extensions of the personal and social positions and roles of family members’ (Lull, 1988: 237), thus making visible in a short visit what would have taken weeks or months to visualize using non-participant observation methods.

7. Interviews: digging beyond reception

Having obtained access to people's homes it was necessary to also enquire on matters which had remained in a blind spot during the news-viewing sessions, and which were of particular concern for this project. This meant asking people, for instance, how important it was for them to keep up with the news, what kind of other media technologies they used for such or any other purpose, how they kept an awareness of developments in Mexico, or how they maintained contact with their relatives back home. Interviews were based on a script open to new questions when necessary (Appendix C). Upon arrival to people's homes the "screening" survey mentioned before would be quickly applied. Answers would then be used to support parts of the interview, for instance, saying something like: 'You indicated in the survey that you travel to Mexico twice a year, and yet I'm surprised you've manifested no interest in the story about the Presidential election there. Why do you think this is?'

These questions permitted to pick on aspects that had surfaced in the viewing sessions but that had been interrupted, ended as half thoughts, or that were in need of further exploration. There was an interest in exploring matters such as the potential tie between the consumption of current affairs reports and moments of political activity (Jensen, 1998: 15). In the news dynamics it had become a constant that participants had expressed more interest in the US political process than in the Mexican election, claiming for instance that they were willing to protest for immigrant rights but not to engage in the bureaucracy to vote in the presidential ballot south of the border. At the same time respondents' manifested more interest in news about armed conflict in the Middle East than in reports about Mexican politics. Thus the interviews opened an opportunity to go deeper into many areas and aspects of respondents' lives which they had somehow uncovered in their earlier discussion of the headlines. Questions such as 'What are the types of news that most interest you?' yielded answers that marked the research in important ways. Unexpectedly, after asking the latter question, for instance, it was learned that many housewives were avid followers of live police chases that KTLA News would run in special broadcasts after interrupting a channel's normal programming. These participants would only tune in the English language channel at certain hours of the day when their husbands or fathers were at work, and only to make sure their relatives would have a safe trip on their way back home. As it turned out in the interviews, respondents' interest in this sort of TV reports was related to their partners using a vehicle without a driving permit, which at the same time was connected to undocumented migration, and ultimately, to fears of deportation. Answers were not always so easy to make sense of,

especially those in which respondents tried to convey, for instance, their loyalties for a homeland, their concern for American dead soldiers in Iraq, or the victims of crime and natural disasters. Only after transcription and analysis of these conversations one gets to see that many times peoples' ideas were contradicting or purely rhetorical. As Geertz put it, 'we begin with our own interpretations of what our informants are up to, or think they are up to, and then systematize those' (1973: 15). It is thus at the junction of respondents' intentions, subjectivities, ambivalences, and so on, where interpretations of a theoretical value may be ascertained.

As previously suggested, the news-viewing sessions had energized participants to the point that they were willing to continue the interviews with a certain disregard for the time they had already spent, and which had normally been a reason of concern they raised when they had been asked to open their homes for the meetings. After sitting in their living rooms for nearly 90 minutes people had to carry on with their daily duties. Sometimes, as it were, they simply could not wait for me to leave; in some cases, they just wanted to 'stop working', as one of the hosts put it, and to be able to enjoy dinner.

8. Writing the news

At one point of the research process there were concerns that only one interview followed by the viewing of a recorded news show would be less than enough to claim any significant knowledge of the ways in which television news mattered to the informants of this empirical excursion. This is why the methodology was broadened to include diary-keeping as an instrument which would expand the data-gathering net with which every participant household or family would make available more information regarding her/his consumption of television news. In audience research diary-keeping has successfully been used in large scale projects (e.g. Gauntlett & Hill, 1999). In the case of the present thesis this technique allowed informants to keep a record of their television news daily intake, while developing reflexive, written "insider accounts" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 158) of their media consumption, and reducing sources of bias that an obtrusive observer (Webb et al., 2000) might instil in the normal activities of households. Diarists were asked to keep a record of their news "diets" in which they would indicate the date and times in which they viewed the news (Appendix C). The 31-pages formatted booklet had entries for informants to include the

news story they had been more interested about in a given day, and to explain the reason why this was so. Only five of the diarists wrote their reports of the news in English, but this has had no significant impact for the process of data analysis nor for my findings.

The diary played a crucial role from the beginning as part of the fieldwork “recruitment” strategy. This is so because participants became diary-keepers before they were part of any other research activities. It was only after they had accepted the booklets that they provided their names, telephone numbers and addresses, which would be used soon after to contact volunteers in order to schedule a meeting to conduct the interviews and news-viewing session. From the beginning I explained volunteers that their contribution would be confidential and that they would be free to abandon the exercise if they wished to. However, they were asked to take the diary only if they had intentions to complete it, and to return it upon completion. In this context, the researcher insisted that the handbook was to be kept in good conditions and out of the reach of children. On the other hand, because the goal was to get as many entries and perspectives as possible, respondents were asked to invite other household members to collaborate with some entries. Shortly after people had taken the diaries they would receive a “thank you” call for their contribution. From there on a record of phone calls was kept with names of all household occupiers, and of certain details (e.g. someone’s appointment with the dentist; their work duties on Sunday; a trip to the beach, etc.). I would recall later this kind of information with the purpose of maintaining personalized contact with fieldwork contributors.

As previously stated, 55 diaries were placed in an equal number of households, but only 26 diaries were finally retrieved, one of them invalidated. Twenty-three out of 25 “primary” diary-keepers were born in Mexico, all of whom reported to watch television news on a daily basis. Nineteen of the “primary” diary-keepers were females and the other six were males. Additionally other 24 individuals who lived in the homes of the primary diarists participated in the exercise, for a total 552 diary entries. While most of the primary diarists were born in Mexico the secondary diarists were in most cases Mexican-Americans, (e.g. US citizens born in a Mexican family). Sixteen of the “primary diarists” lived in households with their families, meaning a heterosexual couple and their offspring. Nine primary diary-keepers, including one second and one third generation Mexican-American (born in the US), lived by themselves. Most diarists lived with other family members who did not contribute to the project. In assessing the contribution of the diaries to this project’s findings success may be claimed because 25 diaries were retrieved. The remaining 30 diaries had reportedly been lost or damaged. While the rate of retrieval went below the 50 percent that had been initially

estimated, its significance is central to the findings of this project. In these diaries informants invested significant amounts of time as well as intellectual and emotional resources in the process of thinking about television news. Because unobtrusiveness is one of the main attributes that characterizes research methods like diary-keeping in qualitative research (Webb et al. 2000), it is reasonable to argue it has balanced out some of the biases that may have been infused into other fieldwork activities. The “insider accounts” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 158) present in the diaries were imbued with reflections about news reports which informants frequently described as touching upon parts of their existence. These diaries have of course not provided the impressive amounts of empirical data yielded by such work as the one conducted by Gauntlett and Hill’s (1999) BFI Audience Tracking Study, let alone the 1988 *One Day in the Life of Television* project the authors had tapped from. However limited my own attempt, it is still comparable, at least in size, to Ien Ang’s work (1985) in making sense of the satisfactions Dutch females obtained from the American soap *Dallas*. Ang explained she did not expect the 42 letters written by her informants would make transparent statements to automatically clarify the feelings of audiences about *Dallas*. Instead, the letters,

‘Should be read ‘symptomatically’: we must search for what is behind the explicitly written, for the presuppositions and accepted attitudes concealed within them. In other words, the letters must be regarded as texts, as discourses people produce when they want to express or have to account for their own preference for, or aversion to, a highly controversial piece of popular culture like *Dallas*’ (Ang, 1985: 11).

Ang’s plea to take the ‘explicitly written’ with caution is however at odds with the factual nature of television news. In this context, one should see the diaries as informants’ reflections of what they consider to be factual and authentic (cf. Hill, 2007: 3). What is being said here is that even if audiences tend to oppose or negotiate the treatment of news (Morley, 1980; Dahlgren, 1988), they will generally believe in the news at least from a phenomenological point of view. This means that, at the most basic level, the significance that an event or development in the news will have for a viewer will depend on how proximate the latter feels from the former. From this the idea that the records that diary-keepers made of the news are reliable reflections of what they consider important to their daily lives.

Finally, the methodology was expanded later when the opportunity arose to conduct a survey of media consumption and migration carried out at Mexico's consular office in Los Angeles (Appendix C). The survey was applied to 106 individuals. Eight of the survey respondents were interviewed on camera in relation to news they had recently seen on television, and about their business at the local Mexican representation. While the results have not been systematically adapted to the analysis of television news reception it has provided a wealth of empirical data which provided the researcher a point of departure to connect with more statistically valid sources of information, but more importantly, with a better understanding of Mexicans in Los Angeles. An outline of the research methods used in this investigation has been provided until here. The next step is aimed towards an explanation of how the data collected was coded and analyzed.

4.2 Analyzing reception analysis: a challenge within challenges

The core of this doctoral dissertation could be summed up in the following research question: What does television news reception tell us about transnational audiences? The first real challenge in the design of a viable research experience was gaining access to a setting of relevant informants. As described above, this was found in Los Angeles, and in snow-balling as a strategy of theoretical – as opposed to convenient – sampling. The second challenge consisted on finding the adequate mix of data-collection approaches which would yield information that could be reasonably considered as meaningful to generate a scholarly answer to the research question that has just been described. The third challenge consisted on deciding what to do with all of the evidence that resulted from the fieldwork activities. Taking on this demand faces us with the difficulty to argue that the data presented in this thesis is significant for the claims advanced, and that the coding and analysis of data can indeed be used to move forward the subject of media reception amongst immigrant communities. This section aims thus to leave a blueprint of how the evidence for this project was systematized, eventually providing some leads for its reproduction in a comparable empirical setting.

1. Data analysis: aiming for reliability and validity

One of the challenges within the challenge of analyzing the data uncovered in the fieldwork stem from complexities associated to what one could describe as a volatile sample of fieldwork participants. The case has been made that the sampling design of this project is theoretical (i.e. Los Angeles being considered a transnational cultural space where subjects were likely to engage in transnational activities), and purposive (i.e. recruiting informants who said they were frequent viewers of television news). However, due to time and economic constraints it was not possible to generate a ‘maximum variation sampling’ (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003: 120) which would have allowed one to establish certain parameters of control amongst the informants, such as gender, age, education, income, years of residence, etc. It would have been desirable to establish such controls but these weaknesses have been balanced out via the theoretical sampling, earlier explained, and due to the fact that our findings emerge from a mix of research methodologies that approached the reception of television news from different angles. This approach both validates our evidence and makes it reliable (cf. Morley & Silverstone, 1991: 157; Wimmer & Dominick, 2003: 114-5), even though it has added to the complexity of processing the data for its analysis. In order to put this obstacle in perspective one has to look at the result of each of the fieldwork activities, which as previously mentioned, yielded uneven rates of participation. This strategy has yielded large amounts of information which while not immediately comparable between each other turned out complementary, and therefore strengthening of our general argument. Description of the results of each method of data collection will be next provided and followed by a detailed outline of our data analysis. Table 4.1 provides an idea of what is meant in regard to informants having participated unevenly in the activities of data collection.

Table 4.1 Multiple fieldwork activities and uneven rates of participation

Fieldwork activity	Female	Male	Total	Households
Domestic session (TV news-viewing/interview)	37	16	53	26
Diary-keeping	19	6	49*	25
Domestic session and diary-keeping	21	9	30	11
Diary-keeping only	11	3	14	14
Total participants	48	19	67	39

* Includes 24 “secondary” diarists

The information of the table above is important because it helps to account for the different approaches to the coding and analysis of data. The number of fieldwork individuals and households that were engaged in the project is self-explanatory. More relevant for now is that it allows making the point that the different sets of data have fed into each other, meaning they were complementary and reinforcing of the fieldwork findings that will be outlined in chapter five. It has been said that at the beginning of fieldwork activities in Los Angeles, 55 diaries of news consumption had been placed in an equal number of households. As the table shows, 26 of these accepted to take part in an in-depth interview and a session of television news-viewing. On the other hand, 26 households participated with keeping a written report of their television news.²⁴ As noted before, not all of the households where a “domestic session” was held kept a diary and vice versa; actually, only 11 of these were willing to participate in all of the research activities, and there were 14 households which decided to only contribute with a diary. This leaves us with the requirement to analyze the evidence gathered in isolation. Each of these approaches has required different analytical measures, one for the “domestic sessions” and one for the diaries.

Having made this point it is now time to make reference to the coding strategies that were used to organize the empirical data. The domestic sessions may be seen as the richest source of information due to the fact that they permitted to get a hold on informants’ actual interpretations of television news, while opening room for people to reflect on how news reports related to their day-to-day lives. Equally important, this exercise shed light on interactions amongst household individuals at the time of viewing television. Understanding the interpretation of media texts has always been complex but the task was facilitated by the informants themselves, as their own understandings of the news stories were consistently articulated in terms of their importance and consequences at a personal level.

As referenced in the theoretical chapter, a lot of the academic work on the reception of television news has analyzed audiences’ “decodings” from a multiplicity of angles. Do viewers buy into the preferred readings conveyed by a particular producer to a newscast on the basis of their positions as class subjects? (Morley, 1980) Can the gender and age of viewers be a determinant in the interpretation that is made of the news? (Morley, 1986). Is it how much people learn or remember (Lewis, 1985) from the news they see the way to go about in assessing their reception? Is it in viewers’ ‘frameworks of understanding’ (Corner et al., 1990) that one should look? Should one focus on how television news give a structure

²⁴ One of these diaries was discarded due to a misunderstanding of the assignment

(Gauntlett & Hill, 1999) to domestic activity? Doubtless, all these criteria provide insightful elements to analyze the reception of television news, but it was the informants' views about the news which actually marked the way to follow (cf. *ibid.*, p. 17). Simply put then, the criteria to assess the evidence from the domestic sessions was provided by the data itself, obtained via the discourse analysis of my informants' verbal and written reflections about the television news from the domestic viewing-sessions, and from those they wrote about during the 30 or so days in which they kept a diary. As initially explained, the domestic sessions were up to 90 minutes one-off meetings that started with the screening of a pre-recorded television show. Informants would thereafter engage in discussions aimed at registering their views about the events and stories, as well as the kind of interactions amongst household members which could emerge during the exercise. This dynamic was taped with both an audio and a video recorder, and followed by a semi-structured interview (taped only in audio) that began with questions about the selection of news stories made in the viewing session, and which then continued to explore a multiplicity of aspects from routines of general media consumption to more personal questions which I thought would serve to better understand people's relationship with the news. This is all to emphasise that the methodology was suited to answer our key research question: What does the reception of TV news tell us about transnational audiences? Clearly, this interrogation is more complex than a pragmatic (i.e. assimilation, cultural maintenance) answer would suggest; it goes down to see the media as important, as providing some form of meaning and purpose to peoples in symbolic or material ways. In other words, the starting assumption in fieldwork activities was that television news were important for my informants, and clearly, the way to test this had to go by asking them directly. It was in their discourses about whether news mattered, and why it was so, that the place of television news in the life of my project's contributors was to be uncovered.

Until here it should be clear that the core material for analysis lied in the verbal and written discourses that people produced in reference to their television news. One regular way to get fieldwork informants to talk about the news consisted on asking them about the story or event that they considered to be the most important of the news block they had seen. Once individuals had expressed their opinions they were asked to argue in favour of their news item of choice. Altogether, the strength of this activity is that it created a registry of that which participants considered as relevant to themselves which was in the news, their reasons for according degrees of importance to certain story subjects, and finally, a snapshot of the kind of living room relationships they were likely to have with other family members when in

circumstances of defending a point of view, and even of fending off the criticism of a relative. These three dimensions of interest bring forward aspects of media reception which foreground the need to conceptualise the “transnational audience” in a light that does away with outdated “minority” and “ethnic” audiences paradigms, while helping to account for the kind of global identities that people develop in modern societies.

2. Coding the news that matter: interpretation, discussion and biographies

The last few paragraphs highlight *importance* [accorded to television news] and *household interactions* [television news being the trigger for these] as central elements to answer a basic research question. The focus shall now be on the procedures taken to sift these elements out of the discourses that participants produced during the fieldwork activities, so that our claims can be substantiated. Sifting out valid and reliable meanings relied on different forms of coding that were deemed convenient to organize over 100,000 words in transcripts from conversations of the domestic sessions and from the diary entries. The task of coding in reception analysis consists on generating ‘a practical thematic indexing of the transcript discourse’ which helps to identify ‘patterned relationships of media experiences’ (Schrøder et al., 2003: 168). For Jensen, the notion of ‘coding’ accounts for ‘two different understandings of how words, numbers, and mental categories can be matched to phenomena in reality’ (2002: 246). Synthesising the work of other authors, Jensen notes that the two strains of coding have been identified as heuristic and factual, or as indexing and representational. He writes that,

‘On the one hand, a code may be taken as an account or representation of a portion of the field of study, capturing and fixating certain qualities of a person, event, text, or other unit of analysis for the purpose of later comparison. The aim is to arrive at exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories which are both of use to explain a phenomenon systematically. Coding in this sense aims to establish a standard by which such qualities may be conferred across contexts and, in the end, quantified. On the other hand, a code may be understood as a resource or instrument for identifying and retrieving a given portion of the field. In a next step, this unit of analysis may be

examined either for its immanent structure and specific qualities, or with reference to some additional portion of its context' (Jensen, 2002: 246).

In the Los Angeles fieldwork the reception of television news, as laid out in the transcripts, was coded within the scope addressed by Jensen. The uneven rate of participation in the research activities made it essential to draw on variants of data analysis which employment could lead to exploit more efficiently certain particular stages of the methodology. For the "domestic session" this was based on three key moments: one was the point of *interpretation*, in which viewers identified the stories that most mattered to them; the other took place along the *discussions* in which family members engaged to argue the relevance of the story they had chosen. A third – *biographic* – moment unfurled throughout the rest of the interviews, in which participants opened themselves to reflect deeply on questions about aspects of reality presented in the news which they felt touched them personally. Factual codes were used to index the first of these moments, while heuristic ones served to dissect the verbal exchanges of the second moment, and the reflexivity of the third one. For the diaries only factual categories were used as these allowed establishing correlations with the domestic sessions while keeping the project's workload and time limits at a manageable level. It is important to state that the variable approaches used to analyze the evidence strove for the kind of robustness sought by "grounded theories" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These are normally 'drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 12). Far from claiming that a point of 'theoretical saturation' (cf. Jensen, 2002: 247) was reached, the attempt was made to interrogate the data in many different ways as to consider its 'alternative meanings', and enabling them to constitute 'building blocks' for a theoretically sustained contribution to knowledge (cf. Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 13). The grounded theory approach meant that the transcripts from the domestic sessions were fragmented in the three moments [*interpretation*, *discussion* and *biographic accounts*] identified above. It is important to mention that each of these stages were seen as different yet interconnected sources of meaning, given their correspondence with concepts from the well established traditions in audience research on which rested the design of this project. Subsequently, the moment of reception was bound to yield evidence about the actual interplay between informants and the television news as "readers" and "texts" (Moore, 1993); the discussions would put in perspective questions regarding the "social uses" of television in domestic settings (e.g. Lull, 1980; 1988), while the stage of biographic

reflexivity would put in perspective the idea of the experiences of everydayness (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999) which can be captured via the research tools of audience research. Table 4.2 is a summary that sketches out the theoretical contributions of each fieldwork activity in reference to established scholarly approaches in audience research. It presents as well the type of coding employed for the analysis of data yielded by each of the research instruments, while providing a first glimpse of the core vehicles used for data analysis.

Table 4.2 A blueprint for the analysis of empirical evidence

Fieldwork phase	Empirical activity	Tool of data collection	Epistemic outcome	Coding level	Category of analysis
Domestic session	TV News-viewing	Structured-interview	Interpretation/natural setting	Factual	Super-themes
Domestic session	Family discussion	Group dynamic	Social uses of media/natural setting	Heuristic	Agreement/Disagreement
Domestic session	Media-use interview	Semi-structured interview	Media as lived experience	Heuristic	Deixis
Diaries	Diary-keeping	Personal reports	Interpretation/unobtrusive measures	Factual	Super-themes

Altogether the table reveals four central categories of analysis which have been used to make sense of the discourses informants produced in reference to television news. These have constituted a useful and effective system to assess each of the fieldwork activities despite the uneven rates of participation signalled in Table 4.1. These categories, in consequence, helped to analyze data on both a unitary basis and as a whole, enabling the researcher to tap on all the information retrieved from the television news-viewing sessions and from the diaries. All of the data from the group discussions, interviews and diaries was transcribed in Spanish with a word processor and then categorised with NVivo, a computer programme for qualitative analysis. The latter was conducted in two separate blocks, one corresponding to the household sessions and the other to the diaries. The transcripts yielded a list of codes or ‘analytical themes’ (Schröder et al., 2003: 169) linked to particular fieldwork activities, and they are outlined in the tables presented below.

Table 4.3 contains ten headline news subjects which comprehend the range of news stories screened along 26 household sessions, and which captured the attention of fieldwork participants after the screening of pre-recorded television news. Despite the fact that a total of 53 individuals participated in these exercise reference to 78 news stories was made due to the fact that respondents frequently overlooked the assignment to pick on just one story, choosing instead to react to two and sometimes three different items which they had found relevant to mention. It was surprising to find that collaborators frequently said themselves more

interested in armed conflict in the Middle East than in developments such as Mexico's presidential election. After the analysis it is clear however that the number of times that a news subject was picked on does not necessarily reflect an interest in the news subject itself but in the series of interconnections that participants establish between different news subjects, which in the end explains why people were frequently reluctant to pick on just one news item. These interconnections make an important part of the findings of this project and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 4.3 Super-themes: news that matter

Super-themes	References	Sources
Accidents	5	4
Armed conflict	11	9
Education	5	4
Health	6	4
Mexico	8	8
Migration	16	11
Murder and crime	5	5
Natural disasters	9	6
Terrorism	6	7
The economy	7	6

Table 4.4 relates to the second activity of the household sessions. It departs from the notion that family communication is constituted by transactions – especially verbal – which range primarily between the points of agreement and disagreement (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002). Many of the transactions that occurred when fieldwork participants were required to argue for the news stories they had chosen can be located within the categories in the table. Their occurrence in the fieldwork hint towards a subversion of traditional family hierarchical structures, an aspect which should be paid heed in the research of transnational audiences. This point has not been sufficiently acknowledged in existing scholarly work, particularly the one that belongs to the tradition of cultural studies that this thesis subscribes to.

Table 4.4 Living room arguments

Types of interaction	Cases
Agreement	6
Disagreement	8
Mediation	5
Negotiation	3
Assistance	5
Differentiation	4

Table 4.5 provides a list of what could be seen as the main subjects that derived from the interviews after the first two research activities held in the household sessions. They served as indexing keys for a broad range of considerations that household members made in reference to the news they considered important, to their routines of media consumption, and to their views of why they cared about developments and events presented in the newscasts. Combined with elements of linguistic analysis to be discussed in the next chapter these conversational themes helped to put news reception in the contexts of our informants' daily experiences.

Table 4.5 Interview reflections about TV news

Issues	References	Sources
Ethnicities	43	13
Everyday life	38	19
Language	25	15
Locations	143	26
Motivations	98	22
Public spheres	41	17
The media	112	26
The self	123	26
Time	29	13

Table 4.6 closes this section on methodology. The approach to the analysis of data from the diaries that were given to fieldwork participants yielded quiet similar results to those registered in the television news-viewing sessions (Table 4.3). The news themes “migration” and “armed conflict” drew the larger number of references, even though stories about the

economy seemed to command a lot more of attention in the written accounts than they did in the domestic discussions. It should be said that the frequency, while important because it helps closing in those areas which are of interest for our news viewers, has not been significant in our interpretation of the data analysed. This is so because the context in which the evidence was obtained and the biographies of informants are more relevant sources of meaning than any quantitative approach could be. A conceptual development is needed to put this in perspective, and such theoretical grid will be put forward along with our findings in the next chapter.

Table 4.6 A written record of TV news

Super-themes	References	Sources
Accidents	42	25
Armed conflict	51	25
Education	32	16
Health	66	19
Latin America	12	7
Mexico	69	21
Migration	91	25
Murder and crime	48	18
Natural disasters	45	24
Terrorism	29	14
The economy	43	25

CHAPTER 5: Findings

5.1 The post-national living room

1. What after patriarchal reception analysis?

Fieldwork conducted in Los Angeles suggests a variety of perspectives can be adopted with the purpose to conceptualize transnational, as opposed to national audiences. There are reasons to think that differentiation between these two should consider earlier scholarly findings as a point of departure, especially the dominant notion that media consumption in domestic spaces is subsumed by the rules of what one could describe as the “patriarchal living room” (e.g. Morley, 1986; Yarto & Lozano, 2004), which is essentially an element of national cultures at odds with post-national developments marking the life of modern societies. This project argues for an acknowledgement that experiences of international migration should be understood in a post-national context. Subsequently, it is in these terms that non-majority audiences should be investigated; the substance of family relationships that were observed around the reception of television news in the Los Angeles fieldwork emphasises the need to reconsider the more or less established assumptions about the nature of the domestic, and the daily routines surrounding the consumption of television. Visualizing the transnational audience is a requirement put in perspective by the fieldwork in Los Angeles; this task does not simply put forward an anti-traditionalist agenda, but the need to acknowledge the spheres of action of immigrants at the level of the household, the neighbourhood, the city, the receiving society, the homeland, and so on. In other words, the transnational audience reveals the transnational social fields where people in diaspora dwell. This chapter aims to make these points by discussing the range of views that fieldwork informants provided in reference to television news, the discussions amongst family members, and their accounts of how news events related to their life histories. The conclusion is that the reception of television news by transnational audiences puts in perspective their actual relationship between private and domestic spaces, in the process revealing how they experience globalization in their daily lives.

