The New Mexican Migration: Remembering Violence, Connecting, And Living In The Third Space

Uriel G. Posada
University of Texas at El Paso, uposada@zgsgroup.com

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THE NEW MEXICAN MIGRATION: REMEMBERING VIOLENCE, CONNECTING, AND LIVING IN THE THIRD SPACE

URIEL G. POSADA

Latin American and Border Studies

APPROVED:

______________________________
Richard D. Pineda, Ph.D., Chair

______________________________
Stacey Sowards, Ph.D.

______________________________
Ernesto Castañeda-Tinoco, Ph.D.

______________________________
Benjamin C. Flores, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
THE NEW MEXICAN MIGRATION: REMEMBERING VIOLENCE, CONNECTING,
AND LIVING IN THE THIRD SPACE

By

URIEL G. POSADA

THESIS

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The concept of identity has become a topic of discussion in the last few decades, especially with the growing immigration across several countries. Countries such as the United States and Canada are receiving people who arrive from different parts of the world and who are changing the composition of these countries. In this thesis I explore how a group of Mexican journalists are adjusting their identity as they live in countries outside of Mexico. Five of the journalists are now living in the United States, and one of them is in Canada. They were forced to leave Mexico after they were threatened with violence by the Mexican government. Their crime: reporting abuses by Mexican authorities. The forced migration undertaken by the journalists has caused them to redefine the way they see themselves, to negotiate their identity, and to adapt their professional and personal lives to a new reality. In this thesis I endeavor to explain why the majority of the journalists interviewed do not want to go back to Mexico leading to a potential renegotiation of their identities. Lastly I highlight how these journalists operate in a transnational sphere, experimenting with a heightened sense of transnationalism; placing themselves in what is known as thirddspace, from which they resist and criticize the hegemonic power that made them leave everything behind and settle in a new country.

Mexican migration has been studied since the beginning of the 20th century: for almost a century Mexican migrants who have been the subjects of much of this research have been agricultural workers and economic migrants. There has not been enough research conducted on the new Mexican migration, those people who have lived in Mexico, and have suddenly been uprooted faced with the reality of having to flee their violence stricken country. In this thesis I look at six cases in which Mexican journalists were forced to leave everything under threatening circumstances, and migrate to the United States and Canada. I seek to contribute to the
understanding of this new Mexican migration. As Nadje, Black and Koser (2001) argue, the
literature on transnationalism, refugees and other exile groups remain relatively understudied.
“Traditionally a clear distinction has been drawn in the study of international migration between
refugees and labor migrants, with the former representing the political, and the latter the
economic, outcome of global systems and interactions” (Nadje, Black, & Koser, 2001).

**Forced Migration**

Forced migration refers to the coerced movement of a person or persons away from their
home. It often connotes violent coercion, and is used interchangeably with the terms
"displacement," or forced displacement. The International Organization for Migration defines
forced migrants as any person who migrates to "escape persecution, conflict, repression, natural
and human-made disasters, ecological degradation, or other situations that endanger their lives,
freedom or livelihood” (Forced Migration Online). According to Forced Migration Online, there
are several types of displacement: Conflict-Induced, Development-Induced, and Disaster-
Induced. Forced Migration Online also states that there are seven types of forced-migrants.
These are refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, development displacess,
environmental and disaster displacees, smuggled people, and trafficked people (Forced
Migration Online). For the purpose of my thesis, I will specifically refer to asylum seekers, and
refugees as two very distinct terms.

The term ‘refugee’ has a long history of usage to describe ‘a person who has sought
refuge’ in broad and non-specific terms. However, there is also a legal definition of a refugee,
which is described in the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.
Article 1 of the Convention defines a refugee as a person residing outside his or her country of
nationality, who is unable or unwilling to return because of a ‘well-founded fear of persecution
on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a political social group, or political opinion’. Some 150 of the world’s 200 or so states have undertaken to protect refugees and not return them to a country where they may be persecuted, by signing the 1951 Refugee Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol. Those recognized as refugees are better off than other forced migrants, in that they have a clear legal status and are entitled to the protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency). The vast majority of refugees are in the world’s poorest countries in Asia and Africa. The global refugee population grew from 2.4 million in 1975 to 14.9 million in 1990. A peak was reached following the end of the Cold War with 18.2 million in 1993. At the end of 2004, there were estimated to be some 11.5 million refugees around the world (UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency).

On the other hand, asylum seekers are people who have moved across an international border in search of protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention, but whose claim for refugee status has not yet been determined. Annual asylum claims in Western Europe, Australia, Canada and the USA combined rose from some 90,400 in 1983 to 323,050 in 1988 and then peaked at 828,645 in 1992. Applications fell sharply by the mid-1990s but began to steadily rise again towards the end of the decade. By the end of 2004, asylum applications made in these Western countries had again dropped significantly (Forced Migration Online). As the numbers of asylum seekers rose during the 1990s and beyond, there was increasing skepticism from politicians and the media, particularly in Western states, about the credibility of the claims of many asylum seekers. They have been labeled ‘economic refugees’ and ‘bogus asylum seekers’. Forced Migration Online asserts that asylum migration is clearly a result of mixed motivations. Most asylum seekers do not come from the world’s poorest states, however “many do come from
failed or failing states enduring civil war and with high degrees of human rights abuses and, not surprisingly, significant levels of poverty” (Forced Migration Online).

**The Mexican Case**

México is in the midst of unprecedented violence brought on by a drug war. In part, México’s violence is caused by rifts between formerly allied cartels (Campbell 2009). The split between the Gulf Cartel and its former hit men, Los Zetas, erupted into bitter fighting in eastern parts of México that had been relatively free of violence previously. Much of the violence in Ciudad Juárez and the rest of Chihuahua, for example is attributed to a turf war between the Sinaloa and Juárez cartels.

More than 50,000 troops and federal police are actively involved in the fight against the cartels. The Mexican government has claimed that record amounts of drugs have been seized, and senior cartel leaders have been jailed or killed in operations. But the war against drug cartels, declared by President Felipe Calderón upon taking office in 2006, caused an explosion of violence, as drug cartels fought both the Mexican army and each other. There are also concerns about the military's lack of accountability, and the fact that both the military and the Federal Police have been working alongside the drug cartels. Campbell (2009) says that a recent trend in narco-killings includes the attachment of a sign or banner to the body of the victim, thus making for a gorier, and more threatening message. Such stylized killings represent the construction of dread, by generating a climate of fear, and reinforcing the power of the perpetrators. Campbell (2009) also points out that “these depraved and ceremonialized actions are part of an emergent culture and discourse used by marginal members of Mexican society, who are cruelly remaking their cultural world” (p. 50).
Many groups have denounced the corruption, and the drug cartel influence within the Mexican government. The journalist community in México is one of the most vocal groups that has been describing the corruption in Mexican government practices allowing certain drug cartels to exist while barring the operation of other cartels. As a consequence, dozens of Mexican journalists have been killed, threatened, and have been subjected to the stylized violence that has become a trademark of the narco violence. Consequently many Mexican journalists have sought political asylum in the United States and Canada, as a last resort to save their own lives, and their family’s lives.

In order to provide more context to this study, I am including some of the most recent cases of journalists who have been killed in the last few months and years. I am attaching their photographs.

Illustration 1

Armando Rodríguez “El Choco” - a police beat reporter for newspaper El Diario in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, was murdered in Nov. 2008 in front of his house. Rodríguez was taking his daughter to school that morning and died protecting her. Rodríguez was the first journalist to be killed in Ciudad Juárez since the beginning of a bloody turf war between two criminal organizations over the control of drug-trafficking routes in the region. More than 10,000 people have been killed in the city since 2008. Rodríguez’s murder caused nationwide outrage; however, the crime remains unpunished.
Humberto Millán Salazar – On August 24, 2011, Millan, a writer for the online news site *A Discusion* and host of a program on Radio Fórmula was left in a field near Sinaloa with a gunshot wound to the head. Though Sinaloa is home to the Sinaloa cartel, colleagues allege his death likely had to do with his reporting on politics rather than drug trafficking.

Victor Manuel Baez Chino – On June 14, 2012, the Mexican Zeta drug cartel kidnapped and killed a journalist for a newspaper in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz,

Reporter Victor Manuel Baez Chino covered the crime beat in Xalapa, the state's capital, for the local edition of the national newspaper Milenio as well as for a news website called Police Reporters.

Veracruz state spokeswoman Gina Dominguez said Baez Chino was reported kidnapped outside the offices of the website in Xalapa as he left work late Wednesday. His body was found dumped on a street. Authorities said a note was attached to Baez Chino's corpse signed by the Zetas.

"This is what happens to those who betray us and be clever, Sincerely the Zetas," the letter reportedly said.

Baez was the fifth journalist to be slain this year in Veracruz, one of the states most affected by drug trafficking violence as the Zetas battle with their rivals, the Gulf cartel.
On May 3, 2012, Gabriel Huge Cordova and Guillermo Luna Varela were killed in Boca del Rio in the state of Veracruz. Huge and Luna had both previously worked for Notiver as photographers: Huge had moved into freelance work and Luna was working with Veracruznews at the time. Their bodies were found dismembered in trash bags along with those of two other individuals.

The correspondent of the weekly magazine Proceso also in Veracruz, Regina Martinez, was killed on April 28 2012, at her home in Xalapa. At that time, the killing of Martinez was the fifth in the first 17 months since Javier Duarte assumed the governorship of that state. According to early reports, a neighbor told the authorities that the journalist’s house had been open for several hours without any movement. Agents of the Secretary of Public Security arrived at Regina’s house and inside they found the body with clear marks of suffocation and strangulation. In late December 2011, her house was burgled. Regina had been a reporter for Proceso for over a decade and previously worked as a correspondent for the national newspaper La Jornada.

Ramon Abel Lopez Aguilar was abducted and murdered in October 2012 in the city of Tijuana, in the northern state of Baja.
California. Lopez Aguilar was a photographer and editor of the news Web site Tijuana Informativo. His body was found on a street in Tijuana just hours after he was snatched from his home in the city’s Guaycura neighborhood, the state AG’s office said.

Lopez Aguilar died of a single gunshot wound to the head, according to the official statement. The body was positively identified by the victim’s family, who had called police earlier to report the pre-dawn kidnapping.

The Layout

This thesis will be divided in five parts. First, will be the introduction to the thesis in which I describe the difference between refugees and political asylum seekers. Additionally, I will be presenting background information that explains the violent conditions under which my interviewees fled México. In the introduction I justify my thesis and explain why I think it is important to advance the study of how we communicate through our identities. This research is important because the identity formation of those Mexicans that have fled their country have not been studied enough.

