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The Sacred and the Mundane: Images of Deity in Ordinary Objects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas

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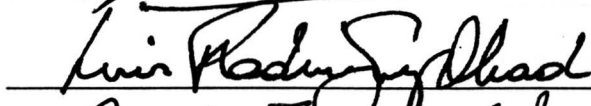
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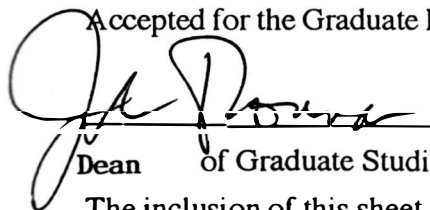
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The Sacred and the Mundane:

Images of Deity in Ordinary Objects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas

by

Monica Delgado Van Wagenen

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Thesis

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the Faculty of the College of Liberal Arts

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My graduate education would not have been possible without financial assistance.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Paula Rivera

who shared with so many people

what it meant to recognize the sacred in everyday life.

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on "iconotheophanies" or images of deity in ordinary objects. It further looks at the people who recognize and believe in iconotheophanies, specifically those of Mexican descent. This study hypothesizes that the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, which emphasizes the appearance of images on objects, sets a pattern for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to recognize the sacred in their own lives. Juan Diego, as the main character in the story, demonstrates a theoretical profile of five characteristics of individuals most likely to recognize iconotheophanies. These characteristics are: low level of acculturation, low socioeconomic status, male gender, older age, and increased religiosity. Each of the traits in this "Juan Diego Paradigm" constitutes psychological distress. In many cases the individuals who exhibit these traits are more likely to ritually reenact the mythical encounter with the Virgin of Guadalupe through iconotheophanies.

Data is presented from seven believers closely involved with the phenomenon in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The iconotheophanies include: the Virgin Mary's appearance on two trees, a window curtain, a shower floor and a Chevrolet Camaro, as well as the likeness of Jesus in a tortilla. Supplementary data collected from literature reports 87 additional iconotheophanies throughout the world. Ultimately the data reveals a clear connection between the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and iconotheophanies. Not only do iconotheophanies appear to be most prevalent among those of Mexican descent, but most witnesses liken themselves to Juan Diego. With the partial exception of gender, the data supports the Juan Diego Paradigm. Perhaps most significant, it demonstrates the importance of annual income in the phenomena.

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PREFACE

My interest in the appearance of deity in ordinary objects began in 1994 when I traveled to the south Texas to research the "Shrine of the Holy Tortilla," the "Shrine of the Holy Camaro," and the "Madonna Tree" in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of south Texas (the Valley). I had heard about the images from my husband, Michael Van Wagenen, who had lived and traveled in the area. He was working at the time as a documentary filmmaker and had shot some footage of the images for another project. It sounded like a wonderful subject for my senior research project required for my undergraduate Anthropology degree at Brigham Young University. I had never made a film before but I was up for the challenge. Together we managed to get grant money, borrow an old 16 mm camera, buy film, rent a van, and convince two friends to go as our film crew.

I knew nothing about these kinds of appearances or the individuals who recognize them before my trip down to the Valley. Admittedly, I was a little nervous about investigating a form of religious expression so seemingly foreign to my own experience. I feared that I would somehow offend believers or not be accepted by them. My experience proved to be just the opposite. I found myself immediately at ease among the people we met and interviewed and was drawn in by their sincere stories of faith. It was this honesty we attempted to capture on film.

Low budget filmmaking often proves to be a difficult endeavor. We spent three weeks documenting the people and events surrounding the three shrines. We had many technical problems with our equipment but the people we met and the things that we saw

made it worthwhile.

After returning home we anxiously waited for our film to be developed. I felt almost sick when we finally watched our footage and listened to the sound. The film camera we had brought had not run simultaneously with the reel-to-reel sound recorder so all of our footage was out of synch. The lens had not been properly calibrated so all of our footage was out of focus. While it seemed an impossible task, we knew we had to salvage the film. For months we carefully spliced tiny frames of sound to match the bits of fuzzy picture. After hundreds of hours at the editing table, *Mundo Milagroso* (Miraculous World), our twenty-seven minute documentary film, was born.

To our surprise, the film has been very well received by audiences throughout North America and Europe. It has been recognized with screenings including the Margaret Mead Film Festival at the American Museum of Natural History, Harvard's Peabody Museum, the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, and the Chicago Latino Film Festival. It also received prestigious awards including the Gold Apple (highest honors) from the National Educational Media Network. What was astonishing to me was that the audience and judges were able to see through the technical flaws and capture the profound spirit of believers. I was also amazed at the genuine interest in the subject. After the screenings, people would thank me for making the film because it helped them understand something they never would have otherwise.

This response inspired me to continue my quest to find meaning in these appearances of images representing deity in mundane objects. Why does this happen? Why do some people recognize an image appearing in an object as the Virgin Mary when

others do not? Why does this phenomenon seem to be more common among those of Mexican descent rather than other ethnic groups? Where does this propensity come from?

The opportunity to continue my education in a graduate program at the University of Texas at Brownsville allowed me the time and personal discipline necessary to continue my work on the subject and seek a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. I hope that this research will shed some light on this often misunderstood aspect of religiosity, particularly as it manifests itself in Mexican-American culture.

I feel it important to inform the reader of my cultural and religious background. I am a third-generation Mexican-American from California and I, unlike the majority of children raised in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, did not grow up speaking Spanish. I took classes in high school and college in order to gain a basic facility with the language. As it generally goes when learning a second language, I understand Spanish better than I can speak it. This has been a challenge when doing field research, but it is reflective of the continuing acculturation of Mexican-Americans in the United States. In addition, I should note that I am not Catholic. Therefore, I have no religious agenda for conducting this study, either to promote the validity of this phenomenon or to discount it.

Coming from an anthropological background, I understand the importance of both the cultural "insider"(emic) and "outsider"(edic) perspectives. The insider provides the subjective experience, a window into the cultural knowledge and experiences of a particular group. This perspective is vital because only an insider, raised in a particular cultural universe, can provide the outsider the necessary details. The outsider's goal, on the other hand, is to provide a more objective view. This perspective allows for

interpretation perhaps not recognized by insiders. Indeed it is difficult to cast aside enculturation and view one's own sociocultural system objectively. I believe that as a religious outsider, but somewhat cultural insider, I can provide a unique perspective on images of deity in ordinary objects among those of Mexican descent.

I have learned a great deal from my interaction with believers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. One of the people interviewed for *Mundo Milagroso* was Jim Davidson, the owner of the tree bearing the image of the Virgin Mary in Brownsville. Although he is not Catholic, he has allowed believers to worship in front of his home for years. Jim is often asked about the validity of the image on the tree in his yard, but he never shares his personal feelings. He simply replies, "God only knows" (Delgado and Van Wagenen, 1995).

People have often asked me the same question concerning the legitimacy or "truth" of images of deity in objects. The purpose of this work is not to prove or disprove the divine origin of these appearances. Rather, it is to explore the roots of this phenomenon, to gain a deeper perspective of the meaning behind these images, and better understand the believers who hold them sacred.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

> It was the twenty-fifth of February about four in the afternoon. I was making tortillas. I was about to eat the last one when I saw the apparition of the face of God in the tortilla. It surprised me. I went to show my husband and asked him, "What do you see in this tortilla?" He was surprised and said, "I see the face of the Lord our God. . . We should build us a little altar because this is something we should keep and treasure because it is divine," I said. "I'll look for someone who can build us a little altar to preserve it well. I want to decorate it, and I will decorate it." On Sunday I took it to the Church in San Juan and the head priest there didn't believe me (Delgado and Van Wagenen, 1995).[1]

Since the beginning of human history, people around the world have sought to come in contact with the sacred. This profound quest provides a sense of stability, significance, and meaning in a mysterious and often perilous universe. Although these human expressions have varied according to culture and era, the goal is the same: to bring the sacred into a profane and otherwise meaningless existence. One of the means in which humans have attempted to grasp the sacred is through images of divine beings (Barasch, 1992: 28). These images bring the unreachable, undefined sacred into the mortal sphere, making it close, comprehensible, and comfortable (Freedberg, 1989: 298, 313). Although made by human hands, they are associated with power and abilities because of their very resemblance to divinity (Barasch, 1992: 71). Some images, however, are more revered than others as they are believed to have miraculous origins outside the human world (Freedberg, 1989: 110). This is true for particular types of images recognized today throughout the United States and even the world: likenesses of deity appearing in ordinary objects. Some reported appearances have attracted thousands of curious and faithful people to such things as trees, windows, walls, and tortillas. Among the best known are a

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[1]See Chapter 4 for Paula Rivera's story.

thirty-foot likeness of the Virgin Mary on a Florida office building and Jesus's face in a

plate of pasta on a billboard in Georgia (Posner, 1997: 4-5; Gurvis, 1996: 68-71).[2] The

peculiar nature of these appearances at times place them on the lighter side of media

reports and popular culture.[3]

Skeptics believe these types of images can be explained scientifically. They assert

water deposits and palm oil produced the Virgin Mary in Florida, and Georgia's

"Spaghetti Jesus" is merely a coincidence (Posner, 1997: 4-5; Gurvis, 1996: 69). One

critic even called these sorts of images "very trivial form[s] of divine activity" and signs of

desperation (Firestone, 1991: E1).[4] These views, however, do not dissuade the devoted

who believe the appearances are true manifestations of the sacred, meant to bring hope

and comfort.

The contrast between believers and nonbelievers is profound but comes down to

one primary difference: their perception of an image. What causes this contrast? What

influences some individuals to look for and believe in these types of images when others

do not? The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the roots of this phenomenon and the

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[2]See photo of Florida image, Appendix A, Figure 1.

[3]For example, in 1996 an employee in a Tennessee coffee shop discovered a
cinnamon roll with the likeness of Mother Teresa, the Calcutta nun. The comical "nun-
bun" was introduced to a national audience (Reuters, 1997: A12). An appearance of
deity in an object was also part of an episode of the popular animated series, *The
Simpsons* in which Homer Simpson dreams of a visit with God. At the end of their
conversation God remarks, "You'll have to excuse me, I have to appear in a tortilla in
Mexico" (Meyer, 1992).

[4]Quote given by Gerald Larue, chairman for the Committee for the Scientific
Examination of Religion.

people who are closely involved in it. This study examines the cultural and religious origins of images of deity that appear in ordinary objects for one group of people, those of Mexican descent. Although other ethnic groups have recognized such images, it is hypothesized that Mexicans and Mexican-Americans have a stronger propensity to identify and venerate them due to their particular cultural and religious history.[5] The Virgin of Guadalupe was said to have miraculously appeared in the cloak of a poor, indigenous man named Juan Diego as a sign to convince an unbelieving Archbishop. The story is an integral part of the collective Mexican heritage, transformed for believers from traditional narrative to cosmic myth. The tangible image accompanying the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance set a pattern for individuals of Mexican descent to recognize the sacred in their own lives, manifested through images of deity in mundane objects.

It is hypothesized that when Mexicans and Mexican-Americans recognize an image of deity in an ordinary object, they become as Juan Diego and ritually reenact the mythical encounter with the Virgin of Guadalupe. Juan Diego, the main character, thus becomes the theoretical archetype for those who recognize images of deity in ordinary objects. Therefore, it is also hypothesized that the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative provided a model in which to evaluate the likelihood for certain individuals of Mexican descent to become involved in the phenomenon. In the story Juan Diego exhibited several socio-demographic characteristics. The five considered to be most influential are: low level of acculturation, low socioeconomic status, male gender, older age, and a high degree of personal

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[5]In this study the term "Mexican" refers to a person who lives in Mexico or is a recent immigrant to the United States. "Mexican-American," on the other hand, refers to an individual of Mexican descent who is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

religiosity. Together these factors compose what will be called the Juan Diego Paradigm. Each of these factors is presumed to cause increased levels of psychological distress in the individuals that have them. Therefore, it is presumed that the more characteristics an individual exhibits or the greater the tendency towards these conditions, the higher the level of distress and thus the stronger the possibility the person will recognize an image of deity in an ordinary object. These ideas will be presented in Chapters 2 and 3, the "Literature Review" and "Theoretical Orientations."

Data is collected primarily from seven individuals involved with appearances of deity in mundane objects. All are located in a small corner of the United States where these types of images are particularly common, the Lower Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. Supplementary data is also included from the literature available on the topic and compiled into a list of 93 reported appearances. The findings and conclusions will be presented in Chapters 6 and 7, the "Data and Analysis" and "Conclusion."

Rationale for Studying the Problem

This investigation was conducted for three reasons. First, the cultural and religious roots of this particular phenomenon have never before been the topic of study, particularly as it relates to those of Mexican descent. Although many scholarly investigations have focused on the Virgin of Guadalupe, and various reports on images of deity in objects have relayed her story, no serious inquiry into a connection between the two has been conducted. This study examines the roots of the phenomenon by linking the past with the present, the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe with reported appearances of

divine images in objects, placing them in the context of the Mexican and Mexican-American experience.

The second reason for carrying out this study is to contribute to the growing body of Mexican-American religious literature. Mexican-Americans, as well as other Hispanics, have in recent decades begun to intellectually explore their unique religiosity, often as it relates to the Virgin of Guadalupe (Elizondo, 1997: 64-65).[6] This study will hopefully add another thread to the colorful tapestry of Mexican-American religiosity, helping to create a clearer picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe and her impact on the lives of believers.

The third reason for undertaking this study is to provide a greater understanding of not only the tangible images of deity in objects, but of the people who recognize and venerate them. These individuals have at times been ridiculed for their beliefs (Blocker, 1997; Bynum; Dart, 1992; Firestone, 1991: E1). Perhaps a serious examination of their experiences, coupled with an inquiry into the origins of this phenomenon, can demonstrate that believers are not as different or as peculiar as they may appear to be. They are ordinary people looking for and recognizing the sacred in their own lives through a culturally prescribed pattern.

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[6]The term Hispanic is an all-encompassing word used to refer to people from Mexico, Central, and South American which emphasizes their Spanish roots. For further reading on Mexican-American theology see Guerrero, 1987; Espín, 1992: 62-87; Rodriguez, 1994; and Goizueta, 1998: 261-288.

Definition of Terms

Many terms are used in the study of religious phenomena, and their meaning often

varies according to context. At times adequate terms simply do not exist. It is therefore

necessary to provide specific definitions that will be used throughout the remainder of this

work, and to create new terms when required.

All supernatural manifestations not sanctioned by Roman Catholic authority fall

into the realm of "folk" or "popular" religion.[7] This unsanctioned religiosity is defined as:

> The totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the
> people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the
> official religion (Yoder, 1974: 14).

What has been called "popular Catholicism" among those of Mexican descent and

other Hispanics emerged in the Americas through syncretism, the blending of religion from

both the Old World and the new.[8] Hispanic religious scholar Orlando Espín maintains that

popular Catholicism among Hispanics developed as the result of suffering and

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[7]Some scholars have discussed the derogatory implications of the term "folk" religion. For example, Primiano suggests that the word inherently "devalues" such beliefs and practices, making them appear "residualistic," lower than the "official" religion (1995: 37-56). However, the most common term used in the study of Mexican-American religiosity is "popular" religion, so this work will follow in the same manner.

[8]Popular Catholicism for Mexican-Americans, like that of other Hispanics, is a blend of beliefs and traditions from both Europe and Mexico. Although it has varied over time from region to region, it began originally as a means for the native peoples to preserve their traditional religion. They continued many of their beliefs and celebrations but under the veneer of Catholicism. This idea is discussed in Brenner's classic work, *Idols Behind Altars* (1929). Today folk Catholicism has developed into a complex blend of ideas and practices in which its adherents typically do not see a conflict between it and Catholic doctrine. This has proved frustrating to many church leaders who often counsel their congregations not to participate in popular Catholicism which may include, but is not limited to, devotion to unapproved saints, unsanctioned appearances, or traditional healing methods, such as spirit channeling, touch therapy, or spiritual herbalists.

vanquishment (1997: 20-28).[9] He believes it began initially after the conquest and was

further compounded by lower-class status in the United States after the annexation of the

Southwest in 1848 (Espín, 1994: 314). Although Hispanics constitute the largest ethnic

group within the U.S. Catholic Church, some feel their needs are not recognized and

met.[10] It is likely that this growing separation between the workings of the official

Church and the lived religion of the people has allowed a rich and colorful popular religion

to flourish (Sandoval, 1983: 60). Espín speculates that popular Catholicism is not only

the way in which the majority of Hispanics in the U.S. express their religiosity, but that it

is an integral part of all Hispanic cultures (1994: 313).[11]

Appearances of the Virgin Mary have typically been referred to as "Marian

apparitions." "Apparition" is a common term used to describe many types of supernatural

manifestations, which in actuality refer to two distinct events: "hallucinations" and

"illusions" (Carroll, 1986: 117).[12] Hallucinations, commonly called "visions" or

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[9]See Espín, 1997 for a thorough theoretical discussion on popular Catholicism among Hispanics.

[10] Some Hispanics are looking outside the Catholic Church to Protestant religions in an attempt to find a more active and personal religiosity. For a discussion on this topic from a Catholic perspective, see Diaz Vilar, 1990. For statistics on Catholics in America see Menendez, 1993: 17. For discussions of the Mexican-American relationship with the Church see Guerrero: 28-29, 64, 73-78; and Sandoval, 1983: 30, 60. For an in-depth study on the alienation and dissatisfaction of Mexican-Americans in the Catholic Church see Hurtado, 1976.

[11]One author believes this to be the case in Mexico as well, speculating that 80% of Mexicans practice popular Catholicism (Escalada, 1994: 12).

[12]Christian refers to three types of phenomena as "apparitions." The first he describes as typical apparitions, the manifestation of a person. The second he calls "signs," physically occurring phenomena that can be confirmed by the senses. The third is

"apparitions," occur when a person claims to see the manifestation of a supernatural being.[13]   During the experience, the subject usually enters a trance-like state and becomes unaware of his or her surroundings. Although others may gather to watch a person experiencing a hallucination, they cannot see the vision themselves (Carroll, 1986: 117-118). Some well-known examples of apparitions occurred in 1858 in Lourdes, France, when a fourteen-year-old girl named Bernadette Soubirous reportedly saw the Virgin Mary. On the numerous occasions Bernadette saw the apparition, she entered a trance and was unaware of others around her. People watching her could not see or hear the apparition themselves (Keyes, 1960: 105-128).[14]

An illusion, on the other hand, is a supernatural explanation of a naturally occurring anomaly in the physical world (Carroll, 1981: 117). Unlike a hallucination, illusions can be corroborated by others because they tangibly exist. The difference is in the explanation of the perceived aberration. Each person interprets them in terms of cultural background, religious upbringing, and personal experience. A popular example of an illusion occurred in 1968 when thousands saw an unusual light on the roof of a church in Zetouin, Egypt. Believers claimed it to be an appearance of the Virgin Mary while skeptics dismissed it as Russian satellites (Swann, 1996: 209). Scientists, on the other

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finding miraculous images such as statues or paintings (Christian, 1981: 8).

[13]Though Carroll presents illusions and hallucinations as two types of Marian apparitions, in order to avoid confusion, apparitions will be used only to refer to the latter.

[14]*A Woman Clothed With the Sun* is a good source for accounts of the most well-known sanctioned appearances (Delaney, 1960).

hand, professed it to be related to tectonic disturbances in the area (Derr and Persinger, 1989: 123-128).

Many types of illusions are reported throughout the world, including moving, weeping, or bleeding statues and paintings, as well as images of deity appearing in ordinary objects (Zimdars-Swartz, 1991: 4). Although these various types of manifestations have commonalities between them, each maintains unique characteristics. For example, images resembling deity that appear in mundane objects have generally been classified under the broad categories of "miraculous images" and "apparitions." While these terms may be partly accurate, they remain vague and fail to describe the unique nature of the occurrence. Due to the distinct cultural and historical context of the phenomenon and the cumbersome nature of its description, new terminology is necessary.

New Terminology

In his cross-cultural works focusing on the innate human need to seek out the sacred, Mercia Eliade introduces the term "hierophany," which comes from the Greek roots *hiero*, meaning "sacred," and *phainein*, meaning "to show" (Eliade, 1958: xii). [15] A hierophany can be revealed through any object at any time if it becomes infused with sacred properties and powers (Eliade, 1987: 313). For instance, a rock, might be set apart from other stones and venerated because it had become something other than itself, a manifestation of the sacred (Eliade, 1954: 4; 1957: 12; 1958: 13).

One type of hierophany is called a "theophany," or the manifestation of a divine

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[15]See Eliade, 1954; 1957; 1958: 26; and 1987: 313-317.

being. Theophany is the most appropriate term for the appearance of images of deity in ordinary objects because it is the manifestation of an actual being. It does not, however, incorporate the unique characteristic of an image left behind in the likeness of that deity. An addition to the word "theophany" will therefore provide for the necessary distinction. Throughout this study an image of deity that appears in an ordinary object will be referred to as an "iconotheophany." The word iconotheophany utilizes "theophany," but incorporates the prefix *icon*, Greek for "image." The new term, iconotheophany, literally means the manifestation of an image of deity. The word icon is the appropriate addition to create new terminology because it is a material depiction of the divine (Laurentin, 1994: 71-72). It provides an accessible, physical representation of an otherwise remote and invisible deity (Laurentin, 1994: 76, 79). As with an image of deity in a mundane object, believers feel an icon's very resemblance to divinity imbues it with a sacred presence and power (Laurentin, 1994: 75). Iconotheophany can be applied to any divine being from any religion.[16] For example, an iconotheophany for a Roman Catholic may be in the image of Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a Saint.

Another new term is necessary for the individuals who recognize and venerate iconotheophanies. The words most often used to describe them are "visionaries" and

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[16]For example, In 1987 an image of Buddha reportedly appeared on the bathroom window of the Yajima family in Nagano City, Japan. A few more were discovered in the following years on walls throughout the house. Believers say the images emanated energy and left gold powder on the hands of visitors (Kurashina, 1993). Although not true iconotheophanies, miraculous objects have also been reported in Muslim communities. The name of "Allah" has been said to appear in England, Holland, and California, in eggs, beans, tomatoes, and the markings of a pet tiger fish (Share International, June 1996; Nov. 1996; 1997).

"seers." These terms, however, imply visions and audible messages that are characteristic of hallucinations and not illusions. The most appropriate term for an individual who identifies and venerates an iconotheophany is "witness." The word witness is already used in relation to Marian apparitions. Witnesses are those who claim to see signs while a visionary is experiencing an apparition (Swann, 1996: 12). These signs are physically perceptible clues which may include unusual lights in the sky, rosaries changing color, or the sudden fragrance of roses ("Of Women and Virgins," 1992: 33). The use of the word witness in relation to iconotheophanies is appropriate because both spectators of an apparition and eyewitnesses to an iconotheophany look for and recognize tangible signs of the divine. Therefore throughout this study the terms seer and visionary will be used interchangeably to refer only to those who experience apparitions while a witness will only refer to those who recognize and venerate iconotheophanies.[17]

The Roman Catholic Church, Iconotheophanies, and the Virgin of Guadalupe

The Roman Catholic Church accepts as fact miraculous appearances, but maintains a skeptical attitude toward reported manifestations of divinity. For example, out of the many thousands of Marian apparitions reported throughout the world, only fourteen in the last 160 years have been sanctioned by Catholic authorities (Samples, 1992: 87).[18] The

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[17]Although Carroll refers to those who see illusions as seers, the term witness better serves this purpose and avoids confusion.

[18]Some lists of sanctioned apparitions count only ten, others twelve. A number of these appearances are at varying degrees of acceptance and are counted differently. For an example, see Samples, 1992: 83-87.

popular apparitions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes, France, and Fatima, Portugal, are part of this select group. Approved appearances such as these are accepted only after a lengthy and complicated process of inquiry and investigation that often spans decades. The thousands of unauthorized manifestations, on the other hand, remain part of popular religion. Some Catholic leaders strongly discourage believers from venerating these unapproved appearances.[19] Most, however, including many clergy in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, leave belief in such manifestations to individual discretion.[20]

Iconotheophanies are not a recent phenomenon. On the contrary, they have a long history within Christianity.[21] As early as the third century C.E., images of Jesus and the Virgin Mary were spontaneously appearing on the windows, walls, and altars of churches (Rogo, 1982: 113). Two well-known iconotheophanies are also believed to originate from the early Christian era. The first image is the Shroud of Turin, believed by some to be the burial cloth of Jesus. The linen shroud, sometimes referred to as the "Image of

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[19]For example, when Joseph Januszkiewicz claimed visions of the Virgin Mary in Marlboro, New Jersey, Bishop John C. Reiss of the local diocese advised against participation (Peterson, 1993: B1). See also Swann, 1996: 12. These unapproved appearances often place local clergy in a difficult position. For by either embracing or discounting appearances they risk alienating members (Goldman, 1992: A31; "Of Women and Virgins," 1992: 33).

[20]The church representative from the Brownsville Catholic Diocese, Pamela Downing, maintained that the Church's "official position" was simply that there was none. She said images appearing in objects are left to individual interpretation, "and if there's a good that comes from it, that's good in itself." (Delgado and Van Wagenen, 1995). For the criteria used to judge an apparition, see Laurentin, 1994: 93-95 and Poulain, 1912: 359.

[21]It is possible that iconotheophanies have a history within other religions, however, this study only focuses on the phenomenon within Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism.

Edessa" or the "Holy Mandylion," shows the likeness of a bearded man bearing wounds similar to those of Jesus described in the New Testament (Stevenson and Habermas, 1981: 13-26; Cruz, 1984: 46, 48, 50). A second image also is believed to bear the likeness of Jesus. A popular legend tells of a woman from Jerusalem named Seraphia who was present on the Via Dolorosa as Jesus carried his cross to Calvary. She took the wrap from her head and wiped the sweat and blood from his face to show her love and devotion. As a reward for her compassion, Jesus's face was miraculously imprinted upon the material (Freedberg, 1989: 207). The image became known as "vera icon," meaning true image in Latin. From this the woman was eventually called Veronica (Cruz, 1984: 55). Veronica's Veil, as the image is commonly referred, is held in the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome (Cruz, 1984: 56).

Although these two examples of iconotheophanies are of Jesus, most images attributed with miraculous properties have borne the likeness of the Virgin Mary (Freedberg, 1989: 299). Marian apparitions have also been common over the centuries. According to some estimates, the Virgin Mary has reportedly appeared more than 20,000 times throughout history and the estimate continues to increase (Eicher, 1996: 5; Samples, 1992: 79, 82; O'Connor, 1996: 76; Religious News Service, 1992: B12).[22] One

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[22]The Virgin Mary's growing popularity can perhaps be attributed to the role she plays in Catholic theology and her increased status in the Church over time. In A.D. 451 Mary gained the status of *Theotokos*, officially recognizing her as the "mother of God" (Miller, 1992: 190). In A.D. 533 at the Second Council of Constantinople she was given the title of *aeiparthenos*, or "ever-virgin" (Miller, 1992: 24). Scholars reasoned further that if Mary was indeed the Mother of God and remained pure throughout her life, then she must have been as Jesus, without sin and conceived immaculately. This notion became dogma in 1854 (Miller, 1992: 30-31; Samples, 1992: 79). Mary's status was elevated further with "the Assumption." This idea that she escaped the ultimate corruption of

particularly popular appearance of the Virgin Mary included not only an apparition but a miraculous image in the form of an iconotheophany, the Virgin of Guadalupe. No other iconotheophany has been as highly accepted, venerated, and promoted by the Roman Catholic Church.[23]

The Virgin of Guadalupe is said to have appeared in 1531 in present-day Mexico City, twelve years after Hernán Cortéz arrived in the New World. The Spanish viewed indigenous beliefs and practices as barbaric and began replacing the native deities of pagan shrines with images of the Virgin Mary (Taylor, 1987: 10). Reluctant to give up their cherished beliefs and practices, the indigenous people continued them veiled beneath the dominant culture and religion in spite of their formal acceptance of Catholicism.[24] It is amidst this cultural upheaval that the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe is said to have taken place.

On a December morning, a poor, recently Christianized Indian named Juan Diego was walking to church for mass. When he reached a hill called Tepeyac he was stopped

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physical death was officially accepted by Pope Pius XII in 1950. Most recently church authorities have considered the controversial stance of elevating the Virgin Mary further to "coredemptrix" and "mediatrix," a position comparable to Jesus Christ (Woodward, 1997: 49-53; Miller, 1992: 46). Although the Virgin Mary's increasing status within the Catholic hierarchy has removed her further out of the realm of the human experience, her popularity continues to grow. Mary's position within Catholic theology is appealing to believers. Her role is that of a loving, compassionate, and understanding mother who is readily accessible to mediate with her son, Jesus, on their behalf (See Laurentin, 91-92 and Samples, 1992: 79 for additional reasons explaining the increase in Marian apparitions).

[23]See Leies for a list of Papal privileges extended to the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe (1964: 407-416)

[24]See Brenner, 1929.

by a beautiful, dark, indigenous woman. She called Juan Diego by name, speaking to him in his native language of Nahuatl. The woman identified herself as the Virgin Mary and asked Juan Diego to take a message to Don Fray Juan de Zumárraga, the Archbishop of New Spain. She instructed him to tell the Archbishop that she wanted a temple built there on Tepeyac. Juan Diego obeyed and brought the request to the Archbishop who was unimpressed by the request and told him to return some other day. Juan Diego returned to the Virgin Mary and told her of the encounter, suggesting someone with higher social standing might be more successful in conveying her message. The Virgin Mary assured him he was the chosen messenger and instructed him to try again.

