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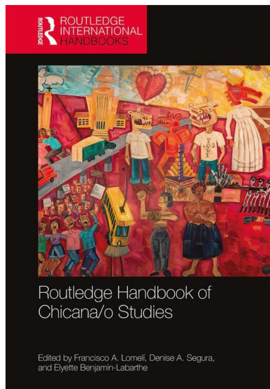

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México y *lo Mexicano* in Aztlán

A study of transborder economic, cultural, and political links

David R. Maciel and María Rosa García-Acevedo

Introduction

Mexico has been a transcendental origin in the spirit and development of the Chicana/o community, not only as its country of origin but as a fundamental essence of its cultural, social, and political process. Mexico's ties with their compatriots in the United States have been constant, intense, all-encompassing, and ever-present. Concretely, such links are immersed in historical events that date back to the mid-19th century and have continued to the very present era. Since the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the number of Mexicans in the United States has been increasing and this community has consistently maintained the closest of ties with its homeland, Mexico, in terms of language, traditions, social patterns, politics, identity, and even way of life. The special relationship of the so-denoted "Two Mexicos" derives from the very closeness of its geographical proximity (Meinig 1971, pp. 3–9). The ill-defined U.S.-Mexican border separating the two countries was totally porous throughout the latter half of the 19th century and the beginnings of the 20th. Although Mexicans were not always welcomed in the United States, it was rather easy to get a visa and even the "green card" granted to permanent residents. Later on, even though the United States implemented more stringent policies on immigration, placing greater control of the border, the transboundary links between the "Two Mexicos" never ceased (Monsiváis 1995 pp. 435–455). Thus, people, commodities, and ideas have managed to cross the border continuously, and a variety of personal, familial, and business ties have flourished. Importantly, close to 80% of all Chicanas/os have resided less than 200 miles from the border. Yet, despite these profound links, there have existed two ill-founded and much-accepted notions that are paramount in this relationship: 1) that Chicanas/os and Mexicans who reside permanently in the United States have turned their back to Mexico, and their priority has been to assimilate at the cost of their Mexicanness; 2) that Mexico has not demonstrated much concern, interest, or curiosity in "El México Perdido" (the Lost Mexico); and thus, it has not drafted any major policies towards its diaspora in the United States (Maciel 1988, pp. 435–455).

The purpose of this chapter is to contribute to dispel these misconceptions by providing clear examples of the continuity, the richness, and the complexity of the relationship between Mexico and the Mexican-origin community from the 19th century to the present day. We offer an interpretive overview with a detailed narrative of this complex relationship. As such,

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the chapter is divided into three sections: the first addresses the context of the links, while the other two sections analyze key topics of Chicana/o-Mexicana/o relations: *Lo Mexicano* in Aztlán; Culture across Borders; and Mexico's outreach policies towards "El México de Afuera" (Mexico from the Outside). Collectively, these sections reveal the role and seminal importance that Mexico has represented for the Chicana/o community in terms of legacy, culture, and even political life.

Context

The war between Mexico and the United States that concluded with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted the annexation to the United States of 51% of the Mexican territory, which at that time was populated by around 120,000 Mexicans (Griswold del Castillo 1990, pp. 43–46). The Treaty stipulated that those Mexicans "left behind" would become legally citizens of the United States if they decided to stay in "the lost land" (Ibid, pp. 62–68). Soon after the conflict, the dominant Anglo-Saxon institutions exerted their condition of conquerors, entitled to all the spoils of their conquest. The end result was a set of principles and policies that legitimated "*El Gran Despojo*" (The Great Plunder) or the "internal colonization" of the Chicanas/os (Maciel 1989, pp. 13–42). With few exceptions, most individuals of the incipient Chicano community were systematically dispossessed – through discriminatory laws, practices, and even violence – of their lands, privileges, leadership roles, and most of their civil rights. They in fact became "foreigners in their own land" (Gómez-Quiñones & Ríos-Bustamante 1977, pp. 24–35). The process of dispossession of their property in many places (like in Texas) included the element of extreme violence (Carrigan & Webb 2013). Added to this situation were certain values including white supremacy, anti-mestizaje (racial mixture) attitudes, and overt discrimination and racism towards people of color, particularly those with Native American roots, such as Mexicans (De León 1983).