What kind of family?

The notion of family has in recent years become increasingly problematic (Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989). Traditional perspectives once framed understandings of family as social units where gender roles and the division of labour are dictated by overarching societal structures (e.g. Parsons & Bale, 1955). In recent years the concept of family is said to have shifted from being seen as a natural given to an unstable form of social organization. Families in this sense have become chaotic (Beck et al., 1995), with ties of kinship being constantly subject to negotiation, more than being a simple outcome propitiated by relationships of love and trust (Giddens, 1992). A recombined notion of family takes on board various configurations – of legally or non-legally recognised forms – of partnership, including the possibility of same-sex marriages that may have children born with help of novel fertilization techniques or obtained through adoption. The idea is that, in straightforward terms, family in the Western world does not necessarily involve biological or legal connections, and it is no longer the rule that they are formed by heterosexual couples and their offspring. Indeed, the “nuclear family” nowadays sits more comfortably with flexible definitions. Koerner and Fitzpatrick write for instance that ‘scholars increasingly define family as a group of intimates who generate a sense of home and group identity and who experience a shared history and a shared future’ (2002a: 71). This kind of flexibility has already been incorporated in media studies, where family is *a priori* problematic, particularly in multi-ethnic, multicultural societies (Lull, 1988: 10). Addressing the end of the patriarchal family, Manuel Castells notes the variable architecture of family arrangements is composed by,

‘Networks of support, increasing female-centeredness, a succession of partners and patterns throughout the life-cycle. Networks of support, often between members of families of divorced couples are a new, important form of sociability and burden-sharing, particularly when children have to be shared and supported between the two parents after they both form new households... So, patriarchalism in the family is altogether eliminated in the case of the growing proportion of female-headed households, and seriously challenged in most other families, because of the negotiations and conditions requested by women and children in the household’ (Castells, 2004: 287).

The destabilisation of the patriarchal order is a development that is known to transnational families. One should see these as formed by individuals who have experienced international migration and who, in physical or mediated ways, lead lives and participate in activities that span two or more national territories. It is known that the Mexican transnational family living in the US has undergone important changes in relation to families in Mexico. These transformations find their centres of gravity in females, and include lower fertility rates – even though Mexican females continue to be one of the most fertile subgroup in the US population – novel patterns of sexuality and marital bonding, higher levels of literacy, access to jobs, wages, public agencies, etc. All of these suppose a shift in the balance of power that females have vis-à-vis their male partners. In the case of the Mexican transnational family this is manifest even in the fact that domestic violence is much rarer than it is within Mexican families in Mexico (Hirsch, 2003). In reference to her fieldwork experience in Atlanta, Jennifer Hirsch writes men explained to her that,

‘The two reasons that women have so much more power in the North [of the Mexican border] is that their husbands can’t hit them (they ascribe the general breakdown in family lines of authority to this cause as well, saying that it is no longer possible to discipline children properly once they go to kindergarten and learn to dial 911 ... The way that the state intervenes to protect individuals against violence, both men and women say, is a crucial force in destabilizing the family’ (Hirsch, 2003: 197).

Domestic violence was not a salient issue of the Los Angeles fieldwork but some traits which are part of the “weak patriarchy” argument were found there, with many household units being formed by single mothers, or by couples who had already been married and who had formed new families with children from different marriages. There were of course older couples who stayed married with the same person for decades, and who were now the proud parents of second generation Mexican-Americans who were brought up to become doctors, social workers, and even police constables. The point in question is that transnational living rooms seem characterized by wives who have become wage-earners and have therefore gained economic independence from their husbands; or by daughters, who are normally better educated and have incomes higher than those of their progenitors. With women having attained a more solid standing, top-down relations become less unequal. Females who would have been otherwise in a subaltern position to that of a male head of family challenge the attitudes and opinions of males (e.g. the father) on a daily basis. Thus

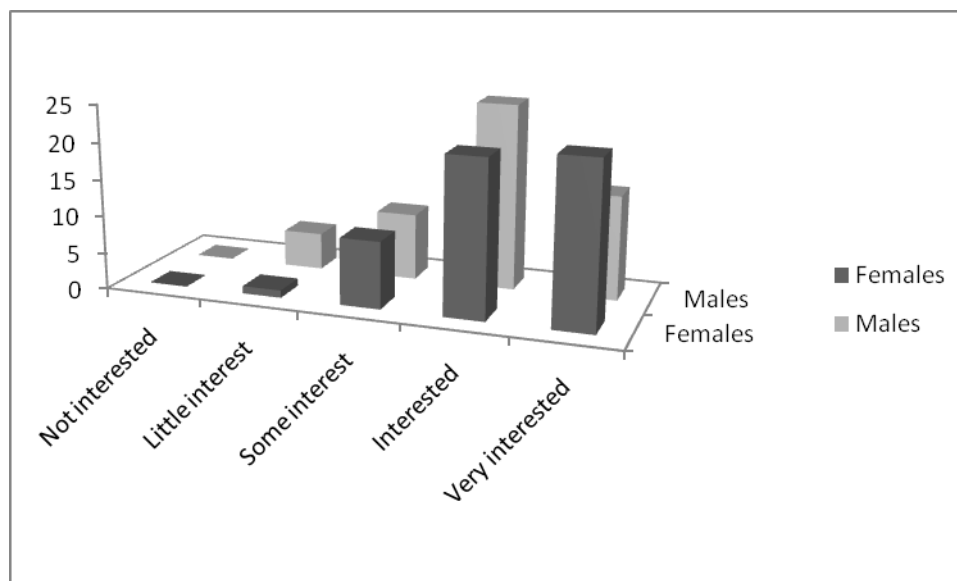
while the families in our fieldwork were mostly composed by heterosexual couples with children the erosion of the male-dominated family is consistently highlighted by the types of arguments that took place in the living rooms of fieldwork participants. It was clear that males were not imposing their programming choices and other rules of family television-viewing (e.g. Morley, 1986; Yarto and Lozano, 2004). Because of this, notions that television programming and media technologies are gendered (e.g. women watch soap operas while men keep up with the news; see Gray, 1992; Hobson, 1982; Radway, 1984), need to be reconsidered. It is true that different patterns of media use and content preferences exist amongst males and females (e.g. Livingstone & Bovill, 2001), but at the same time it has been verified that females have progressively adopted what was hitherto seen as male-oriented programming and media technologies. This points towards the possibility of a 'shrinking of the gender gap and the incorporation of girls in seemingly unisex, but rather masculine, world of mediated popular culture' (Lemish, Liebes & Seidmann, 2001: 280).

TV news: a business of males?

It is proposed here that reception analysis of television news in a context of "weak patriarchy" can contribute to broaden the horizons of audience research. News have been thought to be a form of knowledge (Park, 1940) which processing requires a pre-existing cultural capital, which can in turn determine its correct interpretation (Price & Zaller, 1993). This view has parallels in qualitative research contexts, where there exist distinctions between 'serious' and 'non serious' news coverage (e.g. Fiske, 1992). The convention is more or less that in a domestic setting this would translate into females being more keen on human interest stories or 'soft news', whereas males would be more interested in politics and foreign affairs reporting or 'hard news'. In fact, Dorothy Hobson (1980) bought into the argument that news-viewing is an altogether masculine affair, guided by the statements of housewives who told her they found news dull and depressing. David Morley confirmed the pattern in his interviews with 18 families in South London. He acknowledged, however, that females' preference for soap operas over the news, their reluctance to engage with hard news or new technologies was not out of biological predispositions, but rather linked to social roles deriving from fixed societal structures (1986: 146). Research has also established that females are as likely as men to enjoy or have an interest in current affairs, even though the former normally have less time to "indulge" in these given their heavier domestic workloads and their more active roles in the rearing of children (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999: 76; Morley,

1986: 29). In the Los Angeles fieldwork, domestic chores remained clearly a business of female individuals, but their media routines included a solid diet of television news which was noticeable, and in clear contrast to persisting scholarly reports of female aversion to the news. This is further reinforced by findings from a survey of media consumption in the consular office of Mexico in Los Angeles, where the percentage of people who reported they watched television news seven days a week were also evenly split. Against conventional knowledge, more women than men said they were “very interested” in TV news (Chart 5.1).

Chart 5.1 How interested are you in television news?



Source: Consular survey in Los Angeles

The relevance of numbers regarding genders in television news viewership is however only a point of departure, since this project is more concerned about what can be learned from qualitative studies amongst transnational audiences. This is because updated accounts of their television-viewing should result in an improved understanding of the transnational family. The evidence, to be discussed in the next section, suggests not only that women develop high levels of interest in different types of news, but that their interpretations of the same could be part of a meaningful reconfiguration of power relationships in the family which need to be accounted for in studies of media reception. The point can be made clearer by invoking a female participant who said she had taken on the responsibility of keeping up with the news given that her husband worked several night shifts during the week:

H11F1: In this home I am the one who watches the news. He [my husband] comes back around 8 (in the morning) and falls in bed. He then wakes up at 3 or 4 and soon has to go back to work (Female, 29, housewife).

The informant's husband later said that he sometimes listened to the news from a radio in the liquor store where he worked, but that he seldom paid attention as he was normally busy and the news reports were too brief in a station he usually tuned in for a programme that played popular music in English which he had learned to appreciate when he had worked at a restaurant of a hotel in Cancun, the Mexican upscale beach resort in the Caribbean. He added: 'I'm frequently too tired for the news on television, they're always bad news, so I prefer she [my wife] tells me about it on Sundays'. This tells an important story about how structural elements of family life can determine what media is used and with what purposes, and the kinds of social uses it triggers. The issue at stake here is that the different life paces which accompany the process of migration can impact the known rules of media use in domestic – and public – spaces. In turn, this opens a space to question fixed paradigms (i.e. the gendered nature of media uses), thereby allowing for connections with more updated forms to understand social reality (i.e. the erosion of patriarchal structures).

2. Living room arguments: agreement and disagreement as instances of analysis

The tables presented in chapter 4 included an index of categories that resulted from the analysis of data generated in the fieldwork. Our methodological perspective considered that domestic routines were important to understand media reception but, as has been explained, time and material constraints required focusing the investigation on the actual reception of television news [i.e. the actual meeting of the reader with the text]. The approach yielded a wealth of data regarding what informants consider important about the news, while generating dynamics that revealed interpersonal exchanges and social uses in which transnational families engage when watching these shows. The choice to focus on the “weak patriarchy” argument addressed above has resulted from analyzing the discussions in which informants participated after watching the pre-recorded news shows. In expressing what they thought had been the most important from the news they viewed, people recurrently referred to reports as if they were transparent reflections (cf. Michelle, 2007: 195-8) of a reality which affected them directly, in very personal terms. This is in itself an important finding and a way

to systematize the frequently random – prone to ‘anecdotalism’ (Morley, 2006: 106) –, readings of news that audiences sometimes make in ‘alienated mode’ (cf. Morley, 1999a: 143). Given the scope of this project there was also a priority to understand the nature of the communication amongst family members as they talked about the news, thereby capturing new knowledge about their social reality (cf. Lull, 1990; Morley, 1986). The relevance is not only that one managed to verify that women are actually very interested in the news – which they made manifest in the interviews – but that they are indeed more than willing, for instance, to negotiate and even impose the definition of what stories meant for individuals and the family as a whole.

These “struggles” were put in perspective by what has been identified in the analysis of empirical data as instances of agreement and disagreement, and of other variations of verbal exchange that set the tone for the discussions after the pre-recorded news. In between expressions of agreement and disagreement there were other traits (mediation, negotiation, assistance and differentiation), which shaped the characteristics of what we have identified as “living room arguments”. The approach is supported by family communication schemata (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994) according to which families strive to establish consensual patterns of interaction. Verbal consensus, according to this account, reflects on the tendency of family units to agree on many other dimensions of family life. The presence of agreement has in fact been an element that academic research has considered as central in assessing “normal” from “deviant” families (Doane, 1978). From a qualitative viewpoint, Jensen has identified as ‘conflict perspectives’ (2002: 241) those parts of family communication which hint towards the presence of meaningful interactions with sociological relevance; this premise is fully integrated to the *social uses of the media* perspective (e.g. Lull, 1980; 1988; 1990). Importantly, Lull has distinguished “concept” from “socio”-oriented families in reference to those households where expression of dissent is encouraged, as opposed to those where disagreement is avoided (1990: 88). This validates the decision to conduct the analysis of family discussions by locating agreement, disagreement and its variations as meaningful elements of analysis. The task was conducted via one assignment given to respondents based on two key questions:

- *What, from the stories we’ve just viewed, was the story that you consider is the most relevant? and;*

- *What do you think about your relative's view that X story is more important than the others?*

As shown in table 4.4 (p. 162), disagreement dominated over its opposite whether as entire thematic conversations (i.e. a chain of interactions between two family members) or merely as individual utterances (i.e. rejection of another person's argument). In a few cases differences of opinion were manifest in the simplest of terms, this is without personalized expressions of divergence. An example comes from a session in which a mother and her daughter sided together after the father said that a report about an electoral conflict in Mexico's presidential election was the most relevant of a pre-recorded news show. The exchange was as follows:

H19M1: I think the elections in Mexico (are what matters the most). Felipe Calderón (the official candidate) won. Why won't López Obrador (the left-wing candidate) accept it? He's only fuelling conflict and dividing the country. The country is restless, there are no jobs and salaries are falling. This affects Mexico (Male, 35, press operator).

H19F1: For me the most important story is the one about the undocumented, that they get the worst jobs with the lowest pay (Female, 37, housewife/self-employed).

H19F2: I agree with my mother, because I think there's a lot of racist attitudes involved, they employ Mexicans because they're cheap. I don't think that does us any favours and only worsens the ways in which we're seen out there (Female, 16, student).

Rejecting her husband's view that a report about an Israel air raid in southern Lebanon mattered the most, one of the participants suggested one should always think about the relevance of events in terms of how it affects one's personal life. This is why she had picked the story of a family that was caught in a fire in the funeral of a relative over her husband's. She explained:

H1F1: You're too far from Lebanon. What do you care? (addressing her husband) That doesn't matter to me as much. I can relate more to fire in the funeral, where people are in pain for the loss of a loved one. I can't imagine anything worse, picking the corpse of your relative to save him from burning (Female, 27, custodian).

H1M1: Every head is a world, I'm always more interested in news about the war (Male, 31, mechanic).

Expressions of disagreement can be a lot more nuanced, as manifest during an interview with an older couple, in which the female party had seemingly been very enthusiastic of her husband's views about a child who had drown inside a public swimming pool. Perhaps the fact that she had been nodding approvingly of her husband's assessment made him think they both agreed such report was the most relevant, but he seemed surprised when she intervened with the following:

H2F1: Not really, I was a lot more interested in the report about the floods in Zacatecas. I feel for all of those who lost their belongings (Female, 64 housewife).

While many differences in the perception of importance of news reports were argumentative, there were cases in which dissimilar views about a certain story were seen as confirming traits in the personality of individuals:

H3F2: You think Fidel Castro has been bad for Cubans and I think he's been good. (Female, 50, catering/union leader).

H3F1: You like Castro because you've always been a bit of a commie (Female, 53, cashier).

Some of the clashes in the living room came up in response to what was perceived as errors in the understanding of the story. A discussion which involved a married couple put the spotlight on this when a man suggested there had been an electoral fraud in Mexico's presidential election, to which his partner replied:

H13F3: Yes, the one about the elections in Mexico is important but he didn't get it right since the report speaks about demands for a new tally of votes, not about fraud (Female, 22, social worker).

H13M1: Yes but when you have that kind of thing going on in Mexico you know there's been fraud (Male, 37, press operator).

H13F3: That's what someone in the street said when he was interviewed but the newsreader never mentioned the word fraud so it's all in your imagination (Female, 22, social worker).

During the last discussion the daughter told the researcher they would sometimes 'discuss about politics in Mexico' and that this was part of a broader family argument over whether they would be able to live in Mexico sometime in the future, a plan which was mostly in the mother's agenda but not so much in the father's. This brings forward the need to reflect on how normally people in the research were assessing the relevance of news developments on the basis of their own circumstances. One clear cut case of this is found between a mother and her 42-year-old son, who found that a row over educational programmes between the Los Angeles major and teachers was more important than an update about the electoral standoff in Mexico. Fired up by her son's viewpoint, the lady said:

H12F1: How can you say that? Why would you care about what happens in elementary schools when you have nothing to do with it? The politics in Mexico is more important, it affects the place where you were born (Female, 62, housewife).

H12M1: We do care about the schools, your nieces go to school if you don't remember and as for me I don't care about what goes on in Mexico (Male, 42, concierge).

H12F1: For your information none of your cousins goes to elementary school anymore, but you continue to be Mexican and to have family there (Female, 62, housewife).

The argument between mother and son was revealing not only of the kinds of news that can be of interest for them individually, but also of aspects of their extended family (i.e. that they had young relatives in Los Angeles who had finished elementary school), also offering insight upon other dimensions of their personal relationship. The mother's view that her son ought to consider the Mexican elections important because he was born in Mexico was here telling of a deeper aspect of their family link, as it later emerged during the interview, in which she complained that he never joined her in her frequent travels south of the border. The notion that disagreement over the news can lead to uncover other dimensions of family life is put in perspective by an exchange between a housewife and her daughter, on one side, and the father, on the other. The man chose a story about a recent spate of mass protests in US cities in which foreign nationals called for an overhaul of migration laws. He said he hoped the outcome would favour undocumented immigrants, perhaps granting them

an amnesty that would allow them to work legally in the country. His opinion was met with a strong rebuke from his female relatives:

H20M1: We are nearly 15 million who live in this country without documents. These mobilisations are positive; they make us politically strong, which means television news is helping us accomplish the goal to obtain documents for us all (Male, 56, building sub-contractor).

H20F2: I don't agree... there shouldn't be a general amnesty, if there is a guest worker programme it should be done orderly, only the deserving should be allowed in, there's no jobs for everyone (Female, 19, student/secretary).

H20F1: What you (addressing her husband) said is not right... we don't want that, why should we open the door to every opportunist, there are criminals and drug addicts looking to take advantage, we don't want such undesirable people to cause more problems than we already have (Female, 52, housewife).

H20M1: OK, we only want hard working people, they should be allowed in only once they (the US government) run their background records in Mexico, and receive an amnesty if they're OK (Male, 56, building sub-contractor).

H20F2: But an amnesty is too much, maybe why not focus on making sure residents can vote (...) There are other more important things (...) you for instance could arrange your citizenship instead of hoping for an amnesty for everyone (Female, 19, student/secretary).

At the same time that the conversation above exposed two opposing stances towards undocumented migration between two of the family's females and the only man in the house, it also uncovered the fact that he was not a US citizen. Having arrived 36 years earlier in Los Angeles and after fathering four US born daughters, he was entitled to become a US citizen. This was an option which his wife had taken nearly a decade before but which he disliked since becoming a US citizen would have implied he was willing to live permanently in the US, a prospect he was reluctant to accept and which constantly put him at odds with his offspring and the future plans of his wife, who at some point said: 'he can go back if he wants, all my life is here with my daughters and my granddaughter'.

Defining household agendas

The above discussion suggests that reception analysis focused in the household can shed light on the scope of conflicts among household individuals. It is not just that attention on a 'normal media day' (Jensen, 2002: 241) closes in household 'conflicting perspectives' (ibid.), but that differences over the interpretation of a news story can lead to bigger clashes, especially when viewers feel reports affect them in very personal ways. Nevertheless, the substance of interactions triggered by the interpretation of television news does not need to be marred by disagreement. The presence of agreement can also be of interest to illustrate some male-female interactions which are of use to appreciate how definitions of priorities within the family are made. The point can be made using the last conversation between the father with his wife and daughter. There was first the expression of disagreement on the side of the wife and the daughter; the discussion shifted to a more agreeable mode when the father gave in to the rebukes by taking the argument that not everyone was entitled to an amnesty. He manifested this by saying, 'OK, we only want honest people', and with his suggestion that police checks would need to be run on individuals to benefit from some eventual changes in migration laws. In finally agreeing he opened the door for his daughter to establish as a priority that he obtained his nationality.

While sometimes family communication can get strained in the setting of household agendas – of what matters and what does not – agreement can be voiced in very unequivocal terms. In Los Angeles this happened as part of an inclination that respondents had to thread news stories on television with their personal storylines. This can be exemplified clear by an exchange between a father and his daughter, when explaining their concerns about a mass protest in which supporters of the PRD, Mexico's main left-wing party, took over important avenues of the Mexican capital.

H14F2: In the way I see it the PRD's blocking of streets in Mexico City are very harmful for the economy, I would say it affects us personally (Female, 20, student/mother).

H14M1: I agree, this conflict impacts the economy and people. I for instance, in sending money to relatives I think \$100 dollars will help them but three days later it's all gone, they have to spend it, so it seems this can only make things worse (Male, 48, shopkeeper/social worker).

Expressions of agreement were possible even in cases where informants had chosen different news items, as the wife and mother of the two last respondents clarified when explaining her choice of news story:

H14F1: They are right to say so, all the discontent in Mexico concerns us but for this programme I have picked a different report, the one about child obesity. I took it as a warning for us to keep a vigilant eye on our diets, particularly Beto's (her 2 year old grandson) (Female, housewife, 47 years old).

For an unmarried couple who had recently moved to live together, it was the notion of a shared reality and destiny which seemed to reinforce similar views in assessing the meaning of events in Mexico. A construction worker who was facing difficulty to explain how political developments in Mexico were of any significance to him, received help from his partner in the following way:

H4F1: Of course it affects us, the thing is we are here (in the US) because we couldn't be any better there (in Mexico). That is why if there were jobs and good politicians (in Mexico) we wouldn't be here. One is a little better off here, but there is suffering in not being in your country, and these problems with the elections are no sign that things will be getting any better soon (Female, 42, housewife).

Other stages of family discussions about the news

Family arguments about television news triggered other forms of interaction which illuminate possible kinds of relationships among family members, as well as some of their communication patterns in their day-to-day life. The dynamics that can develop in these contexts of communication can be highly complex (e.g. Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002) and the purpose here is not to address them in detail, but to propose ways to analyze media reception in transnational living rooms, and to adapt these findings to central theoretical perspectives (i.e. social uses of the media). In my empirical experience the meaning taken from news events was in some cases articulated outside the instances of agreement and disagreement. One can identify these other stages of verbal exchange in the family as mediation, negotiation, assistance and differentiation. In the first, an individual would intervene when two relatives seemed to have reached a certain *impasse* during an argument; negotiation

involved two individuals who gradually managed to balance positions of disagreement by trying to explain themselves more clearly; in the mode of assistance a member of the family would help another to explain him or herself, supplementing the words or by explaining altogether what the latter meant. The stage of differentiation generally occurred towards the end of the family dynamics and involved two individuals who used knowledge of their personal traits to explain why they thought differently about a certain news story; notably these verbal differentiations always became manifest towards the end of the viewing dynamic.

Mediation

It is worth noting that there appeared to be a certain connection between the positions that individuals occupied in these interactions with their broader roles in the family. Mothers, for instance, frequently seem to act as mediators in arguments involving two sisters, or a daughter and her father. One case involves a mother who intervened after her older daughter criticised the fact that too many students had failed to secure a place in high-school because of low scores in admission tests. She was then confronted by her younger sister, who thought her decision to focus on a news report about increased security checks at the Los Angeles airport was more sensible. As she put it,

H8F2: Why would you care, you finished (high) school long ago... (Female, 16, student).

H8F1: Yes, but the exam is so simple it surprised me (Female, 24, student).

H8F2: The terrorist threat at the airport is a lot more serious, what if you have to travel? (Female, 16, student).

H8F1: Well, he (the researcher) asked what story we liked and I chose this one, so what do you care? (Female, 24, student).

H8F3: I think you're each interested in different things, you flew to Mexico a few months ago, but not your sister, and that's why you care about the planes and she doesn't (Female, 46, housewife).

In another setting, a mother who had sided with her daughter to rebuke her father's support for undocumented immigrants mediated in her partner's favour when the younger female suggested he didn't watch enough news, and that this might be a reason why he had

such “curious” opinions. ‘You can’t expect him to switch on TV news all the time, especially since he’s always so tired when he comes from work’, the older woman said, taking at the same time an opportunity to tell off her descendent for not ‘showing enough respect to your dad in front of others’. In similar circumstances a young girl mocked her father when he stumbled to explain the importance of a news report about elections in Mexico, in a way implying that he was failing in what she perceived to be an evaluation of his understanding of news. ‘He doesn’t know’, the young student said cheekily, after which her mother intervened telling her to ‘let him speak, he does know but he’s thinking’. Repeating the pattern a mother had to ask one of her daughters to give his father a break after she laughed at his choice of story, about a landslide outside Mexico City which left a few casualties and several people trapped in their vehicles. The exchange went as follows:

H23F2: Come on dad, there were better stories, for instance the attack of Schwarzenegger against Latinos (...), even the elections in Mexico are more important’ (Female, 19, car insurance).