The second chapter of this thesis is the literature review in which I present the research upon which my thesis is based on. It is important to note that since my topic is a fairly new phenomenon, research on the new Mexican migration is very limited and I will be drawing am from different theories and concepts to frame the project. Theories like Bhabha’s (1994) who points out, that these Mexican journalist are now operating in what they considered, before being forced to leave Mexico, the “beyond”: “there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the 'beyond': an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French
rendition of the words *au-delà* - here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth” (p. 1).

The third chapter consists of the methodology in which I lay out how I conducted my interviews and how I choose the format utilized in them.

The fourth part is the analysis of the in-depth interviews conducted with Mexican journalists. I will be dividing the analysis into the following sections:

1. **Settling in a new place: Identity, belonging and Mexicanness**: throughout every interviewee’s story so far, a discussion of identity came up, concerning how they have had to cope with their sudden uprooting. These are stories of people who rationalized the situation, and reacted to a threat thus leaving everything behind.

2. **The ThirdSpace and hybridity**: According to Soja this thirdspace is a term that captures “what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings” (Soja, 2009). Her theory urges us to recognize that the identities, especially of those who are considered the “Other”, like the journalists studied here, are negotiated, and are changing every minute. Third space then, is a meeting point, “a hybrid place, where one can move beyond the existing borders. It is also a place of the marginal women and men, where old connections can be disturbed and new ones emerge” (Sonja, 2009). In this section I use hybridity as a synonym of thirddspace. I talk about the concept of power and how these Mexican journalists are using to protest their government from the space they are occupying.

3. **Transnationalism: connecting without crossing a physical border**: in this section I demonstrate how these Mexican journalists engage in transnational practices even though they do not cross the border into Mexico. Only one of them is a border crosser. I also use Levitt’s (2001) broad patterns of interaction that migrants develop with the host society.
One thing that was clear with all interviewees so far was that no matter what their form of interaction with the host society was, they all fit into what Dufoix refers to as the antagonistic structure of the collective experience abroad (Dufoix, 2003).

The fifth section of the thesis is the conclusion where I emphasize the importance of this research and highlight the findings after my analysis.
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

Mexican Journalists in the U.S. – Adapting Identities While Being in Limbo

There is no doubt that the violent situation in Mexico is forcing migrants to redefine their identities, when suddenly faced with the reality of having to leave their country to settle elsewhere. Many people are working on inventing ways to belong globally. Levitt (2007) asserts that transnational migrants must “divide their energies and loyalties between the countries they move to, the places that they come from, and the many places beyond, and in between” (p. 64). Castañeda (2006) also speaks of the identity formation of immigrants, and confirms Levitt’s point: “migrants are people who live connected to two or more countries and who, because of this fact, have to confront the question of where they belong and where they place their primary allegiances” (p. 3). This identity renegotiation is an ongoing process, which Mexicans who have been forced to flee their homes, must come to terms with immediately. According to reports from the Mexican General Consulate in El Paso and from La Red, an organization formed by Mexican business people who have relocated to El Paso, from 2006 to the present between 100,000 and 250,000 residents of Ciudad Juarez have migrated to the United States. Marfleet (2006) explains that the great majority of forced migrants originate in zones of economic and political crisis located in vulnerable regions of the developing world. He adds that “most forced immigrants are in fact produced by events in which economic or environmental collapse, conflict, or war are intimately linked with crisis of the state” (Marfleet, 2006). This is certainly descriptive of what has taken place in El Paso.

Mexico is a clear example of a country in economic and political crisis: a crisis that has caused the death of at least 50,000 people from 2006 to the present. One group that has been
greatly affected by this conflict is journalists. The organization Reporters Without Borders have confirmed that in 2012, 50 journalists have been killed, 34 Netizens (people who regularly used the internet) and citizen journalists were killed, 147 journalists were imprisoned, while another 129 netizens were imprisoned. (Reporters Without Borders). Meanwhile, the Committee to Protect Journalists notes that in 2012, 48 journalists were killed. “Journalists killed” according to both agencies, are cases where have been clearly established that the victim was killed because of his/her activities as a journalist. It does not include cases in which the motives were not related to the victim’s work or in which a link has not yet been confirmed.

In México, the data on the number of journalists killed differ from agency to agency. México's special prosecutor for crimes against journalists says 67 journalists have been killed and 14 have disappeared in México since 2006. Press advocates have long called Mexico one of the most dangerous countries for reporters. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) states that 48 were killed or disappeared from December 2006 to the end of 2011, and five more were murdered that year in that country. México's human rights commission lists 81 journalists killed since 2000. Since 2007, according to CPJ, 463 journalists were forced to exile. CPJ also gives reasons for exile: 44% received threats of imprisonment, 54% received threats of violence, 10% faced imprisonment, 6% faced violence, and 11% harassment. Seventeen percent of those journalists exiled continued working as journalists in their host country, and 8% are able to return home.

Part of my project will pay special attention to journalists who have survived threats in Mexico and whom have sought political asylum in the United States. I argue that these journalists operate and negotiate their identity in a Thirsdspace, or exist in a state of hybridity as a
synonym. Soja (2009) says that Thirdspace is a meeting point, a hybrid place, where one can move beyond the existing borders. The journalists analyzed in this thesis report and criticize a system that, according to them, was responsible for their forced migration. “A Thirdspace consciousness is a precondition to building a community of resistance to all forms of hegemonic power” (Soja, 2009). From their unique perspective, these forced migrants are negotiating their identities: identities that change and adapt as a form of survival, making the border as Soguk (2007) suggests, ephemeral, never eternal. Along with this idea, Malkki (1992) says: “identity is always mobile and procedural, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, et cetera.” (p. 37).

Renato Rosaldo in the forward of the book Hybrid Cultures by Nestor Garcia Canclini provides a useful definition of hybridity. He says that “hybridity can be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contains no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between cultures)” (1995, xi). The subjects of my thesis have to adapt to their new reality; a reality of living in a foreign country where they struggle to make ends meet due to their immigration status. Their identity as Mexicans is not the only factor affected by their forced migration: the fact that now they have to struggle to provide for themselves and their family also affects how they see themselves. Before, they were recognized journalists, and now they had to start again without money and with no recognizable career record in the host country. In this project I apply lessons from culture and postcolonial studies to explore hybridity and to shed light on how these Mexican journalists feel in a foreign country. Homi Bhabha (1994: 35-39) uses hybridity to describe cultural contact between the colonizer and the colonized that yields and interdependent relationship between the two, creating a “third space of enunciation,” by which he means a space
that negates the dominance of the colonizer and allows the colonized to “emerge as the others of ourselves.” In the negotiation, this third space of enunciation, the hybrid individual neither becomes the colonizer nor remains the colonized, but emerges as “neither the One…nor the Other…but something else besides, which contest the terms and territories of both. My interviewees really live, as Anzaldúa (1999) says in her discussion about the new Mestiza consciousness and her perspective of hybridity, “entre mundos, between and among worlds”. Anzaldúa argues that this third space operates in a constant state of transition.

However the concept of hybridity is criticized by many for being too vague, and also the current debates surrounding the term have to do with its troubled history. Sociologist Nikos Papastergiadis (1997) points to the ambivalence of the notion of hybridity. The concept bears uncomfortable traces of and references to notions of racial purity (organic theories of identity), and its origin seems to be inseparable from nineteen century ideologies of white supremacy. Contemporary studies on hybridity (hailing mainly from cultural studies, post-colonial studies, and sociology) regard this concept as an indicator that current practices of identity need to be conceptualized in a manner that refutes essentialist portrayals of the ways in which individuals, groups, and collectivities locate themselves. The next phase in the use of the term has been to see hybridity as a cultural effect of globalization. For example, hybridity is presented by Kraidy (2005) as the ‘cultural logic’ of globalization as it ‘entails that traces of other cultures exist in every culture, thus offering foreign media and marketers transcultural wedges for forging affective links between their commodities and local communities’. Another promoter of hybridity as globalization is Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2004), who asserts hybridity as the horizontal stem of culture. He argues that globalization as hybridization opposes views which see the process “as homogenising, modernising, and westernizing”, and that it broadens the
empirical history of the concept. I do realize that hybridity requires definition and placement. In this study I intent to position hybridity in terms of power and self-determination from my study subject’s perspective. In discussing digital diasporas, Brinkerhoff (2012) examines power implications and the identity negotiation process they afford. The author poses the fundamental power question: “in what respects are actors able to determine their own fate, and how is that ability limited or enhanced through social relations with others? (p. 79). I will argue that cyberspace reinforce hybridity and my research will try to answer the questions posed above by describing how technology is helping my study subjects to make sense of their situation and from their place, exercising a type of power that could not be performed in their country of origin. Sökefeld (2002) argues that the websites represent a kind of democratization or empowerment. Barnet and Duvall (2005) also write about power and empowerment:

“To understand how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained requires a consideration of different forms of power and international politics. Power is the production, in and through social relations, or effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their own circumstances and fate. But power does not have a single expression or form. It has several.” (p. 3).

Deshmuckh-Ranadive provides another way of thinking about power and empowerment reinforcing the idea of hybridity; she emphasizes the importance of spaces, including physical, economic, socio-cultural, and political spaces. Spaces, she argues, influence both the capacity to act and the resulting type of behavior. She says that “empowerment occurs when spaces are
expanded due to some change in a person’s life, allowing the person the place, freedom, or margin to do what she or he intends to do” (p. 109). This author emphasizes mental space as the most important for empowerment. She defines mental space as the “feeling of freedom that allows a person to think and act” (p. 113). I argue that this freedom of thought and action facilitates power. My project reviews Facebook posts, and internet news stories done by exiled Mexican journalists to articulate how they exercise power from their place in the host country.

