Instances of Cultural Entrepreneurship

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Education

• **MA** in Arts Administration, Media Management Concentration, *University of Oregon* 2010

• **BA** in Spanish, Latin American Studies, *Weber State University* 2003

• Utah Teacher License, *Salt Lake Community College* 2004

• English as a Second Language Endorsement, *Ogden School District* 2006

• Study Abroad Program, Barcelona & Tarragona, Spain 2001

Multimedia Experience

Assistant Director, Mariachi Viva Mexico (MVM), Portland, OR 2009
Designed and implemented all of MVM's graphic standards. In charge of graphic design for all of MVM's print and web media. Spearheaded audio and video projects, which included audio demos and promotional videos. Created website template prototypes.

Marketing and PR Intern, Hult Center, Eugene, OR 2008
Solely responsible for the creation and distribution of email campaigns and print media, such as the quarterly OVATION event calendar distributed to 40,000 ticket-buyers. Developed press releases for local and regional media outlets. Responsible for maintaining and developing the ACCESS database.

Project Coordinator, The Summit Group Communications, Salt Lake City, UT 2006
Aided The Summit Group Communications (TSG) Ad Company in developing and pitching campaign for national chain of Bajio Mexican Grill restaurants. Campaign included video, audio, musical, photographic, web, and printed media . Facilitated all communication between TSG and musicians to develop ten jingles and music for five television commercials and recorded five radio spots. Duties included: training, mediation, clarification of project parameters, research, contract negotiations, and logistics.

Manager, Director, and Performer, Mariachi Zavala LLC, Ogden, UT 1994- 2008
Launched web and social media and social media marketing campaigns. Produced two audio CD's. Designed all print media such as, business cards, posters, brochures, informational packets, and CD covers.

Teaching Experience

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 2010
Co-taught two undergraduate courses, Art and Human Value and Art and Gender. Responsible for curriculum development and lesson plans, facilitated group discussions, and evaluated student work.

High School Teacher, Ogden High School, Ogden, UT 2002- 2008
Responsible for developing curriculum, assessing learning, providing interventions, and evaluations. Responsible for communicating and collaborating with the administration, teachers, parents, students, and members of the community. Developed and taught Beginning Spanish I, II, III; Spanish for Native Speakers; Grammar & Composition for Native Spanish Speakers; English as a Second Language, Level II; and Beginning and Advanced Mariachi Instrumental and Vocal.

Guest Clinician, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 2006
Invited by professor Andrew H. Dabczynski to create and teach a clinic for BYU's fledgling mariachi program and its students. Topics included: History of Mariachi; Mariachi Trends and Traditions; Contemporary and Traditional Instrumentation; Transcribing and Arranging for Mariachi; Mariachi Articulation; Curriculum Development and Guides; and Common Musical Genres.

Commitment to Multicultural Diversity

Diversity Training, Professional Development at Ogden City School District 2006
Topics covered: Identifying Misconceptions, Advantages of Diversity, Identifying Cultural Differences, Dealing with Discrimination, Recognizing a Negative Approach to Diversity, Avoiding Discrimination, Effective Communication, and Manage Diversity in a Workforce.

Community Liaison, XVI Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Literatura Femenina Hispana (*16th Conference of the Int'l Assn. of Hispanic Women Writers),* Ogden, UT 2006
Worked to increase awareness and involve young Hispanic female students from Ogden High, Weber State University, and the local community in this internationally known festival. Recruited and coached participants to present poems alongside festival keynote artist Ana Rossetti, internationally recognized poet and recipient of the prestigious Rey Juan Carlos I award.

Languages Spanish, Native Proficiency
Additional references available upon request.

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y todos los charro de Oregon.

Instances of cultural entrepreneurship: Perspectives on how and why two mariachi cultural entrepreneurs interface with mainstream cultural, social, and economic infrastructures.

By Arturo Zavala

Research Advisor: Dr. John Fenn III

Abstract:
The purpose of this project is to explore instances of cultural entrepreneurship in two distinct mariachi communities, Mariachi Viva Mexico in Hillsboro, OR, and an online virtual YouTube community (or YouTube channel). **My goal is to explore how mariachi leaders function as cultural entrepreneurs within local, regional, national, and international mariachi communities (or contexts).** Because I see the cultural entrepreneur as "filling and bridging gaps," this research presupposes that by identifying the issues faced by cultural entrepreneurs, we develop a greater understanding of our political, institutional, societal deficiencies in arts programming and community cultural development in general. Furthermore, by understanding the problem solving processes and approaches of the cultural entrepreneurs we may be able to better understand the needs of marginalized and underrepresented communities with regards to arts and cultural programming.

Keywords: mariachi, cultural infrastructures, cultural entrepreneurship, creative communities, convergence culture, community development, and representation of marginalized and underrepresented art communities

"Trees have a secret life that is only revealed to those willing to climb them."

–Reinaldo Arenas

Chapter I: Design

1.1 Definitions

Cultural Entrepreneur (CE): Individual committed to three core elements (1) Cultural Mission, (2) Social Responsibilities, and (3) Innovation. The cultural entrepreneur works within the realms of creation, production, and/or distribution.

Cultural Mission: an emotional and ideological commitment to arts and culture, usually to a specific genre or style.

Social Responsibilities: a personal and professional commitment to improving the lives of people, groups, and society at large through arts and culture

Innovation: the action or process of generating a method, idea, or product, etc.

Creation: a new method, idea, or product etc.

Production: the development of a method, idea, or product, etc.

Distribution: the process of disseminating new methods, ideas, or products, etc.

Creative sector: encompasses both nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, and for-profit creative endeavors.

1.2 Problem Statement

What is a Cultural Entrepreneur?

Though every artist can be considered a cultural entrepreneur, because of the innovative process of creating a new work, not all cultural entrepreneurs are artists. Swedberg (2006) states that cultural entrepreneurship is "situated at the intersection of

entrepreneurship, art, and the economy"(p.1). This vague but useful concept suggests that the cultural entrepreneur is not always the artist, but is situated within the creative sector. Furthermore, Hagoort (2003) highlights three core elements of cultural entrepreneurship, (1) cultural mission, or emotional and ideological commitment to arts and culture, usually to a specific genre or style, (2) social responsibilities, or a personal commitment to improving the lives of people, groups, and society at large through arts and culture, and (3) innovation driven, or the action or process of generating a method idea, product, etc., and these three elements comprise the main lens by which I will approach the notion of cultural entrepreneurship in this study.

Cultural entrepreneurs work within the "value chain production" (i.e creation, production, and distribution) (UNESCO p.9). As they work within the value chain, they create new cultural infrastructures and networks. Though they are independent they rely heavily on community.

Many factors can contribute to the success and failure of cultural entrepreneurs (i.e. economic, social, cultural, etc.). Therefore, my research is not an attempt to identify a *right* or *wrong* way to be a cultural entrepreneur. But rather to explore the interface created by the cultural entrepreneur, that connects the commercial and non-profit sector, the high art with low art, and formal infrastructures with informal infrastructures.

Why the Cultural Entrepreneur?

As art organizations and managers attempt to adapt to an ever-changing role of arts and culture, I see the cultural entrepreneur as filling the gaps (i.e. political, institutional, and societal deficiencies) created by mainstream society in the U.S. Cultural entrepreneurship constitutes creative and innovative solutions to redesigning the cultural infrastructure and

build new outlets for cultural products produced by community members.

I believe that the work of the cultural entrepreneur is a direct response to current social conditions and issues affecting the art and culture sector raised by Hagoort (2003), Adams and Goldbard (2001), such as new media, demographic changes, and identity issues. It is presupposed that by identifying the issues faced by cultural entrepreneurs, we develop a greater understanding of our political and institutional deficiencies. As the focus for art administrators turns to new issues such as audience participation, public purpose and the role of the arts within civil society, the arts and culture sector must tap into the informal cultural infrastructures created by the cultural entrepreneur. Without these connections cultural institutions will become static and irrelevant to marginalized communities. With these connections we discover community value, purpose, and role for the arts. By understanding the "problem solving processes and approaches" of the cultural entrepreneurs we may be able to better understand the needs of marginalized and underrepresented communities and develop solutions that will serve these needs. To understand the problem solving process and approaches of cultural entrepreneurship it was necessary to explore the areas in which cultural entrepreneurs and the mainstream cultural sector interface.

There is little literature on cultural entrepreneurship, but it is possible to pull common themes from the field of entrepreneurship in general, and from contemporary socio-economic theories, such as, creative class, free agency, and convergence culture. I see the cultural entrepreneur at the center of all these themes, working through and around the mainstream infrastructure (political, institutional, societal). Toward that end, my research aims to bridge the work of Adams & Goldbard (2001), Rentschler (2002) Alinsky (1971) Pink (2001, 2005), Florida (2002, 2008) and others with the work of cultural entrepreneurs.

Florida (2002) argues that work/production has shifted from industrial to creativity (i.e. knowledge and style) and therefore a new social order has come into existence. Income is created more through innovation and development than through the production of goods and services. Creative workers are educated and self-educated inventors and problem solvers. Pink (2001) describes a shift in the workplace from the "Information Age" that values knowledge to the "Conceptual Age" that values creativity. The arts have also experienced great shifts. Williams (2001) states that, "For 35 years, the US's main cultural-policy concern was to build an infrastructure of non-profit arts organizations; thus, Americans worked to develop public funding at the state and local levels and encouraged corporations to invest in culture. Although that has been successful, the focus has now turned to new issues such as audience participation, the public purpose of the arts, and their role within civil society" (p. 4). I see cultural entrepreneurs as the leaders in finding creative ways to solve these new and complex issues (i.e. audience engagement, public purpose, and the role of arts within civil society) in which the factors and variables are many and vary greatly from community to community. The cultural entrepreneur takes on a cultural mission and social responsibilities because of our institutional, political, and conceptual deficiencies, with regards to social justice for immigrants and the development of arts infrastructure that supports diverse traditions. This research aims to explore the creative and innovative ways mariachi cultural entrepreneurs connect and intersect with the mainstream cultural sector or infrastructure. The assumptions are that two distinct mariachi cultural entrepreneurs (Humberto Guillén and Alex Gonzáles) represent instances of cultural entrepreneurship.

In the mariachi community, it is clear that the *better* musicians or groups (ones with the most experience and largest repertoire) are not always the ones with the most work.

Through my observations, one's *knowledge* —in the case of mariachis, performance experience and musical strengths yields to *creativity* or the ability to sell and/or manipulate several factors of the performance to accommodate the needs of many markets. Pink (2005) states "Engineers must figure our how to get things to work, but if those things are not also pleasing to the eye [or ear] and compelling to the soul, few will buy them" (p.34). The same assumptions may be true for the mariachi entrepreneur. On top of creatively selling and adjusting aspects of performances; the work must indeed be "pleasing to the eye and compelling to the soul" (p.34).

