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

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

**TYPE**
PhD thesis

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

**YEAR**
2009

**FILE**
[Woman reading a book, image]  
Gabriel_Moreno_UoW_thesis_ADDF

**PUBLICATION DATES**

**COMPLETED**
2009

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