

# Final ethnography paper assignment



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The Mexican culture is a very distinct culture. Over the break I was fortunate enough to visit Tijuana, Mexico and analyze the cultural differences represented at the border. The way that I traveled to Mexico was by walking across the border at the San Diego/Tijuana Joint border location. In doing so was able to actively participate and evaluate the cultural clashes and intensification in this border “society” Before even crossing the border, the cultural delve is very environment. Apparent.

Walking along side of me were many families of all ages, carrying carts and hopping bags filled with items such as clothes, blankets, and food. The businesses located before the border are primarily outlet malls, shopping centers, and money exchange locations. As I crossed the border I noted the many armed military men lining the way. Poverty in the city was very evident; all around were women and men selling trinkets and food on the side. As I was walking to the car I even noticed a man walking past without any shoes. Along the sides of the street were food trucks of various Mexican food.

On the trip back into the US I noticed the reoccurring trend of American clothes brands among the families both coming in and out of the US. Once again, many women sat on the sides and sold candy and flowers to those waiting in line. Three times while in line I saw men walk by asking for money whom I believe were only acting blind in order to make money. In comparison to the US, the businesses near the Mexican border are mostly small convenient stores and restaurants. From the language to the food, the culture near the border seemed intensified.

My analysis of the data retrieved from my observations began with the question: “ In what ways does the environment of a border ‘ society intensify or effect Mexican/American culture? ” The Mexican and American culture are both extremely distinct, and when brought side by side these different cultures are only intensified. Culture is defined as the ways of thinking, acting, and the material objects that form one’s way of life and It refers to the shared ways of life for a group of people (Cataract Lecture, Lecture 3 culture).

In this specific environment of this border society, the two cultures are able to intermingle amongst each other. The result then is an environment of intensified cultures as each side attempts to form its own identity and stand out. The border is a looking-glass at both cultures. On one side there is the US and their strong capitalist nation. On the other side there is Mexico, a country plagued with poverty and dependency on other nations. The best way to exemplify this is by observing the businesses on either side of the border. As noted earlier, on the US side the businesses are mainly shopping centers and outlet malls.

This illustrates the commercialese state of the US. In comparison, the industry on the Mexican side lacks the economic value of that of the US. The businesses on the Mexican side were nothing more than small family owned food shops. The result then is an Intensification of commerce and US Influence on the Mexican culture, which is extremely recognizable in this border society. This Influence can be seen in amongst the Mexican families, American brand clothing such as Repopulate, Hollister, Gap, and Firebombed were all extremely popular.

From my observations, the effect of these US clothing brands did not limit itself to one age group or gender. Many men, women, and children of various age groups could be seen wearing American clothing brands, and/or in addition could be found carrying bags of clothes from the US of these American clothes brands. That is merely just one case of cultural influence that can be found in this close environment of differing cultural attitudes and beliefs. However, despite the strong influence of the US culture at the border, the Mexican culture upholds its own cultural identity.

Although so close to the US, the primary language spoken is still Spanish. Very little English is heard or seen even just minutes away from the border. Language is the system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another (Charta Lecture, Lecture 3). It is through this connected language that the Mexican culture has been able to thrive and continue through the generations. In this environment of cultural fusion, the Mexican culture stands out amongst its American counterpart, forming its own cultural identity through its traditions and material culture.

In a country widely affected by poverty, the border provides opportunities for some to find 'Jobs' and make money. A popular attribute to the Mexican culture is that of the For decades, "vendors" or "border vendors" have been popular within the Mexican culture. When leaving Mexico, either by car or walking, vendors can be found all along the road selling candy, food, trinkets, or religious gifts. These Jobs and this aspect popular within the Mexican culture has sprung from the lack of Jobs within Mexico.

The poverty within Mexico can be described as “relative poverty,” as their poverty can be described as a lack of resources in relation to those who have more (Charta Lecture, Lecture 8). This poverty and lack of jobs in result sends men, women, and children out to find jobs, which ends as some becoming border vendors in order to provide for their family. In addition another distinct aspect adding to the cultural identity of the Mexican culture at the border is the Mexican material culture. Material culture are the physical things created by the members of the society (Cataract Lecture, Lecture 3).

This material culture is popular amongst the vendors as it is very common for the vendors to sell religious symbols and Mexican trinkets to those leaving Mexico. The American-Mexican border cannot be compared to that of Canada and America or even the borders between European countries. The American-Mexican border is a unique environment unlike anywhere else. It is an environment where two countries meet and two cultures are allowed to intermingle amongst one another. Through my observations I have concluded that the border in itself is a distinct social environment.

Thus in result, through the interactions of both the American and Mexican culture, a new particular kind of cultural is produced within this social environment. Through the use of language and social formations, this border stands out amongst the rest. Poverty, centralization, and capitalism are all factors affecting the intensification of both cultures at the border. Poverty is the factor behind one of the many popular aspects of Mexican border culture. It is because of the poverty in Mexico that for years the tradition of vendors has continued to pass on throughout the generations.

Centralization and culture. From mass commercialism of American clothes brands, US capitalism has continued to have a greater influence on Mexico culture as more and more families leave Mexico in order to buy clothes and food to bring back into the Mexican country. However, what makes the border culture unique is although there is extreme influence from both the American and Mexican culture, both cultures still have a distinct identity amongst one another at the border. The American culture and influence can be seen through the movement of American goods and fashion across the border.

The Mexican culture can be seen through its language and traditions. The border is a melting pot of cultural traditions where both cultures come together and enhance one another.