The following day Juan Diego returned to see Archbishop Zumárraga. The Archbishop listened but remained unconvinced. He wanted a sign from the Virgin Mary to show that Juan Diego was indeed telling the truth. Juan Diego returned to Tepeyac and delivered the message to the Virgin Mary. She told him to gather roses at the top of the hill and arranged them in his *tilma*, or cloak. She instructed him to show the flowers to the Archbishop, who would then have the confirmation he wanted. Once again Juan Diego returned to Archbishop Zumárraga and relayed the Virgin Mary's message to build a shrine to her on Tepeyac. He opened his *tilma* and spilled roses onto the floor, revealing on his cloak the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. [25] A large cathedral now stands to

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[25]The original account of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance is believed to come from a Nahuatl narrative called the "Nican Mopohua." This account is generally attributed to Antonio Valeriano, a Nahuatl scholar (See Smith, 1994: 83-92 for full account). From this document came the first published accounts translated and adapted into Spanish; by Miguel Sanchez in 1648, Luis Lazo de la Vega in 1649 and Luis Becerra Tanco in 1675 (See Taylor, 1956, for seventeenth century documents concerning Guadalupe's appearance). Critics argue this more than one hundred year lapse in time

house what believers claim is Juan Diego's *tilma* with the likeness of the Virgin Mary. On

October 12, 1895, Pope Leo XIII pronounced Our Lady of Guadalupe as Queen of the

Mexican People. Fifteen years later Pope Saint Pius X named her the Celestial Patron of

Latin America (Leies, 1964: 317-322).

The Virgin of Guadalupe has become a powerful political, cultural, and spiritual

symbol for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. When the Spanish first arrived in Mexico,

the Virgin Mary was a symbol of power and conquest over the people of the New World.

With the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance, however, she became a sign of independence

in New Spain.[26] The tradition of using the Virgin of Guadalupe as a rallying symbol of

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between the alleged occurrence and the published accounts, coupled with a lack of
documentation, undermines the credibility of the original story. References to the
occurrence are not found in the works of important historians or Archbishop Zumárraga
himself (Lafaye, 1976: 290-292; Poole, 1995: 127-212). This doubt was recently
furthered when the Bishop of the Cathedral in Mexico City publicly announced Juan Diego
did not exist and was only a symbol (Muñoz, 1996: B1).

    The outcome of this thesis, however, is not contingent on proving or disproving
the miraculous origin of the Virgin of Guadalupe's image. The focus is rather on the
effect the story and the image have had on Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.

[26]Veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe took hundreds of years to spread
throughout all segments of Mexican society. Initially it began with the *criollos* in Mexico
City, Spaniards born in the New World (Taylor, 1956: 11, 23; Gruzinski, 1992: 508). In
the mid-seventeenth century a growing number of *criollo* clergy and intellectuals sought
control of the government and destiny of New Spain from the ruling elite born in Spain,
known as the *peninsulares*. Some scholars believe it was the Virgin of Guadalupe who
inspired *criollo* self determination. Miguel Sanchez, a *criollo* leader, was first to publish
the account of Our Lady of Guadalupe's appearance in 1648, spreading word that
heaven's favor was upon those born in New Spain. Some even maintain that Guadalupe's
story and image were fabricated by the *criollos* to further their political aspirations
(Gruzinski, 1992: 507-508). Although the Virgin of Guadalupe was chosen as the
patroness of the Mexican colony in 1746, her veneration remained a *criollo*-dominated
movement until the Mexican Revolution. (Gruzinski, 1992: 508; Turner and Turner, 1978:
62-103; Peterson, 1992: 43-46). For a thorough discussion of *criollo* devotion to
Guadalupe and the development of a national identity, see Lafaye and Poole. For

political reform has continued until the present day. In 1810 her image was adopted as a symbol of freedom by those rebelling against Spain in the War of Independence. One hundred years later Guadalupe's likeness was used again to champion change and agrarian improvements during the Mexican Revolution. Mexican-Americans have also used the Virgin of Guadalupe's image for political objectives. Her image was utilized by Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers movement in the 1960s, by protesters of California's Proposition 187 in the 1990s, and most recently by the anti-abortion movement (Meier and Rivera, 1981: 80, 156; Martinez, 1996; Phillips, 1995; Grant, 1998).

The Virgin of Guadalupe also holds important cultural and spiritual significance for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Those of Mexican descent represent the blending of two very different heritages, European and indigenous.[27] The Virgin of Guadalupe is believed to embody these diverse cultural worlds. Her form is that of the Virgin Mary, an image brought by the Spanish from the Old World, but her defining characteristics are attributed to the New World. Guadalupe's dark complexion and style of adornment are said to hearken to her native roots, as does her choice of messenger and the language of the message. Tepeyac, the place she appeared, also held great significance to the Aztecs

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information regarding Guadalupan devotion during this era, see Traslosheros, 1997: 7-19.

[27]This concept has been referred to by some Mexican-American scholars as *mestizaje*. This idea pertains not only to the initial blending of cultures and lifestyles at the time of the conquest but also to the continued merging that has occurred in Mexico and the United States. (See Meier and Rivera, 1981: 219, 293; and Elizondo, 1983: 9-15).

because it marked the sacred shrine of their mother goddess, Tonantzín.[28]   Many

Mexicans and Mexican-Americans identify with the Virgin of Guadalupe not only because

she appeared in Mexico, but because they believe she represents them. Some Mexican-

American religious scholars say that the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance marked the

moment of the cultural and spiritual birth of the Mexican people, forever linking them to

their past and each other (Sandoval, 1983: 17). She provided spiritual redemption and

validated all those of Mexican heritage as a people, restoring their pride and dignity after

the brutal conquest and subsequent exploitation (Elizondo, 1983: 9-15). She has come to

represent the powerless (Elizondo, 1977).   Indeed the Virgin of Guadalupe's impact is so

powerful upon Mexican and Mexican-American cultural identity, that many who convert

to Protestantism still hold onto her as a source of strength (Ihle, 2000; Guerrero, 1987:

112; Martinez, 1996).[29]   Nearly five hundred years after the Spanish brought the Virgin

Mary to the New World as a symbol of conquest, Guadalupe has come to represent the

identity and destiny of a people (Religion News Service, 1995: B4; Taylor, 1987: 20-21;

Wolf, 1979: 115).[30] Indeed, the Virgin of Guadalupe has become a permanent part of the

Mexican and Mexican-American cultural reality, shaping their religious experience and

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[28]For further explanation of symbolism and possible native interpretation, see
Rodriguez, 1994: 14-46.

[29]See also Elizondo, 1986.

[30]Wolf refers to the Virgin of Guadalupe as a "master symbol" linking together all
aspects of Mexican society (1979: 112). See also Elizondo, 1977.

ethnic identity (Sandoval, 1983 : 75).[31]

It is hypothesized that the impact of the Virgin of Guadalupe is manifested in the iconotheophany phenomenon among those of Mexican descent, particularly in places such as the Lower Rio Grande Valley in south Texas. The literature and theoretical basis for this idea will be discussed in the following chapters.

Summary

Images of deity that appear in ordinary objects, named "iconotheophanies" in this study, have become an increasingly familiar expression of popular religiosity. These images and the witnesses who venerate them have not been entirely understood as media reports have lacked any significant cultural and historical context. Although iconotheophanies have been occurring since the early Christian era, today they fall almost entirely outside the realm of orthodox Catholic religion. One iconotheophany, however, has been popularized, sanctioned, and promoted by Catholic authorities: the Virgin of Guadalupe. She has become an important symbol of strength and independence for countless Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. This study hypothesizes that iconotheophanies, particularly among those of Mexican descent, are rooted in the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance. It is this narrative and its accompanying image that

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[31]This is consistent with what Rodriguez refers to as "cultural memory." She describes cultural memory as a powerful connection to the past handed down through generations of tradition. Rodriguez asserts Our Lady of Guadalupe's symbol and story are integral to Mexican-American cultural memory because they explain who they are as a people and where they came from, bonding individuals to her and to one another. For a discussion on cultural memory, see Rodriguez, 1996 and 1997.

find repeated expression via modern iconotheophanies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The first part of this chapter examines the proposed connection between the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and the iconotheophany phenomenon among those of Mexican descent. The second section introduces the Juan Diego Paradigm, a set of five individual characteristics displayed by Juan Diego in the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. They concern level of acculturation, socioeconomic status, gender, age, and personal religiosity.

Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and Iconotheophanies

The Virgin of Guadalupe narrative has influenced Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, particularly as it relates to material images. In the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance, Juan Diego told Archbishop Juan de Zumárraga repeatedly of the apparitions. The Archbishop, however, was not convinced of Juan Diego's account. The Virgin of Guadalupe's apparitions were, as the many other reported apparitions throughout the world, only experienced by himself, the visionary. As a result, the Archbishop asked Juan Diego to bring him a sign, tangible evidence of his message. It was not until Archbishop Zumárraga saw the Virgin of Guadalupe's physical image on Juan Diego's cloak that he believed.

The message to believers of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative can thus be interpreted that apparitions alone are not sufficient for credibility. Not only is a tangible image of the appearing deity possible, it is often required to convince others that an otherworldly experience has actually taken place. An iconotheophany provides this powerful evidence, a physical relic that can be perceived by some to show heavenly

intervention. While traditional apparitions such as Lourdes and Fatima can be disputed, everyone can see the likeness of deity found in an iconotheophany for themselves, whether or not they choose to believe it is of divine origin. As a result, the material element of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, the iconotheophany, has been emphasized rather than the non-physical aspect, the apparition.

Some religious scholars consider the manifestation of the Virgin of Guadalupe to be unique in the history of Marian appearances, marking the only instance the Virgin Mary personally left a physical likeness of herself as testimony of her appearance on earth (Jensen, 1995: 9; Lampe, 1982-1983: 58; and Leies, 1964: v). Pope Benedict XIV declared, "She has not done thus for any other nation" (Cassidy, 1958: 21-22). Some scientific studies of the Virgin of Guadalupe's image and the cloth upon which it appears have only strengthened the faith of the devoted.[32] The tangible, physical image of the Virgin Mary has allowed a continual presence of deity for generations of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans.[33] The idea presented here is that some iconotheophanies, particularly those among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, are present-day reenactments of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. This concept will be addressed in the next section and the following chapter. Here the discussion will cover the proposed connection between

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[32]Some studies have concluded the Virgin of Guadalupe's image cannot be explained scientifically due to the clarity of the image, the quality of its preservation, the lack of perceptible brush strokes, and detailed reflections found in the pupils of the eyes. For scientific studies see Smith,1994: 53-73; Hussey, 1997: 18-43.

[33]Elizondo relayed a story about an Indian woman who was asked why the Virgin of Guadalupe was so special. She simply replied, *"Se quedó!"* (She stayed!) (Rodriguez, 1994: xiii).

reports of iconotheophanies and ethnicity as it relates to those of Mexican descent.

Literature concerning iconotheophanies around the globe is generally limited to reports on the appearances. Sources include books, magazines, newspaper articles, internet sites and television newscasts. Ninety-three reported iconotheophanies from around the world were gathered for this study, 75 from the United States and 18 internationally (See Appendices B and C). This list was not meant to be comprehensive, but rather to use as a means of evaluation and comparison. Relevant details regarding the appearances were reviewed, including the ethnic backgrounds of witnesses.[34] The ethnicity of 72 witnesses from the U.S. iconotheophanies could be determined with some degree of certainty from surnames, demographic descriptions, and the type of image that appeared.[35] Of these U.S. witnesses, over three quarters, 76.4%, are known to be of Mexican descent, have Hispanic surnames, or identified images in predominantly Hispanic areas.[36] Thus Hispanics are 3.2 times more likely to recognize iconotheophanies than non-

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[34]The information collected included the form of the image, the object in which it appeared, the location, and the date, as well as the name, gender, age, ethnicity, and religious affiliation of the witness.

[35]The ethnicity of witnesses is rarely included in reports of iconotheophanies. There are other means, however, of determining it with some degree of accuracy. The most important, and perhaps most reliable, are the names of witnesses, as surnames can reveal ethnic background. When names are not part of a report, demographic clues often help. Some iconotheophanies are reported in geographic regions with large populations of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Other stories describe the area an iconotheophany appears as a predominately Mexican or Hispanic neighborhood. The ethnicity of a witnesses can also be inferred from the form in which an iconotheophany is recognized. For example, iconotheophanies bearing the likeness of the Virgin of Guadalupe were more likely to be recognized by witnesses of Mexican descent.

[36]Out of the 72 witnesses identifiable by ethnicity, 55 (76.4%) are known to be of Mexican descent, have Hispanic surnames, or recognized images in predominantly

Hispanics. This is indeed significant when considering Hispanics comprise only 11.4% of the total U.S. population (National Council of La Raza). This is not to assert, however, that all of the Hispanic-surnamed witnesses on this list living in Hispanic neighborhoods are automatically considered Mexican-Americans. On the contrary, support for this Mexican-American tendency is illustrated in the following three examples.

The first example involves the 18 reported iconotheophanies from 8 different countries outside the U.S. (See Appendix C). The nation with the greatest number of iconotheophanies is Mexico, which accounts for half, 9 of the 18 images (50.0%). Australia and Canada, two countries not part of the Latin America, tied for second with two reports each (11.1% each). This international sample shows Mexicans to be four and a half times as likely to recognize iconotheophanies than any other people, including those in other Latin American countries.

The second example supporting the likelihood Hispanic witnesses in the United States are Mexican-Americans was obtained from the U.S. sample of 75 iconotheophanies (See Appendix B). Mexican-Americans are by far the largest Hispanic group within the United States, 63.3% of the total Hispanic population, nearly five times the size of the next largest group (National Council of La Raza).[37] The vast majority of this Mexican-American population, nearly 85%, is located in the Southwest, particularly the states of

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Hispanic or Mexican-American neighborhoods. There were 17 Non-Hispanics witnesses, comprising 23.6% of the total number of witnesses.

[37]In 1997 Mexican-Americans made up 63.3% of the total Hispanic population, while all those from Central and South Americans made up 14.4%, Puerto Ricans 10.6%, Cubans 4.2%, and other Hispanics 7.4%.

Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas (Mayers, 1989: 283). In fact,

three-fourths of all the churches named after the Virgin of Guadalupe are located in these

five states (Lampe, 1983: 58).[38] Moreover, 44 of the 75 reported iconotheophanies

(59.5%) originate from this region. There are 46 witnesses of identifiable ethnicity in this

area, 45 of whom (97.8%) are known to be Mexican-American, have Hispanic surnames,

or identified images in Hispanic neighborhoods. These statistics show reports of

iconotheophanies are truly most prevalent in areas with large Mexican-American

populations.

The Mexican-American tendency to recognize iconotheophanies is further

demonstrated in a third example of witnesses from the Lower Rio Grande Valley of south

Texas. All 17 identifiable witnesses from the 17 iconotheophanies reported in this four-

county area have Hispanic surnames. Since nearly half of the witnesses from this sample

are known to be ethnically Mexican and the vast majority of Hispanics in the Valley are of

Mexican ancestry (88.9%), it is more than likely that the Hispanic surnamed witnesses

from the Valley are of Mexican heritage.[39]

Although this compilation of 93 iconotheophanies was not comprehensive some

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[38]These five states, along with the land comprising Nevada and Utah, were part of
Mexico until the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848. The Treaty of Guadalupe-
Hidalgo claimed this vast region for the United States, and Mexicans living in these areas
became part of a new nation. Mexican immigrants seeking a common language and
culture in a foreign land often settled with these well-established populations.

[39]The witnesses known to be of Mexican ancestry were the seven interviewed for
this study. The percentage of Mexican-Americans in the Lower Rio Grande Valley was
calculated from statistics in Brownsville where Hispanics comprise 90% of the total
population and Mexican-Americans make up 80% of the total population (Martínez, 1994:
48-49).

important patterns were revealed. The examples examining the witnesses' ethnicity lends

support to the proposed connection between the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and the

iconotheophany phenomenon among those of Mexican descent. A discussion on five

attributes that characterize the witnesses of iconotheophanies is outlined in the following

section.

The Juan Diego Paradigm

The Virgin of Guadalupe narrative has indeed influenced Mexican and Mexican-

American religiosity, setting a pattern for an acceptable means of identifying the sacred.

Thus Juan Diego is, as the primary witness of the Virgin of Guadalupe's iconotheophany,

the archetype of an individual who recognizes images of deity in ordinary objects. Those

of Mexican descent who identify iconotheophanies take upon the role of Juan Diego and

themselves reenact the mythical encounter with the Virgin of Guadalupe. The theoretical

basis for this concept will be presented in the following chapter.

Not all Mexicans or Mexican-Americans, however, look for and recognize

iconotheophanies. Some are more prone to iconotheophany experiences than others due

to their personal circumstances and experiences. In the narrative, Juan Diego's character

exhibited many socio-demographic characteristics, defining key individual attributes of

witnesses of iconotheophanies. The five considered most influential concern level of

acculturation, socioeconomic status, gender, age, and personal religiosity.

Juan Diego's degree of acculturation had changed with the arrival of the

Europeans. As a native, Juan Diego did not speak Spanish and was not acculturated into

the new, Spanish-dominated society. Socioeconomically, legend tells that Juan Diego came from a poor family and was a member of the servant class (Anonymous, 1895: 115). He was an older man by colonial standards, 57 years at the time the narrative is set. It is also believed that Juan Diego was very religious. As a member of the Catholic Church for nine years, he attended mass every Sunday and was said to be a humble and righteous man. After Guadalupe's apparition and iconotheophany, Juan Diego became even more devoted to the Virgin Mary. He moved to the sanctuary where the image was placed and became the caretaker of the shrine and the vicar's house. There, it is said, Juan Diego spent the rest of his life praying, fasting, and meditating, serving as a spiritual guide until his death in 1548 (Anonymous, 1895: 115-117). Therefore, it can be stated that the character, Juan Diego, was a very religious, older, male with a low level of acculturation and low socioeconomic status. These five personal characteristics together constitute a new theoretical model, what will be referred to throughout this study as the Juan Diego Paradigm.[40] This model is hypothesized to predict the likelihood of an iconotheophany experience for individuals of Mexican descent.

The Virgin of Guadalupe narrative is believed to have taken place during great cultural turmoil for the native peoples, set only ten years after the Spanish gained control of Aztec civilization. The indigenous people were relegated to the bottom of the emerging society in New Spain. The governing body, called the First Audiencia, became notorious

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[40]In her work, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women,* Jeanette Rodriguez also refers to a "Juan Diego paradigm of faith development." While both Rodriguez's paradigm and the one presented here use Juan Diego as the model of Mexican-American religiosity, they differ in their specific focus (See Jeanette Rodriguez, 1994: 161-165).

for exploiting the native peoples (Demarest, 1956: 4). They were forced to pay heavy taxes, used as pack animals, sold as slaves, raped, and tortured (Ibid., 4-5; Castañeda, 1949: 302-303).

The Juan Diego Paradigm is itself characterized by distress, the psychological condition that occurs when an individual is confronted by a situation in which he or she lacks the mental or physical skills necessary to cope (Shuval, 1982: 683).[41] Psychological distress may find expression in the form of anxiety or depression, which often manifests in feelings of guilt, helplessness, hopelessness, low self-esteem, loss of appetite, sleeping disorders, or, in extreme instances, suicide (Kaplan and Marks, 1990: 1313, 1319).[42] Each of the five individual factors of the Juan Diego Paradigm is presumed to constitute increased levels of distress. For example, someone with a low level of acculturation would experience a greater amount of distress than an individual who is highly acculturated. Not all witnesses fulfill all five criteria of the Juan Diego Paradigm, or do so to varying degrees. Thus, the more characteristics of the Juan Diego Paradigm an individual displays, the greater the level of distress and, in turn, the greater the chance of having an iconotheophany experience. It is hypothesized that, like Juan Diego, older,

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[41]This definition refers to stress in general but can also be utilized to describe psychological distress.

[42]This context of distress and suffering has been a recognized aspect of the apparition experience (Zimdars-Schwartz, 1991 :25). In his book, *The Great Apparitions of Mary*, Swann places 22 apparitions of the Virgin Mary in their historical and human contexts, showing them to occur at times of societal or personal trial (1996). More particularly, distress has also been identified as contributing to Marian illusions. Carroll found through the study of several popular Marian illusions that an important precursor to their identification is anxiety about the future (1986: 217-218).

religious, males with a low level of acculturation and low socioeconomic status would be the most likely candidates to become witnesses of iconotheophanies.

Increased levels of psychological distress can prompt iconotheophanies among those of Mexican descent because the images are a means of alleviating such distress. Iconotheophanies can empower witnesses and assure them that they are known to deity. The distress-reducing functions of iconotheophanies will be discussed further in the next chapter. This section will present the literature on these five individual factors as they relate to distress, further explaining the Juan Diego Paradigm.

Level of Acculturation

Acculturation is the psychological and social adaptations a person makes when adjusting to a new culture. The United States is a nation of immigrants from all over the world. Though newcomers may adapt in some ways to American society, they often adhere to many of their earlier cultural beliefs and traditions. However, after generations of living in the U.S., cultural ties to countries of origin fade and often disappear entirely. Many studies have focused on the process of acculturation as it pertains to Mexican-Americans (See below). The expanding Mexican-American population is not homogeneous, but divided by differing levels of acculturation. Scholars have investigated the differences between recent Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans to gain insight into acculturation's impact, and their findings are not consistent.

On one side of the argument is the idea that Mexican-Americans with high levels of acculturation suffer from increased levels of psychological distress. This is attributed to

the identity crisis caused by a separation from and a loss of their original cultural heritage, unlike recent immigrants who are more emotionally tied to their roots (Mirowsky and Ross, 1980: 489-494). Gecas reported how migrant workers from Mexico had better self-perceptions and were more optimistic than settled Mexican-Americans (1973: 589, 593, 595). This was also determined to be true for elementary school children in California. Although their grades improved, their self-esteem declined (Knight, et al, 1978: 90-95). Kaplan and Marks found that highly acculturated young adults also felt distress but improved when reaching older adulthood (1990: 1316-1317). This argument was also supported by a study of Mexican-Americans living in Los Angeles who were much more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, and substance abuse than recent Mexican immigrants (Burnam, et al, 1987: 98-99). According to these studies, acculturation culturally separates individuals from their ethnic pasts and identities long before they are integrated into U.S. society, causing physical and psychological problems such as depression and mental illness.

On the other side of the argument is the opposing view: Mexican immigrants, those who are less acculturated into American society, experience higher levels of distress and psychological problems than settled Mexican-Americans. One study concluded that first generation Mexican-American and Japanese-American college students experienced more acculturative anxiety than their second and third generation counterparts (Padilla, Wagatsuma, and Lindholm, 1984). This was corroborated in Cuéllar and Roberts' study on first year college students at the University of Texas-Pan American. Mexican-American students with higher levels of acculturation exhibited fewer depressive

symptoms than less assimilated students (1997: 235). Similar results were also shown with female college students from south Texas in Kansas City. Masten, Penland, and Nayani concluded that acculturation and depression were inversely proportional: the higher the level of acculturation, the lower the depression and vice versa (1994: 1501-1502). The same was found to be true among older respondents. Elderly Mexican-Americans in Fresno, California, with the lowest levels of acculturation measured higher levels of depression than bicultural and acculturated individuals (Zamian, et al, 1992: 115-116).

As Mexican-Americans become increasingly acculturated into mainstream America, some distinct cultural traits disappear while others are maintained. Studies on acculturation and religion reveal continuity in some aspects of Mexican-American religiosity, including affiliation. Markides and Cole found Mexican-Americans maintain strong Catholic ties between generations. While religious affiliation appears to remain quite constant, religious expression may not. Some research shows that certain aspects of outward religious behavior, such as church attendance, are more likely to decrease as level of acculturation increases (Markides and Cole, 1984: 624; Rodriguez, 1998: 9). This idea was also reflected in Hurtado's San Diego County study on Mexican-American perceptions of the Roman Catholic Church. While all participants in the study were affiliated with the Catholic Church, those who identified themselves as Mexican-Americans and "Chicano" were less attached and less favorable toward the Church than

those who considered themselves Mexican (1975: 198-199, 203-204).[43] These studies

show support for the idea that religiosity tends to decrease with increased acculturation.

In this discussion on level of acculturation and distress, the literature provided

evidence for both sides of the argument. However, the position that less acculturated

individuals experience higher levels of psychological distress fits the Juan Diego Paradigm.

Less acculturated individuals, like Juan Diego, are not integrated into the dominant society

and thus would be more likely to experience distress.[44] This side of the debate also shows

that individuals with less acculturation are apt to be more open to religious experiences

than their highly acculturated counterparts. Individuals from Mexico have been

acculturated into Mexican society so they find discord within the U.S., particularly upon

arrival and during the time of adjustment. The language is foreign, the culture is

unfamiliar, and the beliefs and values are often at odds with their own. They are isolated

from their social networks of family, friends, and community (Keefe, 1980: 70-72).

Individuals who are born in the U.S. but raised in a Mexican-oriented environment can

also experience acculturative distress in certain unfamiliar situations, although not to as

great an extent as recent immigrants. Thus, being more culturally Mexican on the U.S.

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[43]Chicano is another term used to describe Mexican-Americans. It was popularized by the activist movement of the 1960s and connotes strong ethnic pride and militancy. The word Chicano is believed to have come from the Nahuatl pronunciation of the word, Mexicano (the "x" as a "sh"). Some Mexican-Americans consider the term pejorative (Meier and Rivera, 1981: 83-84).

[44]This comparison between immigration into the U.S. and the conquest of Mexico is not meant to diminish the magnitude of that historic event but to simply provide a theoretical model in which to draw a hypothetical relationship between Juan Diego and witnesses of iconotheophanies.

side of the border can cause marginalization and constitute psychological distress. Therefore, according to the Juan Diego Paradigm, it is hypothesized that those of Mexican descent with low levels of acculturation have higher levels of distress, making them more likely to experience an iconotheophany.

Socioeconomic Status

Closely associated with level of acculturation is another factor in the Juan Diego Paradigm, socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is calculated by three variables: income, educational attainment, and occupational prestige.

Millions of immigrants have entered the United States in search of the "American Dream." The historical experience of most ethnic groups has been to begin at the bottom of the social ladder and, in time, work their way up. The socioeconomic climb, however, is difficult and often spans several generations. Mexican-Americans and other minorities largely populate the lowest economic levels of American society (Aponte, 1991: 516-518). Low socioeconomic status itself has been shown to cause significant emotional distress because it exposes people to more stressful incidents and conditions (Kessler and Cleary, 1980: 476). Some studies conclude that the stress experienced by Mexican-Americans is not the result of acculturation in itself but rather the difficult socioeconomic circumstances which accompany the process (Miller and Valdez, 1984: 463; Mirowsky and Ross, 1980: 492-493; Warheit, Holzer, and Schwab, 1973: 297). An analysis of the 1979 Current Population Study conducted by Neidert and Farley consistently placed first, second, and third generation Mexican-American men at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale (1985:

843-849).

Other research, however, reveals continuing socioeconomic improvement among Mexican-Americans with each successive generation, showing a close association between level of acculturation and socioeconomic status (Negy and Woods, 1992: 250-251). One of the ways this climb is evident is through education. Rong and Grant concluded that educational attainment increased among Hispanics with every generation in the United States (1992: 633). Wojtkiewicz and Donato found similar results, showing foreign-born Mexicans achieved less education than U.S.-born (1995: 563-571). Zsembik and Llanes found the same results with high school students (1996: 369-372). Yet other research shows third generation Mexican-Americans may become discouraged when socioeconomic rewards are not forthcoming. Two studies demonstrate that educational achievement during this generation does not increase but levels off and even declines (Buriel and Cardoza, 1988: 186-190; Zsembik and Llanes, 1996: 369-372). These findings attest to difficulty inherent in the socioeconomic climb.

Socioeconomic status has also been shown to influence religiosity. Hurtado found the income and educational attainment of upper-class Mexican-Americans in San Diego County to be inversely proportional to the "social distance" they maintained from the Catholic Church. Those with lower earnings and educational attainment were socially and emotionally closer to the Church than those with higher incomes and education (1975: 199-200, 204-205, 208). The same relation between social standing and religiosity was also found with Mexican-Americans and their practice of popular religion. In his classic work on the Lower Rio Grande Valley, William Madsen observed that folk beliefs and

practices vary with socioeconomic status. The lower social classes are more likely to believe and find explanations in supernatural causes than the middle or upper classes (Madsen, 1964:68-69).[45] Emile J. Farge later confirmed Madsen's hypothesis with a Houston population. Although income did not affect the use of traditional healing, higher levels of education and job skill meant less reliance on traditional beliefs and practices (1977: 409-410).

Socioeconomic status is also a significant factor in the literature on Marian apparitions. Visionaries have been historically poor, uneducated, and of low social standing (Christian, 1996: 252; Swann, 1996: 11; Delaney, 1960: 21).[46] Though this has bothered skeptics and sometimes local clergy, it generally strengthens the faith of believers. Visionaries are viewed as humble individuals carefully chosen by God precisely because they are untainted by intellectual doubt and thus more accepting of an apparition experience (Delaney, 1960: 22). An apparition, however, has been known to change the social standing of a visionary. Unknown individuals can become popular overnight and attract scores of followers. Servants who become seers have even been served by believing masters (Christian, 1996: 258).

The literature showed a strong relationship between low socioeconomic status and

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[45]Though Madsen's study specifically refers to folk or traditional healing, it is an integral part of popular religion. Religious iconography and visits to shrines are an important part of folk healing and popular religion (Applewhite, 1995: 249; Newquist, 1985: 6).

[46]Christian showed in his study on visionaries in Ezkioga, Spain, that the individuals who became habitual seers to be poor and uneducated. Although visionaries of higher socioeconomic status were perceived as more reliable, they were significantly fewer in number (1996: 252).