The focus of this study explores the creative process of two cultural entrepreneurs, Mr. Guillén and Mr. Gonzáles, specifically how they connect to existing cultural infrastructure (intentionally or unintentionally). Florida (2002) argues that creativity is a mode that is quite strange and unpredictable, and yet recognizable: it likes freedom, diversity, and being surrounded by enterprising people. The research aims to explore these recognizable factors associated with these two distinct mariachi cultural entrepreneurs.

The works of Yunus (2008) and Adams and Goldard (2001) illustrate the need to develop new cultural infrastructures to allow creativity and innovation to flourish. "Poverty is not created by poor people. The seeds of poverty are embedded in the deficiencies of our institutions, the deficiencies of our policies, and the deficiencies in our concepts. It doesn't have to be. If you can pick out those seeds, no one will have to be poor" (Yunus, 2008, p.127). Similarly, communities do not create the lack of formal cultural infrastructures in marginalized communities.

Both Yunus (2008) and Adams and Goldard (2001) highlight the importance of individuals in developing community infrastructures. While Yunus points to the

entrepreneurs as a solution in developing community infrastructure, Adams and Goldard

refer to cultural workers, community animators, and community artists. Both seek to close

the gap between the cultural and economic sector and both highlight the societal benefits of

doing so. I see the cultural entrepreneur as a key player in developing formal cultural

infrastructures. Because a cultural entrepreneur is part artist, businessperson, part culture

worker, part social worker, and more, I see the cultural entrepreneur as having both the

resources and creditable access to marginalized communities.

The research aims to (1) explore how and why these mariachi cultural entrepreneurs

interface with mainstream cultural, social, and economic infrastructures; (2) to explore the

functions of cultural entrepreneurs (Humberto Guillén in Hillboro, Or. and Alex Gonzáles'

Virtual YouTube Community); and (3) develop a white paper for cultural entrepreneurs and

arts administrators. This white paper will list recommendations on the significance of cultural

entrepreneurship to the arts and cultural sectors and the goals/roles of arts managers.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

Before looking into the role of cultural entrepreneur (CE), it was necessary to explore

the theoretical socio-economic environment in which cultural entrepreneurship exists, such

as, creative class, free agency, entrepreneurship, and convergence culture. Though it was

clear that there are many other factors associated with cultural entrepreneurship, this

research will focus on the previously mentioned themes as defined by the works of Pink

(2001, 2005), Jenkins (2006), and Friedman (2005). Though many concepts exist, I have

focused on the following for initial understanding: community cultural development, creative

class, entrepreneurship, and convergence culture.

Friedman (2005), Jenkins (2006), Pink (2001, 2005) and Florida (2002, 2008) see globalization as shifting and challenging traditional hierarchies, where all competitors have equal opportunity, historical and geographical divisions become increasingly irrelevant, and multi media is used in multiple platforms to change the way we do business. Pink (2001, 2005) and Friedman (2005) suggest that the work force should update its work-skills, perhaps change the way we view our role as workers in general. What does this mean for the cultural entrepreneur and, by extension, the arts and culture sectors? What are these work-skills for mariachi cultural entrepreneurs? How are mariachi cultural entrepreneurs changing traditional hierarchies? Who does the cultural entrepreneur work within and around the existing cultural infrastructure?

Florida (2002) argues that creativity has a mode that is strange, unpredictable, and yet recognizable, it likes freedom, diversity, and being surrounded by enterprising people. This research wishes to explore these *recognizable* factors in the field of cultural entrepreneurship. Florida (2002) describes the creative class as a socioeconomic class of creative individuals. These individuals, like cultural entrepreneurs, are not only "problem solvers" but also "problem finders" (p.69).

Florida looks into the lifestyles of creative professionals (i.e. where they live, skills, education, etc.). How may Florida's work relate to mariachi cultural entrepreneurs? How do mariachi cultural entrepreneurs solve and find problems? How do the lives, skills, education, etc. factor into the decision making (i.e. creation, production, or distribution)?

Jenkins (2006) describes "convergence culture" as the complex relationship between new and old media. How is/isn't the mariachi community an example of convergence culture? Mariachi exists within many sectors including the service sector, arts and culture

sector. They combine old and new media to find innovative and creative ways to solve problems.

For my research project, it was important to explore the "real life" cultural entrepreneur experience. Because of my knowledge and association with the mariachi community in Hillsboro, OR, I decided to focus my research on cultural entrepreneurship within this mariachi community.

For this study, cultural entrepreneurship will refer to micro-businesses, solo-workers, and independent professionals who make a living through selling, teaching, and/or performing mariachi music. The mariachi community refers to an art world as a whole. Becker (2008) defines an art world as, "consisting of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, perhaps others as well, define as art" (p.34). Aside from the individual mariachi entrepreneur, this study will explore businesses, institutions and/or individuals that contribute to innovative process of cultural entrepreneurs (i.e. religious, government, financial, art and cultural institutions, etc.)

Like other art forms, mariachi has strong links to community. Concepts linked to this study include cultural development, empowerment, and cultural identity. Though I feel like these issues are important, my research will only touch on these concepts in an effort to narrow the scope to the "intersecting and interfacing qualities" cultural entrepreneurship.

Case study sites have been purposely selected. The first site, Mariachi Viva Mexico was selected because of my in-depth knowledge and relationship to the organization. Through this relationship I have identified qualities and instances of cultural entrepreneurship. The second site, —Mantecas1972" YouTube channel— was selected because of the innovative ways it uses new media to connect people to mariachi music.

These sites were selected because preliminary research has indicated common themes relating to the field of cultural entrepreneurship. Through these sites, it will be possible to further explore works of Adams and Goldbard (2001), Rentschler (2002), Pink (2001, 2005), Florida (2002, 2008), Jenkins (2006), and Friedman (2005). Furthermore, these case studies will help illustrate the gaps in research and practice of the field of cultural entrepreneurship.

1.4 Methodology Paradigm

The purpose of this case study is to understand the role and factors associated with cultural entrepreneurship in mariachi communities in Portland, Oregon and Los Angeles, California. Because I want to share the perspective of mariachi cultural entrepreneurs, I associate myself in the interpretive methodological paradigm.

Newman (2006) states that, "An interpretive researcher wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people being studied, or how individuals experience daily life" (p. 88). In this study I aim to bring to light the innovation, motivation, and the internal and external the challenges of mariachi cultural entrepreneurs. By choosing the interpretive paradigm I aim to "share the feelings and interpretations" of the people I am studying (p. 88). I view my research as an exchange of ideas between the community and me. I am interested in "how they define what they are doing"(p. 90). The intention is to *interact* with the mariachi community and it to do the same with me, thus "intentionally creating a new experience" and a new *meaning* of the role of cultural entrepreneur (p. 89).

1.5 Role of Researcher

I see myself as working and living within two communities, the Mexican immigrant communities and mainstream communities in the US.   My life experience as a first generation Mexican-American and a working mariachi musician will innately influence my research. However, I hope that my experience adds to the richness and depth of this project by attempting to bridge a gap between these two communities. As researcher, it will be important to set aside my personal feelings and assumptions to be able to look at the data as objectively as possible.

1.6 Delimitations & Limitations

This study will focus on two distinct mariachi communities. In the first site, Mariachi Viva Mexico (Hillsboro, OR), key informant Humberto Guillén will be interviewed to discuss instances of cultural entrepreneurship. Site two will be an interview and web analysis with key informant Alex Gonzáles and his YouTube channel Mantecas1972.   Because of the complexities and unique variables within communities, findings are not intended to be transferable to other sites. However, while findings for these two 'case study sites' are not generalizable, the research looks at nodes in a very far-reaching network of mariachi performers/cultural entrepreneurs, which could have important implications and consideration for the arts and culture sectors.

1.7 Research Strategy

As I associate with an interpretive paradigm, I aim to gather rich and deep stories of cultural entrepreneurs and develop close relationships, so that we may learn from their

innovative roles. "The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events, such as… small group behavior…" (Yin, 2008, p. 4). This is why I believe case study is the appropriate approach. Through literature review, interviews, web analysis, and observations, I hope to, (1) collect "in- depth, detailed knowledge" (Newman, 2006, p. 40) of cultural entrepreneurs, (2) identify their role and common practices, (3) explore contemporary socio-economic factors how they relate to cultural entrepreneurship, and (4) create a white paper for the field.

I picked mariachi because of my intimate knowledge of the art world. As a former group director, I understand the complexities of the mariachi economy. Sheehy (2006) notes, "Mariachi is a commodity. It is bought and sold" (p. 62). He continues by describing the social and economic bonds linked to mariachi music. Mariachi entrepreneurs are constantly working with different business arrangements, skill sets, and diverse social relations with audience, which has a direct barring on the repertoire and quality of the music performed (p. 63). This suggests that mariachis must be proficient and enterprising to be successful.

Key informants have been prescreened and identified as mariachi cultural entrepreneurs based on following criteria:

1. Mariachi cultural entrepreneurs must show an instance of cultural mission and social responsibility, as explored in the works of Hagoort (2003) and Adams and Goldbard (2001).

2. Mariachi cultural entrepreneurs must demonstrate instances of innovation in the creation, production, and distribution of their work, as explored in the works of Jenkins (2006), Pink (2001)(2005), and Florida (2008).

1.8 Preliminary Research Questions

It is clear that mariachi cultural entrepreneurs possess skills and knowledge that make them successful in their communities. The purpose of this project is to explore instances of cultural entrepreneurship in two distinct mariachi communities, Mariachi Viva Mexico in Hillsboro, Oregon, and an online virtual YouTube community (or YouTube channel). My goal is to explore how and why these mariachi cultural entrepreneurs interface with mainstream cultural, social and economic infrastructures.

Because I see the cultural entrepreneur as a problem solver, this research presupposes that by identifying the environment in which the cultural entrepreneurs works, we develop a greater understanding of informal or underground infrastructures in these communities. Furthermore, because the cultural entrepreneur works within a community, is presupposed that the cultural entrepreneur understands and demonstrates (thought his or her work) community values, rules, and standards.

The cultural entrepreneur as defined in this study, works with three core elements: cultural mission, societal responsibilities, and innovation (Hagoort, 2003). I believe that the community defines the meaning and limits of these three guiding principals. The success or failure of the cultural entrepreneur's innovation and creativity depends greatly on whether the work fits into the core elements prescribed by the community. Therefore, when the cultural entrepreneur connects with the mainstream cultural infrastructure, he or she not only leaves behind an artifact or evidence of his or her creativity or innovation, but also evidence of a cultural mission and social responsibility. This evidence becomes then a sample or snippet of a community's cultural values, social roles and responsibilities, strengths and limitations. This becomes the window of opportunity for arts administrators and cultural workers, as we

strive to understand these unique and informal infrastructures. The artifacts left by the

cultural entrepreneur will not answer all our questions, but it will at least get us asking the

right questions. Through my whitepaper, I aim to illustrate how mariachi cultural

entrepreneurs are instrumental in developing and sustaining formal and informal cultural

infrastructures in the their community so that arts and culture sector workers might more

effectively interface with underserved or marginalized communities from which cultural

entrepreneurs emerge in order to develop more progressive and inclusive programming.