The response of the Mexican-origin community after 1848 to the new order was undoubtedly mixed. Yet, in spite of class, regional, and circumstantial differences that existed in the American Southwest, Mexicans on the whole confronted a very difficult and frequently hostile environment. A few, mostly elites, embraced their newly gained citizenship with its benefits and idiosyncrasy. Often they became the gatekeepers between U.S. institutions and the Chicana/o community. The majority attempted to acculturate (by learning and practicing the ways of Anglo society) in order to obtain a somewhat advantageous niche in the United States. But, culturally, in spite of the forced "Americanization" process in the arenas of education, culture, and language, they maintained their Mexicanness, including the use of Spanish in households and in greater areas of the public arena. Another segment of the Chicano community opted for resistance and even open rebellion; they were the so-called social bandits. The one other alternative for the Chicanos in the "El México Perdido" was to return permanently to Mexico (Weber 2008). Mexican official records indicate that a significant number of Mexican families did so right after 1848. Towns like Nuevo Laredo on the Mexican side of the border were founded during that time by repatriated Mexicans (González de la Vara 2000, pp. 43–59).

Mexican immigration to the United States has been an integral part of the Chicana/o experience in innumerable ways for almost 170 years. It shows the artificiality of national boundaries between the two countries (Maciel & Herrera-Sobek 1998, pp. 3–20). In demographic terms, the flows of people from Mexico have contributed considerably to the overall growth of the Chicana/o community. As much as 20% of Mexico's population over time has migrated and settled permanently in the United States (McWilliams 1990, pp. 162–189). Unlike other immigrant groups whose arrival to the United States has been cyclical or a one-time phenomenon, even with ebbs and flows, Mexican immigration has been constant.

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Because of the increasing jobs available (especially after 1880) in American agriculture, construction, industry, and transportation, Mexican workers began to migrate in great numbers to the Southwest. Mexicans supplied the workforce for these difficult and hazardous tasks, even becoming the dominant labor force in the region (Reisler 1976). In World War II and its aftermath, Mexican migrants once again fulfilled a much-needed labor force. Both countries sponsored the Bracero Program, an agreement guaranteeing Mexican workers specific labor rights (Durand 2016, pp. 121–156). From 1942 to 1964, the United States hired altogether around 5 million *braceros* (laborers) from Mexico. In 1964, after intense opposition by American labor and other interest groups, the Bracero Program was terminated unilaterally by the United States (Snodgrass 2011, pp. 79–102).

Yet, this would hardly be the demise of Mexican immigration to *El Norte*; throughout the 1970s and into the beginning of the new millennium, Mexican immigration – legal and undocumented – continued in a steady flow. The 1990s marked a highlight in terms of the number of immigrants from Mexico. The changes in Mexico's economic model of development (the adoption of neoliberalism) has been highlighted as a main cause since it generated the bankruptcy of many small- and medium-size enterprises, the reduction of jobs within the government, and the rampant unemployment in many sectors of the formal economy as a corollary. In fact, between 1990 and 2006, the number of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico grew exponentially from 2,050,000 to 6,950,000 (Pew Research Center 2014). These flows joined the almost 3 million Mexicans who had already legalized their status under the U.S. comprehensive immigration reform of 1986 (Goldring 2002). The new Mexican immigrants started to settle in untapped new regions of the United States, including the Far West and the South. The recent diaspora from Mexico (legal and undocumented) has become more varied and include people from all walks of life: from workers to entrepreneurs, professors, journalists, and even filmmakers, etc. They have crossed the border (frequently with their families) looking for better economic opportunities, fleeing the violence in Mexico, and increasingly in search of political refuge (Smith 2005).

After 2010, conditions dramatically changed in the United States that greatly stymied Mexican migration. Among the factors were: the Great Recession, the rise of violence at the border by organized crime and infamous groups, and the enforcement of U.S. policies oriented to "secure the borders" (e.g., deportations and reinforced surveillance along the border). A more accelerated recuperation of the U.S. economy and eventual changes in the situation of Mexico will provide clues whether or not this scenario is a more permanent tendency.

Lo Mexicano in Aztlán: culture across borders

Two seminal areas – at times overlapping – of cultural confluence have existed between Mexico and its diaspora: the constant struggle for the maintenance of *lo mexicano*; and the impact of immigrants as carriers of artistic experience and cultural motifs. Examples can be found in the era of the Mexican Revolution (1910), the advent of the Chicano movement (1960s and 1970s), and the contemporary era.

During the Revolution and its aftermath, the Mexican immigrants in the United States included numerous cultural figures who integrated into the life of the Chicana/o communities. They contributed to enhance a sense of ethnic consciousness while emphasizing the importance of the Mexican legacy; that is, the Spanish language. By settling in the United States and pursuing their craft, such immigrants rejuvenated artistic and cultural practices among the Mexican-origin community (Maciel 2003, pp. 305–325). Many of them continued their literary activity as journalists, creative writers, poets, and playwrights. Plus, illustrators and caricaturists found

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work in the Spanish-speaking newspapers while painters produced murals for stores, restaurants, and other public places in the Southwest and the Midwest. A selected few assimilated into the emerging film industry of Hollywood.