450-451). Salgado de Snyder showed that women from Mexico are particularly prone to developing psychological problems (Salgado de Snyder, 1987: 482-487). Those who had been in the U.S. for five years or less exhibited more depressive symptoms than those who had been in the country longer (Vega, et al, 1986: 650). This is believed to be caused by socioeconomic factors as well as a lack of social support (Vega, Kolody, and Valle, 1987: 526-528). Some studies show that overall, Mexican-American women are more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms than their male counterparts (Roberts and Roberts, 1982: 211).

Both males and females have been reported as visionaries in Marian apparitions around the world throughout history. The following three samples reveal distinguishing gender patterns. The first list, compiled from various sources for this study, includes 68 visionaries from 36 popular Marian apparitions extending from the 16th century to present day. This particular group of reported apparitions reveals that females make up an overwhelming 75% of visionaries, making them three times more likely to experience apparitions than males.[48]

The two other more comprehensive lists show the same results. These reported apparitions date back as early as the 13th century and include modern day appearances. One list included 135 visionaries while the other consisted of 210 (Drzymala, 1998; New World Preservation Society, 1998) These collections also revealed the majority of visionaries are female, being nearly 2.3 times more likely to experience apparitions than

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[48]These lists also include a few Jesus apparitions as well. For further explanation, see Appendix D.

males.[49]

These statistics appear to show support for the long-held belief that females tend to be more religious than males (Miller and Hoffman, 1993). Some studies have shown this to be the case among Mexican-Americans. Hurtado discovered that among those of Mexican heritage in San Diego County, women were less critical of the Roman Catholic Church, revealing closer spiritual and emotional ties to it than men (1975: 197, 203). Markides and Cole showed similar findings with a San Antonio sample of Mexican-Americans in which women perceived themselves as more religious than men (1984: 624).

The literature regarding gender shows support for the idea that females not only experience more psychological distress, but tend to be more religious than males. This notion, however, does not support the proposed Juan Diego Paradigm. According to this theoretical model, being male constitutes distress, and some studies on Mexicans and Mexican-Americans do support this viewpoint. Upon arrival in the U.S., immigrants are faced with differing family values and gender roles. Mexican society is traditionally male-dominated, with females being subordinate to their fathers as children and husbands as adults (Bach-y-Rita, 1982: 36-37; Hampson, Beavers, and Hulgus, 1990: 309; Murillo, 1976: 21; Staton, 1972: 325-329). Some studies show that as level of acculturation increases among Mexican-Americans, so do attitudes towards gender equality (Leaper and

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[49]The lists originate from two of many internet sites dedicated to Marian apparitions. Stigmatists, those who exhibit the sympathetic wounds of Jesus, and visionaries of unknown gender were not incorporated into this sample. The first list included 94 females (69.6%) and 41 males (30.4%). The second list consisted of 146 females (69.5%) and 64 males (30.5%). The ratio of both samples showed females were 2.3 times more likely to become visionaries of apparitions than males.

Valin, 1996: 351-353). This can be attributed not only to women's education, but more specifically to their employment outside the home (Ybarra, 1982: 176-177; Zinn, 1980: 59-60). In fact, undocumented women from Mexico were shown to be more likely than men to find regular work after immigrating to the United States (Salgado de Snyder, 1986: 443). Employed Mexican-American women were also shown to be have jobs with "higher occupational prestige" than Mexican-American men (Ross, Mirowsky, and Ulbrich, 1983: 676, 680-681). Such a challenge to traditional gender roles and relations can indeed cause distress (Salgado de Snyder, Cervantes, and Padilla, 1990: 442). Some scholars believe the majority of this psychological impact has been experienced by males (Alvirez and Bean, 1976: 290-291).

Some literature shows males have also been actively involved in Marian appearances. Carroll compiled a list of Marian appearances consisting of 50 apparitions taking place mainly in Europe between 1100 and 1896. He found that the majority of visionaries were male, 58%, and only 42% were female (Carroll, 1983: 209-212; 1986: 130-132, 140-147). While this compilation does not deal directly with Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, or iconotheophanies, it does reveal that males are also religious and open to supernatural phenomenon. Indeed, Juan Diego as a male character, set a powerful masculine precedent for witnesses of iconotheophanies. Therefore, following the Juan Diego Paradigm, it is hypothesized that males of Mexican descent experience greater levels of distress than females and are thus more likely to experience iconotheophanies.

Age

Age is the fourth factor in the Juan Diego Paradigm. The literature reviewed for this section will explore the interrelation between age, psychological health, and religiosity. Some studies show that happiness and life satisfaction decrease with age. This is particularly true for Mexican-Americans. Gaitz and Scott demonstrated that elderly Mexican-Americans experience lower levels of mental health than African-Americans but higher levels than Anglos (1974: 109). Andrews, Lyons, and Rowland also demonstrated that elderly Hispanics experience the highest levels of loneliness and the lowest feelings of life fulfillment. They hypothesized this to be caused by increased economic and social obstacles (1992: 25-42). Scholars have found that Mexican-American elderly are more likely to be poor, lack health insurance and be faced with language and cultural barriers (Neibel, 1985: 16-24; Starrett, Roger, and Decker, 1992: 172-176). As a result, Mexican-Americans have shorter life expectancies and higher mortality rates than Anglos (Neibel, 1985: 15).

The problems associated with the elderly have prompted studies examining the relationship between age and personal religiosity. Some of the literature supports the notion that people generally become more religious with age, needing more security and psychological reassurance as they approach death. It was noted that for adults between the ages of 18 and 29, 44% considered religion to be "very important." The number increased significantly to 67% when respondents reached age 65 and over (Crandall, 1991: 337). This trend has also been noted among Mexican-Americans. In a study of three generations of Mexican-Americans in San Antonio, Markides and Cole discovered that

older and middle-aged respondents attended church more often than their younger counterparts. The oldest generation was also more likely than the younger two to rate themselves as "very religious." (1984: 624).

Other studies, however, show little evidence that Mexican-Americans are more apt to turn toward religion in older age. Markides, Levin, and Ray found that Mexican-American and Anglo religious behavior did not increase with age but stayed quite stable over time (1987: 664). Hurtado concluded the same for Mexican-Americans in his San Diego County study, where age did not significantly affect the social and emotional distance from the Roman Catholic Church. The elderly were not more approving of the Church or closer to it than the youth. Conversely, the young people were not more critical or farther from the Church than older Mexican-Americans (1975: 203).

No relationship between old age and increased religiosity is found in the literature concerning apparition experiences. On the contrary, an analysis of 68 visionaries' ages from the list of 36 popular Marian apparitions reported around the world reveals that the majority, 78%, are 30 years and younger. When looking at a strictly United States sample, however, the trend varies. The world sample favors males under 12 years and teenage female visionaries of 12 to 17 years. In the United States, on the other hand, visionaries tend to be slightly older. The most common age of male and female visionaries in the U.S. has been 18-30 years (See Appendix D). The apparition phenomenon, however, is a different religious experience than an iconotheophany. This will be discussed further in the following chapter.

The data concerning older age and higher levels of psychological distress support

the Juan Diego Paradigm. Juan Diego was an older man, a 57 year-old widower when the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative is said to have taken place. Respect for elders, particularly male elders, is a key aspect of traditional Mexican culture (Alvirez and Bean, 1976: 279-280; Keefe, 1984: 66-67; Murillo, 1976: 20-21). Extended family is important to Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. When someone is in need they often move in with family. This often occurs with aging parents. However, some scholars showed that as socioeconomic status increased among Mexican-Americans, many families preferred to discontinue these types of living arrangements (Alvirez and Bean, 1976: 289-290). This lack of social support and conflicting family role expectations can indeed lead to psychological distress (Salgado de Snyder, Cervantes, and Padilla, 1990: 442). Perhaps these cultural contentions, combined with increased socioeconomic problems and declining health, prompt the need for those of Mexican descent to seek for increased religiosity in old age. For example, older Mexican-American men were shown to rely more heavily on church attendance than their middle-aged counterparts (Levin and Markides, 1988: 68-70). Therefore, according to the Juan Diego Paradigm, it is hypothesized that older individuals of Mexican descent experience increased levels of distress and are thus more likely to experience iconotheophanies.

Personal Religiosity

The fifth and final characteristic contributing to the Juan Diego Paradigm is personal religiosity. Religiosity is often evaluated by two different measures known as organizational and nonorganizational religiosity. Organizational religiosity refers to the

public devotion that occurs through institutional venues such as church attendance. Not as easily measured is nonorganizational religiosity, which includes private expressions such as prayer and personal study (Levin and Markides, 1988: 66).

Scholars have attempted to better understand the connection between religious behavior and psychological well-being. Religion has been shown to provide psychological benefits such as feelings of assurance and well-being for some segments of the population (St. George and McNamara, 1984: 361).[50] Peterson and Roy also discovered a significant correlation between mental health and religious behavior. They found that church attendance significantly reduced anxiety by providing a reliable social network. Religious salience, the degree to which religion is integrated into an individual's life, was also shown to affect psychological health. The greater the importance placed on religion, the more enhanced the sense of meaning and purpose (Peterson and Roy, 1985: 58-59).

Church attendance has been shown to be significant among Mexican-Americans. Levin and Markides demonstrated that religious attendance is significantly correlated with well-being for middle-aged and older Mexican-American women. This positive result of organizational religious behavior remains important, although it may slightly diminish with age (Levin and Markides, 1988: 70-71). This decline in organizational religious participation is often related to physical ability. As people age they may become unable to attend religious services, making church attendance more a measure of physical health and ability than personal choice (Levin and Markides, 1986: 36-38). Nonorganizational forms

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[50]This study showed these findings to be true for Blacks but not Whites who rely on more secular sources for psychological assurance, such as education and the media.

of religious expression often increases as health declines, perhaps filling a void left by a lack of organized worship (Levin and Markides, 1985: 66-67). Elderly Mexican-Americans are not the only group to find religious expression in nonorganizational forms. Markides and Cole found that although the youngest group in a three-generation study of Mexican-Americans attended church the least, they still considered themselves religious through nonorganizational means (1984: 624).

Personal religiosity is an important component of the Juan Diego Paradigm. Juan Diego was believed to have been a very religious and devoted Catholic. The Virgin of Guadalupe narrative says he walked many miles to church every week to attend Mass. Not only was he believed to be religious prior to his experience, but he became even more devoted as a result, serving as an intercessor with the Virgin of Guadalupe on behalf of believers. The literature presented in this section, however, does not support the Juan Diego Paradigm which hypothesizes that increased religiosity increases distress. It, on the other hand, seems to support the opposite, showing religiosity decreases distress. Nevertheless, another perspective on this issue may suggest otherwise.

Religion, particularly Catholicism, is an important part of life within Mexican culture, providing the "key to the framework for understanding the self, the environment, and personal relationships" (Bach-y-Rita, 1982: 32). Individuals who come into the United States are confronted with a highly secular society, and thus a conflicting world view. This affront to such core personal beliefs and values can indeed cause psychological distress (Kaplan and Marks, 1990: 1313; Zamian, et al, 1992: 112). "It is the apparent chaos of American society, or lack of interpretability or predictability, which among other

issues poses enormous problems for the rural Mexican immigrant or the Mexican American" (Bach-y-Rita, 1982: 32). It has been shown that Mexican-Americans have as much and even greater amounts of distress than the overall population (Roberts, 1990: 141-142; 1981: 215-218). An individual who is less religious in a secular society would be likely to experience less psychological distress than a highly religious person. As previously discussed with level of acculturation, the first characteristic of the Juan Diego Paradigm, Mexican-American religiosity appears to decrease as level of acculturation increases (Hurtado 1975: 198-199, 203-204; Markides and Cole, 1984: 624; Rodriguez, 1998: 9). This, perhaps, has been part of the coping process, adapting to the secular nature of U.S. society in order to decrease psychological distress. Therefore, it is hypothesized that individuals with increased levels of religiosity, whether organizational or nonorganizational, experience higher levels of distress, making them more likely to have an iconotheophany experience. Furthermore, it is proposed that the appearance of an image of deity in an object will have a profound effect on the spiritual life of the witness, increasing personal religiosity through these public and private expressions.

Summary

The literature shows the Virgin of Guadalupe tradition is an important part of the shared Mexican and Mexican-American cultural reality. This influence is demonstrated in the large number of iconotheophanies occurring among those of Mexican descent. Juan Diego is the archetype for individuals who recognizes iconotheophanies. In the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative he exhibited various socio-demographic characteristics, providing a

theoretical model in which to evaluate witnesses. This model, called the Juan Diego Paradigm, consists of five characteristics: low level of acculturation, low socioeconomic status, male gender, older age, and increased personal religiosity. The literature shows that each of these characteristics can constitute an increased level of psychological distress, making individuals who exhibit them more likely to seek an iconotheophany experience.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

This first portion of this chapter presents the theoretical basis for the connection between the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, the iconotheophany phenomenon among those of Mexican descent, and the Juan Diego Paradigm. The second section explores the theoretical process that occurs in the initial recognition of iconotheophanies and their subsequent veneration.

The Social Construction of Reality and Iconotheophanies

Iconotheophanies among those of Mexican descent are likely the result of various factors. The previous chapter proposed that both the shared cultural and religious tradition of the Virgin of Guadalupe and people's individual experiences and circumstances have played an important role in the phenomenon. This section will discuss how the common cultural knowledge shared by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans can result in an increased propensity to recognize iconotheophanies. This idea is best understood in terms of the "sociology of knowledge," the theoretical orientation that examines the manner in which reality is constructed, maintained, and passed on to succeeding generations.[51] Peter L. Berger explained these ideas in *The Sacred Canopy* (1966) and, with Thomas Luckmann, in *The Social Construction of Reality* (1969).

In these works Berger and Luckmann discuss the social nature of reality, the

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[51]The term "sociology of knowledge" was first introduced by German philosopher Max Scheler in the 1920s. However, Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) is known for developing Scheler's initial ideas into a field of study. For a thorough discussion of the development of the sociology of knowledge as a subject within Sociology, see Berger and Luckmann, 1966:1-18.

process in which it is created, and how it is shared by members of a society (1966: 3).

Each society constructs reality through unique traditions and practices to fit its own

specific needs and desires (1966: 176). Reality, being a human creation, requires continual

maintenance through social interaction. Reality exists beyond the individual, influencing

and shaping the future in terms of the past. If a single person were to cease believing in

his or her own culture's reality, it would continue to exist through the maintenance of

others (1966: 3, 103). It is constantly shared, reaffirmed, and reinforced through the

countless, personal, "face-to-face interactions" with other people (1966: 28-29, 33-34).

Social reality is not only culturally unique, it is also individually specific. It varies

according to personal lives and experiences. Individuals from a variety of cultural

backgrounds and conditions interpret events, objects or persons in terms of their particular

circumstances (1966: 35). Individual reality, though singular in nature, is also maintained

through social interaction because it too only exists in relation to others. This private level

of perception provides affirmation of personal significance and identity. Without both

collective and individual management, human society could not exist (1966: 150, 173).

Reality is not static but constantly evolving as societal information is added and

lost with every generation. As a result, important knowledge must be emphasized in order

to ensure its preservation, to provide continuity and to maintain order (1966: 41-42, 67).

One of the most powerful tools societies use to maintain reality is religion. Religion is the

human establishment of a sacred order, a determination of what is sacred and what is not

in relation to the self and society (1969: 25; Durkheim 1979: 28). In other words, religion

is the human quest to find a place of meaning in a vast and mysterious universe. Religion

is part of reality and requires continual legitimation, or justification, in order to survive. Myths are a component of religion and a powerful means of legitimation (1969: 28, 31-32, 41).

Myths are sacred narratives which tell how things came to be. These "true" accounts describe primordial, sacred time when the world, nature, and human beings were created (Eliade, 1976: 24-25). Hierophanies and theophanies often give birth to myths when locations or objects become infused with sacred power. Affirmation of a myth is also at times required, physical evidence confirming that events occurred, such that tangible objects often become vital to a myth's perpetuation (Eliade, 1958: 367, 430-31). Myths provide divine patterns of behavior for which human beings should interact with one another and, more importantly, with the sacred. As a result, myths are often reenacted to recall or make present ("re-present") the sacred past (Eliade, 1958: 310, 932-33). Even the most insignificant acts, if modeled after divinity, can become sacred, formalized, and known as ritual (Eliade, 1958: 31-33).

Religion, with its associated rituals, fulfill various functions within society. They protect human beings from the meaninglessness of a profane world by confirming the mythical connection between themselves and the divine, elevating their mere mortal actions to the level of celestial performance (Eliade, 1958:32-3). Rituals also unify the members of a society and bind them together through common experience (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 67-69). Finally, rituals serve to remind human beings of the primary elements of culture, its institutions, and their own reality (Berger, 1969: 40). This is vital as humans are naturally prone to forget and require continual assistance, particularly

during times of distress (Berger, 1969: 31). The situations which cause distress are not universal but subjective, defined by cultural and individual perception (Shuval, 1982: 682-683).

Individuals of Mexican descent share important aspects of cultural reality with one another. These religious beliefs and values have provided an important means of cultural identification and belonging. The Virgin of Guadalupe is an important part of this shared reality, having been passed down for many generations. The Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, although set in historical time, can be interpreted as a sacred myth. Theoretically it transpired in primordial time, marking the beginning of a new era and a new people, thus describing for believers how Mexicans and Mexican-Americans spiritually came to be.[52] A vital contributor to the power of the Virgin of Guadalupe myth has been the tangible relic of the Virgin's physical image, legitimating the momentous encounter with Juan Diego for millions of believers. Individuals of Mexican descent have been raised to know the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance, socialized to believe that deity did and therefore still can appear in material objects. When witnesses identify iconotheophanies they take upon themselves the role of Juan Diego and

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[52]The cruel treatment of the native peoples by the Spaniards was rationalized through religious reasoning. The ruling body believed they were "beasts" unworthy of salvation (Hanke, 1949: 275-278). A debate ensued between theologians and scholars as to their origin and if they were indeed children of God (Lafaye, 1976: 37-50). Although Bishop Juan de Zumárraga, the first Archbishop of New Spain, thought the natives were simple and ignorant he believed they were human and capable of civilization and therefore salvation (Hanke, 1949: 278-279; Magner, 1949: 266). Thus the clergy became the only buffer between the cruelty of the *Audiencia* and the indigenous people (Chauvet, 1949: 286-293). Believers feel the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe validated the Mexican people and proved not only to the Spanish but to the world their worth in the eyes of God.

reenact his mythical encounter with the Virgin of Guadalupe. By following this cosmic pattern set forth in the myth it becomes a sacred, ritual act.

When an individual recognizes an iconotheophany, he or she engages in role performance. Role playing is an important part of reality maintenance, particularly when charged with religious significance because it is more profound and secure (Berger, 1969: 37). Unlike human beings who must be continually reminded by others of their cultural reality and self-identity through face-to-face interactions with others, deity never forgets (Berger, 1969: 37-38). Thus, deity becomes the ultimate confirmor of reality and the self. Because it is an actual image of deity, an iconotheophany allows literal, face-to-face interaction with a tangible representation of a divine being, making the divine personal and accessible.

The ritual reenactment of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative through an iconotheophany experience strengthens and validates witnesses in distress on three important levels: culturally, collectively, and individually. Culturally, an iconotheophany provides a link to the witnesses' past. From a theoretical perspective, the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance provided validation for all Mexicans and Mexican-Americans at a time of considerable cultural upheaval. Through her visit with Juan Diego, the devoted of Mexican descent received validation for their suffering as a people, redeeming them spiritually in the eyes of the world. When individuals of Mexican descent recognize an image as a manifestation of deity, they are following a culturally prescribed and accepted means of interacting with the sacred. They make present for themselves this pivotal mythic tradition and reaffirm their religious belief and cultural heritage. A previously

distant tradition comes to life through ritual, making the event real and personal.

An iconotheophany experience also serves a collective function, uniting people in a common purpose in times of trial. By being part of an iconotheophany, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans are able to reinforce social and cultural ties to one another. As news of an image spreads, believers are brought together to share their faith, affirming their collective beliefs and traditions. Some have welcomed modern-day iconotheophanies as signs of hope and change for troubled communities (Jacobson, 1999; Mills, 1997: B2; Reed, 1992: B1; Stack, 1996: B1).

Finally, and most importantly, an iconotheophany functions on an individual level. Juan Diego, as the archetype for a person of Mexican descent who experiences iconotheophanies, provided a mythical pattern for others to recognize the sacred in their own lives. Individuals who exhibit the five characteristics and conditions of the Juan Diego Paradigm have been hypothesized to experience the greatest levels of psychological distress and thus become most likely to recognize iconotheophanies. Distress heightens the need for personal validation through ritual. An iconotheophany experience validates personal trials by assuring people that they are indeed known to deity. They find deeper meaning in their trials and become strengthened in distress.

By taking upon themselves the role of Juan Diego and ritually reenacting the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance, witnesses can find strength and personal validation for themselves and their communities in times of distress. A permanent, physical likeness of deity, unlike a fleeting apparition, makes the divine readily accessible and close, allowing for continual face-to-face interaction with deity as long as the image

persists. The spiritual significance placed on the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and accompanying image has elevated the tradition into a mythical pattern to be reenacted by others. Those who follow this pattern and identify an iconotheophany become strengthened and assured in times of distress that their struggles are recognized and validated by deity, raising them from mundane afflictions to the mythical sacred.

The Process: How Iconotheophanies Become Reality

The previous section serves to explain the cultural origins of the iconotheophany phenomenon among those of Mexican descent and the characteristics of the individuals most likely to identify iconotheophanies. But it does not describe the process by which an unusual image becomes a revered manifestation of deity. This section will demonstrate the process by which an iconotheophanic event develops from a witness's initial recognition to its perpetuation by countless believers as part of collective reality.

The sociological explanation for the process whereby an iconotheophany goes from personal experience to collective reality can be best understood in terms of Berger and Luckmann's works on reality construction. In *The Sacred Canopy* Berger discusses the process through which religion is created and the mechanisms used in its maintenance. He identified three steps in the process: externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger, 1969: 4). Externalization is the continual outpouring of material and non-material energy and creativity into the "human world." This is an innately human need as reality requires continual maintenance to fight its inherent instability. However precarious it may be, once it exists it is "out there," part of objective reality and impossible to be

simply wished away (Berger, 1969: 5-7, 9). This is objectivation, the second step in the

process. Objectivation occurs when these material and non-material human creations have

the power to act back upon its producers (Berger, 1969: 9-11). In the third step, or

internalization, the objectively created reality is reappropriated back into the subjective

consciousness, shaping the reality of its creators as they continuously pour out energy and

creativity (Berger, 1969: 15-16). Society building is thus a dialectical process. Human

beings subjectively create products that achieve an objective reality and ultimately have the

power to turn about and subjectively affect human perception and behavior. This process

is also continual, as society is a fragile creation constantly in need of maintenance through

social interaction.

In *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann describe a similar

pattern. This creative process also consists of three steps: objectivation, legitimation, and

institutionalization. Here the first step is objectivation, the second in the previous work.[53]

Once reality is created, its existence must be justified. This is legitimation, the second step

involving "socially objectivated knowledge that serves to explain and justify the social

order" (Berger, 1969: 29). Legitimation is a necessary component of reality maintenance,

and religion is historically the most widespread and effective form of legitimation. Since

human beings are naturally prone to forget, religious rituals serve to remind them of their

reality and make it continually present through myth and action (Berger and Luckmann,

1966: 110). The final step in the process is institutionalization. This is the eventual

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[53]Berger and Luckmann's choice to begin the process with this step does not deny
that society is indeed a human product of externalization.

building of stable structures of behavior through habitualization. These structures are viewed as a permanent part of reality and are perpetuated through individuals who play fixed roles (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 54).

An analogous theoretical process occurs in the recognition and veneration of iconotheophanies. Individuals of Mexican descent who characterize the conditions of the Juan Diego Paradigm are hypothesized to experience the highest levels of distress and thus be most likely to go through the steps of this process by seeking a face-to-face encounter with deity in iconotheophanies. This was found to be true for the seven individuals interviewed for this study: Alberto Salinas, Aurora Quintero, Santiago Quintero, Gloria Chavez, Paula Rivera, Reynaldo Treviño, and Valentin.[54] These steps are evident in their iconotheophany stories outlined in the next chapter (See Chapter 4). Five steps can be identified in this process, an elaboration of the four stages presented by Berger and Luckmann in their work on the social construction of reality.[55] The additional stage, step 1, was added by the author. The proposed model is as follows:

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[54]Only Valentin's first name is used in this study to preserve his privacy.

[55]Carroll lists four factors contributing to Marian illusions, which he believes are only recognized if a large group of people "predisposed" to see it are present. First, the group is confronted with an unusual visual stimulus. Second, they have a lot of anxiety about the future. Third, someone in the group suggests that the stimulus must be a manifestation of the Virgin Mary. Finally, it is their belief that such an occurrence would signify that God is with them (Carroll 1986: 217-218). These factors are indeed significant and are included as an element of the Juan Diego Paradigm or as part of the theoretical process of iconotheophanies as reality maintenance. However, there is a major difference between Carroll's theory and the one presented in this study. Although Carroll's list of factors considers collective experience, it does not account for individual conditions and tendencies. Iconotheophanies are not only recognized by groups, they are identified by individuals.

1. Recognition

2. Legitimation

3. Objectivation

4. Internalization

5. Externalization

Recognition

The first step in the process of the identification and veneration of

iconotheophanies is recognition. This step takes place when an individual first notices a

physically occurring anomaly not existing before or previously unnoticed. Although the

circumstances of its appearance may be unusual, the oddity resembles something familiar.

An individual's cultural and personal influences such as upbringing and personal

experience shapes his or her perception of the image, determining how it will be discerned.

It is this perception which separates a sacred experience from a meaningless coincidence.

Those who were raised to believe deity does appear to faithful followers and miraculously

leave images, as in the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, are more likely to recognize

iconotheophanies than those who were not. Michael P. Carroll describes these individuals

as "predisposed to perceive" (1986: 217-218). If an individual does not know or believe

such an occurrence is possible, it will not happen. This does not mean that others who do

not believe cannot themselves see an image. Indeed, it is characteristic of Marian illusions

that others can see the image but may not place the same religious significance upon it.[56]

Thus, an individual who recognizes an iconotheophany is looking for the familiar.

A person's prior experiences with the sacred shapes their perception of an image. Carroll illustrated this point with an example of a popular Marian illusion from Knock, Ireland. In 1879 a mysterious light was seen outside a small church. The primary seer, Mary Beirne, recognized it to be St. John the Evangelist. Its form reminded her of a statue she had seen in another village. No other witnesses of the event made the same correlation as Mary because she interpreted the illusion in terms of her own experience (1986: 205-207). A similar occurrence is demonstrated in a modern iconotheophany in Union City, California. An image of the Virgin Mary was recognized in 1996 on the wall of a small Buddhist University by Catholic neighbors. Although Catholics believed the image to be that of the Virgin Mary, the monks identified it as Bodhisattva Kuan Yin, a female deity (Reed, 1999).

The specific form in which an image is recognized is also significant to witnesses as it can affect their relationship with that particular manifestation of deity. It can bring about a deeper bond with the image they perceive it to resemble. For example, one witness, Paula was brought closer to Jesus after she recognized his image in her tortilla.[57]

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[56]An example of this divergence in meaning is illustrated in a comment concerning the *Pizza Hut* advertisement in Georgia. *Rocky Mountain News* columnist, Lewis Grizzard said, "I saw the spaghetti billboard on television. I looked at it, but I didn't see Jesus, unless he looks a lot like Bjorn Borg." He went on to say, "In the second place, if Jesus decided to come back for a little visit, I just can't see God dispatching him to appear on a picture of spaghetti. Can you?" (Nickell, 1993: 37).

[57]See next chapter for witnesses' stories.

Another witness, Valentin, had always been closer to the Virgin of Guadalupe than any other manifestation. However, he developed a closer relationship with a more general representation of the Virgin Mary after he identified it in a tree.[58]

Legitimation

The initial step of recognition is followed by the second, legitimation. Although an iconotheophany is generally a welcome experience, uncertainty often accompanies an appearance. A witness often questions its existence, hardly believing such an event could really happen to them. Since the creation and maintenance of reality is a social process requiring more than a single individual, a person who sees an image immediately feels the need to validate their opinion. The witness is often careful not to name the image they believe to see. In this manner they hope to receive an unbiased answer without appearing presumptuous or risking ridicule.[59] This necessary step of social legitimation was evident in interviews with witnesses as well as in many newspaper reports throughout the United States. This disbelief is understandable when explained in light of a witness's perception of an iconotheophany. Such an image is very different from other likenesses of the Virgin Mary or Jesus because it is considered to be of supernatural origin. For it is believed that deity, whether Jesus or the Virgin Mary, personally chose that particular location in which

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[58]Valentin said, "First, the one I would like better is *La Virgen de Guadalupe*. But when I saw the Virgen Mary, I mean I don't say I don't care about *La Virgen de Guadalupe* now, but I see the Virgin Mary now more than the *Virgen de Guadalupe*. But I believe in both anyway because it's the same one" (Valentin, 1998).

[59]Witnesses generally presented the question to others as, "What do you see?" or "Do you see anything?"

to appear. The magnitude of such an event can be overwhelming.

Objectivation

Objectivation, the third step in the iconotheophanic process, occurs once an image is socially legitimated. The object in which the image was recognized was previously part of objective reality, existing on its own accord. However, after a sacred image is identified and validated, the object becomes something other than itself. It becomes an iconotheophany. It reenters the realm of objective reality but as something different: a physical manifestation of deity. Believers feel an iconotheophany is not an accidental occurrence but a true manifestation of the sacred comparable to an apparition. For example, after Jesus' face appeared in Paula's tortilla, it ceased to be food. It became the vehicle for which Jesus manifested himself in the human world.