1.9 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

At both sites, Hillsboro, OR & Los Angeles, CA, in-depth interviews were conducted,

as well as web, literature, and document analysis. A coding scheme has been developed in

order to group data within common themes.

1.10 Data Collection Instruments

Four data collection instruments were created (appendix b-e). Attached appendix B

is interview protocol and semi-structured research questions. Attached appendix C is

participant observation protocol. Appendix D is the protocol tool for document analysis and

Appendix E is the protocol tool for Web Video Analysis.

Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1 Tradition of Innovation

In it's simplest definition, Mariachi is folk music from the central region of Mexico. According to legend, mariachi originated from the Mexican state of Jalisco, specifically in the town of Cocula, around the turn of the century (1900's). Mariachi has become perhaps one of the most recognized forms of music in the world. Almost anyone can at least hum popular mariachi tunes such as *La Cucaracha*, *Cielito Lindo*, or *El Jarabe Tapatillo* (*The Mexican Hat Dance*). Mariachis wear elaborate outfits with silver buttons running down each side of the legs. Typically, we think of mariachis with big guitars, violins, and loud trumpets.

Through the span of three decades (1920-1950) mariachis established their place in mainstream culture through early recordings, radio, television, and cinema (Sheehy 2006). Through this emerging media, mariachis quickly became the poster child of Mexican national culture and identity. During this period however, mariachi music went through some drastic changes, so much that the music and image is arguably unrecognizable at its polar ends. Is mariachi dead? Or is the core of mariachi a tradition of innovation?

2.2 Convergence of Culture

In 1519, the arrival Hernán Cortes into Tenochtitlán (modern Mexico City) sparked the convergence of several cultures. On one side, we have the Native Americans or Aztecs, on the other, the Europeans which in itself includes an array of cultures such as, Spanish, Jewish, Arab, and also African cultures. The product of this convergence is often referred to

as *Mestizo.* (Fuentes, 1992) From this convergence, mariachi was born, creating a music that is neither Amerindian nor European, but both.

In the 1930's mariachis move from the rural areas to Mexico City. At this time mariachi is known as an all strings ensemble consisting of violins, guitars, and harps. They are mostly playing *sones jalisiences* or *corridos*. They wear *calzones de manta* or white cotton pants and shirts.

By the 40's and 50's mariachis begin to incorporate new repertoire of songs from other regions of Mexico and the world to please their new international clientele in Mexico City (Viva El Mariachi Video, 2004). Instrumentation changes to allow for more musical versatility. Trumpets are established and group sizes grow. Harps are slowly phased out, since violins, and to a less extent trumpets, start playing lead melodies. By this time mariachis have fully embraced the *traje de charro* or outfits used by Mexican cowboys. (Sheehy, 1997. p. 142). The mix of rural and urban cultures developed what we now recognize as the modern mariachi.

In 1996, Mariachi Sol de Mexico, a Los Angeles based mariachi, released their album entitled: *La Nueva Era Del Mariachi, The New Era of Mariachi* featuring a melody called *"Recordando A Glenn Miller" Remembering Glenn Miller*. The song, a tribute to Glenn Miller, is a collection of some of Miller's most recognizable melodies, such as *Moonlight Serenade*, *Stormy Weather,* and *In The Mood*. Though this album caused many traditionalists to cringe, the album arguably introduced a new style, technique, and repertoire to mariachi.

But is *Recordando A Glenn Miller* an example of participatory culture? Jenkins (2006) argues that convergence culture depends on convergence media, participatory

culture, and collective intelligence. Participatory culture is "the circulation of media content—

across different media systems, competing media economies, and national boarders—

depends heavily on consumers' active participation"(Jenkins, 2006, p.3).

Jenkins (2006) argues that media producers and consumers do not play a separate role, but

rather, "we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a

new set of rules that none of us fully understands" (p.3). This inability to fully understand

these new set of rules and expectations is perhaps why mariachi traditionalists get worked-

up about the work of Mariachi Sol de Mexico. They perhaps are frustrated with a group that

does not communicate or reflect the desired image, sound, or feeling. Though mariachi's

origins lay in Mexico, most mariachi recordings are produced in the United States. In fact

four of the top five the most recognizable mariachis, Los Camperos de Nati Cano, Mariachi

Sol de Mexico, Mariachi Los Galleros de Pedro Rey and Mariachi Cobre, are mostly

established in Los Angeles, CA, (Mariachi Cobre based in Orlando, FL.). It is not surprising

then for mariachis to want to cater to a U.S. market, which not only includes Mexican and

Mexican-Americans, but Anglo-Americans as well. But Jenkins continues, "Not all

participants are created equal."

The relationship between mariachis and their consumers is one of interaction, but

this begs to question, who is interacting with who? Nevin (2002) touches upon what he

describes as two separate types of mariachis, the virtuoso and the common. He argues that

the virtuoso mariachi is the musician or group that is educated, disciplined, and innovative.

The virtuosos arrange and compose new songs, they play with symphonies and orchestras,

collaborate with international artists, they all know how to read music and are highly skilled

technicians. On the other side of the spectrum are the common mariachis. Common

mariachis serve a cultural need for example, playing for weddings, birthdays, funerals and other events cultural events. Common mariachis focus on quantity not quality. Nevin (2002) describes that the difference in performance venue, repertoire, could explain the varying cultural roles and expectations evident in mariachis today. Sheehy (2006, 1997) argues that differences are more cross-cultural, for example, mariachi is viewed very differently in the U.S. than in Mexico. While in the Untied States mariachi has taken on a "show like" performance structure, in Mexico the trend is for mariachis to perform in a *cantina* or bar style, meaning the audience has control over what the mariachi plays.

Jenkins (2006) stresses interaction between media producers and consumers. For mariachis this means that in some instances mariachis control the cultural product (i.e. songs, image, etc.) and other instances the consumer is in control. At the same time, virtuosos playing in concert halls are not independent of all other mariachis, and they are not always the ones defining the music (i.e. musical style and repertoire). Virtuosos are sometimes influencing common mariachis, and common mariachis also influence virtuosos. Though Nevin (2002) has categorized two types of mariachis, his intentions are to illustrate the differences between virtuosos and common mariachis, but that is not so say that they are not interacting, collaborating, influencing and even participating at all levels of the performance spectrum (i.e. from cantina to concert hall).

This is where we start seeing mariachi as convergence culture through media. Mariachi becomes a vehicle for disseminating a cultural identity or experience, perhaps multiple identities and experiences. Clientele access media, or in this case mariachi though channels in which they feel most comfortable or compatible with (i.e. cantina or concert hall, or anything in-between). This could mean two things: one, a specific mariachi group (i.e.

virtuoso or common) has a specific function or specialty and consumers pick and choose;

and/or two, mariachis (both virtuosos and common) have multiple functions or specialties to

appeal to more consumers.

In East Los Angeles mariachi struggle to find work after the recession and the

temporary closing of the Mariachi Plaza, a place where hundreds of groups gather to find

work. Los Angeles Times reporter, Takahashi (2010) notes that mariachis are finding new

ways to connect to clients, now that the Plaza has been temporarily shut down. New

attempts include websites and web 2.0 applications. The article discusses how mariachis

used the plaza as a marketing tool. With this valuable resource now gone, they are turning to

websites to find work, however, web clients are described as "barging shoppers," forcing

mariachis to lower their pricing. This article indirectly points out how websites are not

necessarily replacing the Mariachi Plaza. Though mariachis are being hired through the

Internet, clients on the web have different expectations and needs than those who used to

drive up to the plaza to pick up musicians. Perhaps, the emerging presence of mariachis on

the Internet highlights a developing infrastructure that is an extension of traditional

performance settings and business arrangements.

Sheehy (2006, p.65) describes four types of performing settings each with a specific

business arrangement. In *talón*, literally "shoe heal" mariachis walk around a restaurant from

table-to-table soliciting clients. Once the client is found, the price per song is set, often

around two dollars per song per musician, however rates vary. In this set-up client requests

all the songs. This is the hardest type of performance, as mariachis need to know a lot of

repertoire. The second type of performance is called *Chambas* or gigs, wherein groups are

hired out to play by the hour usually at a standard rate of $50–60 per musician per hour.

Here mariachis take request but are usually free to play their repertoire. *Plantas* are steady gigs, usually weekly performances in restaurants, hotels or bars. Musicians are usually paid by the hour but often about half as much as a regular c*hamba.* And then there are the *shows* that spotlight the mariachi. These are usually formal stage performances. Sheehy (2006) highlights the versatility mariachi musician and their leaders must have to perform in all four settings.

2.3 About the Cultural Entrepreneur

Versatility, adaptation, and innovation are all characteristics of cultural entrepreneurship. There is little written about cultural entrepreneurs, where they work, where they come from, what their needs are, or their significance in the arts and culture sectors. Leadbeater and Oakley (1999) argue that, "Policy-makers know little about this new generation of [cultural] entrepreneurs." The political short falls are evident as cultural entrepreneurs still lack many social, financial, cultural resources.

It is not uncommon to get a blank stare when I tell my friends and colleagues that I'm researching *cultural entrepreneurs*. When I mention that the cultural entrepreneur works within arts, culture, and business, most people respond, "oh, an artist!" Yes, but... Some cultural entrepreneurs are not artists. Cultural entrepreneurs are hard to pin-down because they are always adapting and evolving. So it comes as no surprise that there is a lot of confusion and little knowledge about the work of these creative and innovative individuals.

Cultural entrepreneurs are by no means new to the arts and culture sector. Many teaching artists, community cultural planners, and founders of non-profits could be considered cultural entrepreneurs. There are three core elements of cultural entrepreneurship: cultural mission, social responsibility and innovation (Hagoort 2003).

Though cultural entrepreneurs exist on all levels of the non-profit, for-profit, and public sectors; my focus is on the grass-roots cultural entrepreneurs.

When Portland based group Pink Martini released their first independent record in 1990 to "keep control of the band's music," the group founder Thomas Lauderdale arguably took on the role of cultural entrepreneur. The cultural mission was keeping control of the band's music. Lauderdale felt that it was better to work with local companies he knew because he felt a social responsibility to keep the work local. Pink Martini used non-traditional ways of creating, producing, and distributing their work by bypassing major record labels, thus keeping control of their cultural mission and social responsibilities thought innovative ways (Oregon Business 2009).

Pink Martini embraced a new and emergent method of doing business in the Pacific Northwest, leaving major record labels out of the picture. The "do it yourself attitude" and access to new media has made this all possible. Dr. Lawrence Lessig of Stanford University (in a Creative Commons video lecture) argues that we have emerged from a "read only" culture to a "read and write" culture (Lessig, 2007). While the last generation viewed television, this generation is creating television. For Pink Martini, this meant more control over the final product. They tailored not only the creation of their music, but the production and distribution as well, thus imbedding the group's art, cultural mission, and social responsibility at each stage of production.

Cultural entrepreneurs are creative and stubborn, in a good way. They are successful because of their ability to move through and around obstacles. Their creativity, adaptability, and innovation keep them lean and always moving. They are *radicals* in the Alinsky (1971) sense, refusing to take *no* for an answer. Though not always successful, their

persistence (perhaps ego) makes them get up again, and again.