In the 1960s and 1970s, an impressive cultural renaissance took place inspired by the Chicano movement for civil rights – *el movimiento*. A central pillar was to regain its Mexican legacy, which had been negated and dismissed by dominant society. Mexico, as a symbol and inspiration, was to be in the front and center of its agenda, including in the arts. From the onset of the movement, pre-Columbian mythology and the origins of Aztlán would figure promptly in *Chicanismo*. Aztlán refers to the mythical homeland where the Mexica (or Aztecs) originated prior to their pilgrimage to central Mexico, where they ultimately founded Tenochtitlan (current-day Mexico City). Also, border issues and the topic of immigration became essential and creative themes in this era of cultural flowering. Interestingly, in terms of diffusion of Mexican culture in the United States, the Mexican government has historically played an important role. Its consulates have sponsored a variety of activities regarding *lo mexicano*. At times, they have become the center of the sociocultural activity in the Chicana/o communities (Gómez-Quiñones 1975).

This section provides an overview of a variety of cultural manifestations of *lo mexicano*, including: theater, literature, journalism, plastic arts, music, and cinema. The theme of immigration is one of great inspiration that cuts across all phases and practices of such manifestations. The overall majority of Chicana/o writers, journalists, artists, and filmmakers have fully embraced the immigrant experience from a multitude of perspectives. No other single theme of Chicano cultural production is as dominant and constant as Mexican immigration, producing an impressive body of work on the subject. At times, Mexican immigrants themselves have made seminal contributions.

Theater: From the end of the 19th century until the Great Depression (1929), the Spanish-language theater flourished as a popular cultural mode throughout the U.S. Southwest. Mexico's theater companies traveled frequently across the border and staged their plays to very receptive audiences. The dislocation and chaos of the Mexican Revolution impacted the theater companies, many fleeing and settling north of the border. Such companies performed in theater buildings and *carpas* (itinerant theater groups). They became a fixture along the U.S.-Mexican border, but also in cities like Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Antonio, with plays almost exclusively in Spanish. The golden period of the Spanish-language theater in Aztlán took place in the first three decades of the 20th century. Playwrights from Mexico had a key role. Many plays gained popularity because of their themes: historical episodes, overt racism, labor inequities, questions of assimilation and acculturation, comedy and satire, immigration and deportations, and political sketches. Examples of such plays were: Brígido Caro's *Joaquín Murrieta, La leyenda del bandido de California durante los días de la fiebre del oro* (Joaquín Murrieta, the Legend of the California Bandit during the Gold Fever), based on the exploits of the social bandit, Joaquín Murrieta); Eduardo Carrillo's *El proceso de Aurelio Pompa* (The Trial of Aurelio Pompa), which criticized the injustices of the U.S. judicial system regarding Mexicans; and Gabriel Navarro's *Los Emigrados* (The Emigrees), which narrated the experiences of the Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles during the Revolution (Kanellos 1993, p. 251). The Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s fostered a new era for bilingual and Spanish-language theater. El Teatro Campesino, founded by Luis Valdez in 1965, became an innovative and creative way to denounce economic exploitation and continued racism and discrimination, as well as to bring attention to those issues to diverse audiences. His entire repertoire of plays and sketches used language, cultural themes, and political themes related to the Chicana/o experience. The famous play *Zoot Suit* is an outstanding example of this tradition, and actually has now become an iconic play of Chicano theater in the United States – and in Mexico since director Valdez has produced and

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staged the play several times down there. Many other theater companies followed suit (such as Bilingual Foundation, *El Teatro de la Esperanza*, and *El Teatro de la Gente*) and continued to stage plays related to the heritage, society, traditions, and issues of Chicanas/os (Ramírez, pp. 234–245). Also, Valdez and other emerging playwrights have continued the tradition of fomenting bilingual theater in the United States.

Literature: In the realm of literature, various works of fiction, poetry, drama, autobiography, and short stories have narrated critical episodes of the history and legacy of the Chicana/o community related to Mexico. Some early examples are: *Apuntes históricos interesantes de San Antonio de Béxar*, *La historia de Alta California* (recently found), and the memoir on leadership in 19th-century Texas by Juan N. Seguín (Seguín 2003, pp. 177–181). In other words, most Chicana/o texts have certainly been influenced "by the geographical region now divided between the United States and Mexico" (Barvosa 2000, p. 263); for example, the epic poem of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez *Yo Soy Joaquín*, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, and Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek: And Other Stories*.