Internalization

The fourth step in the process is internalization, the reappropriation of the humanly conceived objective reality back into the subjective conscious. As part of objective reality an iconotheophany has the power to "act back" on the human world. Witnesses who believe an image is of divine origin allow it to shape their thoughts and actions. One of the ways it affects human beings is through the internalization of perceived messages from an appearance. Iconotheophanies, unlike Marian apparitions, are not characterized by audible messages. In their silence iconotheophanies can become powerful multivocal symbols as they are interpreted to fit individual wants and needs. One example of how a

single image can fulfill the needs of many was demonstrated through the experience of two witnesses, Aurora and Santiago. Aurora believed the Virgin Mary appeared to help their poor community. Santiago felt she came to help his family. A local priest told them the Virgin Mary had appeared as a sign to fight abortion.

Externalization

The fifth and final step in the process is externalization. This outpouring of humanly created products is the result of internalization. Human beings feel a need to continually build and shape their objective reality through externalization. Witnesses externalize through building shrines, giving prayers, leaving offerings, and telling the story of the appearance. Once these material and nonmaterial externalizations occur they too become objectified, re-internalized and go on to inspire further externalization. This cycle of objectification, internalization and externalization (steps 3, 4, and 5) continues for as long as an image remains present or affects the lives of witnesses and believers. Although the length of time an image remains may vary, this permanence is a unique characteristic of iconotheophanies. Unlike a Marian apparition which lasts only a short time, the devoted feel deity is literally present as long as the image remains, or as believers would say, chooses to stay.[60]

This five-step process of recognition, legitimation, objectivation, internalization

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[60]Witnesses talked about their iconotheophanies as though deity was physically present, particularly Aurora, Alberto, Paula, and Santiago. For example, Alberto said of the Virgin Mary image on the tree in his yard, "She hasn't moved... She's still there." Paula said, "My God, you are in my tortilla."

and externalization occurs every time a witness identifies an iconotheophany. After an image is recognized others hear of the appearance and are predisposed to see what has been recognized. The image has already become part of objective reality so individuals can choose to believe and internalize it or not. If visitors to the shrine believe the image is sacred, they too begin to externalize and add to the creation of an iconotheophany's objective reality.

This process and the Juan Diego Paradigm are vital to the understanding of not only the iconotheophany phenomenon but, more importantly, the witnesses and other individuals who consider them sacred. The following chapter will outline the stories of the seven witnesses interviewed for this study and their iconotheophany experiences.

Summary

Present-day iconotheophanies among those of Mexican descent are best understood in terms of Berger and Luckmann's work on the social construction and maintenance of reality. Reality, as a human creation, requires continual maintenance through the social interaction of individuals in society. The Virgin of Guadalupe narrative is hypothesized to have set a pattern, showing those of Mexican heritage a means to personally interact with the sacred through literal face-to-face interactions with a manifestation of deity in a mundane object. When individuals recognize iconotheophanies they take upon the role of Juan Diego and ritually reenact the mythical encounter with the Virgin of Guadalupe. Through this experience they reaffirm cultural links to their heritage, relationships with other believers, and their bond with deity. In addition, they

find strength and meaning for themselves and often their communities in times of trial and psychological distress. Psychological distress brings on the need for sacred assurance, prompting certain people, particularly those of Mexican descent who fit the Juan Diego Paradigm, to seek the ultimate form of validation through face-to-face encounters with deity.

The process by which an iconotheophany is recognized and venerated can be described in a five-step process adapted from Berger and Luckmann's works on the construction of reality: recognition, legitimation, objectivation, internalization and externalization. When an individual is confronted with an unusual visual anomaly, they rely on his past experiences to find meaning. Someone raised with the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative is more likely to believe deity has and still can appear tangibly as part of the physical world. A mysterious image resembling a sacred likeness would thus be considered a manifestation of deity. Once an individual recognizes an image as sacred, they seek for social confirmation through legitimation. After the witness has their belief corroborated, the image becomes a part of objective reality and is able to act back upon the human world. The witness then internalizes the image and its meaning, allowing it to shape their thoughts and behavior. They then externalize their reaction to the iconotheophany by pouring out material and nonmaterial human creations into objective reality through expressions of faith and worship.

CHAPTER 4: THE LOWER RIO GRANDE VALLEY AND SIX ICONOTHEOPHANIES

The Lower Rio Grande Valley

As shown in the Literature Review, iconotheophanies are reported all over the world but appear to be concentrated in the United States. One area of high iconotheophanic activity is the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The Valley, as it is called, is composed of the four southernmost contiguous counties of the state: Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo, and Starr. The people in the Valley are predominantly Mexican-American, constituting 80% or more of the total population in some areas (Martínez, 1994: 48-49).[61] Mexican-American culture is strong in the region not only due to their large population, but because of the close proximity to Mexico. Many cities, such as Brownsville, are situated along the banks of the Rio Grande River and are characterized by a constant flow of people, culture, merchandise, and ideas back and forth across the border. Mexicans who immigrate to the U.S. continually reinforce the culture and constantly remind Mexican-Americans of their roots. These immigrants are not geographically isolated from their homeland and are able to maintain close ties to family and friends. Some believe acculturation occurs more slowly in such areas (Martínez, 1994: 252). This is reflected in the language of the people. Nearly one third (29.3%) of the Hispanics living in the Lower Rio Grande Valley speak little or no English while nearly all, 96.5%, speak Spanish at home (Martínez, 1994: 92).

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[61]In Brownsville, the south easternmost border crossing, Hispanics, including Mexican-Americans, make up 90% of the total population with Anglos at 9% and other groups at 1%.

The Valley is also plagued by serious economic problems. In 1990 a full one third of the population in Brownsville, 33.7%, lived below the poverty level (Martínez, 1994:92). It is within this cultural and economic framework that iconotheophanies have become common occurrences not only for individuals but for entire communities. In this small corner of the country iconotheophanies have included Jesus's image on a tortilla and likenesses of the Virgin Mary on the fender of a Chevrolet Camaro, a shower floor, dining room curtains, and two trees.[62]

Six Iconotheophanies

<u>Paula (Paulita) Rivera: Jesus in a Tortilla</u>[63]

The tortilla bearing the likeness of Jesus, or as it is sometimes referred, "Shrine of the Holy Tortilla," is the oldest of the iconotheophanies in this study. It is located in the small border town of Hidalgo. The tortilla with the likeness of Jesus's face resides in the home of Paula (Paulita) Rivera who passed away in the summer of 1998. She lived with her husband in a little white house on the corner of a quiet street under the town's water tower. A sign in the front yard advertized *raspas* (snowcones) to the neighborhood children.

The tortilla sat on a large wooden altar draped with blue curtains in the far corner of the small parlor. It was surrounded by pictures of the Virgin Mary and Christ, flowers,

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[62]These accounts are relayed as they were told to the author. No attempt was made to corroborate miraculous stories or to scientifically explain any of the appearances.

[63]See Figures 3 and 4 of Appendix A.

blessed water, and gifts left by believers. The tortilla, or *gordita*, made from Quaker brand cornmeal *masa* (dough), sat enclosed in a protective plastic case.[64] At the time of the interview the image was over a decade old and though quite faded, it remained intact. The tortilla's preservation was seen by believers as a miracle and further proof of its divine origin. An enlarged photo of the tortilla soon after its emergence sat on the shrine below the original, reminding visitors how it looked on that day years ago.

It had been raining on the afternoon of February 25, 1983. Paula's husband had just worked his final day before retirement. He was watching television and Paula was in the kitchen making tortillas. Each time she made tortillas she ate the last one hot out of the pan. But on this particular day it was different. "So when I got the tortilla out there, I turn it on the other side and I saw the face of Jesus."[65] Not believing what she saw, Paula showed it to her husband and asked "What do you see in this tortilla?" He said, "Well, I see the face of Jesus." They put it on a plate and showed some family members who came to visit. They too were surprised.

Paula did not have any children of her own but had raised two nephews. When she showed her oldest nephew the tortilla he began to cry. He believed the miracle was for her, a reward for being a wonderful foster mother and a kind and generous woman. He said, "You're a nice woman, a nice mother for me. So God is with you now. You're not alone. Thank you to God."

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[64]A gordita is somewhat comparable to a cornmeal pancake, thicker than an actual tortilla. They are sometimes split open and filled with meat or cheese.

[65]When an interview was conducted in English, no attempt has been made to correct or edit the original grammar.

Paula became a *curandera* (traditional healer) as a result of the appearance.[66] She enjoyed telling stories of miracles and manifestations of faith from people who visited the image. One of her favorite stories was called "the first miracle" and was the account of how she became a healer. A woman and her niece came to visit. The woman asked Paula to heal her paralyzed hand that had been closed for 20 years. Feeling overwhelmed, Paula began to pray:

> My God, you are in my tortilla that I was used to eat, and you never talked
> to me. I never see you, I never dream you. . . What do you want with me? Why
> did you came over here? To help the people? To bless the people or what?

All of a sudden Paula felt hands on her back, first feeling cold and then very hot. She continued praying. "So this is what you want from me? I feel your hands. You touch me. What do you give to me? You give your power, you give the faith you have to me? OK, I receive it." Paula began to massage the woman's hand and after a few minutes it opened. Her niece began to cry as she opened and closed her renewed hand.

Since that time many people visited Paula in search of a miracle, evidenced through the hundreds of photographs that covered the walls of her home. When asked why she thought Jesus appeared in her tortilla she said simply, "Well, my idea is that maybe he came down here to help the people that were very sick. When they heard about

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[66]A *curandero* or *curandera* is a traditional healer within the Hispanic community. The name is derived from the Spanish word *curar*, meaning "to heal." *Curanderos* work within the cultural and religious system of their patients, employing spiritual and herbal remedies from both Old and New World traditions. Many *curanderos*, including Alberto and Paula, believe their ability to heal is a *don* or gift from God and do not charge for their services. *Curanderos* are important in the Lower Rio Grande Valley because they provide affordable and culturally relevant treatment. For more information see Trotter and Chavira, 1981.

him they came over here and I blessed them and. . . they were really cured."

Paula stayed humble throughout all the attention. She said, "All the people they come, they just say, 'Oh my God, you got the real thing in your house.' 'Yes,' I just say. 'Thank you.'"

Aurora and Santiago Quintero: The Virgin of Guadalupe in a Chevrolet Camaro[67]

On September 19, 1993, about 9:00 at night, Aurora and Santiago Quintero were in front of their home outside the small town of Elsa. Aurora's brother, Dario, was working on his Chevrolet Camaro on the side of the house. The silence of the night was broken by Dario's excited shouts: "Come over here and look. Look, the Virgin appeared!" The family went to see the dark silhouette on the rear fender and agreed it was the Virgin Mary. Feeling a little scared, they asked someone from the neighborhood to come over and see it. The woman shined a flashlight on the image, making it glow and appear brighter than before. They tried to wipe off the image to insure that it was permanent. "And when we saw this we said, 'The image is here.'" Dario gave up the vehicle and donated it to the Virgin of Guadalupe, who he believed it resembled. Although the Quinteros were more affected by the appearance, the family felt the image appeared on Dario's car as a sign for him to change his life and give up racing.

Local television stations and newspapers reported the appearance. As word spread, many people came to see Guadalupe's image. The Quinteros built a small chapel around the car to protect the image and the many photos, candles, letters, and gifts

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[67]See Figures 5 and 6 of Appendix A.

brought by believers. They began to host weekly rosaries at the image and eventually

Bible study classes.

The Quinteros say the image has grown since it first appeared and has even

changed color and cried tears. These unusual occurrences, along with miracles in their

own family, have helped their faith to grow. Santiago had been very sick with diabetes

before the image appeared.

> I had to go to the doctor every day. Now I don't have anything. . . The doctor
> couldn't believe it. . . Nothing hurts me now, not my feet, not my head. Now I
> work all day in the shop. I'm a mechanic and I can work all day without any
> problems. . . Things were pretty bad before the Virgin appeared. Two days ago I
> went for a checkup. It had been a year and three months since I had seen the
> doctor."

The Quinteros have been changed by the image, feeling that it has brought peace

to their home and their family. When asked how long she thinks the image will stay,

Aurora believed it would be for the rest of their lives.

> She's looking for an altar, a place to stay and make herself at home. She knows
> that we love her. She found this place because she knew there was faith here. . .
> We have the Virgin Mary here and really, what more could we want?

Alberto Salinas: The Virgin of San Juan in a Tree[68]

Alberto Salinas is a *curandero* by trade. But he practices his traditional healing

though a different method than Paula. Alberto has a healing *misión* (mission) on his ranch

outside Edinburgh where he spends his life entirely devoted to *El Niño Fidencio*, a folk

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[68]See Figures 7 and 8 of Appendix A.

saint from northern Mexico.[69]   He had heard about other appearances in the Valley prior

to his experience and hoped someday it would happen to him.

> I thought that it was just great and I always envied the people how lucky they are
> that they have an apparition of the Virgin in their home, like I should be so lucky.
> I feel so close to God due to the fact that I always pray for the ill. I've devoted my
> life to praying for people and I do that day in and day out and I live prayer for the
> ill and for the needy. And I always thought . . . "I'm so close to God, I should be
> so lucky. Maybe one day."

One day Alberto was outside doing work for his *misión* when he felt prompted by

El Niño to decorate a swing on a tree in the yard. He ignored the message twice,

becoming involved with other projects. The third time he finally obeyed and that was

when he saw the image on the tree trunk.

> And it was then I heard a voice, "Look up to the tree." . . . I started looking in the
> tree when I saw the form of the Virgin of San Juan . . . I said, "Wow, I'm so
> lucky! I'm so lucky!" . . . I went and I dropped what I was doing and
> immediately something came into me, this wonderful feeling . . . I couldn't believe
> what I was seeing on the tree. I began to float in the air . . . my feet wouldn't
> touch the ground I was so happy, so thrilled, so excited to see the apparition of the
> Virgin Mary on the tree.

Alberto called his wife outside and asked her to look up at the tree and tell him

what she saw. She immediately recognized the image of the Virgin Mary. Alberto

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[69]José Fidencio Sintora Constantino was born in 1898 in Guanajuato, Mexico.
Although from a poor, uneducated family, *El Niño*, as he came to be known, was one of
Mexico's most prominent healers. In a time when modern medical care was unavailable to
the majority of the population, thousands in northern Mexico came to rely on *El Niño* as
an alternative healing source. His treatments ranged from herbal prescriptions and
counseling to surgeries using only shards of broken glass. After his death in 1938 his
popularity continued to grow. Mediums known as *materias* began to channel *El Niño's*
spirit, believing their bodies could be the means through which he could continue healing.
Today *materias* continue *El Niño's* work through congregations called *misiónes*
(missions). *El Niño's* following continues to grow with some scholars estimating their
numbers in the hundreds of thousands. For more information see Zavaleta, 1998 and
Barrera, 2001.

admitted that he had considered cutting the tree down the year before to make room for another one. At the last minute he decided to wait. Laughing he admitted, "I'm glad I did!"

Since that time the image has not changed and Alberto hopes she will be there forever. Now when devoted followers of *El Niño Fidencio* visit Alberto's *misión*, they can also show devotion to the Virgin of San Juan on the tree. He described his feelings about the appearance.

> It makes me feel complete. I can't want anything else. How can I want anything else after I have an apparition of the Virgin Mary? Sometimes when you go through life, you keep wanting the Lord to give you proof of this and so forth. I need no proof. Even if she hadn't appeared. Of course, now that she did, it just confirms my faith. It strengthens it. I wish everybody in the world could see it. I wish everybody could know. I really do. I wish everybody could know that she is there, she gives us signs that she's there. And she wants us to know that . . . she's there for us.

Valentin: The Virgin Mary in a Cottonwood Tree [70]

In the summer of 1993 Valentin was working as a custodian at the Texas Commerce Bank in Brownsville. One morning he noticed an unusual image on a large tree in the front yard of a white house across the street. "I was just standing there in front of the bank and I was looking to the tree there and I saw the Virgin Mary there. I said, 'No, it can't be.' So I just looked there and looked but I didn't say anything." Afraid of appearing "crazy" to his co-workers he did not say anything for two or three weeks. Finally one morning he had to find out if anybody else saw the image. After unlocking the

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[70]Valentin only wanted his first name used in this study. See Figure 9 of Appendix A.

door he asked one of the bank employees to look up at the tree. "So she looks there and says, 'Yeah, that's the Virgin Mary there.'" After receiving this confirmation he did not question the image anymore.

Before long the media and crowds of people arrived from all over the United States and Mexico. The street in front of the bank had to be closed to accommodate the thousands of people who came to see the image on the tree. Valentin, a rather shy and soft-spoken man, was afraid that his boss would be upset to find out that he was the person who first recognized the image and disrupted their business. Although not completely comfortable with the initial attention, Valentin was glad the experience had happened to him. "I believe in God and I believe in Mary and I know they make miracles. So I thought that was one of the miracles that happened to me there." When asked why he believed the Virgin Mary appeared on the tree he said, "I think. . . she's coming because she wants to tell us something, how we can get together like sisters and brothers because the world is getting real bad. . . She wants us to go to church and pray so the world will get better."

Gloria Chavez: The Virgin Mary in Dining Room Curtains[71]

Outside the small town of La Feria is the brick home of Gloria Chavez. One evening in July of 1995 she noticed people looking at her dining room window. Later the crowd began taking photographs of it. Her husband asked her to call their neighbors, Larry and Lisa Reyna, to find out why. The neighbors told them that the Virgin Mary had

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[71]See Figure 10 of Appendix A.

appeared in the fabric folds of her dining room curtains. The following day a local television station came by to ask if they could interview her. She agreed under the condition that the report explain it was the neighbors who had recognized the image and she did not see anything. This later changed, however, when she was able to recognize the Virgin Mary. "I kept saying, 'I can't see anything.'. . . So there were people standing in line to see her so I went to where they were. When it was my turn to look at the glass I saw her."

Early one morning Gloria began to question why the Virgin Mary had chosen to appear in her house.

> I said, "How can this be possible?". . . I looked at the curtains and I said, "Virgin, why did you come to my window? Why didn't you look for another window? Why do you have to come to my house and look at me? I'm not a person who has a lot of faith."

Later Gloria had another faith-affirming experience when a woman who had come to see the image asked for a Bible and a cross. When Gloria brought them outside the woman started to pray and told her to put her hand on the book.

> Then she said, "Open the Bible." It was my Bible, it wasn't marked up at all. When I opened it, the cross was in there and the rosary was in there too. I felt something. I wanted to faint. And then something happened, I cried. Something actually came inside, something was inside my body. My husband never believed in this. He always would tell me that I was just lying down. And I would tell him, "Look, people are coming to see it."

Immediately after this experience Gloria began to fast. She then began to prophesy to her family and friends. She told her sister without children that she was going to have a son, and her mother in Florida not to evacuate her home for an approaching hurricane.

Gloria's husband was not happy about the image in the curtains, the changes in his wife, or the hundreds of people outside their home. Some people believed Gloria had received a gift and asked her to bless and heal them. More than anything her husband did not want her to become a *curandera*. She assured him that she did not want that either and was going to stay removed from the people outside.

During this time, Gloria was also conflicted spiritually. She had been attending a Protestant church when the image appeared. "I really, really believed in the Virgin . . . and they don't believe in the Virgin. So they would quote me things from the Bible and then I would understand from that I shouldn't believe in the Virgin." Not long after the appearance, a man came to visit who changed her opinion. He said he had read about the image in the newspaper and thought it was a wonderful thing. She told him that people had shown her passages in the Bible that said not to believe in the Virgin Mary. He asked her, "Ma'am, would you like it if somebody talked bad about your mother?" She replied, "No, she's my mother." He answered, "She's the mother of Jesus Christ, our Savior." After her conversation with this man she felt she could believe in the Virgin Mary without any internal conflict.

> So why wouldn't I believe in the Virgin, she's the mother of Jesus. It's not to say that she does the miracles, but she's like a lawyer or intermediary. So if I wanted to ask something from my father, because fathers are stricter instead I would ask my mother and she would ask my father. So I see her as an intermediary. . . I can't reject her. I respect her and that's how I came back to this. . . She appeared to me and I felt something, and I like it.

After the Virgin Mary's likeness disappeared from the folds in the curtains, Gloria was able to look back positively on the experience. "It doesn't matter to me what people

say, the Virgin chose my house . . . and if it was some kind of test from God, then here I am."

Reynaldo Treviño: The Virgin of Guadalupe in the Shower Floor of an Auto Parts Store[72]

Reynaldo Treviño owned an auto parts store in the small border town of Progreso. At the time he was planning to close down his business due to outside competition. On the morning of December 2, 1990, Reynaldo went into the bathroom at the back of the store and noticed something on the floor of the shower.

> I got in there and I felt like something was trying to make me turn my face . . . and I turned around and I saw what appeared to be the image. . . I turned back and said, "No, it can't be." Especially not where it was happening. I couldn't believe it. So what I did at that moment, I just kneeled down and I touched the floor . . . and it wouldn't go away. . . To me, I felt sad. That's the first feeling that I got. I was sad because she was on the floor. . . Sure, I looked at it and I didn't expect it there, but instead of being happy, I was sad. That's why I kept asking myself, "Why?". . . So I got out of the bathroom and started walking back to the front counter . . . I kept asking myself, "What does this mean?'

Still not believing what had happened, Reynaldo decided to find out if the next person who came into the store recognized the image as well. Soon his mother came through the door.

> She walked in and I says, "Do me one favor." She says, "What?" I says, "Go back to the bathroom and just look around and see what you see." She says, "What do you want me to see?" I says, "I'm not going to tell you anything. Just walk up there." So she started walking to the back, she went into the bathroom. She was there a few minutes and then she came back with this surprised look on her face. She says, "you're not going to believe it." I says, "Well, tell me what I'm not going to believe." She says, "I see the image of the Virgin, the Virgin Mary." I says, "Good. That's what I'm seeing also."

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[72]See Figure 11 of Appendix A.

Word of the image spread quickly, bringing hundreds of people from miles around.

Reynaldo talked with many believers, encouraging them not to get caught up with the

image on the floor but look beyond it for meaning.

> There was one man that went in there and he said, "Finally something happened.
> We needed something like this in Progreso." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, all
> the problems and fights and everything that's going on around here. We   need
> somebody." And he wanted to build an altar, he wanted to enclose the place. . .
> where people could just go and see and pray. I says, "It's not meant to be
> something like that. She's not meant to be on the floor. . . Don't allow her to stay
> there. When you go in there, if you really want to do something good, take her
> with you. . . Everybody wants to take a picture of it. Everybody runs to it but
> nobody really puts it in their heart. You already have a picture of her in your
> house. . . If you want to build an altar, build it in your hearts. That's what she
> wants. Take her into your heart and pray to her so that she can guide you and help
> you to establish your relationship with Jesus, with her son."

Although Reynaldo was moved by his experience with the iconotheophany, it did

not prompt any significant personal changes in his life. He had already altered his behavior

the previous year. He had stopped drinking and smoking, began to attend church with his

family and even teaching Bible study classes. Not long after he made these changes, his

wife had a serious accident that paralyzed her from the waist down. Rather than tearing

them apart, Reynaldo and his wife became closer and worked through their trials together.

> It wasn't this event [the appearance] that took place that changed my life or the
> accident that did it either, cause it had already changed before. . . my life had
> already made the turn around, because a lot of people say, "When the problems
> occur, that's when you start changing your life towards God." Well, mine
> happened a year before. I changed mine when everything was going good, when
> my business was thriving and when I had no problems. That's when my life
> changed. By the time my problems came, I had the grace that I needed, thanks to
> God, to be able to cope with it.

Reynaldo continues to be involved with his church work and gains spiritual

strength through his involvement with others. When looking back on his life experiences

nearly ten years before, he said:

> God allowed the problems to happen, but he put everything in our hands so that
> we could take it. . . A lot of people told me that maybe this [the appearance]
> happened because of those problems. I said, "Well, you can say that. Maybe it
> did." But it was something for our good because it helped us. In a way it goes to
> show you that we're not alone, even though there are things happening.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants in the personal interviews, referred to as the "local sample," were selected on the basis of two criteria. First, the iconotheophany with which they were associated had to be located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. Second, they had to be either a primary witness, being first to recognize the image, or the owner or caretaker of the object/location in which the image appeared. Four participants were primary witnesses and three were the owners and caretakers of the images.[73]

Four of the seven witnesses were previous contacts from a documentary film entitled *Mundo Milagroso* (Miraculous World) directed by the author in the summer of 1994.[74] Three of those witnesses were interviewed again during January of 1999. The fourth, Paula, could not be re-interviewed due to her death in 1998. Although the information concerning her experience is not complete in all instances, it remains significant as her iconotheophany is among the oldest and best-known appearances in the Valley. The other three witnesses who participated in this study were obtained through other contacts.[75] These interviews also took place in January of 1999. Six of the interviews were conducted in the homes of witnesses. The seventh took place in a

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[73]Alberto, Reynaldo, Valentin, and Paula were primary witnesses. Although Aurora, Santiago, and Gloria were not first to recognize the iconotheophanies, the images appeared on their property and they became the caretakers.

[74]Aurora, Santiago, Paula, and Valentin.

[75]One image was reported by Dr. Antonio N. Zavaleta, a member of the thesis committee and the other revealed through a newspaper reporter named Karen Hastings.

Catholic church.

More witnesses were intended for this study; however, this proved difficult. Many of the images had appeared years previously and current addresses and telephone numbers were no longer available. When potential witnesses were located, some were not willing to participate in the study. One potential witness never returned telephone inquiries and another denied she was the individual in question. The most effective means of locating informants was through personal references by others who had previous contact with them.

Three interviews were conducted in English, two in Spanish, and two in a combination of both languages. The two Spanish interviews were carried out with a Spanish version of the research instrument designed for this project and the aid of a translator. All interviews were tape recorded. Afterwards, Spanish interviews were translated into English and all were transcribed. Interviews were generally between one and a half to two hours in length, depending on the detail of responses.

All participants signed an informed consent form granting permission to use their personal information in the study.[76] Participants had the option to release their full name, only their first name, or remain anonymous. Six out of seven allowed their full names to be used. The release form also assured participants they did not have to answer any question with which they felt uncomfortable.

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[76]See Informed Consent Form in Appendix E.

Research Instrument

The seven Lower Rio Grande Valley witnesses interviewed for the local sample participated in an in-depth interview about their backgrounds, beliefs, and iconotheophany experiences. In order to create a comfortable atmosphere, the intent was to have the instrument flow more as a "guided conversation" than a structured interview schedule. Discussing personal details into a microphone and tape recorder can be very disconcerting for some individuals. Also, the relaxed tone helped the pace of the interviews as the instrument is quite lengthy.

The research instrument consists of three sections: 1) The Appearance; 2) The Virgin of Guadalupe; and 3) Socio-Demographic Information and Personal Background.[77] Traditionally interviews and questionnaires begin in reverse order with personal information collected at the start. However, information regarding place of birth, birth date, and annual household income can be sensitive issues for some people in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where some live or work illegally. Since participants were accustomed to sharing stories about the iconotheophanies with visitors and the media, they were more likely to feel comfortable giving personal information once they were at ease with the interview and the interviewer.

The instrument consists mainly of open-ended questions to allow witnesses the opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Open-ended inquiries also avoid leading questions whose wording can prompt informants to respond in a manner he or she would not otherwise. Closed-ended questions are generally followed by a more specific inquiry.

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[77]See Appendix F for research instrument.

Part One of the instrument concerns the witnesses' feelings and insights on iconotheophanies, their own experience, and the specific events surrounding the appearances. This section also investigates the witnesses' perceptions of the process that occurs in an iconotheophany experience and how it affects their own reality. The instrument opens by asking witnesses to recount the appearance of their iconotheophanies. Questions follow regarding their initial reactions and their personal circumstances at the time to investigate possible patterns of events leading up to the appearances. The subsequent questions focus on witnesses' insights regarding the image: why they feel it appeared to them, the message behind it, and why they believed the image they saw represented deity. The next portion concerns the reactions of others to the iconotheophany, specifically, the church, the media, and visitors. The final questions in the first section of the instrument deal with the witnesses' knowledge and feelings about other iconotheophanies, both prior to and after their own. These inquiries explore previous knowledge of and possible susceptibility to these types of occurrences.

Part Two of the instrument pertains to the Virgin of Guadalupe. Of concern is the perception, maintenance, and transmission of Mexican-American cultural reality as it relates to Guadalupe's image and story. Part Two begins by asking witnesses to share their personal feelings about the Virgin of Guadalupe and her significance in their lives. They are then asked if they believe those of Mexican descent relate better to her than those who are not. This investigates if their relationship with Guadalupe is tied to their own ethnic identity.

In order to assess the transmission of cultural knowledge between generations and

genders, witnesses are asked to recall when they first heard about the Virgin of Guadalupe, the person who told them, and the message they received. To explore possible differences in the religious education and enculturation of males and females, witnesses are then asked if their brothers (if a female witness) or sisters (if a male witness) were told about Guadalupe in a different manner. They are then asked about the cultural knowledge they passed onto younger generations. Had they told their own children about the Virgin of Guadalupe? At what age did they tell them? What specifically did they tell them? Did they tell their daughters things that were different from the things they told their sons?

The following questions examine similarities and differences between genders in relation to Guadalupe. Both men and women are asked to reflect on the differing relationships the two genders have with the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The final segment of Part Two centers on the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. Witnesses are asked to retell the story of her appearance in their own words. This is an attempt to ascertain their knowledge of the account and the characters involved. If they know the story, witnesses are then questioned about where they had learned it. Finally, witnesses are asked about Juan Diego, the visionary in the narrative. How they feel about him, and why they think the Virgin Mary chose him as her messenger? These questions establish prior knowledge of the Guadalupe narrative and evaluate the impact of the story on their lives.