Cultural entrepreneurs value loyalty, particularly in his or her community. The cultural entrepreneurs rely heavily on his or her community at all stages of their work (i.e. creation, production, and distribution) (Williams 2001 p.9). They form mini "creative clusters" by strategically partnering with other creative professionals (UNESCO, 2008). Cultural entrepreneurs are committed to these formal and informal networks because it is how they survive. Within these mini creative clusters, the cultural entrepreneur educates and is educated, through anecdotes that collectively form the ethos of the group. The community is where they find work and inspiration. Thus, one will always find evidence of community cultural values in the work of the cultural entrepreneur.

When Alex Gonzáles decided to share his large music collection with his fellow mariachi musicians in Los Angeles, he slowly started uploading several thousand songs on his YouTube channel, Mantecas1972. This was an easy way for Gonzáles to share all the hard to find recordings of local groups he'd acquired throughout the years. The Mantecas1972 channel slowly gained recognition as a valuable resource for mariachi musicians across the country. Mariachis not only post their own music, but frequently listen to other groups from around the world as well. This channel, and others like it arguably demonstrate two important things: first, the lack of conventional distributions methods for community artists; and second, how artists (cultural entrepreneurs) are filling the gaps of our institutional deficiencies and serving the needs of the community.

This is where the cultural entrepreneur creates a window of opportunity for arts administrators and cultural workers. The cultural entrepreneur not only brings to the table rich and authentic cultural resources (i.e. music), but they highlight community needs (i.e.

lack of artistic support). We see the cultural entrepreneur solving a problem. The solution, not necessarily the right one, gives us insight into the community cultural infrastructure. In this case we see that the Internet is a useful tool for distribution of cultural products in the mariachi community. Lastly, these solutions also bring to light a cultural inventory. These solution built bridges between informal and formal infrastructures. We are then able to see who is participating and how they participate. The cultural entrepreneurs provide the roadmaps and/or the vehicles to community cultural development in marginalized communities.

2.4 Community Cultural Development

"For 35 years, the US's main cultural-policy concern was to build an infrastructure of non-profit arts organizations; thus, Americans worked to develop public funding at the state and local levels and encouraged corporations to invest in culture. Although that has been successful, the focus has now turned to new issues such as audience participation, the public purpose of the arts, and their role within civil society" Williams (2001 p.4).

According to Williams (2001), the future of art organizations will depend heavily on knowing the needs of audiences, developing relationships with these audiences, and understanding how they participate. This will require arts administrators to look beyond the "mass-media mindset" term used by W. Russell Newman to describe, "the set of values, assumptions, interpretive strategies, and consumption practices that emerged in response to broadcasting and other forms of mass-market entertainment (Jenkins, 2006, p.289)." Instead, arts administrators will need to utilize new tools and resources to develop a new media literacy or "perspective that we actively use when exposing ourselves to the media in order to interpret the meaning of the message we encounter (Potter, 2001, p. 4)" in order to

reach niche markets, like the Hispanic community.

According to the US Census Bureau 2010 projections, the Hispanic population is expected to reach 47.8 million or 15.5% of the total US population. In 2006, Mexicans made-up a total of 64% of Hispanics in the country, making it the fastest growing segment of the population (US Census Bureau). But how can arts administrators reach and/or serve this community? Perhaps understanding cultural entrepreneurs as an interface with diverse and often underserved communities might be one avenue for arts administrators to explore in this regard.

Adams and Goldbard state that the flow of cultural information and resources are hindered by the lack of "cultural infrastructure" within marginalized communities (2001, p.36). I agree that there exists a gap between mainstream cultural infrastructures and marginalized communities, but perhaps we should not assume these groups lack a developed and sophisticated cultural infrastructure, just because we don't have access to it.

Mariachi, like other forms of music, has multiple cultural facets. According to Sheehy (2006, 1997) there are varying cultural, social and economic dimensions. Mariachis may serve and have deep access to multiple communities. They understand cultural infrastructures because they work within them. Mariachis, like other artists are cultural entrepreneurs, and they navigate within the formal and informal, mainstream and underground.

Local, semiprofessional groups work between and through the lines and boundaries set by professional groups, other local groups, and audiences with varying expectations. These variances are musical, which include artistic quality and influence repertoire selection; they influence dress and performance standards, and also include socioeconomic factors,

such as musician pay and performance rates. Because of these challenges, mariachis must

have a great deal of versatility. Nevin (2001), Sheehy (2006, 1997) illustrate the level of

sophistication and innovation that mariachi leaders, groups, and individual musicians have.

This means that mariachis have developed their own cultural infrastructures, which include

rules and expectations; they have their own economy. Mariachis have their own language,

media literacy, and streams of communication are national and international.

But cultural entrepreneurs and their informal infrastructures do not exist in a vacuum.

At some point(s) these cultural infrastructures intersect with mainstream infrastructures.

What can we learn from these intersections? Think back to a quote I presented above from

Yunus, and consider how it leads us to think about how we can better understand

institutional, political, conceptual deficiencies in the arts and culture sector. Perhaps we can

see how mariachi cultural entrepreneurs are trying to *fix* complex community problems.

My research has lead to an understanding of the role of cultural entrepreneurship

and how the role develops at the intersection of many factors/institutions (both formal and

informal). The cultural entrepreneur develops from these environments, 1) the cultural

mission, though personal to the cultural entrepreneur, highlights and reflects community

values, 2) The social responsibility illustrates community roles and expectations. 3)

Innovation, or the ability to solve complex problems within complex environments. By

providing the cultural entrepreneur the tools and resources it is my assumption that art and

culture organizations can more effectively reach marginalized and underserved populations,

by reaching individuals that have a strong connection to the community (cultural

commitment), has the creative skills to work within a communities formal and informal

infrastructure (entrepreneurial innovation) and has deep understanding of community issues

and resources (social commitment).

There is new focus and interest on communities and grassroots development for art organizations. But how are these organizations making these shifts? The research suggests that techniques and standards vary enormously because comparisons are problematic. "You need credible access to people. We seldom have both credibility and access" (Williams, 2001, p. 30). Cultural entrepreneurs have both the credibility and assess because they are active members of the community. Cultural entrepreneurs should be used as key informants because they understand community's informal infrastructures and hidden rules.

More research needs to be done on how and why cultural entrepreneurs interface with mainstream cultural infrastructures. Because I see the cultural entrepreneur as developing informal cultural infrastructures, I see their work as a roadmap for developing sustainable interfaces with the mainstream arts and culture infrastructure. Furthermore, by understanding the problem solving processes and approaches of cultural entrepreneurs we may be able to better understand the needs of marginalized and underrepresented communities

Through the review of literature I explored four distinct concepts: 1) tradition and innovation in mariachi music, 2) Ideas relating to convergence culture and participatory culture in mariachi music, 3) cultural entrepreneurship and 4) community cultural development in marginalized communalities. Each of these concepts dealt with oppositional relationships (i.e. informal and formal, new and old, traditional and innovative, mainstream and grassroots, etc.) often bridged by the work of cultural entrepreneurs. The cultural entrepreneur then represents an interface enabling distinct environments, systems, and infrastructures to move beyond binary distinctions and towards common ground.

Chapter III: Data

3.1 Charro vs. Mariachi

In the mariachi community *charro* and mariachi can be used interchangeably to refer to a mariachi musician. I had always considered myself a mariachi and never gave this distinction much thought, that is until the summer of 2008. I had just started working as a mariachi in Portland, OR, and though I had been immersed in mariachi music since childhood, my exposure to the community as a whole was limited to a few brief encounters with local mariachis and the stories passed down by my father and uncles. In this way, my experience with mariachi was very similar to that of my *compañeros* (fellow mariachis) in Portland. Information, both the music and community rules, were learned from family members and fellow mariachis. The stories, mostly anecdotes, had hidden messages and would usually end with a popular Mexican saying. "*Chivo brincado, chivo pagado*" or "the goat has mated, pay the goat," my father would say to express that musicians needed to be paid immediately following a performance. Through these stories I learned the moral and ethical rules of mariachi, though I did not know it at the time. To my surprise, mariachis in Portland shared similar values.

Upon arriving to Portland, however, I felt a deep musical disconnect with the community. Though I knew most of the songs, I did not know the community arrangement or *arreglo de cajón.* "Where can I find the version of this song?" I'd ask. No one could tell me. "How did you learn this song? Who is your source?" I implored. "It's just the way it is," they'd all say, "It's how we've always played it; everyone plays it the same." I had entered the *charro* community, a transnational network of musicians. Yes, I was a mariachi, but I was far

from being a *charro.*

3.2 La Planta

My experience with the community of *charros* started in a Mexican seafood restaurant named *Puerto Marquez* on the west side of Portland. This is the hub of mariachi activity in the Pacific Northwest, according to Humberto Guillén, director of *Mariachi Viva México* (MVM). Humberto or *Beto* as he is known by the mariachis, has been a full-time professional mariachi musician for over twenty-five years. Beto's family was one of the first groups to organize in the state of Oregon. His father (Mr. Guillén) frequently made trips to Los Angeles to recruit musicians. "I'd even loan them the money so that they could make the trip up from Guadalajara," says Guillén (father), "I worked my musicians hard," he proudly explained, "whether we had gigs or not, we'd head out on Fridays at 3 p.m., Saturday and Sunday at 10 a.m., rain or shine. We'd go from restaurant to restaurant; if there was little work we'd end early, about 10 p.m., much later if there was a good client."

It was Humberto's father who established the *planta* or restaurant gig at *Puerto Marquez.* Though the restaurant does not pay mariachis, there is enough clientele to pay per song to make it a hot spot for *talón* (pay per song). When MVM is out performing at events, other mariachi groups are quick to fill-in at the *Puerto Marquez.* Over the years, this restaurant has developed a reputation as the place to go for mariachis. Musicians new to the area show up at random looking for a chance to work with Humberto. Clients have also shown up to book last minute performances, such as serenades.

Many big name groups also have steady restaurant gigs. In Los Angeles, Cielito Lindo Mexican Restaurant is the home of *Mariachi Sol de México de José Hernández,* features 3-5 live mariachi shows five nights a week. In an interview on the Mariachi Channel

on Youtube.com, José Hernández states that the restaurant, which he owns, was a crucial

part of forming *Mariachi Sol de México* because it provided musicians steady work.

3.3 Los Charros

In the summer of 2008, I remember riding down the streets of Portland in a crowded

van full of *charros*, listening to one of the most interesting mariachi recordings I'd heard in a

long time. Who is this? I asked the driver. I'd never heard these mariachis before, and as it

turns out these music files had traveled through the hands of mariachi musicians all the way

from Los Angeles. The mariachis onboard the van that morning were shocked to discover

that I had no idea who *El Mantecas* was, though no one could tell me his real name. "Where

can I get a copy of this?" I asked. The driver shrugged, "Take this one, I'll copy another one

later." He ejected the burned CD and handed it to me. Across the disc, hand-written in

permanent marker were the cryptic words, "*El Mantecas*".