The topic of the Mexican immigrant experiences has been particularly critical for Chicana/o writers. The first known novel on the subject, Daniel Venegas's *Las aventuras de Don Chipote o cuando los pericos mamen*, published originally in 1928 and re-edited in 1984, was written by a Mexican immigrant. The text deals with the dramatic adventures of a Mexican undocumented migrant and his dilemma of either staying in the United States and being subjected to constant discrimination and exploitation, or returning to Mexico. By the early 1960s, the immigrant experience was central in creative writings, such as *Barrio Boy* by Ernesto Galarza, *Rain of Gold* by Víctor Villaseñor, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* by Richard Rodríguez, *The Cariboo Caf*e by Helena María Viramontes, *The House on Mango Street* and *Caramelo* by Sandra Cisneros, and *Trini* by Estela Portillo Trambley (Ledesma 1998, pp. 67–69). Also, emblematic expressions of this dimension are the acclaimed *Peregrinos de Aztlán* by Miguel Méndez, *Klail City y sus alrededores* by Rolando Hinojosa, and *Canícula* by Norma Cantú (Tatum 1990).

Journalism: Newspapers in Spanish flourished in the United States since the second part of the 19th century as a form of cultural maintenance and resistance. Among the many dailies were *El Clamor Público* and *La Voz de México* in California, as well as *El Boletín Popular*, *El Independiente*, and *Bandera Mexicana* in New Mexico. For the Chicana/o community, newspapers performed important tasks: to denounce injustices, highlight important events in the community, and also inform on newsworthy happenings in Mexico like Benito Juárez's struggle against the French army in the 1860s and the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Ignacio Lozano, a young journalist from Mexico, founded two major newspapers in Spanish: *La Prensa* in 1913 (San Antonio, Texas) and *La Opinión* in 1926 (Los Angeles, California). Both reported at length the stages of the Mexican Revolution and its aftermath, and provided new horizons for journalism in the Southwest. Their original staff was comprised almost entirely by Mexican expatriates of the post-Revolution that brought their craft to the United States (Gómez-Quiñones 1975).

In later decades, a new crop of publications in Spanish emerged in various cities inspired by the Chicano movement. Nowadays Spanish-language newspapers not only have proliferated but have successfully thrived in the digital world, such as *La Opinión*. Moreover, all major cities of the United States from Los Angeles to New York with a large Chicano/Mexicano population have at least one such major daily (Chabrán & Chabrán 1993, pp. 365–369). These newspapers have something important in common: their readership is better informed on issues of the Chicana/o community and Mexico's subject matters. In stark contrast, the English-language dailies had little or no such coverage on these topics.

Cinema: The cinema of Mexico has been, by many accounts, an influential transborder and cultural vehicle since the early 20th century. The advent and popularity of cinema displaced

theater as a mass media entertainment (Kanellos 1993). The Chicano/Mexican audiences – like others in the Spanish-speaking world – were fascinated by the images projected on the screen but much more so with the cultural issues and the familiar images and narratives represented. Mexican cinema clearly reflected life experiences and traditions with which Chicanas/os could identify. Also, the films exposed the public to historical and nationalistic themes in their representations. Thus, audiences flocked to the theaters, supporting and enjoying Mexican cinema from the silent era to the movies of its Golden Era (1920–1960).

Another reason for the success of Mexican cinema north of the border was due to the fact that Hollywood productions of that period had nothing to offer to Chicano audiences artistically and thematically. The few Mexican/Latino characters represented in American films were portrayed rather negatively and much stereotyped most of the time. A prime example was the cycle of "greaser" Hollywood films. These and other similar American productions were so offensive and degrading that the Mexican authorities banned them from ever exhibiting in Mexico (Ramírez-Berg 2002).

The distribution and exhibition of Mexican cinema occurred in all major cities that had a considerable Chicano/Mexicano population. The weekly attendance to cinemas became a well-established tradition among families throughout the United States (Serna 2014, pp. 180–215). By the late 1940s and 1950s, there were simultaneous debuts of Mexican films on both sides of the border. Most of the famed stars of the Golden Age traveled consistently to the Southwest for personal appearances, such as to the emblematic Million Dollars Theatre in Los Angeles (Maciel 1995). In fact, audience attendance for Mexican cinema flourished all the way up to the 1960s. Its demise started in the 1960s because of the decline of the Golden Era and the uneven quality of the Mexican cinema at that time (Agrasánchez 2011).

Currently, the interest in Mexican cinema, in spite of practically no theater exhibition, has not altogether declined in the United States. The Golden Age cinema is still popular in the Mexican American communities given that local channels in Spanish broadcast such movies (e.g., Channel 22 in Los Angeles). Besides, most cable and satellite television companies in the United States carries a "Latino package," which includes at least one movie channel (such as *De Película Clásica* or *Cine Clásico*) that broadcast 247 films exclusively from the Golden Era. In addition, such packages also include channels devoted to most contemporary Mexican cinema.