Part Three of the instrument, Socio-Demographic Information and Personal Background, investigates the five characteristics of the Juan Diego Paradigm which relate

to level of acculturation, socioeconomic status, gender, age, and personal religiosity. Acculturation is a complex process with a variety of perspectives and measures.[78] For this study, witnesses are asked about their language use, preference, and fluency in English and Spanish as children and as adults. This is followed by their language use at home with their own families. They are also asked about their birthplace and where they grew up. If they are born in Mexico, they are asked when they began living in the United States. If they are born in the U.S., they are asked about the birthplace of their parents and grandparents in an attempt to ascertain how many generations had passed since their family had left Mexico. Witnesses are also asked to choose a term of self-identification from the following: Mexican, American, Mexican-American, Latino/a, Hispanic, or other. The words people use to describe themselves can give clues not only to how they view themselves, but how they see themselves in relation to others.[79] Although the data concerning acculturation in not gathered in great detail, it allows enough information to evaluate witnesses.

Socioeconomic status is evaluated by the three components of income, level of educational attainment, and occupational prestige. Annual income is measured by six categories: Under $10,000; $10,000-19,999; $20,000-29,999; $30,000-39,999; $40,000-

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[78]See Padilla, 1980.

[79]Witnesses who identify most with the term Mexican would still hold close ties to Mexico. Those who choose Mexican-American would recognize both their Mexican cultural heritage and their ties to the United States. The term American would insinuate that witnesses had let go of much of their Mexican heritage. Although both Hispanic and Latino emphasize the shared history of all of Latin America, the former leans towards Europe and the latter towards the Americas.

49,999; and $50,000 and above. The factors of gender and age are easily collected. The fifth characteristic, personal religiosity, is evaluated by separate organizational and nonorganizational measures. Four questions are asked about three different stages of the witnesses' lives: childhood, prior to the iconotheophany, and after the appearance. For each era, witnesses are asked to rate their religiosity as one of the following: very religious, moderately religious, somewhat religious, or not at all religious. The organizational components of personal religiosity are frequency of church attendance and involvement in religious groups such as a Bible study group or church choir. The variable used to measure nonorganizational religious behavior is individual and family prayer. As another means of self-evaluation, witnesses are then asked if they felt they had become more religious as a result of their experience. The instrument ends with four additional questions related to personal religiosity that help better understand patterns of devotion. These inquiries include devotion to saints, participation in charismatic worship services, other significant spiritual experiences, and the fulfillment of personal needs by the Catholic Church.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data was collected from the list of 93 reported iconotheophanies presented in the Literature Review (75 U.S. and 18 internationally). The table included information regarding the form of the image, the object in which it appeared, the location, the date. In addition, the name, gender, age, ethnicity, and religious affiliation of the witness is also included (See Appendices B and C). This extensive sample can provide a

large-scale analysis for two of the characteristics of the Juan Diego Paradigm, gender and age.

Names are the most reliable means for determining the gender of witnesses. However, names are not always included in reports of iconotheophanies for two reasons. First, if the witnesses are known, they may at times wish to remain anonymous. Second, due to the inherent group nature of the iconotheophany phenomenon, it often is the case that no one knows who was first to see the image. At times when names were not used, witnesses are identified by gender.

Age was more difficult to determine as it is rarely included in iconotheophany reports. As a result, witnesses are divided into general age categories which include: children (under 12 years), adolescents (12-17 years), and adults (18 years and older). Although the adult category is broad, it allows for some age evaluation by group.

CHAPTER 6: DATA AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will begin by presenting the data for the local sample regarding the proposed connection between the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and iconotheophanies among those of Mexican descent. This will be followed by the findings on each of the five individual characteristics of the Juan Diego Paradigm, including a discussion on the relevance of these factors and the correlations between them. The chapter will end with a brief section concerning the Juan Diego Paradigm, distress, and the future of iconotheophanies.

Iconotheophanies and Mexican Cultural Heritage

The proposed relationship between ethnicity and the iconotheophany phenomenon was presented in the Literature Review. Several examples demonstrated that iconotheophanies appear to be most prevalent among those of Mexican descent both internationally and within the United States. The literature also revealed that images appear often in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas (see Chapter 2). To find a relationship between Mexican heritage, iconotheophanies, and the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, the seven witnesses in the local sample were asked about their knowledge and understanding of the story. All seven witnesses, Alberto, Aurora, Gloria, Paula, Reynaldo, Santiago, and Valentin, being of Mexican descent, knew the account of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance prior to their own iconotheophany experiences.[80] Although

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[80]Alberto, Aurora, Gloria, Reynaldo, Santiago, and Valentin indicated they had all learned the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance as children. Aurora, Reynaldo, Santiago, and Valentin said they learned it at church while Alberto remembers learning it

answers varied in length and detail, witnesses conveyed three key elements of the story.[81]

First, all relayed the miraculous nature of the image and its appearance. Second, five of

the seven witnesses stressed the importance and necessity of a physical image. They

believed it was this tangible evidence that proved the actuality of the Virgin of

Guadalupe's visit to the doubting Archbishop. The third key element was Juan Diego

himself. Witnesses were asked whether they knew the story of Guadalupe's appearance.

The question itself was posed without mentioning Juan Diego by name.[82] This was done

to determine if they were familiar with him and his role in the narrative. All seven

witnesses knew Juan Diego's name and displayed some understanding of the part he

played in the event.

Early in their interviews witnesses were asked to explain why they believed the

Virgin Mary or Jesus had appeared to them.[83] Later they were asked the same regarding

Juan Diego.[84] Five of the six witnesses asked these questions gave responses in which

their first answer reflected their second. In other words, the reason they believed an

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at Catholic School and Gloria from her family. Some also reported learning details about the story from a popular Mexican film, *Las Rosas del Milagro*, which tells the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance. It is often shown on Spanish language television during December in honor of Guadalupe's feast day. Paula had been asked about her knowledge of the narrative itself but was never asked when or where she learned it.

[81]See witnesses' full responses in Appendix G.

[82]The full question was: Do you know the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance? Tell it to me.

[83]See Appendix F, question 5.

[84]See Appendix F, question 42.

iconotheophany appeared to them bore a striking resemblance to the reason they gave for why the Virgin of Guadalupe manifested herself to Juan Diego. These five witnesses, consciously or unconsciously, made some comparison between themselves and Juan Diego (See Appendix G for witnesses' full responses). The results are shown in Table 1.[85]

TABLE 1: Witnesses' Explanations for Own Iconotheophanies Compared to Reasons Given for Juan Diego's*

Witness	Explanation for Own Iconotheophany	Explanation for Appearance to Juan Diego	Correlation?
Alberto	Reward/Luck	Reward/Luck	Yes
Aurora	Needed by the Poor	Needed by the Poor	Yes
Gloria	Not know	Not Know	Yes
Paula	Help the sick	**	**
Reynaldo	Just a Messenger	Just a Messenger	Yes
Santiago	Inspire Change	Faith	No
Valentin	Luck	Luck	Yes

*Witnesses' full responses appear in Appendix G.
**Paula was not asked the question concerning Juan Diego so no correspondence could be determined.

       Alberto believed he was lucky for receiving the Virgin Mary's image on the tree in his yard. He also felt it was a reward for the service he had rendered as a *curandero*, a traditional healer. Later in the interview when he was asked why he thought the Virgin

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[85]See Appendix F for witnesses' full responses.

Mary appeared to Juan Diego, Alberto said he was lucky to have such an experience and that it was a reward for his faithfulness. Aurora believed the Virgin Mary appeared on the fender of the car in her yard because she was needed by the poor people in the community. When asked about Juan Diego, she figured it was because maybe he was poor. Reynaldo believed he, like Juan Diego, was simply a messenger for the Virgin Mary. Valentin felt very lucky for being the first to recognize the image of the Virgin Mary on the tree across the street from his work. Later when asked about Juan Diego, he believed he was also lucky. Gloria, unlike the other witnesses, did not venture to guess why the Virgin Mary appeared in her window. But, like the majority of the other witnesses, she gave the same answer for why she thought the Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego. Santiago was the only witness whose response about his own experience did not correspond to his answer concerning Juan Diego.

Table 1 lends support for the proposed theoretical connection between witnesses and Juan Diego. When a witness recognizes an image in an ordinary object as a likeness of deity, he or she takes on the role of Juan Diego and reenacts his face-to-face encounter with the Virgin of Guadalupe and raises their ordinary experience to extraordinary.

The knowledge and understanding witnesses shared about the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance attests to the important role she plays in their lives and in the lives of many Mexican-Americans. During their interviews, witnesses were asked if they thought those of Mexican descent relate better to the Virgin of Guadalupe than others who are not.[86] While addressing her characteristics as uniquely Mexican, they also

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[86]See Appendix F, questions 24.

recognized her universality as the Virgin Mary.[87] Five of the six witnesses asked this question emphasized that the only difference between Guadalupe and other representations of Mary is how she looks, the name she is given, or the location in which she appears.[88] Does this broad perception of the Virgin of Guadalupe diminish the influence of her story on iconotheophanies among Mexican-Americans? On the contrary, this expanded interpretation of Guadalupe finds expression in the variety of iconotheophanic forms identified by witnesses. It is evident from the data that the images recognized by Mexican-Americans take different forms, not just that of the Virgin of Guadalupe.[89] It is not necessary for an image to portray the likeness of Guadalupe to be recognized as an iconotheophany because all represent the Virgin Mary. Since her many representations are understood as different manifestations of the same individual, the characteristics of one can be applied to others. In other words, the details from the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe's appearance can be transferred to other manifestations. It is then possible for the Virgin of San Juan or the Virgin of the Remedies to be recognized as an iconotheophany. This transference goes beyond likenesses of Mary. It also holds true for images recognized as the likeness of Jesus or a saint. Although the shape of the image and thus the specific representation may differ, the roots of the phenomenon among

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[87]Similar results were found in Jeanette Rodriguez's study on the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe among Mexican-American women, (see Jeanette Rodriguez, 1994: 163). Orlando Espín believed this identification between the Virgin of Guadalupe and the "Mary of Catholic popular devotion" to have occurred in more recent years as they adapt to U.S. religiosity (1994: 331, 342).

[88]Reynaldo, Aurora, Santiago, Alberto, Valentin.

[89]See stories in Chapter 4 and photographs in Appendix A.

Mexican-Americans appear to remain grounded in the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative.

This close connection between the Guadalupe narrative and iconotheophanies among Mexican-Americans raises the question of whether it is necessary for individuals to be familiar with the story prior to becoming a witness. For example, all seven witnesses were familiar with the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative before they had their experience. They were also, however, aware of other iconotheophanies appearing in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Were they recognizing images because of the influence of the Guadalupe narrative or the fact that other images had already been identified and accepted by other believers?

The media have been instrumental in disseminating reports of iconotheophanies throughout the United States and the world. Some reports have shown that it may be possible for individuals to become witnesses as a result of hearing about other appearances.[90] Once they know about and accept the idea of iconotheophanies they may become more open to the possibility of it occurring in their own lives. If an image were to ever present itself, the phenomenon is already part of their reality. If it is indeed true that prior knowledge of the Guadalupe narrative is not necessary to become a witness, it would still remain the inspiration behind the iconotheophany phenomenon among those of Mexican descent.

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[90]Although the following example is not of an image of deity, it illustrates the media's influence on religious phenomena, particularly Marian illusions, in the United States. Crosses of light were reported to have appeared in a window in the Los Angeles area. Within a few days twelve other appearances were reported around southern California (Share International, 1999).

The Juan Diego Paradigm

The five traits and conditions that characterize the Juan Diego Paradigm are low levels of acculturation, low socioeconomic status, male gender, older age, and increased religiosity. These factors, derived from Juan Diego in the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, have been hypothesized to cause increased levels of distress and thus increase the likelihood of these types of individuals to play the role of Juan Diego and reenact the mythical encounter through an iconotheophany experience.

Level of Acculturation

The first factor to be discussed is level of acculturation. It was hypothesized that, like Juan Diego, individuals with low levels of acculturation would experience the greatest distress and thus be more likely to recognize iconotheophanies than those who are well integrated into American society. The data from the local sample pertaining to acculturation employed three different means of evaluation: language usage and proficiency, birthplace, and terms of self-identification. Of these three measures language was the best indicator of acculturation. The more English witnesses knew and utilized, the greater their integration into American society. The results are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Witnesses' Language Usage, Preference, and Ability

Witness	First Language	Language Preference	Primary Language at Home	Language Ability	Children's Language Preference
Alberto	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish and English	Bilingual	Bilingual
Aurora	Spanish	Spanish*	Spanish	Spanish and Some English	Bilingual
Gloria	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish and Moderate English	Bilingual
Paula	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish and Moderate English	Bilingual
Reynaldo	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish and English	Bilingual	Bilingual
Santiago	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish and Very Little English	Bilingual
Valentin	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish and Proficient in English	Bilingual

*Aurora expressed a preference for English but because of her limited facility in the language, the majority of her communication is in Spanish.

Spanish was the first language learned by all seven witnesses. Being their primary language, it was used most often in their homes growing up. English was a secondary language, learned by some as children and others as adults. Three witnesses, Aurora, Santiago, and Gloria, were in the process of learning English at the time of their

interviews. All seven witnesses preferred Spanish to English.[91] Two were fully bilingual, using English and Spanish with equal proficiency. Another was nearly bilingual, proficient in English, yet preferring an interpreter in some situations. Two other witnesses were semi-bilingual. They were able to speak and understand moderate amounts of English but usually conversed in Spanish. Another witness understood and spoke some English but primarily used Spanish. The seventh witness understood some English but spoke very little. Spanish was used most often in all of the witnesses' homes. The children of all seven witnesses spoke both English and Spanish though Spanish was also their first language.

The impact of a witnesses' birthplace on acculturation was difficult to evaluate. Although it determined the length of time their families had been away from Mexico, it did not always give a clear indication of acculturative level. The results are shown in Table 3.

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[91]One Spanish-speaking witness, Aurora, did express a preference for English, explaining that it allowed her to practice. However, in terms of actual language usage, Spanish was clearly preferred.

TABLE 3: Witnesses' Birthplace, Terms of Self-Identification, Language Ability, and Estimated Acculturative Measure

Witness	Birth place	Birth place of Parents	Term of Self-Identification	Language Ability	Level of Acculturation (Estimated)
Alberto	Texas	Texas	Hispanic	Bilingual	Bicultural
Aurora	Texas	Texas	Mexican	Spanish and Some English	Very Mexican
Gloria	Mexico	Mexico	Hispanic	Spanish and Moderate English	Mexican-Oriented Bicultural
Paula	Texas	*	*	Spanish and Moderate English	Mexican-Oriented Bicultural
Reynaldo	Texas	Texas	Hispanic	Bilingual	Bicultural
Santiago	Mexico	Mexico	Mexican	Spanish and Very Little English	Very Mexican
Valentin	Texas	Texas	Latino	Spanish and Proficient in English	Mexican-Oriented Bicultural

*Paula was not asked these questions.

Five of the seven witnesses (71.4%), were born in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Of these five, four had both sets of parents born in the U.S. as well. Four of the five U.S. born witnesses were also asked about the birthplace of their grandparents. One witness had one set of grandparents from the U.S. and one from Mexico. The other two did not know. The two witnesses not born in the U.S. were from Mexico.

The complication with using birthplace as a means of evaluating level of acculturation arose when one witness from Mexico, Gloria, proved to be more integrated

into American society than other witnesses whose families had been in the U.S. for generations. The Lower Rio Grande Valley has maintained much of its Mexican culture and tradition due to its geographic isolation from large U.S. cities and its close proximity to Mexico. Spanish-speaking people have lived for many generations in the Valley without learning English or integrating into American society. Consequently, a U.S. citizen may or may not be more acculturated than someone who has immigrated from Mexico. This is changing, however, as the Valley develops economically and becomes more integrated into the national and world economies. This transformation was evident in the language abilities of the witnesses' children. All were fluent in both Spanish and English (See Table 2). Some had grandchildren who did not speak Spanish.

The third measure of acculturation was a term of self-identification. Witnesses were asked to choose from six terms with which they most identified: Mexican, American, Mexican-American, Hispanic, Latino, or Other. Table 3 shows that of the six witnesses asked this question, three chose Hispanic, two Mexican, and one Latino. Thus the majority of witnesses, four of the six, 66.7%, identified most with "Hispanic" or "Latino." Witnesses gave one of two reasons for choosing these particular terms as opposed to "Mexican" or "Mexican-American." First, they both incorporate the word "Mexican" so witnesses perceived the terms to mean an individual from Mexico.[92] Witnesses who chose Hispanic or Latino had either been born in the U.S. or were quickly becoming acculturated into American society. The second reason concerned the broad application of the terms.

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[92]For example, Alberto who identified himself as Hispanic said, "I'm Hispanic because I'm not from Mexico. My parents are from here."

They believed the term "Mexican-American," was divisive and separated themselves from other Hispanic groups.[93] Two of the six witnesses did choose the term "Mexican," although one was born in the United States. These two were the least acculturated of the group (See Table 3).

Although the seven witnesses in this study were at varying levels of acculturation, all maintained elements of Mexican culture in their lives. The two witnesses who were most acculturated were able to communicate equally well in both languages and exist comfortably in both cultures. Even though they utilized English as well as Spanish, their lives were still inextricably tied to their Mexican roots. They could be described as "bicultural." Three other witnesses would be considered "Mexican-oriented bicultural." They knew some English and could function in most English-speaking social situations, but they felt more comfortable in a culturally Mexican environment. The two witnesses who were the least acculturated were "very Mexican," both linguistically and culturally.[94]

Level of acculturation was shown to be an influential characteristic of the Juan Diego Paradigm. The majority of witnesses, 71.1%, were culturally more "Mexican" than "American." All of them preferred Spanish and spoke it most often in their own homes. Although more acculturated Mexican-Americans may recognize and accept iconotheophanies, individuals with lower levels of acculturation appear to be more likely

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[93]For example, Reynaldo, who identified himself as Hispanic, said, "We all are of Hispanic descent. You start putting a name like Mexican or American and then you are picking a particular place. We're all Hispanics. We're all the same, we come from the same."

[94]These terms are identified and described by Cuellar, et al, 1980.

witnesses: The local data supports the hypothesis that witnesses would reflect Juan Diego's low level of acculturation and lack of integration into the dominant society. Less acculturated individuals of Mexican descent may experience acculturative distress and be more open to an iconotheophany experience to strengthen and validate themselves in an unfamiliar environment.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status, the second individual characteristic of the Juan Diego Paradigm, was also important. The data revealed suggestive correlations between socioeconomic status and how witnesses perceive themselves and their iconotheophany.

It was hypothesized that witnesses who recognize iconotheophanies would, like Juan Diego, have low socioeconomic status. This factor was evaluated by three variables: occupation, level of education, and income. The results are shown in Table 4.

appeared. She had recently begun caring for her grandchildren. Paula and Aurora were housewives.

Levels of educational attainment ranged from elementary school to college. Two completed one year of formal education, two others three years, another ten years, while another attended some college. It was not known exactly how much schooling Paula completed, only that she had received an elementary level education. Thus the majority of witnesses, five of the seven, had elementary school education levels (71.4%).

The total annual household incomes of witnesses varied at the time the images appeared. Four witnesses reported income under $10,000 per year. Three of these individuals reported having incomes of under $5,000 annually. Another witness indicated earnings between $20-29,999 while another made $40-49,999 annually. Two witnesses' annual earnings were estimated as one was not asked this question and another chose not to answer. Income estimations were made in terms of occupational prestige and observable social indicators such as location and size of home, type and number of vehicle(s), etc. One witness was presumed to make under $10,000 per year and the other between $20,000-29,999. With regard to four of the seven witnesses, 57.1% had incomes well below the national poverty level (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999).[96] The data on the seven witnesses appear to support the Juan Diego Paradigm, showing that individuals with low occupational prestige, less education, and low income are more likely to recognize iconotheophanies.

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[96] "1999 H.H.S. Poverty Guidelines" are as follows: For a family of 3: $13,880; 4: $16,700; 5:$ 19,520; 6: $22,340; 7: $25,160; 8: $27,980.

Of the three measures used to evaluate socioeconomic status, level of income appeared particularly important. Annual household earnings showed a strong negative correlation with both the significance of the experience and the level of outward change exhibited by witnesses as a result of their iconotheophanies. In other words, the lower the income, the greater the personal significance of the iconotheophanies and the subsequent change in their lives.

Table 5 shows the relationship between income, personal significance, and change. Personal significance refers to the level of importance individuals place on the iconotheophany event. Change accounts for the degree to which they alter their own lives. These two variables are closely related to one another. The greater the significance individuals feel about the event, the stronger their chances of making changes in their personal behavior.[97] As Table 5 shows, the factors of income and personal significance and change are inversely related. The higher the income, the lower the effect of the iconotheophany. The lower the income, the greater the effect.

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[97]Personal significance and change were determined by an overall evaluation of witnesses' interviews, including the amount of change in their personal religiosity (See also the data regarding personal religiosity).

TABLE 5: Witnesses' Income Compared to Significance of Iconotheophany and
Subsequent Change

Witnesses are listed in terms of the personal significance placed on the iconotheophanies and the change they experienced from least affected to greatest (7-1).		
Witnesses	Annual Household Income	Personal Significance and Change
Reynaldo	$40,000-49,999	7
Gloria	$20,000-29,999	6
Valentin	$20,000-29,999	5
Alberto	Under $10,000	4
Santiago	Under $10,000	3
Aurora	Under $10,000	2
Paula	Under $10,000	1

Another interesting relationship was revealed between income, the personal
significance witnesses placed on the images, the resulting changes in their lives, and the
location of the appearances. Although all six iconotheophanies in this study appeared on
private property, the circumstances between them varied. Table 6 shows witnesses, in
order of least significance and change to greatest, compared to income and location of the
iconotheophany. The findings reveal that the higher the income the greater the geographic
and emotional distance between the witness and the image. Geographic distance refers to
the actual physical distance between the image and a witnesses's own home. Emotional
distance refers to the degree of closeness a witness feels toward the image. Some

witnesses interviewed were not first to recognize the iconotheophany, but became more affected by it and took greater responsibility for it than the person who did. Thus they would be considered to be closer emotionally to the image. The three witnesses with the highest earnings - those who earned $20,000 and above - either identified images away from their own homes or were not first to recognize them. The reverse was also true. Witnesses with low earnings were closer to their iconotheophanies geographically and emotionally. The other four witnesses with incomes under $10,000 actually had images appear in their own homes. Although Aurora and Santiago were not the first to identify the image, they embraced the appearance on their property and became the primary caretakers. Thus Table 6 shows support for the idea that individuals with low earnings are more likely to look for and recognize iconotheophanies in their own homes and feel as stronger emotional attachment to them.

TABLE 6: Witnesses' Personal Change and Significance Placed on the Iconotheophany by Annual Household Income, Location of the Appearance, and Distance from the Image (Emotional and/or Physical)

Witness*	Annual Household Income	Personal Significance and Change (least to greatest)	Location of the Image	Inside/Outside	Distance (Geographic/ Emotional)
Reynaldo	$40,000-49,999	7	Work	Inside (Storage Room)	Geographic/Emotional
Gloria	$20,000-29,999	6	Home	Outside (Window)	Emotional
Valentin	$20,000-29,999	5	Work	Outside (Tree)	Geographic
Alberto	Under $10,000	4	Home	Back yard (Tree)	None
Santiago	Under $10,000	3	Home	Side yard (Car)	None
Aurora	Under $10,000	2	Home	Side yard (Car)	None
Paula	Under $10,000	1	Home	Inside (Kitchen)	None

Other important relationships were found between level of income, personal significance and change, and the degree to which witnesses perceived their role in the event. Witnesses who believed they were chosen for their experiences were affected more than those who viewed the appearance as a chance occurrence. As can be seen in Table 7, those with lower earnings believed they were specifically chosen for their experiences while those with higher incomes did not.

TABLE 7: Witnesses' Income Compared to Perceived Role in Iconotheophany Experience

Witness	Annual Household Income	Personal Significance and Change (least to greatest)	Perceived Role in Iconotheophany Event
Reynaldo	$40,000-49,999	7	*Not Chosen* - simply a coincidence
Gloria	$20,000-29,999	6	*Location chosen* - not herself as an individual
Valentin	$20,000-29,999	5	*Chosen by luck* - happy to have been the one
Alberto	Under $10,000	4	*Personally chosen* - because of faithfulness
Santiago	Under $10,000	3	*Personally chosen* - to receive the image
Aurora	Under $10,000	2	*Personally chosen* - because of faithfulness
Paula	Under $10,000	1	*Personally chosen* - to heal others

Reynaldo had the highest income and changed the least as a result of his iconotheophany. He did not feel he was distinct in any way and viewed his experience as a coincidence. Gloria, who tied for the second highest income, also changed little as a result of her iconotheophany, though more than Reynaldo. Gloria did not venture to answer the question why an image had appeared in her curtains. She simply decided to accept it but not take an active role in subsequent events due to conflicts with her Catholic upbringing, newly acquired religious knowledge, and her husband. Valentin's income was in the same category as Gloria, although he was more affected by his iconotheophany than either she or Reynaldo. Valentin perceived the appearance as a great miracle in his life, one that he felt fortunate to receive. Alberto was affected more than any of the previous three witnesses and had earnings in the lowest category. Though he felt lucky, as did Valentin, he perceived he had a greater role in his appearance. Alberto believed he was chosen to receive the image as a result of his faith and devotion.

Santiago and Aurora were next in the degree they were affected by their appearance. As a married couple their household income fell into the same category as Alberto's. They viewed themselves as having an even greater role than the four previous witnesses in the emergence of their iconotheophany. The husband and wife believed they were chosen by God to receive the image of the Virgin Mary. They also exhibited more significant changes in their lives than any of the previous witnesses. Aurora and Santiago began hosting Bible study classes in a chapel they built in their yard around the Virgin of Guadalupe's image.

The witness who exhibited the most change was Paula. She too was in the lowest

income category. She perceived herself as having perhaps the most significant role in her iconotheophany. Not only did she feel she was chosen to receive the image of Christ in her tortilla, she believed she was elected to heal. Paula became a *curandera* as a result of her experience and maintained a shrine in her home for 15 years until her death in 1998.

The inverse relationship between income and the effect of an iconotheophany suggests the importance such an event can have on witnesses with lower earnings. Income is generally the greatest indicator of status in American society as higher earnings bring about an increase in social standing within a community. Without the possibility for higher earnings, some are open to other means of feeling socially validated. An iconotheophany can bring about community recognition and respect. This was demonstrated in the answers given by witnesses when asked if they were treated differently by other people after the appearances. Witnesses with lower incomes perceived greater respect from others after their iconotheophanies than those with higher incomes (See Table 8).

TABLE 8: Difference in Witnesses' Perceived Treatment by Income

Witness	Significance and Change (least to greatest)	Annual Household Income	Perceived Increase in Respect from Others?
Reynaldo	7	$40,000-49,999	No
Gloria	6	$20,000-29,999	No
Valentin	5	$20,000-29,999	Yes (temporarily)
Alberto	4	Under $10,000	Yes
Santiago	3	Under $10,000	Yes
Aurora	2	Under $10,000	Yes
Paula	1	Under $10,000	Yes

These statements illustrate how an iconotheophany can raise an individual's social standing within his or her own cultural community. Witnesses with higher earnings receive social recognition through other means such as occupational prestige and income. They would thus be less inclined to feel a need for additional social validation. This was reflected in the initial reluctance exhibited by wealthier witnesses when the images first appeared. Witnesses with low incomes were more inclined to receive and accept the iconotheophanies because for them personal validation found through socioeconomic means was lacking. As a result, they sought for support outside human society in the realm of the sacred.

The local data supports socioeconomic status as an important aspect of the Juan Diego Paradigm. As hypothesized, all witnesses were part of the working class and the majority had little education and low income. The level of annual household earnings,

however, was the most revealing. Witnesses with the lowest income placed the greatest amount of personal significance on the iconotheophany and, as a result, experienced the most change in their lives. They also were the closest geographically and emotionally to the images. Low income witnesses also expressed the greatest importance on their personal role in the iconotheophany event and perceived the greatest change in their own status. The results of the data appear to support the Juan Diego Paradigm, suggesting those with low socioeconomic status are more religious and experience the greatest levels of psychological distress. These individuals would be those most likely to seek personal strength and status through religious means such as an iconotheophany, thereby personally assuring themselves that they are indeed significant to deity.

Gender

Gender is the third characteristic of the Juan Diego Paradigm. Following the pattern set in the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, it was hypothesized that, like Juan Diego, witnesses of iconotheophanies would be more likely male than female. As with all elements of the Juan Diego Paradigm, it was presumed that this factor would cause increased psychological distress. The local sample includes four males and three females and appears to be consistent with this hypothesis. This sample, however, was too small to evaluate, being more the result of witness availability and willingness to participate in the study than an actual representation of the phenomenon. Therefore, this section will focus primarily on the gender distribution in the U.S. list of 75 iconotheophanies introduced in the Literature Review (See Literature Review).

The gender of 69 U.S. witnesses was determined from the information provided for 75 reported iconotheophanies (See Appendix B). Of these 69 witnesses, 27 were male (39.1%) and 42 were female (60.9%), making females 1.6 times more likely to recognize iconotheophanies than males (See Table 9).

TABLE 9: Number of Male Witnesses Compared to Female Witnesses from U.S. Iconotheophanies*

Sample	Witnesses of Known Gender (out of 75 total)	Male		Female		Ratio (m:f)
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
U.S.	69	27	39.1%	42	60.9%	1:1.6

*See Appendix A for complete list.

This U.S. sample of male and female witnesses becomes increasingly distinctive when it is divided by ethnicity. The gender and ethnicity could be determined for 66 of the witnesses from Table 9. Forty-nine were Hispanic (including Mexican-Americans) and 17 were not. This Hispanic sample includes 20 males and 29 females, a ratio of 1:1.5, slightly lower than the overall ratio. Of the 17 non-Hispanic U.S. witnesses there were 6 males and 11 females, a male to female ratio of 1:1.8 (See Table 10). The ratio of non-Hispanic males to females increased while that of Hispanics diminished, showing Hispanic males, particularly those of Mexican descent, are more apt to experience an iconotheophany than their non-Hispanic counterparts.