This wasn't my first encounter with independently produced mariachi media. In fact

many of the mariachis on board that morning had their own CDs. These are used mainly to

supplement their income. Sergio *El Chevy* Guillén states that he can usually sell five or six

CDs at local *chambas* (gigs), making him an extra $50-60 per show. Mariachis tend to have

a hand full of shows a week, so it adds up quickly. "I'm not going to get rich off it, but I can

make a little extra and have my work recorded," says Guillén.

Guillén recorded his album in Los Angeles. "José Hernández (director of Mariachi

Sol de Mexico) even showed up to the studio," he proudly mentions, "A lot of his guys help

me record the music." At first, I was a bit skeptical. How could a local no-name mariachi

musician record with some of the most popular and talented mariachi musicians in the

world? Guillén explained that many of the musicians from the big name groups often take on side projects, like record tracks and even play in private parties. Many times they'll have the tracks prerecorded so that all the customer has to do is sing his or her parts. Recording cost vary from five to ten thousand dollars, not including duplication cost.

When I got back home, I searched the internet for more of Mantecas's work. I searched through popular mariachi websites, and mainstream distribution channels, with no results. I sent a copy of the CD to many of my friends and family, in hopes that someone could tell me more about Mantecas. Secretly, I wanted to be the one to be the first to introduce his music to my circle. Other than a few mariachis in Portland, I had no idea how relevant *Mantecas* was with the mariachi community at large. All I knew is that he had a great sound and that the song selection was different from what everyone else was doing. Little did I know at the time that Mantecas and I had already connected several times.

When I entered the Portland mariachi scene, I was challenged to learn new repertoire. I started working with Mariachi Viva Mexico (MVM). This experience was different than what I was used to when it came to learning songs. Aside from regular *chambas* and *shows*, MVM also played *talón*, a pay-per-song performance setting. This required a great deal of practice on my part, and I was quickly overwhelmed by the rapidly growing song list. Two things were clear: one, it would not be possible for me to purchase all these songs; and two, I had no idea were would I even find all these songs. The local *charros* recommended Youtube. There I'd find many original recordings, or at least video footage of local groups playing the original versions. Guillén told me I could even find some footage of the local groups. Search after search, the rare songs and arrangements popped up for me on demand. Sure enough, many of the groups had indeed posted a handful of songs. I got to

work setting up my online Youtube profile and play list.

One day, while practicing along side my computer, I searched for the next song on my practice list. As I clicked on the video I noticed the name of the channel, something I'd never paid much attention to before, it read "Mantecas1972". I clicked back to my saved play-list, now well over two hundred songs, and I soon discovered that the same person had uploaded over seventy-five percent of the videos I had archived in my play-list. It was in fact El Mantecas.

3.4 From Alex to El Mantecas

Alex "El Mantecas" González started playing mariachi in 1985 at age of thirteen. However, at the time, mariachi was more of an intervention than a personal interest. Alex was heavily involved with the local gangs in East Los Angeles, which landed him in prison and nearly killed him. After being stabbed multiple times in the stomach by rival gangs members, his father, Fortino González, was desperate to get him off the streets and out of trouble. Fortino was a *guitarra de golpe* player, a traditional but now rare instrument in mariachi. Through his connections with other mariachis, he arranged for his son to receive trumpet lessons. "I didn't like it [mariachi] at first," Alex told me, but he slowly developed a love and devotion for the music. His mentor, Cipriano Silva, a prominent trumpet player for the world-renowned Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán (3rd generation), took Alex under his wing. He focused on developing technique and an authentic mariachi sound, however Alex was never taught to read music. In mariachi, having a good ear was more important than reading music.

According to Alex, mariachis need to pick tunes up fast, and spontaneously

transpose complete songs. It would not make sense to practice every song, in every key.

Mariachi is a participatory art form. The client always picks the songs, not the mariachi. You

never know what the client is going to ask for, so you have to be ready for anything they

throw at you. Mastering your instrument and understanding how to use your scales is the

most efficient way to practice.

Alex joined a community of over five hundred musicians. "I am always playing with

someone different," he says. This is because the mariachi community is in constant turnover.

Musicians are always moving from one group to another, trying to find the most work. Other

mariachis are migrant workers, traveling back and forth between Mexico and the US. There

is a season; *charros* come back from Mexico in mid-April just in time for *Cinco De Mayo*.

They go back home to Mexico in Late august, only to return again for a few weeks for the

Virgin of Guadalupe festivities on December 12th. "That is why I've never wanted to be a

group leader, too many problems," says Alex. Group leaders are constantly struggling to find

reliable and competent musicians. Musicians are shuffled around like a deck of cards. "You

learn to play with everyone. You start recognizing patterns and styles." There is a reason

why most mariachis wear a black suit and red bow tie. The trick is to make it look like the

group has been playing together for a longtime, when in fact, it could be the first and only

time they ever play together.

Los Angeles, the area where Alex works, is known for being nucleus of mariachi

music in the US. "Everyone passes through here," asserts Alex, "I've played with the best

and the worst, I don't care, I play with everybody. I like to play with professionals, but being

professional does not mean that you are a great virtuoso musician; there are great musicians

that are not professional. To me, professional means that you dress well, behave, and give it

your best every time. You must know how to blend in." Ironically, blending in is not what *El Mantecas* is known for. Alex is known for a rich deep sound on the trumpet that is now uncommon in mariachi. He is compared to Miguel Martinez, musician credited for the original mariachi sound, and Cipriano Silva, Martinez's predecessor.

Both Martinez and Silva were member or the prestigious Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán. "I am from the school of *Vargas,"* Mantecas proudly states, meaning that he believes that Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán is the prime example and absolute authority on authentic mariachi sound and repertoire. *Vargas* mostly refers to a specific period of time (50's, 60's and 70's) when mariachi was going through innovative changes. Some mariachis consider this the classic era of mariachi. Mantecas considers himself to be a traditionalist. His music is a reflection of what he feels mariachi should be. But he is the first to acknowledge that he works within two worlds. His performances require him to adapt to the *cajón* or the standard style, often the lowest common denominator. "It does not matter how good you are," says Mantecas, "if you don't know the standard arrangement, no one will invite you." On the other hand, Mantecas's recordings are very personal and unique. "I record songs from my village back in Mexico and I play them the way I believe they should be played. Very few mariachis are playing the traditional Vargas style today," Mantecas argues. Mariachi Los Campers de Nati Cano is the only group that comes close, according to him, "Por que tocan con huevos (because they play with balls), with feeling."

Many of the musicians, especially trumpet players, bring in outside influences, like jazz and blues, which is changing the traditional sound of mariachi. "I like jazz and blues, but as a mariachi [musician], one should play mariachi. There is so much more to be explored within our music. Today mariachis tend to record the same songs over and over, changing a

little arrangement here and there. When they record new songs they are drawing from South America, Spain and the U.S., Why? There is so much music in our villages, as old mariachis die-off, we lose our songs because we never bother to ask them. This is why people like my recordings, because its different, but it's still very traditional and very Mexican"

Mantecas's frustration with mariachi also comes from the emergence of "show" mariachis, whose repertoire is centered on stage performances (Sheehy, 2006). The latest trend, he explains, has been to create *popurris*, or bits and peaces of traditional songs arranged into one. "I can tell you right now, people don't want to hear that shit, they want to hear their songs, the whole thing." Mantecas defends his argument with an example from his experience playing *talón* and *chambas,* where the majority of songs requested are *corridos, boleros, rancheras*, and *sones*, they never ask for the *popurris*. "Customers complain again and again saying, why did you cut off my song?"

Like it or not, Mantecas plays everything. "My real voice is in my recordings, they are for me and my kids, and I don't give a damn who likes them or not." To be able to make a living as a mariachi, Mantecas has to learn how to play with everyone from big name groups to local groups alike. The big name groups work no different than the local groups, says Mantecas. Big name groups like the *Camperos, Vargas, Imperial* etc., work with sheet music, "but I can tell you that most of their musicians don't know how to read."

Sometimes, mariachis audition for work with the big names, but most of the time group leaders learn of mariachi through word of mouth. "I've played with all the guys from *Camperos*, *Sol de Mexico*, and *Vargas*. They are out here playing *chambas* on the side, just like the rest of us. I could be at a wedding playing with a trumpet player from *Camperos* and violin players from *Sol de Mexico*… That's how you make a name for yourself. That's how I

started playing with *Los Camperos*. One day a friend of mine told me that [Jesús] Chuy

Guzmán, artistic director of *Los Camperos*, wanted me to stop by La Fonda, [a restaurant

formerly owned by *Los Camperos*]. Based of my friends message, I showed up for a

rehearsal and ended up working with them for about a year."

Mantecas is also known for playing with both local groups and big name groups as

well. He explains that in the same week he was on *Sábado Gigante* a very popular Mexican

TV show (like being on David Letterman or Jay Leno), to playing at a backyard barbeque.

3.5 What's in a Name?

"It's like a big family, very much like a gang, we even have nicknames for everyone,

like, *Pancho Loco, El Animas, La Moneda,* etc… I've played with people for over 10-15 years

and I still don't know their real name." A nickname usually means you've been accepted and

recognized in the community, but nicknames often aim to make fun of the individual: *La

Perra* or the bitch, *Murci*, or batty. "That's the way of the *charro*, if you're fat, you'll more than

likely get a nickname like *fatty,* or *porky*; there is no use fighting it. The more you fight it the

worse it gets." More importantly nicknames are strongly linked to a charro's reputation.

"Who's the gig with?" mariachis always ask. "When someone is burned, no one wants to

play with them" says Alex. Being "burned" means developing a reputation beyond repair.

Some group leaders that are so burned they never contact musicians directly, but ask other

musicians to do it for them. A mariachi's reputation can be burned for many reasons, paying

too little for gigs, getting too drunk at performances, being overbearing or controlling at gigs,

not distributing tips. If one crosses the line one too many times, mariachis start refusing gigs

from them.

Mariachi is a *gossip community.* The main line of communication in the mariachi world is through the gab. Stories are repeated hundreds and thousands of times, each time more elaborate and exaggerated than the next. Since most mariachis are freelance musicians, the gossip is used to protect each other, like an informal community newsletter. For example, if one week a particular group leader short-changes a musician or promises more work than he/she actually has, by the next weekend mariachis will insist on being paid in advance. Repeat offenders soon find themselves without a workforce and often must move to another community. Often these people will change their nicknames and attempt to start all over, "but it's hard to do, there will always be someone that knows who you are, it's only a matter of time," says Mantecas.

3.6 Mariachi Mercantile

A mariachi's reputation encompasses every aspect of his or her life. The *charro* is interested in everything: past history, drug use, sexual orientation, and family relations. They want to know what kind of car you drive, what area of town you live in etc. It is like an informal credit check to assess risk. If a mariachi treats his or her own brother poorly, then what can one, who is not even related expect? If a group leader's house is too big, where is the money coming from? Though mariachis work in groups, they are fiercely independent. They believe earning should be distributed in equal parts and that groups leaders take only a small part as their commission. A leader that takes too much commission is quickly labeled a *caiman,* because like the cold-blooded reptile, they often take too big of *bites*. Mariachis will advise each other, "don't go with that guy, he's a *caiman*, how do you think he pays for that big house?"