Music: The cultural influence of Mexico in Aztlán can also be attributed to such areas as Mexican music. Mexican folk songs and *corridos* have been popular among the Chicana/o community since the 19th century. Their main themes frequently narrated historical events, the exploits of local heroes and "social bandits," or immigration issues. The dissemination of radio programs in Spanish increased the popularity of Mexican music in the Southwest. Pedro J. González became a pioneer radio personality in the late 1920s and 1930s. He migrated to Los Angeles, California, fearing for his life after the defeat of General Francisco Villa. Originally hired to advertise commercials in Spanish, his successful performance of Mexican songs on a trial basis landed him on a daily radio program, *Los Madrugadores*. González convinced the owners to include a repertoire of Mexican songs, a huge success that opened the door for other Spanish-language broadcasting in the following decades (*Break of Dawn* 1988). By the 1950s, radio stations showcasing Mexican music started their expansion from coast to coast. Two decades later, an interesting experiment was organized by Hugo Morales, a Mexican immigrant. He founded Radio Bilingüe to serve farm workers in the area of Fresno, California with diverse programming in Mexican music. In two decades its audience reached 1 million all over the country, with its signal distributed to 20 stations by satellite (Gómez-Quiñones 2000, pp. 56–59)

Today, the music of performers of all genres of Mexican music is successfully played and sold throughout the United States. New scores and albums are usually released simultaneously

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in both countries. In fact, many major Mexican bands and singers now reside permanently or temporarily in the United States, such as Los Tigres del Norte and the singer Lila Downs. They, like many other artists, address in their musical themes issues related to the border and other binational issues that affect both communities. From the 1990s to the present, Spanish-language radio stations thrive because of the increasing number of Chicanos/Latinos and their strong inclination to listen to radio (93%). According to Nielsen ratings, Mexican regional music (*banda*, *norteño/tejano*, *ranchera*) is the most popular format (Montoya-Coggins 2014, p. 1). However, these radio stations broadcast almost every genre of Mexican music, including oldies, hard rock, and pop, for an ever-growing audience with different musical tastes. As in the past, such radio stations successfully manage to combine music with community affairs and news about Mexico (Sheridan 2009, p. 148).

Muralism: Mexican themes have inspired Chicana/o artists since the first decades of the 20th century and have continued to the present. Artists, especially muralists, have sought particular artistic motifs to express their identity and enhance the principles of their social struggle (Ybarra-Frausto 1983, p. 91). Murals are a unique popular art form that is creative as well as didactic. They convey political and ideological stands in public spaces for everyone to see; in other words, they are people's art. The great muralistas of Mexico's *Escuela Mexicana de Pintura* of the post-Revolution: José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros traveled and resided for certain periods of time in the United States. All interacted with the Chicana/o community and greatly influenced various subsequent generations of Chicano muralists (Hurlburt 1989). During 1920 to 1949, early Chicano muralists, such as Salvador Corona, Antonio García, Consuelo González, Margarita Herrera, Octavio Medellín, and Porfirio Salinas, inspired by the *Escuela Mexicana de Pintura*, recreated Mexican historical and contemporary themes as well as religious iconography (Loste 1983, pp. 124–126).

In the 1960s and 1970s, during the cultural renaissance inspired by *el movimiento*, many of the emerging Chicano/a artists were also much inspired by the great muralists and their legacy. Their murals have in common that they have become "cultural agents of social change" (Vargas 2000, pp. 191–233). Their themes combined the depiction of socially relevant topics with history and popular culture, and certainly addressed transboundary motifs, including immigration. Moreover, they all include the struggles of the Chicano movement. Many incorporated symbols of Mexico, especially from the pre-Columbian world and the Mexican Revolution. From the 1960s to the new millennium, such murals proliferated in the Southwest, Midwest, and beyond. One example is the famous Chicano mural *Untitled* (1968) by Antonio Bernal, which mixes images of Mayan art with the portrayals of the icons of the Mexican Revolution such as Francisco Villa, Emiliano Zapata, and "La Adelita" along with Chicano civil rights icons like César Chávez (Ibid., pp. 197–199). In 1983, Judy Vaca culminated the mural *Great Wall of Los Angeles* that combines elements of David Alfaro Siqueiros "with brilliant 'Chicano' color" (Cockcroft ES 1993, p. 197). Thus, in all of its expressions and practices, Chicano art has been closely aligned with Mexican art.

In defense of *La Raza* (the People): Mexico's outreach policies towards the Chicana/o community

Mexico's outreach policies to "El México de Afuera" (Mexico from the Outside) have fomented important ties. After 1848, thanks to the *política de protección*, the Mexican government made every effort (with varying degrees of success) through its consulates to protect the civil rights of its compatriots, advocating a policy of protest and pressure on the U.S. government and its institutions against the violations of such rights and the atrocities directed at Chicanos. Public

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opinion via its Mexican newspapers, such as *El Siglo Diecinueve*, during that time generally supported this policy (Gómez-Quiñones 1975).