TABLE 10: Ethnicity of Male Witnesses Compared to Female Witnesses from U.S.
Iconotheophanies*

Sample	U.S. Witnesses of Known Gender and Ethnicity (66 total)	Male		Female		Ratio (m:f)
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Hispanic/ Mex-Am	49	20	40.8%	29	59.2%	1:1.5
Non-Hispanic	17	6	35.3%	11	64.7%	1:1.8

*See Appendix B for complete list.

A different trend altogether was found in the male to female ratio when the U.S.
sample was narrowed to include only those iconotheophanies reported in the Lower Rio
Grande Valley of south Texas. Of the 17 iconotheophanies reported, there were 17
witnesses identifiable by both ethnicity and gender. This proportion of nine males to eight
females follows the Juan Diego Paradigm, showing males to be slightly more common
than females (See Table 11).

TABLE 11: Number of Male Witnesses Compared to Female Witnesses from the Lower
Rio Grande Valley of South Texas*

Sample	Witnesses of Known Gender (out of 17)	Male		Female		Ratio (m:f)
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
L.R.G.V.	17	9	52.9%	8	47.1%	1.1:1

*See Appendix B.

The Juan Diego Paradigm hypothesized that males would be more likely than females to become witnesses of iconotheophanies. Although Tables 9, 10 did not fully reflect this assumption, Table 11 did. In spite of these inconsistencies, it is apparent from the data that male involvement in iconotheophanies is significantly different from their involvement in the Marian apparition phenomenon. The Literature Review showed females visionaries to be 2.5-3.0 times more common than male visionaries (See Literature Review). A relationship between gender and ethnicity was also revealed. Hispanic males, particularly Mexican-Americans, seem to be more likely than non-Hispanic males to become witnesses of iconotheophanies. This was particularly demonstrated in the Lower Rio Grande Valley sample, the are where males witnesses were slightly more common than female witnesses. This contrast can perhaps be explained through the shared cultural and religious history of the Mexican people and the Juan Diego Paradigm.

As previously mentioned, the gender element of the Juan Diego Paradigm consists of two related ideas: maleness and distress. Juan Diego, by the nature of his gender, set forth a masculine pattern, making the witness experience more acceptable and accessible to males. The vast majority of people living in the Lower Rio Grande Valley are of Mexican descent (See Chapter 2). In the previous section of this chapter the findings were presented for the seven witnesses' knowledge of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative (See section entitled "Iconotheophanies and Mexican Descent"). Not only did they know the story prior to their iconotheophany experiences, they learned it as children, as it was a part of their religious education (See "Iconotheophanies and Mexican Cultural Heritage). It is therefore possible that many of the Mexican-Americans living in the Valley are, like the

witnesses from the local sample, familiar with the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and thus Juan Diego's gender. Knowing that the primary witness of this monumental iconotheophany was male could potentially make the experience more in the realm of possibility for males.

This male element of the Juan Diego Paradigm has been hypothesized to constitute distress. A connection between distress and Mexican-Americans was demonstrated in the Literature Review, showing level of acculturation to play an important part. The literature showed that Mexican males have typically been raised in a culture where masculinity is valued. Those males who venture into unfamiliar U.S. society may feel their authority challenged when confronted with different gender roles and socioeconomic expectations, potentially causing psychological distress (See Literature Review). The Lower Rio Grande Valley is situated along the U.S./Mexico border where a large percentage of the population is more culturally Mexican than American. In this region one quarter to one third of the population speaks little English or none at all (Martínez, 1994: 101). It is possible males in the region are more likely to experience distress associated with low acculturation than those in other areas of the United States. This distress could potentially make these individuals more prone to an iconotheophany experience than other males (See Literature Review).

The findings from the Lower Rio Grande Valley sample, the near equality of the male to female witness ratio, was reflected in the interviews with the witnesses from the local sample. Six of the seven witnesses were interviewed about gender and its affect on their personal faith and relationship with the Virgin of Guadalupe. All six said they were

told the same information by their parents concerning the Virgin of Guadalupe as their siblings of the opposite sex. All six witnesses also reported that as parents they too relayed the same information about her to their sons as well as their daughters. Of these six witnesses, four believed men and women have a common and equal faith in the Virgin of Guadalupe.[98] The difference they perceived between male and female religiosity was in their outward expressions of faith. Five of the six witnesses believed women were more likely to express religious behavior than men.[99] Perhaps this male hesitancy to be outwardly religious explains why the numbers in Tables 9, 10 do not show male witnesses to be more common than female witnesses.

Although the data concerning gender did not completely support the Juan Diego Paradigm by showing males to be more likely than females to become witnesses in all samples, it did reveal some important patterns. First, males are clearly more involved in the iconotheophany phenomenon than they are in Marian apparitions. Second, Mexican-Americans and other Hispanic males are more common witnesses than non-Hispanic males. Finally, it revealed males to be very prominent witnesses in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. Perhaps the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative has influenced the male tendency towards iconotheophanies. Further investigation is necessary to understand the relationship between gender, the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative, and iconotheophanies.

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[98] Alberto, Aurora, Gloria, and Reynaldo

[99] Alberto, Aurora, Reynaldo, Santiago, and Valentin

<u>Age</u>

Age was the fourth factor presumed to contribute to the Juan Diego Paradigm. It was hypothesized that witnesses of iconotheophanies would be older adults, just as Juan Diego in the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. Old age and its associated problems were presumed to cause greater distress than youth. The local sample of seven witnesses appeared to support these assumptions. Table 12 shows their ages ranged from 45 to 66 years at the time of their iconotheophanies. The average age was 53.9 years.

<u>TABLE 12</u>: Age of Witnesses at the Time of their Iconotheophanies

Witness	Age
Alberto	46
Aurora	50
Gloria	49
Paula	66
Reynaldo	45
Santiago	64
Valentin	57

Average Age of Witnesses: 53.9 years

According to tradition, Juan Diego was 57 years old when the Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to him, very close to the average age of the witnesses in the local sample. This association between older age and reported iconotheophanies also appeared to be supported by the U.S. sample. Obtaining precise data regarding the ages of

witnesses from the U.S. was impossible because reports rarely include this information

(See Appendix B). It was possible, however, to divide witnesses by broad age groups:

children (under 12 years), adolescents (12-17 years), and adults (18 years and over). Of

the 68 witnesses that could be identified by general age categories, 61 were adults

(89.7%), 3 were adolescents (4.4%), and 4 were children (65.9%) (See Table 13).

TABLE 13: Age of Witnesses from 75 U.S. Iconotheophanies

Total Number of U.S. Witnesses Identifiable by Age Group: 68		
Age Group	Number	Percent
Children (Under 12 years)	4	5.9%
Adolescents (12-17 years)	3	4.4%
Adults (18+years)	61	89.7%
TOTAL	**68**	**100%**

Although some of the other factors of the Juan Diego Paradigm have shown

significant correlations with ethnicity, age did not. In fact the numbers changed little when

the 68 witnesses in Table 13 were divided into Hispanic/Mexican-Americans and non-

Hispanic categories. Sixty-seven of the 68 witnesses had identifiable ethnic backgrounds,

50 of which, 74.6%, were determined to be Hispanic. In this sample were 44 adults

(88.0%), 3 adolescents (6.0%), and 3 children (6.0%). The 17 non-Hispanic witnesses

made up 25.4% of the total sample. They consisted of 16 adults (94.1%), no adolescents,

and one child (5.9%) (See Table 14).

TABLE 14: Age and Ethnicity of Witnesses from 75 U.S. Iconotheophanies*

Total Number of U.S. Witnesses Identifiable by Age Group and Ethnicity: 67				
Age Group	Hispanics: 50 (74.6%)		Non-Hispanics: 17 (25.4%)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Children (Under 12 years)	3	6.0%	1	5.9%
Adolescents (12-17 years)	3	6.0%	0	0.0%
Adults (18+ years)	44	88.0%	16	94.1%
TOTAL	50	100%	17	100%

Note: Images reported without identified witnesses in Hispanic neighborhoods are counted as having one witness.

*For full list see Appendix B

The findings concerning witnesses' ages in Tables 12, 13, and 14 differ significantly from the age of visionaries of apparitions. The Literature Review showed that children, adolescents, and young adults were the most frequent visionaries, reporting apparitions more often than adults (See Literature Review). Not only were youths more common visionaries, they were also considered to be more credible than adults, particularly women (Christian, 1996: 246, 251-252). The adult frequency of witnesses in

the iconotheophany phenomenon can perhaps be explained through the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and the Juan Diego Paradigm.

The story of the Virgin of Guadalupe and Juan Diego set a powerful pattern for those of Mexican descent to recognize the sacred in their own lives. As previously demonstrated, people of Mexican descent are likely to be familiar with Juan Diego and his role in the story. It could therefore be presumed that they would also be aware that Juan Diego was an adult. The Literature Review showed older adults to be more prone to depression and distress than their younger counterparts. Studies showed that older Mexican-Americans are particularly prone to psychological distress associated with increased health problems and cultural adjustments (See Literature Review). It is this type of distress that might prompt some older Mexican-Americans to seek for deeper meaning and purpose in their lives through an iconotheophany experience, making them the likeliest candidates for the phenomenon. Therefore, as hypothesized, the data supports the Juan Diego Paradigm which predicted that witnesses of iconotheophanies would most likely be older adults.

Personal Religiosity

Personal religiosity also revealed distinguishing characteristics. It was hypothesized that witnesses would, like Juan Diego, be religious at the time they recognized the images and profoundly religious afterwards. The personal religiosity of the seven witnesses from the local sample was evaluated at three times in their lives: while growing up, at the time of the iconotheophany, and after the appearance. It was

significant that all six witnesses asked these questions had religious upbringings,

accomplishing the important Catholic rites of passage: First Communion and

Confirmation.[100] After this rite of passage was completed, personal religiosity varied (See

Table 15).

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[100]Paula was not asked these questions having died prior to interviewing for this study.

TABLE 15: Personal Religiosity of Witnesses During Childhood

Witness	Self-Rated Religiosity	Church Attendance	Church-Related Activities	Frequency of Prayer	Comments
Alberto	Very Religious	Regularly	None*	Every day	"I can never remember a day in my life I never prayed."
Aurora	Very Religious	Regularly	None	Every Day	"We'd pray at night and in the morning."
Gloria	Very Religious	Regularly	None	Every Day	"I was very religious as a child."
Paula	**	**	**	**	**
Reynaldo	Somewhat Religious	Somewhat Regularly	None	Only at Church	"I would go to mass because I had to."
Santiago	Moderately Religious	Regularly	None	Never	"I didn't pray, I was too busy playing."
Valentin	Somewhat Religious	Somewhat Regularly	None	When Necessary	"We didn't think too much about it [prayer] unless something happens."

*Curanderismo was not considered a "church-related activity" in this study.

**Paula was not asked these questions having died prior to interviewing for this study.

Personal religiosity varied at the time the witnesses had their iconotheophany experiences, but the majority of them described themselves as being "moderately religious" to "very religious." Although all four male witnesses reported a period in their lives when certain aspects of their personal religious behavior declined (such as church attendance), two had returned with their families prior to the appearances.[101] At the time of the iconotheophanies some witnesses preferred organized religion and attended church regularly while others opted for private prayer. Most witnesses practiced both. As Table 16 shows, all six witnesses asked these questions about this time of their lives considered themselves religious to some degree. This appears to support the Juan Diego Paradigm which presumed that religious individuals would be more likely to recognize an iconotheophany.

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[101] Alberto and Reynaldo.

TABLE 16: Personal Religiosity of Witnesses Prior to Iconotheophanies

Witness	Self-Rated Religiosity	Church Attendance	Church-Related Activities	Prayer	Comments
Alberto	Very Religious	Not Very Often	None	Many Times a Day	"I have a church. I am in church constantly."
Aurora	Very Religious	Regularly	None	Every Day	"I was a little less religious than I am now."
Gloria	Moderately Religious	Not Very Often	None	Not Very Often	"I don't pray, the Bible says you don't have to pray much."
Paula	*	Regularly	*	*	*
Reynaldo	Very Religious	Regularly	Choir, Teaching	Every Day	"I pray continually. I pray every day."
Santiago	Moderately Religious	Regularly	None	Only at Church	"I prayed only at funerals and rosaries."
Valentin	Somewhat Religious	Not Very Regularly	None	Not Very Often	"I'd go to church one Sunday and then skip two or three."

*Paula was not asked these questions.

The most significant of the three time periods used to evaluate religiosity was the third, after the iconotheophanies occurred. Six of the seven witnesses felt the experience had increased some aspect of religiosity in their personal lives (See Table 17). This increased religiosity resulting from the iconotheophanies is closely related to the degree of significance and change discussed earlier with the findings on socioeconomic status (See socioeconomic status). Witnesses' nonorganizational religiosity appeared to be more affected by the iconotheophanies than organizational. As Table 17 shows, church attendance did not change as much as personal prayer. Three witnesses started to attend church more often while five began to pray more frequently. However, six of the seven witnesses expressed that the greatest impact had been in more deeply spiritual ways. Santiago and Valentin thought the greatest improvement had been in their family relationships. Alberto, Aurora, and Gloria believed it had affected their faith. Paula and Gloria felt they had gained greater insight into their own trials and personal challenges.[102] Reynaldo, the one witness who thought his own iconotheophany experience did not greatly affect his life, said this because he had already made significant changes in his personal behavior prior to the appearance.[103]

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[102]Paula was asked similar questions during her interview.

[103]See Appendix G for full witness responses.

TABLE 17: Personal Religiosity of Witnesses After Iconotheophanies and Corresponding Change*

Witness	Self-Related Religiosity	Church Attendance	Church-Related Activities	Frequency of Prayer	Comments
Alberto	Very Religious *Increase*	Not Very Often *Same*	None *Same*	Very Often *Increase*	"I never thought it [faith] could get stronger and it did."
Aurora	Very Religious *Increase*	Regularly *Increase*	Classes, Prayer Group *Increase*	Every Day *Increase*	"My faith has grown a lot. I have more faith than before."
Gloria	Religious *Increase*	Regularly *Temporary Increase*	Not Very Often *Same*	Not Very Often *Same*	"It brought me closer to God. I feel him in my heart."
Paula	Very Religious** *Increase*	Not Very Often *Decrease*	None *Same*	Every Day *Increase*	"When Jesus came my husband said, "We don't have to go to church, we have Jesus."
Reynaldo	Very Religious *Same*	Regularly *Same*	Choir, Teaching *Same*	Every Day *Same*	"It wasn't this event that changed my life, it had already changed before."
Santiago	Very Religious *Increase*	Regularly *Increase*	Classes, Prayer Group *Increase*	Every Day *Increase*	"We have a lot of faith in this. We've received a lot of help."
Valentin	Very Religious *Increase*	Not Very Regularly *Same*	None *Same*	Every Day *Increase*	"My life has changed a lot."

*See Appendix G for witnesses' full responses.
**Paula was asked about her level of religiosity after her iconotheophany. The measure of self-rated religiosity, however, was estimated from her other responses.

The data in Tables 15, 16, and 17 showed that personal religiosity was an important element of the Juan Diego Paradigm. Six of the seven witnesses had religious upbringings and, although their personal religiosity at the time of their iconotheophanies varied, they all were religious to some degree. This shows support for the Juan Diego Paradigm which assumed that witnesses of iconotheophanies would most likely be religious. The Literature Review presented the idea that increased religiosity, particularly coupled with low acculturation and low socioeconomic status, could lead to psychological distress. Religion is an important aspect of traditional Mexican culture (Literature Review). Individuals who are raised in this environment may be accustomed to having religion play in important role in their lives. This type of world view could come into conflict with the secular nature of U.S. society, causing them to experience distress. The literature also showed that people of lower socioeconomic status are more believing of supernatural phenomena. This relationship was evident with the final measure of personal religiosity and the previous discussion on socioeconomic status (see socioeconomic status). The degree to which witnesses were affected by their iconotheophany experiences also corresponds with the amount of religious change they made in their personal lives and behavior. Six of the seven witnesses increased some aspect of their individual religiosity through increased church attendance, activities, or prayer. These witnesses also believed that they had a deepened spirituality because of the images. This appears to show support that witnesses would, as hypothesized, indeed feel strengthened and reassured through their face-to-face interaction with a manifestation of deity.

Iconotheophanies, Distress, and the Future

All five of the individual characteristics presumed to comprise the Juan Diego Paradigm are relevant to the study. Although witnesses may or may not be male, they are most likely older, religious, with low levels of acculturation and socioeconomic status. These five characteristics, however, may not be the only ones to contribute to the Juan Diego Paradigm and iconotheophanies among Mexican-Americans. One important commonality found during the course of this study among all seven witnesses interviewed was their marital status and family structure. All witnesses were married at the time of their appearances. All of them also had children, some grandchildren.[104] This possible factor also fits the Juan Diego Paradigm. Although there is no mention of any children, writings on Juan Diego say he had been married for many years but was a widower of two years at the time of the appearance (Anonymous, 1895: 116). To hypothesize that being married and perhaps having children is an element of the Juan Diego Paradigm is also to assume that it characterizes increased levels of psychological distress. Some studies have shown that married people, particularly males, have greater life satisfaction than those who are not (Crandall, 1991: 303; Roberts and Roberts, 1982: 214). Typically marital satisfaction is believed to form a U-shaped pattern, starting high early in marriage, decreasing with the strain of raising children, and increasing once again later in life (Crandall, 1991: 301-302; Markides and Hoppe, 1985: 147-149). However, some studies show that among Mexican-Americans, marital satisfaction appears to decrease with age, specifically for women (Farrell and Markides, 1985: 1032-1035; Markides and

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[104]Paula did not have children of her own but had raised two nephews.

Hoppe, 1985: 152-153). In the cases where elderly Mexican-American women lost their husbands, they were also more likely to have lower socioeconomic status and more health problems than other widows in the United States (Ide, et al, 1992: 83-88). Along the same lines, Mexican-American widowed males were found to show more symptoms of depression than their female counterparts (Roberts and Roberts, 1982: 209). These studies show that marriage, particularly among elderly Mexican-Americans, and widowhood, specifically among men, can cause psychological distress, supporting the Juan Diego Paradigm. The relationships between family structure, marriage, distress, and iconotheophanies merits further investigation.

The notion of distress was indeed a motivating factor in the Juan Diego Paradigm. As demonstrated in the Literature Review and in the majority of the data, all five of the individual characteristics are potential causes of psychological distress. All seven witnesses had personal problems in their lives at the time the images were recognized. This included economic difficulties, acculturative stress, health problems, spiritual challenges, and social issues. By recognizing the iconotheophanies and maintaining a relationship with them, witnesses gained personal strength to deal with their trials in a manner which reinforced a link to deity, their cultural heritage, and other believers.

Alberto worked long hours every day as a *curandero*, making very little income. He spoke of neighbors who did not feel comfortable with the healing activities going on in his home. He believed the iconotheophany on the tree in his yard was a reward for his personal diligence and provided a visible sign of heaven's approval of his endeavors. Aurora had been sick and three murders had occurred in their neighborhood. Both her

health and the community improved after the Virgin of Guadalupe's likeness emerged on her brother-in-law's car. Gloria was experiencing family and spiritual distress. Not only was she having problems within her family, she was investigating other religions and struggling with her long-held belief in the Virgin Mary at the time the image appeared in her dining room curtains. The appearance strengthened her faith in the Virgin Mary. Paula was 66 years old and experiencing many painful health problems at the time she recognized Jesus's face in her tortilla. After the iconotheophany she was able to find greater insight into her suffering. Reynaldo was also faced with some difficult problems. At the time he identified the Virgin Mary on the floor of his shop, he was in the process of closing the business. Earlier that year his wife had been paralyzed in an accident. Through his trials Reynaldo acknowledged many blessings and viewed the iconotheophany as something good happening in his life. Santiago, Aurora's husband, expressed distress related to his personal health and strained relations within the family. These problems disappeared subsequent to the appearance. Valentin also described family health problems, but more significant were the acculturative pressures and conflicts he experienced in his life. By recognizing an image of the Virgin Mary on the tree, he found personal strength and a deeper relationship with deity.

The six appearances in this study are but a few of the ever-increasing iconotheophanies from around the world in recent years. Table 18 shows the frequency of reported images from the last century. The average number of reported iconotheophanies per year has increased significantly, especially in the last ten years. Between 1990 and 1995 there were an average of 4.2 reports per year. In the last five

years of the decade they more than doubled (See Table 18).

TABLE 18: Number of Reported Iconotheophanies World-Wide*

Total Iconotheophanies : 88 (72 U.S. and 16 International)			
Years	Number of years	Number	Percent	Average Number Per Year
Before 1900	-	2	2.3%	-
1900-1989	90	14	15.9%	.2 per year
1990-1995	6	25	28.4%	4.2 per year
1996-2000	5	47	53.4%	9.4 per year

*See Appendix A and B for complete list of iconotheophanies.

The reason for this marked growth in iconotheophanic activity is not clear. Some skeptics assume it to be the result of "millennium fever," mass hysteria, or merely the power of suggestion (Jenkins, 1998; Morris, 1998: B8; Haferd, 1986; Lindgren and Nalick, 1991). These factors may be contributors to the phenomenon. It is also possible that the rise in reported iconotheophanies is tied to the growing Mexican-American population in the United States. As numbers increase, perhaps iconotheophanies do as well. Additional research is required to identify the complex blend of collective and individual influences which drive this phenomenon.[105]

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[105]There are many additional avenues of research on the topic of iconotheophanies and Mexican-Americans. One possible topic of study is comparing the experiences and

When witnesses of Mexican descent characterize the Juan Diego Paradigm and recognize an image as a likeness of deity, they ritually re-create the mythical interaction between Juan Diego and the Virgin of Guadalupe. The images become sources of strength in conditions of psychological distress for two reasons. First, witnesses are personally assured their needs are known in heaven. Whether their trials are due to economic hardships, acculturative pressure, family disputes, or health problems, iconotheophanies provide a continuing presence of deity. As their relationship with the sacred develops they are able to view their problems from a different perspective and even find meaning in their trials. Second, iconotheophanies link witnesses to their collective past, their culture, and their religious heritage. The legacy of the Virgin of Guadalupe is common to all those of Mexican descent, and an iconotheophany emphasizes these shared roots by strengthening witnesses' families and ethnic communities.

characteristics of the Mexican-American witnesses from the Lower Rio Grande Valley to those elsewhere in the United States. Also, how do they compare or contrast with non-Mexican-American witnesses? Along the same lines, how do they compare to those from Mexico? Another possible topic of study relates to the roots of the iconotheophany phenomenon for those of Mexican descent. Research could investigate possible European ties to the occurrence or any links to preexisting native traditions in the New World. For example, Christian discussed a popular custom in Spain of apparitions accompanied by physical images such as hidden or lost statues (1981: 8, 15-17). Although iconotheophanies appear to be most prevalent among those of Mexican descent, they are have been reported among other ethnic groups and religions such as Buddhists and Hindus. Studies could also cover the cultural and historical influences of these groups to determine if they are the result of their own particular cultural and historical framework or diffusion from the Mexican and Mexican-American experience. Such inquiries would not only contribute to the growing body of work on Hispanic religiosity and popular religion, but bring greater understanding to an often misunderstood religious phenomenon.

Summary

The data supports the idea concerning the influence of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative on the iconotheophany phenomenon among Mexican-Americans. The seven witnesses in the local sample not only reported prior knowledge of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative but also revealed significant correlations between the roles they played in their own iconotheophanies and that of Juan Diego.

The data concerning the five characteristics of the Juan Diego Paradigm is also significant. The first factor is low acculturation, measured by language ability, birthplace, and terms of self-identification. The data shows the seven witnesses from the local sample had varying levels of language usage and proficiency. Spanish was the first language for all witnesses as well as the primary means of communication with their own children. Two witnesses were fully bilingual, one proficient in English, two moderately proficient, one spoke some English, and another very little. Five witnesses were born in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and two in Mexico. In terms of self-identification, three witnesses preferred "Hispanic," two chose "Mexican," and one selected "Latino." Thus, as hypothesized, the majority of witnesses from the local Lower Rio Grande sample were culturally more "Mexican" than "American."

Low socioeconomic status is hypothesized to be the second element of the Juan Diego Paradigm. Indeed, like Juan Diego, all witnesses were part of the working class and the majority had little education and income. The strongest correlations, however, are revealed in the witnesses' annual household earnings. The lower the income category, the closer the iconotheophany was to home, either physically or emotionally.

The images also inspired the most significant life changes in these witnesses as they believed they personally played a role in bringing them about. These individuals also perceived the greatest difference in treatment by others. These findings show that iconotheophanies can perhaps be viewed as a accessible means to increase social standing.

The hypothesis concerning gender presumes the majority of witnesses of iconotheophanies would be male. Although this hypothesis is not completely true, it is for the Lower Rio Grande Valley sample. Overall, males were almost equally involved in the phenomenon as females. The data also shows males to be significantly more involved in the iconotheophany phenomenon than Marian apparitions. Also, Hispanic males are also shown to be more likely than their non-Hispanic counterparts to recognize iconotheophanies.

The Juan Diego Paradigm presumes older adults are the most prone to iconotheophany experiences. The local data of seven witnesses shows this to be the case with their ages ranging between 45 and 66 years at the time the images appeared. The U.S. data of 75 iconotheophanies also supports this idea by showing the vast majority of witnesses were over 18 years. This is older than the commonly youth-oriented apparition phenomenon.

The data regarding personal religiosity demonstrates that, like Juan Diego, witnesses were religious and profoundly influenced by their experience. Witnesses had very religious backgrounds as children but not all maintained this level of religiosity until the time of their iconotheophany experiences. In spite of this, the majority of witnesses

considered themselves religious at the time the images appeared. The personal religiosity of six of the seven witnesses also increased in some way as a result of the appearances. Thus the data supports the Juan Diego Paradigm for personal religiosity.

The majority of the hypotheses concerning the Juan Diego Paradigm are indeed valid. The data shows that older, religious, individuals (male and female) with low levels of acculturation and socioeconomic status who are familiar with the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative to be the most prone to iconotheophany experiences. The number of iconotheophany reports has continued to increase yearly and will likely continue to grow.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Images of deity that appear in ordinary objects, named "iconotheophanies" in this study, have become a recognized religious phenomena in the United States and around the world. This study sought to bring about a greater understanding of these images by focusing on the roots of the phenomena and the people who hold them sacred.

This investigation focused on the Mexican and Mexican-American experience. The particular cultural and religious history of Mexicans has made them more prone to recognize iconotheophanies. This is due in large part to the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. This story, set in 1531, tells of an indigenous man named Juan Diego who was visited by apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe. She instructed him to take a message to the Archbishop, requesting that a church be built in her honor. The Archbishop, not believing Juan Diego, demanded proof. As a sign, the Virgin of Guadalupe left an image of herself imprinted on Juan Diego's cloak. Believers say this image hangs on the wall of the cathedral in present-day Mexico City. Through the centuries, the Virgin of Guadalupe's image has come to symbolize independence, strength, and perseverance for millions of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. The sacred narrative of the Virgin of Guadalupe and her image are important components of the Mexican-American historical and cultural reality. Together they have shaped the manner in which many recognize and relate to deity. Since a physical image of the Virgin was required to convince an unbelieving Archbishop, the narrative greatly emphasizes the material element of the experience. This study hypothesized that this powerful narrative set a mythical pattern for individuals of Mexican descent to recognize the sacred in their own lives through

iconotheophany experiences.

Peter L. Berger, along with Thomas Luckmann, described a theoretical process by which reality is socially constructed and maintained. Four of these steps were adapted to describe the process in which an unusual image becomes a revered manifestation of deity. The first step of "recognition" was added by the author. Culture, personal beliefs, and experiences influence how an image is interpreted. Once an image is recognized as a manifestation of deity, the person desires to have it verified and authenticated by others. This is second step, "legitimation," confirms the social nature of reality. Once legitimated by others, the third step of "objectification" occurs. This means the iconotheophany becomes part of objective reality by existing on its own and gaining the power to act back upon the human world. This is when the fourth step of "internalization" occurs. Believers of an iconotheophany allow the image to shape their thoughts and behaviors. As a result, they begin the final step of "externalization" by pouring out their material and nonmaterial creations into the human world. This process goes on repeatedly with iconotheophanies everywhere.

Data for this study was gathered primarily from interviews with seven individuals closely associated with iconotheophanies in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. These individuals, known as witnesses, comprised the "local sample." Supplementary data was collected from the literature available on the subject, including reports from newspapers, magazines, books, internet sites, and television newscasts. From these sources a list of 93 reported iconotheophanies from around the globe (75 U.S. and 18 international) was compiled. Both the local and U.S. data showed a relationship between

the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative and iconotheophanies. First, the U.S. sample presented in the Literature Review showed through three geographic examples that iconotheophanies appear to be most prevalent among individuals of Mexican descent. Second, the local data revealed that all seven witnesses knew the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe and drew correlations between Juan Diego played and the part they played in their own iconotheophany event. In other words, when an individual of Mexican descent recognizes an image of deity in an ordinary object, they become as Juan Diego and ritually reenacts the powerful mythical encounter with the Virgin. This relationship between Juan Diego and witnesses of iconotheophanies led to a theoretical model called the Juan Diego Paradigm.