**Transnationalism: A Review**

Together with the Thirdspace/hybridity concept, I also argue that these journalists deal with a heightened sense of transnationalism. Transnationalism, as described by Levitt, encompasses those who have integrated to varying degrees into the countries that received them, at the same time that they remain connected to the countries left behind (Levitt, 2001). Levitt also states that many migrants engage in some kind of transnational activities, but not all are embedded in transnational social fields (Levitt, 2001). Although my interviewees may not send remittances, or return to their place of origin, I argue that they negotiate a heightened level of transnationalism in which they ideologically inhabit the space that they were forced to leave behind. Brees (2010) in studying Burmese refugees in Thailand, argues that refugees can maintain economic, social, cultural and political links with co-nationals in all the domains of the refugee diaspora, even if their capabilities are in principle strained. She adds that the legal status of the person or diaspora organization concerned, as well as the country of origin and the host country have a larger influence on the type of transnationalism than the label ‘migrant’ or ‘refugee’. The concept of transnationalism should thus be conceived in a more encompassing sense, both geographically, thematically and include all emigrants regardless of their original motivations for migration. The Mexican journalists interviewed in this thesis are limited in their
capability of sending remittances, for example, or physically crossing the border into Mexico. Yet I argue that their activities in the United States, and in the case of a journalist that took refuge in Canada, are truly transnational since they do cross the border everyday either in thinking about their situation and connecting it to their professional locus on violence in México. As Kwok-Bun and Chan Wai-Wan (2010) contend, my sources demonstrate a series of coping mechanisms for their respective situations. These authors, by investigating the migratory experiences of immigrants at the interface of cultures, are able to explore the emotional and behavioral implications of migrants who experience frequent border-crossings. “For example, by seeing culture as a social product rather than a fixed preconception, researchers are beginning to understand that new coping strategies and adaptive skills” (p. 399). Smith (2006) also connects the coping mechanism used by transmigrants in adapting to their host country. She says that “translational life emerges from attempts by migrants and their children to live meaningful lives, to gain respect and recognition, with in the context of the larger processes of migration from Mexico, on the one hand, and assimilation in the United States, on the other” (p. 4). She also states that transnational life should not be an “all-encompassing identity”, but as one of several that migrants can hold and exercise, thus, supporting my claim that the Mexican journalists interviews are in fact hybrid individuals. She goes on to say that “Mexicans encounter an in-between status, where they do not fit easily into any one category, in a somewhat different way within larger American institutions” (p. 37). As I will show, transnational migration opens up opportunities for some, but not for others. As Levitt (2001) says, one factor shaping this relationship is class. In studying transmigrants from the community of Miraflores in the Dominican Republic, the author says the “those who start out (in a new country) with more generally finish with more. Miraflorenos who arrived with more education, money and contacts
were more likely to get ahead” (p. 200). I also argue and I will demonstrate that those with more human and social capital could raise families, start businesses, and express political demands across border more easily.

Moving from the literature review it is crucial to frame the broader project with an explanation of my methodology and my guiding research questions.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Method

My thesis aims to investigate identity formation of a unique class of new Mexican migrants. Up to this point there has been limited research of this new phenomenon: that of the Mexicans who face unique circumstances because they had to uproot themselves to protect their lives. In order to evaluate this phenomenon I propose the following research questions.

RQ1: How is an identity negotiated in times of crisis?
RQ2: How do we define the space forced migrants are living in?
RQ3: How have the interviewees engaged in transnationalism practices or in cultural expressions to make sense of their identity as Mexicans and as journalists?

Upon receiving IRB approval, I interviewed several exiled journalists. These interviews were guided by open ended questions, which aimed to broaden the dialogue, as opposed to simply extracting an answer. Since my target population was limited to Mexican journalists who had fled Mexico in recent years due to threats of violence, the sample of interviews is very narrow. I opted to work on a level of understanding and engagement, as opposed to conducting interviews of large numbers of potential informants or doing an extensive survey. Each interview lasted about one hour to one hour and fifteen minutes. The majority of my journalists have asked asylum while one journalist is a U.S. legal permanent resident.

Interviews were all recorded as a mechanism to encourage the flow of a conversation as opposed to structured interviews. It turned out that interviewees contributed very important information when the “formal interview” was over, and when we moved into social conversation. In one part of this thesis, I analyze Facebook posts that are not public. All quotations taken from these posts were copied with the typological and lexical errors.
As a 17-year veteran journalist, I have always been interested in my colleagues’ work. As I stated before, in the last six years there have been a lot of characterizations of the journalism profession being dangerous especially in Mexico, where many journalist have died. I myself have known many Mexican journalists who told me about the challenges and risks to performing their jobs in México. Thanks to my work as a news director for the Telemundo affiliate in El Paso, Texas, I came into contact with those journalists who were forced to leave Mexico and have been fascinated by their stories. I am merging my professional career with my academic research to advance a new understanding on identity, hybridity and transnationalism and how these issues situate new Mexican migrants.

**The Personal Stories**

I feel it is important to give a review of the journalists’ stories in order to understand how they attempt to come to terms with their new lives in the United States and in Canada. It is important to note that all of the seven subjects say they were threatened by the Mexican government (military/federal/state/local police) and not by the drug cartels as many may argue. I have changed their names to protect their identity.

**Roberto**

Roberto, worked as a journalist for one of the oldest radio stations in the borderland. In his role he had long criticized government corruption and drug trafficking. He presented himself at one of the international bridges in El Paso, Texas, in December 2009, asking for political asylum. The request come after he broadcasts a condemnation of the killings of his two teenaged nephews. He says that his family was targeted for his criticism on the air of the government’s inability to stop the violence in Juárez. The boys were shot to death in front of their mother, Roberto’s sister. After these brutal murders, government officials stated publicly that the boys
were killed as a result of their involvement in narco-trafficking, a charge the family vehemently denies. During our interview, Roberto argued that the Chihuahua State Attorney “solved this horrendous crime in a matter of five minutes”. After denouncing the crime and the false government accusations and criticizing the state attorney general on the radio in Juárez, Roberto received threats via telephone. He crossed into the United States legally on December 9, 2009 using his border-crossing card and asked for asylum. His wife and children were allowed to cross with him on a humanitarian visa. But his sister who crossed at the same time—the mother who witnessed the shooting deaths of her sons—did not have a temporary visa or border-crossing card. She expressed her fear of persecution to the officers at the bridge and told them what had happened to her family, but was nevertheless detained by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Department.

Ezequiel

Ezequiel fled from his hometown in Chihuahua, in June 2008 after receiving direct death threats from Mexican Army personnel who were offended by stories he had written that were critical of soldiers’ behavior in the region. He did not have a tourist visa or border-crossing card, nor was he able to travel to Juárez to get one since he would have had to traverse several army checkpoints between his hometown and Juárez. He was detained at port of entry in New Mexico because at that time, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) policy was to detain any Mexican who asked for asylum upon entering the country at a border crossing. Ezequiel did not attempt to enter the U.S. illegally; rather, he stated his fear of persecution at the port of entry and asked for asylum in the U.S. At that time, he was separated from his teenage son, brought to El Paso and imprisoned for 7 months. His son was detained for 2 months. Ezequiel was finally
released from detention on January 30, 2009, but did not receive a permit to work in the United States until August 2009.

**Luis**

Luis is a veteran journalist who reported for a renowned Mexican newspaper covering Ciudad Juárez and other hotspots along the Mexican-US border. He has spent over twenty years writing about organized crime, corruption, human rights violations, and government abuses in México. Luis says that since he started working in his beat he had received threats both from organized crime and the Mexican government. In the summer of 2008, Luis started to receive more and more threats after he reported on the deaths occurring in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua.

“I had enough solid evidence to denounce that in fact the Mexican government was violating human rights with no accountability”, Luis said. “The government wants to silence those who criticize it through kidnapping, murders, and torture”. Luis knew what had happened to Ezequiel, and he wanted to avoid being imprisoned in the United States. He fled directly to Vancouver, Canada in September 2008 to seek asylum with his family and he has been granted political refuge in that country.

**Jorge**

Jorge is the creator of a renowned and irreverent news website that has followed the abuses of the Mexican authorities at all levels of government for several years. His criticism directed to the Attorney General of the State of Chihuahua, among others, resulted in threats made against his life. When Jorge was on his way to the funeral of a murdered journalist who had worked El Diario, he received a phone call. The caller told him that he would be murdered next. Having seen that the threats against his colleague came to fruition, he made the decision to leave Juárez. That same night he traveled to the Cordova International Bridge, he called his wife and family
and they all crossed to El Paso, Texas. Jorge had a journalist visa as well as a tourist visa. He was able to live legally in the United States for one year, until his visa expired. At that time he was forced to seek political asylum, which he did without the help of an attorney. After a four month wait, and several meetings with immigration officials, on September of 2010 he and his family received political asylum.

**Carlos**

In March 2010 Carlos was stopped by a municipal police officer in Ciudad Juárez. After a few minutes of questioning, the officer let him leave. However, a few blocks away he was bran off the road by a couple of municipal patrol cars. He was violently removed from the vehicle, and after a tumultuous search, Carlos was thrown back into his own truck and driven to an alley. By then he realized that he was being kidnapped by the authorities, who claimed his reporting at a local newspaper was affecting the interests of both the government and organized crime. He was threatened with death in that alley. After a gun had been pointed at him he offered money as a last resort. His attackers accepted the offer and told him that he had bought himself a couple of hours to disappear. On that same night, Carlos left Juárez with the few things he could gather and relocated to El Paso, Texas. Unlike the other journalists described above, Carlos did not have any problems with his relocation, because he was a U.S. legal permanent resident. However, Carlos continues to face similar problems to those facing the rest of the interviewees.

It is important to note that all of these exiled journalists, with the exception of Carlos, have waited or are waiting for months or even years after filing their applications for asylum before obtaining a permit to work legally in the United States. As Levitt (2001) asserts, the state is not superfluous rather than disappearing state continue to play a major role in the acceptance or rejection of new immigrants into its territory. During the time that they are not eligible to
work, they must rely on help from family, friends and community supporters for their basic needs, thus affecting dramatically their sense of belonging and identity.

*Gustavo*

Everything started with threats via phone and mail. Little by little, Gustavo realized his reporting about government corruption could cost him his life. One day in 2008 as he was leaving work at newspaper in the state of Morelos, Mexico, two men kidnapped, robbed and tortured him. "It was an express kidnapping," Gustavo said, who recalls that a man pointed a gun in his face, forcing him to close his eyes while the other checked his notes in his briefcase. Fearing for the life of his wife and daughter, he fled to Colorado looking for refuge, hoping to go back home a few months later. When the violence unleashed by the war against the drug cartels expanded, Gustavo was forced to stay in Denver and to request political asylum. On Sept. 21, 2011, a Denver immigration judge ruled in favor of granting him political asylum.
CHAPTER 4 : ANALYSIS

Settling in a New Place: Identity, Belonging and Mexicanness

The concept of identity in this research is interconnected with other concepts such as global communication, globalization, cultural and border studies. Identity, according to the data offered in this study, and as Appadurai (1990) states, has to be understood “as complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and peripheries). Nor is it susceptible to simple models of push and pull (in terms of migration theory), or of surpluses and deficits (as in traditional models of balance and trade), or of consumer and producers (as in most new Marxist theories of development)” (p.296). This author also offers a framework, which I argue, applies to my research, for exploring all the complexities in the identity discussion. Appadurai looks at the relationships between five dimensions of global cultural flow with can be termed:

1. Ethnoscapes – the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest-workers and other moving groups and persons may affect the politics of and between nations.

