

## CLAS Summer Field Research Grant Recipients Report

### ABSTRACT: One-paragraph abstract of your project \*

Should include the following: a) Brief reiteration of the purpose of the trip b) Description of previous research, international, or field experience c) Overview of activities undertaken and objectives achieved while abroad d) Summary of lessons learned and/or recommendations for others conducting similar field research e) Explanation of the uses of the findings or results of your research

A preliminary investigation of *Transfronterizmo* within two Mexican border cities: Mexicali and Tijuana. I engaged in preliminary archival and ethnographical research work in both cities. I also met with several Mexican border scholars and non-profit organizations working on borderlands issues. I still need to return to the borderlands to continue with my preliminary research work.

### RESEARCH REPORT: Upload a report in the form of a journalistic article describing the Tinker research project \*

The U.S.-Mexico Borderlands could be read, among a plethora of divergent readings, as a transnational global space. My preliminary investigation took place in two border cities located within the Baja California and California borderlands: Mexicali and Tijuana. I particularly focused on investigating *Transfronterizos*. My project, examines the emergence of *Transfronterizmo* in the San Diego/Tijuana border region. I hypothesize that *Transfronterizmo* will further disrupt hegemonic notions of singular identification with one nation-state in terms of one's sense of belonging and cultural identity. Instead, *Transfronterizmo* clearly illustrates the density of transborder cultural practices as a way of life. I define *Transfronterizmo* as both a process and a place. It is a process of becoming a thoroughly bicultural transnational subject, navigating a dual sense of national belonging, culture, and identity, within the circuit of transborder crossings. *Transfronterizmo*, moreover, is rooted in a borderlands consciousness vis-à-vis the crossing of both cognitive and physical borders (Anzaldúa, 1987). As place, it entails the constitution of an imagined community (Anderson, 1983) and/or a Third Nation (Dear, 2013) situated within the borderlands. I examine *Transfronterizmo* through the prism of U.S.-Mexican transborder subjects: a unique subgroup of border residents who live in Mexico but cross the international border on a daily basis. These subjects have developed a distinctive perspective on national belonging, culture, and identity through their frequent engagement with the border. Specifically, I examine *Transfronterizmo* through the lens of *Transfronterizos* in order to explore how daily migrants create new articulations of belonging and subjectivity. Extant literature defines *Transfronterizos* as Mexican-American transborder students crossing the border from Mexico in order to pursue an education in the U.S. (Zentella, 2005, 2016; Reláño-Pastor, 2007; Franquiz and Ortiz, 2017). Although, the dominant literature equates the entire *Transfronterizo* experience with schooling, other scholars have also classified *Transfronterizos* within the larger phenomena of transborder crossings. In other words, *Transfronterizo* crossings are part and parcel of the larger back and forth circuit of international crossings undertaken by commuters or transborder workers (Alegria, 2002) and families (Ojeda, 1994, 2005). Scholars, however, have yet to analyze both groups together. My project addresses this

lacuna by situating both populations under one single rubric in order to provide a holistic analytical lens that is cognizant of age, class, gender, education, and occupational variations. My approach will explore the full gamut of transborder culture. I am interested in how *Transfronterizmo* illustrates both new and old ways of existing as a transborder liminal subject through the cyclical crossing of the geopolitical space where two nations, bound in asymmetrical power relations, converge. What emerges from this space of heightened surveillance set against mundane acts of daily travel? How does a transborder crossing, as a quotidian act, disrupt hegemonic conceptions of national belonging and subjectivity in the age of Trump? What does it mean to be a transborder subject in regards to the normalization of nativism/xenophobia in our contemporary political moment? In sum, what are the limits/possibilities apropos crossing and living in-between borders?