H23F1: But he’s talking about the death of innocent people, probably because of some corrupt supervisor who didn’t do his work correctly, that’s also important (Female, 45, housewife).

Assistance

The stage of mediation was a pattern that for obvious reasons was only present in households with more than two informants. In those cases where only two collaborators were available there was a tendency among women to help males explaining themselves. We have named this a “mode of assistance” which kicked in at times when informants, a majority of which were males, seemed hesitant or clumsy to articulate an argument justifying the choice of a news item. Frequently female partners engaged in the discussions supplementing words or ideas that their partners would use to finish their sentences. The point in question can be illustrated by considering the support an informant provided to her husband when discussing his interest in a spate of pro-immigrant rallies in Los Angeles and other US cities, after viewing a report on the subject. He thought it ‘good that the media are supporting the rights of us immigrants’, but was at pains to explain why it was important:

H25M1: Because it (the media) is helping ... us ... (Male, 34, builder).

H25F1: ... to demonstrate in the streets, the newsreaders where saying 'wave a US flag not a Mexican one' (Female, 44, housewife).

H25M1: Yes, it's the first time I see they help us to... (Male, 34, builder).

H25F1: ... that they take our side, that as immigrants we're also part of the country (Female, 44, housewife).

H25M1: Yes, and to give us reasons to want to become citizens... (Male, 34, builder).

H25F1: Because many of us think it's just about the green card but there are obligations (Female, 44, housewife).

H25M1: But also benefits, it goes together with citizenship, but the news tell you 'you too can be part of this country', and that's why it's interesting (Male, 34, builder).

This assistant mode was however not always well received, as demonstrated by a male who reluctantly used his wife's help to end his points. He demonstrated this by giving awkward looks to his partner, which she would then dismiss with an unaffected chuckle. The situation arose right after she finished explaining why she had been more interested in a report about floods in Mexico than about the child who had drown at a public swimming pool in Los Angeles. Feeling perhaps that the reasons provided by his wife had seemed more interesting than his own, the man horned in saying that,

H2M1: I do too see the point she's making, I mean I picked the news about the drowned baby because one wonders, 'what happened there?'... (Male, 61, retired).

H2F1: Negligence... (Female, 64 housewife).

H2M1: Yes negligence... but I do too see the point she was making, that the floods in that place... (Male, 61, retired).

H2F1: Zacatecas (Female, 64 housewife).

H2M1: Yes, Zacatecas, where I've been in the past, walking ... (Male, 61, retired).

H2F1: Because we have family there in Mexico so we follow the events (Female, 64 housewife).

H2M1: We are here to improve our life but that's where we were born and we want our family to be fine (Male, 61, retired).

Male-to-female assistance in the Los Angeles fieldwork occurred in two cases, one of which involved a male helping his wife to complete a sentence with the names of two

presidential candidates in Mexico's election: 'She means Felipe Calderón and López Obrador, she doesn't know them because she always stops watching when they present news about politics', the man explained. The other had to do with a father who acted as an interpreter of sorts to explain what his daughter meant when she said she found a report about a legislative debate about migration was instructive of the American political process. In the interview the girl said that,

H14F2: The story about immigration was also interesting, because you see the politicians discussing in ... (Female, 20, student/mother).

H14M1: ... the Congress (Male, 48, shopkeeper/social worker).

H14F2: ... yes... and you learn about the system, to collaborate... (Female, 20, student/mother).

H14M1: What she's saying is that by seeing how bills move from the low chamber to the Senate you learn about politics (Male, 48, shopkeeper/social worker).

H14F2: Yes, and then you can participate, as a citizen (Female, 20, student/mother).

Negotiation

A different mode of interaction found in the living room of Mexican families could be defined as "negotiation"; it involved two or more family members talking their way towards agreement even though they had individually opted for different news subjects. One case is represented by a young couple formed by a US born Mexican-American female and her husband, a Mexican born sales manager who moved with his parents to Los Angeles when he was 4 years old. In the discussion, the male had focused on a report in which a Border Patrol spokesperson warned people against crossing the border in what at the moment was one of the hottest summers recorded in history. His wife, however, opted for a story about the rising costs of petrol, and she then asked her partner to change his pick, to which he replied:

H7M1: But even though we never have to cross the border we have relatives and know people who know people that cross the border. It's important that they keep this kind of warnings in mind don't you think? (Male, 33, sales manager).

H7F1: Absolutely, but here we have something that concerns us directly, we have even stopped driving two cars haven't we? ... and no one in our families has to cross the border anyway (Female, 29, teacher).

H7M1: It's true... can I change stories? [addressing researcher] (Male, 33, sales manager).

Negotiation also took place between a couple formed by two Mexicans who met in Los Angeles. After the viewing session the male chose a report involving an undocumented woman who took sanctuary in a Catholic church in Chicago, to avoid deportation. The female, on the other hand, was interested in a highly politicised debate between Democrats and Republicans over a migration reform. He told her that his pick was more interesting because it raised new questions about the role that religious groups could have in favour of undocumented immigrants, like themselves.

H16M1: It makes you wonder whether the intervention of the church will be enough to overturn a deportation order... (Male, 36, plumber).

H16F1: But the thing in the Congress will determine the law and matters to us more doesn't it? (Female, 24, housewife).

H16M1: Yes but the fat cats in the Senate don't care about us, they care about employers and the factories, and all that, but here we're talking about the Church, which is closer to us (Male, 36, plumber).

H16F1: Maybe you're right, and the two things are tied together anyway (Female, 24, housewife).

Differentiation

While negotiation in a strict sense would be expected to be an argumentative process it can also adopt an affective form. This was manifested by a young woman who had originally opted for reports of a hurricane in Mexican coasts, which had provoked floods near her hometown. She then changed her mind in favour of his husband's story about a military campaign of Israeli forces in the south of Lebanon, 'but only because I love him'. A final mode of interaction found in our transnational living rooms is that of "differentiation", in which individuals explained different points of view about the news by invoking personal traits which made them distinctive in comparison with those they lived with. While these exchanges were not part of a discussion about a specific news item they serve as points of reference to think about the kind of everyday situations in which informants were likely to engage with relatives or other housemates. In these cases the consumption of television news

seemed playing a role that is both structural and relational (cf. Lull, 1990: 36). A 50 year old woman who catered for student refectories at a university, for instance, insisted on saying she was better at understanding the news, after sustaining a small argument with her housemate about Fidel Castro. As she put it,

H3F2: I know better because I see them (the news) every day... from the moment I arrive I do housework with the news on the radio and then later at night on TV... She is different, she falls asleep in front of the TV, but I see the news until the end of the show (Female, 50, catering/union leader).

The notion of difference came up also when a neighbour who participated in the news-viewing session with a couple who lived in civil partnership said she was more concerned about small children who got injured in car accidents ‘because I have a small kid and they [the couple] haven’t had one yet’. She added,

H4F3: They have time to think about Mexico and their interests there, they even have two houses there, but when you’re more permanently based here, with a family and everything, then you have to think about these things (Female, housewife).

Differentiation was also used in explaining why some people would demonstrate a lack or excess of interest in certain types of stories. A contributor whose partner had only arrived from Mexico 12 or so months ago said she was at the moment more interested in news about Mexico because she was a recent arrival: ‘Time will increase her interest in other news’. He added that ‘I focus on international stories, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that kind of thing. She pays more attention to the disasters in Mexico but not so much to politics’. His partner, who followed Spanish-language channels Univision and Telemundo, added that,

H18F1: ‘The reason is that I can’t understand English very well and the news in Spanish have to do more with things from our countries and our people. So that makes you turn to the Spanish-language channels (Female, 24, housewife).

A similar situation involving differentiation was put by another informant who suggested that his wife did not follow foreign news because ‘you know how women are... We

men focus more on the international and the politics', but his wife fired back calling him 'a macho', and that, 'it's got nothing to do with being a girl or a boy. I said before I prefer news about what is happening around us, and that affects us directly'.

The strong incidence of verbal confrontation, used as an element of reception analysis, is one of the reasons why the transnational family calls for the need to reconsider notions of male domination in regard to the use of media. There is, for one thing, enough evidence that females do have a commanding voice to decide what programmes are viewed collectively (Lull, 1990: 86-7), and that if they allow others to manipulate electronic appliances such as the video-recorder this can be out of a 'calculated ignorance' (cf. Morley, 1986: 159) to delegate certain domestic activities to other household members. This is to say that while signs of inequality in the distribution of domestic work persist, there are clearly areas of family life where grounded discourse can reveal as much about the balance of power as other arrangements defined by relationships between genders, across different ages and positions occupied in the structure of families. One would not want to exaggerate, anyway, the fact that females were clearly contesting their partners' interpretations of the news. There was of course evidence of agreement which could suggest that the larger incidence of its opposite was simply an accident. Nevertheless, many of the other traits seemed to indicate that along the willingness to stand up to the interpretations of males, female participants seemed frequently more assertive in their opinions, or to say the least prepared to provide arguments which their partners would not want or would not be able to counter. This was so even though men collaborators frequently felt in need to justify themselves or to simply change their opinions.

Certainly a lot more research is needed to explore media reception in regard to developments which are said to erode patriarchal structures. This, of course, is a phenomenon occurring in most western societies (Castells, 2004), but our findings suggest that the research of transnational audiences can offer a variety of snapshots in this regard. It is true that, as has been firmly established, qualitative research offers but a narrative of localised social practices (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), and that one's findings are but the result of what one sees rather than what *really* is. I am aware of this, but one is also confident that the production of theory needs to be grounded on empirically obtained evidence. In this case the analysis of data suggests that the social-uses-of-television-news-in-the-homes-of-Mexican-American-families compel us to look for differences between transnational and national audiences. This is so even when this project was not designed to make such comparisons.

What one can do in this case is to address the findings so far contributed by reception analysis in naturalistic spaces, which rely strongly on the notion of the male-dominated family. This should be accompanied by an attempt to take a systematic account of experiences available to what we have called the transnational family, which can in turn provide hypotheses for future comparative analysis. For the time being our findings can only illuminate areas to explore in connection to what appear as significant aspects of the everyday life of Mexican origin families in regard to their use of television news.

5.2 Living television news

1. Personal narratives of the world outside

We have so far looked at the conflictive interactions that families had after viewing a recorded news show. This requires us to rearticulate notions of family life gravitating around male figures. This section will now draw on three different portions of evidence obtained in the fieldwork to argue that the relationship between our informants and television news tell us about ways in which transnational audiences experience the everyday. By making reference to how developments in the news affect them, research subjects constantly painted a picture in which exterior forces appeared to constantly penetrate their private spaces. This in itself contributes a perspective of how globalization is experienced. Giddens tells us that globalization is as much about the “out there” as it is about the “in here” (1999: 12). Individuals in modern societies are increasingly self-reflexive and constantly monitor the environment to make adjustments through which they can maintain their self-identities and a sense of “ontological security” (Giddens, 1990). This section focuses on “the monitoring” of the outside which respondents performed using the news to maintain individual and family narratives (cf. Silverstone, 1993). We used the concept of “super-themes” to assess this monitoring of the world outside which our informants seemed to perform using television news. In the chapter on methodology the concept of “super-themes” was invoked to summarize the range of news subjects which informants identified as important. Super-themes are units of analysis which serve to identify viewers’ ‘interpretive narratives’ of the world, outside the sphere of the domestic (Jensen, 1998: 19). Super-themes help to organize an otherwise chaotic stream of personal discourses gathered in the fieldwork; they also

contribute a way to identify what television viewers consider important from the news. In Jensen's words super-themes are,

‘Thematic constructs by which viewers may establish links between the world of their everyday lives and the world as represented in television news stories. Super-themes can be seen to mediate between viewer and story by translating a reality that appears complex and distant into simple, general, and personally meaningful terms. Because they tend to be broad and general, super-themes may be distinguished from more specific topical themes that can be identified in the content of particular news stories. At the same time, super-themes may have a concrete quality to them as they depart from specific details in the visuals or commentary of a news item or from the viewer's singular life experiences’ (Jensen, 1998: 19).

As catalysts which concentrate ‘the audience's dominant interests’ (Orozco, 1998: 127), super-themes are a productive way to visualize, for instance, the formers' priorities and spheres of engagement in the realms of sending and receiving societies. This fieldwork's findings suggest that super-themes matter because, next to the verbal relevance they are accorded, they represent phenomena which viewers' see as impacting their livelihoods, no matter how close or distant the events and developments represented in the news are. Put another way, super-themes are units of analysis which reflect on the societal local and global forces which may inherently destabilize transnational viewers' sense of ontological security. Note that such destabilization is the by-product not of a “media effect”, but of the symbolic correlation drawn by audiences between news items and their particular life circumstances. As explained in chapter four, super-themes have been the result of transcribing the dialogues from the viewing sessions, as well as the diaries in which fieldwork participants kept an account of their daily consumption of television news. As previously explained, data from audio and video-tapes was transcribed with a word-processor and the indexing of discourses to specific super-themes – or coding – was executed using NVivo, a software application for qualitative analysis. Because many of the conversations recorded in informants' living rooms have already been drawn upon for the first section of this chapter, information from the diaries will now be employed.

The analysis of the records kept by the diarists reflected on immigration as a predominant super-theme, but news subjects about Mexico, health, war, crime, and the economy also featured heavily in the diaries. An alphabetic order will be followed to provide

examples of the multiplicity of subjects which captured our informants' attention during the time they kept a diary. This approach is taken because the notion should be avoided that super-themes with the largest amount of "hits" are by themselves an indication that people's lives spin around questions and concerns pertaining to a certain subject. Under this logic, for instance, their high-levels of interest in news about immigration would mean that this topic should be considered as being pre-eminent in their lives than, say, the economy. The idea is that super-themes help to identify the interests of audiences in the news, but not necessarily to explain them, which requires an understanding of informant's life histories. This point, central to this project's arguments, will be discussed ahead. Attention should go now to the super-themes as they put in perspective the broad range of events and developments in the news that come in and out of audiences' attention in their daily lives.

Accidents

Judging by the diaries used in this project, one would think television news programmes dedicate a big deal of attention to accidents. Matching the number of entries about the economy and natural disasters, and exceeding those about Latin America, terrorism and education, scores of unfortunate events seemed to enter diary-keepers span of attention on a constant basis, as visible in the following accounts:

DUM1: Four people died as they slept inside their home. They had been warned the building was in bad shape and that a storm would suffice to bring down the ceiling. A neighbour said they were too poor and had nowhere to go. I felt very sad about this (Male, 31, builder).

DEF1: Someone's father fell from an elevator and died. What mattered to me is that his family is shattered; the wife was in tears, saying she thought she would spend her years as an elder with her husband. The daughter was there too, regretting her father would no longer be around (Female, 51, custodian).

DKF1: A boy went out to the street to buy an ice cream, but the ice cream driver didn't see him and ran over the kid, and then ran away. The report said he might have been drunk, it's so sad when innocent people die because of an accident which could have been avoided (Female, 50, cashier).

DXM1: They reported about a massive fire in a family complex in Chicago. I found it interesting because it's a kind of warning, we have to make sure our fire alarms are working to avoid a tragedy (Male, 36, car mechanics).

DIF1: A girl lost her life because of her alcoholic mother. This story warns us against drunk driving, it tells us to drive responsibly because we carry our children's lives with us and we could suddenly be in an accident (Female, 26, housewife).

Armed conflict

Diarists sensitivity to armed clashes was manifest throughout their written reports of the news, in which feelings of sympathy for the victims, anger and frustration were conveyed especially in regard to the Middle East, as shown in the following entries:

DOF1: Israel's attack on Lebanon is sad, despicable, irrational and beastly; I will never understand why Israel attacks innocent people, I'll never understand human nature (Female, 60, custodian).

DVM1: Israel is leading a brutal bombing in the south of Lebanon. They say they are fighting terrorists but I don't understand why they make life horrible for the civilian population (Male, 48, shopkeeper/social worker).

DCM1: More news about war in Iraq, including dead US soldiers. This is a story that we will continue to see every day for a long time until the war is over. It is sad to see that everyday our soldiers are getting killed and a lot of them don't even want to be in the war, but they have to fight (Female, 32, head custodian).

DPF1: I've had enough of the war in the Middle East. The crisis goes on and on, and more innocent people are dying. It looks as if Israel were targeting civilians rather than enemy soldiers (Female, 27, custodian).

DSF1: US soldier killed in Iraq. Even though I hear stories like this almost every day, it just makes me feel so angry that this war is going on. People keep dying (Female, 23, PhD student).

Education

News stories about education were a common denominator in the diaries. With a few exceptions, most mentions on the subject expressed some level of concern with its quality, in

the understanding that high schooling standards would benefit the standing of diarists' sons and daughters.

DHF1: Students are failing to graduate from high-school since they can't handle the exit exam. Over 40% of students in California are failing the test. It's interesting, the exam is not difficult, it's about basic math and English (Female, 24, student).

DCF1: Mayor Villarraigosa wants to take control of the school district, but he faces a lot of opponents. This news matters to me because I have two children and I would like their schools to get all the help they can so they can have better schools, safer, and the best teachers, so they can have a better education (Female, 32, head custodian).

DOF1: News that major Villarraigosa is struggling for control of the LA USD is positive, he would help our young people (Female, 60, custodian).

DMF1: Senator Gil Cedillo is helping Latino students to obtain scholarships. Lydia Camarillo spoke to reporters, she said Cedillo's intervention will help students finish their university programmes. This is positive, we need more news like this (Female, 47, custodian).

DNF1: Today I'm writing about the School reform in Los Angeles. We hope the major will be able to improve the state of schooling for the benefit of many Latino students who are lagging behind in comparison to white students (Female, 29, housewife).

DYM1: The Mayor of Los Angeles wants to take over the LA USD which I think is a great idea because hopefully the mayor could keep the standards high for schools in LA. Maybe it'll start a trend where all schools can be kept to higher standards. I think he's doing what he promised. Actually doing what he says (Male, 22, restaurant manager).

Health

Featuring heavily in the daily reports, stories about health uncovered high levels of concern regarding questions of access and the quality to medical attention; ideas of prevention and awareness of health threatening developments were also present, as demonstrated in the following accounts:

DHF1: The news said there will be universal health services for people in San Francisco. It's going to be the first city to do so (Female, 46, housewife).

DWM1: The news said there are some very mean bugs in hospitals. Because of poor cleaning many patients catch the virus, they come to the hospitals to be cured, but instead they get worse (Male, 49, custodian).

DCF1: More states are reporting people getting sick for eating spinach. Until now one person has already died because of this. This story matters to me because I eat spinach and to get poisoned or sick eating vegetables that are supposed to be healthy is something to think about (Female, 32, head custodian).

DAF1: Soraya's death was sad, more than important; what happens is I'm worried about breast cancer. Soraya's case therefore reminds us it's important to keep an eye. (Female, 43, housewife)

DHF1: Over 1,000 people have caught the E. coli bacteria from eating spinach. A few have even died from food poisoning (Female, 46, housewife).

DIF1: The news said there is an outbreak of food poisoning. It began with spinach but how can we know whether it has spread to other food products? (Female, 26, housewife).

Mexican elections

The electoral process in Mexico attracted massive interest from a variety of angles. The notion that the ballot – open for the first time in history to Mexican residents overseas – was connected to a reality in both sides of the border was strongly conveyed in the daily reports, which also bore a hint of traditional scepticism in Mexico's political process, as suggested by the views below:

DAF1: In Mexico's presidential election only a few thousand Mexicans in the US are expected to vote; many don't have their electoral ID cards and that's why turn out will be very low (Female, 43, housewife).

DCF1: News about the Mexican President elections. This news story matters to me because I would like to have a president that cares more about Mexico and all Mexican people. I would like to see a powerful country, that its people didn't have the need to come to another country looking for a better life and a better future for our children (Female, 32, head custodian).

DIF1: The story said the PAN won the election but the followers of the PRD called it a fraud. I'm interested in this outcome because Mexico's economy depends on this (Female, 26, housewife).

DVM1: It's clear the left is not willing to do anything to keep Mexico from descending into violence. This I know from looking at the stance taken by leftwing lawmakers, who took over the main tribune of the Congress to block the president from making his annual address. I congratulate president Fox for his attitude, he just delivered his address in print, to avoid trouble (Male, 48, shopkeeper/social worker).

DXM1: Felipe Calderon has been declared president elect of Mexico. This is an important political and social development which will somehow be of benefit to us all even though we live in the US. There are strong links between our countries (Male, 36, car mechanics).

Migration

Stories about migration are a staple of Spanish-language television news. This became clear throughout contributors' daily accounts, which in many ways reflected on how related issues touch upon their daily lives, as expressed in these accounts:

DAF1: About the recent immigrant protest I enjoyed realizing that the movement is taking place in many states and that they are fighting for the same cause. I was also interested in the economic boycott that was part of this march, but I think one day is not enough to make a real impact (Female, 43, housewife).

DCF1: A Mexican woman with a deportation order gets support from a Catholic church. This story matters to me because I feel sorry for this woman and her son. I think that if she goes to Mexico with her son they would not have a better future than here, especially her son (Female, 32, head custodian).

DWM1: Fake lawyers are scamming immigrants. They take their money, telling them they will get them documents, but then people never see them again, they lose their savings and sometimes are deported never to come back again (Male, 49, custodian).

DNF1: The Senate approved issuing driver licences for the undocumented. Let's hope the state of California will not oppose this and that it will take all the measures to guarantee everyone can lawfully drive (Female, 29, housewife).

DUM1: Nine dead trying to cross the border. They were being chased by the border police but their vehicle crashed and rolled over as they tried to escape (Male, 31, builder).

Crime

Diarists frequently focused on stories involving criminal offences and the presence of victims, with stories about sexual child abuse, police pursuits, and drug dealing being a constant, as the next entries show.

DWM1: Children raped. Many kids have been victimized. In order to protect them they have created the so called Jessica's law. A child is raped every thirty-five minutes and something must be done to stop rapists (Male, 49, custodian).

DXM1: A 3 year old girl dies because of gang bangers. Street violence is hitting us badly and today it took the life of a little girl; she was shot in South Los Angeles because members of a gang thought her father was part of an enemy gang. Unfortunately we are all exposed to this kind of danger in our streets (Male, 36, car mechanics).

DBF1: Police chase in the highway. A policeman told a suspect driver to pull out his vehicle, but the suspect didn't cooperate so it turned into a chase which turned deadly. I love to see these chases. I like how the cops chase the bad guys, even though it is too dangerous for kids and civilians (Female, 56, social worker).

DNF1: I followed a car chase somewhere in San Bernardino. An helicopter was keeping track of some car robbers but the patrols were keeping their distance to avoid an accident. They finally captured the criminals, two young black men. They interrupted programming to show this report (Female, 29, housewife).

DEF1: It's been good news to know they have caught Javier Arellano Felix; he was fishing off the coast of Baja California and is now in the hands of the US authorities, so I guess he'll be put away for quite some time (Female, 51, custodian).

Latin America

Developments in Latin America received the lowest rate of entries in the written accounts, but the few items that were identified provide in a small sample a good idea of the type of coverage that the southern part of the American continent receives in Spanish-language newscasts:

DCF1: Maras in El Salvador. A lot of gang bangers are being deported to El Salvador. This news matters to me because even though I'm not Salvadorian I have a lot of friends from there. It is sad to see that every day they found persons, especially women, that are being raped and killed by this gang members (Female, 32, head custodian).

DKF1: Fidel Castro is ill and will be operated. He has put in power his brother Raúl, who said Fidel will live 100 years. I could say I will live 100 years myself, but it's God who always has the last word. I think that, sooner or later, the time for the dictator will come (Female, 50, cashier).

DPF1: Some protests in Argentina turned violent. They would do fine to seek agreement before disrupting social peace, after all leaders are democratically elected (Female, 27, custodian).

DNF1: Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez said he didn't recognise Mexico's new president elect. I think he shouldn't mess with Mexico's internal affairs or those of any other country. His comments damage diplomatic relationships between the two countries (Female, 29, housewife).

DTM1: There has been a massacre in Salvador. A family of six members was murdered, apparently by gang bangers (Male, 35, press operator).

Natural disasters

News reports about hurricanes, floods and earthquakes were a clear driver of attention during the period in which respondents kept the diaries, with the focus constantly shifting from one geographic region to another, as shown in the entries below:

DHF1: The hurricane season. The forecast is that many of these, three or four, will affect Mexico and parts of the US. I'm obviously concerned as this affects both my home country and the country where I live (Female, 46, housewife).

DHF2: A report said that a 7.9 (degrees) earthquake would not be tolerated by most buildings because the earth would shake 2 metres per second. This would affects us all, it would be like the Northridge earthquake (Female, 16, student).

DCF1: Hurricanes season. Some states in Mexico are getting flooded because of rain. This stories matters to me because I'm from the coast of Michoacán, and this is one of the states that is getting flooded and the rain won't t stop. I called my family to make sure that they are safe (Female, 32, head custodian).

DOF1: Floods in Japan. The strength of nature is breath-taking. We are just defenceless in the face of these natural disasters (Female, 60, custodian).

DWM1: A volcano erupted. This particular volcano left a big death toll and many people are missing, they think many corpses will be buried beneath the rubble and the magma (Male, 49, custodian).