2. Technoscape – the global configuration of technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational that now flows “at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries” (p. 297). In this landscape is where many of my interviewees operate. As I will show, this landscape is what is giving these journalists a sense of identity and belonging: this landscape is what is empowering them, and allowing them to function in a transnational way even if they do not cross a border physically.
3. Finanscapes – financial interactions between global actors. Appadurai (1990) says that the critical point is that the global relationship between ethnoscapes, technoscapes and finanscapes is deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable, since “each of these landscapes is subject to its own constraints and incentives” (p. 298). This also applies to a number of journalists interviewed in this research since some of them do handle money across the border.

4. Mediascapes – refers both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information and to the images of the world created by these media. What is most important about these mediascapes, according to Appadurai (1990), is that they provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ‘ethnoscapes’ to “viewers” throughout the world, in which the world of “commodities and the world of ‘news’ and politics are profoundly mixed” (p. 299). This is also a landscape in which the journalists interviewed operate freely, thus reinforcing their identities as Mexicans, and as journalists, and empowering them to face and oppose a power that uprooted them from their country.

5. Ideoscapes – these are also concentrations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing a state power or a piece of it. This is also another scape where my study subjects handle themselves well since their comments in a Facebook post or on-line journalistic pieces, for example are charged with political statements against the system that made flee their country.
I do agree with Appadurai in which all these “landscapes” are characterized by the historical, linguistic, and political place of the different actors: these being nation-states, multinational corporations, or diasporic communities.

“Indeed, the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes, for these landscapes are eventually navigated by agents who both experience and constitute larger formations, in part by their own sense of what these landscapes offer. These landscapes thus, are the building blocks of what, extending Benedict Anderson; I would like to call ‘imagined worlds’, that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread throughout the globe” (Appadurai, 1990: 297)

Throughout every interviewee’s story a discussion of identity came up. The study subjects offered a glimpse on how they had to cope with their sudden uprooting. These are stories of people who rationalized the situation, and reacted to a threat thus leaving everything behind. Luis, for example, mentioned that his decision to leave Mexico and live as an exile in Canada was decided in one night.

We came to Canada with our eyes closed. Our decision to come here was made practically in one night. We evaluated every option, and for us there was no other way than to come to this country

Obviously this leaving with their “eyes closed” poses a challenge to the perception of self-identification: they were forced to evaluate what they once were, and what they now are or could become in a host country. According to Stuart Hall, “identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional
sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by a specific enunciative strategies” (Hall, 2000). All of the journalists interviewed spoke of their identities before and after their exile. They re-constructed their identities very much in line with the political discourse that is presently being lived in Mexico. As Alire Saenz (1997) says “identity cannot exist without an attendant politics – and everybody engages in identity politics”. I argue that we all privilege certain categories of discourses over others and organize ourselves around these discourses. The discourse that the majority of the journalists interviewed use is organized around a political discourse, one that opposes the system the uprooted them from Mexico. Their identities as exilees are based in part on their ability to criticize the Mexican government from their space.

Their identity is not based on being similar or adhering to a governance ideal. Their identity is based on difference, due to the fact that they dared to criticize the government in ways that are unacceptable, and that cost them to lose everything. “Identities are constructed through, and not outside difference,” (Hall, 2000). This ‘difference’ is highlighted in the way the journalists spoke about their identities.

Carlos refers to his stay in the United States as being temporary. It is important to note that he is a U.S. permanent resident, and the youngest of the informants. The fact that he is a U.S. permanent resident enables him to have a job in the United States; having said that, he was forced to leave his home in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, in search of security across the border in El Paso, Texas.

I would have never imagined having to leave Juarez. You don’t have a space in El Paso… because you don’t have an identity here… you cannot find an identity on this side of the border. For me, El Paso was a place where I came to shop, I do
not have any childhood memories in El Paso, and I have those childhood memories in Juarez.

As Rebecca Saunders points out, in order to belong one must be part of a whole, and that implies that without feeling as though he is a part of the city, Carlos is essentially outside; a foreigner in his current place of residence (Saunders, 2003). Carlos maintains his ideals very rooted in his Mexican heritage built in Juarez, and he claims that identity is built through memories of one’s place of belonging. He says that he wants to see the world through the perspective of Juarez, but realizes that after his kidnapping by the authorities who are meant to protect the people, he is now living a type of exile in his own city. Before, Carlos used to be a fan of deeply exploring Ciudad Juarez. He speaks of visiting the poorest neighborhoods with the raunchiest bars in Ciudad Juarez, in order to capture the true essence of the city. Now his space has been reduced to the journey from the bridge to his parent’s house, and occasional quick visit to friend’s house: “I am living a type of exile within the city”, he says. Even with the idea of exile within his own city, Carlos still wants to return.

I feel lazy when I have to cross from Juarez to El Paso, and when I am on my way from El Paso to Juarez I have an epiphany. The world which I once knew and remember is again revealed. I feel refreshed when crossing into Juarez, instead of it happening the other way around.

However, this idea of returning to Mexico is far-fetched for Roberto, Ezekiel, Luis, Jorge Gustavo and Jose. Again, all of them were forced to leave Mexico upon receiving direct threats from the military, as well as the local, state, and federal police. Although these journalists romanticize the idea of going back to Mexico, and living the dream of repatriation, it is an impossible goal to attain. Their journalistic work has crossed into prohibited spheres, denouncing
the human rights violations on the part of the Mexican authorities, especially the military.

Roberto, Ezekiel, Luis, Jorge, Gustavo and Jose vow to never go back in order to protect themselves, and their family. Ezequiel explains:

There is nothing that I would like more than to live in my country, but this is not possible. Why? Because I am fighting against the Mexican state, and even if the Secretary of Defense changes, they are all the same, and they all know each other. The resentment they feel towards me will continue to exist because of what I did, which was to pin-point their abuses, and that is unforgivable. I will love to return, but I cannot.

Roberto has a similar explanation:

I will continue to be politically persecuted because they elect one government, and that one is friends with the other. They are all the same. I cannot go back to Juarez, even though there is nothing more that I want.

Luis is on the same page with the rest of his colleagues. He claims that his family’s safety is more important than the need to return:

I would not return to Mexico. The situation is too difficult, and there is too much auto-censorship; and if you don’t comply, they kill you, because it is in nobody’s best interest for the truth to be exposed.

Gustavo, one of the few Mexican who have been able to obtain political asylum says that he really cannot imagine himself and his wife and children living in Mexico anymore.

It is difficult to go back first because my immigration status (political asylum) prohibits me and my family from crossing the border into Mexico. Second I am starting
to love this country. The United States has giving what Mexico has been unable to give me: Liberty.

Jorge on the other hand, also left under threat but now feels no desire to return to live in Juarez. He also reported feelings of anxiety and uncertainty concerning his forced migration, but quickly overcame them. I argue that the reason behind his rapid overcoming of these feelings were in part due to the fact that he was able to continue publishing his news website.

I did not publish any new content on my website for a week. Until my wife told me that I should revive the site, because it was the only way I could survive economically and politically. My website continues, and has been the key to my success, it kept me alive.

One of the most important things the majority of these journalists say they lost is their livelihood which is intrinsically tied to their identity. Losing one’s livelihood entails matters of respect, recognition within the field, as well as identification. In Mexico, they were highly recognized professionals, and here in the United States or Canada, they are not.

The majority of those interviewed have not been able to use their skills as journalists in the United States, as well as they had done in Mexico. This has consequences in the way they see themselves. Luis refers to having arrived in Vancouver, Canada with nothing. He left all his material belongings in Juarez, along with his professional career and recognition. When asked about how he has coped with the adaption process in his new home, Luis states that, “in Vancouver you are no one.” As was mentioned before, Luis faced a dire economic situation in Canada.
I had to work cleaning public bathrooms, and my wife had to do domestic work. We even had to ask for help at a food bank in order to subsist. This is a very low blow to your dignity. In Mexico we were not rich, but we were not poor either. Here we have nothing.

Ricardo believes that now that he is living in the United States he has to be more “aguantador,”

You’re faced with many things, including the indifference of those living in the United States, even those who are Mexican. Here, you are simply one more person, one more immigrant. They think you do not have anything to contribute, even if you were highly recognized in Juarez. One must put up with mistreatment from bosses and the like; you must justify your salary. It does change your identity. I face it knowing that here in El Paso I am not what I used to be in Juarez, now I must be humble and withstanding.

For Ezequiel, performing his duties as a journalist is now only a distant memory.

Now I have to sell ‘burritos’ to my friends in order to make a living. Sometimes I do not have the money to pay the rent.

Gustavo entered the United States with a tourist visa. In December 2007 when visiting Colorado, he and his family decided to stay in this country for a few months: they fear for their lives in Mexico because Gustavo had received several threats directed to him and his entire family. After six months, when their visas expired, they began to live in the United States as undocumented. Gustavo went from having a stable and recognizable job as an opinion writer and professor at a university in the state of Morelos, Mexico, to having close to nothing. His professional career was erased.
It was really tough to accept my new reality. I went from having a nice office to work as an undocumented person. I had several jobs: as dish washer, as a helper in a window cleaning business in Denver, I had to clean offices, and I even distributed sales flyers on the street. I was very frustrated.

From the perspective of these exiles, having nothing affects how they see themselves since they think that they do not belong to their new environment. Although having or not having either work or a legal status to work is up to a point determined by a nation-state, as Castañeda mentions, there is one factor that becomes important in the exiles’ perceptions of themselves. “Though powerful legal frameworks restrict or expand migrant’s rights, migrants speak of their situations not in legal terms but in terms of their own senses of belonging to one nation-state, town or another” (Castañeda, 2006). They perceive the sense of belonging as a very significant feature of citizenship, just as important as issues of their immigration status. Luis says that he is trying really hard to change the perception people in Canada have about him: in other words he wants to belong.

One of my goals right now is to make people in Canada realize that I am not a poor journalist who is afraid, and just asked for refugee status. I want them to see me as an accomplished journalist who has merit and who deserves respect.

Roberto mentions there is an obstacle that is preventing him from belonging: Here in the United States you, as an asylum seeker, as an immigrant, are faced with the indifference of the people.

Jorge, on the other hand, did not show any problems with belonging. Due to his well-established connections in Juarez, he was able to earn a living without much
problem. For this reason, he did not have to face the economic and professional problems that Roberto, Ezequiel, and Luis faced.

I don’t feel frustrated; I think that things happen for a reason. In this case I see as it as destiny, and circumstances lined up for me to come over here. I don’t want to leave.