The Juan Diego Paradigm is a set of five characteristics that describes the personal attributes of Juan Diego. They are related to level of acculturation, socioeconomic status, gender, age and personal religiosity. Thus the epitome of the Juan Diego Paradigm is an older, religious, male with low levels of acculturation and socioeconomic status. Each of these five factors is also hypothesized to create increased levels of psychological distress. The more characteristics an individual exhibits or the greater the tendency towards these conditions, the stronger the likelihood of an iconotheophany experience. The findings from both the local and the U.S. samples supported the Juan Diego Paradigm. The majority of witnesses were indeed like Juan Diego and exhibited many of the same traits as his character in the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. The majority of witnesses did have low levels of acculturation and were more culturally Mexican than American. All seven witnesses were also older, the average age

being about 54 years. The U.S. sample supported the findings of the local data, showing that the overwhelming majority of witnesses were adults (18 and over). Although it was presumed that males would be more common witnesses than females, this was only shown to be the case in the local sample. In the other two samples, males were almost as likely as females to have this sort of experience. In spite of this, some interesting patterns were revealed. Overall males were significantly more involved in the iconotheophany phenomenon than Marian apparitions. Also, Hispanic and Mexican-American males were also more involved in iconotheophanies than their non-Hispanic counterparts.

Religiosity was also an important element of the Juan Diego Paradigm. Personal religiosity was evaluated at three different points in the life of a witness: while growing up, prior to, and after the iconotheophany. It was hypothesized that witnesses would, like Juan Diego, be religious at the time of their iconotheophany and report an increase in their personal religiosity as a result of their experience. Although all seven witnesses had religious upbringings, it was more important that, as hypothesized, they all were religious to some degree at the time of their iconotheophanies. The most important measure of personal religiosity was after the iconotheophanies occurred. Six of the seven witnesses had an increase in their religious behavior but, more significantly, they reported deeper spirituality as a result of the images.

Perhaps the most revealing of the Juan Diego Paradigm's five characteristics was low socioeconomic status. All employed witnesses had working class occupations with little to moderate income. The majority had no more than elementary school education. The amount of annual income was particularly significant and showed a strong

relationship between the degree of personal significance associated with the appearance and the amount of change that resulted in their lives. Witnesses with the lowest earnings placed the greatest amount of importance on the images and experienced the greatest resulting change. This degree of significance and change was also closely associated with the location of the image. Witnesses with lower incomes were closer to the images, geographically (appearing at home) and/or emotionally (having stronger feelings towards them). A strong relationship was also revealed between income and the witnesses' perceptions of the appearances. Those with lower incomes perceived themselves as having personally played a greater role in bringing about their iconotheophanies than witnesses with higher incomes. These findings were also closely associated with the perceived treatment by others. Those with lower incomes believed they were more respected as a result of their experiences while those with higher earnings did not.

These findings reveal an important aspect of the iconotheophany phenomenon. Religious individuals of Mexican descent who are older, have low income, little education, and low levels of acculturation, are marginalized within the United States. They have limited opportunities to feel validated within American society. As a result, they may seek to elevate their social standing outside the human world in the realm of the sacred. These individuals have been raised to believe the Virgin Mary can and does appear in ordinary objects, as she did for Juan Diego during the mythical encounter long ago. Individuals of Mexican descent who exhibit the characteristics of the Juan Diego Paradigm experience increased levels of distress and are more likely to seek personal validation and recognition from deity through an iconotheophany experience. For those

of Mexican descent, a personal manifestation of deity, whether in the form of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, or a saint, hearkens back to the original iconotheophany of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the paragon of freedom, strength and perseverance.

At the dawn of a new millennia reports of iconotheophanies continue to rise. Indeed they fulfill an important function for believers. For individuals of Mexican descent, iconotheophanies are affirmations of faith that closely tie them to deity, their cultural heritage, and to one another through the Virgin of Guadalupe's legacy. The images provide strength and comfort to witnesses, their families, and communities during difficulty and distress. Iconotheophanies allow for continual face-to-face interaction with deity and make the divine tangible and present. Truly, they bring the sacred close, making it accessible in the mundane of everyday life.

APPENDIX A

Photographs

Figure 1: The Virgin Mary's image on the windows of the Ugly Duckling Car Sales Building in Clearwater Florida, 1997. Photo taken by Jacintha VanDal

Figure 2: The Virgin of Guadalupe

Figure 3: The "Shrine of the Holy Tortilla," Hidalgo, Texas.
Photo taken by Michael Van Wagenen, July 1994.
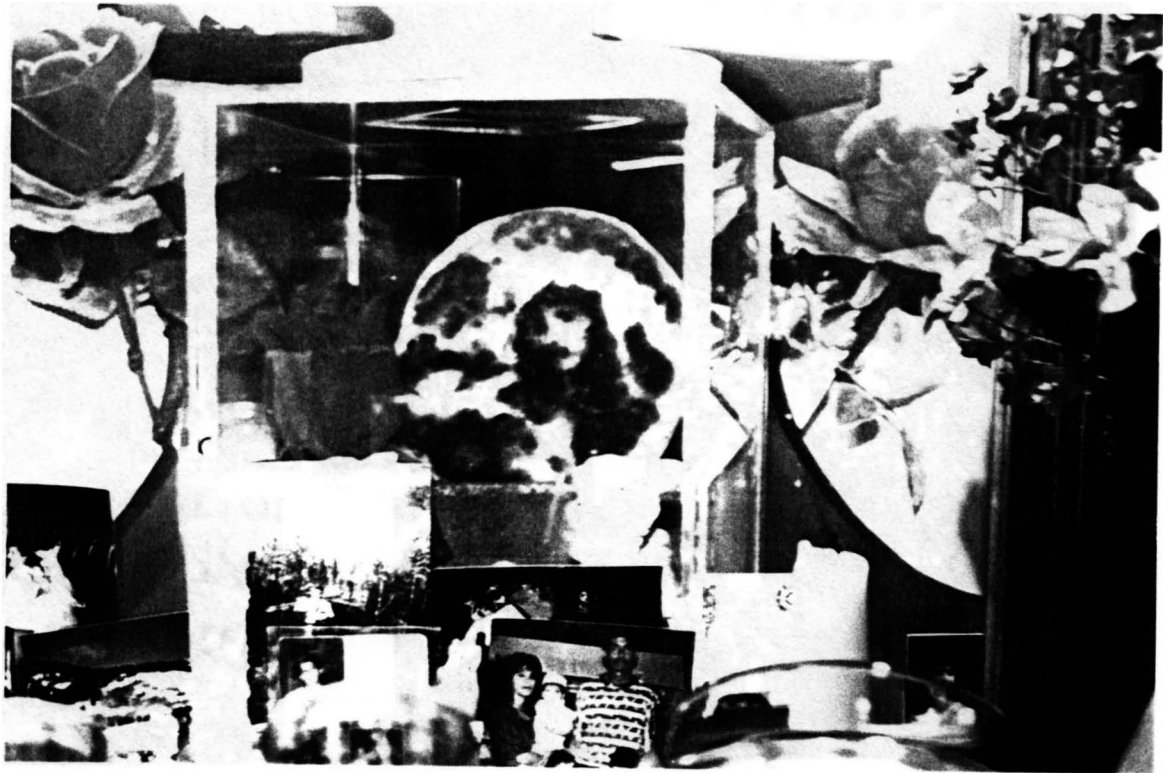
Figure 4: Close-up of Jesus's face on a tortilla, Hidalgo, Texas.
Photo taken by Michael Van Wagenen, July 1994.
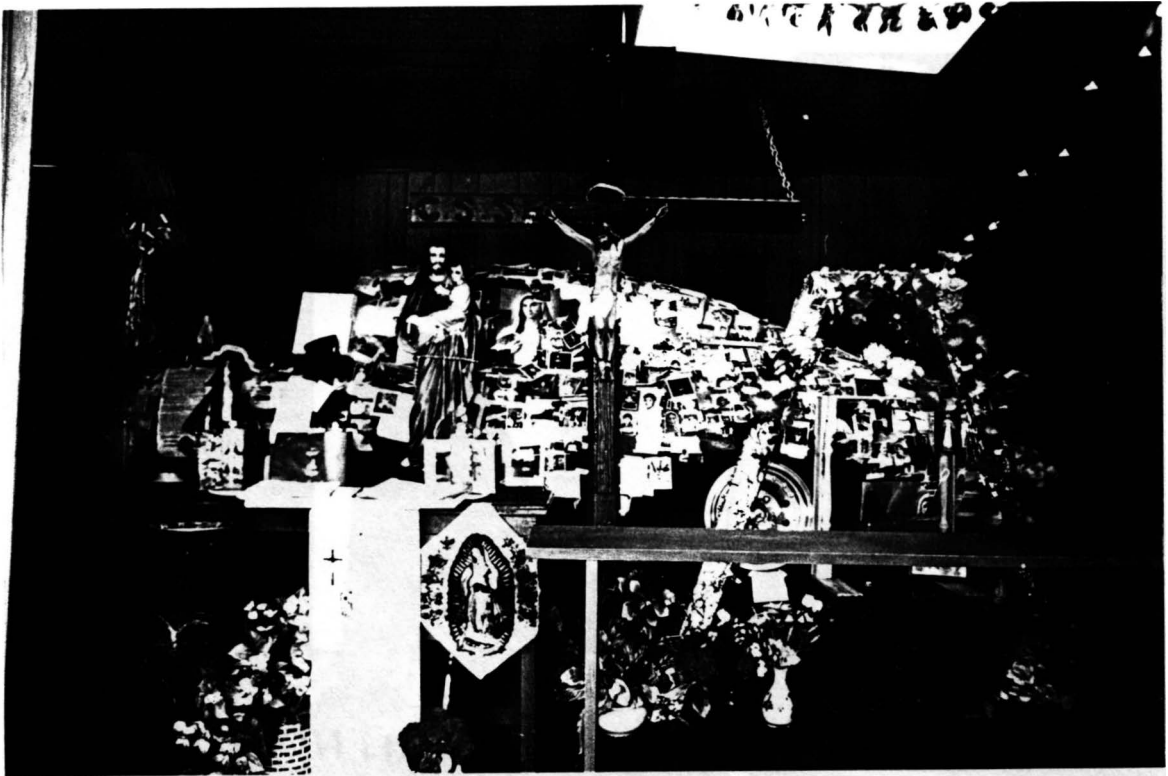
Figure 5: The "Shrine of the Holy Camaro," Elsa, Texas.
Photo taken by Michael Van Wagenen, July 1994.

Figure 6: Close-up of the Virgin of Guadalupe on the fender of a Chevrolet Camaro. Photo taken by Michael Van Wagenen, July 1994.

Figure 7 (left): The Virgin of San Juan on a tree, Edinburg, Texas. Photograph taken by Michael Van Wagenen, January 1999.

Figure 8 (right): The Virgin of San Juan

Figure 9: The Virgin Mary on a tree, Brownsville, Texas.
Photo taken by Michael Van Wagenen, July 1994.
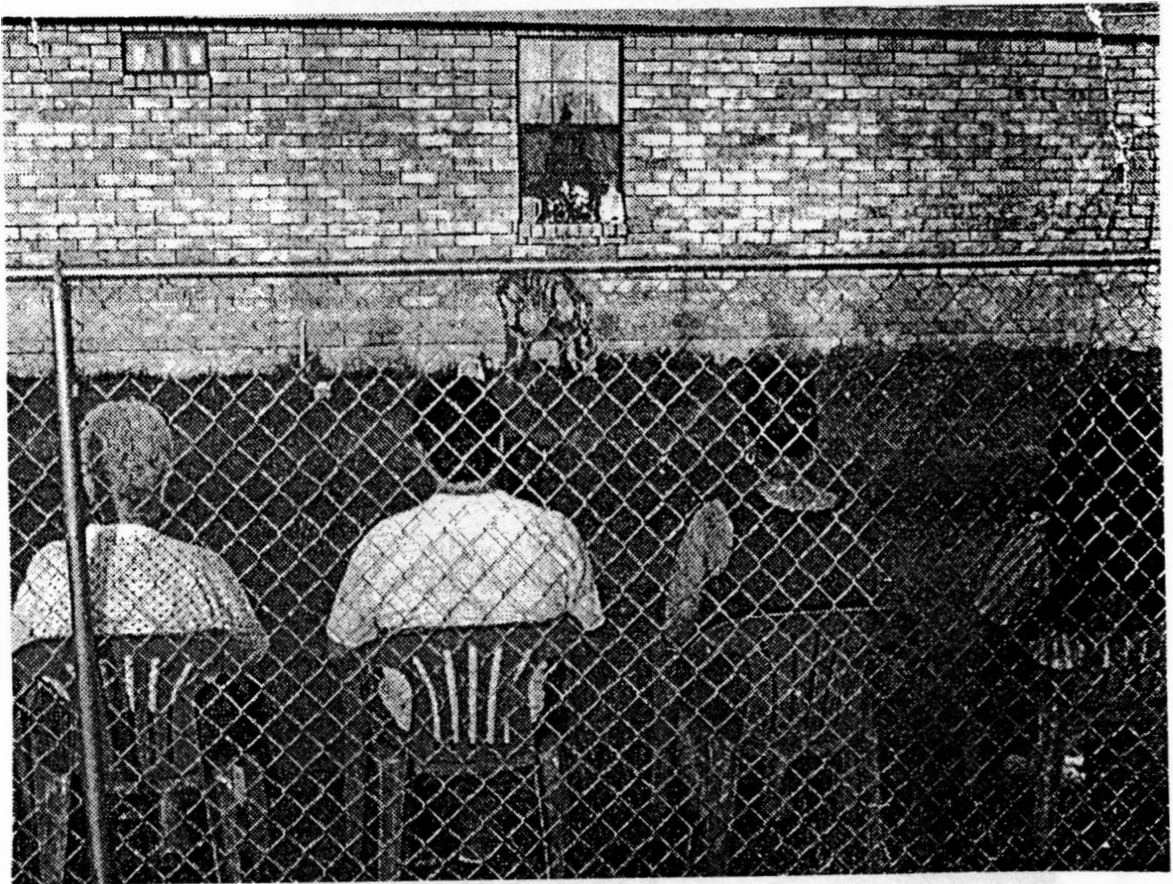
Figure 10: The Virgin Mary in dining room curtains, La Feria, Texas. Photo taken by Robert Amdall, courtesy of the Valley Morning Star.

Figure 11: The Virgin of Guadalupe on a shower floor, Progreso, Texas. Photo taken by Reynaldo Treviño, December 1990.

Appendix B

Reported Iconotheophanies (United States)

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
*1. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Shower floor of auto parts store	Progreso, TX	Dec. 3, 1990	Reynaldo Treviño	Male	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
*2. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Fender of Chevrolet Camaro	Elsa, TX	Sept. 1993	Dario Mendoza	Male	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
*3. Jesus	Tortilla	Hidalgo, TX	Feb. 25, 1983	Paula Rivera	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
*4. Virgin Mary	Tree	Brownsville, TX	June 1993	Valentín	Male	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
*5. Virgin Mary	Dining room curtains	La Feria, TX	1995	Larry and Lisa Reyna	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
*6. Virgin Mary-San Juan	Tree	Edinburg, TX	June 20, 1997	Alberto Lopez	Male	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
7. Virgin Mary	Candle wax	Elsa, TX	Dec. 24, 1997	Lydia Gutierrez	Female	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic

*These iconotheophanies are part of this study.

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
8. Virgin Mary	Garage wall	Weslaco, TX	July 17, 1997	Alfonso Ramos	Male	Adult (19 yrs)	Hispanic surname	Catholic
9. Jesus	Sweat stain	Edcouch, TX	July 1, 1998	Tony Vela	Male	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic
10. Virgin Mary	Tree in cemetary	Mission, TX	Oct. 1998					Catholic
11. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Tree	San Pedro, TX	Aug. 1999	Juanita Torres	Female	Adult (48 yrs)	Mexican-American	Catholic
12. Virgin Mary	Bathroom mirror	Alamo, TX		Anonymous	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
13. Virgin Mary	Wall	Weslaco, TX	Nov. 1999	Manzano	Female	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic
14. Virgin Mary and Saints	Tree	Palmview, TX	Aug. 1997	Juan Martinez	Male	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic
15. Virgin Mary	Lightning on tree	Mission, TX	July 1998	Hermalinda Cabanas	Female	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic
16. Virgin Mary	Wall	Weslaco, TX		Anonymous	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
17. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Rose petal in herb shop	Mercedes, TX	Oct. 6, 2000	Frank Cantu	Male	Adult (30 yrs)	Mexican-American	Catholic
18. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Glass door	San Antonio, TX	June 1, 1997	Brandy Zamora	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
19. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Window	Floresville, TX	Dec. 14, 1997	Delores Trevino	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
20. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Floor of apartment complex	Houston, TX	Jan. 2000				Mexican neighborhood	Catholic
21. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Window of Trailer	Dalhart, TX	Nov. 1999	Leslie Ochoa	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
22. Virgin Mary	Tree	Littlefield, TX	Apr. 1997	Hector and Rosa Ornelas	1 Male 1 Female	2 Adults	Mexican-American	Catholic
23. Virgin Mary	Chocolate milk on porch	Ralls, TX	July 1999	Lucia Magallances	Female	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
24. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Yucca tree	Phoenix, AZ	Dec. 12, 1989		1 Male 1 Female	1 Adult 1 Child	Mexican neighborhood	Catholic
25. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Tree	Tucson, AZ	Apr. 1998	Angie Bustamante	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
26. Virgin Mary	Christmas tree	Yuma, AZ	Oct. 1990	Debbie Aguilar	Female	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic
27. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Bathroom door	Phoenix, AZ	Nov. 1994	Raymond Rodriguez	Male	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
28. Virgin Mary	Tabletop	Phoenix, AZ	Jan. 1989	Joseph Lemond	Male	Adult (75 yrs)	White	Catholic
29. Virgin Mary and Jesus	Mosaic in church	Santa Ana, CA	Nov. 1991	Irma Villegas	Female	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic
30. Jesus	Shadow on garage	Santa Fe Springs, CA	Jan. 1, 1981	Rafael and Graziela Tascon	1 Male 1 Female	2 Adults	Hispanic surname	Catholic
31. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Tree	Watsonville, CA	June 17, 1993	Anita Contreras	Female	Adult (grand-mother)	Mexican-American	Catholic

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
32. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe and Jesus	Window	Long Beach, CA	1992	Guadalupe Orozco	Female	Adolescent (17 yrs)	Mexican-American	Catholic
33. Virgin Mary/ Jesus/ Kuan Yin	Wall of Buddhist Temple	Union City, CA	1996					Catholic
34. Virgin Mary	Tree in cemetary	Colma, CA	Dec. 1997					Catholic
35. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Door	Carson, CA	July 1997	Juan Magdaleno	Male	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
36. Virgin Mary	Wall	Stanislaus County, CA	Sept. 12, 1993	Maria Concepción Velasquez	Female	Adult	Hispanic surname	Catholic
37. Virgin Mary	Wall	Inglewood, CA	Feb. 1993				Mexican neighborhood	Catholic
38. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Tree	North Hollywood, CA	Mar. 14, 1992	Jesus Angulo Priscilla Otto	1 Male 1 Female	1 Adult 1 Child	Mexican-Americans	Catholic
39. Virgin Mary	Window	Oxnard, CA	Dec. 1992	Marty Vaca	Female	Adult (42 yrs)	Hispanic surname	Catholic

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
40. Jesus	Kitchen counters	Montclair, CA	Oct. 1997	Ernestina Ortiz	Female	Adult (68 yrs)	Mexican-American	Catholic
41. Virgin Mary	Wall of church	Colfax, CA	Dec. 1990					Catholic
42. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Bedroom wall	Holly, CO	Feb. 1997	Yolanda Tarango	Female	Adult (26 yrs)	Mexican-American	Catholic
43. Jesus	Wall of Catholic school	Holman, NM	May 25, 1975		2 Males	2 Adolescents	Mexican neighborhood	Catholic
44. Jesus	Tortilla	Lake Arthur, NM	Oct. 5, 1977	Maria Rubio	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
45. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Tree	Salt Lake City, UT	1996	Graciela Garcia	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
46. Jesus	Door of hospital	Jasper, AL	Apr. 9, 1983	Joel Naramore	Male	Adult	White	
47. Jesus	Tree	New Haven, CT	1993		Female			

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
48. Virgin Mary	Window of business	Clearwater, FL	Dec. 17, 1996		Female	Adult		Catholic
49. Virgin Mary	Bank window	Miami, FL	Mar. 2000				Cuban	Catholic
50. Virgin Mary	Mirror	Miami, FL	Mar. 2000	Gonzalez Family			Cuban	Catholic
51. Jesus	Tree	Columbus, GA	Apr. 1994	Barbara Shepherd	Female	Adult	White	Protestant
52. Jesus	*Pizza Hut* billboard	Stone Mountain, GA	May 1991	Joyce Simpson	Female	Adult	White	Protestant
53. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Wall of building	Chicago, IL	Aug. 1997				Mexican neighborhood	Catholic
54. Jesus	Bowling alley	Chicago, IL	1987					
55. Virgin Mary	Attic window	Chicago, IL	July 1999		Male	Child	Hispanic neighborhood	Catholic
56. Jesus	Tree in cemetary	Quincy, IL	July 1998		Male	Adult		

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
57. Jesus	Picture in newspaper	Parsons, KS	Apr. 2000					
58. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Tree in cemetary	Wichita, KS	May 1999	Rachel Rodriguez	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
59. Virgin Mary	Door of clinic	Wichita, KS	July 1998	Anonymous	Male	Adult	Hispanic	Catholic
60. Jesus	Tree	Fairfield, ME	June 1992	Jim and Lisa Rummel	1 Male 1 Female	2 Adults	White	Protestant
61. Jesus	Wall of church	Kenosha, MI	Apr. 7, 1991	Delores Marinelli	Female	Adult	Italian	Catholic
62. Virgin Mary and Jesus	Oyster shell	Gulfport, MS	July 1998	Cathy Pierre	Female	Adult	White	Catholic
63. Virgin Mary	Freezer door of market	Jersey City, NJ	May 1998				Latino supermarket	Catholic
64. Jesus	Bathroom window	Manhattan, NY	1993					
65. Jesus	Wall of church	Charlotte, NC	Sept. 1998	Brenda Stevenson	Female	Adult	White	Catholic

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
66. Jesus	Soybean silo	Fostoria, OH	Aug. 1986	Rita Ratchen	Female	Adult	White	Catholic
67. Jesus	Chair	Akron, OH	Aug. 1977	Grace Barzellon	Female	Adult	White	
68. Virgin Mary	Garage door	Toledo, OH	Aug. 1989					Catholic
69. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Landscape painting	Boardman, OR	1994	Irma Muñoz	Female	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
70. Virgin Mary and Jesus	Wall of Church	Bradford, PA	Jan. 4, 1997	Robert James, woman and child	2 Males 1 Female	2 Adults 1 Child	White	Western Orthodox
71. Virgin Mary	Window of nursing home	Philadelphia, PA	Sept. 11, 1993					Catholic
72. Virgin Mary and Jesus	Window	Philadelphia, PA	May 10, 1997	Sam and Salim Majjar	1 Male 1 Female	2 Adults	Indian	Catholic
73. Jesus	Refrigerator	Estill Springs, TN		Arlene Gardner	Female	Adult	White	

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
74. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Traffic sign	Yakima, WA	1997	Chico Rodriguz	Male	Adult	Mexican-American	Catholic
75. Virgin Mary	Tree	Spokane, WA	Apr. 1997					Catholic

Sources for Appendix B:

1. Murray, 1990; Treviño, 1999.

2. Quintero, Aurora, 1999; Quintero, Santiago, 1999.

3. Rivera, 1994.

4. Valentín, 1999.

5. Chavez, 1999; Durnan, 1995.

6. Salinas, 1999.

7. KRGV-TV, 1997.

8. Essex, 1997.

9. DeLeon, 1998.

10. KGBT-TV, 1998.

11. Lopes, 1999; Rey, 2000.

12. Anonymous, 1999 (June).

13. KRGV-TV, 1999.

14. KGBT-TV, 1997.

15. Hastings, 1998.

16. Anonymous, 1999 (June).

17. KRGV-TV, 2000.

18. Arthur, 1998.

19. Ibid.

20. Associated Press, 2000.

21. Vaughn, 1999.

22. Harrison, 1997.

23. Pratt, 1999.

24. Sowers, 1989.

25. Associated Press, 1998.

26. Associated Press, 1990.

27. Perkes, 1994.

28. United Press International, 1989.

29. Lindgren, 1991.

30. MacDougall, 1983.

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32. Elk Transmission Group, *Signs of His Presence*, 1999.

33. Reed, 1999.

34. Knight-Ridder Tribune News Service, 1997.

35. Smallwood, 1997.

36. Roberts, 1993.

37. Martinez, 1993.

38. Dart, 1992.

39. Reed, 1992.

40. Cicchese, 1998.

41. Trombley, 1990.

42. Foster, 1997.

43. Gurvis, 1996: 126-128.

44. Ibid, 128-132.

45. Stack, 1997.

46. Gurvis, 1996: 1-5.

47. Ibid, 52-54.

48. Moore, 1997.

49. Adams, 2000.

50. Siemaszko, 2000.

51. Gurvis, 1996: 60-63.

52. Ibid, 68-71.

53. Mills, 1997.

54. "Look Everyone, it's Jesus!," 1993.

55. Jacobson, 1999.

56. Bertin, 1998.

57. Bormann, 2000.

58. Lenkner, 1999; Strunk, 1999.

59. Short, 1998.

60. Gurvis, 1996: 95-99.

61. Allen, 1991; Associated Press, 1991.

62. Fink, 1998.

63. "Faithful Flock to Grocery to See Virgin Mary 'Image',",1998.

64. "Look Everyone, it's Jesus!," 1993.

65. Jenkins, 1998.

66. Haferd, 1986.

67. Biliczky, 1996.

68. Associated Press, 1989.

69. Elk Transmission Group, *Signs of the Holy Mother*, 1999.

70. Naedele, 1997.

71. Associated Press, 1993.

72. "Crowds Flocking to See Holy Image," 1997.

73. "It's a Miracle!," 1998.

74. MacDonald, 1997.

75. Blocker, 1997.

APPENDIX C

Reported Iconotheophanies (International)

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
1. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	School window	Limón, Tamps., Mexico	After 1981				Mexican	Catholic
2. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Floor of subway	Mexico City, Mexico	June 1997				Mexican	Catholic
3. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Geode	Mexico	Mid-1900s	Ruvalcaba	Male	Child (10 yrs)	Mexican	Catholic
4. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Tree	Mexico City, Mexico	May 1998				Mexican	Catholic
5. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Maguey plant	Mexico City, Mexico	After 1850				Mexican	Catholic
6. Virgin Mary-Guadalupe	Mountain side	Jalisco, Mexico	After 1850				Mexican	Catholic

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
7. Virgin Mary and Jesus	Wall	Matamoros, Mexico	1999				Mexican	Catholic
8. Virgin Mary	Cake	Bacalar, Mexico	1998	Fernanda Rivas	Female	Adult	Mexican	Catholic
9. Virgin Mary	Shadow on wall of church	Aduana, Sonora, Mexico	1970s				Mexican	
10. Jesus	Granite slab	Australia	1995	Julian Webb	Male	Adult	Australian	
11. Virgin Mary	Altar wall of Church	Yankalilla, Australia	1994	Andrew Nutter	Male	Adult	Australian	Anglican
12. Virgin Mary	Window	Absam, Austria	Jan. 17, 1797	Rosina Buecher	Female	Adult (18 yrs)	Austrian	Catholic
13. Jesus	Wall of donut shop	Cape Breton, N.S. Canada	1998					
14. Virgin Mary	Tree	Halifax, N.S. Canada	1996					Catholic
15. Jesus	Windows and fences	Teheran, Iran	1995					

Image	Object	Location	Date	Witness(es)	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Affiliation
16. Jesus	Wall of School	Nigeria	1988				African	Catholic
17. Jesus	Floor of clinic	Phillipines	1997				Filipino	Catholic
18. Jesus	Communion wafer	Portugal					Portuguese	Catholic

Sources for Appendix C:

1. Nolan, 1991: 28.

2. Fineman, 1997.

3. West, 1988: 68-70.

4. *Uno Más Uno,* 1998.

5. Peterson, 1992: 45.

6. Ibid.

7. Anonymous, 1999 (July).

8. "It's a Miracle!", 1998.

9. Fontana, 1983: 80, 88.

10. Elk Transmission Group, *Signs of His Presence*, 1999.

11. "Australian Vision of Virgin Mary," 1996.

12. Carroll, 1993.

13. "Christ's Image at Canadian Donut Shop," 1998.