As massive migration waves from Mexico crossed the border during and after the Revolution, various Mexican governments upheld a dual policy of *protección* for those immigrants. On the one hand, they implemented policies aimed to dissuade its citizens from leaving the country while pleading for them to stay and help in the reconstruction of the country. On the other hand, they disseminated information on the hostile treatment of Mexicans by U.S. institutions (Maciel 1986). During the Great Depression, Mexico formulated intense efforts to make the forced repatriations (by the American authorities), or the "voluntary" repatriation (because of the lack of jobs), more humane. The Mexican consulates along with their lawyers and organizations of the community embarked on a crusade to help the deportees during the early 1930s. The consulate in Los Angeles under Rafael de la Colina was particularly successful in constructing this alliance, and ultimately became a great advocate for Mexican nationals who faced great hardships and violations of their civil and labor rights during that tragic decade (Balderrama 1982, pp. 15–32).

Another major action of the *política de protección* took place in the 1940s regarding a high-profile case of discrimination. The Mexican government raised its voice in an infamous incident that took place in Los Angeles, charged with racial conflict and violence. This situation was directed at a segment of the Chicano youth: the so-called *Zoot Suiters*, whose defiance, dress modes, and behavior were found offensive by the dominant Anglo-Saxon society. The Mexican government issued a formal protest to American authorities after massive student demonstrations were held in Mexico City against the injustices directed at Mexicans in the United States (Griswold del Castillo 2000, pp. 367–392). The intervention of the Mexican government was critical in curtailing and ultimately ending this tragic episode.

From the 1970s to the present, the outreach policies and initiatives of Mexico aimed at "El México de Afuera" were revamped. Specifically, the *política de protección* was reinforced; for example, a new division of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) was created for this purpose. In addition, the then-named *Cónsules de Protección* were hired to work in Mexican consulates specifically to perform tasks related to the defense of the civil and labor rights of Mexicans in the United States (Saavedra 1980).

In the contemporary period, an important innovation took place in 1996. Responding to the constant demand of organizations of Mexicans in the United States on dual nationality, the Mexican Congress passed a constitutional amendment. It permitted Mexicans abroad to keep their nationality, even if they were granted U.S. citizenship. For Mexico, the rationale for passing such an amendment was that it was a sort of updated version of the *política de protección*: Mexican legal residents who were U.S. citizens (3.5 million at that moment) could now better defend their civil rights because they could vote and increase their influence in the United States (Fineman 1996). The Mexican government has continued supporting this initiative.

The *política de protección* was not the only area of Mexico's outreach policy. Beginning in the 19th century, Mexico has perceived Chicanos/Mexicans as a potential "asset," and in fact they have certainly come to Mexico's aid in times of crises. For example, during the French Invasion in the 1860s (that ended up with the imposition of the Austrian-born prince, Maximilian, as Emperor of Mexico), Mexicans in the United States through their *Juntas Patrióticas* supported the forces of resistance of President Benito Juárez and many eventually enrolled in its army (Gómez-Quiñones 1996, pp. 65–68). Later on, prior and during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), several Chicano organizations were founded to aid particular political causes in Mexico. At the onset of the Revolution, *los Clubes Liberales* supported the cause of Francisco Madero. Subsequently, the *Juntas Constitucionalistas* contributed to the consolidation of power of

Venustiano Carranza – later president of Mexico. Chicanos also aided the activities of Ricardo Flores Magón and his followers against the various Mexican governments that did little to implement social change during the Revolution (Ibid, pp. 69–72).

In the 1960s, the political links between Mexico and its diaspora increased exponentially. They involved a range of constituencies and leadership. These efforts were conducted by progressive organizations, individuals, and the Mexican government. One example was the meetings among left progressive organizations from both sides of the border, specifically those pursued by the Centro de Acción Social Autónomo or CASA (Gómez-Quiñones 1983, p. 435). Within the Mexican government, the ties with Chicanos have evolved from *ad hoc* efforts to more institutionalized ones from 1970 to the present. Of particular importance were the extensive meetings held by President Luis Echeverría (1970–1976) with key leaders of the Chicano movement, including José Angel Gutiérrez (from The Raza Unida Party) and Reies López Tijerina (from the Alianza Nacional de Mercedes or the National Land Grant Alliance). Gutiérrez proposed and succeeded in the creation of educational and artistic programs for Mexican-origin students, funded by the government, to study in Mexico; for example the pioneer program of 150 scholarships or *Becas para Aztlán* for Chicanos to study medicine and other disciplines in Mexican universities. Other successes were the organization of conferences and publications on Chicano themes, the distribution of Mexican-related books and educational material in the Southwest (Gutiérrez, A. 1986, p. 50), and the production of the film *Raíces de Sangre* that dealt with the common labor struggles of Mexicans on both sides of the border (Treviño 1978). Tijerina had interest in maintaining close contacts with Mexico. There was not a favorable resolution for his demand that the Mexican government revisit the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on the issue of the loss of land, as he would have wished. He did back the creation of an Office of Chicano Affairs (preferably at the presidential level) within the Mexican government that would deal with an increasingly ambitious Chicana/o-Mexican agenda, a suggestion that ultimately materialized in the 1990s (Tijerina 1978).