It is arguable that our interviewees left one hegemonic situation within the Mexican nation-state, running for their lives, just to enter another sphere of hegemony. Basch et al. state that identities are constructed in relation to two domination practices, one being “the mechanisms which all state societies legitimate the structures of power,” and the second, “the relationship between capital and labor that is at the historical core of nation-building projects” (Basch, 1994). The new hegemonic situation that they have entered is comprised of the very long and tedious bureaucratic processes whose result would finally grant them the asylum they seek. They left Mexico at the hands of the hegemonic power of the Mexican state, only to cross the border into the sovereign territory of another hegemonic power, which does not let them develop to their full potential. As a consequence they do not have the capital and resources to be “somebody” in their host country, and they feel they do not belong. Although Ezequiel feels out-of-place in the United States because he is very limited on the ways he has to provide for himself and his son, he feels he is finding ways to belong and to continue his journalistic work in this country. One manner he is accomplishing this is similar to Luis’s way of coping with the belonging issue:

I see myself as an architect or a doctor: someone could take away your profession or something would prevent you from practicing, but your vocation, in my case journalism, is yours. You are your vocation. I am still a journalists even if right know I cannot practice it.
He takes this issue further and says he is now working on a community radio initiative that will allow him “to be closer to those who need the most”. He wants to be able to inform those who live in this area and who do not have the information necessary to live a dignified life. Ezequiel also want to inform his audience on the issues affecting Mexico. In essence Ezequiel is taking agency of this status as an asylum seeker and he is not been a passive component of a transnational problem created by nation-states. As Roniger states, Ezequiel’s need “to be closer to those who need the most” could be a characteristic of forced migrants. “It is abroad that citizens forced out of a national territory redefine political commitments and rephrase collective visions, with an impact on the countries of origin” (Roniger, 2009).

By now, we have seen the effects of being up-rooted, of leaving everything behind, of living the reality of having nothing in the host country, of having identity/belonging issues, and of having the possibility or impossibility of going back to Mexico. When faced with the constant impossibility of a return to Mexico, the interviewee’s reported feeling more Mexican than ever. They even mentioned that this ‘Mexicanness’ has been caused by feelings of frustration and anger. Those feelings are in part helping them to face their experience as asylum seekers. Their anger and frustrations are their survival strategy even when they are immersed in the most adverse of conditions. Ezequiel reports that he is more Mexican now, and his feelings are being directed to contribute to help make Mexico a better place especially when he knows that his country is being mishandled and that many friends and colleagues are being threatened and killed. He cannot fathom the idea that the Mexican government never helped him achieve anything at all; on the contrary, they put up barriers for his success. When he tried to become a communal land-holder or ejidatario as they are called in Mexico, the authorities denied him that right.
When I finally succeeded as a journalist, the government also took that away through threats and attacks. I was relegated into exile, and thus lost everything in a matter of hours.

However, this sense of ‘Mexicanness’ described by Ezequiel goes hand in hand with the feelings of frustration and betrayal. In fact, Blackburn (2010) exerts that this is a common characteristic of forced migrants. “The effects of trauma in the context of war, political violence and torture are often profound and debilitating. People seeking asylum, who are suffering the effects of trauma of this nature, often describe an intense disconnection with the sense of themselves, and this disconnection is reinforced by a separation from friends, family, culture and homeland” (Blackburn, 2010).

Luis assures that his displacement has been so traumatic that to this moment, he has been unable to tell his family of the details behind the threats that he received. He feels as though by sharing this information he would turn his family into victims, and thus reliving the pain. This is causing a disconnect between him and his family, because he cannot communicate freely with them. Luis has taken the feelings of frustration and betrayal further than Ezequiel, by believing that everybody’s back was turned to him, including the society’s.

Right now I feel betrayed. The betrayal that I speak of is when neither society nor the government protects you. I was stripped of my Mexican identity, my migration was not due to economic reasons, nor was it planned. It was forced.

In thinking about this “betrayal”, Ezequiel is basically putting himself in a border: a border that he crosses every day. It is a mental border, and this border according to Johnson (1997), in explaining Octavio Paz’s concept of the border, also gives him and other in his situation a sense of identity.
“The border essentializes our identity: its imposition and our crossing over enable us to know who we are, to know, then where we are. The border divides us from ourselves, imposing us on ourselves in our reflection: these two, the before and the now, add up to one, to ‘we’ to Mexico and Mexicanicity” (Johnson, 1997: 134)

Although the heightened feelings of ‘Mexicanness’ and those regarding the loss of a Mexican identity might seem different, they really are not. They could both be understood as being part of the same coping mechanism; where one perceives the situation as being part of his responsibility to fight for the protection of the Mexican society from government authorities, the other feels that even the society has betrayed him. This mechanism has given way to the development of a new space where these journalists are resisting the hegemonic power that made them flee their country: I am talking about the thirds pace. I will be using the term “hybridity” as a synonym.

**Thirdspace and Hybridity**

In the last section I touched on the concept of “border”. Thirdspace and Hybridity are intrinsically tied to this concept since the “in-betweenness” that they imply is a characteristic of those who inhabit a border, and not necessarily a physical border. To begin, let show the definition of border according to the Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary

Border (n)
1: an outer part or edge
2: an ornamental design at the edge of a fabric or rug
3: a narrow bed of planted ground along the edge of a garden or walk <a border of tulips>
4: **boundary** <crossed the border into Italy>
5: a plain or decorative margin around printed matter
Associated with this term are the words borderland and borderline.

Borderland (n)
1a: territory at or near a border
B: fringe 3a <lives on the borderland of society>
2: a vague intermediate state or region <the borderland between fantasy and reality>

Borderline (n)
1: situated at or near a border <a borderline town>

Since in the literature review and in the interviews performed for this study the term frontera emerged, I also include the definition of “frontera” or border in Spanish, this according to the Diccionario de la Lengua Espanola.

Frontera
1. f. Confín de un Estado.
2. f. límite. U. m. en pl. Su codicia no tiene fronteras.
3. f. frontis (l fachada).
4. f. Cada una de las fajas o fuerzas que se ponen en el serón por la parte de abajo para su mayor firmeza.
5. f. Arq. Tablero fortificado con barrotes que sirve para sostener los tapiales que forman el molde de la tapia cuando se llega con ella a las esquinas o vanos.

I am describing the term “border” because it is precisely at the border that identities are negotiated. It is precisely at the border, and I am not talking about a physical border necessarily, but a mental and metaphysical border as well, that identities are always transforming, always in a
constant state of transition. This transition, this adaptation that an identity goes through in a border creates a hybridity, a space where people, especially my study subject, are forced to see themselves in different ways: ways they never imagined to face, and how they have no other choice but to adapt.

Brinkerhoff (2012) in talking about hybridity, thirddspace and digital diasporas says that “diasporas identities are constantly produced and reproduced. They are a negotiated result rather than a reflection of an objective or described reality” (p.80)

In this part of my study I will be reviewing the comments, news reports, and Facebook posts from three of my interviewees that underscore, and help shed light into the thirddspace/hybridity concepts. I also argue that this identity negotiation and adaptation in cyberspace as in the case of Jorge with his on-line news magazine, of Ezequiel with his politically-charged Facebook posts, and with Gustavo with is his radio show may reinforce hybridity and is empowering them to face their new reality, thus making sense of their lives in their host countries.

In all the interviews performed for this research, the respondents felt they have more power in the United States or Canada even if they did not have a job or an efficient way to provide for themselves and their families. Upon arriving to their host country, these Mexican journalists were in a road to empowerment and self-determination.

Gustavo states that event when he was working as a dish washer of when he was cleaning offices, he always thought of “making it” in the United States.

My thirst for having a good life for me and my family kept me going. I always knew that my profession, that being a journalist, was my calling and when I was washing dishes for
example, I always had a folder full of resumes. I always looked for the opportunity to continue my career.

Gunn (1995) confirms Gustavo’s feelings. “The way to liberation from oppression is to focus on one’s own interests, creativity, concerns, and community” (p. 43). In order to cope with their dual minority status, not being of either, the United States and having been uprooted from Mexico, these Mexican journalists negotiate hybrid identities and they do it from a power perspective. Once in the United States, they are able to criticize the Mexican government from their space without physically crossing the border in into Mexico.

It is in the new way of global communication (the internet) where the concepts of empowerment and hybridization are enforced. The nature of the internet where there are a few restrictions, for example, represents values such democracy and freedom of speech, and in a way this may be strange to these Mexican journalists. They tried to report on injustices of the government, and they were censored, up to the point that they had to abandon their own country.

Upon arriving to this country, Gustavo had to opportunity to buy time in a radio station and up to this date, he has been producing and hosting a radio show.

My radio show is about how to help people in my community who may be in the same situation as I was. I also have the opportunity to talk to political players in Mexico and to really question them about their work. The Mexican government is corrupt, and now with a new president coming into power, we really do not know if or when the situation in my country will change. I have a responsibility from my place to help, to question. I am going to do it because here in this country I am safe. I feel empowered.

Electronic means of communications, according to Brinkerhoff (2012) are an efficient easy access tool for story-telling and sharing, enabling hybrid individuals in the same situations
as my study subjects, to make sense of their experiences and feelings in their negotiation for an identity. They experiment with hybridity “in a community that can provide validation or correction to ensure continued shares social norms for group solidarity” (p.81).

It is validation and empowerment what Jorge with his on-line news magazine has found since his settling in the United States as the first Mexican journalist to be granted political asylum.

I can help Mexico more here in the United States that I can inside my country. In Mexico there is no freedom of expression, although the government says there is. The fact that I am living in the United States gives me more tools to denounce and report of government corruption. This is something I did in Mexico hat affected me. Here in the United States I am protected, and can perform my job as a journalist the way it is supposed to be. They try to take away everything, even a piece of me: that is my profession as journalist. They could not do in Mexico; they are not going to do it in the United States.

Jorge, as Moreiras (1999) says when talking about hybridity and double consciousness, is resisting hegemony: a system that many say is silencing journalists in Mexico. Jorge is trying to make sense of his fragmented identity as this author states.

Hegemony and subalternity are two major players in this scenario: hegemony with the power of allocating meaning, subalternity as a relentless place of contestation and reallocation of meaning‘ (n.d.: 1). Thus understood, subalternity is the site, not just of "negated identity, but also for a constant negation of identity positions: identities are always the product of the hegemonic relation: that is, always the result of an interpellation (p.377).
All my study subjects had a traumatic experience that dealt specifically with oppression, and dislocation that produced a fragmented, isolated, and dissociated identity. The concept of hybridity can be applied in Jorge’s situation for example: he felt compelled to both critique and reconnect to homeland through his continued publishing of his only-news magazine. This website is an irreverent, politically-charged site that most of the time has news stories criticizing the Juarez municipal government. Specifically, it questions the actions of Juarez’ mayor, Hector Murguia. In fact, Jorge has created a nickname for Ciudad Juarez: Tetolandia. This obviously is a critique of the way the Juarez’ mayor goes about doing business for the city. However his reports are not only against the mayor, but also against any type of political wrong doing from any government official, political party and even the church. What really get the reader’s attention are the catchy titles of each of the stories: they are funny, but very poignant. These are some of the example with a little bit of the story.