The standard pay rate for mariachis in the Los Angeles area is $60 per hour per musician. Some group leaders play more, $70 to $80 per hour. *Mantecas* admits that he's played for less, especially for friends or family on low budgets. "You have to be willing to play for anything because you never know how much work you'll have in the future." But musicians have to be cautious; many group leaders will claim to have low paying gigs just to get a bigger cut.

Mantecas used to frequently do *talón,* but now prefers not to. "I don't mind selling my music [per song], I just don't like the environment, too dangerous," he explains, "Drugs and hard alcohol are never a good combination, in the *talón* that is all you ever find… You never work for honest hardworking people; they would never spend their hard earn money on 10-15 hours of mariachi... You don't have to be a genius to know that these guys are *tiradores* [drug dealers]." Indeed it is hard to imagine some paying $4,000 to $10,000 of mariachi, but according to many mariachis, it happens.

The mariachi repertoire has greatly expanded because of *tiradores* who are known for hiring mariachis for long periods of time. They are usually asking for the latest *narco-corridos* or drug ballads. "I'll play it, but I don't like it," says Mantecas. Mariachis are now expected to know these songs as part of the standard repertoire.

3.7 Mantecas1972 Channel

The videos posted by Alex/"Mantecas" to YouTube are central to the communal learning of such repertoire. Mantecas sees his role in the mariachi community as preserving the authentic mariachi sound and repertoire. This means providing access to songs that are hard to find in the mainstream distribution channels. Besides his own personal recordings,

Mantecas has taken it upon himself to make mariachi music accessible to all. "My page is a collection of old and new recordings, most are classic hard-to-find recordings, many are from local groups in Mexico." With over six million views, his channel has developed into a dynamic community of mariachis and aficionados. His viewers post questions on proper technique and aesthetics. He gets the most response from his own work. Viewers or fans post requests, praises, and even critiques of his work. "Most comments are positive, every now and then there are a few negative ones... I always respond with a thank you and a promise to get it better on the next recording. There is not much else you can do, plus I really don't care if they like it."

One of his most interesting albums is an educational CD where Mantecas records exercises from the popular *Arban's Complete Conservatory Method: for trumpet (1982).* "Though most mariachis can't read music...they need to learn these exercises," as Alex told me about this recording. Mantecas knows his role in the community as musician and educator. He has many students on Youtube that he tutors for free via Internet. They are always posting questions, and Mantecas personally answers everyone.

Mantecas's main audience is the community of *charros.* "I know they are watching, because they tell me so. I receive messages and phone calls from all across the US and Mexico." He has been contracted to perform and record albums with other groups and musicians. Recently, he's been invited to present at several mariachi conferences based solely on the fact that they love his sound. "All this is through Youtube," says Mantecas.

Like Mantecas, Mariachis all around the country have started posting their videos on social media sites such as Youtube and MySpace. But mariachis are not necessarily drifting away from standard media. During my recent trip to the Mariachi Plaza in East Los Angeles,

it was quite obvious that the business card is still king. Walking through the plaza, I was immediately approached by the mariachis soliciting their work. "*Están buscando mariachis, muchachos*?" are you young men looking for mariachis?, He asked, quickly handing us a business card.

Along the streets, parked vans displayed decals reading *Mariachi Celaya*, *Mariachi Azteca,* and other generic mariachi names along with a telephone numbers. At the plaza's coffee shop, mariachis gathered at the outdoor tables, patiently waiting for the next gig. I could hear the latest gossip, who double-crossed who? And who was trying to sleep with another guy's wife?

The business surrounding the plaza had walls covered with mariachi business cards. Coincidentally, among all the business cards, I found one reading " Mariachi Tepalcatepec de Michoacan, Representate: Alex *El Mantecas* González," It was Mantecas's group. Perhaps the biggest shock of the day however, came when I passed a local street vender selling pirated CD's. Among the selection was the complete collection of Mantecas's work. When I asked Mantecas how he felt to see his work pirated he shrugged it off, "I know my work is being recorded and sold. That is why I only make 1,000 copies, no more. By the time you sell 1,000 everyone has a copy." I couldn't help put remember the first pirated copy I received from a fellow *charro* a few months back. "That's what it's for" Mantecas explained, "a painting is to be looked at, and music is to be listen to. Besides, I get gigs from them."

The data shows that mariachi cultural entrepreneurs like Mantecas and Humberto are working in with formal (i.e. restaurants, webtools) and informal (i.e. community networks) infrastructures, and developing innovative solutions to solve complex community problems (i.e. finding sustainable work solutions for artists through *plantas*, and providing access to

mariachi educational resources through the internet). Mantecas and Humberto as cultural entrepreneurs at the center of these converging infrastructures, not only "building bridges" but creating a "roadmap" detailing hidden community needs.

The cultural entrepreneur is driven and committed to three core elements: cultural mission, social role and responsibilities, and creativity and innovation. These core elements emerge and are developed by the community (or communities), which the cultural entrepreneur serves. Mantecas's educational recordings (mentioned earlier in this chapter) are a prime example of the relationship between community, mission, social responsibilities and innovation. Mission: Mantecas believes that artistic excellences is directly linked to national identity. Social Responsibility: Mantecas feels a need to pass on his skills and knowledge. Innovation: Mantecas has found creative ways to provide his community with assess to this knowledge by producing and publishing (through Youtube) his educational recordings. Viewers can post comments and ask questions, even share the video with others. The data suggests that it's more than just a guy posting trumpet exercises on Youtube, but an entire community (or communities) in action.

Chapter IV: Analysis

4.1 Mariachi Media

The term *charro* literally translates to Mexican cowboy. Mariachis wear charro outfits, specifically *de gala,* or a suit worn for special occasions. Mariachis consider themselves to be an important part of "*el folkor Mexicano"* or Mexican folklore along with the *charrería* (Mexican rodeo) and *ballet folkórico*. Mariachi music celebrates the *charro* as the iconic male figure of *México.* The popular figure of the *charro* and *charro life* has made mariachi music an important cultural commodity. Thus, most of the traditional mariachi repertoire is easily found through mainstream distribution channels (i.e. music stores, television, and radio). My experience with mariachi came primarily through these channels.

My arrival on the Portland mariachi scene brought me to believe that there was a second distribution channel, one I did not have access to. I knew the standard songs, but not the standard arrangements. I went from group to group, and the arrangements were consistent. I recorded my fellow mariachis and compared it to local groups in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Los Angeles, New York, and other cities all via Youtube and again arrangements were consistent. However, compared to mainstream recordings, many arrangements did not match. The older the song was, the harder it was to find the standard arrangement.

A recent trip to Los Angeles confirmed that indeed mariachis were playing the same arrangements performed in the same keys as the mariachis in Portland. It became obvious that this information was being communicated to mariachis throughout the US and Mexico and perhaps the world in unconventional ways, but how?

4.2 A Tradition of Change

Mariachi is inherently a migrant genre, from its emergence in then rural Jalisco to Mexico City sparked many changes highlighted in the second chapter. Today the migration is from Mexico to the United States. Musically the genre is in constant change, consuming all popular music in its path, including *norteño*, *banda*, *naco-corrido*s, rock, pop, jazz, classical, and Latin American. The migation and musical transformation of mariachi is driven primarily by economic factors. In South Carolina, Mariachi Los Cabos introduced songs like Michael Jackson's *Beat It*, Pink Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall,* and The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* to accommodate Anglo clientele. Here in Portland the *Orange Blossom Special* is part of the standard repertoire. Mariachi Sol de México plays Glen Miller and recently released a version of *The Devil went Down to Georgia* on Youtube.

The influence of American pop-culture on mariachi music in Mexico is evident through festivals, such as *Mariachi Rock-O* in Guadalajara. The festival features prominent Mexican-based mariachi groups performing covers from groups like The Cure, Cold Play and Radio Head. There is no easy way to track the forces at play in this *convergence of cultures* (Jenkins), but perhaps the same vehicle driving the *rancheras, sones* and *corridos* from Mexico to the United States, is bringing music back to mariachis in Mexico.

4.3 The Vehicle of Change

There is no doubt that Manteca's recordings are different from what contemporary mariachis are recording. Though mariachis are eager to listen to his next album, as a performer, Mantecas plays the role of *"fiel soldado"* or faithful soldier, playing not his songs

or arrangements but the community standard, *de cajón.* This implies that there are two realities within mariachi; one is about work, while the other is about art. At gigs it is about work, "playing what the people what to hear." In the studio, it's about defining an art form. Mantecas meticulously inspects every second of each track. He knows that the mariachis will be just as particular when listening and critiquing his work.

These two worlds however, are feeding off each other. In Portland, mariachis will occasionally add Manteca's signature *son* endings. *"Esta salió enmantecada,"* or *this one [song] came out buttered-up*, Mariachis jokingly comment to each other, referring to Mantecas's style (*Manteca* literally meaning fat or butter in Spanish). This doesn't necessarily mean the standard will change, but at least for one instance Mantecas's style was part of the *cajón*. Mantecas knows that his work needs to be listened to in order for the community to start incorporating his style and repertoire to the *cajón*. The audio file (mp3, wav, etc.) becomes an important means of disseminating his music.

Independent mariachi audio recordings, like Mantecas's work, are made popular by people, the more copies are made, the more popular the work becomes, thus making it more likely that some of the recordings get incorporated into the standard mariachi repertoire. However, Mantecas only makes 1,000 CDs, "By the time I sell a thousand, everyone already has a copy," says Mantecas. The concept is simple, the more popular a recording is, the more copies are distributed making the work more common. Mariachis begin to copy the style; clients start requesting songs, perhaps slowly becoming part of the standard. This is a way mariachi self-regulates, if the recording is not of interest to the community, is does not get passed around. This is why *piratas* or pirates do not bother Mantecas—they provide more channels of dissemination, meaning that more people listen to his music. To him, this is

more important than turning a profit from the CDs. "I don't want this style to die," says

Mantecas, articulating his personal mission and social responsibility.

Mantecas considers himself part of a dying legacy, that of Miguel Martinez, Cipriano

Silva, and his father Fortino González. His frustration with contemporary mariachi recordings

appears to be from the idea that the *work* side of mariachi is slowly taking over the *artistic*

side. Recordings are no longer used to experiment with mariachi aesthetics, but to

regurgitate the standard repertoire or to "pollute" the genre with techniques and styles from

other musical forms, such as, jazz or classical. Because only a hand full of mariachis get

record contracts, the work of those select few are influencing the genre more and more.

Therefore pirates are considered more like allies than enemies, providing the necessary

mass distribution channel for Mantecas to spread his music through out the community at

large. Pirates can be mariachis, aficionados, and even professional bootleggers. Some

pirates only make a few copies while others make hundreds. Most copies are given away for

free, from friend to friend. Other pirates make it their business. All copies of Manteca's work

are duplicated without official permission, but this is the unspoken understanding between

artist and bootlegger. Mantecas gets a chance to sell a few original copies to recover his

initial investment and the bootleggers distribute the rest. This gives Mantecas's music far

greater reach and potential than it would on its own. There is minimal investment and risk to

both parties.