DXM1: The storms in Mexico. Storms are a big problem in Mexico; it's worrying, many people are been caught in floods and losing their possessions. I am worried about this because many of us have relatives living in Mexico City (Male, 36, car mechanics).

Terrorism

The subject of terror attacks frequently moved informants to write in the diaries, who somehow reflected on the perception that developments in this area are grounded largely in a national US reality with the potential to disrupt people's lives.

DCF1: Five years after the worst terrorist attack in the US. This story matters to me because I still feel sad for all the families that lost any loved ones on this attacks. It looks and feels that it was yesterday and until now the US government haven't done anything, just blaming everybody. (Female, 32, head custodian).

DHF1: Terrorist threat. The report that I'm interested in is about the security measures that are being taken at the Los Angeles airport. All the trouble is linked with airplanes coming from London (Female, 46, housewife).

DOF1: The country in alert. We should be alert because of the terrorist threat. How are we supposed to do this? Don't we have enough with our lives? Now we also have to beware of terrorists? Who's going to help us? Bush? (Female, 60, custodian).

DWM1: New restrictions in airports. The most important of this report is that it seems everyday more restrictions are put to what travellers can bring when boarding an airplane. It is advised that people just bring their documents in a personal bag but that is difficult, since travelling always means one wants to bring stuff for your relatives (Male, 49, custodian).

DXM1: The attacks on the twin towers. This is remembered every year. It affects us all one way or another because many people lost their lives but also because it made life more difficult for immigrants (Male, 36, car mechanics).

The Economy

Considerations about the state of the US economy were clearly picked on by diarists as an element affecting their livelihoods, which they saw connected with the cost of petrol, interest rates, and energy bills, as evidenced in the quotes below:

DIF1: Heat wave and our budget. Because of the hot weather our energy bills are going up. This story matters to me because it makes me pay more attention on things I can do to cut spending, for instance disconnecting appliances that are not in use (Female, 26, housewife).

DSF1: Interest rates rising. I have a lot of student loans so this affects me now and in the future (Female, 23, PhD student).

DNF1: An increase in minimum wages. This will be of benefit to us all because the cost of living has been rising, especially our rent and utilities bills. I'm crossing my fingers the governor will approve this immediately (Female, 29, housewife).

DTM1: High petrol prices. The news story said the price of gasoline will continue to rise, and this obviously matters to me because I need my car to go to work and for my family needs (Male, 35, press operator).

DXM1: Lower interest rates in home mortgages. If this is true it will be very convenient to us, we would then consider buying a house because we aim to stop shedding money in rent payments, especially because let properties are kept in very poor conditions (Male, 36, car mechanics).

2. Experiences of the local and the global: connecting the dots of reception analysis

Super-themes leave us in need of a tool to discern the decoding of the news, to understand what the readers make of these texts. This could be related to the complexities identified by Stuart Hall in his encoding/decoding model (2001[1980]), but the focus of our project requires us to move from issues pertaining “preferred”, “oppositional” and “negotiated” readings, to questions involving the concept of “experience”, of what the use of communication media tell us about the diasporic condition, and ultimately, of how globalization is lived. This is a requirement brought forward by the very discourses of our

television viewers, who in referring to news reports constantly articulated an idea of reality unfurling on the screen, and affecting them in very personal ways. The point can be exemplified through statements from informants who explained what television news meant for them in the following terms:

H17F2: Television news let us find about the situation of our country (Mexico), of the country and city where we live as well as about the rest of the world. What happens to us? What happens to our relatives in Mexico? What happens to people living in other countries? Can the same happen to us? The news keep us informed about all that (Female, 26, catering).

H1M1: TV news are reports that keep me informed of what is going on here, and in different countries and cities (Male, 31, car repair).

H8F3: The news keep us informed of what goes on around the planet. They give you images of your world, your country and your neighbourhood. Once the information is there we decide how it affects us (Female, 46, housewife).

From statements like these it would seem as if television news is a vehicle through which viewers form a consciousness of the world outside. The fact they regard news stories as projections of reality – of the world, the country or neighbourhood, as one of them put it – leave us in need to understand their views about television news as if they were part of their experiences. Experience consists essentially of the impressions and knowledge people gain from interacting with their material surroundings and in a social milieu; it can also be obtained from states of mind such as those induced by faith (i.e. in religion) and aesthetic pleasure (i.e. art) (see respectively James, 1979 and Dewey, 1958). Certainly, television in general and news in particular (Meyrowitz, 1985), constitute a source of experiences, even though these have been “sequestered” from the locales where they were once thought to be firmly embedded (cf. Thompson, 1995). What is being said here is that one needs to interrogate the discourses of informants as if they were reflections of their consciousnesses, which can in turn be considered as by-products of lived experiences (Chafe, 1994: 3). Once this operation is made one needs to think of an adequate strategy to establish a valid link between the television news experiences of transnational audiences and the body of work contributed by reception analysis.

3. Enunciation and deixis: mapping television news reception

The outline of diary entries suggests that super-themes lead to a phenomenology of the experiences of transnational audiences. A deeper framework of analysis is however needed to make sure super-themes are not taken *tout court* at face value. Instead of simply considering informants discourses of the news as displacements of their conscious experiences (Chafe, 1994), a second move was made to further reveal the links between fieldwork participants and their accounts of television news. The concept of “enunciation” was the key element of analysis used for this purpose. Deriving from structural linguistics, enunciation ‘is at the core of the relationship between language and the world: on one hand it allows to represent facts through statements, but on the other it is a fact in itself, an event defined by time and space’ (Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2002: 228).²⁵ Enunciation, as opposed to *énoncé* (statement or utterance), serves to distinguish the action of making a statement from the statement itself, and one cannot fully grasp the latter [what is said] without keeping in mind the context of the former [who is saying it]. Charaudeau and Maingueneau note that enunciation is to be identified through the abstract coordinates which are part of verbal acts.

As part of this project, an effort has been made to locate such coordinates in the content from interviews with fieldwork participants. The concept of *deixis* has been the approach taken to identify those coordinates, as a way to further dissect whatever meanings fieldwork participants took from the news. Deixis is one core aspect of enunciation (ibid., p. 231), and by locating its presence one can interrogate the rationale of informants meaning-taking of the news. This in turn leads to biographic accounts which further stress the idea of experience as a central element of reception analysis. Deixis allows to scrutinize discourse by locating the many dimensions that form people’s perceptions of reality. People use vocabulary deictically, flagging the world, or what they think the world is, through the use of deictic markers, including personal [I, you, she, etc], possessive [mine, yours, hers, etc] and demonstrative [this/that] pronouns, as well as adverbs of time [now/tomorrow] and space [here/there] (Billig, 1995: 116). These categories have provided the criteria for the analysis of the semi-structured interviews, under the consideration that informants used language deictically when talking about television news. In consequence, their discourses should be interpreted in terms of their deictic coordinates, as this should allow to connect a multiplicity of dots leading to an improved understanding of the media reception of transnational

²⁵ My translation from French.

audiences. The point is that in the interviews with informants one's attention is directed to a multiplicity of conversational subjects which are grounded to personal histories. The importance of deixis, which is grounded to the context of the speaker, is that it reveals a number of markers, personal, spatial and temporal, which emerge in discussion about television news. With this in mind, the discourses of our informants have been organized along a number of categories [ethnicities, everyday life, language, location, etc] identified in table 4.5 of chapter four (p. 162). Such indexing of television news reception reveals the many fields of action that are common for the person who migrates, and will be discussed in the next section.

Making sense through pronouns

When discussing certain news reports most participants in the Los Angeles fieldwork conveyed the idea that their personal circumstances made them see the world from singular points of views. This is why analyzing the interviews using personal pronouns, particularly 'I' and 'we', as a criteria of analysis yields important details regarding the connections that informants draw between themselves and news developments. In this respect, being a mother, a father, a man or a woman, was frequently expressed as a reason to understand television news in a determinate manner. Explaining why he thought watching television news was important, a builder explained: 'I'm a man who fights for his family and I must know what opportunities are out there'. In explaining her high levels of interest about road accidents, a housewife said that 'because I'm a mother I must know what dangers are out there waiting for my two daughters'. In regard to Latino mass protests in several US cities another informant mentioned that 'I am a citizen and am obliged to go out there to protest for those who can't walk freely in public places'. A subcontractor, however, expressed exactly the opposite, arguing that as an undocumented immigrant he was at a disadvantage:

H25M1: What can I do? I'm an immigrant, what I do or say doesn't count now, but if we go out there we're stronger and then our voices are heard (Male, 34, subcontractor).

Being of Mexican origin was recurrently mentioned as a reason to explain one's interest in television news: 'I'm Mexican, so I watch the news to find about my Mexico', said a female informant. Even a second generation high-school student who had never been to Mexico said that 'my blood is Mexican, so I go out and march with other Mexicans to fight

for our rights'. Another case was put forward by a father of two who in arguing against the involvement of Hispanics in the war in Iraq, invoked the rather popular view that Mexicans are a peaceful people who have never waged war against another country. As he put it,

H11M1: Mexicans want to know nothing about armed conflict. In Mexico you never see Mexicans fighting overseas, or do you? Well, here in the US you see them because the government recruits them. I think it's unfair, the US keeps us from coming into the country but if you want to enrol they'll take you and send you to Iraq. We saw this in a recent news report (Male, 38, shopkeeper).

In a different context a woman who had been expressing scepticism about the importance of voting in Mexico's presidential election, while being in the US, put her views in the following way:

H10F1: I don't vote in Mexico, I vote here in the US. I voted for Bush last time. I like it better here, things work better in this country. That doesn't make me less Mexican though, I was conceived in Mexico, I was born in Mexico, I cook Mexican food and speak like a Mexican. You see? I'm Mexican, and will always be (Female, 60, housewife).

The point was made differently by an informant who had migrated with his mother to Los Angeles when he was 4 years old:

H12M1: I'm generally not interested in news about Mexico. I came here so many years ago that I don't really feel a connection, I would say I'm not Mexican. Therefore, my interest in news about Mexico is very low (Male, 42, concierge).

In contrast, two sisters who had been born in the US said they would naturally be interested in news about Mexico:

H13F2: We do pay more attention to reports from there, at least more than we would pay to news from Europe or any other place. I would say it's our second choice after the US (Female, 22, social worker).

H13F3: I pay more attention simply because I want to know what is going on in my parents' place of birth (Female, 18, student).

Taking the last three examples it is relevant to note that reflections about national identity can be triggered by television news, in turn creating conditions for dialogue, or tension, between parents and their children:

H13F1: I saw this report with farmers in rural areas, very poor people... and I told them [my two daughters] 'your father and I were once in very similar conditions', and they look at me with surprise, asking 'really?'. Watching the news for me is about that, about reviving our origins, and I try to transmit this to them (Female, 43, self-employed).

H13F2: I agree with my mother. Sometimes, watching the news, looking at what is going on there, you get to think where you come from. You tell yourself 'wow, my parents went through all that to be here, and this is why I exist'. Yes, it's important to watch the news (Female, 22, social worker).

A mother was, on the other hand, bitter about her grown up son's assertion that he normally dismissed news about Mexico since he felt no form of connection with Mexico, telling him that 'you were born in Mexico and you were born to me. So you're Mexican, want it or not'. Other examples of personal deixis have come up where traits of personality are seen as conditions which predispose individuals to assuming certain opinions, attitudes and even political postures in the face of specific developments in the news. A 50 year old woman who was the union representative of catering workers and custodians at a university, explained that she was deeply interested in news because that gave her knowledge and awareness to represent her colleagues. She said that being "a fighter" she always stayed informed by watching the news: 'That's why people chose me to represent them at the union'. Other personality traits assumed in regard to news-viewing included the following:

H5F1: I am a very relaxed person. Because I only do a part-time job I get time to sit back and watch the news with a certain level of tranquillity, and I am therefore able to understand what many can't, since they always come home shattered from a long day at work (Female, 60, custodian).

H21F1: I am very emotional. I can't see that someone is suffering an injustice or something because I immediately start yelling at the TV set (Female, 51, custodian).

Us and them

Informants saw in television news a multiplicity of dynamics which motivated a variety of considerations about the collective identity of Mexicans. Mentioning past coverage in the World Cup of a soccer match between the national teams of Mexico and the US had derived in Mexican-origin fans demonstrating lack of judgement, which earned a bad image for Mexicans in the US. As one married couple put it,

H1M1: We Mexicans are a rowdy crowd, all we can earn staging a mass protest we can lose in situations like these, you see Mexicans drinking beer on camera, blowing their horns and doing all kinds of silly things. How can they expect to be legalised with that kind of attitude? (Male, 31, mechanist).

H1F1: In this I'm with him. In the World Cup all Mexicans here supported Mexicans, they took every opportunity to make a fool of themselves. The same in the mass protests, they were told not to wave Mexican flags but there they went, waving it. This only wins us bad opinions (Female, 27, custodian).

Choosing to merge Mexicans with Latinos another respondent spoke in similar terms when saying that,

H13M1: Some of us wish our people were less disorderly, that people of our race kept as low a profile as possible so we would be more appreciated by the folks of this country. Really, many of the problems here are because of us, the prisons are full of Latinos, parks are full of drunk Latinos. Maybe we deserve the bad TV coverage (Male, 49, custodian).

Noting that part of his interest about television news was partly explained in the opportunity it provided to improve one's understanding of English language, a man expressed

that his interest in learning English evidenced Mexicans were less nationality conscious than what is normally suggested in television news. As he said:

H11M1: I think they exaggerate in the news the view that we love our country too much and the US too little. Everyone who comes from Mexico would like to speak English and if they don't it's because lack of time, they have to work all the time. It's not like Mexicans don't learn English because they want to stay Mexican, so I try to watch the news in English and understand what is being said (Male, 38, shopkeeper).

In a different context a social worker expressed that being part of an ethnic minority she had an interest in following stories about Antonio Villarraigosa, the mayor of Los Angeles and the first politician of Hispanic origin to ever hold that position. Talking about frictions between people of Latin American descent and African Americans she expressed it was wise for high-profile elected officials like Villarraigosa to not favour any ethnic specific groups, especially because

H13F2: We are both minorities. He (Villarraigosa) shouldn't be seen working in favour of Latinos only because blacks would then rebel and we would then have controversy, which would threaten Villarraigosa himself. Better if we all become a united group of minorities, to strike a balance (Female, 22, social worker).

In another conversation two females who lived under the same roof manifested that Mexicans were a hard-working people, and that this differentiated them from African Americans. They however had a slightly different perspective, as captured in the following exchange:

H3F1: We Mexicans are shown [in the news] taking whatever pay they give us for the job we do. Not so the blond ones, they would never take the hard jobs we do with the lousy pay we get. (Female, 53, cashier).

H3F2: But we are hard workers, that's something to be proud of (Female, 50, catering/union leader).

H3F1: I'm not sure being hard-working is so good, that makes us cheap doesn't it? (Female, 53, cashier).

H3F2: But as individual you do well if you work hard, I've been here for 36 years and nobody works harder than me (Female, 50, catering/union leader).

H3F1: But maybe it's not just us Mexicans who work hard, maybe all Latinos do (Female, 53, cashier).

H3F2: But at least we work harder than black people (Female, 50, catering/union leader).

Television news was also seen to allow differentiation of sub-national groups among people of Hispanic origin. As one man said:

H6M1: We are straightforward; we look people in the eye. The migra captured a group trying to cross the border and they all said they were Mexican. But you could tell they weren't, they were looking down, they were Salvadoran and Peruvian, but they always say they're Mexican, so they'll just be thrown at the border and not somewhere farther, making an attempt to return more difficult (Male, 53, driver).

4. Television news as grounded geography: actors in transnational social spaces

Locational deixis came up as a central element of informants' interpretation of news reports. In response to a multiplicity of news items, fieldwork participants repeatedly articulated the relevance of news stories as distributed across multiple geographic layers, which one could locate in between the "here" and "there" of their physical contexts. By focusing on informant's use of locational deixis, one can notice their strong tendency to see distant events as if they bore consequences for their personal and family interests. Consider, for example, a discussion with three members of a family in South Central L.A. – a husband, his wife and the latter's sister – after viewing a TV news programme with stories including an Israeli bombing campaign in Lebanon, high gasoline prices and the electoral standoff in Mexico. Asked to identify the story that in their opinion was the most relevant of the news block, each one of the respondents came up with the following:

H6M1: The two most important stories were the ones about Mexico and the Middle East. You know, what is happening in Mexico may disrupt peace and lead to, you

know, more migrants coming here, that's why it needs a solution. The other is the same, should peace continue to be fractured in Lebanon that may lead to international unrest. Lack of peace becomes a disease that grows till it reaches you, no matter where we are. That is why I'm interested in these two stories (Male, 53, newspaper delivery).

H6F1: I agree with my husband. Too many innocent people are suffering (with the bombings in Lebanon). In Mexico, as my husband said, one wishes for a quick end to the conflict, even though the death toll is not as high, it's our country. I'm also concerned with (the war in) Iraq, too many soldiers are dying and at the same time it's putting pressure on the prices of petrol. The prices are always on the rise but not our incomes. It's because of the war; President Bush does nothing but giving orders whose consequences we suffer. Sometimes I think we won't have enough to eat. I think we're reaching that point (Female, 43, baby-sitter).

H6F3: I worry about the bombing, this new war has repercussions for us Latinos, here and there, it's all connected (Female, 29, housewife).

The discussion above is representative of many others that took place during the fieldwork. This kind of evidence suggests that transnational audiences personalise television news as if they were part of their own mental geographies, seemingly embedded in three broad layers that can be identified as the local, the global and diasporic. This is a crucial distinction that can be of use to start differentiating national from transnational audiences. Klaus Bruhn Jensen and his team found in a study that the reception of news of families in eight different countries operated along a dimension of space which simultaneously correlates physical with 'experienced distance' (1998: 166). In the eyes of television viewers, he noted, events were perceived as placed 'on an axis from the highly familiar and culturally bound to the entirely unknown, alien, and perhaps, threatening aspects of news' (Jensen, 1998: 166). This allows to entertain the possibility that whereas national audiences – like the ones Jensen and his team researched – tend to assess the impact of news on the basis of their perceived proximity from these, transnational audiences find themselves almost inevitably involved in the unfurling of news developments. This is so because they see their presence – real or imagined – in different spatial layers, frequently "skewered" by the trajectories and outcomes followed by news stories. Consider the statement above of respondent H6M1 for instance. For him, a disruption of peace may arise in the form of political strife in Mexico or as an

Israeli bombing campaign in Lebanon. In both cases, he conveys the idea that disruption of peace affects his living conditions, with one meaning 'more migration' and the other an expanding disease that 'reaches you, no matter where we are'. Through the concept of peace this person threaded together different super-themes – political strife, war and migration – which he sees bearing influence upon his living conditions, despite their not so obvious geographical proximity.

Jensen and his colleagues have demonstrated that super-themes normally uncover a relationship between the lived experiences of publics and the television news they keep up with. This connection yields four dimensions – space, power, time and identity – (Jensen, 1998: 165) which inform the analysis of super-themes, thereby revealing the 'structuring principles which might unite or divide the groups of national respondents along similar analytical dimensions'. Because transnational audiences tend to interconnect two or more super-themes in their response to news events, however, such mixing usually results in multifaceted notions of space which in turn lead to variable articulations of power, time and identity, thus making their analysis more difficult. Consider now the statement of respondent H6F1. For her, armed conflict leads to loss of life abroad and at home, and to adverse personal economic conditions. This participant links together different news categories – war, politics and the economy – which she goes on to translate into sources of personal and anonymous suffering. The third respondent came to reassert her relatives' claims in even simpler terms, by implying that some air raids taking place thousands of miles away have immediate consequences for an imagined community to which she belongs. These and other examples add up then to the argument that in the articulations of space put in place by transnational audiences, there tends to be a merger between perceived and geographical distance. The idea is that reception analysis of transnational audiences should follow not just super-themes but the connections respondents draw between television news and the multiple spaces to which they ground their life histories. It is in this intersection of narrative and deixis that one can close in on the contribution that reception analysis can make to produce a sharper picture of diasporic groups in a context of globalization.

5. Glocal visions

Until here the point has been made that informants sense a proximity from news-developments regardless of how close or distant they are from the reality perceived via the

news. This argument has a parallel in our analytical framework of deixis, whereby respondents' discourses frequently trace a relationship between the use of personal pronouns and spatial or temporal adverbs. This evidenced not only a tendency to personalise the importance of news, but also a variety of ordinary and unusual experiences in the lives of our informants which highlight the need to take stock of their nature as actors in transnational social spaces. This requires us to think in terms of the spatial layers which are embedded in the mental geographies of our informants, and which we have described before as the local, the global and the diasporic. We shall provide a description of each of the three using material from our interviews with fieldwork participants in Los Angeles. Not surprisingly, viewers constant self-localizing lead to ideas expressed in terms of distant events having repercussions in immediate surroundings. Fomenting a consciousness of close and distant realities is a well documented function of television news (i.e. Jensen, 1998; Morley, 1999a). This awareness may however turn into a form of alertness in the face of a fast moving world where distant localities (Giddens, 1990: 64) are linked through time-compression technologies (Harvey, 1989: 147). This translates into a deeply ingrained notion that far away events have immediate consequences elsewhere, in what could be described as a "what happens there affects us here" kind of rationale. Under such logic respondents' ideas about the world constantly refer to a mix of interlinked forces including war, political, economic and even environmental phenomena as capable to affect their very livelihoods, as the following quotes demonstrate:

H17F1: Brace yourself if the news says inflation's up. I've lived here (in LA) for nine years. In that time the economic situation has only worsened. Any variation of prices is immediately felt; we all feel it at once. The food, bills, transport costs, everything is connected. Even our folks back home feel it in the form of thinner remittances we send to them (Female, 26, catering).

H6M1: Look at the stories about global warming, it's our fault, we're all ruining the environment and sooner or later it's coming to get us (Male, 53, driver).

H20M1: What happens here is a reflection of what happens in Mexico. The news says it all. Take for instance the presidential election (in Mexico), the political unrest there means more migrants. The amount of Mexicans and Latin Americans here is a consequence of the lack of economic growth and political development there (Male, 56, building sub-contractor).

The notions of an interconnected world involved in the reception of TV news are accompanied by a multiplicity of perceptions about specific dynamics unfurling in certain locations. When it comes to the “here” of the host society, for instance, respondents’ expressed perceptions of themselves as members of a group in disadvantage likely to be victimized, discriminated against or marginalized on the basis of legal status, ethnicity and socioeconomic background.²⁶ One case is represented by a construction worker who migrated to Los Angeles in 1993. He expressed frustration over his inability to act in response to certain news events, which he attributed to the very fact that he could not participate in American electoral processes. As he said,

H25M1: I’m concerned with news about migration, about the wars and the children who die. Unfortunately I can’t do anything about it as I don’t have a right to vote here, I’m not entitled to come forward and say ‘Hey, I can contribute to this problem’s solution’ (Male, 34, builder).

Public, local places

Lack of citizen rights is a reason that respondents have frequently quoted as an obstacle to obtain reasonably paid jobs and better housing, but also a standing from which to exert political pressure in favour of Hispanic causes. As a mother of two US-born children one contributor had earned legal residence in the US, but was not entitled to have her one-year-old taken care of during the mornings at a day care centre. She worried about the fact that the entire economic burden fell on her husband, who had been unlawfully in Los Angeles for almost 20 years, and who had to work seven days a week to precariously make ends meet. She said television news had been recently stressing the importance that citizens of Latino origin took part in local elections, which in her view would lead them to expand their influence in decision-making processes affecting the lives of immigrants. As she put it,

H11F1: Television news has taken on the promotion of vote, news readers are constantly telling us ‘register with the electoral authority if you are a citizen’. I think

²⁶ It is worth-noting that all except eight respondents were documented residents or American citizens at the time of the fieldwork. However, close contact with relatives and friends who are undocumented make the subject of migration a very sensitive topic, constantly present in the mindset and everyday life conversations of Mexican born migrants in the US.

that is crucial to grow our political standing, those who are citizens need to participate (Female, 29, housewife).

For some respondents news programmes are an important ally in the way they go about their personal politics. Such was the case of a feisty 47 year old catering services employee who represented her co-workers at the union of the university she worked for. She had been a union leader for the last three years, an unpaid activity she took on after becoming a US citizen, 25 years after her arrival from Mexico's central state of Oaxaca. Having been among the arrested for blocking an important street in Los Angeles downtown, she said that TV news reporting provided a safety guard for the potential labour struggles in which she might participate. She recalled that,

H3F2: When the police removed us from the street there were TV cameras all over, that made me feel safe, and I knew we wouldn't be harmed or anything but also that everyone would be aware of our struggle. I consider the media to be very important for Hispanics because it allows us to be informed of the things that matter but we can also sometimes use it to get our message across (Female, 50, catering/union leader).

The respondent added that television news as well as radio talk programmes had been key instruments in the organisation of recent Latino-led mass rallies, but found that it was up to citizens of Hispanic origin to continue to organise politically in order to maintain media attention. As she put it,

H3F2: When I first came (37 years ago) there was no news whatsoever about us. TV news has now engaged with us because we are too many. We have to organise to make it cover our causes aside from large scale events (...) The problem is people don't vote, there are 15 million citizens (of Hispanic origin) and only three million vote. When we all vote the news will take us yet more seriously, not only to speak about protests and deaths in the border but to convey our position in political debates (Female, 50, catering/union leader).