HÉCTOR AGUSTÍN GÓMEZ MORÍN

La dirigencia estatal del PAN no sabe como empezar los preparativos para las elecciones 2013. Desprestigiado, vendido al mejor postor y devastado por la corrupción interna, el PAN de Chihuahua parece condenado a muerte sin remedio. Ausente de liderazgo y con sus cuadros enfrascados en guerra interna por las participaciones y posiciones de poder, no se ve manera de volver a embaucar el electorado políticamente dopado que aun persiste en Juárez. El principal problema para los meses pro venir, es la disyuntiva entre dejar que Teto Murguia expropie de una vez el partido, o tratar de arrebatárselo y pagar el precio.

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Dueño de diputados, regidores, aspirantes y operadores del blanquiazul, el Alcalde priista de Ciudad Juárez juega a presionar al PRI para convencerse a sí mismo que aún tiene poder, mientras acabar de sepultar al PAN en sus delirios de ser Gobernador.

In this story, Jorge talks about how the Juarez mayor tries to extend his political power event in a political party that he does not belong to. He is saying the mayor Hector Murguia is trying to destroy the PAN party to make way to his aspiration to become the next Chihuahua governor. At the same time, Jose is making a critic about how the PAN is basically caving its own tomb.

S.O.S. TETONIC

El Tetonic se hunde aceleradamente.

Enmedio de traiciones y pugnas internas el barco municipal navega sin timón. Y como siempre sucede en tales casos, buena parte de la tripulación está a punto de abandonar la nave en este fin de año.

Las recientes pugnas que terminaron a golpes entre el Secretario del Ayuntamiento Hector Arcelus y un lugarteniente del jefe del gabinete, Polo Canizales, han causado efectos desastrosos entre la tropa.

Como resultado, el Alcalde Teto Muguia ha comenzado a perder la cabeza en público.

This reports talks about how the Juarez government is slowly “sinking”. Jorge is saying the Juarez is the shipt titanic and that its captain is destroying it. The captain in the story is the Juarez mayor. Jorge says that Hector Murguia has not been able to control his cabinet, and that he as even lost control of this anger in public.

LA IRA DE LOS DIOSES..!
Fuerzas de cielo y tierra se movilizaron este miércoles para impedir una rueda de prensa convocada por comerciantes del centro y el Párroco de Catedral, contra el paso a desnivel que se construye en la calle 16.

Una comitiva del gobierno municipal acudió a Catedral para impedir el evento a las afueras del templo en la que participaría el Padre Villaneva, quien de hecho no salió del recinto por órdenes del Vocero del Obispado, Hesiquio Trevizo, trascendió.

Here, Jorge criticizes the Juarez catholic church and the municipal govern for interrupting a press conferences organized by downtown business people the the vicar of the Juarez cathedral again a bridge that is being constructed in Avenida 16 de Septiembre in downtown Juarez. He is saying that the church and the government prevented freedom of expression on an issue that is causing a lot of headaches of many residents of Ciudad Juarez.

As I have shown, Jorge cannot be physically in Juarez, but he has adapted and reports on the issues most important for that community. As Vickroy (2005) says, Jorge’s reports “raise the question of the “relationship between culture and self, and feeling bound to a place remains an imperative for some, particularly if the separation from homeland is traumatic” (p.109).

Jorge’s adaptation of this reporting on Juarez from the United States calls, I argue, upon reader to be the witnesses of something that was unavailable to him in Mexico: Freedom of expression. Jorge has gone through great lengths to create or maintain a sense of agency and order. His writing has given him a sense of wholeness, has made him to overcome helplessness and fear, and has pushed him to resist oppression.

This empowerment is also felt by Ezequiel. Although his immigration status has not been resolved and he has not been granted political asylum, the fact that he can express himself via Facebook is refreshing and also has given him a sense of wholeness.
I really do not know if my words in Facebook have any effect whatsoever. I am happy to express myself without the fear that I’m going to be prosecuted or killed for what I say or do. Although I am still waiting for my asylum, I have the power: the power of expressing my self.

As I have discussed, hybrid individuals do feel the need to express their power in different ways. There has been a lot of writing about power and empowerment. A growing body of literature explores the notion of psychological empowerment. Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) provide a particularly helpful overview. Psychological empowerment refers to “people’s beliefs that they have the resources, energy, and competence to accomplish important goals” (p.125). Since all my study subjects were accomplished journalists in Mexico, they do feel capable of doing or continuing their work in the United States. In the last chapter I reviewed Appadurai’s (1990) framework for exploring all the complexities in the identity and hybridity discussion. He looked at different landscapes in which hybrid individuals can be placed in. This can also be connected to the concept of mental space used my Deshmuckh-Ranadive (2005) who provides another way of thinking about power and empowerment. Empowerment occurs when spaces are expanded due to some change in a person’s like, “allowing the person the place, freedom, or margin to do what she or he intends to do” (pg. 109). Mental space is very important for these Mexican journalists since it is from this space where they are making sense of their situation by telling their stories without any fear, and it is where they negotiate their identities questioning the very essence of what it means to be Mexican. This is facilitating power within. A clear example of this is Ezequiel, who through his Facebook posts shares his views on the Mexican situation, especially of the last few months where Mexico has elected a new president.
Ezequiel has taken his criticism toward Mexico’s president Felipe Calderon very seriously: he says that Felipe Calderon was the one responsible for his forced migration. On November 29, 2012, Ezequiel posted a comment about the fact the president Calderon will be leaving power and leaving Mexico with a president’s salary and benefits while his fellow Mexicans cannot and have been unable so to sue him for the thousands of deaths this government has caused. Ezequiel doubts the situation will change with the next government.

Y Calderon se larga a Estados Unidos con sueldo de presidente, con Ejercito de rateros, con prestaciones mayores y con mas de 100 mil muertos a su espalda....y la mayoría de los mexicanos en condiciones tibias....ni siquiera para firmar la denuncia en su contra para ser llevado ante un Tribunal Judicial Internacional...POR ESO ESTA JODIDO MEXICO...Y MAS VA ESTAR CON EL JUMENTO QUE ARRIBA EL SABADO...

On November 28, 2012 he wrote former presidential candidate, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. Ezequiel is saying that he supports him in his quest to denounce electoral fraud in the Mexican presidential elections. Ezequiel says that from his exile, where President Calderon sent him, will be putting pressure to hopefully fix the situation in Mexico.

Así se habla compadre del alma...ni un paso atrás...vamos a dar la batalla en contra de estos delincuentes, que lucran con el dolor y el hambre de la sociedad y de los mas desprotegidos....desde el exilio a donde me envió el imbécil genocida de Fraudelipe, te envío un abrazo solidario...

On November 20, 2012, Ezequiel wrote another post that is a clear example of the empowerment he is feeling and the mental space he is exercising. In this post, Ezequiel is breaking the news that he is no longer going to be monitored by the United States Federal Government. He is now free to do productive activities, and he says that his freedom is slowly
coming back. Ezequiel says that has been emancipated and thanks President Barack Obama for this phase in this political asylum process.

A todos los habitantes de la Tierra y lugares circunvecinos...Quiero informarles que a partir de hoy y por instrucciones precisas desde la presidencial, ya no seré "monitoreado" con visitas a casa, con llamadas telefónicas, con idas a firmar a El Paso Tx, etc...me han emancipado de esas pendejadas para los solicitantes de asilo político...me puedo incorporar libremente a las actividades productivas sin restricciones...estoy recuperando paulatinamente mi LIBERTAD y ahora me sigue encontrar a esa señora de nombre JUSTICIA que se fugó de mi Patria y no ha sido localizada...seguramente está secuestrada por esos gobiernos siempre nefastos y pestilentes del PRIAN (Partido Robolucionario Institucional de Acción Nacional) Estoy FELIZ desde aquí le envío un fuerte abrazo a mi "Negrito Sandía" porque está haciendo posible un sueño libertario y justiciero...RECIBA USTED SEÑOR PRESIDENTE BARAK OBAMA UN AGRADECIMIENTO ETERNO DE PARTE DE MI HIJO Y MIO...QUE DIOS LE BENDIGA JUNTO A SU FAMILIA Y A LOS HABITANTES DE ESTE PAIS...(he empezado a creer que es el pais de las libertades)...Gracias todos los que nos han brindado su confianza...un abrazo fraternal!!

Jorge’s news magazine and Ezequiel’s Facebook posts illustrates how information technologies enables hybrid individuals to explore, negotiate, and validate their self-determined identity and political perspectives. In these two cases, cyberspace has become a safe haven for the questioning and challenging of a system that forced them out of Mexico. A challenge that is their country would not be tolerated.
Transnationalism: Connecting Without Crossing a Physical Border

Transnationalism as described by Levitt encompasses those who have integrated to varying degrees into the countries that receive, at the same time that they remain connected to the countries left behind (Levitt, 2001). Levitt also states that many migrants engage in some kind of transnational activities, but not all are embedded in transnational social fields (Levitt, 2001). Although our interviewees may not send remittances, or return to their place of origin, we argue that they practice a heightened level of transnationalism in which they ideologically and symbolically inhabit the space that they were forced to leave behind. Roberto states that:

My mind and my thoughts have always been in Juarez, it will always be my city. In one form or another, I am going to be over there for those whom were left behind. If I must raise my voice from here, I will do that. It’s very painful not being able to return, but in some way my thoughts will always be in Juarez.

These journalists are truly migrants in the sense of the word, because they did not enter a country to stay, but instead refers to someone who continues to move back and forth between places, including a mythical home or imaginary origin (Castañeda, 2006). Roberto has continued his work with Radio Cañon, in Ciudad Juarez, even after his arrival in El Paso. He continues to criticize and demand justice from the Mexican government. In this manner, Roberto leads a transnational life because he crosses the border everyday through his journalistic work that continues to demand attention from Juarez’ society and government.

Ezequiel does practically the same as Roberto, although he has been unable to find steady employment due to his legal status, he still practices his profession. Ezequiel participates in a project involving community radio to help those most in need. Ezequiel also writes articles and
editorial pieces which are very critical of the Mexican authorities. He writes from the United States, but has a very poignant effect in Mexico, and thus making these practices transnational.

It’s a matter of being constant in our criticism toward the Mexican government.

They have kicked us out of the country, and stripped of us everything that we had worked for. We must make an effort every day to bring about change, even if we cannot physically be there.