4.4 The Fuel

Mantecas works within a community of over 500 musicians, many of which are

constantly migrating from community to community within Mexico and the US. In Portland,

mariachi groups rely heavily on such migrant mariachis. Prior to the summer months, group leaders from Oregon have been known to travel to all the way to Los Angles to recruit musicians for the season. Humberto "Beto" Guillén, director of Mariachi Viva México says that musicians are always calling from Mexico and throughout the US to inquire about work. Beto, who's family has deep roots in mariachi, confidently books-up this calendar with events, knowing that the first wave of mariachis from Los Angeles, and other areas will arrive right before *Cinco de Mayo.* "As you get to Seattle, WA. there are less mariachis, but I know them all," says Beto, "They've all played for me at some point and every now and then, help them out too." Beto's relationships with regional mariachis are similar to Mantecas's experiences; both work within and are aware of the transnational *mariachi wave.* Like the cultural entrepreneur, discussed in chapter 1, mariachi group leaders form mini "creative clusters" (UNESCO, 2008). Mariachis not only partner with other musicians based on their musical talent, but for their skills such as instrument repair, hemming and alterations, computer literacy, ability to legally drive, etc.

Migrating personnel brings unique challenges to group leaders. In the winter months, when work is low and musicians are scarce, group leads must secure summer performances even though they may not have the personnel to cover the events. There is significant risk both legally and economically if a mariachi leader cannot produce enough musicians. Booking events becomes a double edge sword, overbook and you don't have enough musicians to cover, under-book and you may not have enough work to keep your musicians from leaving. If musicians do leave, then the mariachi cultural entrepreneur must work with other local groups. Without the risk, mariachi cultural entrepreneurs cannot survive. But the cultural entrepreneur is creative and is always prepared, he or she stocks

spare mariachi suits and instruments, so if there is ever a need for an extra mariachi, a

substitute is quickly found among the musicians outside the mariachi community. The subs

are dressed as *charros* and given a crash course in mariachi. However, more often then not,

the news of work quickly draws in mariachis from Mexico and throughout the US.

The *mariachi wave* brings much more than personnel. From Mexico, mariachis will

bring *cintos de pita* or hand-embroidered belts, and other hard to find *charro* accessories,

such as *guitarrón* strings. Mariachi musical instruments such as *guitarrónes* and *vihuelas,*

particularly Morales brand are highly desired in the U.S. These items are brought over to sell

or trade amongst the mariachis. From the United States, musical instruments such as Bach

Stradivarius Trumpets and Parduba mouthpieces are especially desired in Mexico.

Commonly, mariachi leaders become the center of these transactions. The mariachi cultural

entrepreneurs understand community needs for instruments and accessories which are hard

to find and expensive in the US. The cultural entrepreneur fills gaps by offering cultural

products that may not be considered profitable through conventional means (e.g. music store

may not carry *guitarrones* because they may not see a market for them).

In storage, Beto has *guitarrónes*, *vihuelas,* and various other instruments waiting to

be purchased by local mariachis. Beto works very much like a pawnshop, buying instruments

from musicians in need of money, usually at the end to the season. The following season the

instruments are sold to the new arriving musicians. After my interview with Mantecas, he

asked if I was in the market for a trumpet. "$2000.00 with case," he prodded. This is how

cultural entrepreneurs differ from musicians. Where the musician's focus is solely on

performance, the cultural entrepreneur encompasses an entire art world.

The mariachi wave is important to Mantecas because his music is distributed through

the hands and minds of migrant mariachis. Copies of copies are made of his work and then it's copied again. The pirate, at this point does not bother to copy the CD sleeve or write the down the names of songs, like the burned CD I acquired that read only "Mantecas". This method of distribution at the surface appears chaotic and highly unpredictable. There is no practical way to track the number of copies created or their destination. But what is clear is that some how Mantecas's music and influence appears in several communities.

At the center of all this is Mantecas, the cultural entrepreneur, combining innovation, social responsibility, personal mission into a cultural product. With the help of his community, he records, produces, and distributes his work.

4.5 The Infrastructure

Amidst the complexities, there emerged a sophisticated infrastructure within the *charro* community. The infrastructure is made up of traditional and emerging distribution points. Though these points operate independently, they indeed form part of a larger network.

Traditionally, *Plantas* (Sheehy 2006), or steady restaurant gigs are the hubs of mariachi activity in most cites. *Plantas* provide the steady income in the highly unpredictable entertainment market. That is not to say that *plantas* are not unpredictable. When restaurants go out of business, often the mariachis scramble to find the next hot spot. Staking claim to a successful *planta* has a profound impact on the quality and quantity of group members. The best musicians will often go where there is more money to be made. Group leaders must provide constant and consistent work to avoid the *golpe de charro,* or the *charro* strike. Group leaders that fail to provide steady work will often find themselves

without musicians. Musicians therefore are not only moving from city to city, but from group to group as well.

The *planta* also provides the time and space for the mariachi gab. New arrivals bring the latest gossip from afar, while those who have been around share the local news. Buying, selling, and trading amongst mariachis is also common in this space.

Equally important for obtaining work and personnel are the major mariachi plazas: Mariachi Plaza in East Los Angeles, Plaza Garibaldi in Mexico City, and Plaza de Mariachis in Guadalajara. These locations are the corner stones of mariachi activity and are often the most traveled points in the network.

Mariachi cultural entrepreneurs significantly rely on *plazas* and *plantas* to both find work and stay in business. These are the spaces mini "creative clusters" form (UNESCO 2008). These points become unofficial cultural centers, where mariachis learn the art and craft of mariachi, where stories are told to reinforce community values.

However *plantas* and *plazas* are not the only places where the mariachis gather to share ideas and find work. Many websites and social media sites have emerged bringing to the light the work of the cultural entrepreneur. Mantecas admits that he is far from being tech-savvy. "I don't even know how to open my email," he confesses. But with the help of his fellow mariachis, he launched his Youtube channel Mantecas1972 in the summer of 2008. Aside from his own recordings, Mantecas uploads songs from his vast collection of rare and vintage mariachi recordings. He learned to convert his old records and tapes into digital files and upload them to his Youtube channel. His main motivation to post came from the hundreds of requests for music from fellow mariachis. Mantecas got tired of burning CDs. With Youtube, he uploads the audio file once and mariachis can search the entire collection.

On March 23, 2010, Mantecas had almost 900 subscribers and over 6.3 million views. His site is often in top rank for Mexican region music channels on Youtube.

The importance of Mantecas1972 has less to do the music and more with the exposure of a community. Here mainstream meets underground and perhaps we are able see a side of mariachi most people do not have access to. Through Youtube we are now able to quantify views, read comments by the community members, and view subscriber profiles.

Mantecas and other cultural entrepreneurs are still vulnerable to our institutional policies. Weeks following my interview with Mantecas, his Youtube account was suspended, and Mantecas1972 Channel disappeared. Luckily and coincidentally, a few days later a new channel emerged, Mantecas 2010.

The Mantecas1972 was perhaps a virtual hub for mariachis, like the *plantas* and *plazas*. Mantecas admits that all though he doesn't rely on Youtube for work, he has found work through Youtube. He states that he's been invited to record for other groups and he's even been contracted as guest artist at a few national mariachi festivals. Group leaders from around the US invite him to gigs from time to time via Youtube.

The Mantecas1972 community is not made up entirely of mariachis or aficionados. Moreover, it is hard to tell whether these mariachis are part of the larger mariachi network, other than Mantecas assertions, "I know who they are because they tell me." This statement suggests two things: one, mariachis within the mariachi network is using the Mantecas1972 channel; and two, communication continues outside the channel. This means that mariachis still rely on the traditional media infrastructure. After all, Mantecas posts audio files from CD's handed to him by mariachi communities in Mexico and the US. Clearly, Mantecas1972 is an

extension of mariachi network, not a replacement.

4.6 Charro vs. Mariachi Revisited

Mariachi as a migrant community is in constant change (musically, physically, socially, etc.). Currents of ideas (identity, ethos, aesthetics) and goods (music, instruments, etc.) are in constant flow, to and from multiple inlets and outlets, simultaneously. Cultural entrepreneurs become both receptors and distributors of this information and cultural goods. At times, borders (physical, cultural, social, political, economic etc.) are crossed, and the line that divides formal and informal destabilizes.

As we begin to shed light on the interface between multiple community infrastructures and environments, what do we, as arts managers/cultural programmers/emerging entrepreneurs do with all of this information? If the aim if creating purposeful and strategic intersections, where and when should these intersections occur? Perhaps these questions can only be answered with everyone at the table. The challenge will be developing common ground (culture, language, value system, rules etc.) for these conversations to take place.

Chapter V: Whitepaper

The purpose of this study is to explore how mariachi leaders function as cultural entrepreneurs within local, regional, national and international mariachi communities. By understanding the "problem solving processes and approaches" of the cultural entrepreneur we may be able to better understand the needs of marginalized and underrepresented communities and develop solutions that will serve the needs of these communities.

In the communities I observed and interacted with in Portland and Los Angeles, mariachi group leaders did more than just book gigs and perform. Many of them are passionate artists, creative business people, community activists, social workers, and educators. They function as creators, producers, and distributors of cultural goods and services. They play an important role in developing and sustaining informal cultural infrastructures within their communities.

In Portland, OR, Humberto "Beto" Guillén and his father Apolinar Guillén established the first *planta* restaurant gig, making *El Puerto Marquez Mexican Seafood Restaurant* the center of mariachi activity in Oregon. Clients show up at random to book events or to pay for a few songs while they eat. Mariachi musicians from all over the US and Mexico also come around hoping to find work with Beto's group. In the last few months, Beto has opened his own restaurant in Beverton, OR, in an attempt to create a more formal cultural hub, similar to *La Fonda* and *Cielito Lindo* Restaurants in Los Angeles (owned and operated by prominent mariachi leaders).

The cultural entrepreneur has the skills and resources to develop environments of

cultural interaction and enterprise. Furthermore, the cultural entrepreneur understands the inner workings of the community and confidently navigates and interprets cultural values held by community members. *El Puerto Marquez* is than an important cultural resource that cannot be dismissed as "just another restaurant" because it plays a key role in mariachi culture infrastructure in these communities. Why is the center of mariachi activity in a restaurant and not at a conventional cultural institution?

Let's look at the question from a different perspective, one that accounts for social and virtual networks. From his home in Southern California, Alex Gonzáles, also known as El Mantecas, started posting independent, as well as rare and vintage, mariachi albums on his YouTube site Mantecas1972. Within a year, Mantecas had over 8,000 songs posted, with over 6 million views; his channel is often ranked in the top 50 most viewed channels in the Musicians Mexico category. The Smithsonian Folkways Recordings a nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, also posts mariachi resources such as, music and education materials, yet they have significantly less views on their Youtube channels (434,236 views compared to 6,000,000 views). These are two separate entities with perhaps similar missions and goals (documentation, preservation, and dissemination of audio recordings and educational materials to strengthen people's engagement with their own cultural heritage), yet every different resources and results.