The subsequent administration of President José López Portillo (1976–1982) encountered a new scenario in terms of Chicana/o leadership: a novel group of organizations that emerged in the aftermath of the Chicano movement. He promoted the establishment of an *ad hoc* forum, the *Comisión Mixta de Enlace*, that could provide formal structure to the ongoing dialogue with various Chicana/o and Latina/o organizations, integrated into the newly created umbrella organization, the Hispanic Commission, and Mexico's Minister of Labor with the avail of his office. The topics of common interest were educational links and U.S. proposals on immigration policy (Gutiérrez J A 1986). As a result of an agreement between the *Comisión Mixta* and the Hispanic Commission[1] in the early 1980s, for example, Mexico's Ministry of Public Education contacted the Association of Mexican American Educators in order to implement a teachers' exchange program. Thus, a pioneer group of 110 Mexican bilingual teachers were sent to Los Angeles to work closely with the school district, and Chicana/o teachers came to Mexico for summer courses (Maciel Interview 1989).

Under President De la Madrid (1982–1988), the Ministry of Public Education expanded its activities in the United States in the realm of bilingual education. Also in 1986, President De la Madrid had the National Council of Population (Consejo Nacional de Población 1987) elaborate the first Mexico's comprehensive policy memorandum on outreach policies towards Mexicans in the United States (Consejo Nacional de Población 1987). Unfortunately, this project (drafted just a year before President De la Madrid finished his term) did not fully materialize because of the time frame. Interestingly, at the end of President De la Madrid's term, the Mexican presidential campaigns of 1988 became a landmark in terms of the political participation of Mexican nationals in the United States. Heberto Castillo, presidential candidate from the

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Partido Socialista Unificado de México, visited various U.S. cities to openly campaign. Taking note, other candidates such as Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana or PARM), Manuel Clouthier (Partido Acción Nacional or PAN), and Carlos Salinas de Gortari (Partido Revolucionario Institucional or PRI) would also travel frequently to various cities in the United States seeking political support among "El México de Afuera." Cárdenas was undoubtedly the most popular, and a *Cardenista* movement was founded. One of its key demands was precisely that Mexican nationals could vote in upcoming Mexican presidential elections – a demand that did not materialize immediately (Santamaría 1994, pp. 148–206). With the shadow of solid evidence of a fraud-tainted election, Salinas de Gortari (PRI) was inaugurated in 1988. Many voices on both sides of the border openly denounced electoral fraud, and even called for a dismissal of the results (Cárdenas 2006, pp. 243–254).

A main objective of Salinas's regime was to deter what had been the increasing support for the Mexican opposition parties by the Chicana/o and Mexicana/o communities in the United States. As one Mexican high-level official argued in the late 1980s, the dangers of the criticism from the Chicana/o community towards the political order needed to be prevented. Otherwise, the next generation would turn into "the worst enemy of Mexico" (Maciel, Interview 1997). The first major shift was the creation of the *Dirección General del Programa Presidencial para la Atención de las Comunidades Mexicanas en el Exterior* in 1990 (PCME) within the Ministry of Foreign Relations as a major effort to institutionalize the links with the Chicana/o community and to further "legitimize" this outreach policy within the foreign policy of Mexico. The PCME laid out an agenda that included the participation of many Mexican governmental actors, whose tasks included the "revalorization of Mexico" among "Mexicans and their descendants who live outside of the confines of the country" as well as the coordination of the outreach policies at the different levels of the government (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 1990). The network of Mexican consulates in the United States was in charge of implementing the new policies of the PCME (Rozenthal 1993, p. 124). Overall, the Programa was the most successful of all previous endeavors because of its more comprehensive goals, its multiple targets, and the fact that it delivered (García-Acevedo 2008).

Later on, the PCME was transformed under the presidency of Vicente Fox (2000–2005), and finally became the Instituto para los Mexicanos en el Exterior (IME) in 2002. In the voice of President Fox, the IME had the task to transform "community initiatives into concrete [governmental] programs" (Proceso 2002). Specifically, the Consulting Council (CCIME) of the IME, following principles of participatory democracy, had the faculty to interact with Mexico's policymakers in the formulation of certain provisions of the outreach policy.