The eloquence of the union representative was rather extraordinary, but many others in the fieldwork spoke in similar terms. Notably, coverage of the protests against a Republican sponsored plan to criminalize undocumented migrants uncovered a highly

productive – yet uncommon – link between moments of media use and civic participation. Extensive coverage of the protests including a one-day economic boycott was seen as if the broadcasters were legitimizing the measures, and as proof of their being supporters of immigrant causes. In the eyes of respondents the mass rallies constituted a rare political victory consummated when thousands of marchers, regardless of their migratory status, reasserted their right to manifest their demands in local public spaces. This idea has been frequently expressed in reference to the streets of Los Angeles being taken over by the marchers as a political statement. One example is embodied by a builder who, unlike his partner, had not been able to become a legal resident despite he had been in the country for 13 years. He said calls from the media to participate in the rally motivated him to cancel his work duties at a client's house where he was building an extra room. He added he never risked losing his work contract because his client, a French man, trusted him and the quality of his work. The man recalled the day when he marched with his wife and two children in the following terms:

H25M1: It was Monday. We all stopped working and marched in support of our people so the president (Bush) realized how big a contribution we make to this country. I felt a bit emboldened with all the news talk about Hispanic unity and solidarity. So we went out to the streets in demand of a work permit. We marched all the way from Maywood to Huntington Park (...) I knew it would make an impact if I didn't show up to work that day (Male, 34, builder).

An informant who was a student at the University of California added to the same point, recalling that,

H17F2: I participated in the protests after watching the news were calling people to the streets. I did it to add up to the numbers and to send a message of unity among Mexicans and Latin Americans. I think we all said 'we deserve more spaces in this country' (Female, 19, student).

Against the generalized notion in academia that television news is committed to scandal, celebrity and other signs of media malaise, coverage of the mass rallies opened a window through which viewers found informative value and a guide to political engagement in the US. Numerous examples emerged from the interviews supporting this argument:

H16M1: I frequently feel TV news is a waste of time. Other times they leave you with the impression the information system really works, like with the Hispanic protests. All the broadcasters came together in support of the protests, they guided and we followed to the streets (Male, 36, plumber).

H14F1: Media coverage like the one about the protests is really helpful; it gives you political guidance as to how to demonstrate in the streets (Female, 47, housewife).

H15F1: Being an American citizen I thought the anti-immigrant measures didn't affect me, and then I saw the coverage and realized it affects people I know, my parents' friends for instance, so I guess the news opened my eyes (Female, 24, retail sales).

Having become an American citizen in 2001, another informant said she had felt morally compelled to participate in the pro-immigrant rallies hoping it would move forward the interests of her fellow co-workers, many of who 'don't dare come out to the streets. Being a citizen, marching was the least I could do'. At the same time, however, she felt media coverage of the protests had been excessive, which according to her could backfire by fuelling already negative sentiments against Mexicans. As she put it,

H5F1: On one side I was surprised with all the support on the TV, people were talking about it everywhere but I'm afraid Anglos (...) were scared with all the hype about the protests, I even heard people saying 'they're invading us these Mexicans'. Of course it wasn't only Mexicans, there were even Koreans. The problem is that they always blame us; they see dark skins and cry 'Mexicans' (Female, 60, custodian).

Hispanic world

The subject of Hispanic mass mobilisations as result of media coverage shed light on dynamics that reflected on the routine of fieldwork participants in such contexts as the workplace. A manager of staff that did maintenance work at the same university said at one point he wished news coverage of the mass protests would stop, as individuals under his supervision had been caught 'in the heat of the moment', which in his view had rarefied the working environment. The Mexican-born man, who migrated to Los Angeles being five years old, explained his point as follows:

H18M1: Everyone was talking about the protests. Many workers asked me if I thought they should join the rallies and miss a day's work. On the one hand, I wanted to tell them to participate but on the other I knew their absence would make things awkward for me as I would need to report them. I was glad that mainstream media took sides with *my people*. On the other hand, however, I wanted it to stop. The excessive coverage was making things difficult for me. I know one of my bosses was feeling suspicious. So, in a sort of supportive way I suggested people I wouldn't tell on them if they missed work, but making sure it didn't look like I was actually telling them they could miss work (Male, 36, manager).

Questions of what could be described as national-allegiance-in-reverse were raised when discussing the protests in several cities with large populations of immigrants and people of Latin American descent. A mother who had settled in Los Angeles in 1991 questioned individuals who attended the mass display waving Mexican flags, arguing that those wishing to become legal residents should have at least cared to demonstrate some form of loyalty to the country 'that feeds them and their families'. She went on to explain she had waved an American flag at the protests following recommendations from a television news programme:

H1F1: Many programmes on TV and radio asked the public not to wave Mexican flags and they were right, we are in the United States; they're giving us an opportunity to work here, so people who want the same opportunity should at least care to wave the right flag when in the streets (Female, 27, custodian).

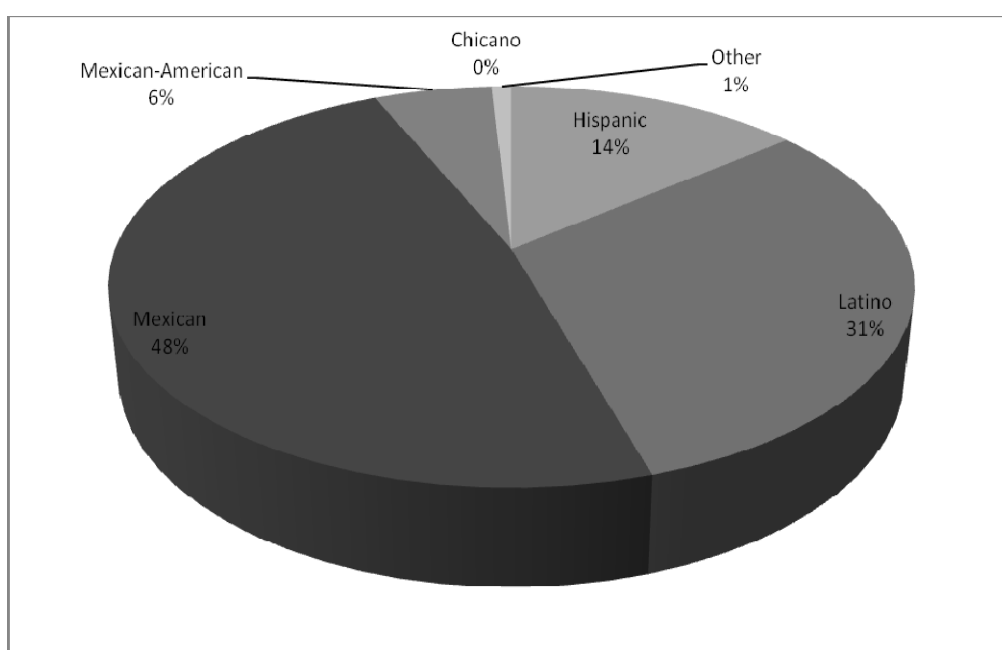
Surprisingly, the same participant had mixed feelings about pro-immigrant demands for an amnesty which would give residence rights to undocumented workers, which she judged unfair considering it had taken her nine years to settle her status in the country. Her husband was still in waiting for legal settlement. Such mixed sentiments were voiced throughout the fieldwork, for instance when a mother and her daughter scolded a male relative who opined all immigrants should be legalised. Another respondent put it in strong terms:

H5F1: They come out to the streets and make demands but what have they done to deserve their documents? They come illegally into the country, breed themselves and get drunk. I'm sorry to say it, but it's not fair that all people are given an amnesty just

like that, after all we had to go through a lot to obtain our documents (Female, 60, custodian).

In all cases, informants reflected on a wide range of concerns when assessing how television news affects them. They have, for instance, identified a number of societal actors they see as having influence upon their destinies (e.g. George W. Bush), who act as political and humanitarian allies (e.g. Los Angeles mayor, the Catholic Church), or as their enemies (e.g. the Republican Party, the governor of California). Scores of participants manifested especial concern with portrayals of Mexicans and Hispanics in the news, which they said, hindered their advancement in the American society. Interestingly, interviewees were generally inclined to describe themselves as Mexicans or Mexican-Americans, but the use of “Hispanic” and “Latino” was also a recurrent form of self-identification (Chart 5.1).

Chart 5.1 Preferred labels for self-identification



Source: Consular survey in Los Angeles (N=106)

In the same context, articulations of belonging to a Pan-American community were common in descriptions regarding the hardships of migration as applying to Hispanics or Latinos in general, and as a struggle that has to be undertaken by establishing alliances between people of different ethnic origins and nationalities. Nonetheless, contributors

worried that news programmes tend to systematically favour associations between having Mexican nationality and being undocumented. Rather bitterly, many noted that Salvadorians, Peruvians and Guatemalans, among others, normally identify themselves as Mexicans. Such strategy of identification by people from South American countries is aimed at avoiding deportation – should the case arise – to their farther-than-Mexico countries. This, in participants' views, makes Mexicans responsible for the rowdy and antisocial behaviour in public places of non-Mexican immigrants, thereby increasing negativity in the general perceptions of Mexicans. Calling attention to their interaction with other ethnic groups in the American society, many participants hinted at the existence of tensions with African-Americans, whom the former blame of abusing “positive discrimination” policies which give them access to the best blue collar jobs (e.g. mail delivery, parking wardens), residential areas, schools, etc. Remarks were common where males and females said they were in an unequal competition against members of the black community. Additionally, most contributors, generally those who were households' main income winners, were quick to find links between reports of rising unemployment, energy and food prices with their living conditions.

Local spaces as case of uses and gratifications

In a different context the fieldwork has shed light on a bundle of uses and gratifications that participants obtain from television news. Many of these have been documented by most audience research-based studies (e.g. structuring daily life activities, family interaction, coping and relaxation, learning, social correlation, etc). Attention should be drawn however to cases where news act to provide a map of viewers' existence across different spatial layers. Such uses suggest there are survival strategies families deploy as part of their daily routines and plans for development in the future. Of particular interest has been the finding regarding the way in which certain items in television news are deployed by families to navigate the hectic Californian highways and the roads of Greater Los Angeles. In this context TV news function as screening devices for planning bodily displacements. Through television news viewers make sense of world events but also of their immediate physical surroundings. One could speak of complicity bonds which develop among household members around the subject of movement in the city. Consider the case of a mother of two who said she once dialled her husband's mobile number to tell him to avoid the Santa Monica bound freeway near the Hoover Street exit in Los Angeles, after KTLA's Channel 9 interrupted its regular

programming to report a “spectacular” police chase in the area. As she explained, her partner was likely to be on his way home, driving in the area at the time of the report. Not only was she worried with her children’s father being in the middle of a dangerous situation, but with the prospect that the increased number of cops in the zone would add to the possibility of him being randomly stopped and caught driving without a proper driver license. The couple put this in perspective during an interview, an excerpt of which is transcribed below:

H11F1: Because he [her husband] can’t get a driver’s license I’ve taken up scanning the news for traffic reports. The other day I called him on his mobile to warn him of a police chase near Hoover Street (Female, 29, housewife).

Interviewer: [Asking to the husband] What did you do when she called?

H11M1: I wasn’t too close but got off the freeway two exits before anyway, then just drove home down the street roads (Male, 38, shopkeeper).

Similar examples of this television “news-informed partnership” emerged during the interviews. A 42 year old woman said she had also called her husband to warn him of a thief and cops shoot out in Los Angeles downtown. ‘Not that he was anywhere near but I just wanted to make sure’, she explained. Other female partners confessed to ‘feeling anxiety’ when they saw police chases in the news, lest they could presage an accident or harm for relatives known to be in transit. Indeed, traffic reports have occupied the imagination of many fieldwork participants, especially those who confessed to have unlawfully driven in the Californian metropolis. As a construction worker explained,

H4M1: When I didn’t have documents I would ask my wife to look for car accidents on the TV. As I drove away I would call and ask whether she’d seen anything, I didn’t want to be anywhere near the cops (Male, 49, construction).

Television news reception helps to visualize other aspects of family relationships. Parenthood, for instance, has been a salient aspect driving viewers’ interest in certain news items. Both mothers and fathers in this fieldwork claimed to have scanned for news which could help them get access to health, nutrition, education and other benefits for their children. Reference has been made to what is considered ‘the blessing of citizenship by birth’, as one father said, which gives parents a pathway towards legal residence and citizenship, while improving access to public entitlements sometimes spotted in “public service” postings that

television news have adopted to their programme formats. One housewife, for example, had migrated to the US in 1998 with her then three year old son. In Los Angeles she met her now husband, with whom she gave birth to two children –two and one year old at the time of the fieldwork. The couple said they had recently found information on television about a vaccination campaign for the two younger children as well as an English course targeted at kids the age of the eldest son. In these cases the husband had obtained ‘these tips’ from a TV news programme, which he then passed on to his wife who in turn took over the task to find the exact locations and to bring the children to where the services in question were being provided. The woman recalled that,

H16F1: He [her husband] got the information from Telemundo’s [news show]. We are always alert to whatever opportunities we can get from the TV, radio, even hand-given flyers. Because Armando keeps up with the news more frequently we sort of teamed up, he got the data but I found the places where we could use it (...) You see, we try to offer the best attention and care to our kids (Female, 24, housewife).

Paradoxically the informant added she thought television news were more frequently ‘useless rather than useful’, making the point that she preferred being a proactive mother who’s always asking in schools and clinics, talking to other mothers and teachers about how to better nurture her children. ‘I obviously don’t sit in front of the TV waiting for information that will tell me how to be a better mum’, she said in sarcasm. The contributor even suggested that the tips recently caught by her partner had been actually chanceful. One would be hard pressed to prove that television news – particularly in the US commercially driven media environment – provide a solid array of public service-oriented information. Despite the fact that this project did not collect substantial evidence to make claims in this regard, our survey at the consular office of Mexico in Los Angeles (see Charts 5.2 and 5.3) hints towards the possibility that Mexican-origin people find they can put television news to practical uses. Having said this, quite a few respondents were inclined to highlight their interest on news features giving advice on a range of topics about health, nutrition and home or road safety. Attention to such news items is related by viewers to their particular circumstances, as a young mother explained in reference to a feature which recommended reigning on the diet of overweight children. Pointing at her almost 40 kilos three year old son, she said that,

H14F2: The report about child obesity is of the utmost importance to me. It reminds me I need to be more careful with my son eating habits, perhaps I should eliminate bread and sugar from his meals but sometimes there's no time. News like that I take very seriously, as though they'd been tailored for me (Female, 20, student).

Chart 5.2 Favourite platforms to find about the news

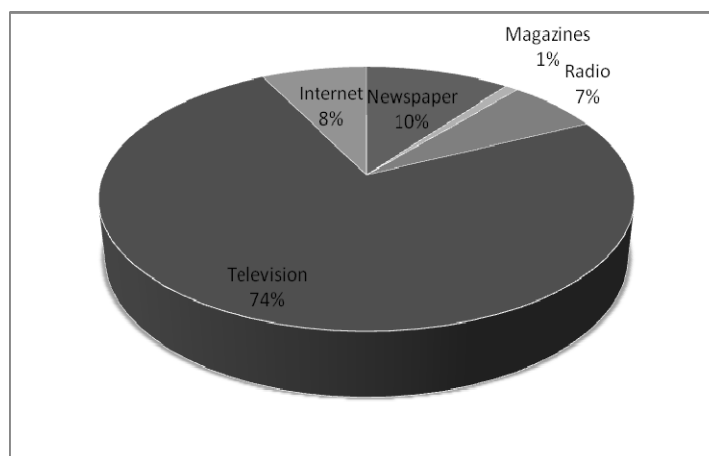
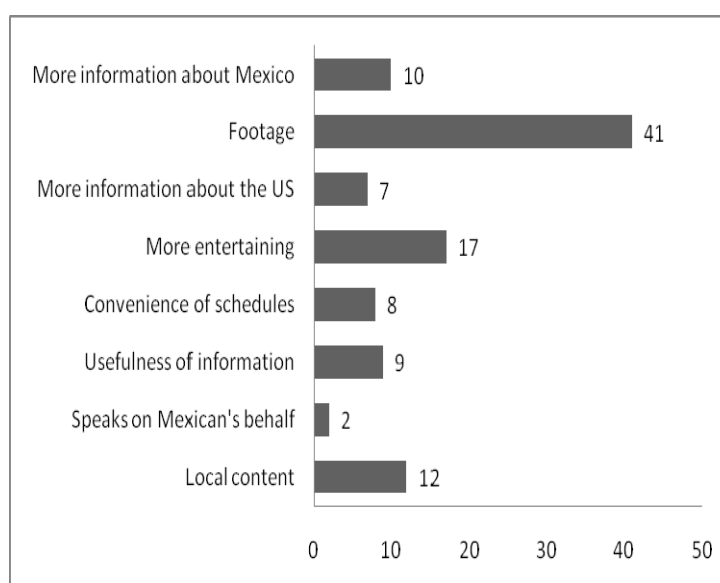


Chart 5.3 Reason for preference of news platform



Source: Consular survey in Los Angeles (N=106)

War in the living room as site of the global

The exercise of parenthood brings, however, concerns over news subjects which are distressing despite their geographic distance. This was particularly the case in regard to an

international news agenda which in participants' views lurked threateningly in their children's future. Parents said they feared about the prospect of their sons and daughters being recruited and sent to fight in the Middle East. In this case parenthood – regardless of gender, migratory circumstances or academic background – emerged as a key driver of attention to news about armed conflicts. In fact, news reports about the war seemed to constitute an unlikely boundary stitching together the lives of fieldwork participants with the spheres of global developments and geopolitical upheaval. A female informant mentioned for instance that television news about Iraq reminded her that,

H11F1: As long as there is war they will always send people from here to the battlefield, while my child is still under-aged I don't know what the future could hold for him, with the US in a permanent state of war he might as well be called to join the army (Female, 29, housewife).

Explaining his especial attention to news about the US occupation of Iraq, a father voiced similar concerns, counter balanced however by the possibility of an Army-funded university, which was a 'very tempting' prospect. As he put it,

H16M1: My interest in the news about Iraq comes from my concern with the American system; the White House could pass a law making it obligatory for my children to serve in the armed forces. Then there's the uncertainty regarding whether I will ever be able to afford university education for them, which makes the Army choice somewhat attractive (Male, 36, plumber).

A third respondent simply said she and her husband felt a constant anxiety about news of dead American soldiers, since a son and a daughter were already old enough to be drafted by the military. She mentioned that,

H6F1: With news about the war we constantly have to remind that our son and daughter are in an age to be called for war. We live with that fear. So many soldiers dying in Iraq and so many of them are Latin American (Female, 43, baby-sitting).

A father added to this subject when told that his son was part of a training programme in a military base in San Diego, prior to his departure to Iraq which had been scheduled for

March 2007. For the man, reports about the Middle East conflict provided a gauge of the levels of violence, thereby allowing him to make some guessing regarding the eventual return of his at the time 20 year old son. After viewing a news block including a story about an Israeli air raid in Lebanon, the father foresaw that increased violence in the region would not improve the chances of an early return:

H12M1: I never miss the news about Iraq; they give me an idea of improvement in the situation, of when to await his [the son] return. Right now I've my eye on the news about Israel, the bombs on Lebanon, which can only mean that the situation in Iraq will get worse. With my child about to depart I worry about anything that happens in that part of the world (Male, 42, concierge).

Clearly, news about war stood sitting in the imagination of many fieldwork respondents who constantly found connections between the state of geopolitical affairs and their very living conditions. This was manifest in respondents' acute sensitivity to stories about the US occupation of Iraq and an Israeli military campaign in the south of Lebanon. In their opinions informants recurrently said that American involvement in international conflicts normally bore hidden consequences for the Latino population. One participant put this in the following way when commenting a report about an Israeli air raid in southern Lebanon:

H11F1: I'm really glad Israel stopped the bombing in Lebanon. So many innocent people dying but we can't even take sides as we lose anyhow. You can almost sense it, if you're not on the side of Israel that means you're against the US, and then they use it as an excuse to suggest that Latin Americans are potential terrorists (Female, 29, housewife).

Another woman tied the war in Iraq to her household economy, at the same time that decrying decisions made by the US government which she said affected especially people of her ethnic background. She argued that,

H6F1: I watch the TV and I realize that the war (in Iraq) is not just in the news (...) we feel it in our pockets too, the gas prices always on the rise, everything on the rise but our incomes. It's all because of the war, (president) Bush sits down to give orders while

we suffer the consequences, especially us with a dark skin (...) Sometimes I fear we won't have enough money to eat, the news make me think we're getting close to that situation (Female, 43, baby-sitting).

One respondent said that news about the Iraq war were meant to be seen in relationship to the September 2001 Al Qaeda terrorist attacks against the US, which in his opinion had forced the government to close its borders and to adopt a tough hand against undocumented migrants. He explained that,

H20M1: Things are related, politics is linked to the economy, and it's normally our economy. Take Bush, all his problems derive from the invasion of Iraq, he should have thought of the consequences more carefully, now he has no credibility, not even to have the Congress approve a guest worker programme for our people (Male, 56, building sub-contractor).

A man who had settled in Los Angeles as a mechanic in 1969 and owns a building of apartments which he rents to mostly Latin American migrants, was relentless when criticising the Republican Party for sponsoring legislation that would criminalize those who giving jobs or letting properties to people without legal status. For him, conservative politicians were manipulating the public into seeing undocumented migrants as potential terrorists, a conspiracy of sorts to which television news contributes when reporting news about the war in Iraq. He explained that,

H2M1: These news about the war are a joke, it's always: all Iraqis bad, Americans good. Didn't the Americans invade the country in the first place? Media owners and their shows will say what the Republicans tell them to, they are all one and the same. That's why they're always saying that the borders are unsafe and that the immigrants are terrorists disguised as Mexicans. It is very sad; they sell their workforce so cheaply. It turns out that now I'm a criminal if I rent them a room (Male, 61, landlord).

Some fieldwork contributors avoided identifying themselves with their Mexican roots, claiming for instance that undocumented migration from Mexico was the main reason for what they perceived to be negative news portrayals of brown people. Having migrated to Los Angeles from his natal city of León when he was four years old, another informant said he

did not see himself as Mexican but as Latino. Such attitude put him at odds with his mother, who told him off rather rancorously for ‘negating his origins’ and not joining any of her twice-a-year trips to her hometown. ‘All my life is here, I have no interests there [in Mexico]’, the 42 year old man explained when asked why he had dismissed the importance of a news report about the Mexican presidential election. Discussing a television feature about one young man whose leg had to be removed after being injured trying to cross the border, he said he was indifferent to the problems of undocumented migrants whose ‘poverty doesn’t grant them right to break this country’s laws’. Later in the interview he reasserted his lack of sympathy for border crossers, when expressing the opinion that Hispanic people were normally portrayed negatively in television news precisely because of immigrants:

H12M1: They (television news) treat us very poorly, like we’re all terrorists just because we are Latinos (...) it’s not like most of us have just sneaked through the border you know, many of us are American citizens (Male, 42, concierge).

The man then told of how he had recently been treated rudely by two cops who had stopped him while driving his van one night on his way home. He remained silent for a few elongated seconds when asked whether he would think television news depict Latinos as terrorists had he not been approached by the law enforcers, and uttered: ‘We all judge from our experience, don’t we?’

6. From “telespectators” to “teleactors”

The evidence discussed so far may be sufficient to suggest that transnational audiences are not only “telespectators” (Stam, 1983: 24) of distant events but “teleactors” whose spheres of agency may expand outside national boundaries, especially as they grow links to transnational social fields. What is suggested here is that people are part of social and material realities which transcend the local, whether by way of electronic mediation (e.g. broadcasting) or constant travelling. Even those who stay in one place, like the man whose mother accused him of ‘negating his origins’, constantly enter in contact with objects, ideas and persons that give life to transnational social fields. This is to say that even though individuals and families – like the ones that participated in this fieldwork – have limited

involvement in transnational practices, their normally intermittent input to transnational circuits is worth of study. This should in turn produce more robust theoretical articulations of transnational experiences.

Fruitful to further the point in question is the subject of the Mexican-US border, a powerful symbol space in the news that captured the attention of informants regardless of their gender, ages, academic backgrounds, legal status, and so on. In this sense, “the Border” seems to occupy a special place in a collective imaginary which, with a few exceptions, is sensitive to the suffering of undocumented Mexicans. This is so not only out of ethnic correlation and solidarity, but of the multiple ways in which the complex migratory phenomenon connects to the specific circumstances of viewers. In this context, an element of personal proximity to news stories may be considered as part of a wider picture of regional integration. One speaks here about a migratory system formed by families and individuals of different socioeconomic backgrounds who enter in contact in either intermittent or sustained ways, in the process generating transnational social fields. Aspects of these flows of social, economic, and cultural transactions straddling Mexico and the US have been in a sense revealed by participants’ responses to news about the border. In many conversations with fieldwork participants this topic emerged repeatedly when discussing related news items. A telling example was provided by two female cousins from a small city in the Mexican state of Michoacán, who recounted of how they always paid attention to news stories about people who die in the wilderness trying to get across the border from Mexico. While they were both established residents in Los Angeles, one as a college student and the other as a restaurant worker at a local university, they both said they related to the hardships of irregular border crossers, as they feared one of the victims could be someone they knew. Part of their discussion is transcribed:

H17F2: I’m always interested on news about migration. Even though it no longer affects me (...) I have relatives and friends who come back and forth. When there is a story about someone who died in the desert I immediately think of people I know. What makes me think one of them can’t die in an attempt to cross? (Female, 19, student).