There are more ways in which these journalists practice being transnational. Luis, for example, is often invited by international organizations, such as Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, to give talks regarding his exile and his take on the Mexican violent situation. Luis’ efforts have been recognized through the offering of a one year scholarship at Massey College, in Toronto, Canada. Luis is focusing on globalization, terrorism, and drug trafficking. A more specific example of how he continues to have an impact in his place of origin is through the establishment of a Facebook page called “Periodista no Calles”.

The idea of this page is to have Mexican journalists report any abuses against them. I wanted to send these reports to international organizations that help journalists. Unfortunately, the project worked. Last year when a photojournalist from El Diario was killed in Juarez, a colleague of mine reported the homicide on the page five minutes after its occurrence. Less than half an hour after the incident, several international organizations that protect journalists published the news, and made pronouncements condemning the killings, and the apparent lack of accountability from the Mexican Government.
“Periodista no Calles” Facebook page invites fellow journalists to not be silenced. In this way, this journalist is crossing the border: he is connecting and trying to make a change to avoid any more journalists’ killings.

EN SEPTIEMBRE DEL 2008, MIENTRAS TRABAJABA COMO CORRESPONSAL DEL GRUPO REFORMA EN CIUDAD JUAREZ, RECIBI AMENAZAS A CAUSA DE MI TRABAJO QUE ME LLEVARON A EXILIARME EN CANADÁ. FUI AFORTUNADO AL SALIR CON VIDA Y MI FAMILIA. TE INVITO A QUE NO CALLES.

Gorashi and Tavakoli (2006) say transnationalism is more than crossborder interactions: it is about the ways that the local space gets redefined through transnational activities and vice versa. “As local and transnational spaces begin to overlap and interact, one of the actors often becomes the nation-state itself. It is often assumed that the nation-state is weakened through transnational activities yet in this article we show that the influence of the state can be a crucial factor in the ways that both transnational and local spaces get constructed” (p. 90). In the case of the Facebook page “Periodista no Calles”, the influence or the lack of from the part of the Mexican government is helping created this transnational space that is trying to help with the denouncing of abuses against Mexican journalist, and as I said before, is also helping the exiled Mexican journalist, and those who have not left the country to empower themselves, thus redefining who they are.

Illustration 7

In a Facebook page on March 1, 2011, “Periodista no Calles” posted a photograph of some police officers from the State of Sinaloa abusing a photojournalist. Again, Luis invited his
colleagues to speak up against these abuses. Luis in this post said: “en 2007 conoci de primera mano la agresión de los policías estatales en Sonora. Parece que las cosas no han cambiado...” With this, he is desiminating information: a picture of the police officers that could be identified and may be avoided. This post does not specify if the alleged attackers were jailed or taken to the appropriate authorities.

Jorge’s work as journalist has been constant and for this reason we believe he is the most symbolically transnational. As was mentioned before he is the publisher of a well-known news web site. Jorge mentions he feels that his reporting is more effective since he is in the United States and is not forced self-censor his work.

From here I can help Mexico more, much better than in Juarez. There is no freedom of expression in that city. Right now I have an advantage here because I can write about any abuses and I am more protected.

His reporting has been so effective in highlighting the abuses of power in Juarez and Chihuahua that his site has been the target of several attacks. According to him, such attacks were launched by the Juarez mayor. This is evidence of his continued impact on the Chihuahua’s political system. Although he is not crossing the border physically, his transnationalism is evident through the impact of his journalistic work.

I did not expect the attacks to my web page. It goes to show you that this type of reporting is important in my country. Although I cannot cross, I know my work as a journalist is affecting and touching people. May be my reporting will not change the political system in Mexico, but I know I am helping in some way or form.
Jorge’s comments do support the research done by Bernal (2006) in talking about diasporas, cyberspace and transnationalism. She seeks to uncover the “various ways that migration, transnational connections and new media are transforming the boundaries of belonging and exclusion behind the formation of political identities, the experience of citizenship and the character of the public sphere” (p. 162). Internet as a transnational public sphere where they produce, and debate narratives of history, culture, democracy and identity. Online activities offer immigrants an important way to maintain and recreate transnational linkages across space and time.

All of the journalists interviewed have found a way of managing distances in their migration experience. The internet and other electronic means of communication have caused the shrinking of distances between individuals or groups and their land. Dufoix (2003) outlines three different approaches on managing distances in a diaspora. These approaches could be applied to the transnationalism experienced by my study subjects. The first is objective and legal proximity: it occurs within the formal links of nationality and representation within a state. The second is political proximity: when actions are taken from afar in the name of the nation against an occupying state or a regime judge illegitimate. The third is temporal proximity: when modern means of communication allow a connected intimacy with the homeland despite being away. It is this temporal proximity that characterizes the majority of the journalists interviewed. As we saw in the last chapter they do keep connected to Mexico through the use of internet. The means of communications used by transmigrants extend to television, radio, mobile phones and video.

Gustavo interviews in his radio show produced in Denver, Colorado, political figures from Mexico.
I have interviewed several important political figures from my country. These people are in a position to effect change. I have questioned them. When I left Mexico one of the goals was to find a way of helping my people. My radio show, I feel, is helping, at least, by keeping everyone informed of what is happening in Mexico.

Dufoix (2010) in citing Michel Foucault says the cyberspace and any other means of electronic communications can be described as a “heterotopia”:

“an alternative space that challenges the dominance of the official one. This heterotopia allows one to escape from the center, either to challenging it or to validate the existence of all the poles of the periphery in addition to the center.

Exile polities have found the internet an effective tool for lobbying, diffusion and communication” (p. 103).

The transmigrants interviewed in this research also practice “political proximity” as defined by Dufoix (2010). They do this by engaging in various forms of direct cross-border participation in the politics of their country of origin such as voting and other support for political parties, participating in debates in the press, as well as their indirect participation via the political institutions of the host country. In this proximity the physical crossing of the migrants or the “mobility of the actors” is not important.

“Why do I comment so much on the current political situation in Mexico? First, because in the United States I can. Second it is ridiculous that the Mexican political system has not changed a bit. We have a responsibility to help change my country, even if it is from afar.

This is a comment from Ezequiel, who very often criticizes the outgoing Mexican president. In a Facebook post, on November 30, 2012, Ezequiel shared a political cartoon of
I do not see why we should keep a political party in Mexico who’s leader has been the cause of so much death. He came into power with a vision for the future, but soon we realized that the vision was one of blood and death. The economic situation in Mexico continues to be bad: there are no jobs, no education, no nothing. I will continue to raise my voice against this political system in any way I can.

Gustavo is participating in political and professional discussion in institutions in Canada and the United States. He talks about the danger of doing journalism in Mexico and how this situation could be improved.

Everywhere I go, I talk about my experience and how my experience could help other fellow journalists in the same situation as I was. In the Facebook page “Periodista no Calles” I do give advice and try to organize training so journalist in Mexico and other countries could be safe.

As opposed to this type of transnationalism that the previously mentioned journalists practice, Carlos is more tangibly transnational. He fits the traditional definition of transnationalism because he is a physical border crosser and maintains ties and relationships on both sides of the border, which he continues to develop every day. His reporting position at El
Diario de El Paso covering trans-border violence and drug-trafficking encompasses both Juarez and El Paso. He is transnational in both his personal and professional life.

I am covering transborder violence, but I am very careful on how I portray the issue. I do not sign these types of stories, and I do not mention the names of people involved in controversial issues in Mexico.

Levitt identified three broad patterns of interaction that migrants develop with the host society. These were recipient observers, instrumental adapters, and purposeful innovators (Levitt, 2001). We found these patterns, which Levitt claims to have offered as conceptual tools, to have been very useful in understanding the types of interactions that our interviewee’s established within the host society. Three of the interviewed journalists fit precisely into the parameters that Levitt set forward for each of the patterns, and we found that, as was to be expected, the purposeful innovator has overcome barriers with more ease than the participant observer.

Levitt describes the recipient observer as one who does not actively explore their new world, and they take in ideas by passively observing the world around them (Levitt, 2001). When it comes to our interviewees, none could be described as passive due to the circumstances under which they fled Mexico. It is understood that they were not willing to step down, and let abuses go unreported. However, once they arrived in the United States, their ways of adapting and coping with the situation have varied from one end of the spectrum to the other. In Roberto’s case, he has continued to work with the same radio station. However, now he does much smaller jobs due to the fact that he can no longer be on site. It is clear to him that such small tasks with the radio station are simply
not enough to support a family of seven. He continues to seek out other ways of surviving, but it is very hard, and he continues to struggle every day.

On the other hand, there is Ezequiel, who fits more into Levitt’s description of an instrumental adapter. Levitt states that instrumental adapters add to their life for pragmatic reasons; they also adjust the way they interpret the world to equip themselves to meet the challenges they are faced with (Levitt, 2001). Ezequiel continues to fight for the cause, and believes that he can make a change in his country from the United States. He has changed the way he carries out his work. For example, he must now make use of online resources in order to make his opinions known, and to organize. He has had to cope with the changes as they come, and although he has done so successfully, he still looks back and wishes things were as before. Although he is now in the United States and admits that he will never return, his discourse is plagued with nostalgia. Ezequiel does as is required at the moment, but has not yet grown accustomed to the idea of his life in the United States.

Jorge has the characteristics of a purposeful innovator. Levitt describes purposeful innovators as creatively adding and combining what they observe with their existing ideas and practices, thereby expanding and extending their cultural repertoire (Levitt, 2001). These are individuals who do not wait around for things to happen, but instead make them happen. Jorge does not spend too much time speaking of the past; instead he spent most of the interview speaking of the present and the future. He claims that he is not at all reproachful for what happened, he is only thankful to be alive. When Jorge was disappointed by the work of attorneys, he chose to go through with the asylum process by himself. He ceased publishing his news website for only ten days after his relocating to El
Paso. After these ten days, he resumed his work which has continued to this day. His site is widely read, and continues to create a strong response in the entire state of Chihuahua. Jorge also does well economically due to advertisement sold on his site. It is arguable that a combination of his forward looking attitude, and his good economic standing are what have led Jorge to have a very positive outlook on his future in the United States.