Though it is difficult to compare a national institution with an individual cultural entrepreneur due to the differential scale of factors, resources and considerations, I propose that juxtaposing these two examples allows us to see who has access to which communities (rather than who is 'right' or 'wrong', more efficient or less efficient, etc.). This is why it would be hard to dismiss Mantecas's work as irrelevant, not only because of the quantity people

watching, but also the specific demographic the Mantecas channel caters to, which is primarily mariachis and aficionados. Beto and Mantecas have combined their individual entrepreneurial skills, varying resources, and insider knowledge of the mariachi community to develop informal cultural resources and environments.

On the surface it appears that mariachi cultural entrepreneurs are independent actors but they are actually working within an established system; a transnational network of mariachi musicians. In Portland, Humberto confidently overbooks his summer calendar, knowing that the first wave of mariachi musicians will arrive just before *cinco de mayo.* He takes considerable legal risk based on his intimate knowledge of community migration patterns. His relationship with the mariachi community at large not only gives him access to personnel, but also access to cultural goods and services on an international level. Humberto's home becomes the community's music store/pawnshop where cultural goods are bought, sold, and traded. Because these transactions occur bellow the radar, assessing community need is difficult without access. Perhaps, the cultural entrepreneur can be that access.

The wave of musicians that provides Humberto with personnel and cultural goods, is perhaps the same wave that spreads Mantecas's work throughout the United States and Mexico. Though Mantecas only makes 1,000 copies of any of his many albums, his work spreads virally through the hands of community members. The same people who purchase his CD's will make copies for their friends and colleagues. I can't help but to think of my first introduction to Mantecas's music. A fellow mariachi was playing a burned copy of Mantecas's CD in his car stereo. "Where can I get a copy of this?" I asked. My colleague shrugged, "Take this one, I'll copy another one later." He ejected the burned CD and handed

it to me. Across the disc, hand-written in permanent marker were the cryptic words, "El Mantecas". Though I did not know it at the time, the audio files on the burned CD had traveled nearly 1,000 miles though the hands of mariachi musicians.

This unorthodox method in which Mantecas's work is distributed is difficult to track and monitor. It's hard to say how many copies are really out there, besides the thousand copies Mantecas sold, the bootleg copy I randomly received and the five copies I made for my family and friends. Yet Mantecas's work is widely known through out the community. Pirating music can mean several things. Perhaps it reflects a value system; this music is important enough to share and to listen to, but not important enough to pay for; at least more than once. Or perhaps it highlights a need for more independent media outlets; bootleg copies are made because it is the only way to have access to the information. Regardless we begin to ask the right questions, and again, the cultural entrepreneur is a key player.

My research explored the interface between mainstream cultural infrastructures (communities, cultural institutions and programming) and informal community infrastructures (i.e. *plantas, plazas*) in the mariachi community. I found mariachi cultural entrepreneurs (Mantecas and Beto) as key players in developing and sustaining these interfaces. However, the data shows that though there is community support and resources at the grass-roots level; there is a lack of interaction between cultural entrepreneurs and formal art and culture organizations. Undercofler (in *State of the Art* Weblog) argues that there is little support or resources for the cultural entrepreneur, such as "seed capital and hands-on support."

In recent weblogs (ArtsJournal.com) the discussions suggest that this gap between cultural entrepreneurs and mainstream artist and culture institutions will have to be addressed by art and culture sector leaders (perhaps functioning as cultural entrepreneurs

themselves), because as Taylor (2010) states, "If nonprofit or public status is the way to get there, fine. If not, they're [cultural entrepreneurs] open to a full range of other business options." This means that the cultural entrepreneur will follow the path of least resistance (economically, physically, socially, politically etc.) and often see formal institutions and barriers.

But I agree with Taylor in that (2010), "The professional nonprofit we've come to know as a standard in the past decades will continue to be an essential part of the arts and culture system. But it's also clear that those structures are not appropriate to every artistic or creative endeavor." However, I would add that both cultural entrepreneurs and art and culture sector leaders have many cultural resources that would benefit the other.

Cultural Entrepreneurs and the Mainstream Arts and Culture Sector [Recommendations]

Cultural entrepreneurs in this study have challenged art and culture sector leaders to revaluate the cultural environment. What is considered art? Where does art happen? How do people interpret and value art in their communities? By interfacing with the cultural entrepreneur, we can better answer these questions and develop culturally relevant programs and resources to marginalized communities.

The following list of recommendations provides insight on how to better interface with the cultural entrepreneur.

1) Money: Cultural entrepreneurs need access to seed capital. Though funding individuals through grants can be controversial (as seen at the national level with the NEA funding controversial artists), but cultural entrepreneurs have little resources

available to them aside from credit cards. I suggest providing low or no interest

cultural loans.

2) Professional Development and Hands-on support: Along with funding, organizations

should provide resources to help cultural entrepreneurs develop "realistic and

sustainable business plans" (artjournal.com, 2010). Though the cultural entrepreneur

may have great ideas, they may not always understand the large-scale political,

social, and economic landscape, which could have a profound impact on their

endeavors. Most importantly, organizations must teach cultural entrepreneurs how

to interface with their organizations. For example, many cultural entrepreneurs have

"community access," yet that access is organized in very different ways than formal

organizations. Most cultural entrepreneurs do not have a formal database of past

clients or community members, a skill that if developed can very valuable for both the

cultural entrepreneur and the organization.

3) Space: Not all support needs to be financial. It kills me to walk through organizations

only to see empty space (particularly studio space), knowing that cultural

entrepreneurs and their communities are practicing in garages and living rooms.

Yes, it costs money to have people use the space, but it is an investment. Providing

access to space can make these organizations into cultural hubs for these

marginalized communities.

4) Promote and support the value of art in our communities: Non-profit art and culture

organizations are always expressing the value of art and culture, yet many times they

are the first to ask for 'free performances" or discounts. If we truly believe in the value

of "arts and culture" then we must be wiling to pay the market value.

These recommendations come from this research and personal experience as a cultural entrepreneur. Though there was an attempt to generalize my recommendations, I am aware that there are specific factors in the communities I researched, which may not be present in others. Further research must be done to identify the function of cultural entrepreneurs in other communities and how they interact and interface with each other.

In conclusion, I do not believe that all cultural enterprise needs to fit in a neat box that is the formal cultural infrastructure. In fact, many of the cultural entrepreneurs I've encountered are perfectly satisfied and successful in the environment in which they work (perhaps created for themselves). The real purpose of this study was to illustrate that there is a system already in place, even if we as art and culture leaders do not see or understand it and as long as we keep applying the same format, we will only attract those compatible to that format.

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Interview Protocol for Instances of Cultural Entrepreneur Appendices A & B

Case Study: *Data ID:*

Key Descriptor:

Date: *Interview Location:*

Interviewee Details:

Consent: ____ Oral   ____ Written (form)   ____ Audio Recording   ____ OK to Quote
___Member Check

Notes on Interview Context:

Key Points:

CODING	INFORMATION	NOTES
Mission		
Social Res.		
Innovation		
Creation		
Production		
Distribution		
Interface		
Community Influence		

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

Preliminary Interview Questions
With Humberto Guillén and Alex Gonzáles

Personal
Why mariachi?
Personal History

Entrepreneurship

1. What are your short and long-term goals for your organization?

    a. Why are these goals important to you?

2. What do you have to do to reach your short and long-term goals?

3. What do you see as major obstacles?

4. What do you see as your major strengths?

5. Who are your **clients**?

    a. How did they become clients?

6. How do you find new clients?

7. How do you stay connected to your clients?

8. Who are your **musicians**?

    a. How did they become your musicians?

9. How are you connected to musicians?

    a. How do you find musicians?

10. How valuable are your musicians?

    a. How easily could they be replaced?

    b. What makes a "good" musician?

11. What is your turnover like?

12. How do you see your musicians helping you achieve your goals?

13. Besides providing work for your musicians, what do you do or have done for your musicians?

14. What do you pay musicians? And how does that compare nationally?

15. What do you feel is the next market or community you need to reach?

    a. How do you think you can get there?

Identity

16. Who is your community(ies)?

17. How do you see yourself as being connected to this community(ies)?

18. What is mariachi?

19. How are you stay connected to the music?

20. Who or what decides what mariachi is?

Community Development

21. What is your main role(s) in your community?

22. How are ways your organization engages the community?

23. How do you make someone a mariachi?

    a. Where do you find them? Or do they find you?

    b. What do you provide?

    c. What must they contribute?

    d. How do you pay them (if you pay them) compared to your other musicians?

24. How do you see local arts organizations helping you achieve your goals?

25. How do you see your community helping you achieve your goals?

26. What types of professional development to you provide your musicians?

27. Who is your community(ies)?

28. How do you see yourself as being connected to this community(ies)?

Cultural Network

29. How do you see the role of arts organizations in your community (education,

    representation)?

30. What community organizations (if any) do you see as helping you achieve your

    goals?

31. What local or regional art organizations are you familiar with?

32. What local or regional art organizations have you worked for or with?

33. What kind of support (if any) do you receive from these art organizations?

34. What do you see as barriers between you and these art organizations?

Social

35. What do your musicians value most?

36. What are the major challenges you musicians face on a personal level?

    a. Legal issues?

    b. Drugs?

    c. Immigration?

    d. Housing?

    e. Transportation?

37. What do you feel is your responsibility to help your musicians?

38. In what ways do you help your musicians on a personal level?

Media

39. How do mariachis use the internet?

40. What media tools to you find helpful in running your business? (connecting with clients, musicians etc.)

41. What web tools do you use?

42. What web tools would you like to learn how to use?

    a. Why do you think it would be helpful?

Data Collection Sheet for Participant Observation   ***Appendix C***

Case Study: *Data ID:*

Key Descriptor:

Date: *Activity Location:*

Activity: ____ Cultural Mission   ____ Social Responsibility   ____ Innovation
___Creation ____Production _____Distribution
Details:

_____

CODING	*OBSERVATION*	*NOTES*
Interface *Community Influence*		

Data Collection Sheet for Document Analysis   Appendix D

Case Study: *Data ID:*

Key Descriptor:

Date: *Document Location:*

Document Type: ____ Report, Article, Book etc ____ Arts Organizations' Written Materials
____ Job Descriptions ____ Online Information   ____ Notes   ____ Other: ____

Reference Citation:

CODING   *INFORMATION*   *NOTES*

Mission

Social Res.

Innovation

Creation

Production

Distribution

Interface

*Community
Influence*

Data Collection Sheet for WEB Video/Video Comments Analysis   **Appendix E**

Case Study: *Data ID:*

Key Descriptor:

Date: *Video Web Application: YouTube Mega Video My Space*

Other:_____

Video URL:_____

Activity: ____ Cultural Mission   ____ Social Responsibility   ____ Innovation
___Creation ____Production _____Distribution

Details:

_____

CODING	*OBSERVATION*	*NOTES*
Interface		
Community Influence		