H17F1: I know guys who cross the border two or three times a year, they spend a month or two here, when they save one or two-thousand dollars they go back (Female, 26, catering).

H17F2: That’s exactly how it is, too many families experience the same. It commonly is the older brother or the father who does the crossing. They come across, sometimes

in large groups they chip in a pot to pay a *coyote* (a smuggler), they spend a little time here make some cash and then go back. That brings nothing but worries for their families (Female, 19, student).

H17F1: Look at our case for instance, too many in our family are here illegally, they come and go, they don't stay here permanently. My in-laws, for instance, don't have green cards yet they come and go. In the case of my brothers and sisters, two of us have documents and the other two don't. You see, in this situation who wouldn't get nervous with the news? (Female, 26, catering).

While feelings of sympathy and solidarity are expressed towards those who die trying to cross the desert, these sentiments appear to disguise personal interests, revealed by viewers explanations of the significance accorded to the tragedies taking place in the border. With the "it could happen to me" element of news stories there is also an attempt to extract content that is personally meaningful for viewers. This could constitute a case of active audiences who turn de-contextualized, highly dramatized news bites into personally relevant reports. After viewing a programme with several news items, the head of one family explained the importance he accorded to a report about the high number of fatalities at the border:

H25M1: We've just seen what's happening at the border, all these people who have died this summer because of the high temperatures. It's a sad story and I hope it will help make the case of the need to regularize us undocumented workers so we'll stop risking our lives (Male, 34, builder).

The informant went on to recall the last time he had crossed the border with a group guided by Mexican smugglers:

H25M1: I went to Mexico two years ago and I returned here just like most Mexicans: hungry and suffering in the cold at night. It took me three days to get across San Luis Rio Colorado, near Arizona. We were this close to be captured by the border patrol, the group then split up (...) After that it was another four days before I could make it home (Male, 34, builder).

Weak political transnationalism

The evidence cited thus far suggests television news is an important window viewers use as an interface that connects the private or domestic with the public aspects of the outside world. These televisual realities may take the form of intercontinental distance being traversed by the ripple effects of armed conflict upon households' economies, or the more quotidian surroundings of the neighbourhood, the place of work, the Church and even the prospects of local political engagement. Significant others are identified in the course of reception analysis, from relatives, friends and proximate strangers from members of the same or other ethnic groups, to politicians and law enforcers that may actively enter the realm of everyday life. In between the spheres of what could be considered as the local and the global, this third, diasporic space emerges where individuals find themselves as members of an imagined community in which they frequently act as distant economic and social agents. Having said this, romantic ideas of immigrant transnationalism should be taken cautiously when entertaining hopes – traditionally conflated to the conceptualization of diaspora – of a significant relationship between media consumption and political engagement with the homeland. This applies for Mexican born people and their offspring, whose transnational practices are rather low in intensity. Such weak transnationalism is characterised by infrequent travel, limited ownership of property, fleeting transference of remittances and even irregular phone communication.²⁷ While the array of people I entered in contact with clearly inhabited a transnational social space (e.g. Rudometof, 2005), they were short of meaningful political transactions with the homeland. In contrast to respondents' explicit willingness to participate in the American political process displayed in response to television news, for instance, attitudes towards the coverage of Mexico's presidential election in July 2006 were generally of deep political disenfranchise and scepticism. Not only is this view sustained by the fact that not a single respondent voted in the election – indeed less than 1 percent of the nearly 4 million entitled to vote in the US did – but by the predominant criticism, frequently lining in the border of cynicism, that resulted in response to the television coverage of the electoral ballot. A man's comparison of American and Mexican political processes is to some extent representative of what was found in the research:

H16M1: During electoral times [in the US] you follow the news, people are interested, and they express themselves, make demands and propositions. It's not like in Mexico, where you can almost see how they're already counting the money they plan to steal.

²⁷ Certainly, on an individual basis one could say that some fieldwork participants are more transnational than others, but even the most transnational of them would fall in a low tier rating of transnational practices.

Here [in the US] you wish you could come out too and make your contribution (Male, 36, plumber).

Undocumented and two years away from his latest border crossing, another contributor spoke in similar terms:

H25M1: In Mexico they take what little you have and give it to the rich. Here at least you see things work, you can send your children to school, there is water and roads. When I get my papers right I will vote, I hope it will be here (Male, 34, builder).

Another participant said:

H22M1: So much corruption in Mexico, with the news one can't help thinking about the politicians who've been plundering the country for decades. Why bother to vote? (Male, 33, administrator).

As previously suggested, instead of expressing interest in the Mexican political process respondents saw negative consequences coming their way as result of the electoral standoff which for several weeks seemed to presage disruption of social peace south of the border. A family man expressed that,

H20M1: With the political instability in Mexico we see in the news we can only expect to see more migrants coming. Then there's no jobs, the cops harass you. Who suffers the consequences? Us (Male, 56, building sub-contractor).

Diaspora: thinking the homeland

Poor prospects for political transnationalism notwithstanding, the fieldwork uncovered potentially fruitful links between the parts that television news plays in the production of what is termed as diaspora space (Brah, 1996). If transnationalism involves sustained forms of cross border activity a diasporic space is that where physical contact with the homeland may be fleeting, yet accompanied of an active process of thinking the homeland. Brah has termed this as a 'homing desire', which does not necessarily imply longing for a definitive return to the homeland. This applies for instance in the cases of individuals who travel

regularly to Mexico. Participants in this category have described such travelling in connection with their news consumption and as source of knowledge and information about their country of birth. Interestingly, individuals who travel to Mexico attribute special relevance to the value that news have in their own articulation of ideas and thoughts about their homeland. These are usually manifested as coherent opinions and notions of the reality there. Three contributors who said they travelled at least twice a year to their hometowns in Mexico backed this argument. One leader of an Alcoholic Anonymous group in Los Angeles, narrated he had developed an interest in news regarding the reduction of Mexico's external debt and the central bank's increasing grip on inflation and interest rates, which in his view was an achievement of president Vicente Fox's administration. For him, Mexico's improved financial situation was compatible with impressions he had gathered in recent trips to his birthplace. He said that,

H14M1: Mexico seems politically and economically more stable. When I go to León I walk into the Hall town, I look around, people are working, public servants seem more efficient, their offices are clean and presentable and unlike past times they no longer feel as prisons or public toilets (Male, 48, dry cleaner).

In her trip to Mexico the AA group leader's wife said however that she had been appalled by the high prices of food staples in Mexico, a fact of life there she had not heard about in the news. She exclaimed that,

H14F1: What you never hear on television is about the cost of life there, prices are in the sky, I'm talking two months ago, stuff like milk, eggs and meat were more expensive than here. You only get to know that when you're there, otherwise you just hear prices are up but don't really get it (Female, 47, housewife).

While she had lived 11 years in Los Angeles a woman said she remained fully aware of political developments in her hometown in Mexico City, which allowed her to express political support for a presidential candidate who had previously been the mayor of the capital:

H5F1: Look, we've given (president Vicente) Fox and his party an opportunity to demonstrate he could bring our country forward. If he couldn't do it I don't see how

(Felipe) Calderon will. It's time to give an opportunity to (Manuel) Obrador, I've been many times in Mexico City since he assumed (as mayor) there and he's given results. I've seen the road improvements and all the public works of his administration. That's why I believe him when he questions the election's result (Female, 60, custodian).

Vivid diasporic reflections are nurtured through travel and seem to put in motion a mechanism through which homeland places and spaces are rediscovered, as they enter in contact with the narratives of television news. This goes in contrast with the rather vague and abstract opinions of those who for different reasons stay in Los Angeles, in which cases television news appear reproductive of fixed recollections and memories of a life individuals seldom want to invoke. This argument is especially strong among respondents who had not travelled to Mexico in more than 10 years:

H6F1: Nothing ever changes there, it's all corruption and injustice. The last time we travelled (in 1995) they (highway patrol men) stopped us four times on the road to ask for money, even though we had a permit (to drive an American vehicle in Mexico). See the news now, with the election and everything, you just can't trust them (Female, 43, baby-sitting).

H11M1: So much corruption in Mexico, you see the news and one can't help thinking about the politicians who've been plundering the country for decades. Why bother to go when you know how it is? (Male, 38, shopkeeper).

H4M1: It's confusing, when you see the news you sort of love your country but you also hate it. That's why we never go. So many bad things happening, the drug dealers, the kidnappings, the lack of jobs. At least one makes a living here, lack of documents aside (Male, 49, construction).

H16F1: Judging by the news it looks like not much has changed (Female, 24, housewife).

Other (diasporic) uses of television news

The claim that little or no travel activity to one's country of birth goes in hand with static, rather emotional judgements of Mexican national reality could be a point of departure for deeper, systematic audience research. In the mean time the empirical exercise has also rendered visible some uses of television news in the production of diasporic space. Whether

invoking past experiences, the presence of family and friends, or material stakes in homeland realms, the footage of TV news arises as a vehicle for movement across migrant geographies that make the subject of dislocation and displacements people have gone through all too difficult to ignore. Footage of known places that became subject of news in Mexico has proven a fluid lubricant of participants' memories where reside faces and places of life south of the border. A married couple brought this idea up when commenting a story about a clash between a teachers union and Mexico's federal police in the southern state of Oaxaca. A respondent showed surprise when he learned that his partner had separate experiences of the same place, as shown in the dialogue below:

H16F1: What is happening in (the city of) Oaxaca is really sad; it's such a beautiful place where I've been several times. I've eaten in the street market and been on a bench by the town square. Last night I felt sad when I saw the place with barricades (...) I couldn't believe that was the place where I'd been (Female, 24, housewife).

H16M1: Really, you've been to Oaxaca? I didn't know. Me too, I even have a friend living in the city, now that you mention it is very worrying indeed (...) I wish we could travel there sometime with the kids (Male, 36, plumber).

Uninterested on a news report about a blockade of Mexico City's main square by supporters of a left-wing presidential candidate, footage of the political demonstration moved a contributor to recall a trip she had made as a teenager with her father from her village in the central state of Puebla to the Mexican capital. She narrated that,

H25F1: We ate corncoobs with chilli, took a walk in the streets nearby and then entered the cathedral. I can't help feeling I'm somehow there when I see the images of the main square (Female, 44, housewife).

Along the indications of mental displacement through the rolling pictures of news, respondents hinted at an additional practical use consisting on the monitoring of relatives well-being and economic interests held south of the border. Having recently lost her husband one woman said she had grown increasingly anxious when she had no knowledge about her relatives in Mexico City. She said that television news helped her find some certainty in this regard:

H3F1: I have to know what is going on, television news let me know about the dangers my family may be facing (...) I generally follow reports of earthquakes and crime in the Federal District, you know those two things are very common there. Right now I'm very attentive to whether there will be an armed uprising (Female, 53, cashier).

News about natural disasters, a man said, are frequently necessary as assurance that calamity has not stricken in familiar places:

H4M1: I keep track of news about floods and landslides; they frequently show pictures of the capital, where I have two properties. I obviously don't expect to see my house on the TV, on the contrary, is just to make sure. But if they mention any neighbourhood I know I pay attention, immediately (Male, 49, construction).

A lady who had arrived from her second trip to her hometown said she usually interrupted any activities, like cooking and cleaning, whenever word came of natural disasters. Rather rhetorically, she added she always felt for any Mexican victims 'because they're all my people even if I don't know them'. Thus she recited a catalogue of natural disasters:

H12F1: It doesn't matter what I'm doing but if I hear there was a thunderstorm, an earthquake or a landslide I stop at what I'm doing and sit to watch. I just came back (from Mexico) two weeks ago and there were floods every single day in (the cities) of Guadalajara, Irapuato and Mexico. I just always need to know how bad it was (Female, 64, housewife).

While TV news is said to be an important medium through which individuals maintain an awareness of the homeland, conversations about people's birthplaces are an important part of social interactions and, paradoxically, a substitute of television news which seems fundamental in participants' mental geographies. As one 75 year old widower put it:

H9F1: Sometimes I feel I never left Mexico, so many Mexicans, you just need to hang out with them for a few minutes to find exactly what is going on there, and you don't even need the TV because they themselves will tell you the news (Female, 75, housewife).

In fact, one of the informants said she normally preferred getting the news from her friends or relatives:

H3F1: Just talk to people, the news is more bones than meat. When I turn the TV it turns out I already know most of it, I guess I switch on just for the images and distraction (Female, 53, cashier).

A girl and her cousin strengthened the argument when noting that:

H17F2: I don't feel I've missed too much if I don't watch the news, one only has to ask what's on and they will tell you (Female, 19, student).

H17F3: That's true, actually we're always asking, when I arrive I ask my mum or dad, then you're more or less informed (Female, 24, social worker).

The problem, some say, is that news is frequently misleading and forms wrong footed images of Mexico which may only be corrected through the actual experience of having been there, as suggested by a second generation respondent who frequently had to deal with what she considered the erroneous misconceptions of her female friends:

H15F1: Many people tell me, my girl friends for instance, they've never been to Mexico, and they've told me something like 'I wouldn't have my holidays in Mexico, the news say it's dangerous, that tourists get mugged in the streets'. May be I would think the same way if didn't know better (Female, 24, retail sales).

Sometimes, the reception of news is doubly mediated, with the filter of social transmission relying on electronic networks that contribute to the formation of diasporic forms of consciousness. Notwithstanding the special attributes of diasporic spaces (e.g. for cultural and the pursuit of transnational political, economic and cultural agendas), the idea is that television news may create a buffer zone of sorts where social interactions occur with the potential to trigger dynamics which are common of transnational social fields. In this respect, some people have expressed that in their long distance calls to relatives and friends television news commonly have an input to the content of verbal exchange, as conveyed by three respondents:

H11F1: I talk to my dad and mum about the news, with my younger sister I discuss on the phone about politics, things that happen, with the (electoral) row now we've had some pretty heated discussions, a few days ago we even got mad and hung the phone off on each other (Female, 29, housewife).

H18M1: We discuss the news when there are fires and earthquakes. It's they (my relatives) who ask especially, I tell them Los Angeles is huge and that most events normally take place far from where we are. Sometimes they call asking about a news story, that's when they have nothing better to do (Male, 36, manager).

H2M1: My brother called just this morning. He said: 'We know it's very hot there (in Los Angeles)'. We then discussed the election (in Mexico). That's what we talk about, once we know everyone's OK then we talk about the news (Male, 61, landlord).

A mother expressed that her level of attention to news programmes sometimes depended of her awareness of events in Mexico, as a result of a previously held conversation. She mentioned that,

H1F1: Watching the news depends on what is happening; if one of my relatives tells me it's been raining a lot I then pay more attention (Female, 27, cleaning staff).

Some informants suggested that they did not rely on news reports as a source for knowledge about small towns and cities in Mexico, given the lack of coverage in small villages and towns from the mainstream news media alternatives available in Los Angeles. This uncovers a somewhat ingrained understanding that media coverage, at both national and international levels, takes place under the logic of centres and peripheries, where the density of news about a certain place is proportional to the latter's population size, its contribution to a national economy, the presence of strategic interests, societal stakeholders and so on. While this phenomenon would require an entire study about the logic regulating the output and distribution of news flows, one part of this audience research reveals that the capacity of news as a resource to sustain transnational and diasporic spaces depends on socioeconomic and political variables and the telecommunications infrastructure of sending and receiving societies. In this fieldwork, some participants addressed the point made in this paragraph in the following way:

H11F1: I never expect to find about my hometown in the news, it's too small (...) half of my friends from childhood are here (in Los Angeles) anyway, so I don't need the news to find what is happening there (Female, 29, housewife).

H1F1: We have a small hometown community right there (at the workplace), so that we make up for the lack of news (about our hometown) with what we know it's happening there, it's mostly gossip, but also stuff like someone who gets married, has a child, or dies (Female, 27, custodian).

H24M1: When I lived in Mexico the news there never had stories about my hometown. I certainly don't expect now that the news programmes here will have any stories about there either (...) What I know about home is what I get from phone calls with relatives, or from the occasions when I travel there (Male, 43, building contractor).

H18M1: The only moment when I find news about Leon (in the state of Guanajuato) is when the president (Vicente Fox) spends time in his villa, most of the times news come only from the capital and from places where there's been disasters or deaths. Here (in Los Angeles), when you see the news you feel you're in the lion's mouth (Male, 36, manager).

5.3 Discussion

This chapter has focused on key findings uncovered in the fieldwork. The methodology undertaken with families and households of Mexican origin in Los Angeles has revealed a potentially fruitful connection between moments of media consumption and acts of civic participation such as street mobilisations and voting in electoral processes. When discussing television news, respondents have drawn attention to the issue of citizenship as the condition leading to entitlements and rights for access to public spaces. They tended to express concern with stories regarding price inflation and unemployment, while seeing news as informative resources with the potential to facilitate access to health services and education for children. Notably, news coverage about armed conflict in the Middle East and the so called war on terror are carefully followed by participants, most of who believe such developments may impinge at the core of their living conditions.

Migration has proven to be an overarching super-theme constantly cutting into other news items and bringing attention to social networks involving citizens, undocumented migrants, legal residents, and second generation children, thereby reflecting heavily on dynamics constitutive of wider migration processes. The evidence discussed has underlined

important uses of television news directed at informing people's interaction with their physical and socio-spatial surroundings. These include from the habitual use of traffic reports as part of daily routines, to police chases and raids of undocumented workers which capture the attention of viewers regardless of their legal status. Along the interviews respondents have identified characters and institutions (e.g. the police, the church) that are perceived as hostile or amicable to their circumstances. Concerns have been expressed with media portrayals which in participants' views generate negative perceptions of Mexicans and Hispanics, leading to reproduction of alienating stereotypes and to rejection from other groups in society.

Regardless of viewers' legal status, news that put the spotlight on the US-Mexican border are a powerful symbol leading to articulations of stories in relationship with personal histories or those of kin and friends. Different ways to perceive the border have shed light on migration as a social process involving variable family configurations. For many, news about the border has led to articulations regarding the circumstances that pushed individuals and families to migrate in the first instance. Distrust and scepticism is a constant among many a respondent regarding the Mexican political process, and news about a borderline electoral standoff in the July 2006 Mexican presidential election have renewed such opinions. In this context, while news reception seems to indicate a weakened outlook for political transnationalism, it has on the other hand proven a solid vehicle supporting the development of a diasporic consciousness which may be conducive to engagement in transnational social fields. Among respondents who are free to travel at will south of the border news reports seem to provide an effective tool interacting with travelling experiences which provide elements of judgement of the national reality in Mexico. Reception of news items from natural disasters to reports about remittances equally lubricates participants' mental displacements to where economic and affective interests lie. Interpersonal networks are, however, much more effective at providing information regarding people's places of origin poorly covered by mainstream news media.

These findings are but vignettes for complex dynamics at the heart of migrant communities and need to be made sense of in response to wider phenomenon in the development of a Mexican diaspora in the United States. The contribution that reception analysis can make to produce a sharper understanding of transnational social fields includes the assessments audiences make of how public affairs touch their existence; identification of power relationships that take place in the household and identity construction processes, many of which – for questions of space – have been ignored or obviated here. As opposed to

the somewhat fixed assumptions that were made regarding an idealised national audience, analysis of transnational audiences helps put in perspective the changes that modern societies are undergoing. These include expanded families (e.g. non-members of the nuclear family take part in family life); a reconfiguration of power relationships (e.g. males' authority frequently questioned or challenged by female partners and children); a redistribution of household space (e.g. two families living in the same household); novel patterns of local and cross border mobility among members of a same household (e.g. those with documents travel, those without documents stay put). In the interplay of audiences' engagement between private and public spaces it is possible to witness a broad range of diasporic moments. The former are embedded on survival strategies and social networks that sit astride local and transnational spaces, on such processes of negotiation, identification with and rejection of members of different ethnic groups and nationalities. The evidence discussed here indicates that people may experience such dynamics in segmented layers of space, concrete and abstract, with real and transcendental meaning for their existence. Blurred as such phenomenon is, reception analysis of transnational audiences can contribute to close in its complexities. Such perspective shall contribute to expand the body of knowledge on the part that communication media play in the development strategies of particular ethnic groups who have experienced dislocation from national contexts in a post-colonial world. The findings discussed here are important as a contribution that links audience research with the body of knowledge produced by migration theory, cultural studies and research of transnational communication and global media processes. In turn, the scope of reception analysis should be broadened.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This doctoral project has made a call to consider transnational audiences outside traditional academic discourses. The latter have approached non-majority media publics as essentially marginal, especially because of their ethnic backgrounds. Taking stock of globalization, and of the consequences it has in the experiences of people who trace south-to-north international trajectories of migration, reveals the inadequacies of “assimilationist” audience research. Labelling audiences with terms such as “ethnic” and “minority” acts as a principle of national exclusion. In the process, this cages individuals and families who have moved from one country to another as persons whose media consumption can only lead to outcomes of cultural retention or adaptation. A perspective on transnational audiences helps, on the other hand, to account for the variety of mediated experiences of people on the move, and of the links between their symbolic and physical engagement with a social reality that is post-national. This approach also injects life to qualitative data-gathering strategies contributed by cultural studies and reception analysis, by suggesting the possibility of differences between national and transnational audiences which need to be accounted for. The approach is of course not without problems, and some thought must be put in the objections which may be raised against the project of understanding transnational audiences as elements of an interplay between agency and structure in a global context.

A series of developments in the US and at the international level make the idea of transnationalism seemingly problematic. This is particularly at odds with the resurgence of state actors who in finding their Keynesian roots are using public money to keep running the global financial system, which stands virtually nationalised, and to subsidise the ailing operations of companies in the automotive sector in both America and Europe. As the shadow of a full-fledged depression casts itself larger upon the economies of the developed world, a spate of anti-immigrant sentiment seems to be taking over political discourse and the headlines of national media systems. At the same time, immigration authorities have been stepping up their efforts to find undocumented people at workplaces from factories to food-processing facilities, for their subsequent deportation. Even some legal residents, including a few who participated in this thesis fieldwork, are considering to abandon their hard-earned lives in the US, and to draw on what little savings they have to resettle back in Mexico. Such is the case of Gustavo and Minga, a couple who’s lived together for over 8 years in a civil

partnership, and who had been supporting themselves with the income Gustavo earned doing construction work for a number of clients who hired him on a temporary basis. 'Gustavo hasn't had a single job in three weeks and we almost have no savings left', Minga said in a recent phone conversation. 'I think we will have no other choice but to go back and lose everything we have made to establish ourselves here'. A different case is provided by the Camacho's, a family who was torn apart in 2008 when Alejandro, a father of three, left for Mexico misguided by his crooked lawyer, who had convinced him that his leaving the US for a few weeks would make him eligible for legal US residence. His wife, Graciela, said:

'We paid the man \$5,000 to do the paperwork and have never since heard of him again. Without Alejandro we are struggling to make ends meet, I'm tempted to leave the country and join him with his family in Sonora, but Mexico is too dangerous at the moment. You know what I mean if you've been following the news. The problem is Brian [the son], who is the only one who was born in Los Angeles. He's too young and the girls can't take care of him all the time. I don't know what to do'.

Ricardo is another example. He became a US citizen in 2002, and has now decided he will indefinitely delay his plans to bring a cousin from Mexico into the United States. Ricardo was intent on passing his job to his relative as a shopkeeper at a dry cleaning outlet. 'I thought I could use my savings to start a small food stand down Figueroa (avenue), but now I can't risk quitting my job', he said. 'And with things as they are the investment of bringing my cousin in would probably be wasteful, as I don't think it will be possible to get legal documents for him anytime soon'. As suggested at the beginning of this conclusion, the growing importance of state actors in addressing the onslaught of the global economic crisis poses questions for transnationalism. These have been forcibly made before by Roger Waldinger (2003: 2), who in reasserting the power of the nation-state to shape the experience of immigrants, dismisses the extent to which people on the move can lead lives spanning more than one national territory. Difficult as life is at the moment for many Mexicans who are living in the US, there are reasons to think transnationalism will continue to shape the scope of possibilities for many individuals who see a life beyond their birthplaces. Even in cases where cross border mobility is blocked by the militarization of borders, and by obstacles of an economic nature, many members of families and households continue to make decisions which preserve their existences in a transnational space. As has been discussed in the relevant section, transnationalism is not just defined by people who move fluidly across

customs checkpoints, and who conduct economic or political transactions on a sustained basis across different polities. Rather, it is the result of the networks of kith and kin that extend across national territories, and which are formed by the continuous interactions amongst “movers” and “stayers”. In this, the role of communication media and of information processing technologies will continue to be central in peoples’ ability to consider their prospects in either side of the border. Graciela, the wife of the man scammed from his \$5,000, put this in perspective when noting that life in Mexico was too dangerous, making reference to an ongoing struggle for power among drug cartels which has victimised thousands of innocent people all over the country. ‘You know what I mean if you’ve been following the news’, were her words.