14. Morris, 1998.

15. Elk Transmission Group, Signs *of His Presence*," 1999.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

APPENDIX D

36 Popular Marian Apparitions**

Location	Date	Visionary(ies)	Gender	Age in Years
1. Manresa, Spain	1522	St. Ignatius of Loyola	Male	30
*2. Mexico City, Mexico	Dec. 9-12, 1531	Juan Diego	Male	57
3. Ávila, Spain	1561	Saint Teresa of Ávila	Female	12
4. Paray-le-Monial, France	1673	St. Margaret Mary Alacoque	Female	Young woman (18-30)
*5. Paris, France	Nov. 17, 1830	Catherine Laboure	Female	23
6. Rome, Italy	1842	Alphonse M. Ratisbonne	Male	28
*7. La Salette, France	Sept. 19, 1846	Maximin Giraud Melanie Calvat	Male Female	11 14 or 15
*8. Lourdes, France	Feb. 11-July 16, 1858	Bernadette Soubiroux	Female	14
*9. Pontmain, France	Jan. 17, 1871	Eugéne Barbadette Joseph Barbadette Jeanne Marie Lebossé Francoise Lebossé Augustine Boitin	Male Male Female Female Female	12 10 9 11 2
*10. Fátima, Portugal	May 13-Oct. 13, 1917	Lucia Abóbora (dos Santos) Francisco Marto Jacinta Marto	Female Male Female	9 7 5
*11. Beauraing, Belgium	Nov. 29, 1932-Jan. 3, 1933	Gilberte Voisin Albert Voisin Fernande Voisin Gilberte Degeimbre Andree Degeimbre	Female Male Female Female Female	13 11 15 9 14

Location	Date	Visionary(ies)	Gender	Age in Years
*12. Banneaux, Belgium	Jan. 15-Feb. 2, 1933	Mariette Beco	Female	11
13. Kerizinen, France	1938-1970s	Jeanne-Louise Ramonet	Female	28
14. Montichiari, Italy	1947, 1966	Pierina Gilli	Female	35
15. Holland	1945-1959	Unknown	Female	Approx. 40
16. Lipa, Philippines	1948, 1949	Sister Teresita Castillo	Female	Young woman (18-30)
17. Necedah, Wisconsin	1949-1950	Mary Ann Van Hoof	Female	40
18. Seredne, Ukraine	1954, 1987	Anna	Female	Young girl (under 12)
19. Garabandal, Spain	1961-1965	Conchita González Loli Mazón Jacinta González Cruz González	Female Female Female Female	12 12 12 11
20. San Damiano, Italy	1964	Rosa Quattrini	Female	52
21. Bayside, Queens, New York	1970	Veronica Leuken	Female	38
22. Akita, Japan	1973-1984	Agnes Katsuko Sasagawa	Female	20-30
*23. Betania, Venezuala	1976	Maria Esperanza Medrano de Brancini	Female	48
24. Cuapa, Nicaragua	1980	Bernardo Martinez	Male	50

Location	Date	Visionary(ies)	Gender	Age in Years
25. Medjugorje, Yugoslavia	June 24, 1981	Mirjana Dragicevic Ivanka Ivankovic Jacov Çolo Vicka Ivankovic Ivan Dragicevic	Female Female Male Female Male	16 15 9 17 16
26. Rwanda, Africa	Nov. 28, 1981-Nov. 28, 1988	Alphonsine Mumureka AnthalieMukamazimpaka Marie-Clare Mukangango Stephanie Mukamurenzi Emmanuel Segatashya Agnes Kamagaju Vestine Salina	Female Female Female Female Male Female Female	16 17 21 14 15 22 24
27. Damascus, Syria	1982 to Present	Maria (Myrna) Al Akharas	Female	18
28. San Nicholás, Argentina	1983-1990	Gladys de Motta	Female	Grandmother (51-70)
29. Naju, South Korea	1985-Present	Julia Kim	Female	Middle-age (31-50)
30. Chicago, Illionois	1987	Joseph Reinholtz	Male	83
31. Conyers, Georgia	1987, 1990-1994	Nancy Fowler	Female	46
32. Phoenix, Arizona	1988-present	Estella Ruiz	Female	50s
33. Scottsdale, Arizona	1988	Gianna Talone Annie Ross Mary Cook Jimmy Kupanoff Steve Nelson Wendy Nelson Stephanie Staab Susan Evans James Pauley	Female Female Female Male Male Female Female Female Male	31 The other visionaries are between 19 and 31
34. Litmanova, Slovakia	1990	Ivetka Korcakova Katka Ceselkova	Female Female	13 13
35. Cuenca, Ecuador	1990	Patricia Talbot	Female	16

Location	Date	Visionary(ies)	Gender	Age in Years
36. Steubenville, Ohio	1992	Tony Fernwalt	Male	Adult (31-50)

*Sanctioned apparitions

NOTE: This sample does not include Marian hallucinations like Knock, Ireland or Mantara, Lebanon where hundreds or thousands of people were able to see the appearance. Also, some age categories of visionaries were approximated due to lack of information.

Sources: Connell, 1995; Delaney, 1960; Garvey, 1998; and Swann, 1996.

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

My name is Monica Delgado Van Wagenen and I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Brownsville writing my Masters Thesis. I am conducting interviews with those who have recognized the appearance of images of deity in ordinary objects about their personal backgrounds, experiences, and feelings about the occurrence. I would be honored to have you participate in this study, as your experience is unique and important and can bring about a greater understanding of this often misunderstood phenomenon.

The interviews will be recorded on tape and used for academic purposes only, which include (but are not limited to) the writing of my Masters Thesis, an academic journal article, or book. I realize you are volunteering your time and do not have to answer any questions you do not want to. If you do not want your name used in connection with your interview, please indicate at the bottom of the page. You may also choose to use your full name or only your first name.

Thank you for your time, your contribution is greatly appreciated.

Monica Delgado Van Wagenen
Behavioral Sciences Dept - S226
The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College
80 Fort Brown
Brownsville, TX 78520
(956) 544-8225

_____   _____
            Signature of Subject   Date

_____ You may use my full name in your research

_____ Please do not use my name, I wish to remain anonymous

_____ Please use only my first name

APPENDIX F

Research Instrument

PART 1: The Appearance

1. Tell me the story of the image's appearance.

2. Was the appearance something that took you by surprise or something you thought might happen to you?
-Tell me about it.

3. Tell me about what was going on in your life prior to the appearance? What I mean, did anything happen to you that you would see as particularly good or bad?
-Tell me about it.

4. How do you feel about the image appearing to you?

5. Why do you think the image appeared to you?

6. Does the image have a message?
-What is it?

7. Who is the message for? (Personal or public).

8. Do you believe that the image is of the Virgin of Guadalupe or some other manifestation of the Virgin Mary?

9. Can you tell me how you, yourself are able to know in your heart that that image is the Virgin Mary/the Virgin of Guadalupe?

10. Is the Virgin Mary still here/there?
-How are you able to know?

11. Do you have any idea how long the Virgin will stay?

12. Did people come to see the image? (How did word spread?)
-Tell me about them.
-Why did they come?
-Are they still coming?

13. Did the media (news, newspaper, reporters) come see the image?
-What did they do/say?

14. What about the Church, did they know about the image appearing?
-What did they say?

15. Some people have told me that others treat them differently after an experience like yours, have you found this to be true?
-Tell me about it.

16. How has the appearance of the image changed your life?

17. At the time of your own experience, had you heard about these types of images appearing before?
-What were they?
-Where?

18. Did you go see any of them?
-Which ones?
-How did the visit affect you?

19. Since your own experience, have you heard about any other images appearing in the Valley?
-Where?
-Have you gone to see any of them?

20. How do you feel about those images?

21. Why do you think the Virgin appears so often here in the Valley?

PART 2: The Virgin of Guadalupe

22. How do you feel about the Virgin of Guadalupe? Tell me about your relationship.

23. Why is she special to you?

24. Do you feel those of Mexican descent relate better to the Virgin of Guadalupe than Anglos?
-Why?

25. How have your feelings changed about the Virgin of Guadalupe since the appearance of the image?

26. Thinking back, when do you first remember hearing about the Virgin of Guadalupe?
-Who told you?

-What did he/she tell you?

27. Do you know if your brothers (if a woman) or sisters (if a man) told differently about the Virgin of Guadalupe?

28. Have you told your children anything about the Virgin of Guadalupe?

29. How old were they when you first told them about her?

30. What did you tell them?

31. Did you tell your sons differently about the Virgin of Guadalupe than your daughters?
-Why?

32. Do you think women have a different relationship with the Virgin of Guadalupe than men?
-Why?

(#33-35 for men only)
33. Why do you think women relate to the Virgin of Guadalupe?

34. Why do you relate to the Virgin of Guadalupe?

35. Why do you think other men relate to her?

(#36-38 for women only)
36. Why do you think men relate to the Virgin of Guadalupe?

37. Why do you relate to the Virgin of Guadalupe?

38. Why do you think other women relate to her?

39. Do you know the story of the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe?
-Tell it to me.

40. Who told you the story of the appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe?

41. How do you feel about Juan Diego?

42. Why do you think the Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego?

PART 3: Socio-Demographic Information and Personal Background

43. Did you grow up here in the Valley?

44. Were you born here in the Valley? (If not born in the US, find out when arrived)
45. Where did you go to school? High school? College?

46. Were your parents born in the Valley? (Mother and Father)

47. Do you know where your grandparents born?(Maternal and Paternal)

48. Tell me about your family.
-Number of children (if applicable): (sons and daughters, grandchildren?)
-Marital status - (Single, Married, Divorced, Widowed, Partnered)
-Number of siblings : (brothers and sisters)

49. What languages do you speak? (You speak English and Spanish, any other language?)

50. What was your first language?

51. What language was spoken most often in your home while you were growing up?

52. What language do you prefer to speak?

53. What language did you try to teach your children at home?

54. What languages do your children speak?

55. What was their first language?

56. What language is spoken most often in your home?

57. Do you know what language your children prefer to speak?

58. I'm going to read you some terms which those of Mexican descent call themselves and I'd like you to tell me which of them you identify most with yourself: American, Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicano/a, Latino/a, Hispanic, Other
-Why?

59. What do you do for a living?

60. What is your husband/wife's occupation?

61. If you feel comfortable answering this question, I'd like to know your total annual household income from all sources before taxes:

a) under $10,000   e) $40,000-49,999

b) $10,000- 19,999   f) $50,000 and above

c) $20,000-29,999

d) $30,000-39,999

62. How would you describe your religious upbringing? Would you consider it very religious, moderately religious, somewhat religious, or not at all religious?
-Why is that?

63. How often did you attend church growing up?
-Let's say, up until your First Communion?
-How about from your First Communion to your Confirmation?
-How about from your Confirmation until adulthood?

64. Did you participate in any church-related activities or organizations as a child? (For example: choir, Bible study, altar server, etc.)
-Which ones?
-At what ages?

65. Do you remember praying while you were growing up? (Personal and with family)
-How often?
-To whom did you pray to most often?
-Was there any particular reason why?

66. How would you describe your personal religiosity at the time of the appearance? Would you describe it as very religious, moderately religious, somewhat religious, or not at all religious)
-Why is that?

67. How often were you attending church at the time of the appearance?

68. Were you participating in any church-related activities or organizations at the time of the appearance? (For instance, Bible study, choir, etc.)
-Which ones?

69. Were you praying at the time of the appearance? (Personal and with family)
-How often?
-To whom were you praying to most often?
-Any particular reason why?

70. Do you feel you have become more religious as a result of the image appearing?

71. Since the time of the appearance, how often have you attended Church?
-Right after appearance?
-Since then?

72. Do you participate in any church-related activities or organizations now since the appearance?
-Which ones?

73. Have you been praying since the time of the appearance?
-How often?
-To whom do you pray to most often?
-Any particular reason why?

74. Have there been any saints that have been important in your life?
-Who in particular?
-Why?

75. Are you part of a charismatic group? Have you ever been?

76. Have you ever been treated for *susto*? *Mal de ojo*? (Folk illnesses)
-Tell me about it.
-(Find out if use *yerbas* or visit *curanderas*.)

77. Aside from the appearance of the Virgin Mary, have you ever had any other spiritual or supernatural experiences in your life?

APPENDIX G

Full Witness Responses Regarding Knowledge of the
Virgin of Guadalupe Narrative and Data Tables 1, 6, 7, and 16[106]

Witnesses' Responses Regarding Knowledge of the Virgin of Guadalupe Narrative[107]

Aurora

"The Virgin to Juan Diego? She appeared to him because he wanted proof to know that was where he was supposed to build the sanctuary to her. To the father she sent roses and the father didn't believe it. He didn't want to believe. 'Give me proof, give me proof.' There the Virgin is. That was the proof."

Alberto

"I cry. The cloak. When she appears I get all emotional, I really do. Every time. When she appears I cry. It just makes me feel good. No matter how many times I see the movie every year and I get really emotional, I just can't help it. It just makes me feel good."

Gloria

"It's the story of Juan Diego and how the Virgen appeared to him. She had the message that she wanted the chapel built to her, in her name so she brought them roses. It was a test and so he took them. And something that he carried his flowers in, that was where the Virgin appeared."

Paula

"It was in the mountains. He was taking care of sheep. So when he walked to go home with the sheeps, he heard a voice and he turned around. 'I am the mother of God.' *Se sustó.* (She scared him). Then he ran because he scared. And then the next day she was over there and she talk again, 'Don't be scared of me, I am the Virgin and I want you to go to the Church, ask to the priest that I want a church.' And he ran and talked to the priest but the priest don't, *no le creyó* (he didn't believe him). *Él se fue muy triste y* (He

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[106]The seven witnesses' responses appear in this appendix as they were relayed to the author. Grammatical errors and inconsistencies were included to preserve the original voice and genuine meaning for each witnesses.

[107]Three witness responses to this question include Spanish words. These individuals were interviewed in English but switched back and forth between the two languages. This "code-switching" was included to preserve each witnesses' interpretation of the Virgin of Guadalupe narrative. The responses that were completely in Spanish were translated into English. These include Aurora, Gloria, and Santiago.

left very sad and) he told, '*Virgencita*, the priest doesn't want to believe me what you told me.' So she told him, 'Go in the back of the mountain, there are too many flowers.' 'Oh no, there are no flowers over here right now.' 'You just go and do what I told you.' So he went on the back of the mountain and saw a lot of roses. He cut it and put it in his *tilma*, and she just pray to the flowers. And she said, 'Go to the church, the priest is giving the mass right now so you go over there.' So he went over there and the priest got mad. He said, 'Oh no priest, believe me. My virgin send you some flowers.' 'Oh that's not true.' 'Yeah it's true, I bring it over here.' So when he tried to show him, it was the Virgin Mary. Then he believed.'"

Reynaldo

"People didn't believe him when the Bishop, especially the Bishop didn't believe him when he went up there since he was just a poor Indian that probably didn't know what he was talking about. Not only until he took the proof that the Virgin Mary gave him the roses. That's when they finally believed him. But she's still there, the cloth that she appeared where she left her image, it's still there."

Santiago

"What I know is that she appeared to Juan Diego with the roses."

Valentin

"The only thing I can tell you is only what I saw in the picture, in the movies. When he was coming down from the *cierras* (mountains) and saw *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and the *Virgen de Guadalupe* told him to go and tell the preacher in the church but they didn't believe in him, they need more proof. OK. And where the *cierras* there, there were not flowers or anything, it was only grass and *nopales* (cactus). So the *Virgen de Guadalupe* told him to get his *poncho* (cloak) and he put some roses. I think there was red and yellow roses in there. There was no flower like that in there. So he took them over there to the church and when he opened it to show him the roses, the picture of Guadalupe was right there. It was beautiful, I mean I like it when I saw that."

TABLE 1: Witnesses' Explanations for their Own Iconotheophanies Compared to
Reasons Given for Juan Diego's

Alberto
Self:

"I guess it was for my faith in the Lord and prayer and singing and so forth, that it manifested it. He just gave me that gift . . . I feel blessed, I'm lucky."

Juan Diego:

"I can relate to Juan Diego . . . The most humble and most simple of us are represented by Juan Diego, and that's what he teaches us . . . I always thought ever since I met Juan Diego, he was so lucky to see her and to hear her, and for her to appear to him . . . We should all be like him, we should all be like him, we should all be as lucky to be able to hear her or see her, *La Virgen Maria.*"

Aurora
Self:

"The Virgin came because people are poor . . . We needed her a lot here. God sent her here because we needed her."

Juan Diego:

"I think she appeared to him because maybe he needed it. Maybe he was poor like we are."

Gloria
Self:

"I don't know why."

Juan Diego:

"What can I say, that was neat that he was chosen, that he was able to see her . . . The only thing I can tell you is that there was a reason that God chose him."

Paula
Self:

"He came down here to help the people that were very sick. When they heard about Him, they came over here and I blessed them and they got all, they were really cured."

Juan Diego:

(Not asked this question)

Reynaldo
Self:

"I don't look at it as just appearing to me, like I'm chosen or something. No, I don't feel like that at all . . . I thank God for opening my eyes that I could recognize what was happening, what happened at that time, what I'm supposed to do. But to me it's something to be shared. I wasn't picked. Just anybody could've, it just happened that I was at that place. It was for everybody not just for me. I don't have any special feeling."

Juan Diego:

"He just fulfilled a mission that was asked of him to do. Like for instance, me. I'm just fulfilling. Actually it was just brought to my attention what I was supposed to be doing . . . It just so happened that they picked him at that moment to fulfill the message that had to be done."

Santiago
Self:

"I think it's a blessing that God has sent to us to help us make a change in our lives. We're very proud of it and pleased that the Lord has chosen us for this."

Juan Diego:

"He was an Indian man that had a lot of faith in the Virgin . . . He would have to have a lot of faith for her to be able to appear."

Valentin
Self:

"I believe in God and I believe in Mary and I know they make miracles so I thought that was one of the miracles that happened to me there, looking at her. That's what makes me feel good because I saw her there . . . I'm just the lucky man that saw it."

Juan Diego:

"I feel like he was a lucky guy that saw *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, and talked to her, and the Virgen talked to him . . . Which I didn't talk to her when I saw the Virgin Mary but I think I was still, I'm lucky that I saw . . . I think Juan Diego was a great man. He don't talk anything bad or fight with anybody, or something like that, he was just doing his work . . . I think *La Virgen de Guadalupe* needs to, everybody knows that she was there for them . . . She knows who to go to."

TABLE 6: Witnesses' Income Compared to Perceived Role in Iconotheophany
Experience

Reynaldo

"I don't look at it as just appearing to me, like I'm chosen or something. No, I don't feel like that at all. I feel that it's part of my obligation just to share with everybody. I don't take it as just I was picked, you're special. I'm not. I'm just the same as everybody else . . . I wasn't picked. Just anybody could've. It just happened that I was at that place."

Gloria

"At the beginning I said, 'How can this be possible?' I was looking at the curtains and I said, 'Virgin, why did you come to my window? Why didn't you look for another window? Why did you have to come here to my house and look at me? I'm not one who has a lot of faith.' It doesn't matter to me what people say, the Virgin chose my house, so come to my house and be welcome. I'm afraid because my husband doesn't want this. He doesn't want me to be a *curandera*. I don't want to be a *curandera* . . . I don't believe in that. The Bible says you shouldn't believe in that."

Valentin

"I believe in God and I believe in Mary and I know they make miracles so I thought that was one of the miracles that happened to me there, looking at her . . . I'm just the lucky guy that saw it."

Alberto

"I guess [it] was for my faith in the Lord and prayer and singing and so forth, that it just manifested it. He just gave me that gift . . . I feel blessed, I'm lucky."

Santiago

"I think it's a blessing that God sent to us to help us   make a change in our lives. We are very proud of it and pleased that the Lord has chosen us for this."

Aurora

"I think she appeared to us because she knew that we would share the message with the people that don't know, that we would keep it going. A lot of other people have faith in it but . . . we would be the ones to take that message and we wouldn't give up."

Paula

"Well, my idea is that maybe he came down here to help the people that were very sick. When they heard about him, they came over here and I blessed them and they got all, they were really cured."

TABLE 7: Difference in Witnesses' Perceived Treatment by Others

Reynaldo
"No, they treated me the same way they treated me as soon as I changed my life [the previous year]. Everything was already prepared by the time anything like this happened."

Gloria
"No. No differently."

Valentin
"For a while, yes. One time a lady come by and she wanted to kiss my hand."

Alberto
"Yes." (How so?)
"With more respect, more love, and more brotherhood, and more understanding, and more compassion . . . In the past, we didn't have a problem in that area, people respected us, for the . . . *curanderismo* work. And then we have her apparition and it just got better . . . It kind of helped them feel more at ease and more content with coming by . . . 'Your work has been confirmed and I've been told it's been blessed by the Virgin. So it was one hundred percent all around."

Santiago
"Yes they do. How do I say it, maybe with more love? They pay their respect. Each time they come here they treat us with respect because they come to see the image. They're more loving, more caring. When they come, they treat us with more courtesy, more friendliness. Everything is going a little bit better."

Aurora
"Yes they have. They've treated us well."

(Not asked this question).

TABLE 16: Personal Religiosity of Witnesses After Iconotheophanies and Corresponding Change

Families:

Santiago
"We had a lot of things, we were fighting a lot amongst ourselves and it made a change in our family. We got closer to the church and our life has changed a lot. We have a good way with each other now."

Valentin
"My life changed a lot because everything in my family is doing great . . . So far whatever happens, it's real good."

Faith:

Alberto
"I have more faith and it made my faith stronger. I just couldn't believe that it could be stronger, I couldn't . . . I was so strong in my convictions and in my faith and in my belief in Jesus and his teachings. I was so strong in that, faithful in that. I never thought it could get stronger and it did. It was amazing. It makes me feel complete. I can't want anything else. How can I want anything else after I have an apparition of the Virgin Mary?"

Aurora
"My faith has grown a lot more. I have more faith than I had before. I believe more. I already believed but it grew even more. That small light I had has grown to a great light. I feel it, I feel more faith than I did before because I know that she's here."

Gloria
"It brought me closer to God. I feel him in my heart. I have a lot of faith in him."

Insight Into Personal Trials:

Gloria
"It changed my family. I got sick and I'm not totally well but that's OK. If these are tests that I have to pass through then I just ask God for the strength to help me through it . . . I was willing to take whatever happened because I know these things come from God."

Paula

"It changed a little bit because I was sick . . . Sometimes I think that Jesus suffered for us to live in this ground on the cross. Then I think maybe [he] divided a little thing for me. Like he suffered for us then I have to suffer a little bit."

Not Affected:

Reynaldo

"So it wasn't this event that took place that changed my life . . . cause it had already been changed before . . . it was like a reward."

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Zsembik, Barbara A., and Daniel Llanes. "Generational Differences in Educational Attainment among Mexican Americans". *Social Science Quarterly* 77 (June), no. 2: 363-374.

Monica Delgado Van Wagenen
Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

M.A.I.S. Candidate, Areas of Concentration: Sociology and Anthropology, University of Texas at Brownsville, Projected Graduation May 2001

B.A. Anthropology, Brigham Young University, April 1995

FILM EXPERIENCE

Telling Our Story currently in post-production. **Writer, Producer, Director, Location Sound Recorder.** 30 min.

Arte Y Color currently in post-production. **Writer, Producer, Director, Location Sound Recorder.** 30 min.

Vatos Locos: The History of the 38th Street Gang currently in post-production. **Writer, Producer, Director, Location Sound Recorder.** 30 min.

Folk Healing Practices in the Latino Immigrant Community currently in production. **Writer, Producer, Director, Camera.** 60 min.

Grandma Vera's Tortillas 2000. **Producer, Director, Editor, Camera.** 5 min.

El Mercado Sonora: A Traditional Healer's Market 1998. **Writer, Producer.** 15 min.

Pawkuh Va: Tradition and History at Fish Lake 1998. **Writer, Producer.** 30 min.

The Guatemala Research Video Archive 1997. **Producer, Location Sound Recorder.** 25 hours.

The History of Yellowstone Park 1997. **Researcher.** 60 min.

Low and Slow 1997. **Writer, Producer, Director, Location Sound Recorder.** 30 min.

Yellowstone: America's Eden 1997. **Researcher.** 60 min.

A Day With Sheriff Joe 1997. **Producer, Location Sound Recorder.** 30 min.

Kuo Hine 'E Hiapo: The Mulberry is White and Ready For Harvest 1997. **Associate Producer.** 30 min.

Piana 1996. **Location Sound Recorder.** 60 min.

Center Street: Duke's Bike Club 1996. **Segment Producer, Director.** 4 min.

Center Street: Young Filmmakers 1996. **Location Sound Recorder.** 4 min.

Center Street: "Be Nice" 1996. **Location Sound Recorder.** 4 min.

Los Huicholes: History - Art - Culture 1996. **Associate Producer.** 30 min.

Spirit Doctors 1996. **Writer, Producer, Director, Location Sound Recorder.** 30 min.

Utah Centennial Project 1996. **Location Sound Recorder.** 30 min.

Mundo Milagroso (Miraculous World) 1995. **Writer, Producer, Director.** 30 min.

Street Smart Challanger (CD ROM) 1995. **Producer.**

Only A Little Time 1995. **Producer, Director.** 5 min.

Becky Ball and Billy Box 1995. **Producer.** 5 min.

Beauty Before Me: Navajo Weavers 1994. **Production Assistant.** 30 min.

The Great Eight 1994. **Researcher.** 30 min.

FILM AWARDS AND HONORS

Featured Screening, Mercado Sonora, Cinesol Latino Film Festival, South Padre Island, TX, 2000.

Featured Screening, Grandma Vera's Tortillas, Cinesol Latino Film Festival, South Padre Island, TX, 2000.

Featured Screening, Underground Expressions, Cinesol Latino Film Festival, South Padre Island, TX, 2000.

Featured Screening, Mundo Milagroso, Rio Bravo Conference, Texas A&M University Kingville, 2000.

Featured Screening, <u>Spirit Doctors,</u> Rio Bravo Conference, Texas A&M University Kingville, 2000.

Featured Screening, <u>Underground Expression: Chicano Prison Tattoos,</u> Margaret Mead Film Festival, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, NY, 1999.

Featured Screening, <u>Low and Slow,</u> Cinesol Latino Film Festival, South Padre Island, TX, 1999.

Featured Screening, <u>Spirit Doctors,</u> Cinesol Latino Film Festival, South Padre Island, TX, 1999.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso,</u> Cinesol Latino Film Festival, South Padre Island, TX, 1999.

Featured Screening, <u>Low and Slow,</u> Freiburg Film Forum, Freiburg, Germany, 1999.

Featured Screening, <u>Spirit Doctors,</u> Freiburg Film Forum, Freiburg, Germany, 1999.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso,</u> Freiburg Film Forum, Freiburg, Germany, 1999.

Featured Screening, <u>A Day With Sheriff Joe,</u> Arizona International Film Festival, Tucson, AZ, 1998.

Featured Screening, <u>Spirit Doctors,</u> University of Texas System Texas-Mexico Border Health Symposium, South Padre Island, TX, 1998.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso,</u> San Antonio CineFestival, San Antonio, TX, 1997.

Gold Apple (Highest Honors), <u>Spirit Doctors,</u> National Educational Media Network Film Festival, Oakland, CA, 1997.

Featured Screening, <u>Spirit Doctors,</u> Southwest Council of Latin American Studies, Austin, TX, 1997.

Best National Documentary Film, <u>Spirit Doctors,</u> Utah Short Film and Video Festival, Salt Lake City, UT, 1996.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso,</u> Southwest Council of Latin American Studies, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1996.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C., 1996.

Gold Apple (Highest Honors), <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, National Educational Media Network Film Festival, Oakland, CA, 1996.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Chicago Latino Film Festival, Chicago, IL, 1996.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Harvard University's Peabody Museum, Boston, MA, 1996.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, "Go See" Film Exhibit and Screening Invitational, Greenville, SC, 1996.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, American Anthropological Association, Washington D.C., 1995.

Featured Screening, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Margaret Mead Film Festival, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, NY, 1995.

Mort Rosenfeld Award (Best Film From Utah), <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Utah Short Film and Video Festival, Salt Lake City, UT, 1995.

GRANT AWARDS

Research Grant, "Folk Shrines in the Lower Rio Grande Valley," National Science Foundation - Alliance for Minority Participation, 1998.

Academic Scholarship, National Hispanic Scholarship Fund, 1998.

Media Grant Recipient, <u>Arte Y Color</u>, Utah Humanities Council, 1997.

Summer Research Grant Recipient, <u>Arte Y Color</u>, Charles Redd Center For Western Studies, 1997.

Production Grant, <u>Guatemala Research Video Archive</u>, Brigham Young University Film Committee, 1997.

Media Artist's Grant, <u>Low and Slow</u>, Utah Arts Council, 1996.

Research Grant, <u>Spirit Doctors</u>, Stauffer-Sigall Endowment, 1995.

Research Grant, <u>Spirit Doctors</u>, Community Oriented Primary Care Association, 1995.

Research Grant, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Stauffer-Sigall Endowment, 1994.

Summer Research Grant, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Charles Redd Center For Western Studies, 1994.

Research Grant, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Department of Religious Studies - Brigham Young University, 1994.

Research Grant, <u>Mundo Milagroso</u>, Department of International Studies - Brigham Young University 1994.

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

Museum of Peoples and Cultures - Brigham Young University, **Faces on Parade: Symbolism and Tradition in Mexican Masks**, provided apx. 20 artifacts, 1995-1996..

INVITED SPEAKER

University of Texas System Texas-Mexico Border Health Symposium, **Speaker**, "Recognizing the Importance of Culture in Health Care Delivery Systems," South Padre Island, TX, 1998.

Great Basin Anthropology Conference, **Speaker**, "Film and Anthropology," Lake Tahoe, NV, 1996.

Cine Film Festival, **Regional Juror**, Washington D.C., 1996.

Brigham Young University Department of Theater and Film, **Speaker**, "Ethnographic Film," Provo, UT, 1995 and 1996.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Brigham Young University, **Part-Time Faculty - Evening School Faculty**, Department of Anthropology 1995-1997. Classes taught:

> Anthropology 101 - Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
> Anthropology 390 - Ethnographic Film Production

University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, **Part-Time Staff & Lecturer**, Department of Behavioral Sciences 1997-present. Classes taught:

>Anthropology 3375 - Mexican-American Folklore
>Anthropology 2351 - Cultural Anthropology

OTHER

Ritual Films, **President**. Motion Picture Production Company, 1995 - present.

Margaret Mead Traveling Film Festival, **Site Coordinator**. Brigham Young University, 1996.

Visual Anthropology Club, **Founder**. Brigham Young University, 1996.

Utah State Hospital - Children's School, **Volunteer**. Provo, UT, 1994-1997.

Mexican-American Student Club, **Vice President**. Brigham Young University, 1993-1994.

Museum of Peoples and Cultures, **Photo Archivist**. Provo, UT, 1992-1993.

PERSONAL

Born: 1972, Yakima, WA

Married to Michael Van Wagenen and mother to Maya Isabel

Hobbies: artwork, music composition and performance