One thing that was clear with all interviewees was that no matter what their form of interaction with the host society was, they all fit into what Dufoix refers to as the antagonistic structure of the collective experience abroad (Dufoix, 2003). Dufoix defines the antagonistic mode as an exile polity formed by groups who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the current regime in their country of origin. This exile polity’s goal is to liberate their country, nation, people, or land (Dufoix, 2003). All of the journalists interviewed spoke of the abuses of the government, and of the desire to liberate the nation of its parasitic authorities. Some mentioned that they believe that Calderon is an illegitimate president due to the very close, almost nonexistent, margin with which he won; and one even mentioned having participated in the gathering of evidence for the case that was presented before an international tribunal, accusing the Calderon administration of crimes against humanity. While other migrants may be disapproving of their government, this group of journalists refuses to turn their backs to their people and their country. They believe in making a change through their work, even if they must work from afar.
CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

According to Hall (2000) everyone needs an identity. As I have shown, identity is not a constant and is something that is renegotiated on a regular basis. Such renegotiation occurs at the individual and often at the national level. This is especially problematic for the six Mexican journalists identified in this thesis whom have had to deal with an identity that has been fragmented due to their forced migration. The journalists had to leave their country in a matter of hours, but their need to remain actively interested in the affairs of the homeland continued to grow as they acquired another identity in their host country. With this thesis, I meant take on the issue of identity around the new Mexican migration in a multidimensional and multidisciplinary way, taking into consideration historical, social, economic, political, cultural, and psychological dimensions of the intersection between their forced migration and the way they are making sense of their new lives in the United States and Canada. I have clearly demonstrated that while their lives are profoundly structured by transnational cultural and social forces, the have repeatedly demonstrated their agency and self-determination, perhaps the most poignant example being when they flee from persecution and harm by escaping their country of origin.

After giving a historical perspective on the situation of violence in Mexico, I described what happened to some of the Mexican journalists who have been killed in the line of duty. The cases of Armando Rodriguez, El Choco, Humberto Millan Salazar, Victor Manuel Baez Chino, Gabriel Huge Cordova, Guillermo Luna Varela, Regina Martinez and Ramon Abel Lopez Aguilar, give us a very clear idea of the harsh conditions journalists in Mexico have to face when performing their jobs. Because of these conditions, Roberto, Ezequiel, Luis, Jorge, Carlos, and
Gustavo, the journalists interviewed for these research, left Mexico in search of a more secure place. We can apply the theoretical perspective of Appadurai (1990) who explains forced migrants can be placed in “landscapes” characterized by the historical, linguistic, and political place of the different actors: these being nation-states, multinational corporations, or diasporic communities. The situational nature of identity construction and negotiation suggests that it is important to take into account the spatial dimension of individuals’ experience – the feelings, memories and experiences associated with certain geographical area or their “place”. This “place” has come to refer not only to a location, but to subjective feelings associated with it. Establishing the link between “place” and identity negotiation, it has been pointed out that “who we are” is closely related to “where we are” (Liu 2010).

That is why when Roberto, Ezequiel, Luis, Jorge, Carlos, and Gustavo were forced to leave Mexico their very identity was for a moment erased. Each journalist could not believe that it was the Mexican government responsible for their uprooting; as human beings, they felt violated. At another level, as professionals, they felt the government was taking away their jobs when their only purpose was to denounce wrong-doings.

The majority of the journalists interviewed do not want to go back to México even if they have the opportunity to do it; this adds to the complexity of renegotiating their identities. I also argue that job uncertainty in a new country while waiting for political asylum status affects the identity and the sense of belonging of each person. Once in the United States, they were frustrated by the fact that once they had an office and were recognized by their journalistic contributions. Upon arrival in their host county, they had to clean offices, toilets, windows, or do other types of manual labor that they were not used to.
Although they do feel betrayed by the Mexican government and blame the government for their forced migration, all of my interviewees feel more Mexican than ever. I have illustrated how their identities were re-constructed very much in line with the political discourse that is presently being experienced in Mexico. This feeling of “Mexicanness” is in part helping them to face their experience as asylum seekers. Their anger and frustrations are a survival strategy even when they are immersed in the most adverse of conditions.

This mechanism of identity has given way to the development of a new space where these journalists are resisting the hegemonic power that made them flee their country; this is thirdspace. I have positioned “hybridity” as a synonym, and I also positioned hybridity in terms of power and self-determination from my interviewee’s perspective. I argued that thirdspace and Hybridity are intrinsically tied to this concept of border since the “in-betweenness” that they imply is a characteristic of those who inhabit a border. It is precisely at the border, both the physical border and a mental and metaphysical border as well, where identities are always transforming and transitioning. This transition or adaptation that an identity goes through at a border space creates hybridity, a space where people, especially these journalists, are forced to see themselves in different ways.

Through the analysis of comments, news reports, and Facebook posts from Jorge, Ezequiel and Gustavo I demonstrated how hybridity is empowering these journalists to face their new reality, thus making sense of their lives in their host countries. All of my respondents felt they have more power in the United States or Canada even if they did not have a job or an efficient way to provide for themselves and their families. I emphasized this conclusion in order to explain how they cope with their dual minority status; not being of either the United States and having been uprooted from México. Ultimately these Mexican journalists negotiate hybrid
identities and they do it from a power perspective. Once in the United States, they are able to criticize the Mexican government from their space without physically crossing the border into Mexico. In this thesis I have demonstrated how the new way of global digitized communication is where the concepts of empowerment and hybridization are enforced. The nature of the internet where there are a few restrictions, for example, represents an expressive space for values such democracy and freedom of speech to prosper. What the journalists’ hybrid personas are doing with the new ways of global communication is resisting hegemony. They are resisting a political form of government unable to protect their livelihood, to protect their families and to protect them.

Hybrid individuals do feel the need to express their power in different ways. There has been a lot of writing about power and empowerment. A growing body of literature explores the notion of psychological empowerment and this is where my study subjects could be placed. I especially highlighted the fact that they are operating in mental spaces a term used by Deshmuckh-Ranadive (2005) who provides another way of thinking about power and empowerment. Empowerment occurs when spaces are expanded due to some change in a person’s like posting something on the internet without the fear of repression. Mental space is very important for these Mexican journalists since it is from this space where they are making sense of their situation by telling their stories without any fear, and it is where they negotiate their identities questioning the very essence of what it means to be Mexican.

This space has given birth to a heightened sense of transnationalism in my study subjects. I argue that the classical description of transnationalism, that of maintaining physical links to the homeland, should be broadened. Transnationalism is more than crossborder interactions. As I highlight through Gustavo’s comments about his radio show, or Ezequiel’s politically-charg
posts on Facebook, or through Jorge’s news reports in his on-line magazine, there are several ways that migration, transnational connections and new media are transforming the boundaries of belonging and exclusion behind the formation of political identities. The internet should be seen in the transnationalism studies, as a public sphere where narratives are produced and debated especially with the contexts of history, culture, democracy and identity. Online activities offer immigrants an important way to maintain and recreate transnational linkages across space and time.

My research adds to the study of communication in several ways: first it begins to advance the knowledge about identity formation and adaptation of Mexicans that are forced to leave México because of the condition of violence facing that country. There are not enough studies that deal with this new Mexican migration or “Mexodus” as it is known. This new migration is different from the migration caused by economic factors; these new migrants come to the United States with different skills and with more money. Although I do agree that the adaptation process in the United States is similar to that of the economic migrants, my interviewees have had to adapt in different ways because their immigration status does not let them go back to México. Many economic migrants come to the United States, and they go back to México to reconnect especially in an economically sense of the word.

Borrowing from many academic disciplines, my thesis has looked at the way my study subjects communicate and makes their voices heard from afar. Many may think that the journalists are disillusioned by the way the Mexican government has treated them. However, their situation is allowing the journalists to create spaces of communication that are proving to be efficient.
Finally, I tried to broaden the term “transnationalism” by arguing that even though these six Mexican journalists cannot keep physical links to México, they are truly transmigrants. Their work as journalists here in the United States and their activism influences the political life in their home country by offering a clear opinion. This way of communicating with the motherland makes my interviewees transnationals.

Limitations

Although with this research I feel I have contributed to the field of communication, I also think there is a need for more studies that could broaden the reach and depth of understanding toward the new Mexican migration. My thesis is limited to only six journalists who fled Mexico due to the violence. There are thousands of other professionals who have also migrated to the United States, among them are business owners who have also lost everything and had to rebuild. There are others who are not professionals but had to flee Mexico and now are living in this country: they have also received threats to their lives, and now are facing the challenge of adapting to a new life. There are groups like La Red and Mexicanos en el exilio that also offer research opportunities to study the adaptation process of the so-called “Mexodus”

My thesis does not go into the gender discussion around this topic. The majority of the exiled journalists are men. Up to this point I have not seen a female Mexican journalist who has taken refuge outside México because of her reporting even when there have been reports of Mexican female journalists being killed. More research should be done to explore why they are not choosing to ask for political asylum. This is an area where there is even fewer resources and research on an important area of journalism.
Another limitation is that my research was mainly done in El Paso, Texas and Las Cruces, New Mexico. My findings, many may argue, could not be fully supported because this region is not very different from Juarez, for example. However I think that living in El Paso or Las Cruces is different from living in Juarez and there is a degree of adaptation one has to go through. My study subject had a much harder task in trying to adapt because they had to burden of proving they had the merit of staying in the country. However, I feel there is a need to study Mexican forced migrants in other states in this country or in any other. Although I described the experience of Luis, his experience may be different from a person how takes refuge in Spain, or the United Kingdom. More studies can compare experiences between Mexican journalists from other countries who have also fled their homeland due to violent situations.

Mexican journalists continue to be victimized in Mexico, and many more will probably choose to leave the country in order to save their lives. We have seen that it is not an easy choice, but unfortunately for Roberto, Ezequiel, Carlos, Luis, Jorge, and Gustavo it was the only choice. They left a violence-stricken country, only to enter another sphere of power in which they have been constantly questioned. The first questioning came from the authorities, trying to pass judgment regarding the legitimacy of their claim of persecution. After this questioning they report feeling scrutinized by the society that they have joined. It is clear that these individuals are going through a very complex process, which calls for identity renegotiation as a survival strategy. They have reached out in many directions in order to come to terms with who they have become within this foreign country. These many directions include their own country, Mexico. They believe that although they may never be able to go back, and thus must begin the process of establishing a life in a new place, they will never cut all ties with Mexico.
They have forged transnational ties that range from the symbolic to the physical; each with their very own impact on the political discourse back home. This type of transnationalism has led them to operate and exercise their Mexican citizenship from the United States. From their space where they are able to resist, criticize, and propose ways to help their colleagues in a country that basically robbed them their identity, both, at a personal and professional levels.
REFERENCES


CURRICULUM VITA

Uriel G. Posada was born in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The first son of Uriel G. Posada Sr. and Margarita Posada, he graduated from El Paso High School in the spring of 1993 and entered the University of Texas at El Paso in the fall of that same year. Upon graduation from UTEP with a BA in Electronic Media, he started his professional career in the television industry working in Albuquerque, NM, Denver, CO, and Sacramento, CA. The three-time Emmy-winner decided to come back to El Paso after being offered the position of news director for the Telemundo affiliate in El Paso, KTDO. In the fall of 2010, he entered the Graduate School at the University of Texas at El Paso.