In the particular context of this research project, transnationalism opens many windows from where to appreciate the significance that the concept of transnational audiences offers to qualitative research. Visualizing this goes by understanding the range of experiences which are available to people who migrate. Increased availability to air travel, telephone calls, money transfers, email, television programmes and so on, enable immigrants to interact from a distance with their places of birth. This translates into the continuation of affective links with family and friends, as well as increased economic participation by way of remittances, or larger transactions in which the investment of income earned in the US can be used to buy property, or to finance family-run businesses in the homeland. The concept is particularly strong when one considers the phenomenon at an aggregate level, so that forms of cultural deterritorialization become manifest in a variety of ways. These include, for instance, the possibility to watch Mexican made soap operas or a match involving teams of Mexico’s soccer league. This is important in commercial terms for it leads to the formation of profitable markets for broadcasters, advertisers and providers for services from phone calls to money transfers. It becomes also transcendental when a Spanish geolinguistic region materializes into events with clear political, cultural and economic consequences. One clear example has been the celebration of Mexico’s presidential election in 2006, which received massive media coverage and which, for the first time in history, extended the possibility for Mexicans in the US to participate in their country’s political process. But as has been argued in this project, the importance of transnational spaces goes beyond the assumption that communities in diaspora dedicate their lives and imaginations to the prospects of a homeland return. In this context, the semantics of “diaspora” help us bring about a vocabulary that allows understanding of migration experiences beyond the “either/or” traditional academic discourses. An updated approach should consider the formation of developing cultural spaces

like “Mexican Los Angeles”, which over the years has developed an infrastructure for economic and social activities of millions of Mexican origin people who create a local reality that shapes crucial aspects of the economic, political and cultural life of the United States. At the same time, this results in the creation of forms of capital used to sustain the livelihoods of families south of the border, triggering also political contests in Mexico for the financial and political support of Mexican transnationals. In this regard, reception analysis of television news can put in perspective the range of the local and global experiences – of knowledge-experience – of transnational audiences.

One of the main contributions that this project has made consists on inserting the concept of transnationalism within the vocabulary of qualitative audience research. There is here a political agenda which, in invoking the advent of a post-national age, calls to eradicate the principle of national exclusion at play in perspectives of “ethnic” and “minority” audiences. This should not however blind us to the fact that qualitative data-gathering strategies are valuable to dissect the mediated experiences of immigrants, and that these yield also empirical findings which help us further understand their actual life circumstances. This idea has been synthesised in the expression “everyday life globalization”, which puts in perspective the various connections, symbolic and material that transnational communities engage on a constant basis. One should keep into account here key conceptual operations proposed in this project. One involves the centrality of the domestic as the nervous centre for reception analysis. As a key research setting the latter reveals media consumption as a social activity embedded upon everyday life. A contribution from cultural studies, this approach has taught us that television viewers, radio listeners, and so on, seldom engage their media in a state of absolute absorption. What this suggests is that television use, or that of any other media technology, needs to be explored by considering the series of other activities that take place in front and around televisual space. Further to this, a second main consideration is that the domestic is a site that connects the private reality of individual families and households with the broader social phenomena of public spaces. In other words, television-viewing and other forms of media reception are activities whereby the private becomes intertwined with the public.

The idea of the domestic has been long applied in audience research, but always under the unspoken assumption that “the audience” equals a country’s population, necessarily excluding the non-natives who reside in a national territory. This is where this project’s contribution resides: it readjusts the tools of reception analysis and cultural studies, recognizing that any member of a family and a household should be first seen as potentially

active in social and economic terms, and not essentially marginalised by ethnicity, nationality, migratory status, gender, age, religion, and so on. The result of this operation is that people who migrate soon emerge as individuals with social networks, economic activities, interests, and life histories which cover a variety of different locations, normally involving more than one national territory. This focus on agency, at the same time, calls to reconfigure understandings of the binary private-public so that it includes the specific settings for action of transnational subjects, including those in their country of residence and in their homelands. Hence the decision to link the public-private binary to that of the local-global. Clearly, informants in this fieldwork manifested interest in a broad range of news subjects, regardless of geographic proximity. This in itself is a point of departure to think there is a lot more to know when it comes to reception analysis in transnational settings. The fact that contributors felt personally affected by developments occurring in both proximate and distant localities constantly reveals symbolic and material connections with a variety of “local”, “global” and “diasporic” locales. This helps us account for the development of global identities and for the way in which the interplay of “structure” and “agency” (Giddens, 1984) leads to the creation of transnational spaces.

The centrality of domestic backdrops also calls for more attention to the social uses of television. This has been done largely in national contexts, but a focus on the transnational audience will necessarily produce novel empirical situations. One of the latter, argued for in this thesis, includes the hypothesis of a redistribution of power which suggests the erosion of family patriarchal structures. Past audience research has signalled the authority of males over females when it comes to controlling programming choices, devices and technologies involved in media consumption. The idea is that the households of transnational families present a different order where the distribution of space, availability of television sets and programming delivery platforms, change the nature of relationships that can be established around the reception of television shows. Of course, many houses in different countries are nowadays equipped with more television sets and an assorted range of programming alternatives delivered via satellite, cable, DVDs and the Internet. The experience of this project suggests that the households of many transnational families will not always be highly sophisticated sanctuaries of media consumption, and that in any case, there are indeed moments of media reception which are used as an excuse for the enactment of family life. While this project was not precisely designed to capture these moments in detail, the methodologies used reveal that media consumption can still be a site for struggles of power in the household. Notably, a context of transnationality in media reception, as this study case

suggests, can balance out power differentials that increase the standing of females and younger household members at the expense of male “bread-winning” figures. Having said this, some clarification is needed to think about how reception analysis can help to unveil the content of family life.

The fieldwork in Los Angeles has revealed that a focus on discursive practices result in a variety of “close-ups” which tell us something about family interaction. This reconciles us with the idea that media interpretation is fraught with abstraction and subjectivity only to be made sense of by measuring audiences understanding of media contents; or by using elements of sociological analysis, and even psychoanalysis, to understand their meaning-making practices. In this respect, factuality, as a key characteristic of television news, allows for a registry of television reports which appear relevant and important from the life perspectives of audiences. Therefore, the tensions that arise from family members’ “wrestling” over the meaning of what for them are true-to-life situations can in themselves build a reliable platform for the analysis of television as an instrument of family socialization. The idea of extracting the substance of family relationships in the household from the interpretation of television news can, in a few words, be an effective tool of reception analysis. This applies for research projects with financial and time limitations, but especially so where obstacles for an unrestricted access to the most intimate spaces and moments of families exist. In this respect, a domestic setting like the living room provides a backdrop where informants will feel at ease giving their most personal views about programming such as television news. In domestic settings informants will normally open to revealing parts of their biography which they would not normally disclose in front of a stranger. Having said this, the project to develop a cultural studies/reception analysis approach to transnational audiences can and should be refined through attempts to produce more systematic empirical accounts.

One aspect with obvious potential is the one concerning the distribution of space in “transnational households”. While over 80% of households inhabited by Mexican-origin people are considered to be “family households”, compared to 67% for the rest of the population in the US (ACS, 2005-2007), some aspects of their domestic life can be seen as “unusual” and different from what one could find in a traditional “nuclear” family. The point is that these settings can sometimes be the frame for activities and exchanges where media consumption has direct and indirect roles. The traffic of people, objects and symbols from Mexico, visitors, pictures of relatives, telephone calls, and trips, for instance, frequently arise as topics of conversation around the televisual space, providing a window to appreciate

domestic connections to a transnational reality. This reveals the novel articulations of private settings. Generally, adverse contexts of migrant reception and increased economic uncertainties, for instance, lead household decision makers to sublet rooms to members of a second immigrant family. There are also cases where a long-term friendship goes in hand with life at work. For example, partnerships as subcontractors in the construction sector are common, and allow bread winners from two different households to combine their financial resources in order to buy a property they can modify to suit the needs of their respective families. In other words, the residential spaces that develop as part of migrants' experiences create dynamics where activities such as cooking, eating, sleeping, having a discussion, intimate contact, etcetera, can become entangled with the privacy of other groups and individuals. One example is provided by one family in the fieldwork, which having experienced an income shortfall decided to sublet one of their home's room to a second family (a mother, her husband and a child). The female from the first family told the researcher she frequently felt angry about the fact that she had to share her kitchen with another woman. Feeling she was entitled to privileged kitchen access, she said she would sometimes turn the television by the living room a couple of steps away, to a very loud volume. This she did with the purpose to 'push' her competitor off the cooking space. In a second setting the researcher became aware that families from three households who shared a common garden, would sometimes put a flat TV screen under a roof of tiles, so their children could watch TV while the married couples talked and sipped drinks around a barbecue. A good deal of research has discussed how television is used as a parenting substitute, but it is not exaggerate to think that transnational households hide dynamics that still need to be accounted for. These could include generational and educational gaps that separate the members of a Mexican-origin family, and which lie as unexploited mines of empirical value for the study of transnational audiences.

As dealt with in this project, the convergence of transnationalism with audience research allows one to keep a focus on family interactions that develop as part of domestic media use. The instances of agreement, disagreement, negotiation, etc, that emerged in the arguments between daughters and fathers, wives and husbands, or mothers and sons, for instance, lead us to reflect on a variable geometry of media reception. Within the social-uses-of-television-viewing perspective, what one can find here is a variety of configurations in media reception that can be of value to systematise what is meant by the "transnational audience". Based on past research one could claim, for instance, that television can be an excuse for a father and his daughter to spend "quality" time together. In a transnational

setting like the one where this project's fieldwork took place, this notion would continue to be valid, even though new elements need to be taken into account. The fact that the younger person would normally follow programmes in English, only shifting to Spanish-language content when in company of her progenitor, can be indicative, for example, of the shifting differentials of power between males and females signalled in this thesis. Two examples from the fieldwork are at hand. In one of them, a young social worker said she usually followed news in English because she considered them useful for her professional interests. 'I only watch in Spanish with my dad, because he can't understand the news in English', was her explanation. In a different case a self-employed young housewife mentioned the only moment when she entered in contact with Spanish-based TV news was during her visits to her parents' home. 'This makes it easy for us to discuss the news, otherwise they won't get it'. There are other circumstances which involve a reconfiguring of family relationships as traditionally addressed by media studies. Where it was once thought that males were more interested than females in television news a transnational context presents us with a different version. Many reasons can be found, including the idea of news-informed partnerships addressed in the findings chapter, where wives screened traffic reports with the intention to help their husbands navigate their way around the city. At the same time, the possibility that individuals are too stressed to deal with the news, after a day that might involve working and driving illegally, for instance, puts forward the question of whether housewives have now taken on the role to be better informed than their partners.

Next to the potential areas of interest one can visit to differentiate national from transnational audiences, the variable configurations of reception mentioned above call attention to a complex of media systems that challenge assumptions about what transnational media actually are. This calls for a new way of thinking about television programmes from the perspective of the subjects being researched, who do not always prefer media alternatives provided by broadcasters based in their countries of birth. In the case of Mexicans in the US, one can see that the dominance of Televisa in providing soap operas and sports for people from Latin America wanes in the segment of television news. This is why, as extensively covered in this project, broadcasters Univision and less so Telemundo are the US's leading Spanish-language news providers. Additionally, and as the demographic profile of the Hispanic population in the US shifts to having its core base amongst native US born peoples, there is an understanding that the importance of Televisa and other Latin American broadcasters will diminish, given that the younger generations will increasingly prefer media content produced by US-owned companies. The argument here is not that Latin American

broadcasters will become irrelevant, for international migration into the US is likely to continue even if at rates lower than in the past. The point to make here is that in researching the transnational audience one should move away from “media from the homeland” study designs, to a more broadly based methodology that can capture the varied diets of media consumption engaged by transnational audiences. The drive here could be related with producing an accurate picture of the programmes they consume. More importantly in a context of qualitative research, however, would be to sketch a map of different stages of reception that gets a hold on the different kinds of links that transnational audiences establish with their media. With the emphasis of the transnational on “readers” rather than “texts” or their means of distribution, one can get more precise pictures of how the former relate to the latter. Notably, this brings us back to consider the interplay of agency and structure, for transnational audiences can be visualised as actors capable to engage economically, culturally and politically in their countries of origin and destiny. In this sense, the reception of television news puts the finger on aspects of people’s daily lives where they are visualised as parents, workers, shoppers, travellers, immigrants and even citizens interested in electoral processes, as well as in economic and legislative affairs. Having said this, there are gaps this project leaves uncovered due to the paucity of time and financial resources which are not uncommon in doctoral endeavours.

In the face of the cited constraints, the requirement to create a base of informants in a country and city that was unfamiliar for the researcher made it necessary to rely on a “snowball” approach. This decision led to a sample that while sizeable enough could be seen as random and unrepresentative. The case has been made in this project that the universe of participants was theoretically relevant, for it was found in a transnational social space. Nevertheless, the fact that the number of male participants was significantly lower to that of females, for instance, made it impossible to design a research setting leading to more measured probing of the reception analysis of each gender. At the same time, the lack of comparable families and households has been an obstacle to attempt charting a map of the social uses of television news in the transnational living room. Future research could in this sense pursue the integration of a well-balanced pool of informants allowing us to make more meaningful comparisons. Equally important would be to test the actual differences and similarities between national and transnational media publics as part of the same research project. This would require conducting fieldwork involving members of the same network of kin and kith scattered across different geographies, with the purpose to explore questions such as how different individuals in the same transnational circuit experience nearby and

distant events. The position in this thesis has been informed by the assumption that transnational audiences are more sensitive to local and global developments, and therefore more suitable subjects to explore the formation of global identities. In any case, many of the generalizations this project advances were necessary given the lack of a proper articulation of the concept in US academic contexts. Certainly, a lot more evidence and discussion is required. In the mean time, I should be satisfied if this PhD thesis does its bit to validate an approach to transnational audiences which does not *a priori* exclude and marginalize the travelling peoples of this world.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Limited availability of Spanish-language news in broadcast TV in Los Angeles *

CHANNEL	3-7 am	11am-12 pm	12-2 pm	2 - 4 pm	4-7 pm	7 - 9 pm	9 - 11 pm	11 pm - 1 am
2 KCBS	CBS Morning /CBS 2 News	CBS 2 News at 11			CBS 2 News at 5			CBS 2 News at 11 PM
4 KNBC	Meet the Press / Early Today / Today	Channel 4 News Midday		Local Story: Summer Edition	Channel 4 News			Channel 4 News 11 PM
5 KTLA	KTLA Morning News First Ed						KTLA Prime News	
7 KABC	World News Now / Eyewitness News	Eyewitness News 11 AM			Eyewitness News / ABC's			Eyewitness News 11 PM
7.2 KABC DT	This Week		Nightline / BusinessWeek	Eyewitness News	BusinessWeek /	Eyewitness / ABC's W. News	Eyewitness / ABC's W. News	Eyewitness News 11 PM / Nightline
9 KCAL			News at Noon	News at 2PM / Inside Edition	News at 4PM		News at 9 PM / News at 10	
11 KTTV	Geraldo / Fox 11						Fox 11 Ten O'Clock News	Geraldo at Large
13 KCOP			Good Day L.A.					Channel 13 News
18 KSCI	News Express	Taiwan News Watch		Global Report News	TV Patrol / Kabayan / LA 18	KTAN Local News	MBC News Today	Noticiero Nacional
22 KWHY						Noticias 22 / Al Filo de--.	Noticias 22 a las 10	
24 KVCR	Nightly Business / News 27							Foreign Exchange
27 KZSW			News 27 / Newsmakers		News 27	INN News / Newsmakers	News 27	Newsmakers / News 27
28 KCET	BBC World News				BBC World News / Life & Tim	Newshour with Jim Lehrer		
34 KMEX	Noticias Univisión 34: Primera Edición				Primer Impacto			Univisión / Última Hora
44 KXLA				Santa Monica Update	Saigon Broadcasting			
50 KOCE					BBC World News	Inside Orange County		
52 KVEA	Noticiero 52 / Buenos Días LA	Noticiero al Mediodía			Al Rojo Vivo / N Telemundo /			En Contexto / Al Rojo Vivo
54 KAZA								Noticiero Nacional
62 KRCA			Noticias 62 en Vivo				Noticias 62 En Vivo	

* Typical news programming in Los Angeles broadcast area, this one being for Monday the 21st of August 2006. Underlined channels offer Spanish-language news. Source: TV Guide.com.

Appendix A. Wide availability of Spanish-language news on cable TV in Los Angeles *

CANAL	5 -7 h	7-11 h	11-15 h	15 - 17 h
10 KMEX (Univision)	Noticias Univisión 34: Primera Edición			
12 KVEA (Telemundo)	En contexto / Buenos días Los Angeles		Noticiero al Mediodía	Al Rojo Vivo
20 KAZA (Azteca América)				
22 KWHY (Telemundo)			Nocias 62 en vivo	
23 KRCA				
79 Galavision (Univision)		Primero Noticias		Noticiero con Paola Rojas
170 LAFcos (Insp. Networks)		Cosmovisión Noticias		
305 CNN en Español	Al Día	Al Día / En Efectivo / Nuestro Mundo	Nuestro Mundo / En Efectivo	Encuentro / Directo desde EEUU
306 Once TV (Mexican Gvmnt)				
307 MEX22 (México 22)	Ventana 22	Rotativo		
308 CBTv	CB Noticias por la Mañana		CB Noticias	
309 TVE (TV Española)	Desayunos de TVE / Telediario	Telediario Internacional	Telediario 2 / España al día	
310 Sur (Sur Corp.)	América Noticias / Primera Página	Primera Página / 1a. Edición Uruguay	Globovisión / Mediodía	Edición Central / Telenueve
	17 - 19 h	19 - 22 h	22 - 24 h	24 - 4 h
10 KMEX (Univision)	Noticiero Univision / Primer Impacto		Sólo a las Once / Última hora	
12 KVEA (Telemundo)	Al Rojo Vivo / Noticiero 52 / Telemundo		En Contexto	52 a las Seis / En Contexto
20 KAZA (Azteca América)	Noticiero 54 / Noticiero Azteca América		Noticiero A.America / Hechos	
22 KWHY (Telemundo)	Noticiero 22 / Al Filo de la Noticia			
23 KRCA	Noticiero STN	Noticias 62 En Vivo	Noticiero STN	
79 Galavision (Univision)			Por Adela / Con J. L. Doriga	Noticiero con Joaquín Lpz Doriga
170 LAFcos (Insp. Networks)	Cable Noticias			
305 CNN en Español	Noticias / Ec. y Fin. / Panorama Mundial	Economía y Fin. / Panorama Mundial	Noticias desde EEUU / Econ. y Fin.	Economía y Finanzas / Al Día
306 Once TV (Mexican Gvmnt)	15 Minutos	Noticias con Adriana Pérez Cañedo	Noticias de Medianoche	Noticias con Gabriela Calzada
307 MEX22 (México 22)	Ventana 22			
308 CBTv	Línea por línea / CB Noticias	CB Noticias	CB Noticias	
309 TVE (TV Española)	Telediario Internacional	En Portada / 59 Segundos	Telediario Matinal	Desayunos TVE / Telediario Inter.
310 Sur (Sur Corp.)	Grado 33 / Globovisión	América Noticias	Noticiero P.A.T / Telenueve	América Noticias

* Listings of Spanish-language TV news programmes in South Central Los Angeles for January 23rd-24th 2007. Cable provider: Time Warner. Source: TV Guide.com

Appendix B. Mapping the informants of the fieldwork in Los Angeles (see bottom of table for keys)

Informant key	Gender	Age	Gen.	Years LA	Activity	MS	MSuA	Children	Education	English	CtM	LTM	SR	TV ch.	Pay TV	TV lang.
1a	Female	27	1	15	Custodian	Resident	Visa	2	Elementary	NF	1	3	No	Univision	Yes	Spanish
1b	Male	31	1	16	Mechanist	Resident	Undoc.	-2	Elementary	NF	1	3	No	Telemundo	Yes	Spanish
2a	Male	61	1	35	Real state	Citizen	Visa	3	Elementary	SF	1	1	Yes	Univision	No	Spanish
2b	Female	55	1	32	Housewife	Citizen	Undoc.	-3	Elementary	SF	1	1	Yes	Telemundo	No	Spanish
3a	Female	53	1	28	Cashier	Citizen	Undoc.	2	High school	F	0	4	No	Univision	No	Spanish
3b	Female	50	1	36	Custodian	Citizen	Undoc.	0	NA	SF	0	2	No	Univision	No	Spanish
4a	Female	42	1	11	Housewife	Undoc.	Undoc.	0	Elementary	NF	1	11	No	Galavision	Yes	Spanish
4b	Male	49	1	12	Construction	Resident	Undoc.	0	NA	NF	1	12	Yes	Univision	Yes	Spanish
5a	Female	60	1	12	Custodian	Citizen	Visa	0	Elementary	NF	3	1	Yes	Univ./Azteca	No	Spanish
6a	Male	53	1	22	Driver	Citizen	Undoc.	3	NA	SF	1	3	Yes	Univision	Yes	Spanish
6b	Female	43	1	18	Baby sitting	Citizen	Undoc.	-3	NA	NF	2	13	Yes	Telemundo	Yes	Spanish
6c	Female	22	1	4	Baby sitting	Undoc.	Undoc.	1	NA	NF	1	4	No	Azteca	Yes	Spanish
7a	Female	29	2	29	Teacher	Citizen	NA	1	Graduate	F	0	2	No	CBS/Univ.	Yes	Bilingual
7b	Female	33	1.5	26	Manager	Citizen	Visa	-1	Graduate	F	1	2	Yes	NBC/Univ.	Yes	Bilingual
8a	Female	46	1	26	Housewife	Citizen	Visa	4	Elementary	SF	1	1	Yes	Univision	Yes	Spanish
8b	Female	24	2	24	Student	Citizen	NA	0	Undergrad.	F	0	3	No	Univision	Yes	Bilingual
8c	Female	16	2	16	Student	Citizen	NA	0	High school	F	0	3	No	Univision	Yes	Bilingual
9a	Female	75	1	36	Housewife	Citizen	Visa	6	High school	NF	0	0	No	Univision	No	Spanish
10a	Female	60	1	29	Housewife	Citizen	Visa	3	NA	F	2	1	No	Univ/ABC	No	Bilingual
11a	Female	29	1	9	Housewife	Undoc.	Undoc.	2	High school	NF	1	9	Yes	Univ/KTLN	No	Bilingual
11b	Male	38	1	12	Shopkeeper	Resident	Undoc.	-2	NA	NF	1	12	Yes	Canal 22, ABC	No	Bilingual
12a	Male	42	1.5	38	Concierge	Citizen	Visa	1	Secondary	F	0	8	No	ABC/Univ.	No	Bilingual
12b	Female	64	1	40	Housewife	Citizen	Undoc.	5	NA	NF	3	1	No	Univision	No	Spanish
13a	Male	49	1	27	Custodian	Citizen	Undoc.	2	Elementary	NF	2	2	Yes	Univision	No	Spanish
13b	Female	43	1	22	Self-employed	Citizen	Undoc.	2	Secondary	SF	2	1	Yes	Univision	No	Spanish
13c	Female	22	2	24	Social worker	Citizen	NA	0	Graduate	F	1	1	No	CBS/NBC/Uni	No	Bilingual
13d	Female	18	2	19	Student	Citizen	NA	0	Undergrad.	F	0	1	No	NBC/Univ.	No	Bilingual
14a	Male	48	1	15	Shop/Soc.wkr	Citizen	Visa	3	High school	SF	1	1	No	Univ./Telem.	No	Spanish
14b	Female	47	1	13	Housewife	Citizen	Visa	-3	Elementary	NF	1	1	No	Univ./Telem.	No	Spanish
14c	Female	20	1	7	Student	Citizen	Visa	1	Undergrad.	F	1	1	No	NBC/Univ.	No	Bilingual