Besides all the progress, the demands for the right to vote for Mexicans abroad were not met. The vote of Mexicans abroad was perceived with suspicion by many politicians and observers. Yet, the change regarding dual nationality in 1996 (mentioned before) slowly cleared the way for the provision approved in 2005 by the Mexican Congress, permitting the casting of absentee voting starting in 2006. Still, the red tape related to obtaining the absentee ballot as well as to the prerequisite of having the voting card explained a low turnout in the presidential elections of 2006 and 2012 (Suru & Escobar 2006; Instituto Federal Electoral 2006; Instituto Federal Electoral 2012). Finally, after other electoral reform, in 2016, Mexico's voting card started being issued by the Mexican consulates, and the forms to obtain an absentee ballot were simplified. These changes may well signify an increasing turnout of Mexican nationals in Mexico's presidential elections of 2018.

Finally, in economic terms, the Mexican-origin community is an "asset" for its homeland nowadays. The increasing amount of the individual remittances ($25.6 billion in 2015) are more important than ever for Mexico. In 2016, for example, because of the drastic fall of oil prices,

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such remittances became the main source of dollars for the country. Also, the monies sent back home are vital to the very survival of families, and are the lifeblood of various rural and urban areas all over Mexico (Serrano & Jaramillo 2016, p. 124). Many Mexicans in the United States and their organizations are also involved in other transboundary activities, such as financing public works in numerous localities in Mexico. For example, since the 1990s, the Mexican "Hometown Associations" (HTAs) in the United States have financed in partnership with the Mexican government many public works throughout the so-called *Programa 3x1*, coordinated by the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL). This program refers to a policy of matching the money fundraised by the HTAs for a project (e.g., a road, a school, a water plant) with similar amounts granted by local, state, and federal governments. In 2009, 1,000 HTAs were already financing 6,000 projects that benefited 27 of the 32 states of Mexico (Aparicio FJ & Mesenguer C 2011, p. 1). Ultimately, the leaders of the HTAs have become *de fact*o stakeholders in the design and implementation of public policies at the three levels of the government, especially the municipal one (Soto-Priante 2006).

Final reflections

Today, Mexican cultural practices and manifestations are represented and acknowledged in a wide array of arenas and facets of the Chicana/o experience. Innovations like the Internet have permitted the multiplication of individual cultural interactions within the Chicana/o community and regarding the homeland. As never before, Chicanas/os and Mexicans on both sides of the border are in contact on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, language is an important unifying element of the "Two Mexicos," as the United States is the second largest country of Spanish-speaking individuals worldwide. There exist many factors that will only make this phenomenon increase in the future. For example, the Chicana/o and Latina/o youth are realizing that, beyond cultural reasons, competence and maintenance of Spanish is critical for pragmatic reasons: their future careers as professionals. The Spanish-speaking media also contribute to reinforcing the language. UNIVISION – the principal but not the only Spanish-language commercial network – achieves among the highest ratings of the nation. Its national news program *Noticiero Univisión*, is now the single most viewed in the United States, and its more renowned anchor Jorge Ramos was recently included as one of the 100 most influential persons in the country, according to *Forbes* magazine. UNIVISION's great appeal is that its newscasts cover the U.S. Latina/o community in its totality as well as Latin America, including accurate and critical information about Mexico – unlike others in mainstream television media.

Mexicans residing in the United States participate in a wide array of transboundary activities connected to Mexico, including the sending of remittances, the membership to hometown associations, church groups, civic organizations, and political parties. Mexican nationals can now vote in Mexican presidential elections; the number of voters could increase once some organizational barriers can be removed. Those who have U.S. citizenship can vote and ultimately influence American domestic matters, but also the direction of U.S. issues with consequences in Mexico (such as immigration policy). The exciting implications of this dual political participation is still uncharted territory.

Examining the current status of the ties between Mexico and its diaspora in the United States, it can be stated that Mexico's outreach policy has certainly gained full legitimacy in the context of foreign policy. The items of its agenda are frequently innovative, plus the agents and targets that participate in such outreach policy have grown exponentially. Among the future challenges in this arena is how to rejuvenate the themes continuously while creating new mechanisms for receiving feedback from the evolving Chicano/Mexican community.

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Thus, because of all these factors and relationships, Mexico y *lo mexicano* will without any question remain a reference point, an essential dimension in Chicana/o thought, culture, family, society, political experience, and identity for present and future generations. The fact is that culturally and spiritually Chicanas/os continue to accentuate their *Mexicanness*, and Mexico is and will always be the spiritual homeland for *La Raza*.

Note

1 The Hispanic Commission was integrated by LULAC (League of United Latin Americans Council), Project SER, American G.I. Forum, MALDEF, National Association of Farmworker Organizations (NAFO), Mexican American Women's National Association (MANA), National Image, National Hispanic Forum, National Council of La Raza, and the Puerto Rican organization ASPIRA (Gutiérrez J A 1986, p. 22).

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