

## SPMT 319 – Multicultural Event Final Paper

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Event Info: Dia de los Muertos Event

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Location: Bryan, Texas



## I. Introduction

- A. The event I attended was a Dia de los Muertos celebration in Bryan, Texas, which was part of the First Friday gathering where vendors and families go to spend time together and shop on the first Friday of every month. I chose to attend this event because of the significance it has on my Hispanic friends. Their appreciation along with a recent loss in my family fueled my interest in attending, seeking connection, and understanding the rituals of this celebration.
- B. The Dia de los Muertos event was a multicultural experience for me. Growing up, my exposure to Hispanic culture was limited due to my schooling and family background. However, joining organizations at Texas A&M introduced me to a unique and diverse new group of friends that have shared their cultural traditions with me, such as Dia de los Muertos. This allowed me to reconnect with my Hispanic heritage and my family back home was happy to hear about it since the passing of my beloved aunt is still fresh on our minds.

## II. Experience

- A. We began by walking up to several altars, decorated with pretty flowers to commemorate the dead. These are full of pictures of the loved ones who have passed. I was able to look at this beautiful display and take in the significance of it, this affected me by making me realize how important it is to remember loved ones. Unfortunately, I was not able to take a photo of my aunt that I was remembering at the event but since I know what to expect now, I can make plans to do so next year. After this, my friends and I watched boys and girls do a traditional Mexican dance called “Folklorico”.
- B. People were very welcoming and accepting towards me, this made me feel comfortable at the event and gave me a sense of belonging. I was able to confidently have conversations with other attendees, including families and older residents.
- C. I interacted with a Texas A&M student who was at the altar remembering her beloved grandma. Being a day dedicated to remembering the dead opens conversations up and allows a deep and personal conversation with people that would not happen at other events. This can be an emotional time and helped me open up about a sensitive topic to other people who are experiencing the same.
- D. At this event, there was no single host, it was more of a community effort so everybody was welcome and made it feel special. I had conversations with other attendees and asked questions like “Has your family always celebrated this day?” and “May I ask who you are commemorating?” I also asked how this celebration compared to others attended in the past. This allowed me to get an understanding of any differences in traditions for different communities. Attendees asked me questions about who I was remembering, my background, and whether I planned on celebrating again next year knowing this was my first time celebrating.

- E. I had some concerns before attending the event. I worried that people there would be upset to hear that it was my first time celebrating this holiday. Since my family is of Mexican descent, I believe others may judge me for straying from my heritage. Those thoughts of course did change since I felt so welcomed and was not judged for being my first time celebrating. I was happy to see people happy for me for reconnecting with my heritage, stepping out of my comfort zone, and finding a new holiday to show to my friends and family.
- F. From what I observed, others at the event seemed very happy to welcome me and show me around. I was treated well since it was held outside of a church where people are usually in high spirits which made me feel very comfortable. Although I did not have many interactions, I did feel accepted and did not feel like I stuck out. Being of the same culture, it is hard for me to communicate with others since I believe I am not as immersed in the culture as I should be. However, after interacting with other attendees at the event, I was able to get rid of my negative beliefs and discussed more about what the day meant to other people and how it brought a community of people so close.
- G. At the Dia de los Muertos event, my experience can be categorized into two sociological concepts that I found were Race and Ethnicity, and Community. I am someone of Mexican descent who attended an event with deep roots in the Hispanic culture. My concerns before attending the event, how I am not as immersed in my own culture, gave a perfect example of race and ethnicity within social interactions. However, my positive experience of being warmly welcomed and comfortable at the event showed the fluidity and complexity of your identity in cultural gatherings. I challenged stereotypes of people who are losing their culture and how it could make individuals insecure by thinking twice about racial and ethnic identities in social contexts.

The event also showed the sociological concept of Community. Although there was a large and diverse group of people from all different walks of life, this celebration brought together an entire community which gave us a sense of togetherness and support. Commemorating loved ones became a shared experience we all witnessed, showing the strength and social barriers that the event breaks down, allowing people to talk about sensitive topics. My personal experience of being a part of this community helped me embrace my culture, even though I previously felt so far apart from it. Overall, the event showed me how communities form, thrive, and provide support, to create new experiences with new individuals.

#### Food, Music, and Sports:

- H. Indeed, a large part that influences me to attend an event is the food and music. There were no sports involved at this event, however, there were very beautiful dances along with music that I enjoyed watching for a while my friends and I conversed. The dancing and live music was most definitely what stood out to me and other people in the surrounding area, a large group of people gathered around to watch it. Food was handed out at a stand and donations were accepted, the food was gorditas that were catered, and free water to wash it all down.

- I. Food and music played a large role in my decision to attend this event. At the time of the event, I was very hungry. As a college student who is always looking for a free meal, my decision was a no-brainer. Gorditas and any Mexican food are one of my favorites since it reminds me of being back at my grandma's house when I was younger. As a member of an orchestra for several years, I also have a great appreciation for music and dancing. Anytime I can listen to live music I will always take up the opportunity.
- J. Yes, the Mexican food that was being offered took me back to my younger self eagerly going to my grandma's house to eat the food she had cooked for my brothers and myself. I have an emotional connection to good Mexican food such as gorditas that gives me a sense of comfort and makes me feel immersed in the culture at the event. Also, being a part of an orchestra for several years made me appreciate music and dance from a very young age. I understand the difficulty and dedication it takes to perform in front of strangers. However, the music playing during my time there also made me feel immersed in the culture.
- K. The Mexican food and music played at this event most certainly made me appreciate the event so much more. It felt like a place I could go and express myself freely in a judgment-free zone and it allowed me to grow closer to my culture. This was a situation I had never immersed myself in before, food and music played a large role in this.

### III. Reflection

- A. Attending the event positively affected me, making me realize what I had been missing out on by not attempting to immerse myself in my own culture. My overall experience ignited an interest and passion in me to go out of my comfort zone and try new things. It changed my perception about the Mexican culture by reminding me I am a part of it and accepted in it, even though I am not fully immersed in it. Before attending I had worries of being judged or not accepted. After I felt welcomed and a sense of belonging that made me interested in attending a similar event in the future. I plan to celebrate Dia de los Muertos again next year and take a picture of my dear aunt to place on the Altar.
- B. What I can take away from this experience is how an event with entertainment and food can bring a community together and create new experiences for people. Like sports, the event I attended had food and music, both found at sporting events such as the Texas A&M football games. As I was reflecting above, I realized a large part of my deciding factor for attending the event was because of the food, a judgment-free zone, and a community of people gathering to witness an event that shares their interests. These are also the same reasons why I attend sporting events and what was discussed in this class.