15a	Female	24	2	24	HW/Self emp.	Citizen	NA	1	Graduate	F	0	3	No	MSNB/Univ.	Yes	Bilingual
16a	Male	36	1	25	Plumber	Undoc.	Undoc.	2	NA	NF	1	20	No	Univ./Telem.	No	Spanish
16b	Female	24	1	11	Housewife	Undoc.	Undoc.	-2	Elementary	NF	2	11	No	Univ./Telem.	No	Spanish
17a	Female	26	1	9	Catering	Resident	Undoc.	0	Secondary	SF	3	3	Yes	Univ./Gala	Yes	Spanish
17b	Female	19	1	7	Student/Cat.	Resident	Visa	0	Undergrad.	F	1	2	No	CNN/Gala/Uni	Yes	Bilingual
18a	Male	36	1	22	Manager	Citizen	Visa	2	Graduate	F	1	2	Yes	Univ./Telem/ABC	No	Bilingual
18b	Female	24	1	6	Housewife	Resident	Visa	-2	Secondary	NF	1	2	No	Univ. / Telem.	No	Spanish
19a	Male	35	1	14	Pressman	Undoc.	Undoc.	3	Secondary	NF	2	14	Yes	Univision	No	Spanish
19b	Female	37	1	14	Self-employed	Undoc.	Undoc.	-3	Elementary	NF	1	14	Yes	Univision	No	Spanish
19c	Female	16	1.5	14	Student	Undoc.	Undoc.	0	High school	F	1	14	No	Univision	No	Spanish
20a	Female	52	1	34	Housewife	Citizen	Undoc.	4	Secondary	SF	3	2	Yes	Univision	No	Spanish
20b	Male	56	1	36	Contractor	Resident	Undoc.	-4	Secondary	SF	0	6	No	Univision/Telem	No	Spanish
20c	Female	19	2	19	Student/Sec.	Citizen	NA	0	Undergrad.	F	0	2	No	ABC/Univ.	No	Bilingual
21a	Female	51	1	23	Custodian	Resident	Undoc.	1	NA	NF	0	16	No	Univision	No	Spanish
22a	Male	33	1	18	Administrator	Citizen	Undoc.	0	Graduate	F	3	3	Yes	Univ. / Telem.	No	Spanish
23a	Female	45	1	15	Housewife	Citizen	Undoc.	3	Graduate	SF	1	15	Yes	Univision/Gala	Yes	Bilingual
23b	Male	42	1	15	Accountant	Undoc.	Undoc.	-3	Graduate	SF	1	15	Yes	Univision/Gala	Yes	Spanish
23c	Female	19	1.5	15	Entrepreneur	Resident	Undoc.	0	High school	F	1	15	No	Univision/ABC	Yes	Bilingual
23d	Female	15	1.5	15	Student	Citizen	NA	0	High school	F	0	NA	No	Univision	Yes	Bilingual
24a	Male	43	1	21	Contractor	Citizen	Visa	3	High school	F	1	1	Yes	Univ./CNN/NBC	Yes	Bilingual
24b	Female	42	1	20	Housewife	Citizen	Visa	-3	Secondary	SF	2	1	No	Univision	Yes	Spanish
25a	Male	34	1	16	Construction	Undoc.	Undoc.	2	NA	NF	1	3	Yes	Univision	No	Spanish
25b	Female	44	1	17	Housewife	Resident	Undoc.	2	NA	NF	1	17	No	Univision	No	Spanish
26a	Female	43	1	15	Housewife	Citizen	Undoc.	3	High school	SF	1	1	No	Univision	No	Spanish
27a	Female	56	1	25	Social work	Resident	Undocumented	3	Elementary	SF	0	32	No	Univision	No	Spanish
28a	Female	32	1	13	Head custodian	Citizen	Undocumented	2	Secondary	F	0.5	7	Yes	Univision/KCAL	No	Bilingual
29a	Female	58	1	12	Elderly care	Resident	Undocumented	0	High-school	SF	1	1	No	Univision	No	Spanish
30a	Female	34	1	7	Hair stylist	Resident	Temp. Res. Visa	1	Elementary	NF	3	4	Yes	Univision/Telemundo	No	Spanish
31a	Female	46	1	26	Housewife	Citizen	Temp. Res. Visa	3	Elementary	SF	1	1	Yes	UnivisionNAzteca A.	Yes	Spanish
32a	Female	50	1	20	Cashier	Citizen	Temp. Res. Visa	0	College	F	2	2	Yes	Telemundo/Univision	Yes	Spanish
33a	Female	47	1	27	Custodian	Resident	Undocumented	3	Elementary	NF	3	14	No	Univision	No	Spanish
34a	Female	36	1	8	Cashier	Resident	Temp. Res. Visa	0	High-school	SF	1	1	Yes	Univision/Telemundo	No	Spanish
35a	Female	48	1	22	Custodian	Resident	Undocumented	1	Elementary	NF	1	6	Yes	Telemundo/Univision	No	Spanish
36a	Female	23	2	23	PhD student	Citizen	Citizen	0	Postgraduate	F	0	1	No	NBC, Fox, CNN, Uni	Yes	Bilingual
37a	Male	31	1	11	Construction	Resident	Temp. Res. Visa	1	Secondary	SF	2	2	Yes	Univision	Yes	Spanish

38a	Male	36	1	14	Car repairs	Citizen	Temp. Res. Visa	2	NA	SF	1	1	Yes	Univision	Yes	Spanish
39a	Male	22	3	22	Manager	Citizen	Citizen	0	College	F	0	10	No	ABC, CNN, PBC	Yes	English

Table keys: **Gen:** Generation; **PoB:** Place of birth; **MS:** Migratory status at the time when fieldwork was conducted; **MSuA:** Migratory status upon arrival; **CtM:** Number of phone calls to Mexico a week; **LTM:** Number of years since last trip to Mexico; **SR:** Sends remittances to relatives in Mexico; **TV ch:** Preferred television news channels; **TV lang:** Language of choice to see the news. **Years LA:** Years in Los Angeles; Note: Minus sign in number of children indicates they have already been counted.

Appendix C. The screening survey

(PREGUNTE AL PARTICIPANTE SI VE NOTICIAS POR TELEVISION. **NO** APLIQUE EL CUESTIONARIO EN CASO DE QUE LA RESPUESTA SEA NEGATIVA)

Nombre: _____ **Estado civil:** Soltero, Casado, Divorciado, Otro

Domicilio: _____ **Número telefónico:** _____

Nacionalidad: _____ **Edad:** _____ **Profesión o actividad económica:** _____

1 – ¿Cuántos televisores tiene en su hogar?: _____

2 – Dónde están las televisiones en su hogar:

(Elija tantas opciones como sea necesario)

a) Mi habitación b) Cocina c) Comedor d) Sala de estar e) Otro (especificar) _____

3 – Encierre el tipo de servicio de televisión que tiene en su hogar.

a) Televisión abierta (gratuita)

b) Televisión por cable

c) Televisión satelital (Satellite TV)

d) Otros (especifique) _____

4 – ¿Con qué frecuencia ve noticias por televisión?

a) Todo los días b) Al menos tres veces a la semana c) Una vez a la semana

5 – Elija cuál de las siguientes oraciones describe mejor su opinión sobre las noticias en televisión. (Seleccione todas las opciones que desee)

a) Los noticieros me informan oportunamente de los acontecimientos importantes.

b) Los noticieros ofrecen información que **no** refleja mis intereses.

6 – ¿Cuál es el canal y horario en que ve las noticias?

Canal: _____ **Hora:** _____

Canal: _____ **Hora:** _____

7 – ¿En qué idioma prefiere ver las noticias de televisión?

a) Español b) Inglés c) Ambos

8 – Voy a leer algunos temas de las noticias. Por favor indique cuánto le interesan los siguientes temas.

- La presencia de Estados Unidos en Irak:

a) Mucho interés b) Interesado c) Algo interesado d) Desinteresado

- Inmigración y Latinos/Hispanos en Estados Unidos

a) Mucho interés b) Interesado c) Algo interesado d) Desinteresado

- Temas sobre México

a) Mucho interés b) Interesado c) Algo interesado d) Desinteresado

- Latinoamérica y noticias internacionales

a) Mucho interés b) Interesado c) Algo interesado d) Desinteresado

- Deportes

a) Mucho interés b) Interesado c) Algo interesado d) Desinteresado

- Entretenimiento (Películas y artistas)

a) Mucho interés b) Interesado c) Algo interesado d) Desinteresado

- Clima y reporte de tráfico vehicular

a) Mucho interés b) Interesado c) Algo interesado d) Desinteresado

9 – ¿Ha visto recientemente noticias en televisión sobre la elección presidencial de México en el 2006?

a) Sí b) No

10 – Califique, del 1 al 5, cuál es su interés en las noticias sobre la próxima elección del presidente de México. (1 es nada de interés y 5 mucho interés) _____

11 - ¿Tiene credencial para votar en las elecciones de México? De ser así, ¿piensa participar en la elección presidencial? (Sólo elija "sí" si ambas respuestas fueron afirmativas)

a) Sí b) No

12 – ¿Mantiene contacto con familiares y amigos en México? a) Sí b) No

13 - ¿Qué formas de comunicación utiliza para comunicarse con familiares y amigos en México?

a) Correo b) Teléfono c) Internet d) Telégrafo e) Otro (Especifique _____)

14 - ¿Con qué frecuencia viaja usted a México?

a) Más de tres veces al año b) Una vez al año c) No viajo nunca a México

15 – ¿Cómo viaja a México?

a) Avión b) Camión de pasajeros c) Vehículo particular d) Vehículo de amigos e) Otro

16 – ¿Envía usted dinero a familiares u otras personas en México? a) Sí b) No

17 - ¿Cómo envía dinero a sus familiares en México?

a) Servicio tipo Western Union b) Depósito bancario c) Poni card

d) Otro (Especifique _____)

18 - ¿Cuál de las siguientes afirmaciones lo describe mejor?:

a) Soy México-Americano. Nací en Estados Unidos pero soy de origen mexicano.

b) Nací en México. Soy ciudadano mexicano.

c) No soy mexicano pero estoy casado con un/una mexicana y vivo con él/ella.

19 – ¿Cuál de las siguientes frases lo describe mejor?:

a) Yo tomo las decisiones en el hogar pero no contribuyo con los gastos.

b) Soy jefe/jefa de familia y cubro al menos 30 por ciento de los gastos en el hogar.

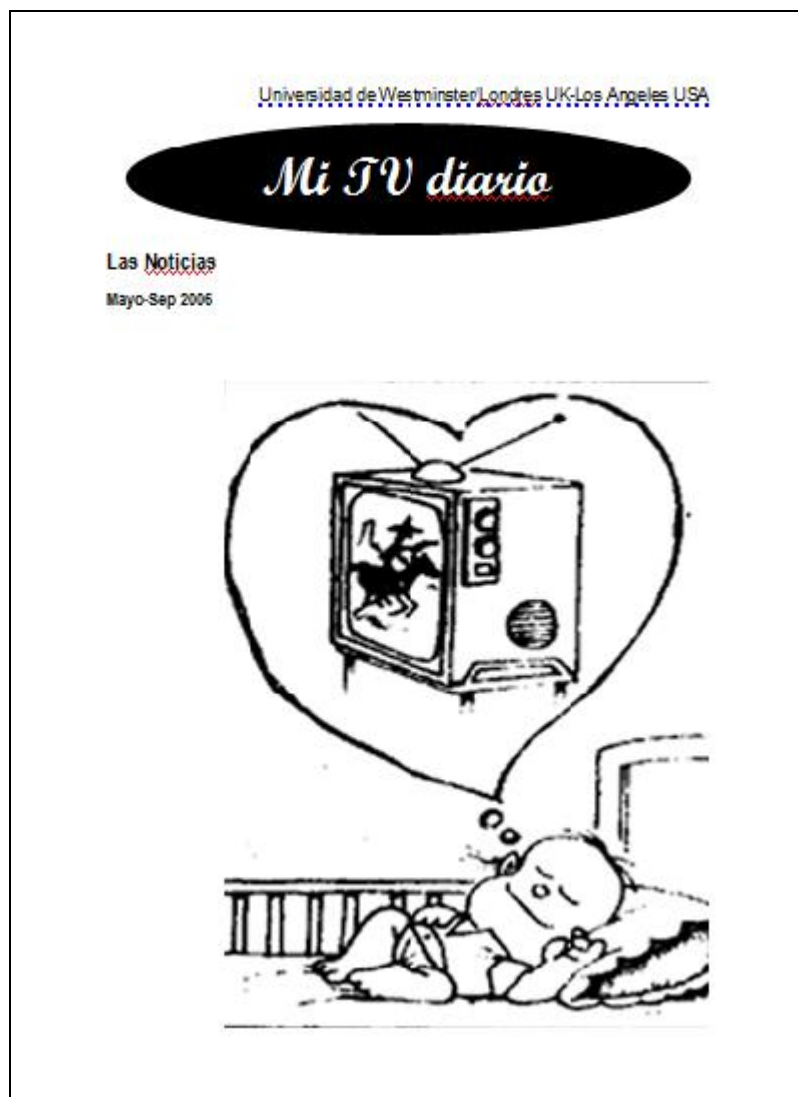
c) No soy jefe/jefa de familia pero cubro al menos 30 por ciento de los gastos en el hogar.

20 – Cuántas personas viven en su casa? _____

Nombre

Edad

APPENDIX C. “My TV diary”: The television news diary’s front-page



APPENDIX C. Page 1 of the television news diary.

<p>DIA: _____ MES: _____ 2006</p> <p>NOMBRE: _____ EDAD: _____</p> <p>HORARIO: _____</p> <p>CANAL DE TV: _____</p>	<p><i>POR QUÉ ES IMPORTANTE PARA UD. ESTA NOTICIA?</i></p>
<p>NOMBRE DE SU NOTICIERO: _____</p> <p>LA NOTICIA QUE MAS LE INTERESÓ: _____</p>	

The comic consists of two panels. The left panel shows a small, dark, round character sitting on a wooden bench. On the wall behind them, the words 'BASTA DE CENSU' are written in large, bold, capital letters. The right panel shows the same character standing and looking up. A speech bubble above them contains the text: 'O SE LE ACABO LA PINTU, O NO PU TERAM POR RAZO QUE SON DEL DOMINI PUBLIC'. The word 'CENSU' is also visible on the wall in this panel. The comic is signed 'G. LUCAS' in the bottom right corner of the right panel.

Appendix C. Script for television news-viewing sessions and semi-structured interviews

The purpose of this interview is to find about the importance that television news have in the everyday life of Mexican families and individuals, and to explore how you might relate content in the news to your actual experiences. Now I'm going to ask you some questions which I believe will contribute to such purpose. We will start speaking about the news we just saw.

- What was the most relevant story we just saw in the news? Why?
- Do you agree? (Addressing another informant)
- Why do you think X considers that story is more important than the one you chose?
- What would you tell him/her to show the story you chose is of more relevance?
- When was the last time you watched television news? Was it in English or in Spanish?
- Why do you prefer to see the news (Spanish/English) language?
- Do you remember what were the last stories you saw?
- Why do you think you remember that story in particular and not others? (Did not remember:) Why do you think you forgot?
- Now please tell me, what is the relevance of TV news in your daily life?
- What are the type of news you're most interested about? Why?
- I see that the TV technology to which you have access in your home is SUCH. Do you consider that having (ACCESS or LACK of it) to a wider range of television channels increases/decreases the quality of the information you have access to? Why?
- In this survey (applied at the beginning of the session), you assigned the (more, same, less) importance to (such news subjects). Could you please explain why?
- How much interested are you in the news about Mexico's presidential election? Why?
- How much trust do you have in your favourite TV news programme? Which one is it? What makes you think you can trust the information you get from this programme?
- Tell me, for instance, to what extent is your opinion about political affairs shaped by the stories you see on television?

- Based on the television news that you watch please tell me what do you think about the Mexican and US government? (For instance about President Vicente Fox/W. Bush/Governor Schwarzenegger/Major Villarraigosa)
- In the survey you've mentioned you're very interested about news from Mexico and yet in the programme we just saw you showed more interest about (the war/economy/migration/natural disasters, etc.) Play around with this question.
- **MEXICAN BORN ONLY:** To what extent do you actively use television news with the explicit purpose to get information about your country of birth?
- What do you think about the state of affairs of Mexico? How has your opinion of Mexico changed since you are in the US? To what extent television news have helped you shape this opinion?
- Do you ever make decisions regarding your relationship with relatives and other interests that you have in Mexico based on the television news you watch?
- **SECOND GENERATION ONLY (if applicable):** Being a descendant of Mexicans do you feel you sometimes manifest more interest in news about Mexico than about any other country? Why?
- What is your impression about the coverage that people of Mexican/Latino origin get from television news?
- Do you think news coverage of Hispanics changes according to the language of the news programme? Why?
- To what extent you agree with the notion that news coverage of ethnic minorities influence the opportunities and obstacles that members of such groups face in the American society?
- Do you agree with the notion that the news media have the power to influence people's opinions?
- Do you think the news inform people on issues that would eventually lead them to find solutions for problems in societies?
- Can you think of any cases in which news coverage has had a role in mobilising you to participate in street protests or to make economic boycotts?
- Have you ever participated in any movement of a political nature, for instance signing a document in support of a certain group or a political cause or marching in the street? Why?
- Did you inform your decision for such participation in any views or information you obtained from the media?

Appendix D. The Consular survey in Los Angeles

Encuesta Mexicanos y las noticias de televisión

Los Angeles, California. Consulado de México. Septiembre 2006

(Encierre en un círculo o subraye la respuesta que considere correcta)

1 – ¿Cuántos televisores útiles tiene en su hogar?: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9

2 – ¿Cuáles son los aparatos electrónicos que tiene en su hogar?

- a) Televisor a color
- b) Componente estereofónico (reproductor musical)
- c) Reproductor de DVD
- d) Video casetera
- e) Computadora (Escritorio o portátil)
- f) Videocámara
- g) Reproductor MP3 (e.g. iPod)

3 – ¿Cuáles son las tecnologías de comunicación de que dispone en su hogar?

- a) Línea telefónica residencial
- b) Teléfono celular prepago
- c) Teléfono celular con plan mensual
- d) Internet por línea telefónica (dial up)
- e) Internet rápido (cable, broadband, etc)
- f) Ninguna

4 – ¿Cuál es el servicio de televisión que hay en su hogar?

- a) Televisión abierta (gratuita)
- b) Televisión por suscripción (cable o satélite)
- c) Otro (especifique) _____

5 – ¿Cuál es su idioma preferido para ver televisión?

- a) Inglés b) Español c) Ambos

6 – ¿Cuáles son los tres tipos de programas televisivos que más le interesan? Elija su respuesta de entre las siguientes opciones con un número del 1 al 3, donde 1 es el tipo de programa que más le interesa.

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| a) Películas | _____ | g) Concursos y “game shows” | _____ |
| b) Deportes | _____ | h) Talk shows | _____ |
| c) Series drama y comedia | _____ | i) Religión | _____ |
| d) Telenovelas | _____ | j) Viajes y turismo | _____ |
| e) Noticias | _____ | k) Cocina | _____ |
| f) Caricaturas | _____ | l) Reality shows | _____ |
| m) Estilo de vida y modas | _____ | n) Decoración y diseño | _____ |

7 – ¿Cuántos días a la semana ve los tres géneros televisivos que eligió en la pregunta anterior? La opción a) es para el número uno, b) para el número dos y c) para el número tres que asignó en la pregunta anterior.

- a) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 días a la semana
- b) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 días a la semana
- c) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 días a la semana

8 – ¿En qué idioma ve los programas de televisión mencionados en las dos preguntas anteriores? (Mismo orden que en la pregunta 7)

a) Inglés Español Ambos b) Inglés Español Ambos c) Inglés Español Ambos

9 – Elija, encerrando en un círculo, el medio de comunicación que usa para enterarse de los siguientes temas noticiosos, e indique encerrando en un círculo el idioma y la frecuencia con que usa dichos medios de comunicación.

a) Noticias sobre deportes

Inglés Español Ambos

- Periódico	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Semanario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Revistas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Gaceta comunitaria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Publicación religiosa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Televisión	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana

b) Noticias sobre su comunidad local

Inglés Español Ambos

- Periódico	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Semanario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Revistas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Gaceta comunitaria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Publicación religiosa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Televisión	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana

c) Noticias sobre migración, trabajo y salud en su ciudad de residencia

Inglés Español Ambos

- Periódico	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Semanario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Revistas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Gaceta comunitaria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Publicación religiosa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Televisión	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana

d) Noticias sobre México

Inglés Español Ambos

- Periódico	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Semanario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Revistas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Gaceta comunitaria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Publicación religiosa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Televisión	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana

e) Noticias sobre el conflicto armado en el Medio Oriente

Inglés Español Ambos

- Periódico	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Semanario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Revistas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Gaceta comunitaria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Publicación religiosa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Televisión	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana

f) Noticias sobre el clima

Inglés Español Ambos

- Periódico	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Semanario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Revistas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Gaceta comunitaria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Publicación religiosa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Televisión	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
- Internet	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana

10 – ¿Cuán interesado(a) está usted en las noticias o en los contenidos de tipo noticioso transmitidos por televisión?

- 1 No me interesan
- 2 Me interesan muy poco o casi nada
- 3 Me interesan algo pero no mucho
- 4 Me interesan la mayoría de las veces
- 5 Me interesan muchísimo

11 – ¿Con cuál de las siguientes afiliaciones se identifica mejor?

- a) Latino
- b) Hispano
- c) Mexicano
- d) Mexico-Americano
- e) Chicano
- f) Otro (especifique) _____

12 – ¿En términos generales cuál es el medio de comunicación que usted prefiere para enterarse de las noticias? (Sólo una respuesta)

Inglés Español Ambos

Periódico	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
Semanario	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
Revistas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
Gaceta comunitaria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
Publicación religiosa	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
Radio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana
Televisión	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 días a la semana

Internet 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 días a la semana
Otro (especifique) _____

13 – ¿De los medios de comunicación que usa con más frecuencia y con base en las preguntas anteriores cuál(es) de las siguientes razones explican esa preferencia?

- a) Por que hay más contenido local b) Porque es más entretenido
c) Porque representa mejor mis intereses d) Porque tiene más información sobre EEUU
e) Por la utilidad de su información f) Porque tiene imágenes
g) Porque se ajusta mejor a mis horarios h) Porque tiene más contenido sobre México
i) Otro: _____

14 – Encierre en un círculo el número de días a la semana que ve noticias por televisión?

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 0 días a la semana

15 – ¿Cuáles son los días de la semana en los que es más probable que vea noticias por televisión?

L – M – Mi – J – V – S – D

16 – ¿Cuál es el canal y horario que usa más frecuentemente para ver sus noticias por televisión?

Canal: _____ Hora: _____

17 – ¿Quiénes lo acompañan cuando ve sus noticias por televisión?

- a) Nadie b) Mi familia c) Mi pareja d) Mis amigos e) Otro _____

18 – ¿Cuál es el lugar donde de su hogar donde normalmente ve sus noticias por televisión?

- a) Habitación
b) Cocina
c) Sala de estar
d) Comedor
e) Habitación de los niños
f) Otro (especifique) _____

19 – Indique la opción que mejor refleja su opinión sobre las siguientes oraciones:

- Los noticieros de TV me informan oportunamente de acontecimientos importantes que pueden afectarme y a mi familia
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo
- Aunque la información de los noticieros de TV es importante, esa información a menudo es irrelevante para mí y mi familia
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo
- Frecuentemente dudo de la veracidad de las noticias televisivas
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo
- Cuando veo las noticias por televisión mi principal interés está en las noticias sobre lo que pasa a mi alrededor en Estados Unidos
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo

- Preferiría que mi noticiero televisivo tuviera más noticias sobre mi ciudad o población de origen, aunque esto signifique menos noticias sobre lo que pasa a mi alrededor en Estados Unidos
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo
- Mi interés sobre las noticias de México es mayor que mi interés en las noticias de cualquier otro país
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo
- Mi interés sobre las noticias relacionadas con mi situación migratoria es mayor a mi interés en las noticias relacionadas con México
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo
- Si mi familia no viviera en México pondría menos atención a las noticias sobre ese país
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo
- El bienestar económico de mi familia en México depende de mi bienestar económico en Estados Unidos
a) De acuerdo b) Más o menos de acuerdo c) No estoy de acuerdo

20 – Encierre en un círculo la palabra que mejor describe su situación migratoria.

- a) Soy ciudadano estadounidense
- b) Soy inmigrante legalmente documentado
- c) No tengo documentos para residir en Estados Unidos

21 – Elija la palabra que mejor describa su situación económica

- a) Estable b) Más o menos estable c) Inestable d) Precaria

22 – Elija la oración que mejor expresa su opinión sobre su actual situación económica

- a) Mi situación económica en EEUU es muy superior a la que tenía cuando vivía en México
- b) Mi situación económica en EEUU es similar a la que tenía en México
- c) No hay gran cambio entre mi situación económica en EEUU y la que tenía en México
- d) Mi situación económica en EEUU es inferior a la que tenía en México

23 – ¿Mantiene contacto con familiares y amigos en México?

- a) Sí b) No

24 – ¿Qué formas de comunicación utiliza para comunicarse con familiares y amigos en México?

- a) Correo b) Teléfono c) Internet d) Telégrafo e) Otro (Especifique_____)

25 – ¿Cuál es la frecuencia con la que usa los medios de comunicación arriba señalados?

- a) 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 0 días a la semana
- b) Al menos una vez al mes
- c) Otro (especifique) _____

26– ¿Con qué frecuencia viaja usted a México?

- a) 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 veces al año
- b) Una vez al mes
- c) Más de una vez al mes
- d) Viajo a México cada _____ años
- e) Tengo _____ años sin viajar a México

27 – ¿Cuál es su profesión o actividad económica en Estados Unidos?

28 – ¿Cuál era su profesión o actividad económica en México?

29 – Elija la oración que mejor expresa su opinión sobre su actual profesión o actividad económica

- a) Mi profesión o actividad económica en EEUU es mucho más satisfactoria que en México
- b) Mi profesión o actividad económica en EEUU es igualmente satisfactoria a la que tenía en México
- c) Desearía desempeñar en EEUU la misma profesión o actividad económica que tenía en México

30 – ¿Me permitiría contactarle por vía telefónica para aprender más sobre su consumo de noticias por televisión?

- a) Sí b) No

INFORMACIÓN PERSONAL:

Nombre y apellido: _____

Estado civil: Soltero, Casado, Divorciado, Otro (Encierre en un círculo)

Ciudad de residencia: _____ **Estado:** _____

Número telefónico: () _____

Grado académico completado: _____

Tiempo de residencia en Estados Unidos: _____

Edad: _____

Profesión o actividad económica: _____